

**A CRITICAL COMPARISON OF CONTEMPORARY
COPTIC, KOREAN AND WESTERN SCHOLARLY PERSPECTIVES ON
SINGLENESS AND DIVORCE
IN 1 CORINTHIANS 7
AND RELATED BIBLICAL TEXTS**

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SOON YI BYUN

School of Arts, Languages and Cultures

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Abstract

This study takes as case studies the traditions of three major Christian communities, the Egyptian Coptic Orthodox church, the Korean Protestant church and the Western Christianity (including Western scholars from both Protestant and Roman Catholic backgrounds.) In doing so I examine the marked discrepancies in their interpretation of Scripture and the likely factors that might have influenced their various readings and subsequent applications regarding four issues – singleness, marriage, divorce and remarriage. I will begin by exploring the relevant scholarly literature, namely: previous studies of reception in general and of the Bible in particular, previous studies of reception of the New Testament texts (especially 1 Corinthians 7); previous studies of Korean and Coptic churches concerning the Bible in general and biblical texts on these four topics.

I will examine how the contemporary reading of Coptic Orthodox Christianity about divorce and remarriage issues is likely to be affected by various aspects including the biblical interpretation of the Church Fathers as well as the unique social, religious and political circumstances of the Coptic Church as a minority group in a Muslim country. I will also look into elements of influence in Korean scholarship, where the interpretation of modern Korean Protestant scholars of biblical texts on divorce and remarriage might be influenced by the long-standing cultural influence of Confucianism, fundamentalism and liberal theology. Likewise, I plan to inspect the factors that may possibly affect the reading of modern biblical scholars of Western Christianity about the related biblical passages on singleness and divorce, including the individual circumstances, religious and social background, denominational situation, theological approach (e.g. evangelical, liberal or feminist), cultural view and gender of various scholars.

I will also argue that the factors which might affect the ways that modern biblical scholars of Western Christianity read the related biblical texts on singleness and divorce include the views of two Greek philosophical groups (Cynics and Stoics), two Jewish sects (Philo's group and the Essenes), Church Fathers and apocalyptic literature, as well as Roman cults. Such a different approach of Western scholars is due to their scholarly discussion with an attempt to understand the original text through historical and critical method, unlike the approach of the two previous church groups. A final chapter will draw conclusions by evaluating each tradition in terms of their understanding and practice of these issues. In addition, the way that Paul honoured the rights of women in those areas in the first century will be briefly mentioned.

Declaration

No portion of the work referred to in the thesis has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other university or other institute of learning.

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the study

The institution of marriage can be considered as one of the most established of the many structures to have been formed in society since human beings first existed on the earth. However, as a consequence of the dysfunctional exercise of matrimony, there have also been numerous occurrences of divorce and remarriage. Currently a variety of causes and moral changes appear to be bringing about an increase in marital breakdowns.

The latest statistics, published in December 2012 by the Office for National Statistics (ONS), the UK's largest independent producer of official statistics, indicates the changing social trends (*What percentage of marriages end in divorce?* 2013). According to the report, for marriages taking place between the early 1970s and the early 1990s, the proportion that ended in divorce has increased, such that 42% of marriages in England and Wales now end in divorce.

South Korea (henceforth 'Korea') provides another example. The Korea Legal Centre for Family Relations, a well-known legal advice centre, recently published a report about the recent trends in the divorce rate in that country (*Research Summary of the Divorce Rate in Korea*, 2014). According to the report, the divorce rate has increased markedly since the 1980s. Then, a marital split was usually regarded as a stigma in Korean society. But as attitudes on this matter have changed, so divorce has become more commonplace until it is now generally accepted.

John Witte Jr. offers an insightful comment on the change of perspective on marriage. He explains that in the early twentieth-century West, particularly the US and UK, the "leading legal authorities" regarded marriage as a "state of existence ordained by the Creator," "a consummation of the Divine command to multiply and replenish the earth," "the highest state of existence," and "the only stable substructure of social, civil, and religious institutions" (Witte Jr. 2012, 287). By contrast, current attitudes to personal status reflect a dramatic modification of the concept of marriage.

Witte Jr. observes that

What we have also been witnessing in the course of the past century is the gradual rise to legal prominence of an Enlightenment contractarian model of marriage. This model has slowly eclipsed Protestant and Catholic models of marriage, as well as the earlier classical and biblical ideas and institutions of marriage, on which the Western legal tradition of marriage was founded (Witte Jr. 2012, 289).

As this explanation indicates, the cultural movements of the late seventeenth century brought a tremendous change to the foundational basis of the institution of marriage in the Western world. Arguably, the social changes that stressed human reason rather than the observation of conventional traditions motivated people to drift away from what they had previously believed, including the biblical teaching of the church. Consequently, the cultural movement of the seventeenth century became one of the decisive forces that affected the way that the character of marriage has gradually changed from a sacred sacrament (as the church has generally viewed it) to a civil contract between two parties (as it is commonly viewed in the modern age). This change towards viewing matrimony as solely a mutual agreement between two people might have affected society to the point where people began to take marriage less seriously, and ended up moving toward easy divorce in present times.

This speculation also finds its support in an interesting article from the US-based journal *National Affairs*, where W. Bradford Wilcox, who is director of the National Marriage Project at the University of Virginia and a senior fellow at the Institute for American Values, discusses the rising divorce rate in the United States (*The Evolution of Divorce*, 2009). The divorce revolution of the 1960s and '70s was remarkable. The nearly universal introduction of no-fault divorce enabled access to unilateral divorce and lent moral legitimacy to the dissolution of marriages. The sexual revolution, too, fueled the marital tumult of the times: Spouses found it easier in the Swinging Seventies to find extramarital partners, and came to have higher, and often unrealistic, expectations of their marital relationships. Increases in women's employment as well as feminist consciousness-raising also did their part to drive up the divorce rate, as wives felt freer in the late '60s and '70s to leave marriages that were abusive or that they found unsatisfying.

In Europe, the Enlightenment is regarded as the main force that brought a change to views of

the institution of marriage. By comparison, Wilcox's remarks on the divorce revolution of the 1960s and 1970s give a clear indication about the general change of people's attitude toward marriage in the States, which resulted from several social shifts in the areas of divorce law, sexuality, women's work and the feminist movement. Similarly, in his book *The Moral Vision of the New Testament*, Hays states that divorce in the United States at the end of the twentieth century has become so widespread that 'about one divorce for every two marriages in the United States has been widely reported' (Hays 1996, 347). Even though this outlook and statistics emerge from a particular context in the United States, they help us to recognise the overall increase in divorce in the contemporary Western world. In fact, the same social trend is occurring in present-day Asia as well.

The change in views of marriage, especially from the late seventeenth century to the modern period, implies that the changed perspective of matrimony during the cultural movement emerged from the reaction of people to the traditional teaching of the church on this issue. The support for this assumption is also evident in the comment by Witte Jr. that the contractarian model of marriage has gradually assumed high priority. This observation led the author of this thesis to explore what the churches actually state about matters of marital status, such as singleness, marriage, divorce and remarriage, and how church policies relate to the changed social view of these topics.

Diverse church traditions have distinct ways of using the Bible for these issues. For instance, in the Coptic Church, the permissible grounds for divorce are adultery, or the conversion of one spouse. Unlike the Coptic confession, the Korean Protestant Church does not have any specific church rules on this topic. The policy of the Western Church is too broad to pin down to one common church practice, but in general terms, the Roman Catholic Church does not permit divorce whereas the Protestant Church does.

This marked discrepancy between church traditions motivated the researcher to select three church community groups, Egyptian Coptic Orthodox, Korean Protestant and Western Christianity (including Western scholars with either Protestant or Roman Catholic backgrounds), as case studies in order to examine their interpretation of the Bible and the factors that might have influenced the various readings and subsequent application in each

church group. Few researchers appear to have made in-depth studies in this area. Hence, this lack of current scholarship further inspired me to investigate the field, which has been overlooked by previous biblical scholars.

For the purpose of this study, I will explore the relevant scholarly literature, namely: previous studies of reception in general and of the Bible in particular, previous studies of reception of the New Testament texts on singleness, marriage, divorce and remarriage (especially 1 Corinthians 7); previous studies of Korean and Coptic churches regarding the Bible in general and Biblical texts on singleness, marriage, divorce and remarriage.

Moreover, I will argue that the contemporary reading of Coptic Orthodox Christianity about divorce and remarriage issues is likely to be influenced by factors including the biblical interpretation of the Church Fathers as well as the unique social, religious and political circumstances of the Coptic Church as a minority group in a Muslim country. I will also look into elements of influence in Korean scholarship where the interpretation of modern Korean Protestant scholars of biblical texts on divorce and remarriage might be affected by the long-standing cultural influence of Confucianism, fundamentalism and liberal theology. Likewise, I plan to inspect the factors that may possibly affect the reading of modern biblical scholars of Western Christianity about the related biblical texts on singleness and divorce, including the individual circumstances, religious and social background, denominational situation, theological approach (e.g. evangelical, liberal or feminist), cultural view and gender of various scholars. Based on the findings of this study, I will conclude with an evaluation and comparison of each church tradition in terms of its diverse understanding and practice of the related issues in their real life. This approach will contribute to the thesis being both analytical and critical.

1.2 Aim, scope and academic contribution of the thesis

In general, one might have expected that the churches would have one unified biblical interpretation and church practice regarding singleness, marriage, divorce and remarriage, because each church group refers to Scripture as a fundamental basis of their guidelines for these topics. Nevertheless, it has been found that diverse church confessional groups have

dissimilar church practices resulting from their different readings of related biblical passages, presumably, as well as other additional factors. Therefore, the aim of my research is to discuss how some Christian confessional groups read the relevant verses in the Bible regarding those four important subjects, and how they put their interpretation into practice in the lives of their followers through church policy. Also, this study will look at what factors have influenced the specific reading and application of the understanding of each church tradition about the related biblical texts. In addition, the way Paul honoured the right of women in these areas in the first century will be briefly explored. For this purpose, three church groups have been chosen as case studies: Coptic Orthodox Christianity (Egypt), Korean Protestant Christianity and Western Christian biblical scholarship.

Each Christian group will be studied in its contemporary context, namely, from the twentieth to the twenty-first century. The first Christian tradition has been chosen because it has the longest religious history, and its traditions contrast with those of many other Christian confessional groups. The second is chosen in distinction to Coptic Orthodox Christianity, and also because of my personal interest in the Asian church context. The third expression of Christianity has been chosen in order to keep up with the current state of Christian biblical scholarship in the Western world, since this perspective may well affect other expressions of Christianity in the world.

As the first step in this research, a mixture of relevant materials and references for each group has been collected and analysed. The sources are mostly selected from books, magazines, journals and websites. A number of personal meetings have been also conducted over the past four years, with informal conversations with ministers and lay people in the United Kingdom and Korea from each of the three church groups. The key text for the study is taken from chapter 7 of Paul's first letter to the Corinthians in the New Testament, since this biblical text deals with these four issues. In connection with this passage, some other pertinent passages in the Gospels including Matthew 5:31-32 and 19:3-9, Mark 10:2-12 and Luke 16:18 are also cited, as well as a few verses in the Old Testament.

Some contemporary scholars have investigated individual aspects of this field. However, they have not gone into explaining the particular reasons why each church confession has

such a diverse understanding and application of the same biblical texts for those four issues. Moreover, they have also not examined the likely influencing elements, which could affect the particular reading of pertinent biblical passages by each church tradition. The latter point is of considerable significance, and should be highlighted for an appropriate comprehension of the reasoning behind the varying church policy of each church tradition. For example, in the Orthodox Coptic Christian tradition, the contemporary Coptic Church applies the strict divorce and remarriage regulation to the followers of church. Nevertheless, modern Coptic scholars do not appear to explicate the possible aspects of influence which motivated the church to end up being stringent in their church policy.

In the light of this observation, the first chapter will include several sections dealing with the history of scholarship in several parts; previous studies of reception (in general and of the Bible in particular), previous studies of reception of the New Testament texts concerning singleness, marriage, divorce and remarriage (especially 1 Corinthians 7), previous studies of Korean biblical scholarship (regarding the Bible in general and/or singleness, marriage, divorce and remarriage texts in the Bible) and previous studies of Coptic biblical scholarship (regarding the Bible in general and/or singleness, marriage, divorce and remarriage texts in the Bible).

With regard to the academic contribution of the thesis, four possible grounds could be suggested as the achievable contributions which this thesis could make not only in UK scholarship but globally. The first is that no scholar or theological student appears to have embarked upon a similar analysis of the topic to the one I will explore in this thesis. The second is that the effort to discover the factors of influence on the reading of pertinent biblical passages in two church groups aids comprehension of the development and application of church policy in the different traditions.

The third is that a critical comparison of three church confessions in terms of their divergent interpretations and applications of the same biblical passages about the four topics will help us to recognise the strengths and weaknesses of each reading. This attempt will make the research of this thesis unique. For instance, in the chapter on divorce and remarriage in Korean Protestant Christianity, some of the scholars cited happen to belong to Presbyterian churches, where they would regard themselves as followers of John Calvin. Thus, it might

have been expected that the Korean Presbyterian scholars would abide by Calvin's understanding of Paul's writings on issues of divorce and second marriage. Smith refers to the Calvin's comment, who said, "the allowed three grounds for divorce and remarriage other than adultery are: impotence, extreme religious incompatibility, and abandonment" (Smith 1990, 138). Nevertheless, Korean Presbyterian scholars such as S.S. Kwon, S.A. Park and others, whose arguments are mentioned in this part, do not overtly note what Calvin proposed.

With respect to remarriage, the Korean commentators appear to interpret the teaching of Paul without taking account of different contexts. Consequently the scholars determine that remarriage can be permitted only on two grounds, adultery and the death of one spouse. They do not comment on other possible reasons for second marriage. Thus it appears that the readings of the pertinent passages by Korean scholars in regard to second marriage are more conservative than that of Calvin. Such discoveries can motivate us to attempt to engage in further exploration of these problems.

The last ground for the academic ground for contribution of this thesis is that, even though scholars report the various interpretations of the usage of relevant biblical passages and the resulting church practices, they do not point to negative cases of application (especially among the followers of the two church traditions: Orthodox Coptic and Korean Protestant) in reality. This overlooked factor will be also be examined in my thesis. Accordingly, this endeavour will give a motivation to consider some potential problems in the interpretation of pertinent verses or caused by inflexible enforcement of the reading of the text in each church tradition.

The undertaking of this research is therefore intended to be a response to the lack of scholarly studies identified in the introduction of this section. I hope and anticipate that what has been observed in this thesis can be a helpful aid to other scholars who will investigate the reception of singleness, marriage, divorce and remarriage texts in Scripture in the future. Therefore, in view of the findings mentioned above, my current work can be a useful case study on the reception of the biblical texts. In other words, no one appears to have done the same academic exploration as the one undertaken in this thesis and the reception theory that I use

as a major aspect of my research aids the identification of likely influencing factors affecting the reading of the related biblical texts on the subjects of singleness, marriage, divorce and remarriage in addition to the interpretation and application by three particular church groups in modern times.

1.3. History of Scholarship

1.3.1. Previous studies of reception in general, and of the Bible in particular

According to Mark Knight, the historical-critical method has been recognised as the conventional way of interpreting the Bible in modern times. However, Knight argues that this method of reading Scripture ended up preparing the ground for the new way of interpreting the Bible, reception theory, which raises a question about the former method (Knight 2010, 137). This indicates a possible limit in interpreting the Bible through the means of the historical-critical approach. This leads me to look briefly into the historical-critical method, before going into further detail about the recent history of biblical interpretation.

Regarding the historical-critical method, Crocker says that “Scholars utilize a variety of historical-critical methods, which are meant to analyse the political and economic situations, the social and cultural peculiarities, the religious customs, the rhetorical styles, and even the letter-writing conventions that existed in the Greco-Roman world during the first century” (Crocker 2004, 11). This remark of Crocker shows that modern researchers attempt to interpret the primary text (i.e. The Bible) through various methods, as indicated above, in order to get closer to the setting and period of Scripture, since it was written in the first century when the dominant civilization was the Greco-Roman culture. This endeavour aims to help a reader of today to understand the ancient text and its context.

This observation finds its support in the argument of Luz, who comments on the historical-critical method, which sets out to detach the text from the modern audience. According to Luz, this scheme attempts to understand the passage within its original historical and cultural setting as well as to understand its original meaning as intended by the author. The purpose of this method is to narrow the gap of any possible misinterpretation between the writer and the current receiver of the passage (Luz 1994, 7). This way of reading the Bible can help the

reader to gain a broad understanding of a text within its historical context. This also indicates that the purpose of the historical-critical method is to enable the modern reader to become chronologically connected with the initial writer, so that the cultural distance and a modern reader can be narrowed.

In spite of this strength, however, several weaknesses of this method are apparent. This way of reading the text does not help the modern audience to be well informed as to how to apply the interpretation of the text in one's practical life in current times. Luz also echoes this concern. Consequently, this method of analysis is likely to generate a disconnection between the ancient text and an audience (Luz 1994, 8). Also, it can be challenging if a contemporary reader attempts to interpret an ancient text in his or her own world, which is dissimilar from the world of the original audience. What is more, the historical-critical method discourages the interpreter from bringing his or her personal and subjective opinions to the process of reading a text. In this way, arguably, the audience of today is kept from interacting with the initial passage at a personal level. This separation can bring about a situation in which the audience can have some difficulties in getting a proper grasp of the passage and/or the intent of the author of the text.

The criticism stated above became a motive through which a new literary interpretation, "reception theory," came along in the late 1960s. In this regard, Holub points out to the remark of Hans Robert Jauss, a German academic, who introduced this theory. Holub cites Jauss as follows:

Literature and art only obtain a history that has the character of a process when the succession of works is mediated not only through the producing subject, but also the consuming subject – through the interaction of author and public (Holub 1984, 57-58).

This leads to a definition of reception theory, which refers to the method of analysing the literary work with an emphasis on the reader and their personal experience in the process of reading the text.

Gooder also says that, with regard to the argument of the development of the reading of the Bible, the theory of reception has been used as an equivalent term to *Wirkungsgeschichte*

(history of effect or history of influence) (Goode 2008, 111). Further, Knight comments on Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900-2002), who introduced the use of the word, *Wirkungsgeschichte* in his influential book, *Truth and Method* (2004). According to Knight, Gadamer used this phrase to explain the ‘history of influence’, which is essential to ‘hermeneutics’ (Knight 2010, 137). Therefore, these two terms, ‘reception theory’ and *Wirkungsgeschichte*, can be considered a new method of interpreting a literary work in which the text can be understood while giving consideration to the reciprocal communication between the initial passage and the audience who reads the text.

Crocker relates this method to the situation in which a reader interprets a text, bringing to it his or her own diverse personal, cultural, religious, political, and social contexts. According to Crocker, this signifies that the particular time and circumstance of the audience will probably have a great influence on their reading of the passage, whether intentional or not. Hence, this mutual interaction is likely to lead a reader to include his or her own distinctive viewpoint in the process of understanding the text (Crocker 2004, 28). This remark of Crocker is apposite, since a reader tends to read the text in the context of their own time and place in life; the audience is grounded in a definite time and space. Thus, the reader is likely to bring along their particular viewpoint and input to the reading process. This is the core concept of reception theory. In other words, when an audience attempts to evaluate a certain passage, the person tends to read the text through their particular personal lenses, which might be formed by their gender, education, ethnicity, social and political class, culture, tradition, etc. These aspects can influence the course of comprehending the text.

This assumption suggests that the analysis of a text becomes diverse and also changes accordingly. This implies that the study of reception theory encourages readers to become actively engaged with the ancient text, with their own input. This also entails the reader being invited to look into its past interpretation, since whenever a reader reads a text in the past, that person will have understood the text from his or her perspective at the time of reading. Crocker here gives a detailed account of this matter: “At the theoretical-theological level, it is crucial for all readers to be mindful of the various ways in which much of the Bible has been read in the past and continues to be read now” (Crocker 2004, 210).

The phrase, ‘ways in which the Bible has been read in the past,’ leads us to reflect on how the Bible has been understood throughout the long history of the interpretation of Scripture, since Christianity is two thousand years old. This means that the Bible has been interpreted in the past by many well known and intelligent Christian thinkers who understood Scripture based on their personal standpoints. Without their being aware of it, however, their readings must have been affected by their particular personal background. These factors are thus the main difference from that of the historical-critical method as has been formerly observed.

For example, as I will discuss in a later chapter on Coptic Orthodox Christianity, the Church Fathers read the pertinent biblical texts concerning those four major topics (singleness, marriage, divorce and remarriage) on the basis of their diverse individual points of view. Since then, the Coptic Church appears to have chosen various readings of pertinent texts by the early Church Fathers, which have affected the way that modern Coptic Christianity understands the related passages. This observation is seen in several references of some Fathers quoted by the Coptic Church.

There is, however, one further noteworthy point here. Among the Church Fathers’ different understanding of passages relating to those four issues, some of their readings were stringent whereas a few of them were lenient. Out of these differing perspectives, the Coptic Church has selected the strict way of understanding the passages. This choice of the Coptic Church intrigued the researcher so as to examine the rationale behind their preference. Based on my findings, it emerges that the contemporary social and political situation of the Coptic community as a minority in Egypt, where Muslims are in the majority, appeared to influence the particular interpretation of the Coptic Church. Accordingly, throughout this thesis, reception theory will be a useful tool to analyse the various understandings and applications of the related passages of two church groups, as well as the possible factors that might affect the particular way of reading the text of each church tradition.

Luz highlights the point noted earlier, saying that “The history of influence explains the gap between past and present. It also makes clear that all interpretations of a text bore the mark of the historical situation of its interpreter” (Luz 1994, 26). This comment of Luz is well made. This means that the text can be read in diverse ways depending on how a reader of today with

their various personal contexts interprets the passage. In this regard, Luz also makes an excellent summary as follows:

I try to speak of the direction in which the texts point for today in order, on the one hand, to sketch the space and the direction in which the texts might direct us today but on the other hand to leave the users of this commentary the space they need to seek with the texts their own avenue of understanding (Luz: 2007, p.65).

Since a biblical passage can be differently understood by readers depending on their subjective inputs and various backgrounds, it can be difficult to decide which interpretation is the most valid one among many dissimilar interpretations of the same passage. For instance, in the chapter on Egyptian Coptic Orthodox Christianity, several renowned Church Fathers suggested their understandings of a text, 1 Corinthians 7, on the topic of remarriage. For the church policy, it has been found that the Coptic Church chose the majority belief among Fathers for this subject. Yet, it is clearly seen that some opinions of Church Fathers were at variance with the readings of others. Some examples of this observation will be provided later in the thesis. Consequently, this variation can leave room for possible controversy over biblical interpretation amongst the contemporary audience.

In an effort to expand on this topic, Christopher Rowland, a British Anglican priest and theologian, also refers to Gadamer, who helps the reader to realise that they are a bearer of tradition and history, which affects the way in which the audience analyses passages (Rowland 2008, 111). Rowland underlines the significance of an awareness of the possible influence of specific time and space when a reader is involved with the process of reading an ancient text.

Based on the studies of reception theory up to this point, if this way of reading the Bible is going to be applied to the way we examine a particular passage, it will certainly provide a variety of possible interpretations of the text. Moreover, the text is likely to make more sense to the person who reads since the reader is actively involved in interpreting the passage. In light of this research, therefore, the theory of reception is the main means by which the related biblical texts for the major issues of singleness, marriage, divorce and remarriage in three church traditions, Egyptian Coptic Orthodox, Korean Protestant and Western Christianity, will be approached and interpreted. This approach will help us to look into the arena of their various understandings and applications of these four topics in 1 Corinthians 7

and related biblical texts. As a result of this endeavour, we will also attempt to find out what elements might have affected the interpretation and application of each church group.

1.3.2 Previous studies of reception of the New Testament singleness, marriage, divorce and remarriage texts, especially 1 Corinthians 7

In this section, two subjects among the four issues, divorce and remarriage, will be covered in brief, along with 1 Corinthians 7 in general. This effort will bring the spotlight back onto how some scholars have attempted to understand reception of these two issues and the main text, 1 Corinthians 7. The arguments of four biblical scholars, Hays, Thiselton, Instone-Brewer and Luz, will be briefly mentioned in the following, along with the content, method, strengths and weaknesses of their arguments.

a. R. Hays on Reception of Divorce Texts

Hays is a Methodist, currently dean and professor of New Testament at Duke Divinity School. In his book, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament*, Hays considers the medieval period of biblical scholarship. He explains the development of canon law in the Roman Catholic Church, which included a strict interpretation of the teaching of the New Testament, that is, no recognition of divorce and the prohibition of remarriage. Nevertheless, the Catholic Church acknowledged the exceptional case of the ‘Pauline privilege,’ which gives legitimacy to the remarriage of a Christian divorced from an unbelieving partner (Hays 1996, 369).

This also implies that the Catholic Church complied with the stern instruction of the general consensus of the readings of the Fathers, who did not permit a second marriage except in the case of death of one spouse. It is interesting to notice that Hays, a Methodist, refers to the Roman Catholic Church. By comparison, Hays refers to the view of Protestantism, which has in general allowed divorce in some cases and did not prohibit remarriage (Hays 1996, 369). As for the ‘some cases,’ however, Hays does not specifically refer to what these occasions are. Also, Hays comments that the Reformers permitted second marriage in cases of adultery or desertion by one’s spouse. We will look into this further in a later chapter on Western Christianity.

Hays continues to comment on the stance of the Protestant church as follows:

...Mainstream Protestantism has hesitated to impose the Bible's teaching as a form of ecclesiastical law... Liberal Protestantism has found itself with little normative leverage against divorce as the wider cultural taboo against it has dissipated. In some conservative Protestant traditions, however, the New Testament prohibition of divorce and remarriage is taught and practiced rigorously (Hays 1996, 370).

As for the contemporary situation, Hays asserts that the diverse characteristics of the writings in the New Testament resulted in the church taking an inconsistent approach to divorce and remarriage (Hays 1996, 370). It is true that the diversity of the interpretation of pertinent texts in the New Testament affected the reading of these subjects in churches. For instance, the history of interpretation of the related passages in Matthew 5:31-32 shows a variety of exegesis. This will be dealt with in more detail in the later chapter on Western Christianity, since each church group presents different perspectives of the topics of divorce and remarriage.

Hays begins his argument by describing the rise of divorce at the end of the twentieth century in the United States, which also affected Christians. This is followed by his brief reference to the present culture, where divorce has become so commonplace, and his consequent suggestions to deal with this issue of marital split in the church community. Hays does fine work in trying to respond to the marital problems among believers by examining the teaching of Jesus and the counsel of Paul on the topic of divorce. His biblical exegesis of the relevant passages in Scripture is also approached with an awareness of its proper application to the present day circumstances.

Yet, his reading leads him to restrict divorce to a narrow range of cases, since he points to only three permissible grounds for divorce: adultery, desertion by an unbeliever and physical violence by one spouse. Hays does not give an exhaustive list of other possible reasons which can cause marital breakdown. In reality, there can be more reasonable grounds for marital split other than the three reasons Hays mentions. Nevertheless, Hays' reading is more lenient than those of the Roman Catholic Church and the majority Protestant Church, where divorce is permitted only on the basis of adultery and desertion of one spouse (Hays 1996, 347- 376).

b. U. Luz on Reception of Matthean Divorce Texts

Luz is a Protestant theologian and professor at the University of Bern in Switzerland. In his book, *Matthew 1-7*, and specifically in regard to the patristic period in the history of church, Luz maintains that the biblical interpretation of Church Fathers had a significant impact on the progress of interpretations of related texts on divorce. Nonetheless, Luz does not comment on what elements the Church Fathers regarded as reasonable grounds for divorce. Luz consults the Fathers only for the matter of remarriage (Luz 2007, 256-257).

According to Luz, it is noticeable that in the circumstances of divorce the Roman Catholic Church ‘provides the possibility of a separation of table, bed, and dwelling with a continuing *vinculum* (bond, tie) of marriage.’ Luz goes on to explain that this understanding of the Catholic Church has its basis in the text in Matthew 5:31-32, where an extramarital affair can bring about a marital separation (Luz 2007, 256). This raises some questions. First of all, it is questionable whether a matrimonial bond can be kept in continuation in the event of a marital separation as described. Does this mean that the split will not lead to the complete ending of marriage, or divorce but the later reunion of the couple in trouble? Or, conversely, does this imply that the separation is a step towards a later decision to permanently break the marital tie?

By comparison, Luz explains that Orthodox tradition permits the second marriage of a divorced person who shows penitence, which some of the ‘Greek Fathers’ already carefully affirmed (Luz 2007, 257). In the chapter on the Coptic Orthodox, it will be seen that Cyril of Jerusalem (A.D. 313-386) and Pope Gregory (A.D. 540-604) were sympathetic to remarriage. Luz continues to describe the Orthodox churches’ understanding of divorce and remarriage as follows:

Always important in the Eastern tradition was the conviction that adultery in fact already destroyed a marriage. Thus the possibility of a second marriage for divorced persons was conceded, based not on divine law but on the pastoral principle of fairness. The grounds for divorce here are restrictive, but they are not completely limited to adultery. From Matt 5:32 *πορνεία* is taken seriously as a reason for divorce, but the prohibition against marrying divorced persons is, as a concession to human weakness (cf. 19:8), ignored (Luz 2007, 257).

This remark indicates that the practice of the Orthodox churches toward matters of divorce and remarriage was less strict. Luz, the only scholar considered here who examines the Orthodox churches, attests that this church tradition was flexible in allowing members of the church to divorce their spouse for reasons other than just infidelity. In fact, the dogma of the Orthodox Church is more lenient than that of the Catholic Church in this regard. Nevertheless, he does not give explicit illustrations of what the other potential reasons for the permission of divorce might be. Also, remarriage was not completely forbidden and was permitted out of concession. This is remarkable in the sense that this comment dissents from what the contemporary Coptic Orthodox Church asks for the modern Copts, as will be seen later in the chapter on this tradition.

With respect to the Reformation era, Luz states that this new religious movement ended up bringing about a new reading of the relevant passages in the churches of the Reformation during the sixteenth century (Luz 2007, 257). Various evidences in the later chapter on Korean Christianity also prove that the Reformers did not insist that marriage had to be lifelong. Luz elucidates that, unlike those of Orthodox belief, the Reformers considered matrimony as a ‘secular thing’ with seemingly more moderate grounds for divorce (Luz 2007, 258). As a result, by contrast with the progress of the Catholic Church, the Reformation Church has moved toward taking a completely opposite stand by allowing an easier divorce. This change implies that the Reformers attempted to reassess Scripture while distancing themselves from the established church authority and the conventional Christian belief about the two topics under consideration here.

Luz presents the history of interpretation by referring to the readings of the Church Fathers, and the attitude of the Catholic Church, Orthodox Church and the churches of the Reformation in this regard. He does excellent work in introducing various useful writings and also in comparing how each church confession understood Matthew 5:31-32 on the subjects of divorce and remarriage. Furthermore, he gives a practical suggestion in terms of understanding the meaning of related passages for these two topics for today.

Nonetheless, with the exception of the act of adultery, he does not appear to explicitly describe the appropriate grounds for divorce within each church community group. A

Protestant himself, his point of view regarding the reasonable grounds for divorce is similar to that of the Roman Catholic Church and stricter than that of the majority of Protestants. Moreover, as for his remark about the churches' position on divorce and remarriage, he does not work in chronological order, which gives an impression of not being organized in developing his argument about the matters of divorce and remarriage, since he starts off by pointing to the Roman Catholic Church, then the group of Church Fathers, then the Catholic position again, then the Orthodox Church, followed by the Reformed Church. Moreover, he does not comment on the factors that might affect the readings and applications of the related Bible texts by each church group (Luz 2007, 249-259).

c. A. Thiselton on Reception of 1 Corinthians 7

Thiselton is an Anglican who was principal of both St John's College, Nottingham (1986-88), and St John's College, Durham (1988-1992), an honorary fellow of Cranmer Hall, a fellow of Kings College, London, and a fellow of the British Academy. He considers that the Reformers saw only two reasonable grounds for a second marriage: an extramarital affair and/or desertion by an unbelieving spouse. Thiselton also refers to Luther, an appropriate representative of the Reformers, who permitted the remarriage of a Christian spouse after divorce (Luther, *Works*, 1544: 28, 36-38; WA, 12: 123-25 in Thiselton 2000, 535). It is interesting to notice that unlike Thiselton, the two scholars in the previous sections, Hays and Luz, in spite of being Protestants, do not make reference to the views of Luther on the issue of divorce and remarriage. As for Luther's view on the remarriage of a Christian after a marital split, Smith also agrees with Thiselton on this point by pointing to various grounds (Smith 1990, 137).

In his commentary on 1 Corinthians 7, Thiselton consults the arguments of numerous contemporary biblical scholars to see how they have interpreted this text. Thiselton makes reference to a variety of scholars including Will Deming (1995), G. Delling (1931), Vincent L. Wimbush (1987), O. Larry Yarbrough (1985), Antoinette C. Wire (1990), Ben Witherington (1988 and 1995), Brian Rosner (1994), W. Schrage (1976), C. Brown (1978), B. Winter (1989), and B.B. Blue (1991). Some of them have similar ways of understanding the text, but some of them dissent in their approaches to the passage (Thiselton 2000, 487-489).

According to Thiselton, those who relate the opinions of Paul in the text to the argument of the Stoics and Cynics about the advantages and disadvantages of marriage are Deming, Delling, Wimbush and Yarbrough. By contrast, Wire reads the text through the completely ‘different frame of a feminist reading of the status of women prophets at Corinth’ (Thiselton 2000, 489-490). All the scholars mentioned so far have examined mainly the ‘conceptual discussions of marriage in the Graeco-Roman world of philosophy and religion’ (Thiselton 2000, 490). This suggests that these commentators have attempted to comprehend the notion of matrimony in ancient Graeco-Roman society. Since the audience of Paul’s epistle was the Christians in the first century where Greco-Roman culture was dominant, it is sensible for these scholars to attempt to discover exactly what Paul wanted to say to his readers by examining the contemporary understanding of marriage in the first century.

Thiselton also points to Witherington, who takes a serious account of the ‘sociohistorical factors in the Roman world.’ This means that Witherington devotes his attention to ‘social and rhetorical factors’ that affect the interpretation of this text (Thiselton 2000, 490). In fact, the study of society greatly aids comprehension of the ancient book, since the author of a text reflects in his writing the situation in which he lived. Moreover, the rhetorical aspect in their writing helps to give a sense of the mind-set of the people of that time.

According to Thiselton, Witherington also accedes to the opinion of Wire, who interprets the text in a different way (Thiselton 2000, 490). Another scholar, Rosner, is presented as a person who points out that Paul was more defined by Old Testament custom than by the Stoics and Cynics. Finally, Schrage, Brown and Blue read the text through the ‘circumstantial factors’ (Thiselton 2000, 491). In other words, according to Thiselton, they think that the text is not a structured exegesis of Paul’s theology regarding the topic of marriage or singleness but a kind of ad hoc response to a situation where specific and troubled issues arose in Corinth (Thiselton 2000, 491). Crocker is also in agreement with this point (Crocker 2004, 26-27). Actually, the phrase in 1 Corinthians 7:1, “Now concerning the matters about which you wrote” suggests that the Corinthian Christians had asked Paul for the things that Paul was about to answer in what followed.

In considering the Bible texts about celibacy in the context of the writings of the Church Fathers, Thiselton introduces Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Cyprian, Methodius and two scholars who wrote about Church Fathers, Josephine Massingberd Ford and C.H.Giblin (Thiselton 2000, 495-497). In 1 Corinthians 7, according to Thiselton, a question can be asked as to whether Paul regarded celibacy as a 'higher' calling, or merely that it is equal to the calling of marriage (Thiselton 2000, 495). Giblin highlights the equal emphasis of Paul on the gift of marriage and celibacy since 'every charisma is equally necessary for the church as indicated in 1 Corinthians 12:12-31' (Thiselton 2000, 496).

Nevertheless, in contrast to Giblin, according to Thiselton, Ford thinks that Paul was not talking about celibacy but about remarriage in 1 Corinthians 7. Thiselton also points out the following:

Her article on the patristic exegesis of 1 Corinthians 7 is to show that in 1 Corinthians 7 and in the earliest churches "consecrated virginity was not a customary way of life" (Ford, "St. Paul the Philogamist," 326). She demonstrates without difficulty that this chapter was not understood to promote this lifestyle in earliest patristic exegesis, and that it began to function as an appeal for, and defense of, this only when at a later period the celibate life became an official vocation (Thiselton 2000, 496).

By comparison, Tertullian reads the text as meaning Paul was against the second marriage of a widow or widower (Thiselton 2000, 497). Other well-known Church Fathers, namely, Cyprian, Clement of Alexandria and Methodius are presented as those being supportive of celibacy (Thiselton 2000, 496-497). It is noticeable that most of the Church Fathers mentioned by Thiselton, are those who had a positive attitude towards the state of singleness. For a balanced comparison of the issue, Thiselton could have introduced some other Fathers who might be critical of the status of celibacy.

d. Víctor Manuel Morales Vásquez on the comment of Thiselton about the history of study of reception

Vásquez, who received his PhD from Liverpool in UK in 2008, introduces what Thiselton says about the history of the study of the reception of the main text, 1 Corinthians:

He tries to compare the situations and concerns of the Christian community in Corinth with our contemporary problems in order to show how the text makes sense

to us in this particular situation. He continues to argue that the interpretations done in the past have shaped the theological reflection in which the Church has sought to live out the message of the epistle on a daily basis (Vásquez 2012, 52).

This reference to Thiselton shows that he compares the contexts of 1 Corinthians and that of modern times for the contemporary application of the text. Here, the phrase ‘the text makes sense to us in this particular situation’ gives a fine explanation of one aspect of reception theory, since the reader of today goes into the ancient text for reading and then comes up with their own particular reading of the passage by applying their own understanding to their current circumstance. Further, another phrase, ‘the interpretations done in the past have shaped the theological reflections...’ implies that the readings of the text by Christian thinkers and theologians in the past have established a particular mode of biblical understanding so as to influence both the church’s comprehension of the text and their subsequent church practice.

Moreover, Vásquez refers to Thiselton’s theological endeavour, which was done in the context of theology and language. Thus, according to Vasquez, Thiselton uses reception theory by acknowledging the change from restrictive tradition ‘promising continuity and stability,’ to ‘the creativity of the process of interpretation’ that produces new patterns and ensuing new questions (Vásquez 2012, 52). The first phrase appears to signify that the interpretation of text done in the past tradition is recognised as the established rendering. Thus, it offers a stable stance in biblical interpretation. By contrast, however, the latter part is likely to mean that each reader of a text will bring along their particular perspective and input in the process of reading. Hence, this means of interpreting the text will allow the reader to create their own unique way of understanding of the text, which is the essence of reception theory.

Vásquez gives further explanation on how Thiselton puts reception theory to good use in his translation of this text by looking into the arena of language and also applying it to this philological research about the ‘common connotation of the Greek word in the first century’ (Vásquez 2012, 53). This study eventually leads Thiselton to make references to some renowned theologians, who best elucidated the main idea of the text. They are Irenaeus,

Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Athanasius, Basil of Caesarea and Chrysostom as well as Luther, Calvin, Locke and Barth (Vásquez 2012, 53-54).

Moreover, in his appraisal of the work of Thiselton, Vásquez argues thus:

He certainly engages with philosophers as he discusses the Sache of the text, but does not actually deal with other instances of reception in genres other than exegetical works. For instance, how many songs have been inspired by 1 Corinthians 13? There is no mention of them at all. In fact, astonishingly, there is no section on the post-history of this chapter. Hence, his use of reception theory remains essentially a history of exegesis (Vásquez 2012, 55).

It may well be sensible for Vásquez to point out that Thiselton engages only in a critical interpretation of a text while failing to notice other occasions of reception in different fields. Nevertheless, it is possible for Vásquez to overlook the underlying purpose of ‘the exegetical works’ of Thiselton, who might intend to exemplify how to handle the usage of reception in other genres through his effort. In the light of this assumption, it looks as though Vásquez jumped to conclusions here.

e. D. Instone-Brewer on Reception of Divorce Texts

Instone-Brewer is a Baptist minister and research fellow at Tyndale House, the evangelical research institute in Cambridge, UK. In his book, *Divorce and Remarriage in the Bible*, Instone-Brewer explores the conventional point of view in which Jesus prohibited all divorce except in the case of the sin of extramarital intercourse, and all second marriages. According to the author, this standpoint derived from the reading of the early ‘Church Fathers’, ‘church canon law’, and the ‘works of Reformation scholars’ (Instone-Brewer 2002, 238). He believes that all this understanding later progressed toward two different courses in the Roman Catholic and Reformed churches. The Catholic Church developed their practice toward ‘easier annulment’ and the Reformed churches toward ‘easier divorce’ (Instone-Brewer 2002, 238).

Instone-Brewer’s second comment is pertinent to current church practice amongst Reformed churches in general. Nevertheless, if he means in his first statement that ‘Reformation scholars’ abided by the teaching of Jesus in allowing divorce only on the ground of sexual

infidelity, with complete prohibition of remarriage, this seems to differ from the writings of Reformers such as Martin Luther and John Calvin, since Luther permitted remarriage of a Christian spouse after divorce. Moreover, according to Smith, Luther introduced four permissible reasons for divorce: adultery, desertion of spouse and family, one spouse's keeping the Christian partner from following Jesus, and anger, with permission for remarriage (Smith 1990, 136). Additionally, Smith also points out that Calvin made mention of four grounds for divorce, 'adultery, impotence, extreme religious incompatibility, abandonment' (Smith 1990, 138).

When it comes to the tradition of the Roman Catholic Church, Instone-Brewer explains that the canon rule of this confession is based on the teaching of Augustine, which Thomas Aquinas later systematised and loyally summarised with regard to divorce and remarriage in the thirteenth century (Instone-Brewer 2002, 255). Both Augustine and Aquinas accepted the 'full sacramental character of marriage' based on the Vulgate translation of $\mu\sigma\tau\epsilon\rho\iota\omicron\nu$ in Ephesians 5:32. Thus, the Catholic Church came to the conclusion that:

Any reference to divorce in the NT referred only to separation, and that the freedom of 1 Corinthians 7:15 did not include the freedom to remarry. Separation was "from bed and board" (*a mensa et thoro*) but not the end of the marriage (Instone-Brewer 2002, 255-256).

This comment requires us to look into the connotation of the words used for the meaning of separation in the original Greek text. Two scholars, Morris and Instone-Brewer, have commented on the two Greek verbs: $\chi\omega\rho\epsilon\zeta\omega$ in 1 Corinthians 7:10 and $\sigma\phi\eta\mu\iota$ in 1 Corinthians 7:11. According to Morris, they take different forms, yet the meaning and consequence is the same (Morris 1958, 108). Instone-Brewer also elucidates that it is impossible to differentiate between $\sigma\phi\eta\mu\iota$, 'a legal divorce' and $\chi\omega\rho\epsilon\zeta\omega$, 'just a separation.' The latter term was generally used to refer to divorce in Greco-Roman culture, where separation was considered as an officially authorized divorce. In the main text, it looks likely that both verbs clarify the way that a person has settled on divorcing their spouse (Instone-Brewer 2002, 199).

Thus, these Greek terms signify not only separation from 'room and board' as the Catholic Church understood, but the complete ending of a marital state. Also, if Paul wanted to communicate his intention for the separation from 'room and board' between a married

couple, he might have used another word for this purpose. What is more, in spite of this remark being a crucial point in understanding the attitude of the Catholic Church toward marriage and divorce, Instone-Brewer does not give any further explanation as to how this church group could have taken this phrase out of its context in 1 Corinthians 7 so as to interpret it as meaning that Paul prohibited remarriage.

Instone-Brewer continues to explicate the tremendous influence of Aquinas's teaching until the Reformation era and beyond. The Reformation in 1517 motivated the Catholic Church to convene the Council of Trent, which was convened in 1545, concluding in 1563, where the church confirmed 'the official Roman Catholic position' on the matter of divorce and remarriage. Further, the council reaffirmed their view of marriage as being permanent and sacramental with the following comment:

The bond of matrimony cannot be dissolved on account of the adultery of one of the married parties... and that "neither spouse may contract a second marriage during the lifetime of another without committing adultery" (Instone-Brewer 2002, 256).

This echoes the writing of Paul in Romans 7:2, where the death of one spouse brings an end to married life. This regulation can be applicable not only to the Roman Catholic Church but to other church traditions, yet this statement does not reflect the recognition by Paul of the possible marital split as implied in 1 Corinthians 7:11.

Moreover, Instone-Brewer describes how the Catholic Church also developed the 'use of annulment to end marriages.' This means that if some impediments in married life were found so that the marriage vows had been made inappropriately, then the church could declare that the matrimony was invalid. This would mean that the marriage could be annulled, namely, that the marriage had never happened. Consequently, according to the viewpoint of the Catholic Church, marriage would be permitted after cancellation since, 'legally speaking, this is not remarriage' (Instone-Brewer 2002, 256). In the same way, Hays and Luz also describe the tradition of the Catholic Church about the same issue as seen earlier; however, the observation of Instone-Brewer is more detailed. Nevertheless, Instone-Brewer does not point to how and on what basis the Catholic Church has developed the interesting concept of annulment of marriage.

Concerning the Reformation period, Instone-Brewer makes mention of Erasmus, a Catholic priest and one of the brilliant theologians of the Middle Ages as follows:

Erasmus also took a new look at the divorce texts and tried to interpret them in the context in which they occurred. He suggested that the divorce saying of Matthew 5:32 should be interpreted less legalistically, in line with the rest of the Sermon on the Mount. He suggested that the sayings in Matthew 19 and Mark 10 were addressed to disciples who represented truly committed members of the kingdom, rather than to ordinary, imperfect ones. At the time of the Reformation virtually every member of the country was counted as a member of the kingdom, and it was difficult to apply these ideal regulations to a very imperfect society (Instone-Brewer 2002, 259).

Additionally, Instone-Brewer points to the English reformers in the same epoch. One of the scholars was William Tyndale, who was in agreement with Luther on the matter of marriage not being sacred, with permission for a second marriage based on the same reasons suggested by Luther (Instone-Brewer 2002, 263). Thiselton also points to Reformers who consented to the second marriage of divorced Christians whilst regarding Luther as being a representative of this group.

However, Instone-Brewer does not refer to any possible connection between Luther and Tyndale at that time. Even though he does not comment on how both of them came to the same secular view of matrimony and grounds for permission of remarriage, this possibly resulted from the extension of Erasmus' influence to England. Instone-Brewer also describes how modern scholars have tried to invoke some biblical basis for permitting divorce and remarriage for other reasons, such as physical and emotional abuse (Instone-Brewer 2002, 268).

Instone-Brewer is well informed, referring to many diverse and useful writings, with a well-balanced judgment of each source. In spite of his fine research, however, several weaknesses need to be pointed out. He mentions the writings of the early Church Fathers about the Bible, but he does not state which church adheres to which Father's opinion. Also, with regard to the Roman Catholic Church's reliance on the opinion of St. Augustine for their church doctrine and policy, Instone-Brewer does not go into detail about the reasons. He does not mention why and how the Catholic Church selected the argument of St. Augustine. Moreover, he comments only on some representative people from the Reformation without referring to

the context and background of the movement in terms of a possible new approach to Scripture. It is also interesting to notice that, like Hays, he is not a Roman Catholic believer himself, yet he gives a good account of the reception of the related texts by the Catholic Church.

1.3.3. Previous studies of Korean biblical scholarship regarding the Bible in general

The purpose of this section is to examine how Korean and non-Korean scholars have written about Korean biblical scholarship. A renowned female scholar, Man Ja Choi, who was a chairman of the Korean Association of Feminist Theology, introduces two significant and conspicuous elements in Korean Christianity. These are the long-held belief in Confucianism, and the theology of fundamentalism (M.J. Choi 2005, 43). According to M.J. Choi, the first factor undergirds the patriarchal structure, which is derived from Korea's pervasive Confucian worldview (M.J. Choi 2005, 43).

Another female Korean scholar, Hye Won Park, also supports this assumption by stressing that the believers in Korea are under the complete influence of the patriarchal culture of its Confucianism (H.W. Park 2010, 160). Park studied 'Women in Leadership,' at Fuller Theological Seminary, and is currently a lecturer at Chongshin Theological Seminary in Seoul, Korea. The seminary where H.W. Park presently teaches belongs to the Hapdong (in Korean 합동) Presbyterian denomination, which is regarded as conservative. Her comment here appears to have been made from a feminist point of view. What both M.J. Choi and H.W. Park state is unfortunately true and this is also echoed in my direct personal experience while growing up as a Christian in the Korean church.

Furthermore, one website of a Korean Christian newspaper introduces Sang Kyu Lee, a Korean professor of church history at a Bible College, who has a similar opinion on this point (S.K. Lee Accessed February 25, 2014. <http://www.christiantoday.co.kr>). As a matter of fact, it is the general consensus among Korean people that Confucianism has left a huge inheritance both positive and negative, in Korean culture. Consequently, the conventional way of thinking resulting from this tradition seems to have an influence on some conservative Korean male exegetes, who tend to prefer a strict interpretation of Scripture.

In addition to the first point, M.J. Choi refers to the influence of the theology of ‘fundamentalism of the Western world’ as the second feature in Korean scholarship (M.J. Choi 2005, 43). M.J. Choi also thinks that the influence of missionaries, mainly Protestants from the States, resulted in the development of several prominent theological colleges in Korea, which later took this doctrine as the foundational principle for the educational institutions (M.J. Choi 2005, 44). Nevertheless, M.J. Choi also sharply criticises the lack of theology amongst those missionaries who promoted the doctrine of fundamentalism in the religious soil of Korean Christians. Later on, a division took place among missionary groups, which split into two; fundamentalists and liberals. Both of these views, and especially the first, made a considerable impact on Korean theology. As a result, two separate groups were formed amongst Korean theologians and ministers, a situation that continues to the present day (M.J. Choi 2005, 48).

The fact that the hard work of early missionaries amongst many Christians and theological institutions in Korea bore positive fruit is a strong indication that the missionaries’ theology with its solid basis in the doctrine of fundamentalism has greatly influenced Korean scholarship. Similarly, a Korean Catholic news website records the remark of Dae Kwang Choi, a Korean professor at the Methodist Theological University, who comments on the fundamentalist theological background of the American missionaries who entered Korea in the early twentieth century (D.K. Choi Accessed July 7, 2014. <http://www.catholicnews.co.kr>).

Likewise, Jong Ho Baek, a researcher at the Korean Theology Institute, also highlights the Reformed theology in Korea as follows:

The main stream of the Korean theology movement as demonstrated in Korean church history is Reformed theology. This movement resulted from the theological trend that attempted to carry on and preserve the theology and ideology of the reformist, John Calvin who tried to reform the corrupt Roman Catholic Church in the sixteenth century. The decisive momentum in establishing Reformed theology as the foremost theology in Korean Christianity relies mainly on the influence of the early missionaries (J. H. Baek Accessed March 6, 2014. <http://www.koreatheology.or.kr>).

This suggests that the dogma of fundamentalism was very much influenced by Calvinism

from Europe. Also, J. H. Baek uses the words “reformed theology” and “fundamentalism” interchangeably.

In spite of this observation, as we shall see in a later chapter on Korean Protestant Christianity, when it comes to the reading of texts about divorce and remarriage, the interpretation of Korean Protestant scholars turns out to be significantly diverse. The range of opinions among Korean theologians varies from conservative to liberal. Moreover, some of them are inclined to differ from Calvin whose theological work has greatly affected Korean theologians, especially Protestant scholars. To some extent, their understanding appears to be more conservative than that of Calvin on these two issues.

In addition to the long-held belief in Confucianism and the theology of fundamentalism, there is one additional aspect to consider in Korean scholarship: namely, the influence of liberal theology. In Korea, this theological work was used to develop a unique theological approach, *minjung theology* (in Korean 민중 신학). This third element in Korean scholarship is evident in interpreting the biblical text from one’s own subjective and personal standpoint. Sugirtharajah, a Sri-Lankan scholar, introduces the late Korean minister Byung Mu Ahn (in Korean 안 병무), who paid special attention to the term $\sigma\chi\lambda\omicron\varsigma$ in Mark (Sugirtharajah 2013, 199). Liew, a Chinese scholar, also believes that based on his religious understanding about the people in Mark, Ahn developed a new theological concept, known as *minjung theology* (Liew 2008, 188).

According to Liew, Ahn regarded the meaning of $\sigma\chi\lambda\omicron\varsigma$ as ‘crowd or people’ (that is *minjung* in Korean (민중)), describing the legions of people who followed Jesus in Mark (Liew 2008, 188). Sugirtharajah adds that this term indicates a group that was accepted by Jesus without prejudice in the Gospels, yet it is also used to describe the less privileged people in many areas of society (Sugirtharajah 2013, 198). Liew continues to comment on the vital point of Ahn’s argument:

The people initially appear unnamed and unidentified in the narrative, being referred to as *polloi* or ‘many’, until in Mark 2:4 they are designated with the Greek word *ochlos* or crowd, which then occurs 36 more times in the Gospel.---Mark seems to choose not to use the word *laos* or people. Both of these factors seem to indicate that this word was important for Mark, and that it was he who introduced it into the

vocabulary of the New Testament, since it does not appear in any texts written before Mark, whereas it is common in the Gospels and Acts which post-date it (Ahn 1991, 88 by Liew 2008, 189).

With his understanding of *minjung* as a minority group in society, Ahn appears to understand this term in Mark through his own specific unusual circumstances in Korea in the modern times. It looks as though Ahn draws an analogy between people in low status in his own culture and the seemingly insignificant lowly group in the book of Mark. This similarity might have motivated Ahn to apply the attitude of Jesus as demonstrated in Mark towards the $\square\chi\lambda\omicron\varsigma$ that is *minjung*, in Ahn's contemporary situation during the troubled period of the 1970s in Korea. Liew shares this perspective, pointing to the interesting theological work of Ahn (Liew 2008, 191).

Sugirtharajah explores some of the particular and contemporary aspects of the use of the Bible in the Asian context. He also puts an emphasis on various features such as:

Employment of the Bible in a multi-religious context, the recent surfacing of minority voices, such as the Dalits, Burakumin, women, and indigenous people as well as the two recent entrants on the scene — post-colonialism and Asian diasporic interpretation (Sugirtharajah 2013, 190).

In dealing with these issues, Sugirtharajah attempts to examine the interpretation, significant people under discussion, and the crucial historical context, as well as the methods and opinions that molded the 'reading practices' (Sugirtharajah 2013, 190).

In his writing, Sugirtharajah compares the strengths and weaknesses of various religions. It seems that Sugirtharajah's perspective comes from his strong interest in the post-colonialist point of view. His reference to *minjung theology* is a good example of his work in this regard. Even though he deals with the historical background and context of this trend, he does not go into details about the consequence of this theological movement in the contemporary context in Korea.

For comparison, Liew refers to Asian criticism that looks into Scripture from the point of view of the Asian reader, with an awareness that covers a broad spectrum. So Liew attempts to relate Asian criticism to both 'the text of the New Testament' and 'the context of the

interpreter.’ (Liew 2008, 191) Liew also explains the wide-ranging contexts of scholarship in Asia whilst being well versed in the diverse characteristics of biblical interpretations in particular countries of Asia.

However, Liew does not appear to be aware of the fact that Korean churches no longer regard *minjung theology* as a strong theological movement. There is no doubt that liberal theology prepared the ground for the birth of *minjung theology* in the current Korean theological field. Nevertheless this theological approach is not well known amongst contemporary Christians, and as mentioned earlier, it is not viewed as a normative theological theory in Korea. As Liew points it out, this concept was well accepted by many Christians in the 1970s and 1980s, since it motivated Korean Christians of that time to have a greater concern about the social and political situation of people who were less privileged in the Korean society.

Today, however, liberal theology is only a minor theological strand in Korean Christianity. The Korean Institute for Reformed Studies published an article written by Dong Min Jang, a professor of historical theology at a Bible College, saying that “The *minjung theology* was an influential theological movement during the 1970s and 1980s, yet, it is no longer the main-stream theology in the Korean biblical scholarship.” (D.M. Jang Accessed May 2, 2014. <http://www.kirs.kr>)

Likewise, another Korean scholar, Yong Sung Ahn, a current research fellow at Presbyterian University and Theological Seminary (in Korean 장로회 신학 대학교) in Korea, commenting on this issue, says that “The *minjung theology* was neither the only Korean theology in the past decades of the twentieth century nor a dominant factor in Korean Christianity” (Y.S. Ahn 2012, 73). There may be several reasons for the decline of this theology in recent years in Korea. One of them may be the already well-established presence of fundamentalism in Korean scholarship. Hee Heon Kim supports this supposition by stating that *minjung theology* has come to the point where it has lost its followers partly because it faced vehement criticism from the party of the fundamentalists, and partly because it failed to build a strong theological basis for this new theological trend (H.H. Kim Accessed March 7, 2014. <http://www.ecumenian.com>).

In the same way, Y.S. Ahn also sharply expands on this problem as follows:

The noble idea of the *minjung* (*theology*) could not find enough supporters within the churches. Although the active participation of the theologians in the world became an exemplary model for organic intellectuals, and although their distinctive theological ideas drew the attention of the Western scholarly community, *minjung* theologians lacked rhetorical persuasiveness among the congregations at large in the Korean church (Y.S. Ahn 2012, 73).

Additionally, during the period of dictators, the Korean government was reluctant to endorse this kind of seemingly grass-roots liberal theological trend. In some ways, the ideology of this movement contradicted the mentality of dictatorship of the government leaders, who desired to keep a tight rein on the common people for their easy control. Thus, in a sense, it may well be that the state attempted to discourage the movement from spreading widely among Korean Christians at that time.

As stated earlier, the difficult situation of Ahn and/or the suffering he might have witnessed amongst some Koreans might have motivated him to pay heed to the specific word referring to a group in the Gospels whom he could identify as the lower class in society. This also suggests that Ahn brought his particular situation into his reading of the passage, applying his interpretation of the text to his own circumstances. Furthermore, it is noteworthy that both Sugirtharajah and Liew, who appear to think highly of the *minjung* *theology*, are non-Korean scholars. Probably both of them, from their Asian backgrounds, shared a concern for the ordinary, less privileged people in their countries. Hence, they could easily form a religious consensus among themselves. In spite of the seemingly favourable stance of two Asian researchers, the distinct dissimilarity of M. J. Choi from these two non-Korean scholars in terms of their view of the latest theological movement in Korea suggests that there is a gap on this topic between the way Korean theologians and foreign scholars evaluate this theology.

In summary, the comment made by Se Yoon Kim, who is associate dean for the Korean Doctor of Ministry program and professor of New Testament at Fuller Theological Seminary in the United States, as well as being a well-known biblical scholar, makes a point worth serious theological consideration:

A significant and historical task is put on the current Korean church. The Church has to avoid the irresponsible liberal theology, which has been spiritually devastating the Korean churches. The Church also needs to get out of the sphere of 'fundamentalism'

so as to bring about the theological maturity (S. Y. Kim Accessed February 21, 2014. <https://www.christiantoday.co.kr>).

This remark of S. Y. Kim points up the lingering influence of liberal theology in Korean theological circles. Also, it gives an impression that the theology of fundamentalism has been keeping the Korean theology from moving toward theological maturity.

Thus far, this section has attempted to analyse how a mixture of Korean and non-Korean scholars have written about Korean biblical scholarship. On the basis of my findings so far, three major factors in Korean scholarship have been identified. They are: the long-held underlying culture of Confucianism; the theology of fundamentalism (with its roots in Calvinistic theology through the influence of early Western missionaries at the late nineteenth century); and the liberal theology of the 1970s and 1980s.

These elements may have seriously affected the way that the Bible, and particularly the passages on singleness, marriage, divorce and remarriage, have been interpreted and applied in the life of believers in Korean churches. This issue will be dealt with more fully in the chapter on Korean Christianity. This again reminds us of the close connection between the reading of a text and the response of the reader.

1.3.4. Previous studies of Coptic biblical scholarship regarding the Bible in general and/or singleness, marriage, divorce and remarriage texts in the Bible

In this section I will examine previous studies of Coptic biblical scholarship regarding the Bible in general and/or singleness, marriage, divorce and remarriage texts in particular. For reference, the scholars who are quoted here tend to use the terms “the Coptic Orthodox church” and “the Orthodox church” interchangeably. If there is any distinctive dissimilarity between Coptic and other Orthodox churches in general in terms of their biblical interpretation or its application in their church policy, it will be noted.

The major factor of influence in Coptic biblical scholarship is the patristic tradition. According to Assad, several elements, namely, the Bible, the apostolic teachings, the ecumenical councils, the teaching of the Church Fathers, have been amalgamated with

tradition of the church as the noteworthy foundations of the Christian community (Assad 2000, 157). Assad regards the godly tradition of the church as the pivotal pillar in the Orthodoxy theology. Among these aspects, this section will look at the main principal influencing factor, the patristic tradition, which may have led the Coptic Church towards their particular method of biblical scholarship.

It is interesting to note that one Orthodox-related website describes the Orthodox Church as the only Church that preserves and abides by the instructions of the Holy Apostles and those of the devout Church Fathers (Accessed February 22, 2014. <http://theorthodoxchurch.info>). The official website of the Coptic Orthodox Dioceses of the Southern United States also shows high regard for the patristic tradition:

It could be said that tradition begins with the Apostolic preaching and is found in Scriptures, but it is kept, interpreted, and explained to the Church by the Holy Fathers, the successors of the Apostles. The Fathers, men of extraordinary holiness and trusted orthodoxy in doctrine, enjoyed the acceptance and respect of the universal Church by witnessing the message of the Gospel (Accessed February 22, 2014. <http://www.suscopts.org>).

This comment throws further light on the heightened role of the Church Fathers in the fundamental foundation of Orthodox doctrine. Also, it indicates that those Fathers were well-respected due to their godly character and profound theological code of belief. These two characteristics resulted in the Orthodox Church coming to accept the arguments of the Fathers as their church dogma. The same source also points to another Church Father, St. Irenaeus, who wrote that there was only one tradition that combines the Bible and the instruction of the Church Fathers:

For the Orthodox Christian, there is one Tradition, the Tradition of the Church, incorporating the Scriptures and the teaching of the Fathers. This is the preaching of the truth handed down by the Church in the whole world to Her children (Accessed February 22, 2014. <http://www.suscopts.org>).

The same website says that:

In retrospect, Tradition is founded upon the Holy Trinity, it constantly proclaims the Gospel of Christ, it is found within the boundaries of the Christian Church, and it is expounded by the Fathers (Accessed February 22, 2014. <http://www.suscopts.org>).

This indicates that the Fathers' biblical interpretation is the only recognised doctrine of the

church. Also, it points to the church tradition, which is essentially built upon the biblical exposition of the Fathers. This clearly shows the significance of the biblical interpretations of the Church Fathers in the history of Orthodox scholarship and church tradition.

In the light of this, we see that the biblical interpretation of the Church Fathers is well recognised as an authoritative and more traditional interpretation of Scripture in Orthodox biblical scholarship. Hauser and Watson add that:

Contemporary Eastern Orthodox biblical interpretation is rooted in the creative work of the Greek theologian-exegetes of the third through fifth centuries... The mind of the Fathers is an intrinsic reference in Orthodox theology, no less than the word of Holy Scriptures... Sketching the formation of Orthodox hermeneutics must therefore begin with the appropriation of that patristic legacy...and ultimately to the response of contemporary Orthodoxy to modern biblical criticism (Hauser & Watson 2009, 172-173).

Clearly most of the quotations cited thus refer to the great significance of the Church Fathers' reading in establishing the solid tradition of Orthodoxy.

With this in mind, the various readings of the early Church Fathers, both stringent and more moderate, will be investigated in the chapter of this thesis on Coptic Orthodox Christianity, along with the possible factors that determined why the Coptic Church had to choose certain elements in their church doctrine and policy. Yet, as for the various arguments of the Church Fathers, in the matter of divorce and remarriage in the life of the Copts in Egypt, the Coptic Church abided by the stern beliefs of the Church Fathers.

In practice, until the inauguration of the late Pope Shenouda III in 1971, the Coptic Church community in Egypt used to deal with divorce according to the 1938 code. Adel Guindy, a journalist covering family matters at *The Middle East Review of International Affairs*, states that this code was lenient in that it allowed the Copts to divorce on a wide variety of grounds; adultery, conversion to another religion, absence for a period of five consecutive years with no news of whereabouts, being judged and sentenced to seven years imprisonment, contagious illness, mental illness, or impotence with no recovery for at least three years. In 1971, in response to these multiple permissive grounds for divorce, the late Coptic Pope Shenouda III revoked the 1938 Code and replaced it with only two grounds of legal divorce

for Coptic Christians (Guindy, 2007). As a result, among the present-day Copts, divorce is allowed in only two circumstances: adultery, and apostasy of one spouse. This second ground for divorce is not found in the New Testament. Also, the Coptic Church could have chosen the more lenient opinions of Church Fathers as reasonable grounds for divorce and remarriage.

This raises a further question. What motivated the Coptic Church to choose the strict instruction of the Fathers for their legitimately acknowledged reading and the subsequent application of church policy, rather than their more liberal understanding? This question leads us to look into the complicated political and religious situation in which the Copts find themselves in modern Egypt. Perhaps the answer lies in the current demography of Egypt. According to Goldschmidt, the current total population of Egypt is 80 million, of whom 90% are Muslim and 10% are Coptic Christians (Goldschmidt 2008, 241).

In the light of these facts, we may imagine that the difficult circumstances facing the Copts have forced the Coptic Church to be seriously zealous to preserve their fragile presence and community identity as a minority in a country in which Islam is the dominant religion. This concern may have led the Church to adhere to a strict reading of the Church Fathers and the subsequent practice in the life of Copts in areas such as divorce and remarriage. Consequently, this attitude makes the Coptic Orthodox church appear very conservative in its doctrines and policy. This observation is reflected in the comment “The Coptic Orthodox Church is well known as a conservative Church, especially in dogmas and doctrines (Accessed May 28, 2014. <http://www.suscopts.org>).

1.4 Methodology

My primary methodology of research is reception theory, which has been discussed in the previous sections. To reiterate, according to Kaufmann, the chief concern of reception theory is “its concern with the reaction or response to a work of art or literature” (Kaufmann, *Reception Theory*, 1980). Rowland also states that “a text’s interpreters have read that text in their various social and religious contexts” (Rowland 2008, 111). This implies that when a reader interprets a text, the person is likely to bring their personal religious, cultural, political

and social views to the text in responding to the passage.

Bearing this definition of reception theory in mind, the researcher intends to apply this method to examining three contemporary Christian traditions, - Coptic Orthodox, Korean Protestant and Western Christianity - in the area of their various understandings and applications of the teaching on singleness, marriage, divorce and remarriage in 1 Corinthians 7 and related biblical texts. I will deal with each topic individually, describe the ways in which texts are being read and used, analyse likely influencing factors, discuss key aspects of context and examine how the readings compare with how people themselves say they read the text, or how other scholars describe them as reading the text. This scheme will also help in exploring what possible factors might have influenced the way that each church group interprets the pertinent passages about those four topics and translates their reading in their church policy.

Based on these findings so far, the thesis will explore various understandings and applications by each church group of the pertinent biblical texts on the four major issues: singleness, marriage, divorce and remarriage. We will also explore, from the perspective of reception theory, the elements that may have been influential in the reading and subsequent policy of each church tradition. With this aim and method, broad research in more detail will be undertaken in the following three chapters.

2 THE COPTIC ORTHODOX CHURCH (EGYPT)

2.1 Introduction

This chapter will explore the understanding of 1 Corinthians 7 and related biblical texts on the four major issues of celibacy, marriage, divorce and remarriage within the Coptic Orthodox Church in Egypt, as well as contemporary Coptic practice. In addition, I will examine the factors that are likely to have influenced the Coptic reading of the pertinent passages on those four topics. This church is one of the richest traditional Christian communities in the world. Furthermore, I have not come across any other scholar who has done extensive work in this arena, and this lack of current scholarship is a stimulus to look into this church tradition.

It is my intention to compare the Coptic Orthodox Church with other church groups, specifically Korean Protestant Christianity and Western Christianity, in terms of its understanding and application of the biblical texts on the four topics listed above. In order to gain the necessary references for Coptic biblical scholarship, I have consulted a variety of Coptic materials available in English. I do not claim to be a specialist in the Coptic Orthodox Church, and I have not attempted to read the material in the original Arabic.

I have drawn on resources to examine the views and arguments of several modern biblical scholars, local church ministers, Orthodox-related journals and websites, current Egyptian news websites and newspapers, the early Church Fathers, the writings of Orthodox ministers, ancient Christian literature, and church councils, as well as a personal interview with a Coptic priest in the UK. In addition, I have referred to the Qur'an and a few scholarly books about Islam in general for a brief comment on Muslim divorce law in Egypt.

Before going any further, some basic understanding of Coptic Christian tradition will be useful. When I spoke about this church tradition with Father Bishoy Michel at St. Mary & St. Mina's Coptic Orthodox Church in Manchester in September 2011, he defined 'Coptic' as 'Egyptian.' Murad Kamil, an Egyptian scholar and educator in ancient and modern languages, also confirms that the word 'Copt' and 'Egyptian' are cognates, both originating from the

Greek term *Aigyptos*, meaning 'Egyptian' (Kamil 1968, 20).

According to the BBC (the British Broadcasting Corporation), the word 'Coptic' is frequently used to refer to all Egyptian Christians, not just members of the Coptic Orthodox Church, which is also viewed as a prominent ethno-religious group in Egypt (Al Aharm Accessed October 10, 2011. <http://www.bbc.co.uk>). Athanasius, a Coptic bishop of Beni-Suef and al-Bahnassa in Egypt from 1962 until 2000, asserts that the gospel was first introduced to Egypt by St. Mark, the evangelist and author of the Gospel of Mark, who established the first African Christian Church in Alexandria in the year 42 C.E. (Athanasius 1973, 1). One Coptic website - <http://www.copticchurch.net>- also asserts that after the martyrdom of Mark in Alexandria in 68 C.E., Christianity became widespread and ended up being the most-professed faith in Egypt.

The percentage of Muslims in Egypt today is 90%, whereas Coptic Orthodox Egyptians (henceforward Copts) form just 10% of the current total population of 80 million (Goldschmidt 2008, 241). Coptic Christianity is thus now regarded as a minor religious sect. The Middle East Research Institute, based in the United States, points out that the Sunni Islam dominates in Egypt; accordingly, Sunni Muslim divorce law governs family law in Egypt (Middle East Research Institute 1985, 5). In this context, a brief look at Muslim divorce in general may be helpful to understand the religious and social background of the Copts in Egypt. Thus, based on the research aim, collected resources and background in this section, this chapter will be divided into several sections as follows:

2.2 Celibacy

2.2.1 Context of Orthodox Church practice

2.2.2 Reading the Bible on celibacy

2.3 Marriage, Divorce and Remarriage

2.3.1 The context of history and the current situation of the Coptic Orthodox Church

a. Muslim(Sunni) divorce law in Egypt

b. Coptic Orthodox Christian divorce Law in Egypt

c. The consequences of the application of Coptic divorce law in Egypt

i. The ruling of the Supreme Administrative Court against the Coptic divorce law in May 2010

ii. The response to SAC's verdict of May 2010 amongst Coptic Christians

iii. The overwhelming reversal of SAC's verdict in July 2010 and the response

- amongst Coptic Christians
- d. The current situation in family law in Egypt
- 2.3.2 Reading the Bible on marriage
- 2.3.3 Reading the Bible on divorce
- 2.3.4 Reading the Bible on remarriage

2.4 Conclusion

The conclusion section will summarise the current practice of the Coptic Church in the areas of singleness, marriage, divorce and remarriage as well as their reading of related biblical texts on these subjects. The elements that likely influenced their view of pertinent passages on these issues, along with evaluation of the church's application of these passages and their biblical interpretation will be also mentioned.

2.2 Celibacy

2.2.1 Context of Orthodox Church Practice

There are two major groups of denominations of the Orthodox Church: Eastern Orthodoxy and Oriental Orthodoxy. Concerning these two groups, the website of the Coptic Orthodox Church of Alexandria states:

The Coptic Church is a member of the Oriental Orthodox family having almost the same faith as the Eastern Orthodox Churches, including the Russian, Greek, Romanian, Bulgarian, Ukrainian, Serbian and the Orthodox Church of America, the Coptic Church is involved in an ecumenical dialogue that aims in the restoration of the intercommunion relations between both families of Orthodox Churches (Fanous 2003).

This implies some similarity between the two major Orthodox Church groups. Hence, the references and resources to be cited in this chapter for research will be taken from Orthodox and/or Coptic scholars. If, however, there is any significant dissimilarity between the Coptic and other Orthodox churches in their biblical interpretation and its application in their church policy, it will be mentioned. With this exception, the terms Coptic Church and Orthodox Church will be used interchangeably in this chapter.

On the issue of the state of being single, or singleness, in the Orthodox Church, Basilios, an Ethiopian Orthodox bishop, asserts that the Coptic and other Orthodox churches require their bishops to be celibate (Basilios 1991, 2). Let us examine the personal status of Orthodox bishops and priests in general. According to Comby, Eastern Christianity finally settled on a church regulation about ministers and marriage in the sixth century, and this regulation is still in place at the present time. In the past, there were times when a married man was elected as bishop; however, he was asked to leave his home and go to reside in a remote monastery. As time went by, monks were usually selected as bishops (Comby 1984, 140). Ware also agrees that bishops are selected solely from the monastic clergy since at least the sixth century. If a widower makes 'monastic vows,' he can be made a bishop (Ware 1963, 298).

Regarding the marital status of priests, Comby says that those priests who are married at the time of their ordination are not allowed to change their marital status (Comby 1984, 140). This clearly indicates that candidates for ordination can get married prior to their ordination, but marriage after ordination is forbidden. This appears to apply to both Coptic and Eastern Orthodox churches. As far as this regulation within the Coptic Church is concerned, I offer two positions I have identified in Coptic-related websites. The first reference relates to the comment on the compulsory marriage of a priest as follows:

The direct pastoral responsibility of Coptic congregations falls on Priests, who must be married (Accessed August 9, 2014. <http://www.stabraam.org>).

Thus, priests must be married (Accessed August 9, 2014. <http://www.bbc.co.uk>).

The direct pastoral responsibility of Coptic congregations in any of these dioceses falls on Priests, who must be married and must attend Catechetical School before being ordained (Fanous 2003 Accessed August 9, 2014. <http://www.christian-egypt.com>).

Both the Orthodox Pope and Bishop must be monks (Accessed July 14, 2014. <http://www.coptic.net>).

In contrast, the second sort of statement is a remark about the option for celibacy for the Coptic priest taken from a few other Coptic-related web sources:

A priest is allowed to get married or may make a pledge of celibacy ahead of their ordination (Accessed July 11, 2014. <http://www.suscopts.org>).

We have two sorts of priests; celibate priests (who are usually monks) and married

priests. If someone is called to be a priest (by God), he needs to first get married or make a vow of celibacy (Accessed August 9, 2014. <http://tasbeha.org>).

The two positions cited here are inconsistent in providing information on the desired marital status of a priest. The first reference makes reference to the marriage of a priest without mentioning an option for celibacy. The second resource points to the personal choice for celibacy of a priest prior to ordination. Perhaps, when the second makes mention of a possible celibacy option for a priest before ordination, it may refer to the wider class of priests including the monks, that is, celibate priests. For example, one Coptic-related website introduces a Coptic monk as ‘Coptic priest-monk Fr. Bishoy El Antony’ on its website, <http://www.orthodoxchristianity.net> (Accessed August 9, 2014). This may support the presumption that the Coptic Church has a broad understanding of priesthood that includes monks as well.

Similarly Ware, as a Greek Orthodox layman who thus follows Eastern Orthodoxy, also gives an interesting explanation about the Orthodox priesthood:

Orthodox priests are divided into two distinct groups, the ‘white’ or married clergy, and the ‘black’ or monastic. Ordinands must make up their mind before ordination to which group they wish to belong, for it is a strict rule that no one can marry after he has been ordained to a Major Order. Those who wish to marry must therefore do so before they are made deacon. Those who do not wish to marry are normally expected to become monks prior to their ordination; but in the Orthodox Church today there are now a number of celibate clergy who have not taken formal monastic vows. These celibate priests, however, cannot afterwards change their minds and decide to get married (Ware 1963, 298).

All these references clearly show that an Orthodox (including Coptic) bishop should be celibate, never-married, and a monk, whereas a priest is permitted to get married before ordination, but is not allowed to marry after ordination. This church rule appears to signify that the Orthodox Church recognises a divine gift of marriage and celibacy in priesthood since both of the Orthodox groups, Oriental and Eastern, agree to the marriage of a priest even though he is allowed to do so only prior to his ordination. Nevertheless, compared to that of the Roman Catholic Church, the system of Orthodox priesthood is more flexible. A Roman Catholic priest is not permitted to get married even before ordination.

The priesthood of the Orthodox Church faces a question. The church does not provide any

biblical or theological basis for keeping priests from getting married after ordination. Further, no Orthodox or modern scholar offers any relevant grounds for this prohibition. The Bible does not give any specific prohibition of priests getting married after ordination, since the matter of marriage depends not on ordination but on the gift of an individual, as suggested in 1 Corinthians 7:7. Also, this strict church regulation gives an impression that the ministry of a celibate is more highly valued than that of a married minister. This observation can be also supported by the comment as below:

Orthodox tradition and practice honour and respect the celibacy of priests and praise their service in the body of the Church; at the same time, they honour and respect the married clergy since, they too, serve the same sacrament of the Church and salvation. The Orthodox Church thus accepts these two forms of service equally and leaves the choice of which it is to be to the individual member, in accordance with his own vocation and particular charisma. For pastoral reasons however, the Church has favoured the institution of celibacy for the order of bishops, and these are chosen exclusively from the celibate priesthood (Papandreou 2014).

The Bible does not give any ground “for pastoral reasons the Church has favoured the institution of celibacy” as stated above. In fact, the structure of celibacy in church is a product of interpretation. Ware’s remark is appropriate here: “Married life, no less than the life of a monk, is a special vocation (Ware 1963, 301).

What is more, Orthodox bishops are chosen only from the ranks of monks, which means that a married priest is not qualified to apply to be bishop. Scripture does not give any clear teaching on this matter, even though first-century Jewish culture showed more honour to those celibates who remained unmarried for spiritual reasons, as we shall see later in this chapter. These findings about church practice in the Orthodox and/or Coptic Church on the topic of singleness thus far lead to the next stage of this chapter, in which we will search how the Orthodox and /or Coptic Church reads the pertinent biblical passages on this issue, and what factors likely influence these readings.

2.2.2 Reading the Bible on Celibacy

To explain how the Coptic Church views the subject of singleness in this section, four sources will be considered: the writing of Basilios, an Orthodox bishop; of Ware, an Orthodox layman, and two other Coptic-related websites. Among them, Basilios’ argument

will be the main reference, since he provides an extensive collection of useful sources and information. Basilios starts off his writing about celibacy with his clear-cut opinion that the status of singleness is to be preferred to that of marriage. He evinces this by introducing a range of useful materials and several relevant sources, and efficiently draws out and explains his point of view from other materials that are already commonly known. Furthermore, his affirmative attitude toward the topic of celibacy can be also clearly echoed through Paul's advice in 1 Corinthians 7:26-35, where Paul encouraged the unmarried to stay as they were due to the present distress, suggesting that celibacy would help single people to get ready for the imminent return of Christ.

On the other hand, it is helpful to be aware that the Coptic Orthodox Church is affiliated with the same group, Oriental Orthodoxy, to which the Ethiopian Orthodox bishop Basilios also belongs. Several other Orthodox Churches comprise this group: the Armenian Orthodox Church of All Armenians; the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church; the Eritrean Orthodox Tewahedo Church; the Indian Orthodox Church; and the Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch. These churches are hierarchically independent, but are in full communion with one another and reciprocally recognise one another's fundamental doctrines (Accessed September 17, 2012. <http://theorthodoxchurch.info>). In an effort to set out a logical argument on the issue of celibacy, if any conspicuous difference between the Coptic Orthodox and other Orthodox churches arises, it will be discussed.

In his writings on the topic of celibacy in the *Claremont Coptic Encyclopaedia* (henceforth 'CCE'), Basilios points to helpful and solid evidence by which the concept of celibacy and its theological background in the Orthodox Church can be closely examined (Basilios 1991, 2). Basilios also refers to a range of New Testament texts, including the teachings of Jesus in Matt 19:9-12, Mark 10:28-30 and Luke 20:27-36 and several quotations from 1 Corinthians 7, as well as Revelation 14:4. Basilios also introduces some short sayings of a few well-known early Church Fathers for their supportive views on the issue of celibacy, including Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage (died in 258 C. E.), Athanasius (296/298 – 373 C.E.) Cyril of Jerusalem, Gregory of Nyssa (330-395 C.E.), Clement of Alexandria (150- 215 C.E.), Basil the Great (329/330- 379 C. E.), Ambrose (337/340 – 397 C. E.), John Chrysostom (347-407 C.E.) and Jerome (347- 420 C.E.) (Basilios 1991, 1-2).

In order to explore these views of some Church Fathers on the issue of celibacy, I will examine the perspectives of Chrysostom and Jerome in this section, then compare them with those of Augustine and Origen. John Chrysostom, according to Roth and Anderson, did not comment directly on the issue of marriage or abstinence. He viewed sex not as evil, but as an obstacle to those who wanted to devote their entire lives to the pursuit of prayer (Roth and Anderson 1986, 41) Moreover, according to Roth and Anderson, Chrysostom interpreted Paul's comment on the issue of continence to mean that celibacy is better than marriage. Nevertheless, Chrysostom also understood that persons who could not lead an ascetic life should not be forced to do so, since a lack of self-control could result in yielding to strong sexual desires (Roth and Anderson 1986, 29).

Chrysostom had an appropriate grasp of how Paul viewed the matter of celibacy: as an ideal that not everyone should be asked to pursue. In addition, it is also rational for Chrysostom to refer to the lack of self-control as a possible source of sexual temptation. On the one hand, his view of sex as an obstacle to those who hope to give undivided devotion to the life of prayer seems sensible. However, on the other hand, sex is regarded as a wonderful gift from God, granted to human beings to enjoy lawfully within married life. In that sense, if someone is called to remain celibate for the sake of the kingdom of God, God may give him or her enough grace to subdue sexual desire. From this point of view, sex is not regarded as an obstacle, but a privilege which the human recipients willingly give up to pursue full ministry to God.

The second Church Father to whom Basilios refers is Jerome (347 – 420 C.E.). In order to understand the argument of Jerome, the teaching of Jovinian needs to be presented first, since his claim is intimately related to that of Jerome. David Hunter introduces Jovinian, a monk of the late fourth century C.E, who responded to the widespread movement of ascetic fervour throughout the Church of his time. Unlike his contemporaries, Jovinian refused to accept that asceticism is a higher and truer form of the Christian life, and highly praised the excellence of marriage. His idea was not well accepted by his contemporaries; as a result, he was eventually condemned in the early 390s by a Church synod at Rome under Pope Siricius, and subsequently at a synod convened at Milan by Ambrose (Hunter 1987, 45).

In response to this situation, Jerome ended up vehemently refuting Jovinian in his book "*Adversus Jovinianum*" (Hunter 1987, 45), which was full of praise for virginity (*The Catholic Encyclopedia*. Accessed May 29, 2012. <http://www.newadvent.org>). Additionally, in the book *Marriage and Sexuality* Augustine also portrayed Jerome as having championed the life of celibacy, to the point where Jerome was considered to have denigrated the privilege of marriage among Christians. According to Hunter, the ascetic movement was gaining ground and spreading widely in Western Christianity during the 380s. Therefore, considering his role as one of the leading supporters of this trend, Jerome's view might be regarded as a natural response. Yet his exaltation of single life over married life was not favourably received either amongst non-believers or believers (Hunter 1987, 45-64).

Jews traditionally approved of the merits of marriage, in accordance with Genesis 1:28. If Christians in the fourth century had been aware of this Jewish attitude toward marriage, they might not have gone to the extreme of condemning the teaching of Jovinian. Also, from this point of view, it is understandable that Jerome's instruction was not constructively received. Accordingly, if Jovinian's viewpoint could be criticised, so also could that of Jerome, since the arguments of both do not appear to be in complete accord with what Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 7:7: "I wish that all were as I myself am. But each has his own gift from God, one of one kind and one of another (ESV)." Perhaps Jerome's initial intention to elevate the status of celibacy over that of marriage came out of his effort to place a strong emphasis on being single, going along with the ascetic movement current in his lifetime. Thus, his excessively positive view of celibacy could have caused his contemporaries to misunderstand his intent.

Augustine of Hippo (354 -430 C.E.) is another renowned Church Father. Even though Basilios does not make mention of him, a Coptic-related website – <http://www.cotichchurch.net>- refers to his views on the topic of celibacy. Augustine was heavily involved in the debate on the desirability of singleness. In contrast to the seemingly extreme tendency toward celibacy as discussed earlier, Augustine took a middle ground by acknowledging the superiority of virginity, but also affirming the merits of marriage more properly than had Jerome (ed. Clark 1996, 43. *The Good of Marriage, Augustine: 401*, in *St. Augustine on Marriage and Sexuality*). In his view of upholding the virtue of continence as

preferable to matrimony, Augustine also wisely stated that “Virginity must not only be praised that it may be loved, but also be admonished that it may not be puffed up” (*ibid.* 61-62).

It seems that the Christian community in the time of Augustine so approved of the status of singleness and held such a high view of celibacy that he needed to warn the faithful of their excessive pride. According to Kamil, the monastic movement that originated from St. Antony (251-356 C. E.) was in full swing by Augustine’s time (Kamil 1968, 47). This movement was thus likely to have influenced Augustine’s perspective toward the status of singleness to some degree. Accordingly, it is appropriate for Hunter to underline the intention and emphasis of Augustine. Augustine’s comment did not imply that celibates were inevitably greater than married people, despite the several advantages that single people could enjoy personally (Hunter 1999, 32).

Therefore, it is sensible for Augustine to have attempted to keep a rational balance between the merits of celibacy and the advantages of married life in the midst of a vehement dispute over these two topics. This moderate attitude is more unbiased than those of Jovinian and Jerome, due to Augustine’s recognition of the valuable characteristics of each gift. In spite of this shrewd middle stance, nonetheless, it still looks as if Augustine viewed the status of celibacy more highly than that of marriage.

Elizabeth Clark elucidates that Augustine referred to 2 Corinthians 11:2, where Paul had described the whole Church as a virgin betrothed to the one man, who is Christ (ed. Clark 1996, 25). This comment, as well as Basilios’s remarks on the desirability of celibacy, leads us to look into one significant point. By referring to the general attitudes and customs of first-century Jews toward celibates for the cultural and social background of the text, Basilios suggests that in first-century Jewish society the concept of intentionally abstaining from marriage was not closely related to Jewish custom (Basilios 1991, 2). Actually, in Jewish culture, the majority of ordinary people were expected to get married according to the instruction of God as described in Genesis 1:28. The Coptic bishop Gregorios, whose writing about marriage will be examined later in this chapter, also points to this issue (Gregorios 1991, 1) Nevertheless, those few people who chose not to get married for the sake of the

kingdom of God were favourably recognised. For instance, Basilios believes that some celibates such as Jeremiah, Daniel and John the Baptist were highly esteemed by Jewish society for their celibacy (Basilios 1991, 2).

Ancient Jewish culture honoured those single people who were willing to give up their right to marriage in order to devote their lives fully to the ministry of God. Accordingly, it is not surprising that Basilios commented on the public honour of celibates by the early church through giving them priority in seating and communing (Basilios 1991, 2). In light of this observation, it is possible that the favourable perspective of celibacy in Jewish custom affected the general view of Christians, from the first century onwards. In fact this subject is clearly present in the New Testament through the teachings of Jesus, as seen in Matt. 19:9-12, Mark 10:28-30, Luke 20:27-36, and Jesus' remark about John the Baptist in Matthew 11:11.

The Church Father Origen (185 – 254 C.E.) is not cited by Basilios, but is referred to in a website of the Coptic Orthodox Church Network, -<http://www.copticchurch.net>. Origen did not directly deal with the issue of virginity in his essay. Nevertheless, it is said that his teachings about this issue are scattered throughout his works. It is known that Origen viewed the status of singleness as a godly gift and a profound spiritual sacrifice, which was accepted by God (Accessed March 4, 202. <http://www.copticchurch.net>). This standpoint reminds us of several celibates in the Bible, such as Daniel, Jeremiah and John the Baptist, who gave up on the right to get married for the sake of ministry to God. Another comment confirms the perspective of Origen:

Origen considers virginity as the most perfect gift after martyrdom. In the sacrifice of virginity, man is at once, by his intellect, the priest, and in his flesh the victim, like Christ on the Cross. Virginity is presented as a privileged link between heaven and earth; for God was able to unite Himself to humanity only through a "holy" body of a virgin woman without marital relations (Accessed August 11, 2014. <http://www.copticchurch.net>).

This remark of Origen's is an obvious indication of his being a keen advocate of the outstanding status of celibacy. Therefore, it is no wonder that Origen took seriously the word of Matthew 19:12: "There are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of

the kingdom of heaven (ESV).”

It was later revealed that Origen felt compelled to take the word literally by making himself a eunuch, contrary to the traditional reading of the Church. His act of self-mutilation had been criticised by the Church, and was later officially condemned (Accessed July 12, 2014. <http://www.copticchurch.net>). Origen himself wrote, when explaining this passage in Matthew:

“If there are other passages, not only in the Old but also in the New Testament, to which we ought to apply the words: ‘The letter kills, but the spirit gives life,’ we must allow that they apply especially to this particular text”
(Accessed May 30, 2012. <http://www.copticchurch.net>).

Perhaps Origen meant here that he had made himself a eunuch intentionally for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. The same source also introduces his other statement:

“True purity does not consist in doing violence to the body, but in mortifying the senses for the Kingdom of God”(Accessed June 3, 2012. <http://www.copticchurch.net>).

The illustration of his life and remarks are vivid indications of Origen’s serious regard for the calling of celibacy, and of his great support of this gift. However, self-infliction is not biblical, even though it was his visible demonstration of what he believed in this regard. Otherwise, many Christians might feel compelled to follow his way of dealing with their physical passions by undertaking self-mutilation. Moreover, they might also try to enact even the sayings of Jesus in Matthew 5:29-30 without considering the context. In this sense, it is appropriate to cite the remark of a modern Coptic Father and renowned theologian: “the ascetic life does not mean an enmity to the body and its senses and energies, but rather it looks upon the body in sanctity as aiding the soul’ (Malaty 1986, 12). Father Malaty understands being celibate not as being restrained sexually, but as being self-controlled, with moral chastity in our fleshly body.

So far, Basilios presents his understanding through the different readings of two Church Fathers, St John Chrysostom and St Jerome. In addition to these Fathers, the perspectives of St Augustine and Origen were also examined. It has been observed that even though Paul

acknowledged the different callings and gifts of celibacy and marriage, he underlined the advantages of being single in 1 Corinthians 7. For example, according to Paul, the unmarried person could think more about how to be holy in body and spirit for the Lord, as described in 1 Corinthians 7:32-34. In this situation, to be single was not compulsory, but a completely voluntary option for the better service of God. Therefore, Paul's encouragement to Christians of that time to remain unmarried seems to be appropriate. Consequently, Paul's viewpoint on celibacy would influence the various opinions of several Church Fathers, as Basilios mentioned.

As a whole, Basilios does fine work in presenting the perspective of the Orthodox Church through various relevant materials and resources on the issue of celibacy in his writing. He is also skilful in organising a wide range of evidence in good order. He begins to develop his persuasive argument about the issue of celibacy by considering the general thought of early Jewish society, related passages in the Bible, and a range of Church Fathers from the second century to the fourth and fifth centuries. Finally, he refers to the early church, which covers the period from the beginnings of Christianity until the fourth century. His efforts in expounding his persuasive argument on the subject of being single from the Orthodox point of view are helpful in gaining an insight into the Orthodox understanding and application of its understanding in church structure.

Basilios clearly considers being single to be better than being married by his reference to the definition of celibacy. In a way, this notion of being celibate was deeply rooted and indicated in the New Testament through the teachings of Jesus in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke. Furthermore, in support of his argument, Basilios carefully introduces the perspectives of Church Fathers, whose stances support singleness. His particular choice of these Fathers implies that Basilios himself has a favourable attitude toward the status of singleness, which is not explicitly mentioned in his writing. Basilios himself was bishop, so must have been celibate. Hence his personal status as a celibate may have affected his writing, causing him to favour those Church Fathers who were in favour of celibacy. Also, perhaps, he might have hoped to see more males becoming celibates for the sake of God's kingdom, since there were times when it was not easy to find appropriate candidates among monks for the position of

bishop. Ware suggests a similar concern (Ware 1963, 298).

Moreover, Basilios refers to the positive attitude of first century Jewish culture, which held celibates in the Bible in high esteem while pointing to the celibacy of the priesthood in the Orthodox Church. Basilios also stresses the preference of Paul for celibacy over marriage in 1 Corinthians 7, and those chaste celibates who were described as saints in Revelation 14:4. Accordingly, his status as a bishop and the existent structure of priesthood in Orthodox Church, where celibates were more qualified for episcopal positions, might have affected his interpretation of Scripture and the pertinent biblical texts, so that he understood the subject of celibacy mainly through the readings of several Church Fathers whose views are mentioned in this section.

2.3 Marriage, Divorce and Remarriage

2.3.1 The Context of History and Current Situation of Coptic Orthodox Church

a. Muslim (Sunni) Divorce Law in Egypt

Before moving on to look at the current situation of the Coptic Church in the arena of family law in Egypt, it is useful to have a brief look at the Muslim divorce law in Egypt in order to understand the background in which the Coptic Church is situated. Engineer, an advocate for women's rights in Islamic culture and a well-known Indian Muslim scholar, writes that, generally speaking, in the common Arab/Muslim culture among the Arabs, marriage is a matter of a contract between two people (Engineer 2004, 153). There will be times when a couple might attempt to separate from each other. Ahmed, a Pakistani scholar, refers to the teaching of the Qur'an on marriage breakup as follows: "Retain them (the wives) in kindness or separate (from them) with kindness" (Ahmed 1972, 3, Qur'an, IV: 19). The Prophet Mohammed conceded the possibility of marital splits but opposed the practice of divorce, saying that "Of all the permitted things divorce is the most abominable with God" (Ahmed 1972, 3 Abu Dawud, Sunan, Kanpur, I: 296). These two comments clearly suggest that Muslim society in general is not in favour of marriage breakdown among the Muslims, even though divorce may be permitted.

According to the US-based website Human Rights Watch, when it comes to regulations in contemporary Egypt there are two types of divorce, depending on who takes the initiative in dismissing the spouse. Concerning divorce initiated by men, the source says that:

Muslim Egyptian men have a unilateral and unconditional right to divorce without resort to legal proceedings (*talaq*). They simply need to repudiate their wives, saying “you are divorced” three times, making the divorce irrevocable (*ba’in*), and register the divorce within 30 days with a religious notary to make it official. A repudiated woman has to observe a waiting period (*‘idda*) not exceeding one year, during which she is not allowed to marry another man (“Overview of Marriage and Divorce Laws in Egypt” Accessed August 13, 2014. <http://www.hrw.org>).

This simple procedure of divorce for man indicates a society where men are privileged over women in the area of divorce law. Under the same legal system, divorce is more complicated for women than for men. The same comments on the two categories of divorce that can be initiated by a woman:

Women who seek divorce in Egypt have two options, fault-based or no-fault divorce (*khula*). Unlike men, women can only divorce by court action (*tatliq*). Regardless of which system they choose, a number of government officials are involved in the process, including judges, attorneys for both parties, and arbitrators involved in compulsory mediation between the couple... For both types of divorce initiated by women (fault-based and no-fault), public prosecutors provide the judge with an adversary opinion on whether the divorce should be granted (“Overview of Marriage and Divorce Laws in Egypt” Accessed August 13, 2004. <http://www.hrw.org>).

Regarding the traditional fault-based divorce, the same website continues:

Women are required to obtain legal counsel, provide evidence of harm often through eyewitness testimony, and submit to compulsory mediation. A woman must prove to the court that it is impossible for her to continue living with her husband. The following four grounds for fault-based divorce are accepted by the court: (1) illness, including mental illness, venereal disease, and impotence; (2) non-provision of maintenance or financial support; (3) absence or imprisonment; and (4) “injury”(*darar*) which includes a variety of forms of physical and mental harm.

The diverse grounds for divorce here seemingly give women more opportunities to file for divorce; however, the conditions women have to meet to be granted a separation are extremely complex. This suggests that Egyptian tradition tries to keep women from getting an easy divorce, but not men. The same source speaks of a political change that gave Egyptian women a limited ray of hope. A law signed by President Mubarak of Egypt on January 29,

2000 permitted women the right to sue for divorce on the grounds of “incompatibility,” without submitting proof of harm. This so-called “no-fault” divorce is defined as follows:

In order to file for a “no-fault” divorce (*khula*, in Arabic خلع), a woman need not provide grounds for filing the divorce request, but must agree to forfeit her rights to alimony and her deferred dowry (*mu’akhar*) as well as repay her advanced dowry (*muqaddam*). For some women, *khula* has proved to be faster than the fault-based divorce process, since they are not required to demonstrate evidence of harm or find witnesses, and men do not have the right to appeal the no-fault divorce to a higher court.... The success of this legislative initiative has also been attributed to the fact that the basis of the law is found in the Qur’an. Given the constrained environment in which advocates for changing discriminatory elements of the personal status law (derived from interpretations of Shari’a deemed untouched by some) operate, the coalition made the strategic decision to use religion as a basis for these forms (“Overview of Marriage and Divorce Laws in Egypt” Accessed August 13, 2004. <http://www.hrw.org>).

The right of *khula* can obviously help some women to gain easier access to divorce. However, this ruling is limited to women who are sufficiently well-off to be able to willingly give up the right to any financial support. Therefore, this law works only for those women who have independent wealth, or who are so desperate for a marital split that they are prepared to live in poverty, a point Human Rights Watch also mentions. Furthermore, this law is disproportionately advantageous to the husband because he does not have to pay alimony, and because he will be reimbursed for the dowry he paid at the time of his marriage. Research indicates that even though Egyptian Muslim men and women are not legal equals in terms of divorce rights, there are at least some grounds on which it is permissible for Muslims to seek a divorce.

b. Coptic Orthodox Christian Divorce Law in Egypt

In this section we will look at the development of family law and current situation for Copts in Egypt. Since the 1938 Code will be referred to frequently, it is necessary to look briefly at the historical background to this Code. Shaham, a senior lecturer in the Department of Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies at the Hebrew University in Israel, writes that since the sixteenth century, the Egyptian government has allowed each religious community in the country to enact their own communal bylaws, through their own courts, in all matters of personal and family law. As a result of this ruling, the first Coptic Orthodox Communal Council (Arabic: *maglis al-milli*), which was taken over by a predominantly lay leadership in 1874, oversaw and took part in the administration of community affairs in the Coptic

community (Shaham 2010, 410). This suggests that the Council had obtained strong political power and control of its own community affairs.

Shaham argues that from the 1920s onwards, the Egyptian state began to strengthen its political power, to widen public support. Additionally, in its effort to institute Egyptian citizenship founded on a unified state law, the government tried to restrict the legal autonomy enjoyed by non-Muslim religious communities in the area of family law. This led the state to propose replacing the jurisdiction of the courts of the religious minorities with a unified national law of personal status (Shaham 2010, 419-422). This proposal of the government challenged the independence of religious communities and other minority groups in Egypt, and provoked strong opposition from the leaders of those communities.

Shaham also explains that the conflict between the government and non-Muslim communities led to the state's attempting to take control of the functioning of the religious communities. Consequently, the government requested each community to codify and issue its existing structure and regulations in relation to family law. In response to this order, in May 1938, the Coptic Orthodox Supreme Communal Council (al-Majlis al-Milli al-Aila) submitted to the government a rule of personal status, which the Egyptian government approved. Accordingly, from July 1938 the Coptic Community Council adopted this Code, which included the ordinance for the dissolution of marriage in the Coptic community, until the abolition of the Code in 1955 (Shaham 2010, 411).

Adel Guindy, a political writer on Middle East affairs and a senior editor of the Coptic Egyptian weekly *Watani*, summarises Articles 50 to 58 of Law 462 in Egyptian family law, specifying nine points from the 1938 guidelines. If either spouse commits or falls under one of the following conditions, the applicant may be permitted divorce: (Guindy *The Middle East Review of International Affairs*. Accessed January 7, 2012.)

- Adultery
- Conversion to another religion.
- Absence for a period of five consecutive years with no news of whereabouts.
- Being judged and sentenced to seven years imprisonment.
- Contagious illness, mental illness, or impotence--with no recovery for at least three years.
- Serious domestic violence.
- Immoral behaviour or debauchery

- Separation for at least three years as a result of untenable marital life.
- Assumption of monastic life

Most of the grounds for divorce here seem to be reasonable although the second and last appear to be complicated by a close link between religion and the personal life of Copts. The second reason – religious conversion – suggests a strict intervention by the church in the married life of the Copts. The last reason – adoption of monastic life - implies that the pursuit of spiritual goals is valued more highly than the maintenance of married life.

Meinardus, a German Christian minister who is regarded as the most important contemporary Western authority on the Church in Egypt, gives the following reasons for the termination of marriage, based on the 1938 Law: (Meinardus 1970, 284)

- Adultery
- Impotence
- Infertility
- If one of the spouses is absent for seven years, without any contact
- If the spouses have separated for three years because of disagreement
- If the wife or husband adopts a religion other than Coptic Christianity
- If the husband or wife becomes infected with a deadly disease such as syphilis, leprosy, or elephantiasis
- If the wife leaves her husband's residence in the evening and stays away from the house the whole night without his permission
- If the wife is revealed not to be a virgin when the couple consummate the marriage
- If the husband is in a sexual relationship with another woman and the wife does not approve of it

Meinardus offers one more reason than Guindy, and some of his reasons, especially the last three, signify a male-oriented society. Corresponding rights were not given to a woman. For example, the permission to divorce “If the husband is in a sexual relationship with another woman and the wife does not approve of it” means that a wife is obligated to acquiesce to her husband's infidelity if she does not want to get divorced. Surely infidelity by a husband is no less adulterous than infidelity by a wife – but this law clearly indicates the lower status of women in the Coptic Church.

As we have seen, there is some overlap and some dissimilarity between Meinardus and Guindy in their understanding of the grounds for divorce in Egypt prior to 1971. Shaham follows the same nine guidelines as Guindy (Shaham 2010, 411). Guindy's points are more

accurate since they refer to the nine points from the 1938, however, the additional suggestions provided by Meinardus offer an interesting Western perspective on the wide-ranging divorce regulations in the early twentieth century in Egypt. We have observed that the various religious communities in Egypt have handled family status issues separately from each other and independently of the state, according to their own codified family law. Under the 1938 Code, Muslims depended on the Sharia courts and Copts on the Church community courts. Either way, the Egyptian government could not avoid the influence of existing religions in society.

Guindy goes on to point out that in 1955 Family Status Law 462 was enacted and applied to all Egyptians, irrespective of their beliefs. From that time on, individual personal status cases came under the jurisdiction of national courts. As a result, civil family courts were established, and the various community courts were closed down. Article 7 of the Family Status Law 462 required the civil court to judge each personal status case according to the religious guidelines of the applicant (Guindy *The Middle East Review of International Affairs*. Accessed January 7, 2012). Through this new civil code of family law, the Egyptian government ordered the state courts to rule on marriage and divorce cases by applying the moral code of each client: Sharia law for Muslims, and the corresponding religious regulations for each of the non-Muslim communities.

The BBC points to a radical change that took place in the family law of the Coptic community on the accession of Shenouda III (1923 –17th March 2012) to the Orthodox Papacy in 1971, as the 171st Coptic Pope in Egypt. Shenouda III regarded the 1938 code as a contradiction of the Bible, and vigorously insisted that divorce be permitted only on grounds of adultery or change of religion (BBC Accessed October 10, 2011). Rowberry and Khalil, two Harvard Law School graduates working at Georgia State University in the United States, confirm this, referring to the *Bill of Personal Affairs for Copts* (January 2007) in the Coptic Church which states that “two valid reasons for which divorce will be granted. The first is apostasy. The second reason for divorce is adultery” (Rowberry & Khalil 2013, 55).

Regarding religious conversion, Rowberry and Khalil write that “this occurs when either husband or wife leaves the Christian faith to atheism, to any other religion, or to any sect that

is not admitted by Christian churches in Egypt” (Rowberry & Khalil 2013, 134). This reflects the exclusive character of the Coptic Church, and also indicates the serious concern of the Church to preserve religious purity among the Copts. The newly established *Bill* overturned the 1938 Code and ended up giving less freedom to Copts seeking divorce, which undoubtedly harmed couples whose married life was unbearable for reasons not covered by the bill. There is no doubt that married people can encounter difficulties other than adultery or religious conversion that can bring the couple to the brink of marital split. The strict new rule, with only two permissible grounds for divorce, created all sorts of problems, as described in sections c) and d) of this chapter.

The UK Coptic website confirms that there are only the two legitimate grounds for divorce between Copts. As a result, according to the same source, it seems that some Copts who could not get divorced in the Coptic community chose to convert to other religions that would allow them to divorce and remarry (Accessed October 17, 2011. <http://www.coptsunited.com>). It is most likely that this caused serious sectarian tensions and discrimination between Muslims and Copts. In fact, sectarian violence attributed to this issue has been reported by a variety of news media.

According to the same source, all Copts who wish to get married need to have their marriage registered with the Egyptian government through the offices of a Coptic priest after their wedding in a religious ceremony. If they wish to get divorced, the civil law requires that they go first to the Coptic Church. If the church turns down their request, the couple can go to the civil courts. Generally, in these cases, the courts apply church law rather than Sharia law. The website suggests that in most cases the church will allow a termination of marriage, but will prohibit the divorced parties from remarriage (Accessed October 17, 2011. <http://www.coptsunited.com>).

This means that if the marriage among Copts is to break down because of adultery or conversion, their divorce can be recognised by the church and one or both of them can get married again in the church whilst still remaining a member of the church. If the reason for their divorce falls outside these two categories, the couple can appeal to the civil court as citizens of Egypt citing one of the grounds for divorce permitted by the government. The applicants can obtain their divorce from the court if the judge considered that the grounds

were reasonable, even though the decision of the civil divorce cannot be recognised by church. If the divorcees insisted on the divorce permit from the civil court, they do not have any choice but to leave the Coptic Church as a result.

The late Pope was openly critical of some Coptic divorcees who left the church to undertake a second marriage, saying “We do not welcome them in our church if they do not abide by our religion” (Bayoumi Accessed October 5, 2011. <http://www.almasryalyoum.com>). His attitude to Copts who might have struggled in their married life for reasons other than the two recognized grounds was resolute and uncompromising. For that reason, Copts can be forced to endure married life no matter how unsatisfactory it may be. Rowberry and Khalil believe that the strict Coptic divorce law reflects ‘some notion of ensuring that Copts remain Copts’ because Copts in Egypt are a ‘small and often embattled minority’ (Rowberry & Khalil 2013, 134). In the troubled Egyptian society, the Church is viewed by many Copts as a spiritual shelter, and this gives the church and its Pope great authority and control over family issues in the community.

c. The Consequences of the Application of Coptic Divorce Law in Egypt

i. The ruling of the Supreme Administrative Court against the Coptic Divorce Law in May 2010

In the midst of this tension between the leadership of the Coptic Church and the difficult circumstance individual Copts faced as a consequence of the strict application of 1971 divorce law, Shaimaa el-Karanshawi and Hoda Rashwan, two writers for the *Egypt Independent* published the following report on 30th May 2010:

The Supreme Administrative Court has ordered Pope Shenouda III to allow two Copts, in two different lawsuits, to remarry after divorce. Both claimants, Hani Wasfi and Magdi William, had asked the Church to permit them to remarry, but the Church refused. After appealing the Church's decision, the Administrative Court ruled in the two men's favour. The court clarified that family formation is a constitutional right that is above any other considerations. While it expressed respect for religious beliefs, the court asserted that its decisions are made according to the law. The two rulings are considered final and uncontestable (Karanshawi & Rashwan Accessed August 14, 2014, <http://www.egyptindependent.com>).

From the standpoint of the civil court, the eligibility of the two Coptic applicants to remarry was rational, since the Muslim state regards all Egyptians, regardless of their religion, as ordinary citizens of the country. However, this unusual ruling provoked public objections from conservative Copts, and especially Coptic clergy, who supported the Pope. The decision raised essential questions about the nature of the rights of the minority Coptic community in the Muslim-majority society in Egypt. The dispute went to the heart of the complex dichotomy between faith and secular civil rights that was deeply rooted in the history of Egypt. The current conflict over the rights of Copts to marriage and divorce also highlighted the strain between concepts of group and personal freedom in the country.

In response to this unusual ruling by the Supreme Administrative Court (henceforth ‘SAC’), *Al-Masry Al-Youm* reported a meeting of Coptic leaders in May 2010 to consider the decision. The same source also reported the following comments related to the issue. Bishop Saleeb Matta, the head of the el-Salam Orthodox Coptic Association and a member of the General Congregation Council in Egypt, said:

I have respect for the court's decisions. However, God should be obeyed more than people. Also, according to the Bible's teachings, divorced men can remarry only in cases of adultery and deceit-based marriage. Thus, whoever wants to remarry without the Church's approval must have a civil marriage (Accessed July 14, 2014. <http://www.egyptindependent.com>).

In the first instance, Bishop Saleeb Matta appeared to be referring to Matthew 5:32, where Jesus teaches that a man may divorce his wife on the ground of sexual immorality. But Scripture does not mention ‘deceit-based marriage,’ Bishop Matta’s second legitimate basis for marital split. Naguib Gebrael, a church advisor and head of the Egyptian Union of Human Rights Organizations (EUHRO), said that “The court's decision is non-binding from a religious perspective, as only religious authorities can decide whether a marriage is legitimate.” (Accessed July 14, 2014. <http://www.egyptindependent.com>).

These two remarks are reasonable from the standpoint of the Coptic Church, which regards its followers as members of the church first and civil citizens second. Nevertheless, it gives an impression that the church does not take the authority of the Egyptian government seriously, so the Church can take responsibility for the family life of Copts. Looked at from this point of view, the SAC’s ruling could be viewed as interfering with the implementation

of Coptic family law. This SAC verdict offered the church only two choices: to maintain their understanding of the teaching of the Bible on marriage and see divorced Copts leaving the Coptic Church, or to disobey the state.

It is perhaps not surprising that, according to the Coptic-related website as below, the late Pope Shenouda III made the following pronouncement:

The Coptic Church respects the law, but does not accept rulings that are against the Bible and against its religious freedom which is guaranteed by the Constitution.... The recent ruling is not acceptable to our conscience, and we cannot implement it. Marriage is a holy sacrament of a purely religious nature and not merely an "administrative act." The second marriage for divorcees is a religious issue, governed by the Bible (Accessed October 17, 2011 <http://www.copts-united.com>).

Thus the Coptic Church puts biblical principles and church law before the regulation of the state when the two forces conflict. It appears that the Church was not willingly under the control of the government but strived to retain its independence. In December 2010, Judge Mohamed El-Husseini, head of SAC, ruled that:

“[the] Egyptian constitution guarantees that anyone may remarry and form a new family. The appeal made by Pope Shenouda III to prevent Copts from remarrying is accordingly rejected (*Church of England Newspaper* Accessed October 14, 2011. <http://www.religiousintelligence.org>).

It is apparent that each party, the Church and the court, looked at the same issue from a different angle: on the one side, the structures of Church doctrine, which are higher than the demands of the state; on the other, the rights and duties of the secular government. The SAC ruling raises several important points. In Muslim society, marriage is viewed as a contract, but in the Coptic Christian community, as stated earlier, it is considered a sacrament. From the viewpoint of Islam, if one or both members of a married couple break the contract by failing to meet its conditions and responsibilities, the marriage can be annulled. If a first marriage is broken in this way, the state does not have any problem permitting the divorced parties to remarry as Egyptian citizens, regardless of their religion.

Furthermore, this decision indicates that the government's law is more lenient in terms of allowing citizens to get divorced, since the judges at the civil court are mostly Muslims, who are likely to apply Sharia-based divorce regulation to non-Muslim claimants, thereby creating

a good chance of success for those Copts seeking divorce outside of the grounds authorised by the Coptic Church. The initial judgment issued by SAC created a fresh alternative for Copts in marital difficulties. In the long run, this was likely to pose a strong challenge to the strict application of the principle of Coptic family law.

It would appear that if an edict of the state and an edict of the church contradict each other, the government has the right to rescind the decision of the church. This poses a challenge to the authority of the church and its ability to uphold its doctrine of family law within its own community. The strong responses from the late Pope himself and some other Copts were understandable. On the other hand, for some Copts the verdict of the SAC in May 2010 might be interpreted as a stepping stone to improvements in the protection of the civil rights for all Egyptians in terms of freedom of marriage.

ii. The Response to SAC's Verdict of May 2010 among Coptic Christians

The variety of responses to the far-reaching effect of SAC's ruling among the Copts was understandable, since the verdict provided a window onto the serious difficulties in family law practiced inside the Coptic community after the church's 1971 divorce ruling. *Al-Masry Al-Youm* quoted Shenouda III in an interview in June 2010, saying:

“Coptic divorcees wishing to remarry can only qualify for civil marriages since the church expressly forbids second marriages. There is no power on earth that can force me to violate the teachings of the Bible (Bayoumi Accessed October 15, 2011. <http://www.almasryalyoum.com>).

This remark of the Pope here echoed Matthew 5:32, Mark 10:11 and Luke 16:18, which state that divorce is permitted only on grounds of adultery. His statement that “the church expressly forbids second marriage” also reflected the strict views on divorce and remarriage present in the church's tradition. Nonetheless, he seems to overlook the more lenient opinions of a few Church Fathers toward these issues, as we will see in a later section of this chapter.

The same source also quoted a press conference held by Shenouda III in August 2010 at the papal residence:

The decision by the Coptic Holy Synod vis-a-vis an administrative court ruling issued

last month obliging the church to allow divorced Copts to remarry: The Coptic Church doesn't accept rules that contravene biblical teachings and violate our freedom of religion, which is guaranteed by law. Marriage within the Coptic Church is a sacrament and a religious duty, not merely an administrative action (Bayoumi Accessed October 15, 2011. <http://www.almasryalyoum.com>).

This report clearly defines Coptic matrimony as a 'sacrament,' in contrast to civil marriage, which reflects the description of marriage as a 'mystery' in Ephesians 5:32. It also distinguishes the concept of Coptic matrimony from that of Islam, in which marriage is not regarded as a sacred matter.

Al-Masry Al-Youm also referred to the comments of the late Pope in his response to criticism of his strict literal interpretation of the Bible, and his contradiction of the 1938 Code. Pope Shenouda III stated:

The Council at the time consisted of pashas that knew nothing about the Coptic religion. The Coptic Pope at that time was John XIX (1928-1942), and immediately following his death, the Council's findings were changed in 1944 under the papacy of Pope Macarius III (1942-1944). Since then, no divorce has been permitted within the Coptic community except in cases of adultery (Bayoumi Accessed October 15, 2011. <http://www.almasryalyoum.com>).

Pope Shenouda's reading of the Code in this way justified his strict standpoint. The late Pope appeared not to have given a thought to those Coptic couples who might have to separate from each other because of serious marital troubles. Moreover, he made a sweeping criticism of those who sought to end their marriage. Some couples might feel they face such severe difficulties in their married life that they do not have any choice but to get divorced.

Taken as a whole, the various statements of the Pope indicate an approach to the biblical texts on divorce and remarriage that fails to consider any context. That being so, it is perhaps understandable for the Pope to hold tenaciously to the Coptic Church's particular view of family law, as a minor religious group's striving to maintain its own distinct family moral code in Egypt should not be undervalued. Nevertheless, if regulation causes such undesirable side effects in the real lives of the faith's followers, the authority figures in the Coptic Church should perhaps take note, out of consideration for those who are suffering.

Likewise, on June 2 2010, the *Church of England Newspaper* reported what the Pope had

said:

Although we respect the judicial system, it is not binding on the church. Egypt's personal status law does not recognise civil marriage, and requires a religious ceremony to give legal status to a nuptial union. Copts who wish to remarry after a divorce must either obtain a dispensation from the church showing they were the innocent party in a case of adultery, or convert
(*Church of England Newspaper* Accessed October 14, 2011.
<http://www.religiousintelligence.org>).

By stressing that it is the 'religious ceremony' that gives 'legal status to a nuptial union,' the church attempted to remind Copts of the significance of marriage in the church. This was probably intended to discourage Copts from pursuing divorce readily, in order to keep the believers inside the community and encourage Copts to stay in troubled marriages and not consider divorce as an option.

In June 2010, the request for a clarified law of the leaders of the Coptic Church had led the Justice Ministry to call the Coptic, Catholic and Anglican Churches to a meeting to discuss the possibility of a new marriage law. However, the Coptic leaders told *Al-Masry Al-Youm* that they were anxious about working with Anglicans on divorce law due to their different approaches (Accessed October 14, 2011. <http://www.religiousintelligence.org>). By taking a positive step in accepting the request from the Coptic Church, the government suggested that it might be willing to propose a newly unified family law which would govern family affairs for non-Muslim communities in Egypt. Nevertheless, the hesitant attitude of the Coptic Church toward the Anglicans is understandable, since the proposal of one general family moral code would require each party to make concessions.

In the midst of this speculation, an Egyptian newspaper, *Copts United*, also pointed to the enormous rise in the number of Christian divorce cases going through the civil courts in Egypt: from 4,000 a year in the 1990s to 12,000 in 2010 (Accessed October 17, 2011. <http://www.copts-united.com>). This phenomenon indicates the downside of the 1971 family law of the Coptic Church, which may have given the divorcees cause to appeal to the SAC for a divorce permit. Perhaps this situation is a sign that the Coptic Church needs to listen to the needs of Copts and examine and seriously reconsider their current divorce law, in order to consider possible changes that might make it more practical. If the church was willing to

compromise so that the verdict of the SAC could be accepted, it could contribute to solving the existing problems. From a non-Coptic point of view, it is undeniable that the new ruling of SAC issued in May 2010 is a beacon of hope for some Copts who wish to marry again. In that sense, the recent decision of the SAC can be regarded as a great achievement for the development of human rights in Egypt. The unusual verdict of SAC represents progress in securing the civil rights of marriage, divorce and remarriage for all Egyptian citizens, irrespective of their religion.

iii. The overwhelming reversal of SAC's Verdict in July 2010 and the response amongst Coptic Christians

To the satisfaction of the Coptic Church, *The Egyptian* newspaper reported that in July 2010 the Supreme Constitutional Court (SCC), the highest judicial power in Egypt, had overturned the earlier verdict of SAC. Coptic Archbishop Armia thanked them on behalf of the Church, saying, "This historic verdict proves that we have a fair judicial system that does not interfere in Coptic religious affairs (Bayoumi Accessed October 15, 2011. <http://www.almasryalyoum.com>). It is clear that the Coptic Church is not willing to conform to the secular institution of government in matters of family law.

The same newspaper also commented that the members of the Coptic, Catholic and Anglican Churches in Egypt all welcomed the decision by SCC. Nevertheless, the court reversal has provoked some argument within judicial circles. Some judges claimed that the ruling of SCC signified a direct confrontation with the SAC. Moreover, in contrast to those favourable responses, some Copts inevitably felt disappointed by this change, especially those who had hoped to get remarried whilst remaining inside the church (Khalil Accessed October 15, 2011. <http://www.almasryalyoum.com>).

The frustration of some Copts is reasonable, since those Copts who wish to end their unhappy marriages and marry again now face a dilemma if their marital problem is not connected to adultery or religious conversion. They are left with no choice but to consider leaving their Church, unless they are prepared to falsely claim adultery or to change their religion. Those who feel that they have to leave the Church may say that they have not renounced their Coptic faith, but in a Muslim society it is an open question how fully or for how long those

Copts can maintain their faith outside the church. Additionally, the sudden reversal of SAC's verdict by SCC may keep the Egyptian state from considering the proposal of a new family law for the minor religious groups in Egypt.

d. The Current Situation in Family Law in Egypt

The positive atmosphere in the Coptic Church as a result of the decision of SCC in July 2010 did not last long. The *Church of England Newspaper* reported that on the 30th November 2010, the State Council's Administrative Court in Egypt expressed their support of the SAC's May decision by rejecting the appeal of the Coptic Church (Conger Accessed January 14, 2012. <http://www.religiousintelligence.org>). In addition, according to the Egypt State Information Service, the State Council in Egypt, not the SCC, is the only institution that has the authority to examine administrative disagreements (Accessed August 12, 2012. <http://www.sis.gov.eg>). Thus, it appears that the State Council has the ultimate power to resolve legal disputes in Egypt. This means that the ruling of the SCC is no longer effective in family law, which can give some hope to some Copts who wish to pursue a second marriage outside the church.

In the meantime, several sources reported occasions when some Copts had made efforts to remarry. For example, the *Copts United* revealed that Copts have frequently converted to Protestant denominations or other religions in order to end their unhappy marriages (Accessed October 17, 2011. <http://www.copts-united.com>). Moreover, the head of the Anglican Communion in Egypt, Safwat al-Bayaadi, told *Al-Masry Al-Youm*: "So far, we have not received any requests to join the Evangelical Church. If those wanting divorce asked to join, the requests would be examined on a case-by-case basis"(Khali Accessed January 14, 2012. <http://www.almasryalyoum.com>). The response of the Anglican priest here is rational, and it appears that other Evangelical Churches in Egypt are more moderate in their marital law than the Coptic Church.

In this heated atmosphere, Coptic leaders criticised the latest ruling of the State Council's Administrative Court and asked the government to swiftly process a new personal status law for non-Muslims in Egypt, with the hope of putting an end to the controversy (Accessed

January 14, 2012. <http://www.almasryalyoum.com>). The vice president of the Anglican Church in Egypt, Andre Zaki, also called for a revision of the personal status law to permit divorce and civil marriages for Christians. Naguib Gabriel, head of the Egyptian Union for Human Rights, joined this request by asking the justice minister to register civil marriages of Copts without the prior approval of the church (Accessed January 14, 2012. <http://www.almasryalyoum.com>).

These movements were understandable, since they sought a way out of difficulty for those divorced Copts who wish to remarry. Nevertheless, the leaders of the Coptic Church still do not appear to show any serious signs of examining their own strict 1971 divorce law, or of examining any possibility of adapting the church's rule to the present complicated circumstances. There is no doubt that this unexpected turn of events left the Church with a straight choice. Either it would modify its teaching and doctrine on marriage and divorce to enable divorced Copts to remarry, or it would witness its members joining another church or converting to Islam.

In the light of their stringent principles it is logical that the Coptic Church does not allow its members simply to get divorced and remarry, but when their guidelines produce a negative and weakening effect through the various unconstructive responses of the church's members, the church should perhaps show some wisdom and flexibility in seeing if there is any room for amendment, in order to improve the rights of family life in their community. On the other hand, the Egyptian government also needs to accelerate its drafting of a new personal status law that is generally applicable to all Egyptian citizens, as requested by the church leaders and human rights activists, so as to put matrimony under government jurisdiction.

The way present church practice has affected the Coptic reading of 1 Corinthians 7 and other texts in the Bible relating to marriage, divorce and remarriage invites us to survey the historical context of the Coptic Church's authority in the area of personal and matrimonial status, and the current complicated situation regarding these issues in the Coptic Church.

2. 3.2 Reading the Bible on Marriage

In examining the topic of marriage in this section, I will refer to the works of a few modern scholars, a number of Orthodox believers, and one Coptic Bishop, Anba Gregorios (1919-2001). Among these sources, the writings of Gregorios will be the main resource, since he offers an overview of the Coptic view in his article. Bishop Gregorios started to teach theology and philosophy in 1944, and then in 1967 became a General Bishop of the Higher Institute of Coptic Studies and Scientific Research in the Clerical College in Cairo in Egypt (Accessed August 11, 2014. <http://www.suscopts.org>). Gregorios is skilful in making references to the appropriate materials from the Old Testament, the recognition of the role of Holy Spirit in marriage, New Testament writings by disciples of Jesus, and Church Fathers' comments, as well as the decrees of a variety of ecumenical councils.

Gregorios underlines the significance of marriage when he refers to Genesis: "God blessed Adam and Eve, and later, Noah, saying, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth" (Genesis 1:28, 9:1) (Gregorios 1991, 1). It is interesting to notice that in order to set out his case for the importance of marriage, Gregorios does not make reference to any passage in the New Testament, but to the Old Testament. Had he wished, he could have pointed to the teachings of Jesus and other pertinent verses in the New Testament. It may be that he hoped to place stress on God as an originator of marriage. Furthermore, if the same commandment is given twice in the Bible, that repetition usually adds to its weight. The instruction to human beings to be productive can be performed only through the physical bonding of two people, man and woman, as God intends. This also implies that Christian matrimony is defined as a male and a female becoming one flesh, in accordance with Genesis 2:24. This text thus vividly describes God as the initiator of the matrimonial union between Adam and Eve.

In addition, Genesis 1:28 and 9:1 also represent the general belief about marriage in Jewish thought, as described in the article by Basilios in connection with the subject of celibacy in the previous section. Also, Jesus reminded the Pharisees of God's original purpose for marriage in Matthew 19:5-6, as Gregorios points out:

Likewise, Christ rebuked the Pharisees who importuned Him for a facile justification of divorce by reminding them that “God made them at the beginning male and female, and for this cause a man shall leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife, and the twain shall be one flesh.” (Gregorios 1991, 1)

Thus, Gregorios introduced his proposed definition of Christian marriage: “Marriage is a spiritual bond between a man and a woman, sanctified by the grace of the Holy Spirit, joining them into indissoluble unit for the purpose of establishing a caring and harmonious Christian family” (Gregorios 1991, 1). This remark is significant because it indicates the various characteristics of the Coptic view of marriage. The Coptic Church regards matrimony not as secular but as a ‘spiritual union’ between one male and one female, with the Holy Spirit playing a unique role as the mediator between the two people, making the marriage bond permanent.

Next, Gregorios turns his attention to the interpretation of John 2:1-11, as the foundational text for the Coptic Church’s sacramental approach to matrimony. Gregorios states as below:

The presence of Christ at the marriage of Cana was a very significant event. That the Lord accepted an invitation to a wedding and performed His first miracle there reflects the importance He attached to marriage as a sacrosanct institution in the structure of society (Gregorios 1991, 1).

That is an interesting perception of the passage, but Gregorios fails to provide any further persuasive evidence of the validity of this analysis in his writing. Perhaps his interpretation results from his literal adaptation of the common general understanding of this text, where the unusual presence of Jesus at the wedding and his first miracle in John 2:1-11 reflect the importance of marriage. In spite of this possible explanation, this text actually needs a broader exegesis, because a variety of implications can be drawn from this context. For example, Keener considers the symbol of wine as pointing towards the messianic feast (Keener 2003, 494). By comparison, Lightfoot pays more attention to the ‘sign,’ which is viewed as the relationship of the old order and the new, that is, of the Law and the Gospel. This may also refer to the latter being regarded as the completion and transformation of the former (Lightfoot 1956, 100). As a result, the precise setting and intention of the miracle in this text is open to discussion, so it is uncertain whether the Coptic rendering is the only possible appropriate interpretation of the text.

Gregorios then moves to the sayings of the Church Fathers, who commented on the practice of matrimony, along with its purpose and benefits. Gregorios introduces Origen, who profoundly echoed the commentaries on Matthew by stating:

Certainly it is God who joins two in one, so that when he marries a woman to a man there are no longer two. And since it is God who joins them, there is in this joining a grace for those who are joined by God. Paul knows this, and he said that just as holy celibacy was a grace, so also was marriage, according to the Word of God, a grace (Gregorios, 1991, 2).

The citation from Origen here appears to add weight to Gregorios's argument. Like Gregorios, Origen also refers to marriage between one man and one woman as a locus of God's grace, through the Holy Spirit. Origen also underlines God as the originator of matrimony. The Coptic Orthodox Church Network also points to Origen, who explained Christian matrimony as a unity of the church with Christ as follows: "Since God has joined them together (a man and a woman in marriage), for this reason there is a gift for those joined together by God (Accessed March 4, 2012. <http://www.copticchurch.net>). Origen thought of marriage as a grace, and also as a gift. He seems to have put a particularly strong emphasis on the characteristic of marriage as a free gift of God, and God as the giver of the gift and the initiator of married life.

Gregorios also references John Chrysostom who pointed out that marriage was intended to be an appropriate solution not for sexual immorality, but for keeping moral chastity (Roth & Anderson 1986, 85). It is obvious that Chrysostom understood the institution of Christian matrimony as a means of helping Christians avoid sexual temptation. This observation can be connected to the work of Kearney, who introduces the idea of three goods of marriage as suggested by Augustine in his work *Marriage and Virginit*y. Augustine asserted that the original and major goodness of Christian marriage lies in the procreation of children, the reciprocal loyalty of spouses, and what Augustine called sacrament: the sacred sign or symbol of spiritual union between Christ and the church (*Marriage and Virginit*y. trans. Kearney. 1999, 30). In the book, Hunter introduces that the view of marriage as being sacred became characteristic of the morality of early Christianity (*ibid.* 1999, 30).

Augustine's views on marriage can be traced to Scripture; the first advantage of marriage he

identifies, the production of children, reflects the commandment of God in Genesis 1: 28 to “be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth (ESV).” The second one is drawn from Genesis 2:18: “Then the Lord God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.” The third, Christian matrimony reflects the spiritual relationship between Christ and church, is alluded to in Ephesians 5:21-33. It is certain that all three benefits of matrimony articulated by Augustine are in line with the teachings of the Bible. As one of the most influential of the Church Fathers, his stress on these points secured the essential value and sanctity of Christian marriage in the church and church tradition.

For the final basis of support for his argument concerning marriage, Gregorios turns to the church council rules adopted in the Council of Gangra in Asia Minor in A.D. 345. The council strongly defended marriage. For instance, it said that a priest could be expelled if he rejected his wife to pursue a vision of celibacy as a godlier life style (Gregorios 1991, 3). This suggests that the Coptic Church regarded the marital relationship more highly than it did the personal pursuit of piety. Gregorios also points to the Second Council of Lyons (1274), the Council of Florence (1439) and the Council of Trent (1547), where marriage was considered as a divine sacrament instituted by God consisting of the marital union of one man and one woman (Accessed May 30, 2012. <http://www.catholicdoors.com>).

By comparison with the strict view of marriage of the Coptic Church, Gregorios briefly describes the extreme perspective of a cult which promoted absolute celibacy and self-restraint. According to Gregorios, the religious movements of Manichaeism and Gnosticism, which were active between the first and third centuries, looked down on marriage and the Christian teachings on this topic (Gregorios 1991, 2). Here, Gregorios intends to make a sharp distinction between the extreme belief of a cult and the constructive outlook of the Coptic Church in their attitudes toward marriage.

As I have stated earlier, the union of one flesh between Adam and Eve as described in Genesis 2:24 can be taken as a typological prefigurement of the union of Christ and his church, as illustrated in Ephesians 5:32. This is a mystery (μυστήριον) with a spiritual connotation. Hence, the principle of marriage described by Paul (pace those scholars who do

not regard this epistle as Pauline) in Ephesians 5:22-33 is an evident illustration of matrimony being sacramental, since those married in the Lord will share in the union and be joined together like Christ and his church. Their participation will take place by applying the same biblical attitudes to each other as apply to the relationship between Christ and his church.

Gregorios refers to the liturgy at a Coptic wedding:

Next comes the reading of Ephesians 5:22-6:30, wherein Paul speaks of the married life of devout Christians as the relationship between Christ and the church; the key verses are, “For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church,” and “Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.” (Gregorios 1991, 5)

The reading of a biblical passage like this is an unusual aspect of the Coptic wedding ceremony. Professor Zion, the Head of the Department of Religious Studies at Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario, confirms that this text is read in the liturgical service for marriage in the Orthodox Church (Zion 1992, 45). Because Zion writes from the perspective of the Eastern Orthodox, his remark suggests that a similar liturgy is used there.

Gregorios also points to another element of the Coptic wedding, the venue for the ceremony: “Let us look further into the typical Coptic marriage ceremony here, which should be performed in the church or on exceptional occasions in a private house” (Gregorios 1991, 3). Having the wedding presided over by a Coptic priest in a church building is most likely a necessary step to “give legal status to a nuptial union,” as the late Pope was quoted as saying in the *Church of England Newspaper* (Accessed October 14, 2011.

<http://www.religiousintelligence.org>). These regulations are unlike those for a civil marriage, since the latter can happen in any venue, according to the preference of the couple. Gregorios also points to certain other particular customs. For example, the presiding priest at the wedding should wear full ministerial robes but no shoes (Gregorios 1991, 3). Gregorios goes on to explain that only a wedding that was conducted under the liturgy of the church would be considered a legitimate marriage, since the liturgy is the means that legitimises the joining of the man and the woman (Gregorios 1991, 3).

These regulations are interesting and give rise to a number of questions. Does this mean that the Copts do not recognise a non-Coptic style wedding as a valid marriage? What would the Coptic Church do if the officiating minister happened to wear shoes at the wedding? Would

this mistake call into question the validity of the marriage? It is also uncertain whether the church would acknowledge a civil wedding that took place without the proper church liturgy as a legitimate marriage. Moreover, what if the couple chose to have a wedding not at church, but at their preferred venue? Would this choice render their marriage invalid in the sight of Coptic Church?

Rowberry and Khalil refer to *The Bill of Personal Affairs for Copts* (January 2007), which was given to them by Bishop Paula, its primary author. He was ordained by the late Pope Shenouda as chief Bishop for the Family. He comments on this matter in their article as follows:

The *Bill* defines "Christian marriage" as "a continuous, sacred and religious bond" that "takes place in public" between "one Christian man and one Christian woman who are fit for marriage" and must be solemnized by a priest who is authorized to perform the ceremony (Rowberry & Khalil, 2013, 46).

This *Bill* is a formal reminder of various aspects of Coptic marriage, as mentioned by Gregorios. Ware also writes that:

The Trinitarian mystery of unity in diversity applies not only to the doctrine of the Church but to the doctrine of marriage. Man is made in the image of the Trinity, and except in special cases he is not intended by God to live alone, but in a family. And just as God blessed the first family, commanding Adam and Eve to be fruitful and multiply, so the Church today gives its blessing to the union of man and woman (Ware 1963, 300).

The last phrase quoted from the *Bill* about the definition of Christian marriage and the comment of Ware as cited above both imply that everyone supports the right of the Orthodox Church to perform marriages in the church, because the church alone is privileged to give the blessing of God to Christian matrimony. Nevertheless, this assertion does not have any biblical foundation, since the Scripture does not give any clear mandate for the church to officiate at marriages. What is more, the blessing of God can be given to any Christian couple regardless of their wedding venue. Therefore, the regulation of the Coptic Church in this issue of the blessing of God is not properly grounded biblically or theologically. No pertinent passage on the right of the church to grant blessing to the marital binding of a couple is to be found in the Bible. Nevertheless, these two guidelines of the Coptic Church appear to

exercise religious leverage over all areas of life of Copts.

Gregorios also mentions the long prayer recited by the priest at the wedding. One clause refers to the “betrothal of the blessed Orthodox virgin son [name of bridegroom] to his betrothed, the blessed Orthodox virgin daughter [name of bride] (Gregorios 1991, 4). It is open to discussion how strict the understanding of “virgin” here may be! According to Gregorios, after various rituals, prayers and a reading from Matthew 19:5-6, the prayer of absolution is also offered (Gregorios 1991, 5). The grounds for observing this form of prayer at the wedding are questionable. It is not clear whether this prayer is given for the forgiveness of all sins in general committed by the bride and bridegroom, or for the pardon of specific offences of both parties before the wedding.

Rowberry and Khalil also mention a further marital restriction of the Church that should not be overlooked. The Coptic Church only permits a Copt to marry another person who has the same faith. This means that:

A Copt can get married to fellow believer or one of its sister churches from the Oriental Orthodox family of churches: the Armenian Orthodox Church of All Armenians; the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church; The Eritrean Orthodox Tewahedo Church; The Indian Orthodox Church; and The Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch. These churches are doctrinally linked by their rejection of the Council of Chalcedon in 451 CE and, therefore, are in full communion with each other, each accepting all of the others' sacramental rites. The Coptic Church thus refuses to honour marriages between a Copt and any other Christian or non-Christian denomination (Rowberry & Khalil 2013, 48-49).

This strict rule limits people’s choices of marriage partner. This also implies that a non-Copt who wants to marry a Copt must leave his religion and accept the Coptic faith in order to marry. This stringent marriage regulation differs from what Paul stated in 2 Corinthians 6:14, “Do not be unequally yoked with an unbeliever. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness?” Here, Paul admonished a believer not to marry an unbeliever. Hence, the stern judgment of the Coptic Church in choice of marriage partner reflects the exclusionary attitude of the church.

Gregorios understands the status of marriage through his reading of several passages in the

Old Testament, the recognition of the role of the Holy Spirit, a few passages in the New Testament, the writings of a number of Church Fathers and several ecumenical church councils. However, a few notable points are worth mentioning here. When it comes to his choice of Church Fathers for the support of his argument, Gregorios singles out the Fathers who were from the city of Alexandria in Egypt. Since Gregorios was a bishop of the Coptic Church in Egypt, he might have been more familiar with those early Fathers. Moreover, the political and cultural background of the writings of the Church Fathers needs also to be taken into account. Egypt had fallen under the rule of the Roman Empire from 30 B.C. and was later controlled by the Arab invaders from the seventh century C.E. The Fathers whose comments were quoted in this section happened to live in the Roman Empire between the third century and the fifth century. Accordingly, the context of their lifetime may have influenced their teachings and their interpretation of the Bible.

Furthermore, even though there are several guidelines for marriage in the New Testament that Gregorios could have cited, he refers to one particular teaching of Jesus (in Matthew 19:5-6) and to the presence of Jesus and the miracle performed by him in John 2 :1-11. It looks as if Gregorios does not pay much heed to the other instructions of the disciples in the New Testament on the same issue. He does not even make mention of the pertinent passages in 1 Corinthians 7, where Paul gave extensive counsel on this topic.

In the light of this I conclude that the Coptic Church interprets the biblical texts on the subject of marriage mainly through the lenses of the Church Fathers and a few church councils and the Bible. They all held matrimony in high esteem, and also firmly regarded marriage as a solemn pledge before God and one of the important sacraments of the Coptic Church. This shows how Christian understanding of marriage is noticeably distinct from both ancient Roman and modern Muslim marriage.

In Muslim culture, when the two parties are asked to meet the conditions of the marriage, if one or both of them does not carry out the requirements, they can easily terminate their marriage contract. This system of marriage is more or less similar to that of ancient Rome. This implies that there is no distinctive spiritual implication in the Roman and Muslim

concepts of marriage. By contrast, the marriage vow amongst Copts is more intimately related to their calling and gift, as well as their intention to enter into a matrimonial union. In other words, once married, Christians are expected not just to fulfill their secular marital responsibilities, but also to fulfill the purpose for which they were created in the realm of spiritual life before God. Consequently, I conclude that the special need for the church to preserve matrimony as a solemn and permanent sacrament before God in the midst of liberal ancient Roman and modern Muslim personal status law has affected the church's reading of the related biblical texts for marriage, mainly through the conservative perspectives of a few early Church Fathers and several church councils.

2. 3.3. Reading the Bible on Divorce

We have already observed that there are two valid grounds for divorce in the Coptic Church: adultery and apostasy. This leads us to enquire how the Coptic Church understands the topic of divorce in the Bible, and what influences may have affected the reading of the pertinent biblical texts by the church. For this issue, I will refer to the perspectives of the Coptic bishop Gregorios, the late Pope Shenouda III, and a number of well-known Church Fathers such as Theophilus, Basil of Caesarea, John Chrysostom, St. Augustine and St Athanasius, as well as a few modern scholars: Evdokimov, Grubbs, Instone-Brewer and Ware. I will address their diverse comments and arguments in chronological order.

According to Zion, the renowned Roman historian, exegete and Christian polemicist Eusebius, who was also the Bishop of Caesarea in Palestine around 314 C.E., introduced the apologist and sixth bishop of Antioch, Theophilus (? - 181 C.E.), as 'the first Father of the Church' in his *Church History*, in order to mention the exception clause in Matthew 5:32 in relation to divorce:

The gospel voice provides a stricter teaching about purity when it says, 'Everyone who looks upon another person's wife to desire her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. And he who marries a woman divorced by her husband commits adultery, and whoever divorces his wife except for fornication makes her a partner in adultery' (Zion 1992, 198).

Theophilus' understanding of this verse clearly indicates his stringent and literal

interpretation of the passage, taking no account of the context, but reinforcing his high standard of marital chastity.

Evdokimov, a noted contemporary lay theologian of the Orthodox Church in France, also refers to the great Church Father Basil of Caesarea (329-379 C.E.) who was an influential theologian and Greek-speaking bishop in Turkey. He firmly restated that a marriage union could be terminated only on the grounds of adultery by the wife (Evdokimov 1985, 184). This statement shows Basil's conservative attitude, consonant with that of Theophilus. Indeed, Basil's opinion appears stricter than that of Theophilus, since he regarded only the adultery of a wife as a cause for divorce, not mentioning sexual immorality on the part of a husband as a cause for the break-up of a marriage. This attitude reflects the male-centred Christian society of the time, in which men were given precedence over women in family moral status.

John Chrysostom is another Church Father who considered the termination of marriage to be contrary to human nature, since husband and wife were bonded as one flesh. Nevertheless, he continued to insist that a husband could separate himself from his wife in the case of the wife's adultery. In this case, he concluded that the husband was no longer regarded as the spouse of the wife who had committed sexual immorality (Zion 1992, 203). Similarly, Augustine (354- 430 C.E.) asserted in the third chapter of his book *The Good of Marriage* that divorce was permitted only on the grounds of sexual fornication by a wife, as Jesus had taught (ed. Clark 1996, 45).

The position on grounds for divorce taken by these two Fathers is the same as that of Basil, in that all of them viewed the infidelity of the wife as the only appropriate reason for marital split. This implies that the sexual unfaithfulness of husband is to be acquiesced to, and would not be a legitimate cause for divorce.

The last Father to be discussed in this context is St Athanasius (295-373 C.E.), who was the twentieth Coptic Pope of Alexandria. Rowbery and Khalil write that "in his 107 Canons, four of them (Canons 6, 8, 45, and 46) renew the familiar injunctions that Christians should practice monogamy and should not seek divorce except in cases of adultery" (Rowberry &

Khalil 2013, 17). Here, St. Athanasius did not specify clearly to whose adultery he referred. Presumably, given the consensus of the two Fathers, Chrysostom and Augustine, as well as the ancient Christian standard of family law, which was more lenient to men than to women, it refers to the wife.

The perspectives of the Church Fathers toward the topic of divorce are a great help in understanding the commonly-held thoughts of early Christians. Bearing in mind the opinions of the five Fathers, Theophilus, Basil of Caesarea, John Chrysostom, St Augustine, and St Athanasius on the subject of divorce, let us examine the family law of ancient Roman society, which was the background of the early church and Church Fathers.

According to Grubbs, divorce was regarded as an acknowledged reality of life in Roman society regardless of whether it happened unilaterally or by mutual consent. Until the fourth century, marital breakup in Roman culture was not much restricted due to the liberal divorce policy (Grubbs 2002, 187). The practice of divorce in the Roman world was known to be widespread, which led to marriages being relatively easily dissolved on various grounds.

Instone-Brewer also speaks of the general belief that the Orthodox Church under Roman rule accepted the right of secular law to permit divorce from the time of the Roman emperor Justinian (482 - 565 C.E.). Justinian promulgated a new law about marriage and remarriage in Novels XXII and XVII- units of Roman law- in 536 and 542 C.E. respectively (Instone-Brewer 2002, 306). This indicates that since they were governed by Rome, the Church had to adapt to the liberal Roman family laws, which permitted Copts to get divorced on a variety of grounds. In other words, thanks to the influence of the Roman culture, there may have been more permissible grounds for divorce inside the church during that time.

Evdokimov also supports this viewpoint, stating that under Roman national legislation there could be other potential reasons for divorce in the Coptic community. They might include the adultery of the husband *or* his wife, the absence or the lack of news from one of the estranged partners for more than five years, civil execution, the husband's elevation to the episcopacy, or entry into monastic life by one of the spouses at an advanced age. In such cases marriage was terminated, but the responsible party was not permitted to remarry (Evdokimov 1985, 184). Perhaps the 1938 Code reflects the more lenient aspects of patristic church divorce law

because it was influenced by Roman family law.

Instone-Brewer points out that the conditions under which divorce was permitted, especially sexual unfaithfulness and desertion, were recognised in the Coptic Church from an early date (Instone-Brewer 2002, 306). This implies that the church had to abide by the marriage and divorce laws of Rome, which ruled until the seventh century and the beginning of Muslim rule. Instone-Brewer also comments on the first recorded canon written during the period when Alexius (1025-1043 C.E.) was Patriarch of Constantinople, which indicates that consent for divorce and remarriage was granted only for adultery (Instone-Brewer 2002, 306). This suggests that the Orthodox Church might have turned back to their old, strict divorce law after the Muslim conquest. However, the Coptic family regulation in the 1938 Code, as observed earlier, offered more diverse divorce grounds than had previously been available. This means that there had been changes and progress in divorce law in the general Orthodox and/or Coptic Church up to the middle of the twentieth century.

Having looked at the historic development of divorce law in the Orthodox Church, let us go on to examine various sources to find out what kind of rules the contemporary Coptic Church observes with regard to the legitimacy of divorce. One Coptic-related website - <http://www.suscopts.org>- makes reference to this subject, citing the following passage in the Bible: “Divorce is not permitted except in the case of sexual immorality (Matthew 5:32)” (Accessed July 11, 2014). The initial intention of this commandment was probably equally applicable to both men and women, but the church has traditionally regarded this as a guideline for women, meaning that a man could initiate a divorce from his wife in the case of her adultery, but the wife could not do the same thing on the occasion of her husband’s misconduct. Compared to this understanding, however, the *Bill* of the Coptic Church says that “If either the husband or the wife have apostatised or committed adultery, the innocent spouse must file for divorce” (Rowberry & Khalil 2013, 55). This statement indicates the change of culture, which acknowledges that in modern days a woman’s right to ask for a divorce is equal to a man’s.

Another Coptic website - <http://www.coptic.net> - says:

The Coptic Orthodox Church does not mind any civil law of the land as long as it does not interfere with the Church's sacraments. The Church does not have (and actually refuses to canonize) an official position vis-à-vis some controversial issues (e.g. abortion). While the church has clear teachings about such matters (e.g. abortion interferes with God's will), it is the position of the Church that such matters are better resolved on a case-by-case basis by the father of confession, as opposed to having a blanket canon that makes a sin of such practices (Accessed July 14, 2014. <http://www.coptic.net>).

This gives the impression that when it comes to family law, the church sees itself as an independent entity within the state. This echoes Ware, who makes it clear that a divorce “arranged by the State in the civil courts is not sufficient” (Ware 1963, 302). This sets the church and the government on a collision course, since a divorce issued by the secular state is not recognised by the church. This point is also found in a Catholic-related website (Accessed July 14, 2014. <http://www.catholicculture.org>). According to this source, because of the more liberal attitude of the Muslim government in Egypt towards divorce, ‘many Coptic women have converted to Islam to leave their marriages.’ It continues:

If the woman runs off with a Muslim man, Christian families have been known to accuse the man and his family of abducting her and forcing her to convert to Islam. Though on occasion such kidnappings and forced conversions do occur, more often the woman has chosen to build a life with the man. Such accusations are made to save face within the Christian community. Whether well-founded or not, they attract a great deal of public attention and inflame relations between the two religious communities (Accessed July 14, 2014. <http://www.catholicculture.org>).

This comment clearly indicates the negative effects of the inflexible divorce law in the Coptic Church. We will look further into the troubled situation described here in a later part of this chapter.

At this point, let us look in detail at the way the Coptic Church defines adultery. Rowberry and Khalil again:

Any of the following constitutes adultery:

- (1) Sexual perversion (i.e., any kind of unnatural sex act- for example, homosexuality);
- (2) If the wife is pregnant at a time when there is no possibility that the husband could be the father;
- (3) If the husband or wife urges his or her spouse to commit adultery;
- (4) If letters from the husband or wife to a stranger prove that there is an illicit

- relationship between them;
- (5) If a stranger is found with the husband or wife in a suspicious situation within the home;
 - (6) If either party runs away with an unrelated member of the opposite sex, or spends the night with that person without the spouse's knowledge
- (Rowbery & Khalil 2013, 55).

This comprehensive guideline is notable in its precise definition of adultery. Unlike some contemporary churches, in which homosexuality is conceded, the Coptic Church defines the act of sexual behaviour among same sex as adultery, which can be a ground for a marital breakdown.

With respect to divorce within the Coptic Church, the perspectives of four Church Fathers have been surveyed, along with the arguments of some contemporary Coptic ministers and current Coptic-related sources. A few modern scholars provide helpful research about the particular political and social setting of ancient Roman family law. Also, the special religious situation of the church in Egypt has been briefly mentioned.

It is highly likely that the stern regulations concerning divorce in the Orthodox Church were probably observed during the lifetime of the Fathers, and possibly for some time afterwards, until the enactment of the new Roman personal status law in the fifth and sixth centuries. Nevertheless, the strict observation of Christian teaching on marriage and divorce in early Christianity might have been gradually weakened by the influence of the relaxed divorce practices in the dominant Roman culture.

Accordingly, the family law of the church during this era appears to have allowed wider grounds for divorce than in earlier times. Later, the church may have been threatened by the different, looser family law of Muslim society after the introduction of Islam into Egypt during the seventh and eighth centuries. This shift probably challenged the Coptic Church to some degree, so that they tried to tighten their family moral code. The Coptic Church had eventually formulated the 1938 Code, which was later replaced by the stricter family regulations of 1971.

Although it is understandable for the Coptic Church to attempt to rigidly apply conservative

family law to the lay population, the impracticality of its application cannot but bring out unpleasant side effects. Therefore, some realistic consideration of adding more acceptable grounds for divorce can be suggested. For instance, the Bible mentions desertion by an unbelieving spouse in 1 Corinthians 7:5, as suggested by Bishop Gregorios. Furthermore, if a husband abuses his wife verbally, emotionally, and physically, and/or does not provide his family with emotional, physical and material support, it could be argued that this is covered by the biblical principle suggested in Ephesians 5:25. These kinds of neglect may thus be taken into consideration as rational grounds for divorce.

It is very likely that the current unique religious circumstances of the Coptic Church in Egypt motivated the church to read the biblical passages for divorce through the readings of Church Fathers, especially those Fathers who did not consent to divorce except on the ground of adultery. The 1971 divorce law permitted one further permissible reason for divorce: the religious conversion of one spouse. This differs from the teaching of the Bible. It is likely that, as a minority population in a Muslim country, the church is attempting to maintain its religious purity and identity through this unbiblical divorce guideline. All of these understandings lead me to conclude that the unique religious and political circumstances of Coptic Church in Egypt must have influenced the way that the church reads the pertinent biblical texts on divorce.

2. 3.4. Reading the Bible on Remarriage

We now move on to examine how the Orthodox Church reads the pertinent biblical texts on the issue of remarriage, and the factors that might possibly have influenced the church's understanding of this topic. Once again, I will draw on a number of resources: the writings of the Coptic bishop Basilios, the Church Fathers, church councils, ancient Christian literature, the Coptic Orthodox Church Network website, Zion, CCE, Grubbs, and another Coptic scholar, Safi ibn al-‘Assal, Al, Basilios, the Coptic Orthodox Church Network, and Zion quote the sayings of several Fathers, so this section will start with the comments of the Fathers, taken in chronological order.

On the topic of remarriage, the Church Fathers are divided into those who are in generally in

favour and those who are opposed. First I will address the minority of Church Fathers who appear to acquiesce to the idea of second marriage. Zion makes mention of an argument by Origen:

Contrary to what was written, some even of the rulers of the church have permitted a woman to marry, even when her husband was living, doing contrary to what was written, where it is said in Romans 7:2-3, “A wife is bound for so long time as her husband liveth,” and “So then if while her husband liveth, she shall be joined to another man she shall be called an adulteress,” not indeed altogether without reason, for it is probable this concession was permitted in comparison with worse things, contrary to what was from the beginning ordained by law, and written (G. Cereti, *Divorzio, Nuove Nozee et penitenza Nella Chiesa Primitiva*; Zion 1992, 199-200).

This implies that while Origen was living, there was at least one rare case where remarriage was allowed for whatever reason. This may suggest that the act of divorce and/or remarriage was permitted in real life despite the strict church rules that time, possibly under the tacit approval of some church leaders. Thus, although it could be argued that church law did not tolerate the custom of remarriage, in reality it was secretly practiced among the Christians. This may indicate that there were numerous elements that caused the breakdown of marriages other than the sole legitimately authorized reason of adultery. In a similar way, Bishop Basilios, in his article on “Digamy” in *CCE*, introduces Cyril of Jerusalem (315-386 C.E.) and Ambrose of Milan (339-397 C.E.), who gave their consent to second marriages, though they regarded widowhood more highly than remarriage (Basilios “Digamy” 1991, 1).

In spite of varying degrees of hesitation amongst the Fathers, Cyril of Jerusalem, demonstrated more leniency towards remarriage, saying:

Those who are once married, let them not hold in contempt those who have accommodated themselves to a second marriage. Continence is a good and wonderful thing; but still, it is permissible to enter upon a second marriage (Basilios “Digamy” 1991, 1).

Cyril appears to be one of the exceptional Church Fathers who were not totally opposed to the second marriage of believers in every circumstance.

Basil of Caesarea (330 – 379 C.E.), the Greek bishop of Caesarea Mazaca in Cappadocia, emphasised in his *Moralia* the continuous marital status of a husband and wife, unless one

spouse had been caught in the act of adultery or hoped to enter a monastery:

A man, however, who abandons his legally wedded wife, and marries another woman, according to the Lord's decision, is liable to the judgment of adultery. But it has been ruled and regulated by our Fathers that such persons are to weep for a year, listen on the side for two years, kneel for three years, in the seventh year co-stand together with the faithful, and then be deemed worthy to participate in the offering, provided they repent with remorseful tears (Gregory of Nazianzus *Letter 44 to Olympia*; Zion 1992, 201-202).

The method of reform proposed by the Fathers for a man who has deserted his wife is open to question, since this rule cannot be found in the Bible. Perhaps this chastisement for evildoers might represent an accumulation of advice from the Fathers on ways to deal with a husband who neglects his wife. Nevertheless, it is harsh in comparison to the mercy which Jesus showed to the woman caught in adultery in John 8:1-11.

What is striking in this remark is the unspoken acceptance of second marriage: Basil even suggests a mode of penance for husbands who have left their wives and remarried. This suggestion may be unusual, since it might have been routine in that culture for a husband to leave his wife so as to get remarried. Moreover, he acknowledged the possibility of divorce due to the sexual unfaithfulness of a husband. This point is also not usual, because the custom in that time would be to ignore the infidelity of a man and disregard it as a reason for marital breakdown. This suggests that he was more sympathetic than Clement of Alexandria (whose opinion we will come to later). His attitude in prescribing penance as a condition for restoring a remarried Christian to the church community and to communion was remarkably unlike that of other Fathers.

John Chrysostom also spoke about the remarriage of a widow or widower. He approved of this on the condition that it should take place only "in the Lord", which meant with carefulness and decency (Chrysostom *Homily 19*, 41; Roth & Anderson 1986, 41). The implication usually means that he or she who wishes to remarry is encouraged to choose a fellow believer in the Lord. He did not speak here about the possibility of second marriage of a husband who had divorced his wife for her sexual immorality. However, like other Church Fathers whose opinions are quoted in this section, Chrysostom would probably not have

consented to the remarriage of the husband, even though he agreed with the second marriage of a widow or widower.

The Coptic Orthodox Church Network mentions another Church Father, Gregory (540 – 604 C.E.), who was Pope from 590 C.E. until his death in Rome. He said that:

The first marriage is a law, the second marriage is forgiveness, the third transgression and the fourth is clearly adultery (Accessed February 15, 2012. <http://copticchurch.net>).

Gregory is also unusual in appearing to accept the incidence of divorce and to approve of second marriage, even though the grounds for either of them are not mentioned here. What is more, he did not implicitly comment on the person, be it wife or husband, who is allowed to have the second, third or fourth marriage.

It is most likely that the person who would be permitted to have more than one marriage would be a man, since the second marriage of women in the early church community was not readily permitted except for widows. It is also questionable whether the forgiveness is given only to those who marry a second time. In a situation where a man has to dismiss his wife because of her sexual immorality, serious long-term illness, severe character flaw, or change of religion, the man might end up marrying several times. In those circumstances the “sin” of remarriage might be forgivable. A few exceptional Church Fathers showed a favourable attitude towards remarriage, but by far the majority opposed. I will now examine various negative comments of Fathers on the topic of second marriage.

Zion refers to *The Shepherd of Hermas*, a very old work dating either from the end of the first century or from circa 140-150 C. E., one of the earliest written records of patristic thinking on marriage and divorce. Several Church Fathers, including Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian and Athanasius, considered this writing as canonical or at least quasi-canonical (Zion 1992, 194). In this text, according to Zion, a former slave called Hermas asked his guardian angel what a man should do if he discovered that his wife was sexually unfaithful and was continuing to commit sin in this way. In response, the angel insisted strongly that the husband should leave the wife. Nevertheless, the husband was asked not to get married again, since his remarriage would result in his committing adultery himself. The reason for his remaining unmarried was to allow for the possibility of his wife’s repentance and their

potential reconciliation (Zion 1992, 194). Hermas continued:

‘But, if, sir, I said, after the divorce the wife repents and wishes to return to her husband, will he refuse to receive her?’ The angel said, ‘No, indeed, if the husband does not receive her, he sins. He incurs a great sin. The sinner who has repented must be received. However, it should not be often, for there is only one repentance for the servants of God. To bring about her repentance, then, the husband should not remarry.’ (Zion 1992, 195)

It is interesting to see here that the angel was against the remarriage of a husband who was left alone due to his wife’s sin, even though the wife might well not repent of her sin and come back to her first husband. It appears that, in either case, the husband was required to remain single after the breakdown of a marriage. This warning turns out to be stricter than the norm of the Coptic community up to 1971, from which time the husband was, (and still is,) usually allowed to remarry if his wife was the guilty party in the break-up of the marriage. The admonition of the angel differs from the traditional Jewish custom, in which a divorced man was likely to remarry. It is also questionable whether the husband in that situation would, in reality, be willing to wait for the return of his wife indefinitely. Through this unusual advice, the writer was emphasising the unbreakable nature of the Christian marital bond, which starkly contrasted with the widespread practice of easy divorce and remarriage in second-century Roman culture. Osiek makes sense when she asserts that the conversation here suggests an early phase of development of the Christian distrust of remarriage and the high ascetic merit of celibacy (Osiek 1999, 116). Also, the angel’s remark, “However, it should not be often, for there is only one repentance for the servants of God” is not in accordance with the instruction of Jesus in Matthew 18:22, where he commanded his disciples to forgive those who sinned countless times if asked. This indicates that the book has a resolute undertone of strict patristic ethics on Christian marriage.

Basilios refers to additional resources that indicate an unfavourable attitude towards remarriage:

- (1) The seventh canon of the Council of Neocaesarea (315 C.E.) forbids priests from attending the remarriage feast.
- (2) The Coptic service for those people omits the crowning of the spouse who has been married before, and includes a petition for absolution.
- (3) Remarrying persons were asked to do penance in the early church.
- (4) Remarrying persons could not be ordained to any rank of the presbytery or

office of a deacon (Basilios “Digamy” 1991, 1).

The third clause might be appropriate at the end of a marriage, whatever the cause might be, but the rest seem unreasonable because they show no clemency to those who wish to remarry, and because the guidelines here do not find support in the Bible. For example, in the first clause, if the remarriage takes place due to the act of adultery of one spouse, a second marriage for the other is legitimate, and thus the minister should be allowed to attend the feast.

Basilios goes on to introduce another source, Canon 1 of the First Council of Valence (374 C.E.), insisting that “None after this synod . . . be ordained to the clergy from among bigamists, or the husbands of previously married women.” As valuable literary evidence, these materials give a glimpse of the way the early Church disapproved of those in a second marriage, either personally or publicly, although the grounds for a second marriage were evidently described here. Furthermore, the second paragraph appears to be a literal application of the phrases of Matthew 5:32 and Luke 16:18, in which a man becomes an adulterer by marrying a divorced woman. It would seem that these canons may have directly or indirectly influenced some Church Fathers in their literal interpretation of the biblical texts on remarriage.

The first of the Church Fathers to criticise remarriage is Justin Martyr (103–165 C.E.). He stated that “those who, according to human law, contract double marriages, are sinners against our master.” (Zion 1992, 196) Justin did not point to any possible grounds on which people might remarry, and appears to have condemned every second marriage without exception. This suggests that there is no way out of a troubled marriage except by the death of one spouse: an uncompromising stance against remarriage.

The second Father whose comments on remarriage are relevant is Athanagoras of Athens (133-190 C.E.). According to Zion, chapter 33 of Athanagoras’ *A Plea for Christians*, written around 177 AD, has become a most significant text for the debate on divorce and remarriage in the early Church. It reads, in part:

We are not concerned with the exercise of eloquence but with the performance and

teaching of deeds-either to stay in the state in which a man was born or to remain satisfied with one marriage; for a second marriage is gilded adultery. For “whoever divorces his wife,” it says, “and marries another, commits adultery.” Neither does it allow a man to divorce a woman whose maidenhead he has taken, nor does it allow him to marry again. For he who detaches himself from his previous wife, even if she has died, is a covert adulterer. He thwarts the hand of God (because in the beginning God formed one man and one woman), and he destroys the communion of flesh with flesh in the unity characteristic of the intercourse of the sexes (Athanasius *A plea for Christians 33 in Legatio and De Resurrectione*. 33; Zion 1992, 197).

In the citation above, the exception clause ‘except for the cause of adultery’ in Matthew 5:32, which is the only biblical ground for second marriage, is omitted. If remarriage results from this issue, then it should not be condemned as ‘adultery,’ as it is here. It may well be that Athanasius failed to notice this clause when highlighting his argument against second marriages. Moreover, the phrase, “For he who detaches himself from his previous wife, even if she has died, is a covert adulterer” is also not biblical, since in Romans 7:2 and 1 Corinthians 7:39 Paul permitted the second marriage of those whose spouse has passed away. Zion points to this extremely unyielding attitude of Athanasius in opposing any remarriage (Zion 1992, 197).

The third Church Father to be discussed is Clement of Alexandria (150-215 C.E.). He might be regarded as the chief advocate of marriage in the Patristic age. He commented on the indissolubility of marriage:

Now that the Scripture counsels marriage and allows no release from the union, it is expressly contained in the law, Thou shall not put away thy wife, except for the cause of fornication: and it regards as fornication, the marriage of those separated while the other is alive (Zion 1992, 198-199).

It looks as though Clement is less conventional than Justin and Athanasius, in that he mentions a situation in which there might be a divorce. Nevertheless, Clement did not specify that this applied when the husband was sexually unfaithful. Clement also explicitly permits separation only by reason of marital infidelity (not of a husband, but of his wife) and thus all subsequent remarriage was excluded, being regarded as adultery. In contrast to this view, the current Coptic Church permits the remarriage of a spouse, whether husband or wife, who is proved not to be the guilty party in any instance of sexual immorality. In this case, as we have

seen earlier, the remarriage is not condemned as adultery in the Coptic Church. Also, it does not matter whether or not the divorced spouse is still alive at the time of remarriage of his or her partner.

Ambrose (339-397 C.E.) wrote that “[what] we suggest by way of counsel we do not command as a precept We do not prohibit second marriages, but neither do we recommend them” (Basilios “Digamy,” 1991, 1). The tone of his comment on this issue is not as stern as that of the other Church Fathers whose opinions we have considered. This suggests that his view of divorce might stand in the middle ground between positive and negative, though he was rigid in his belief that remarriage cannot be commended. Zion points out several writings in which Ambrose stated this view, the most obvious example being found in his essay *On Abraham*, where he insisted “You are forbidden to take another wife as long as your first wife lives” (Zion 1992, 204.). Ambrose strictly prohibited a husband from remarrying while his first wife lived. However, it is uncertain whether this order applies to the wife as well. Furthermore, there is no recognition here of any exceptional situation, or of cases of adultery. If this is the case, the man may remarry.

Likewise, according to the Coptic Orthodox Church Network, Jerome (347 –420 C.E.) wrote:

“The first Adam married once but the second Adam (Christ) never married. Even the pigeons and doves don’t take another partner if their companions pass away. Remarriage is even rejected by the birds.” (Accessed September 25, 2012. <http://copticchurch.net>).

This interpretation shows that Jerome did not pay attention to what Paul said in 1 Corinthians 7, where remarriage is permitted in certain circumstances. What is more, Christ intentionally chose to remain celibate for the sake of God’s kingdom, so this allusion does not seem to be appropriate. In fact, Jerome’s intention is questionable, since it is not clear whether he wanted Christians to get married once, like Adam, and not remarry for whatever reason, or to remain unmarried like Jesus.

We have considered the views of numerous Church Fathers who discouraged Christians from remarrying. The common ground between their views is probably their admission of no exceptional circumstance that permits one or both partners to remarry on account of

immorality (usually that of the wife) and/or death. In light of this view, those Church Fathers appear stricter than the teaching of Jesus (who allowed remarriage in case of adultery) and Paul (who allowed it in case of the decease of one partner).

These stringent perspectives of the Church Fathers lead us to look at remarriage customs in Roman culture in the early centuries, the context in which the Fathers lived and wrote. According to Grubbs, the marriage law of the Roman emperor Augustus (27 B.C. – 14 C.E.) compelled widows to remarry within two (or three) years of their husband's death. This regulation, however, was rescinded by the emperor Constantine in 320 C.E., thus removing the legal pressure on widows to remarry (Grubbs 2002, 220). The background and motivation of this marriage law enacted by Augustus is not known. Perhaps one motive was that the Roman Empire needed many soldiers to guard their large territories against surrounding countries. This political and military circumstance might encourage Roman women, including widows who remarried, to produce as many children as possible for the future security of the Roman state.

Roman law, which legalised and encouraged the remarriage of widows, stood in contrast to the conservative views of some Church Fathers, who did not support remarriage. It has already been shown that family law in Egypt was affected by Roman law, since Egypt was controlled by the Roman Empire between the first and seventh centuries. No scholar has explained whether the Roman law that allowed the swift remarriage of widows might have affected the views of some Fathers or of the Church in this area during the period between Augustus and Constantine.

As we have seen thus far, a second marriage was permitted on rare occasions. However, Jerome explained as below:

I do not condemn digamists, nor yet trigamists, nor even, to put on extreme case, octogamists. I will make a still greater concession; I am ready to receive even a whore-monger, if penitent. In every case where fairness is possible, fair consideration must be shown (Schaff & Wallace 2007, 70).

This comment signifies that unlike other Fathers who were not favourable to the issue of remarriage, Jerome is unusually lenient about this matter. Also, he stresses not the frequency

of marriage itself but the heart of repentance.

Safi ibn al-‘Assal, Al, who lived around 1205-1265 C.E., “played an important role in the intellectual renaissance of the Coptic Church in the thirteenth century” (*CCE* 16 July 2014). After commenting on ‘the second marriage as inferior to the first’ in his work, *Al-Majmu‘ al-Safawi*, he added, “He who dares to enter upon a fourth marriage...let him not call it marriage, nor the children born of it rightful progeny. Such an action merits punishment due to adultery” (Gregorios “The Marriage Ceremony” 1991, 7).

In this section we have explored the diverse arguments of the Coptic bishop Basilios, the writings of Church Fathers, some ancient Christian literature and a few church councils, as well as a number of modern scholars. From their arguments, it is clear that a remarriage is less commendable than a first marriage, especially amongst the majority of the Fathers. The most common view among all the references we have cited is that remarriage is allowable, if at all, only on the occasion of divorce on the grounds of sexual immorality, or after the death of one partner. Although this stance appears to be the same as that of Jesus and of Paul in the Bible, other writers’ understanding may result from their literal interpretation of scriptures such as Matthew 5:32, Matthew 19:9, Mark 10:2-12, Romans 7:2 and 1 Corinthians 7:39. Nevertheless, if their various contexts are taken into account in analysing these texts, they can perhaps be interpreted differently, with more available grounds for remarriage.

Notably, some Fathers, namely Gregory, Cyril, Justin Martyr, Athanagaros and Ambrose, did not make specific mention of permissible grounds, be they adultery or the death of a spouse, in their arguments for and against remarriage. By comparison, other Fathers, including Basil and Clement of Alexandria, made reference to the issue of sexual infidelity in their views on second marriage. John Chrysostom pointed to the death of one spouse in his opinion on remarriage.

This brings us to look at the Bible for a clearer understanding of the subject of remarriage. For this purpose, I will briefly mention the teaching of Jesus in this area, followed by that of Paul. Matthew 19: 9 and Mark 10:2-12 indicate that Jesus allowed a man to remarry in the

case of the moral misconduct of his wife. Matthew 19:9 seems to suggest that there would be different regulations applicable to husband and wife in the matter of sexual infidelity. If the wife leaves her husband due to her husband's adultery and marries someone else, she commits adultery. If the husband leaves his wife for the same reason and takes another wife, he is not regarded as a person of loose morals. However, if the same rule is to have an equal effect on both parties, then they are both guilty of moral misconduct if they enter a union with someone else after separation from a partner who has committed adultery. This conclusion may be drawn from the comment of Paul in 1 Corinthians 7:4 on the mutual authority over the body of each other in married life, which may refer to sexual responsibility to each other. It could be argued that sexual chastity in wedlock is required not only for the wife but also for the husband.

On the other hand, Paul evidently acknowledged second marriage in 1 Corinthians 7:39, if only for a widow, saying that "If her husband dies, she is free to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord (ESV)." 1 Corinthians 7:8-9 is also relevant. There, Paul gives an admonition relating to the status of the widowed. Bishop Gregorios also refers to this scripture in his article in the *CCE* about second marriage, which is called digamy in the Coptic Church term (Gregorios "Digamy" 1991, 1). Accordingly, both Jesus and Paul obviously appeared to consent to the remarriage of believers in the case of adultery or death.

It may be helpful to consider in detail the general guidelines on this subject, set out by Paul in 1 Corinthians 7:8-16, for various groups inside church. The first group, in 1 Corinthians 7:8-9, are the unmarried and the widows. Paul admonished them to remain single like him, yet he allowed the widows to marry again if they could not exercise self-control against possible sexual temptation. The *CCE* also comments that the Coptic Church allows second marriage to widows, according to the words of Paul in 1 Corinthians 7:39 and Romans 7:2-3 (Gregorios, "The Sacrament of Marriage" 1991, 3). However, it is not clearly stated whether this guideline would be applicable to widowers as well. This assumption is supported by Burmester, a British specialist in Arabic Coptology, who comments on the 'service of digamy' in the Coptic Church, writing "This service is used when both of the contracting parties have been previously married, i.e., one is a widower and the other a widow. In the case where only one of the contracting parties has been married previously, the ordinary marriage service is

used” (Burmester 1967, 143).

In light of such biblical passages, the standpoint of Athanagoras of Athens, who described the remarriage of widowers as ‘covert adultery’, is not appropriate, because it differs from Paul’s counsel in this regard. By comparison, no relevant reference to the remarriage of priests has been found in the Coptic Church. According to Ware (who, it should be remembered, belongs to a different Orthodox denomination), if the wife of an Orthodox priest dies, he is not allowed to get remarried (Ware 1963, 298).

Presumably, this regulation would be applied to a Coptic priest also, since as we have seen earlier, a Coptic priest is not permitted to marry after ordination. For this reason, a priest cannot marry after the death of his wife. This contradicts the teaching of the Bible, which permits the remarriage of widows and widowers in Romans 7:2 and 1 Corinthians 7:39. This rule suggests that the church attaches higher status to celibacy than to marriage. It would be better if the issue of second marriage were left in the hands of the widowed priest to decide. For instance, if a widowed priest does not have a gift of celibacy after the death of his wife and is asked to remain celibate, it would be hard for him. He could persist in unhappy celibacy if he wishes. Or, he could give up his priesthood to pursue a second marriage.

The next group, those who are married to fellow believers, is addressed in 1 Corinthians 7:10-11. They are not permitted to divorce. Paul reminds them of the commandments of Jesus in Matthew 5:32, 19:9, Mark 10:12, and Luke 16:18. However, according to Farley, a well-known Canadian Coptic writer, Paul appeared to predict a situation in which a wife could leave (or could be compelled to leave) her husband. For example, a wife might have to separate herself from her husband due to poor treatment, physical and emotional desertion, or the threat of violence (Farley 2005, 78). In this case, Paul agreed to a separation, but advised the wife to remain unmarried while waiting for the potential repentance of her husband and eventual reconciliation. Judging from this sensible warning, it seems that Paul was thinking of a normal and healthy Christian marriage. It does not appear that Paul supported the remarriage of divorcees in this context. This approach may have affected, to some extent the ideas of the writer of *The Shepherd of Hermas*.

The last group referred to is those in “mixed” marriages, i.e., a Christian married to a non-believing spouse, as described in 1 Corinthians 7:12-17. Paul’s principle in this context is “Only let each person lead the life that the Lord has assigned to him, and to which God has called him (ESV).” This means that if a believing husband was living with an unbelieving wife when God called him to the Christian faith, he can continue to stay with the wife. If a believing wife had an unbelieving husband when she was called to faith, she could continue to live with her husband. This comment leads logically to the next: “Each one should remain in the condition in which he was called” (1 Corinthians 7:20, ESV).

On the passage concerning ‘separation by the unbelieving partner’ in 1 Corinthians 7: 15, Instone-Brewer points to the different understandings of the meaning between the Protestant Reformers and Roman Catholics. According to Instone-Brewer, the Reformers generally viewed this as a freedom to remarry, whereas the Roman Catholic Church regarded it as a personal choice to remain separate without any continuous pursuit of reconciliation. It is likely that the Church Fathers understood this verse in the same way as the Catholic scholars. According to Instone-Brewer, the Fathers did not discuss this exceptional reason because it did not have any practical significance to believers in the early centuries. In the Roman Empire of the first century, separation was equivalent to divorce, so if an unbeliever left a believing partner, the believer could do nothing about it. Accordingly, in this case, there was no point in trying to seek reconciliation (Instone-Brewer 2002, 279-280).

This explanation is supported by further detail about the original Greek verbs denoting separation. Instone-Brewer argues that it is impossible to differentiate between $\kappa\alpha\tau\alpha\lambda\upsilon\sigma\iota\varsigma$ in 7:13, ‘a legal divorce’, and $\chi\omega\rho\iota\zeta\omega$ in 7:15, ‘just a separation.’ The latter term was generally used to describe divorce in the Greco-Roman culture, where separation was considered an officially authorised divorce. In the main text, it looks as if both verbs clarify the way that someone has chosen to divorce their spouse (Instone-Brewer 2002, 199). This means that if the unbeliever decides to separate him or herself from their spouse, that behaviour can be regarded as an act of divorce. In this event, the believing spouse can do nothing to change the situation.

The different opinions of the Protestant and Roman Catholic Churches appear to be

reasonable. However, it could be argued that if a believing spouse is deserted by a non-believing partner, he or she should be allowed to get married again if they wish. If he or she cannot control his or her sexual desire, it is probably better for the person to remarry, as Paul suggests in 1 Corinthians 7:9. The Bible does not appear to prohibit second marriage to people in this situation. Moreover, if the marriage split results from the immorality of the unbelieving partner, the Bible suggests that the abandoned spouse may be given consent to remarry. Presumably this latter view is the same as that of some of the more flexible Church Fathers, and of the Orthodox Church.

We have already seen that remaining single after divorce is commended by Coptic Christians, even though remarriage is not completely forbidden. It has also been seen that most of the Church Fathers were rigidly against both divorce and second marriages. As I have already mentioned, Coptic authorities appear to have a literal understanding of the texts in the Bible. Accordingly, as a result of the traditional attitude of the Fathers towards these two topics, it is apparent that their conservative perspective has greatly affected the principles and policy of the Coptic Church.

This outlook may have helped the Orthodox Church to sustain the metaphorical meaning of mystery (μυστήριον) in marriage. This point of view would ultimately enable the Orthodox Church to regard Christian matrimony as indissoluble, irrespective of any possible severance. This implies that in the case of troubles or problems in married life, the only path for a Christian married couple is reconciliation, not separation.

Egypt was under Roman rule from the first century until the seventh century and was subsequently invaded by Muslims, who have remained the dominant religious group in Egypt to the present day. Unquestionably, these dominant forces, Rome and Islam, have brought in with them different views and values, political, social, religious and cultural. Dissimilar morals in these areas would eventually create cultural conflict. As a result of this tension, the church might have been motivated to choose strict regulations about remarriage, so as to keep the followers of their church from being influenced by the more liberal remarriage laws of other cultures.

In other words, the current stern church ruling in the area of remarriage could be regarded as a result of their extraordinary efforts to maintain their church dogma as purely as possible, and to keep their religious purity intact among the pagan cultures around them. This attitude has also been observed in the areas of marriage and divorce in the previous sections. Accordingly, by complying with the stringent divorce rules, the church hoped to make a second marriage almost impossible to help prevent Copts from easily divorcing. Thus, it is with this view that the Coptic Church read the related biblical texts on the issue of remarriage, adopting the strict views of the references discussed. The social and political context of the Coptic Church in Egypt must have affected its reading in the matter of second marriage.

2.4. Conclusion

This chapter has sought to explore how the current situation regarding family law in the Coptic Church has affected the church's reading of the pertinent biblical texts in the area of singleness, marriage, divorce and remarriage. For this purpose, we have discussed a variety of subjects including celibacy in the context of the church's interpretation and practice, the church's history and present circumstances in Egypt, and the church's understanding of marriage, divorce and remarriage.

Regarding celibacy, the Coptic Church is inclined to prefer the status of singleness to that of marriage. Concerning the topic of marriage, the church tradition considers marriage a life-long, sacred, and indissoluble vow before God. The church also requires a wedding to take place in a church and to be officiated by a Coptic priest to publicly acknowledge the marital bonding. The church makes divorce difficult by allowing it only on two grounds: adultery or religious conversion.

Throughout the long history of the Coptic Church, family law has gone through many amendments, from strict regulations during the ancient church period, to the less stern 1938 Code, to the more stringent 1971 law. Nevertheless, the principle of divine marriage as a sacrament of the holy union between one man and one woman initiated by God has not been changed, and still remains the core value of Coptic family law. Furthermore, the Coptic

Church and Coptic ministers have a great authority over the matter of family law. Despite this, some Copts are challenging the established church's rulings and influence.

Contemporary church practice leads us to examine the major factors influencing the reading of pertinent biblical texts. In the main, the studies demonstrate a preference for two particular sources amongst Coptic scholars: church councils and the teaching of the early Church Fathers. These two aspects are the main foundational bases of conventional Orthodox belief in the area of family law. Of the two, the arguments of the Fathers appear to be the principal source for the long-term history of biblical scholarship in the Coptic Church.

This was recognised in the section on previous studies of Coptic biblical scholarship in the introductory chapter. This chapter pointed to the four foundational theological bases of the Coptic Church: the Bible, apostolic teachings, the ecumenical councils, and the teachings of the Church Fathers. Amongst these, the biblical exegesis of the Fathers was considered the most influential factor in the history of Orthodox biblical scholarship. In other words, it is hard to pin down how the Coptic Church read the Bible and applied their reading into their church application, since the Church relies heavily on the biblical interpretation of several well-known early Church Fathers. Also, a majority of Coptic writers refer to the writings of Fathers who were strict and clung to the literal exegesis of texts without considering the context.

Although the opinions of Church Fathers are a pivotal factor in the doctrine of the Coptic Church, the Coptic way of reading the Bible on the topics of singleness, marriage, divorce and remarriage gives rise to some questions. First, why did Coptic scholars or the church not choose other interpretations of the Bible, such as the ecumenical councils, but rely mostly on the Fathers? Second, why do contemporary biblical scholars not attempt to analyse the strengths or weaknesses of the biblical analysis of the Fathers? The Fathers were fallible human beings, ordinary people who were capable of faulty opinions in their biblical exegesis. Contemporary Coptic scholars could take courage in exploring previous works and develop novel or divergent interpretations of the Bible. However, I have not yet discovered this kind of work in the modern writings of Coptic scholars. As a result, it is likely that contemporary Coptic exegetes comply with the views of the Fathers and apply them to their church policy without serious questioning or enquiry. Furthermore, Coptic scholars have not cited any

relevant passages from the Old Testament, with the exception of Genesis. For instance, if they were interested in giving rights of remarriage to a divorced woman, they could have referred to Deuteronomy 24:1. Nonetheless, I have not come across this kind of academic effort.

It stands to reason that the unexpected change in the family law from the more lenient 1938 Code to the more stringent 1971 code has been causing negative side effects for Copts. This is seen in the SAC decree permitting the divorce of two Coptic applicants, the overruling of SAC's decision by SCC, and the recent support of the State Council for the SAC ruling in 2010. All these occurrences have left the current family law in Egypt, both state and church, in a more difficult situation.

Some recent instances demonstrate the unconstructive enforcement of family law in the church. The Centre for Egyptian Women's Legal Assistance (CEWLA) is a leading group of Egyptian lawyers that advances women's rights through the law by providing legal aid, mainly to impoverished women, and also advocates against female genital mutilation, honour crimes, and discriminatory divorce laws. According to Azza Suleiman, who has been its director since its founding in 1995, a recent study indicates the ineffectiveness of the church's restrictions on divorce, because increasing numbers of Copts are getting divorced and separated. The strict church directive on marriage has led Copts to depend on Muslim laws to obtain divorce and separation (Accessed October 15, 2011.

<http://www.almasryalyoum.com>). Rachel Scott, associate Professor of Islamic Studies in the Department of Religion and Culture at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University in the States, writes that "Requests by Copts for divorce have increased in the last decade, partly because Christian women are becoming more economically independent. But (it is said) that the church is unresponsive to the new dynamics of society" (Scott 2010. 84-85).

As a result, it is likely that those Copts who wish to separate from their spouses will have no choice but to turn to the civil court of the Egyptian state, where their requests can be granted simply as ordinary Egyptian citizens. Scott also points to the high percentage of Copts changing their religion (Scott 2010, 84). In order to expand on this topic, it is necessary to remind ourselves that one of legitimate grounds for divorce amongst the Copts is the religious conversion of one spouse. If this is the case, those people may not have any choice but to leave the church to secure remarriage in another community. Consequently, it seems that the

increase in divorce, either due to a change of faith or other appropriate reason, is likely to influence the decline of the number of Copts in Egypt.

Al-Masry Al-Youm reports on the current divorce situation by quoting Azza Suleiman on the 18th April, 2010:

There are currently five million postponed divorce cases in Egypt, in addition to 13 million cases under consideration by the personal status courts. A divorce occurs every six minutes in the country, and 250 thousand women resort to the courts annually to obtain divorce (Accessed January 7, 2012. <http://www.almasryalyoum.com>).

This fact represents an urgent call for the church and the Egyptian government to take serious action on the issue of divorce, regardless of faith differences. In pointing out that some 98 percent of the judges in civil courts in Egypt are Muslims, Guindy poignantly observes:

It is estimated that thousands of spouses who were divorced by the civil courts are attempting to obtain permission to remarry within the Coptic Orthodox Church. Media sources have reported some 50,000 cases of civil divorce, while a knowledgeable family status lawyer has estimated that there are approximately 12,000 cases pending of those seeking permission from the Clerical Council for Family Affairs (CCFA) to remarry (Guindy, 2012).

All these observations show that there are many Copts who were allowed to get divorced by the government as civil citizens, and also who want to get remarried inside church as Copts. These people may choose to leave the church to get remarried if the church does not acknowledge their legal divorce permit from the state. Nevertheless, their hope to get permission from church for remarriage indicates their strong dedication to their faith. This also suggests that the church should not avoid facing the predicament of the divorced Copts.

At this point, let us look at the two grounds for divorce officially permitted by the church, adultery and change of religion. It is fairly understandable that the act of adultery is regarded as a valid reason for divorce in Coptic and other Christian traditions. It is also interesting to note that in order to get a divorce permit from a church, a Copt needs to provide evidence for the act of adultery of his or her spouse. There have been instances when a Copt who wishes to separate from their spouse tries to report a false case of sexual immorality to the church. For this reason, Egyptian news reports that the person who hopes to divorce has to show that his or her partner “has spent the night in the house of someone of the opposite sex” (Accessed

July 14, 2014. <http://www.egyptindependent.com>). It is questionable how the person can demonstrate effectively the adulterous relationship of his or her spouse so that the church can approve of divorce.

The second ground for divorce, change of religion, is inappropriate biblically. In 1 Corinthians 6:14, Paul advised Christians not to marry non-Christians. However, nowhere in the New Testament is there any suggestion that Christians should separate from their existing non-believing marriage partners. On the contrary, Paul gave guidance in 1 Corinthians 7:12-13 to the believing partner not to divorce his or her non-believing spouse if the latter is willing to stay together. These scriptures can be interpreted to mean that Paul implied that a Christian could live together with his or her non-believing mate (after marital union) regardless of their having no religion, or a different religion, if the latter consents to do so. Thus, in the light of this New Testament context, it is hard to justify change of religion (or not holding the same belief) as legal grounds for divorce. From the Old Testament viewpoint, however, God's instruction to the Israelite community through Moses in Deuteronomy 7 can be interpreted as a valid foundation for this restriction. Deuteronomy 7:3-4 states that "You shall not intermarry with them, giving your daughters to their sons or taking their daughters for your sons, for they would turn away your sons from following me, to serve other gods" (ESV).

God commanded the Israelites to abstain from intermarriage with surrounding nations, which is a form of total loyalty to God. Therefore, to convert from Coptic Christianity to another faith can be viewed as spiritual adultery in the Coptic community. Nevertheless, this way of interpreting the Old Testament may differ from the way that Paul dealt with the matter. The instruction of the late Pope concerning apostasy as a justification for divorce appears to have come out of his effort to keep Copts faithful to their religion.

This observation finds its support with Rowberry and Khalil, who offer a further explanation of this matter:

This (apostasy) occurs when either husband or wife "leaves the Christian faith to atheism, to any other religion, or to any sect that is not admitted by Christian churches in Egypt." The purpose for this rule, beyond the impossibility of pursuing a marriage in God where "God" means something different for each party, is rooted in protecting

the Coptic faith. Since Copts in Egypt form a small and often embattled minority, this law reflects some notion of ensuring that Copts remain Copts (Rowberry & Khalil 2013, 55).

In the middle of this unstable situation, the Coptic Pope Shenouda III died on the 17th March 2012. This may have raised expectations among some Copts, who hoped to see certain changes in the family law inside Coptic Church, that a new Pope might take a different position; however, up to now there has been no public change to family law in the church.

In light of all our findings thus far it can be seen that the current, strict church practice is derived from the unique religious, political and social circumstance of the church in Egypt. In other words, the desperate effort of the Coptic Church to keep their religious community intact and pure has had a great influence on the church's understanding of the four marital issues of singleness, marriage, divorce and remarriage, on which their perspectives are conservative. This helps us to understand the personal status law the Copts are facing, which provides a uniquely different understanding from other confessional groups in the same area.

3 THE KOREAN CHRISTIAN TRADITION (PROTESTANT)

3.1 Introduction

This chapter will explore the Presbyterian Christian tradition in South Korea (henceforth 'Korea') on the four major issues of celibacy, marriage, divorce and remarriage in 1 Corinthians 7 and other related biblical texts. Before dealing with these four subjects, it will be helpful to briefly look into the biblical scholarship, underlying culture and current status of Christianity in contemporary Korea, since these are related to the reading of four main topics. As has already been observed in the introductory chapter, Christianity in Korea dates back only one hundred and thirty years. This short period of Korean Christianity means that the history of biblical scholarship in Korea is not long enough to have gone through many stages of development and maturity like that of Western Christianity.

Some aspects of Korean biblical scholarship have been examined in the first chapter of my thesis. They are the conservative cultural legacy coming from Confucianism, a mentality of male-dominance, the theological trend of legalistic fundamentalism in mainline Christian thought, and liberal theology as a minor theological strand. Of these elements, the theology of fundamentalism has been dominant in biblical interpretation in Korea. Man Ja Choi, who was a chairman at the Korean Association of Feminist Theology in Korea, says that "The theology of fundamentalism takes over the authority of the biblical exegesis in Korea" (M.J. Choi 2005, 45). This signifies that the theological perspective of fundamentalism could have affected the way the Korean biblical scholars have interpreted the biblical texts.

It is remarkable to note that some facets of the traditional teachings of Confucianism appear to look similar to the literal interpretation of the Bible. This suggests that conventional Korean culture could have affected the way that fundamentalist (and mainly male) theologians interpreted the Bible in Korea during the twentieth century. For example, it is no coincidence that a common characteristic between Confucianism and fundamentalism is a

patriarchal attitude in dealing with women. This becomes explicit in the conservative directives and regulations on the status of Korean women in both the personal and public arena. This could show that the Bible exegetes are also shaped by their own time and place, and the various influences of the male-oriented society in which they live.

We observe that Confucianism was the most influential religious belief in the history of Korea, and also in the development of Korean Christianity. Before Christianity arrived in Korea around the end of the nineteenth century, the major state religion was Confucianism, which dominated all areas of Korean society for over five hundred years. Even though the closed Chosun dynasty came to an end in 1897, the influence of Confucianism has been tremendously pervasive in the mindset of Korean people, and in the ethics and customs of Korean culture. It has also significantly affected the way that Korean people, both believers and non-believers, viewed family law.

Korean society was a community-oriented culture, with its moral and ethical foundation in Confucianism. So people were generally expected to get married, to bear children, to take care of their parents and to be loyal to the country. Thanks to its communal aspect, this mindset remains strong in the way of thinking of Korean people, although it is slowly fading amongst young people today. To remain permanently single often implied that a person was not normal in terms of character, physical condition, or financial status. Marriage was considered the accepted norm during the reign of the dynasty, and remains so today.

One of the teachings of Confucianism was that in all circumstances young single people should aspire to be married. From the fourteenth to the early twentieth century the fundamental morality of Confucianism was ruling the ‘Chosun’ dynasty (in Korean 조선 왕국) in Korea. To remain celibate was regarded as an abnormal lifestyle, as M.J. Choi points out (M.J. Choi 2005, 36). In addition, divorce and remarriage was strictly prohibited in the society that time. Traditionally, a married woman was required to live with her husband until her death. No matter how unhappy her marital life was, she was absolutely forbidden from requesting a divorce. By comparison, a husband could send his wife away when or if she happened to commit one of ‘seven vices’, which were regulated by the government. The *Korean Culture Encyclopedia* defines the ‘seven vices’(in Korean chil-ge-gi-ak 칠거지악)

as follows:

1. Wife does not honour and take good care of her parents-in-law.
2. Wife cannot bear a son.
3. Wife commits extramarital affair.
4. Wife is excessively jealous.
5. Wife has hereditary diseases, leprosy, epileptic seizure, etc.
6. Wife is too talkative.
7. Wife steals.

(Accessed March 10, 2014. <http://terms.naver.com>)

The first misdeed is similar to the fifth of the Ten Commandments in the Old Testament. However, not honouring one's husband's parents is questionable as a reasonable ground for marital breakdown since to some extent it relates to how much honour and/or care for the parents-in-law should be shown. The second category relates to a physical ability of the wife which suggests the preference for males in the society of the time. The third is in line with the biblical basis for divorce. The fourth is interesting - but the emotional limit of jealousy is questionable. The fifth could be considered for possible divorce if the problem is too severe. The sixth one is also uncertain in its scope. Only the seventh wrongdoing belongs to the category of social crime. The rest are derived from the feudalistic family system. Around the time of the late Chosun dynasty the second and fourth factors were rescinded by law (Accessed March 10, 2014. <http://terms.naver.com>).

In spite of these seven vices or misdeeds, there were three regulations on which a husband should not send his wife away. They were used to keep a husband from misusing the right to divorce his wife. They were called three non-permissible reasons for sending away (in Korean, sam-bul-geo 삼불거):

1. A wife had a three-year mourning period for her deceased parents-in-law.
2. A wife was in low and poor status at the time of marriage, who later became rich and honourable.
3. A wife does not have any close relatives to whom she can return to live after her divorce (Accessed March 10, 2014. <http://terms.naver.com>).

The first indicates the high regard in which filial duty is held, in contrast to the first of the 'seven vices.' The second appears to recognise the economic contribution of a wife to her household. The last shows physical care for the wife. The criminal law at the end of Chosun dynasty added one further factor in addition to the three articles introduced earlier. If a couple

had children in their marriage, they were not permitted to get divorced (Accessed March 10, 2014. <http://terms.naver.com>). This new policy was an indication of the government's care for the welfare of children in the case of divorce. These seven vices and four items were all abolished in 1908 (Accessed March 10, 2014. <http://terms.naver.com>).

These four conditions, which prohibited a husband from dismissing his wife until the early twentieth century, to some extent demonstrate social concern for the woman. Nonetheless, there would not be many wives who could call on these four factors so as not to get divorced. Also, these four prohibitions could probably not be found in other church traditions, since most of these guidelines reflect more or less social and moral concern for the wife as the weaker being in society.

Until recently divorce and remarriage were considered as a stigma and disgrace in the lives of Koreans. These issues have changed in contemporary Korean society partly due to Korea being exposed to the more liberal way of life in the Western world and also partly due to the increased social tendency towards self-centred life style. This cultural change has come to the point where the Korean Church and Christians have also been affected to some degree.

Ordinary citizens in Korea have a freedom in areas of marriage and divorce like those in other countries, quite unlike the days of the Chosun dynasty. However, in contrast to the Coptic Orthodox Church, the Korean Church does not have one fixed policy for these matters. As we will see in detail below, each church denomination does not have their own church regulation. The regulation of divorce and remarriage are taken care of by the local church leadership or church tradition. Despite this, Korean churches and ministers are generally inclined to have a negative attitude towards these matters, discouraging believers from getting divorced and remarried.

At this point, let us have a brief look at the present state of Korean Christianity in terms of its Christian tradition. Korea is one of the Asian countries where one of the major religions is Christianity - both Roman Catholic and Protestant. In 2005, out of population of 47 million in Korea, about 8.61 million (18.3 %) are regarded as Protestants in the various Protestant denominations whereas the Roman Catholic Church amounts to 5.14 million (10.9%)

(Accessed July 10, 2014. <http://hompy.onmam.com>). Korea being the home country of the author of this thesis, it seemed good to look at the understanding of Korean Protestant scholars on the important topics of celibacy, marriage, divorce and remarriage. Hopefully this research may make some constructive contribution to the Korean academy in the area of interpretation of the passages pertaining to those four subjects.

Among the several Korean church traditions, Presbyterianism is considered as the mainline Protestant denomination with around five million followers (Accessed May 19, 2013. <http://kin.naver.com>). The two major Presbyterian denominations in Korea are called Hapdong (in Korean 합동 and in English The General Assembly of Presbyterian Church in Korea) and Tonghap (in Korean 통합 and in English The Presbyterian Church of Korea). According to the Korean Christian internet news site *Christian Today* (in Korean 크리스천투데이) which was founded in July 2000 as a weekly journal and has become the most widely read Christian newspaper, each group numbers around 2,300,000 followers. The doctrine of these two groups is very different, but the different responses to the matter of joining WCC (World Council of Churches) caused a traumatic split in 1959. Hapdong was not supportive of the WCC, whereas Tonghap joined the religious organisation that year (Accessed February 26, 2013. <http://www.christiantoday.co.kr>).

In addition to this dissimilarity, one further difference between two denominations is that the first group forbids woman from being ordained, whereas the latter allows it. Another Christian news website, *Kidokgongbo* (in Korean 기독교공보), which was founded in 1946 as a weekly Christian newspaper and belongs to one of major Presbyterian denominations, The Presbyterian Church of Korea (in Korean 대한예수교장로회(통합)), says that 1996 was the first year when seven Korean women were ordained in this denomination (Accessed February 27, 2013. <http://www.pckworld.com>).

As it is widely known in Korea, the doctrine of Hapdong on this issue is explained by the fact that this denomination tends to interpret the biblical texts more strictly than Tonghap without seriously considering the context of the biblical passages. The research for the chapter on Korean Christianity was conducted by means of collecting various resources, namely, books,

articles, magazines and websites during a research trip to Korea in the summer of 2012. A few more recent web sites and news sites were also consulted. The collected materials were all written in Korean, by Korean Protestant scholars, so those parts which are cited below have been translated into English and paraphrased by the author of this thesis. The original Korean materials I refer to in this chapter are available for consultation.

Quite a number of the Protestant writers cited belong either to Hapdong or Tonghap. Apart from these religious groups, there are also a few non-Presbyterian authors from other denominations; Methodist, Pentecostal, Catholic, etc. All of them will be described as Protestant scholars in this chapter except for one minister with a Roman Catholic Church background. For this reason, when it is necessary in the context, the denomination of the scholar whose work is quoted in this chapter will be specifically mentioned.

Thus far Korean biblical scholarship, the long-held conservative culture of Confucianism, the current status of Korean Christianity, and the current attitude of Korean people toward personal status have been briefly described in this chapter. An understanding of the cultural and religious background in Korea will help us to grasp the current theological context in which Korean biblical scholars are situated. On the basis of these preliminary studies, the readings of related passages for each topic by Korean scholars will be examined below.

3.2 Celibacy

3.2.1 The interpretation of singleness by Korean Protestant scholars

I begin this chapter by examining the views of the Korean Protestant tradition on the matter of singleness. Most scholars whose arguments are cited in this section support the status of singleness, yet the way they approach this subject differs according to their various perspectives. As we will see here most scholars, including H.S. Kim, K.H.Kim, Y. S.Park, I.S. Park and the Korean Christian magazine, *Ministry and Theology*, tend to think that Paul regarded the status of singleness more highly than that of marriage. Compared to this standpoint just one scholar, J.H.Lee, believes that Paul held the status of marriage in higher

regard than that of singleness.

The first Korean theologian we will consider is Hee Sung Kim, who taught New Testament at a theological university belonging to the Holiness Church in Seoul. He believes that Paul was sure that the coming of the kingdom of God would take place during his lifetime. Kim argues that Paul's theological perspective and personal assurance about the imminent days influenced his viewpoint on marriage and singleness (H.S.Kim 2001, 115). It is true that in 1 Corinthians 7:29, Paul commented that "the appointed time has grown very short" (ESV). It is quite possible to suppose that this verse suggests that the end of world will occur during the lifetime of Paul. However, it is questionable whether Paul's main aim was to point to the upcoming return of the Lord in the last days. Nowhere else in 1 Corinthians 7 does Paul directly mention the end of the world.

Likewise, Morris also states:

Though he (Paul) often refers to the Lord's return, Paul never elsewhere gives this kind of counsel. Both in his earlier and his later Epistles he uses the second advent to inspire men to blameless conduct (e.g. 1 Thes. v.1-11; Phil. i.9-11) (Morris 1959, 117).

This implies that Paul's intention in mentioning the end times was not to emphasise this event per se, but to encourage believers to be aware of the possible imminence of the last days, so as to encourage their godly life style. This calls into question Kim's supposition.

By pointing to 1 Corinthians 7:33-34, Kim also suggests that Paul regarded a single life as more beneficial in pleasing God than marriage. Kim thinks that this mind-set might have motivated Paul to strongly encourage a life of celibacy. He further develops this view by commenting on 1 Corinthians 7:26, where Paul says "I think that in view of the present distress it is good for a person to remain as he is." (ESV) Kim suggests that Paul anticipated various wars, earthquakes, famine, etc. around or before the end of times (H. S. Kim 2001, 116). Yet Paul did not explicitly comment on famines, earthquakes and wars in his text. Actually, it was Jesus who mentioned these calamities in Matthew 24:7.

It is possible that while he was writing this epistle Paul had in mind the warning of Jesus in relation to troubled times. In this case, the allusion of Paul to the various distresses in his letter reflects his strong concern about the welfare of his fellow believers in the hostile

surroundings of Corinth, and possible subsequent hardships in the first century. It seems that in order to support his interpretation of Paul on the topic of singleness, H.S. Kim chooses deliberately to refer to 1 Corinthians 7:26, 29 and 7:33-34. This suggests that Kim puts a stress on reading of singleness in 1 Corinthians 7 by highlighting Paul's eschatological view of history and consequently of full dedication to the service of God.

In a similar way, the Korean Christian monthly magazine *Ministry and Theology*, (in Korean 목회와 신학) interprets the subject of singleness from an eschatological point of view. This journal was founded in July 1989 by Onnuri (in Korean 온누리) Church in Seoul, and it is a well-known monthly Christian magazine aimed mainly at helping the ministry of Korean churches and pastors. This periodical points to an interesting trend among many young Korean believers who prefer to stay single (*Ministry and Theology* 2007, 141). Single life is becoming more attractive and popular among young Koreans for various reasons. The magazine suggests that if the inclination for single people to remain unmarried results from setting too high a standard for their potential spouse, this can be a serious matter (*Ministry and Theology* 2007, 141).

This magazine also looks into the topic of celibacy from the same perspective as that of H. S. Kim (*Ministry and Theology* 2007, 134). It is not clear why this magazine approaches the topic of singleness with the same viewpoint as Kim. Yet, in an effort to support reasonable evidence, the magazine quotes 1 Corinthians 7:26, 7:29 and 7:31, which refer to the coming of tremendous distress (7:26), the short period of the appointed time (7:29) and the passing away of the present form of the world (7:31). No doubt these verses indicate one of motives Paul had in his encouraging his fellow believers to remain unmarried.

Noticeably, the approach of the two Korean sources, H.S.Kim and *Ministry and Theology*, differs from that of the Coptic writers on the same subject. The Coptic scholars tend to hold celibacy in higher esteem than marriage most likely because of the influence of their reading of Church Fathers on the biblical texts pertaining to this topic. This way of reading the passage is not found in the understanding of Korean scholars.

Like the two resources cited so far, H.S. Kim and the *Ministry & Theology*, Kyung Haeng

Kim, a pastor at a church in Seoul, also asserts that the impending return of Jesus, possibly during the lifetime of Paul, was the main feature in Paul's argument about the matter of singleness as implied in 1 Corinthians 7:29-31 (K.H. Kim 1986, 156). This means that Paul's perspective on the Second Coming of Christ in the near future led Paul to suggest that the Corinthian believers should remain unmarried.

In addition, K. H. Kim points to the two motives on which a status of celibacy can be accepted. The first is that this gift is reasonable for the person who is able to bring his or her sexual desire under control (K. H. Kim 1986, 146). This signifies that this person is a man or woman of a strong self-control. The second is the attitude in which a person is determined to give his life wholly to the service of God. The person is not bound by anyone and is likely to be more focused on the ministry of the kingdom of God (K. H. Kim 1986, 146). This reminds us of Matthew 19:12.

Another well-known Korean theologian, Yune Sun Park (1905-1988), believes that Paul encouraged the Corinthian Christians to remain unmarried because of unique circumstances in the city (Y. S. Park 1995, 90). Y. S. Park made his theological studies at the Westminster Theological Seminary in the United States, and later returned to Korea to work as a minister, professor and theologian. Y.S. Park does not give any further explanation of the 'unique circumstances', so let us see how other Korean scholars describe the special situation of the city.

According to Dong Yeon Khee, a professor of Old Testament at Koshin University in Korea, there were a thousand temple prostitutes at the temple of Aphrodite in Corinth whose sexual labours were officially recognised at that time. By the time Paul visited the city, the phrase 'to become a Corinthian' was used ironically to describe a male or female prostitute. In the midst of this situation, the incomparably high moral standard of Christianity was introduced into the city. Naturally this caused the Corinthian Christians faced various conflicts resulting from the licentious morality of the city (D. Y. Khee 1993, 151). Additionally, Se Yoon Kim mentions this social atmosphere in Corinth. He also makes reference to the famous schools of philosophy and rhetoric in Corinth, of which the intellectuals of the city were very proud. The city was well-known for two particular characteristics at that time; immorality and oratory (S.

Y. Kim 2011, 18).

In light of this, it is likely that the liberal sexual immorality in society affected the way that Corinthian Christians viewed sexuality, singleness and marriage. It is no wonder that the context and surroundings in which 1 Corinthians was written emphasise the importance of personal status. Since this situation was directly concerned with the status of singleness, this status offered a way to be free from the prevailing sexual fornication in the city if a Christian is determined to remain sexually pure. Jie Chul Kim also supports this observation (J.C. Kim 1999, 280). Furthermore, according to Sung Soo Kwon, some Corinthian Christians asked for both married and unmarried Christians to remain celibate so as to live as spiritual Christians in the midst of sexual immorality in the city (S.S. Kwon 2000, 611). Nevertheless, the text shows that Paul's response to this expectation was different.

Y.S. Park also points to the particular situations that are implied in the texts of 1 Corinthians 7:26, 28 and 29. According to Y.S. Park, Paul did not give his advice in those passages the status of a religious dogma (Y.S. Park 1995, 90). As for the matter of singleness, Y.S. Park observes that Paul did not ask people to remain single because that lifestyle was nobler than marriage in terms of personal ethics. From the perspective of Paul, according to Y.S. Park, the simple lifestyle of singleness could help a person to follow the calling of Jesus upon his life more simply (Y.S. Park 1995, 93). While echoing the concern of Paul in this text, Y.S. Park refers to 1 Corinthians 7:26, where Paul encouraged singleness due to the upcoming distress. So the perspective of Y.S. Park on the issue of singleness is not given from the same viewpoint as H.S. Kim, *Ministry and Theology* and K.H. Kim, as cited earlier, but from his emphasis on the situation portrayed in the main text, 1 Corinthians.

The personal background of Y. S. Park is a blend of Confucianism, fundamentalism and Western academic education. It is possible that all of these elements might have affected the way he understands the passages pertaining to singleness even though it is not obvious which particular influence is related to which way of reading the Bible. Nevertheless, his interpretation of the text on this topic suggests that he is aware of his audience, who might have looked forward to the return of Jesus in the near future.

In contrast to the earlier standpoint, another Korean writer Ick Soo Park, who taught New Testament at the Methodist Theological Seminary in Seoul, believes that Paul advised a single person to get married because of the temptation to sexual immorality as indicated in 1 Corinthians 7: 2. Park emphasises that Paul's permission for marriage and a sexual relationship within married life is motivated by avoidance of possible immorality outside married life (I.S. Park 2002, 208). Park points to the key motive of Paul's support for marriage being the consequence of the difficulties of a single life, where an unmarried man may struggle with an immoral temptation and a strong sexual desire beyond their self-control. This may possibly be legitimate, as this perspective can be found in 1 Corinthians 7:2 and 7:9.

Contrary to I.S. Park, a man or a woman may choose to remain unmarried for a religious cause, as is indicated in Matthew 19:12. Therefore, in 1 Corinthians 7:32-35, Paul pointed to the positive benefits of celibate life in serving the Lord wholeheartedly as a single man. This perspective can be regarded as a godly religious ground for Paul's advice. Paul's pious approach towards the topic of celibacy may be a timely suggestion in the contemporary world where the culture is sexually promiscuous. The strong sexual temptation in current liberal society may have motivated I.S. Park to interpret the text in such a way as to suggest that Paul underscored the importance of marriage, yet with a higher regard for the status of singleness amongst those who are not sexually active. The way that I. S. Park reads the text on this issue appears to derive from the traditional attitude of Confucianism which strongly emphasises moral chastity of single people in Korean culture and also regards it as a social and moral norm for single people to get married.

According to another Korean theologian Joon Ho Lee, who teaches the New Testament at Hanyoung Theological University in Seoul, it is likely that Paul did not prefer celibacy nor support asceticism. On the contrary, J.H. Lee observes that Paul always regarded marriage as a fundamental Biblical principal according to the teaching of Jesus in Matthew 19:5-6 and Mark 10:7-9, where he cited the creation order as God's given command in Genesis 2:24. As a result, J. H. Lee argues that Paul viewed the status of marriage as higher than that of celibacy. J.H. Lee asserts that although Paul appeared to stand for celibacy in 1 Corinthians 7:6-9, his views in this regard resulted from the specific circumstances in the city of Corinth (J. H. Lee 2010, 246). Lee does not provide any further explanation of these 'specific

circumstance in Corinth.’ Most likely he has in mind the same factors brought up by Y.S. Park earlier.

In saying ‘due to the temptation to sexual immorality’ in 1 Corinthians 7:2, Paul encouraged people to get married. This reflects the social situation at that time. It also indicates one of the purposes of marriage, which is to protect people from being sexually immoral. Furthermore, even though Paul did not refer to either any direct instruction of Jesus or any verse in the Old Testament in his letter, the principle underlying this text implies that it is natural and normal for a believer to get married. Based on this study, the observation of Lee about Paul’s regard for marriage as a fundamental Biblical principal among Christians is appropriate.

Nevertheless, when it comes to the argument of J.H. Lee, who believes that Paul regarded the status of marriage as higher than that of celibacy, Paul did not directly mention anywhere in this epistle that to marry is better than to remain single. S.S. Kwon is also in agreement with this point (S.S. Kwon 2000, 611). In support of his opinion, J. H. Lee deliberately refers to passages, Matthew 19:5-6, Mark 10:7-9 and Genesis 2:24, where matrimony is described as an essential obligation for Christians (J. H. Lee 2010, 246). Yet, it seems that J.H. Lee purposely ignores 1 Corinthians 7:7 where Paul says “But each has his own gift from God, one of one kind and one of another (ESV).”

This verse clearly shows not a comparable but a different calling and gift for each person. Even though the strong assertion of J.H. Lee, who views matrimony as the normative status of the Christian, is understandable, it is not appropriate to evaluate one gift as better than the other. Moreover, the way in which J. H. Lee reads this text seems to reflect his conservative denominational background as a Hapdong, as well as the traditional view of Confucianism, which highlights the absolute necessity of marriage for the single person in Korean custom.

In the light of the findings of this study so far, two aspects are noticeable when it comes to the preference between celibacy and marriage as well as the reason for the status of celibacy. Among the six quoted Korean sources, most scholars and the Christian magazine prefer the life of singleness to that of matrimony. Each scholar is inclined to choose diverse focus points in their readings of the text to rationalise their understanding of the status of singleness. For

example, H.S. Kim, *Ministry and Theology* and K.H. Kim relate the views of Paul on the state of singleness to Paul's apocalyptic view of history and its giving more freedom in serving God wholeheartedly. According to Y.S. Park, Paul's views on singleness are motivated by the particular situation in Corinth, the forthcoming distress, and the advantage of giving complete dedication to God. I.S. Park thinks that Paul underlined the status of singleness out of his personal experience.

The awareness of various focal points amongst scholars suggests possible further studies of the potential motivating factors of the scholars whose arguments are cited in this chapter. It is not easy to pin down exactly what factors influence some scholars to promote singleness and some to encourage marriage. The view of I.S. Park, who prefers singleness with moral chastity, may be a reaction to modern sexually promiscuous culture. Also, the argument of J.H. Lee, who supports the status of marriage, is likely to be influenced by the traditional Confucian way of thinking, in which it is normal for single people to get married.

Regarding the perspectives of other scholars, however, perhaps some of the influential elements come from their diverse church backgrounds, with their more lenient or strict readings of Scripture. Some of them may result from their theological training in particular countries or institutions which may affect their approaches to the Bible. Some elements of influence can derive from their special interests or concerns about natural or economic disasters, the sexually promiscuous social order, or the expectation of the impending return of the Lord. This will be an interesting topic to explore more in detail, if time allows.

3.3 Marriage

3.3.1 Interpretation of Korean Protestant scholars concerning marriage

In 1 Corinthians 7:1-5, Paul permitted marriage as a means of protection against sexual temptation, and encouraged a married couple to maintain a good sexual relationship within their marriage. In 1 Corinthians 7:9 Paul also counselled the recipients of his letter to exercise self-control over their sexual desire so that they did not fall into sin. Furthermore, in 1 Corinthians 7:7, Paul reminded them that singleness and marriage are a gift and calling. In

this section, the perspectives on the status of marriage of four scholars, J.H.Lee, Y.Y.Hur, H.S Kim and I.S Park, and one Korean magazine will be considered. They all agree about Paul's emphasis on this issue, yet present their arguments from different approaches.

One contemporary Korean scholar, J. H. Lee, observes that Paul emphasised the need for marriage to keep believers from sexual immorality in the context of Corinth (J. H. Lee 2010, 235). According to Dong Yeon Khee, Corinth in the first century was known as a place with a low standard of morality and ungodly ethics, which negatively affected the existing religions in the city. Eventually, due to this influence, religions in Corinth ended up growing in immoral life style and behaviour (D. Y. Khee 1993, 150). It is appropriate for Lee to point out that Paul promoted marriage for his fellow believers out of his concern. As we saw in the section about celibacy, J.H.Lee is a scholar who favours marriage over singleness. Accordingly, J.H.Lee's stress on the subject of matrimony is appropriate, since one of the purposes of marriage is to help a man to refrain from any morally wrong relationship as suggested in 1 Corinthians 7:1-5.

J.H. Lee goes on mentioning a particularly interesting aspect of 1 Corinthians 7:6-8. Lee suggests a distinction between the terms 'consent' and 'command.' The word command is used or implied in 1 Corinthians 7:2 (□χ□τω), 5 (□ποστερε□τε) and 9 (γαμησ□τωσαν). By contrast, the word for permission, which contains Paul's hope, can be seen in 1 Corinthians 7:7 (θ□λω), 8 (με□νωσιν) and 26 (καλ□ν) (J. H. Lee 2010, 233).

It may well be that J. H. Lee intentionally underlines these passages so as to argue that Paul desired the status of matrimony rather than that of singleness. Therefore, it is possible to claim that Paul's positive option for marriage is clearly indicated in 1 Corinthians 7:8-9 with an awareness of Genesis 1:27 and 2:24. Yet this view needs to be examined from a different aspect. In Christian matrimony, a man is encouraged to get married not only to meet their sexual need as mentioned in 1 Corinthians 7:1-5 but also to marry according to his calling and gift as noted in 1 Corinthians 7:7. J.H. Lee attempts to put more stress on the former point rather than the latter. Lee's view here is related to his perspective on the subject of singleness, since he tends to emphasise a preference of marriage. He appears to read the text for the marriage from the same approach which he has in the area of singleness as mentioned

in the previous section.

On the whole, the text seems to imply that Paul did not regard matrimony among Christians as extraordinary. Rather, it was a normal idea and custom among believers during Paul's lifetime. Young Yeob Hur, a Roman Catholic priest in Korea, also introduces a verse from the Talmud: "A man without a wife is not a complete man" (Y. Y. Hur 2006, 231).

The opposite - 'a woman without a husband is not a complete woman' – might also be suggested. Y.Y. Hur says that the remark in the Talmud may suggest that a person is not a human being if he or she is not married. This underlines the absolute need for a man or woman to get married. Y.Y. Hur also refers to Jewish people who believed that the creation work of God was carried out through the practice of marriage (Y.Y. Hur 2006, 232). This implies that God is the one who originated the structure of matrimony. Judging from these findings, the viewpoint of Judaism evidently indicates a significance of marriage in the common Jewish culture.

What is notable in J. H. Lee's discussion is the way in which J. H. Lee describes verses such as 1 Corinthians 7:2, 5a, 5b and 9a as strong instructions of Paul for marriage for the Corinthian Christians. One of the presumptions here is that there might be some believers at the Corinthian church who tried to abstain from getting married out of an eager hope for the return of the Lord Jesus. This unique situation might have motivated Paul to mention the topic of matrimony, so the writing of Paul gives J.H. Lee an impression that Paul had more inclination toward marriage.

Otherwise, it may be that J.H. Lee purposely intends to put an emphasis on the matter of marriage because many contemporary young singles in Korean society tend not to get married or to delay marriage for various reasons. One Korean internet news site, Daum.net, reports this social trend in a recent survey of the reasons why Korean single people postpone or give up on marriage. Its survey sets out four major reasons as follows:

- 1) They have not yet met any potential mate.
- 2) They enjoy living alone.
- 3) They still struggle with emotional hurt due to a break-up with a previous boy /girlfriend.

4) They are concerned about their uncertain future
(Accessed May 25, 2013. <http://media.daum.net>).

Following this, we move to some articles from the monthly Christian magazine, *Ministry and Theology*. It suggests that Paul's advice for marriage is based on an eschatological perspective. Several passages are cited in 1 Corinthians, "upcoming distress" (7:26), "The appointed time has grown very short." (7:29) and "the present form of this world is passing away" (7:31) (*Ministry and Theology* Sep. 2007, 135). The magazine attempts to get believers to think of the impending hardships they might face. It tries to ask believers to regard their married life seriously. In other words, Christians should be faithful right to the end in their marriage, regardless of what may take place in the future. Also, it reminds Christians that the state of marriage will soon come to an end. Due to these diverse possible interpretations, the comment of the magazine is dubious to some degree.

Paul reminded believers of the significant nature of marriage in 1 Corinthians 7:32 and 34, where he used the same phrase twice:

“---is anxious about the things of the Lord (7:32, ESV).”
“---is anxious about the things of the Lord (7:34, ESV).”

The repetitive expression here signifies his intentional emphasis on dedication to one's object. The same magazine emphasises this point by stating that Paul appeared to draw attention to the calling of God and purpose of marriage for the sake of ministry, which should result from Christians getting married (*Ministry and Theology* Sep. 2007, 135).

It seems as though the magazine deliberately uses these two verses so as to highlight the rationale of Christian matrimony through which a believer is motivated to marry for the service of God by obeying the calling of marriage. Nevertheless, this statement does not seem to imply other motives for marriage, such as production of children. Also, it gives the impression that one aspect of marriage, vocation, is to be stressed above the nature of marriage as a gift from God.

In addition, perhaps the magazine is attempting to advise Christians to be faithful in their marriage so that the married couple can be more focused on the matters of God without being

distracted by other things. A believer can be a person who obeys God's calling, irrespective of its nature such as celibacy or marriage, and also devotes his or her life to the ministry of God as he or she wants. For this reason, it is not appropriate to use 1 Corinthians 7:32 and 34 to suggest that only married persons can be considered as obedient to God's calling and able to perform a ministry of God.

Yet the magazine challenges believers about their motivation for marriage and their continuing attitude in their married life. The magazine may try to reiterate these passages, 1 Corinthians 7:32 and 7:34, as a way of laying stress on the significance of marriage to its modern readers. In other words, just like the view this magazine has toward singleness, the journal appears to read this text with an awareness of the contemporary audience who might not have the appropriate intentions for marriage, and also in the light of the social tendency towards easy divorce.

As we mentioned earlier, the marital traditions of the Jewish people resulted from their interpretation of Genesis 1:27 and 2:24 as implied in Matthew 19. H.S. Kim suggests that the conventional view of Jewish people towards matrimony signifies the understanding of Jews that marital union is an accomplishment of God's work (H.S. Kim 2001, 115). Thus, in the Gospels, it is obvious that Jesus also understood the system of marriage according to the Old Testament.

In referring to the writing of Paul about the topic of marriage, H.S. Kim explains that Paul believed that the end of the world would come during his lifetime. He believes that this understanding influenced Paul's perspective on matrimony (H.S. Kim 2001, 115). This means that because of Paul's expectation of the imminent coming of the Lord, Paul did not eagerly encourage single Christians to get married as implied in 1 Corinthians 7:27 and 34. This also suggests that Paul added the apocalyptic aspect to the structure of marriage. H.S. Kim's presumption is understandable as Paul's view of the world of that time may have affected the way that he regarded marriage. Nevertheless, H.S. Kim's statement may be inappropriate to some degree, since Paul did not clearly mention his unmistakable assurance that the end of days would definitely take place during his lifetime in the first century.

H. S. Kim approaches marriage not as a gift but as a sacred institution established by God (H.S. Kim 2001, 116). The latter part of H. S. Kim's remark is particularly relevant since Genesis 2:22 indicates God as the originator of marriage. Nonetheless, the previous part may well not be reasonable as Paul evidently referred to marriage as a gift from God in 1 Corinthians 7:7. H.S. Kim does not give any further explanation about what he meant as mentioned earlier. H.S. Kim is also keen to affirm that the state of marriage has two purposes, positive and passive. Kim observes that the first is intended to carry on the responsibility of producing offspring and the second is to avoid any sexual temptation (H.S. Kim 2001, 116). H.S. Kim claims that a man should get married in order to stay away from any immoral sin since every human being has an inherent sexual instinct. For this reason, Kim thinks that if this sexual desire cannot be met within a system of marriage, which was instituted by God, human nature is likely to attempt to find an outlet outside matrimony. As a result, this tendency can lead to sexual immorality. Accordingly, H.S. Kim argues that a man who is not granted a gift of celibacy ought to get married (H.S. Kim 2001, 116). H.S. Kim's opinion seems to entail that a man is to get married mainly on the grounds of meeting his sexual desire inside married life and of keeping himself from falling into an act of immorality. This interpretation suggests that Kim does not grasp the important theme in regard to marriage in the whole chapter.

Kim's motives here are questionable, since he appears deliberately to ignore 1 Corinthians 7:7 but to stress 7:2. Perhaps Kim wants to emphasise the need for matrimony in the midst of a sexually promiscuous societal atmosphere in the city of Corinth in the first century. In addition, H.S. Kim probably intends to draw the attention of the modern reader to the benefit of marriage in the equally immoral modern days, as a place where a man's sexual needs can be met. This shows that H.S. Kim attempts to relate to the text from the conventional Korean culture where this aspect of matrimony is traditionally acknowledged.

Another writer, I.S. Park, gives a detailed introduction to the church at Corinth which received the letter from Paul. I.S. Park describes how some members of the church were influenced by the Greek dualism to the degree that they could behave carelessly according to their fleshly desires, to the point where some Christians might have been married, divorced and remarried repeatedly as non-believers did that time, motivated by the eventual decay of

their body. In contrast to this tendency, however, there were also some people who were so extremely abstinent that they would not have conjugal relationships with their married partner, but tried to suppress their sexual desire (I. S. Park 2002, 211). I. S. Park makes mention of some Christians who might have attempted to remain celibate like Paul in preparation for the impending return of Jesus. In response to these complicated situations, I. S. Park also describes how Paul proposed marriage as one way of avoiding sexual immorality but also emphasised mutual sincerity and self-control toward each other in married life as implied in 1 Corinthians 7:2 (I. S. Park 2002, 211).

I.S. Park reads the text as a reaction against Gnosticism, where one of the characteristics is dualism. He is the only Korean scholar in this section who attempts to understand the pertinent passages about marriage by looking into the likely influencing aspects of Greek culture on the Corinthian church in the first century in the area of sexuality. In other words, he understands the instruction of Paul toward the Corinthian Christians for the issue of marriage from the ancient Greek philosophy.

I.S. Park also claims that in 1 Corinthians 7:4, Paul highlighted the equal rights and duties of husband and wife in terms of having authority over the body of each other in married life (I.S. Park 2002, 212). Among Korean scholars whose opinions are cited in this section, I.S. Park is the only one who points to the stress of Paul on the same responsibilities of a man and a woman in marriage. Park belongs to the Methodist Church in Korea which, unlike the more conservative Protestant churches and denominations, ordains women. The orders of the Methodist Church, which tends to recognise equal rights between men and women, may have influenced the way that I. S. Park reads this text. It is no surprise that out of his concern for and awareness of the low status of the rights of women in Korea, he may purposely emphasise 1 Corinthians 7:4. It is also likely that I.S. Park attempts to put an emphasis on this point so as to help bring about change in this area.

This widely respected report clearly identifies the inferior status of woman in a male-oriented Korean society. This mentality, a high regard for men but unjust treatment of women, is evident not only in Korean culture but also in the church. Accordingly, it is possible that Park attempts to point to the teaching of Paul who emphasised the equal right between a man and

woman so that contemporary readers can give thought to improving the rights of Korean women.

In a similar way as it was in the section on singleness, various scholars look at the issue of marriage from different views. These scholars generally consent that Paul recognised the nature of matrimony as a traditional lifestyle amongst believers. However, they read the text by putting an emphasis on this topic from diverse perspectives. In some cases it is not easy to discern the factors influencing the scholars' views. Yet, it is likely that Y.Y.Hur is influenced by the traditional Korean way of thinking on this topic, namely that it is natural for single people to get married. J.H.Lee, who underlines the importance of marriage for the avoidance of sexual temptation outside of marriage, may be reacting to sexually liberal modern society.

3.4 Divorce

3.4.1 Interpretation of divorce by Korean Protestant scholars

Before going further, let us look at the latest divorce rate among Koreans. Regardless of their religion, increasing numbers of Koreans are getting divorced these days, and for many reasons. As of 2013, according to a Korean news website, the rate of divorce in Korea is 33% (Accessed June 23, 2014. <http://blog.naver.com>).

This indicates that one in three couples in Korea ends up separating. This high rate of marital breakdown leads many Korean scholars to examine what the Bible says about this issue. Korean scholar Dong Yeon Khee asserts that churches in Korea are apt not to refer to the Bible for its proper advice but instead to deal with this issue from the viewpoint of moral ethics so as not to anger the believers in this sensitive area. In addition, even though the churches try to give some help to believers, Christians are inclined to make decisions about marital breakdown on their own without acknowledging the authority of church (D.Y. Khee 1993, 121). D.Y. Khee's argument makes sense, perhaps because the churches in Korea do not want to be seen as being too strict by applying the biblical principle to the marital lives of their followers.

In personal meetings with some Korean pastors, I was told that neither church law nor denominational regulations in Korea stipulate any distinctive code for divorce and subsequent remarriage. Consequently, Korean pastors and Christian leaders have diverse ways of understanding and applying the related Biblical teaching to the topic of divorce. This is an encouragement to examine how Korean biblical scholars attempt to interpret the Bible pertaining to this significant subject.

For the purpose of this research, numerous materials written by Korean theologians, ministers and lay people have been collected so as to provide an appropriate understanding of the Bible texts linked to the topic of divorce. Standpoints on this matter vary more or less according to each commentator. To examine the development of thinking, I will focus on the work of nine scholars: I.S. Park, J. H. Lee, D. Y. Khee, S. K. Lee, Y. S. Park, J.C. Kim, J.I .Kim, S.A. Park and S. S. Kwon. As for the grounds for divorce amongst believers, the views of scholars vary from being very stringent to rather lenient. In the case of a mixed marriage, they tend to agree that divorce can be permitted if the unbelieving spouse asks for it.

I.S. Park and D. Y. Khee give informative coverage of the Roman culture in the first century, offering for a brief understanding of the social background that influenced people in the city of Corinth. According to I.S. Park, in Roman culture, marriage referred to the status of co-habitation of an adult man and woman, whereas divorce referred to ceasing to live together. Since Corinth was under the colonial rule of the Roman Empire in the first century, the marriage law of the Romans probably affected other ethnic groups including Christians in the city (I.S. Park 2002, 217). This can be inferred from the various questions about marriage and sexuality in 1 Corinthians 7 which were asked by the Corinthian Christians in the first century.

D.Y. Khee reports that divorce and remarriage were rampant among the high class of Roman society in the first century. People of the upper class were known to get divorced in order to get remarried (D.Y. Khee 1993, 126). This suggests that the same cultural practice of marriage and divorce, as well as immoral sexual conduct practiced by the Romans was probably carried out amongst the Christians in Corinth at that time. Se Yoon Kim also supports this assumption (S. Y. Kim 2011, 23). Paul dealt with the topic of divorce and remarriage in 1 Corinthians 7. 1 Corinthians 5:1-11 and 6:12-19 also allude to sexual

immorality amongst Corinthian believers. I.S. Park and D.Y.Khee seek to understand the issue of divorce amongst Corinthian Christians from a cultural perspective.

Like D. Y. Khee and S. Y. Kim, S.K. Lee also explains that in Roman Corinth in the first century, many cases of marital split took place amongst people whose moral life was promiscuous, as well as among those who were too ascetic to have any sexual relationships in marriage (S.K. Lee 1969, 100). For the latter part of argument, however, S. K. Lee does not give any associated biblical evidence. Even so, he argues that some people in Corinth asked for divorce with an excuse of devout faith of one partner (S.K. Lee 1969, 101). Most probably, S. K. Lee points to this matter on the basis of his understanding of 1 Corinthians 7:5, where Paul admonished them not to separate for a long time because of full dedication to the life of prayer.

1 Corinthians 7:5 is the first verse in 1 Corinthians 7 where the word separation is indirectly alluded to in the phrase, ‘deprive one another.’ Presumably this citation is worth consideration by some scholars. In spite of the ungodly cultural background in Corinth, it is unclear whether the frequent occasions of marital split were caused by the practice of abstinence by some devout Christians in the city who refrained from having a sexual relationship with their partner in marriage as indicated by S. K. Lee. The related passage, 1 Corinthians 7:5 says “Do not deprive one another, except perhaps by agreement for a limited time, that you may devote yourselves to prayer, but then come together gain, so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control” (ESV). This verse suggests that there might be some religiously dedicated believers in the city, who attempted to separate themselves from their spouse for a long time in order to give complete dedication to prayer. This might have motivated Paul to give them the advice as described above. Alternatively, perhaps Paul gave this admonition with an awareness of the presence of some ascetic people in the city. Nonetheless, the text does not clearly say more about this possible occasion.

Se Yoon Kim, a biblical scholar and associate dean of the Korean Doctor of Ministry program and professor of New Testament at Fuller Theological Seminary in the United States also comments on this verse:

This passage means that the marital partner should not decline the sexual request from

each other. However, there is only one legitimate reason for the couple to refrain from having sexual intercourse, that is, they devote their time to the spiritual cause for a fixed period on the mutual agreement. In other words, they can abstain from having sexual relationship for the sake of dedicated prayer life for some time. This means that they have to get together after that time (S.Y.Kim 2011, 128).

This remark of S. Y. Kim seems to underline one of the purposes of marriage, which is to help a married partner to be protected from sexual sin resulting from the neglect of sexual obligation of one spouse as Paul stated in 1 Corinthians 7:2. S.Y. Kim also makes it clear that one's desire for the pursuit of piety in married life should not go to the extreme so that it becomes a hindrance to fulfilling marital responsibility. It is not clear in the text whether there were some believers at that time who might have gone through marital breakdown after being separate from their partner because of a long-term personal prayer life, or due to the extremely ascetic life style of one spouse. Hence, the argument of S. K. Lee, who says that the possible ascetic atmosphere among believers in the Corinthian church, is not apposite and needs further relevant explanation.

a. Divorce amongst believers

In 1 Corinthians 7:10-11, Paul distinguished couples who are both believers by presenting his advice in the manner of a direct word from Jesus, “not I, but the Lord.” By phrasing his advice this way, Paul presented his remark as an authoritative order from the Lord.

Yune Sun Park, another famous Bible exegete, asserts that the comment of Paul in 7:10, “The wife should not separate from her husband” (ESV), means that a wife is not recommended to insist on a divorce unless her husband commits adultery (Y. S. Park 1995, 94). This means that Park also recognises the teaching of Jesus that the only permissible reason for divorce is the infidelity of one spouse, even though Paul did not especially specify in the text here that this was the only ground permitted. Paul did not appear to mention any reasons for divorces in this verse. If he wanted to permit a marital breakdown for any other possible reasons, he could have written “The wife should not separate from her husband, unless.....”

According to Y.S. Park the marital troubles, characteristic incompatibility, a serious character flaw, physical sickness, crime, and so on appear to justify a public law that enables people to

get divorced. To some extent, this civil regulation tends to lead to an easy breakup of marriage. For this reason, Park argues that if matrimony cannot be protected from these problems, the one who initiates to cause the dissolution of matrimony is the one who is guilty (Y. S. Park 1995, 94). The comment of Y.S. Park here suggests that a believing spouse who faces such problems should not take the initiative in asking for a marriage breakup even though civil law may consider those troubles as permissible grounds for divorce. Through this statement and his reference to the occasion of adultery, Y. S. Park seems to suggest that a believing couple may get divorced only on the ground of infidelity.

In reality a married couple, whether Christians or not, can encounter many marital problems such as domestic violence, habitual lying, anger, desertion, addiction to pornography, drugs, alcohol or gambling, financial irresponsibility, incest etc. As a result, this tragic situation leads us to ask whether it is sensible for one spouse to keep suffering from these troubles. In other words, is it rational for one partner to continue to endure this hardship only for the sake of keeping the marital vow. In the light of these circumstances, the argument of Y.S. Pak who views sexual infidelity as only one legitimate ground for divorce looks unrealistic and rigid. Taken as a whole, the understanding of Y.S. Park about the issue of divorce is very similar to the way that the fundamentalist interprets the Scripture - reading the biblical text literally without considering the context.

Another scholar, Soo Am Park, also thinks that divorce is not allowed on any occasion, either at the initiative of the husband or the wife based on Jesus' strict prohibition of divorce as seen in Mark 10:9 as well as the warning of God in Malachi 2:14-16 (S. A. Park 2007, 120). These two texts do not include the "exception clause" as seen in Matthew 5:32. S. A. Park sounds stricter than Y.S. Park in terms of divorce grounds. Also, it seems that S. A. Park deliberately ignores the phrase in Matthew 5:32, "But I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of sexual immorality, makes her commit adultery" (ESV). From this point of view, the reading of S. A. Park is stricter than that of Y.S. Park and of Paul. And the standpoint of S. A. Park reflects the traditional way of thinking of Koreans, mainly coming from the Confucianism, toward the topic of divorce.

According to Joon Ho Lee, a Roman husband had a unilateral power over the body and

liberty of his wife under Roman law. Yet the law of the Roman world granted an equal right to a wife (or the father of the wife) and a husband in initiating a marital breakup (J. H. Lee 2010, 237). In contrast to Roman custom, Paul's advice given in 1 Corinthians 7:11 is completely contrary to that of Jewish society, where woman was not permitted to take the initiative in divorcing her husband. J. H. Lee says that a wife was not allowed to divorce her husband since the right of woman for divorce was limited in the Jewish culture (J.H. Lee 2010, 237).

In the light of the circumstances of the Jewish culture of the first century, the short but significant comment in 1 Corinthians 7:11 undoubtedly recognises the right of woman to take the initiative in separating herself from her spouse on any possible ground, including the cause of sexual immorality. This also indicates that Paul supported the equal right of woman to men, even in the male-dominated Jewish culture. In a way, this outlook reflects the same favourable attitude Jesus showed toward woman in general in the gospels. S. K. Lee also asserts that it was a radical ideology in the first century to admit the initiative of wife in this area, giving her the same right to appeal for divorce as her husband (S.K. Lee 1969, 101). This can be also considered revolutionary against the conventional Jewish social custom of the first century. By making reference to the ancient custom toward women in the rights of divorce in two cultures, Roman and Jewish, J.H. Lee may well try to point to some similarity between the custom of Roman and the way that Paul viewed the subject of divorce. Moreover, J.H. Lee may be trying to point a spotlight on the equality of divorce rights between man and woman in the contemporary context.

In order to see what Paul intended here, it may well be worth examining the Greek expression used in this context. In the original Greek Bible, the verb $\kappa\omega\rho\iota\zeta\omega$, (*divide, separate, pass*) is mentioned in 1 Corinthians 7:10 and 11a as an infinitive aorist passive and subjective aorist passive separately and as indicative present middle form in 7:15a. Another Greek verb, $\alpha\upsilon\phi\iota\eta\mu\iota$ (*let go, send away, leave it*) is used in 7:11b in an infinitive present active form. It is questionable why Paul did not use the same word, but the different expressions, even though both the verbs used in these passages reflect the situation in which a man is to separate from his wife. Nevertheless, some significant clues can be obtained by looking carefully into the dissimilar connotation and also the different tense of each word.

J.H. Lee explains that the first Greek verb $\kappa\omega\rho\iota\zeta\omega$, was used to express the separation or divorce of a married couple (J. H. Lee 2010, 236). According to Lee, this term was also used to mean divorce in the speech of the famous Greek historian Polybius (200-118 BC) in the Hellenistic world in the second century B.C. For this reason then, the Greek word $\kappa\omega\rho\iota\zeta\omega$ has a definite meaning which does not describe the situation of separation without sleeping together but divorce resulting from the legal cancellation of a marriage contract (J.H. Lee 2010, 236). This signifies the complete ending of marriage between two people.

J. H. Lee develops this idea further by adding that a husband is not to forsake his wife even if he plans to live a godly life like an angel resulting from his strong pursuit of spirituality. In the same way, a wife is not to part herself from her husband in spite of his request for divorce as stated in 1 Corinthians 7:10. Lee also intensifies the prevention of marital breakup by pointing to the implied meaning of the Greek verbal expressions as below: (J.H. Lee 2010, 247)

- a) Verb with a connotation of order $\kappa\alpha\tau\alpha\lambda\lambda\alpha\gamma\eta, \tau\omega$ (reconcile) in 7:11
- b) Verb with a meaning of command, $\mu\eta. \alpha\upsilon\phi\iota\epsilon, \tau\omega$ in 7:12 and 13
- c) Verb of simple past passive infinitive $\kappa\omega\rho\iota\sigma\theta\eta\iota\sigma\theta\epsilon\iota$ in 7:10
- d) Verb of infinitive present active $\alpha\upsilon\phi\iota\epsilon, \tau\omega$ in 7:11

The detailed discussion of the Greek words in the text provides a useful insight into the clear understanding of the intention of Paul on the major topic which is dealt with in this section. The studies of J. H .Lee help us to take the advice of Paul more seriously by taking a firm grasp of the original purpose of his writing.

On the basis of this observation, let us look into each verbal expression more carefully. The first expression, $\kappa\alpha\tau\alpha\lambda\lambda\alpha\gamma\eta, \tau\omega$ indicates that to get reconciled to the ex-spouse after split is a compulsory command. This means that Paul acknowledged divorce was taking place amongst believing couples for all manner of reasons. And since Paul gave his advice not depending on his own judgment but on the instruction of Jesus, it is likely Paul might have had in mind adultery as the only ground for divorce for a Christian couple when he used this verb.

Nevertheless, it is also possible to presume that Paul could consider other possible reasons for divorce even though he did not clearly mention them in this text. The second expression, *mh .avfie ,tw*, implies the equal treatment of Paul for the matter of divorce. S. Y. Kim also refers to this point (S. Y. Kim 2011, 132). The third verb, *cwrisqh/nai*, reflects the Jewish custom in the first century where a husband sent a wife away, and thus the wife was divorced against her wish. The last word, *avfie ,nai*, also alludes to the Jewish culture where a husband took the initiative in divorcing his wife. S. Y. Kim also points to this possible allusion of Jewish tradition in the first century (S. Y. Kim 2011, 132). Therefore, the original Greek words which are used in the text evidently reflect the conservative Jewish culture, recognition of marital split, strong instruction for reconciliation after marriage breakdown and the equal marital rights and responsibilities of husband in divorce.

Dong Yeon Khee, points to the advice of Paul of 1 Corinthians 7:10-11 which states that a divorce is viewed as an act of adultery, since the divorced parties are still in a marriage covenant before God (D. Y. Khee 1993, 151). This means that even in the occasion of marriage breakup, Paul asserted that it should not be regarded as a complete termination of matrimony. This viewpoint is in line with 1 Corinthians 7:11, where Paul advised reconciliation between two people. Furthermore, D. Y. Khee says that at the time of Jesus, a heavy punishment was imposed on the party involved in an offence of sexual immorality. It was a long-term tradition for the Jewish culture to stone the party involved in adultery as the penalty for the immoral sin (D. Y. Khee 1993, 154). By reminding us of this way of dealing with the matter of divorce in Jewish culture, D.Y. Khee may try to remind the believers of any undesirable consequence of marriage breakup.

In connection with this observation, Leviticus 20:10 states the punishment for sexual sin: “If a man commits adultery with the wife of his neighbour, both the adulterer, and the adulteress shall surely be put to death” (ESV). This passage shows the strict attitude of Jewish society towards the act of infidelity. As mentioned earlier, the Bible does not comment on the means of putting people in extramarital affairs to death. Yet, according to D. Y. Khee, it was done by stoning in the Jewish custom. The passage cited here unmistakably asks for the equal chastisement to the two parties involved in a sexual relationship outside of marriage. However, in John 8:1-11, the Jews brought to Jesus a woman who had been caught in

adultery. This story gives rise to some questions. What happened to the man on the scene? Did the Jews let go of him intentionally? Or did the man run away from the hands of the Jews? Why did the Jews bring only woman to Jesus, without the other guilty party?

Presumably this scenario indicates that the Jewish people did not treat a man and a woman equally in the matter of executing punishment on the sexual offender. Leviticus commands an equal sentence for both man and woman. Yet the text in John 8 implies a lenient attitude toward the man in Jewish society. The act of adultery can offer a reasonable basis of divorce and the guilty party may not be able to get remarried because of his or her infidelity. Nonetheless, it is possible to think that if a spouse who committed infidelity asks for forgiveness and is reconciled, and the other party forgives the person of sexual immorality and consents to live together, that may be permissible.

Taken as a whole, the arguments of the Korean scholars considered in this section are conservative in not allowing divorce for a Christian couple. They appear to be stricter than the directives of Jesus, (divorce on the ground of adultery) and Paul, who might have allowed divorce under various circumstances. Most of the scholars, with the exception of S. K. Lee, do not make mention of any permissible grounds for marriage breakdown. It is also notable that J. H. Lee and S.Y. Kim point to the equal rights of divorce between man and woman.

b. Divorce in a mixed marriage

Unlike the advice he gives to the believing couple, the advice Paul gives in 1 Corinthians 7:12-14 regarding the “mixed marriage” of a believer and an unbeliever starts off “I, not the Lord” (ESV). This suggests that as far as Paul knew Jesus did not comment on the occasion of mixed marriage during his public ministry, since his ministry was mostly fulfilled inside the scope of Jewish culture. This observation finds support in the statement of S.S. Kwon (S. S. Kwon 200, 627). By contrast the major ministry group for Paul was gentiles, as stated in Romans 15:16. Thus, Paul could have been in a situation where he had to deal with the marital troubles caused by a mixed marriage. Accordingly, it is more likely that Paul could not rely on the teaching of Jesus for his advice, but had to give guidance based on his own

authority in this area. This also led Paul to give advice to a mixed marriage which was different from that to a Christian couple on the same issue. J.C. Kim also makes reference to this point (J.C.Kim 1999, 288).

It is noticeable that the counsel of Paul was given here to a man first before it was given to a wife, which is dissimilar from the way Paul advised a believing couple in the previous text. This suggests the Jewish tradition, where a man had authority to terminate his marriage on his own initiative.

Paul did not approve of marriage between a believer and a non-believer, as stated in 2 Corinthians 6: 14. This advice can be given to those Christian singles who are not yet married. Also, in the Old Testament, marriage between a Jew and non-Jew was not approved, as seen in Deuteronomy 7:1-6. Accordingly, by custom, Jewish culture did not approve of mixed marriage. It can be imagined that in the Corinthian church community, some conservative believers did not hold a mixed marriage in high esteem. Sung Soo Kwon also points to this observation (S. S .Kwon 2000, 626). Thus, probably, some conservative members of the church in Corinth insisted that the unbelieving mate should be excluded from the fellowship of the church so as to preserve the religious purity of the Christian body. Or, some Corinthian Christians might have asked Paul to rule that the believing spouse should separate him/herself from non-believing partner. Bruce suggests the same assumption (Bruce 1971, 69). Nevertheless, based on the observation of what Paul has been saying in this text, the low regard of the Jewish people toward a mixed marriage is at variance with the view of Paul since Paul acknowledged the benefits of mixed marriage.

As a whole, the Korean scholars cited in this section do not allow for the ending of a mixed marriage as Paul did, unless the unbelieving spouse requests it for whatever reason that may be. With this in mind, the scholars seek to understand Paul's recognition of advantages of mixed marriage from diverse viewpoints, by paying an attention to particular Greek terms, phrases and verses.

Sang Keun Lee points to the unusual aspect of a mixed marriage by considering the Greek verb used in the original text, which is *μη. (not) αφιε, τω* (let go, send away). This was

used in the same way in the two commands given by Paul in 1 Corinthians 7:12 and 13 (S.K. Lee 1969, 101). By referring to these particular words, S. K. Lee tries to call our attention to Paul's intention to give the same advice given to the husband and wife, on equal terms, by using the same Greek word. This indicates the recognition by Paul of the equal right of man and woman in married life when it comes to responding to a request for separation from the side of an unbelieving party. This is in complete contrast to Jewish culture where only a husband was permitted to initiate a divorce. S.S. Kwon also points to this unusual stance (S.S. Kwon 2000, 628).

In case of mixed marriage, Paul did not ask them to get divorced. 1 Corinthians 7:13 is addressed to a believing wife whose husband is an unbeliever. This passage implies that the believing person is allowed to agree to the request of an unbelieving mate if asked not to live together. In other words, the believing spouse should not be forced to remain in marriage if an unbelieving partner wants to terminate the matrimony for any reason. In the same way, S. Y. Kim, S. S. Kwon and J. C. Kim all also understand these verses in terms of the unbelieving spouse to become holy through the godly influence of a believing partner (S. Y. Kim 2011, 134-137) (S.S. Kwon 2000, 632-634) (J.C. Kim 1999, 289-290).

The reading of Luke 8:43-48 can be applied to understanding 1 Corinthians 7:14. By an indirect allusion to Mark 1:40-45 and Luke 8:43-48, Paul emphasised the aspect of the unbelieving partner becoming holy through the godly example, witness, prayer and living-out of the gospel by the believing spouse. Paul believed that the believer could help the unbeliever to become clean and holy by the grace of God. We can assume that some of the healing stories of Jesus, which Paul might have heard, could have lead Paul to encourage the believing spouse to hope for his or her unbelieving partner to be made clean through the godliness that dwells inside the believing spouse. Paul's remark in his passage gives hope for the possibility of making unbelievers holy through the influence of godly Christians.

On the basis of the foregoing observation then, 1 Corinthians 7:14 clearly shows that Paul's primary concern is to give confidence to the believer to remain married to their unbelieving spouse with a hope that their unbelieving partner and their children can be made clean and holy by their godly influence. For this reason, Paul concluded that both the unbelieving

spouse and children were acceptable. This is such an encouraging counsel, since one Christian can make a constructive difference in an unbelieving family.

This also indicates that even though Paul did not recommend mixed marriage, he did not ask that a mixed couple should separate. Moreover, by choosing the particular Greek word for being holy in the life of the unbelieving party in a couple as has been discussed in 7:14, Paul appeared to have the situation where the gospel could reach out to the unbeliever through a Christian marriage deeply at heart. This understanding undoubtedly points to the fervent desire of Paul for the salvation of gentile souls through the marital bond for the sake of the gospel, even though salvation depends wholly on God. Korean scholars S.Y.Kim, S.S.Kwon and J.C.Kim all interpret this text in the same way (S.Y.Kim 2011, 134-137) (S.S. Kwon 2000, 632-634) (J.C. Kim 1999, 289-290).

Jong In Kim also makes mention of the last two passages, 1 Corinthians 7:15 and 7:16 which show Paul's recognition that divorce might be initiated by an unbeliever who was not willing to live harmoniously with a Christian spouse (J. I. Kim 2001, 132). In these passages, Paul offered two ways in which the believing party can positively respond to the request for marital breakup from an unbelieving partner. The first affirmative ground is that the believing spouse does not need to be enslaved in the matter of divorce request. This means that Paul permitted the consent of a believing partner to the demand of marital split from an unbelieving spouse even though the believer did their best to maintain the marriage.

Another scholar, Soo Am Park, also acknowledges one ground for divorce in the case of a mixed marriage - if the unbelieving partner wants a divorce. S. A. Park uses an interesting idiom for this: a "passive divorce" from an unbelieving partner (S.A. Park 2007, 121). S. A. Park finds support for his argument in the phrase in 1 Corinthians 7:15, "In such cases the brother or sister is not enslaved" (ESV). It looks as if S. A. Park views this verse as an indirect permission from Paul for marital breakup, since S.A. Park understands that Paul did not want a believing partner to remain in a troubled marriage when he or she was asked for divorce by a non-believing partner.

In regard to the latter phrase in 1 Corinthians 7:15, this passage can be interpreted in two

ways depending on the understanding of the scholar. One of the two readings is that Paul's comment in 7:15 gives a second basis for allowing the believing partner to dismiss his or her unbelieving spouse in the case of a request for divorce. Two scholars, S. K. Lee and S. A. Park, are in favour of this view. Here, let us examine the church background of S. K. Lee and S. A. Park. Lee belongs to Hapdong, which is considered a conservative church group whereas Park belongs to Tonghap, which is viewed as a liberal church. In this sense, it is not surprising that S. A. Park consents to the request for a split on the side of the unbelieving spouse. By contrast, it was to be expected that S. K. Lee might not approve of a believing spouse sending away his or her unbelieving partner in the case of a request for divorce. So his agreement in this regard is surprising. Perhaps, as a minister, he is more concerned about the freedom and well-being of the believing spouse in this troubled situation.

S. K. Lee thinks that this means that it is better for the believing partner to let go of the unbelieving spouse when asked for divorce rather than breaking the peace of his family by striving to maintain the troubled marriage (S. K. Lee 1969, 102). S.A. Park supports the observation of S. K. Lee by interpreting this passage that it would be better for a couple to split when they wish to end their matrimony, rather than trying to live with a marital problem without peace. S.A. Park refers to other scholars who are in line with this understanding, including Alford, Mare, Goudge, Mering, Holladay and Conzelmann (S.A. Park 2007, 121).

In contrast to this perspective however, KJV, NKJV, NASB and the Korean Bible translated the participle *de* as meaning *but*. In this understanding, Paul reminded the couple that God has called them to live peace. Hence, according Joon Ho Lee, Paul appeared to anticipate in this text that the marital bonding would and should not to be broken regardless of a request for divorce from the side of non-believer (J.H. Lee 2010, 242). This suggests that Paul was aware of the possibility of the salvation of the unbeliever, who could be saved through the godly influence of a believing partner as supported in 1 Corinthians 7:16. The view of J. H. Lee above is further confirmed by J. I. Kim, who also regards this passage as a clear instruction that it would be better to try to live in peace condition whilst maintaining a married life, rather than to divorce (J. I. Kim 2001, 132).

According to the perspective of the second group it is obvious that the wording *de* (but, for)

in the phrase is used as an adversative participle, which expresses the opposition of their meanings. For this reason, the text after this wording can have a completely dissimilar implication in it. In the light of this standpoint, the second group considers that to split from a non-believing partner due to a marital dispute does not lead to a peaceful life. Therefore, they believe that the allusion of Paul in this context is that it is recommended for the couple in trouble to make an effort to settle their marital problem without getting divorced. S. A. Park mentions others who take the same stance, Lightfoot and Edwards (S. A. Park 2007, 121).

Jie Chul Kim also supports the second viewpoint, that is, he thinks that the believing partner is asked to do their best to be united to his or her unbelieving partner even though he or she is permitted to divorce his or her unbelieving spouse. He continues to assert:

The word, ‘---to peace’ can be translated ‘for peace.’ Also, the conjunction, *de*, gives a connotation of the opposite meaning to the previous comment, thus, it is better for a mixed couple not to get divorced so as to live peacefully in harmony (J. C. Kim 1999, 291).

The advice of J. H. Lee, J. I. Kim and J.C. Kim is commendable and also conceivable in accord with their careful examination of the particularly related conjunction. Nevertheless, they appear to have a lack of understanding of how to apply the literal guidelines into a workable practice. In real life, it usually takes a tremendous mutual effort and energy to resolve any marital trouble. Perhaps, there will be times when the unbelieving party wishes to give up on sorting out the problem so as to consider asking for a divorce. Additionally, in the case of unilateral action or unreasonable request from one person, things may not be favourably resolved between two parties in marriage so that they may never be able to reach a place of peace.

A contrasting understanding might be that a believing spouse should not dismiss his or her spouse due to the probability of leading the person to salvation. S. K. Lee refers to Chrysostom, Ambrosiaster, Lightfoot, Edwards, Parry and Findlay as being in line with this interpretation (S. K. Lee 1969, 103). S. A. Park also adds Findlay and Fee who read this text as a counsel of prohibition of divorce since the unbelieving partner may be saved through the godly influence of the believing partner (S. A. Park 2007, 121). Nevertheless, the

assumption suggested earlier is at odds with what Paul (if it was written by Paul) unmistakably declared in his letter to the Ephesians: “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God” (Ephesians 2:8, ESV).

This scripture obviously refers to faith in Christ, which cannot be obtained by human will or endeavour but only by the grace of God. Of course, this does not deny the important contribution of the prayer and effort of a believer on behalf of the unbelieving person. This is crucial and can be taken into account in the process of leading an unbelieving person to salvation. Nevertheless, as stated earlier, it is a general biblical understanding and Christian doctrine that people can be saved only by the work of God. S. Y. Kim is also in agreement with this point of view (S. Y. Kim 2011, 142).

3.4.2. Conclusion

In summary, at the beginning of this chapter we noted the widespread marital breakdown in contemporary Korea, regardless of religion. In addition, contemporary Christians do not tend to ask their Christian leaders for advice on their marital problems. Believers are more likely to decide for themselves, and then inform their pastors of their divorce. These two points were confirmed to me in informal interviews with several Korean ministers and lay people during a short visit to Korea in the summer of 2013.

The response of some Korean believers mentioned above led me to explore whether there is any fixed stipulation on the matter of divorce in the church law or policy. According to Tonghap, their constitution reads as follows:

IV. The Westminster Confession of Faith
Chapter 24: About marriage and divorce

Marriage: A Christian marriage was originated by God between a man and a woman.

Divorce: The corruption of human being is likely to cause an ending of matrimony. If the divorce took place due to any grounds as obviously mentioned in the Bible, it is permitted after the serious repentance of sin and failure with an appropriate attitude up to the purpose of Christian matrimony on the side of guilty person
(Accessed June 24, 2014 <http://www.pck.or.kr>).

Hence, the church does not give any clear grounds for divorce and consequent remarriage. Let us compare this bylaw to the original one in the Westminster Confession (1647) as published by the Centre for Reformed Theology and Apologetics:

Chapter XXIV : Of Marriage and Divorce

I. Marriage is to be between one man and one woman: neither is it lawful for any man to have more than one wife, nor for any woman to have more than one husband, at the same time.

II. Marriage was ordained for the mutual help of husband and wife, for the increase of mankind with a legitimate issue, and of the Church with a holy seed; and for preventing of uncleanness.

III. It is lawful for all sorts of people to marry, who are able with judgment to give their consent. Yet it is the duty of Christians to marry only in the Lord. And therefore such as profess the true reformed religion should not marry with infidels, papists, or other idolaters: neither should such as are godly be unequally yoked, by marrying with such as are notoriously wicked in their life, or maintain damnable heresies.

IV. Marriage ought not to be within the degrees of consanguinity or affinity forbidden by the Word. Nor can such incestuous marriages ever be made lawful by any law of man or consent of parties, so as those persons may live together as man and wife. The man may not marry any of his wife's kindred, nearer in blood than he may of his own: nor the woman of her husband's kindred, nearer in blood than of her own.

V. Adultery or fornication committed after a contract, being detected before marriage, gives just occasion to the innocent party to dissolve that contract. In the case of adultery after marriage, it is lawful for the innocent party to sue out a divorce and, after the divorce, to marry another, as if the offending party were dead.

VI. Although the corruption of man be such as is apt to study arguments unduly to put asunder those whom God has joined together in marriage: yet, nothing but adultery, or such willful desertion as can no way be remedied by the Church, or civil magistrate, is cause sufficient of dissolving the bond of marriage: wherein, a public and orderly course of proceeding is to be observed; and the persons concerned in it not left to their own wills, and discretion, in their own case (Accessed July 25, 2014. <http://www.reformed.org>)

This dissertation regards adultery as the only permissible ground for divorce. The regulations about marriage, divorce and remarriage in the original Confession are much clearer than the Korean version. Perhaps the Korean version of this declaration has been modified to reflect the religious atmosphere and culture of that country.

I could find no regulation from the other mainline Presbyterian group, Hapdong (in Korean 합동 and in English The General Assembly of Presbyterian Church in Korea). However Jong Yoon Lee, a famous pastor in this denomination, discusses the topic in a Christian newspaper published on 26th April 2014:

Is there any reasonable reason for divorce for a Christian couple? No any divorce is not allowed since a Christian couple is called to make a godly Christian marriage through continuous forgiveness for each other's sins and failings (Accessed June 24, 2014. <http://jangro.treem.kr>).

The two comments here indicate the different readings of biblical texts on divorce in two mainline Presbyterian church groups, which represent about five million members of the eight million believers presently in Korea (Lee, J.Y. Accessed June 24, 2014. <http://www.igoodnews.net>).

It is well known in Korea that Tonghap is more liberal in their interpretation and application of the Bible than Hapdong. This is attested by the two citations above. This study also suggests that the Korean churches do not have a single church rule for divorce and remarriage. It may be time for the Korean churches to begin to consider this significant issue. It is no wonder that some Korean ministers I had interviewed said that each case of divorce amongst believers tends to be decided by the church tradition, or by the leaders if asked by the church member. This situation in Korean churches leads us to look for a proper understanding of the ways that Korean scholars and commentators read the related Bible passages on this important issue. As stated earlier, the perspectives and readings of the verses are diverse, with some choosing one interpretation and some another. Nevertheless, it is worth looking into their various understandings on this topic.

According to Smith, John Calvin offered three permissible grounds for divorce and remarriage other than adultery: impotence, extreme religious incompatibility and abandonment. However, Calvin did allow the possibility of remarriage for a believer who was divorced by a non-believing spouse (Smith. 1990, 137).

In the initial phase of my research, I anticipated that Korean Protestant scholars, the majority of them being Presbyterian, would make extensive reference to Calvin on the subject of remarriage. In fact however, none of the Korean scholars whose arguments are cited here

explicitly refer to what Calvin proposed. Concerning remarriage, Korean commentators interpret the teaching of Paul literally. They allow remarriage to take place on only two grounds, adultery and the death of one spouse. They do not suggest other possible reasons for a second marriage. It looks as though the readings of Korean scholars of the pertinent passages in regard to second marriage are more conservative than those of Calvin.

This leads us to reflect on what factors have affected Korean scholars in their strict reading of the Scripture in general. These people do not make mention of their obvious differences to Calvin, but there may be some factors influencing to their approaches in this way. Perhaps some of them may be patriarchal in their thinking as a result of the long-held tradition of Confucianism, conservative fundamentalist church doctrine from the States, their educational and denominational backgrounds. None of the Korean scholars make explicit reference to any of these elements as a possible motivation for their particular perspectives on the text, but it is possible to imagine that the scholars may be influenced by their circumstances so as to comprehend the text in a particular way. This supposition seems reasonable since human beings are products of their culture.

Based on our findings so far, all Korean scholars consent to the idea that the unbelief of one spouse cannot be a biblical basis for divorce as long as the unbelieving one agrees to live with his or her believing partner. Korean scholars are in agreement that a believing partner is not allowed to take the initiative in sending his or her unbelieving spouse away. Nevertheless, if a non-believing partner asks for separation, the believing spouse is permitted to agree to the request.

Returning to the studies of the writing of Paul on the subject of divorce in 1 Corinthians 7: 10-16, Paul referred to divorce between two believers in 7:10-11, and to the case of a believing spouse with a non-believing partner in 7:12-13, and to the benefits of mixed marriage in 7:14-16. In the first instance, Paul strongly advises a believing couple not to get divorced, yet he appears to grant that divorce is possible under various circumstances, even though he does not specify any permissible grounds for divorce.

Marital problems occur in the lives of believers all over the world, even amongst faithful Christians. There may be a sexual relationship outside of marriage, but other factors such as

domestic violence, desertion (physical, financial, or emotional), habitual lying, alcohol, drugs etc. even amongst Christian couples. The Bible does not give any clear guidance on how to solve these problems. So the church needs to seriously and wisely consider how to give biblical and realistic advice to Christian couples in these circumstances.

3.5 Remarriage

3.5.1 Interpretation of remarriage by Korean Protestant scholars

This section will explore the subject of remarriage in 1 Corinthians 7:11, 39 and 40 by examining the readings of Korean Christian commentators. For this purpose, the opinions of Sang Keun Lee, Soo Am Park, Yune Sun Park, Sung Soo Kwon, Se Yoon Kim and Ji Chel Kim, will be quoted in this section. Hence, it might be expected that the belief of Calvin mentioned here is the fundamental theological basis for the Korean scholars whose opinions are quoted in this section in their reading of the text on the topic of remarriage. The arguments of Korean commentators in this section can be understood through the Calvinistic tradition.

Based on the interpretation of Matthew 5:32, if a divorced woman gets remarried after her marital split, whilst her husband is still alive, she makes her second husband commit infidelity against her first husband. Similar advice is also found in Romans 7:2-3. On the basis of this observation, a number of Korean scholars including Soo Am Park (S.A. Park 2007, 120), Yune Sun Park (Y.S. Park 1995, 94), Young Seon Park (2010, 205), Sung Soo Kwon (S.S. Kwon 2000, 623) and Sang Keun Lee (S. K. Lee 1969, 100) all concur that a divorced person should not get married again, unless there has been sexual immorality. Paul did not specify this, but based on his awareness of the equal rights of both genders, this principle should be applied to both women and men. Y.S. Park also thinks that the seemingly non-compromising attitude of Paul toward remarriage reflects Paul's obedience to the commandment of God given in Malachi 2:14-16 (Y. S. Park 1995, 94).

S. S. Kwon presumes that if the divorcee was the guilty party in marital breakdown caused by his or her having sex outside of marriage, Paul required the person at fault not to get remarried. Paul hoped to stop the divorced partner from committing adultery through his or her remarriage, as Jesus said in the Gospels (S.S. Kwon 2000, 623). It is true that the statement of Jesus in Matthew 5:32, 19:9 and Luke 16:18 does not approve of the second marriage of a divorced person following an extramarital affair. It is also possible that Paul was aware of the instruction of Jesus. Accordingly, even though Paul referred to the potential split between a believing couple for reasons other than adultery, he did not clearly permit the remarriage of a divorced person, irrespective of any other ground except for the incident of adultery.

The separation of a couple presents them with a choice. One option is to continue to live separately, and the other is to be reunited with their ex-spouses. In the latter case, according to Y.S. Park, the phrase, “be reconciled to her husband” in 7:11 seems to assume the maturity of the partner who makes up with his or her estranged spouse (Y.S. Park 2010, 205). This attitude may also indicate the biblical teaching that a married couple should not separate from each other. It is clear that Paul wanted to leave open the possibility for the split couple to be reunited later. The principle of reunion with an ex-partner may be a typological example of the ministry of reconciliation between God and human beings through the cross of Jesus as suggested in 2 Corinthians 5:18-19.

Another noticeable feature of this text is that Paul gave his advice first to the wife and then to the husband. J. C. Kim thinks that the reason for this order is simply that there were more women than men at that time (J.C. Kim 1999, 286). However Kim does not provide any biblical evidence for this assumption, which is found nowhere in the Bible. If this comment is accepted, then the order of Paul’s advice may be for one of two reasons. The first is that there were more female believers than male believers in the Corinthian church at that time. Yet we are not sure that this was the case, and the Scripture does not offer any clue about this possibility. The second is that there was a stronger presence of women than men in church who for whatever reason wanted to separate from their husbands. This unique circumstance might have caught Paul’s attention, causing him to give his advice to wives first.

Young Seun Park also suggests that some women in the church at Corinth may have wanted to leave their marriages to pursue a more ascetic lifestyle. These women did not attempt to gratify their worldly desires but wished to practice a more godly lifestyle without being bound by their husbands or their marital status. In this situation, presumably, what Paul wanted to tell them was that to live with a partner in love and forgiveness can be a better sign of a godly Christian life than keeping an abstinent lifestyle on your own (Y.S. Park 2010, 205).

This supposition of Y.S. Park is interesting, however, it is not easy to find a relevant biblical basis for his statement. Hence, his assumption here is open to question. It has already been observed that the liberal life style of Romans in Corinth might have negatively affected the marriage customs of the Jews living there. In other words, the immoral sexual practice outside of marriage amongst Roman people might have been a negative influence on the Corinthian Christians. Some believers may have adopted this immoral married lifestyle. By contrast, some other believers may have gone to the other extreme, and attempted to pursue a religiously abstinent lifestyle.

I.S. Park also points that there were some Christians in Corinth who suppressed the desire of body to the point that they tended to be too ascetic to have any sexual relationship with their marriage partner. We might guess that some married Christians, like Paul, attempted to remain celibate in preparation for the imminent returning of the Lord Jesus (I.S. Park 2002, 208). I. S. Park's suggestion looks reasonable, but he also does not offer any appropriate basis for his argument. Otherwise, the statement of I. S Park may well provide a pertinent ground for the assumption of Y.S. Park in the preceding comment. In spite of these possible arguments, the fact that Paul gave his advice to the wife first is a strong indication of Paul's recognition of the rights of women, allowing them to initiate marital separation in contrast to Jewish society (as cited earlier in 3.4. 1. a.).

1 Corinthians 7:11 does not recommend that a woman should separate herself from her husband in accordance with his will or against it, irrespective of the cause of marital breakdown. In the same passage Paul was careful in giving his advice to the wife as described in this text. In the latter part of 7:11 Paul also admonished a husband not to divorce his wife.

Arguably Paul would give the same guidance to the divorced man to either stay unmarried or get reconciled to his wife, most likely based on the same advice equally given to a wife and a husband in the previous passages, especially 1 Corinthians 7:3-4. Similarly, S.Y. Kim also believes that the same opinion should be given to a husband as well on the basis of the mutual reciprocity and gender equality suggested in the preceding and following texts (S.Y. Kim 2011, 132).

With regard to the possibility of a second marriage of a divorced believing partner, S. K. Lee points to various opinions depending on the different denominational background. The Catholic Church for instance does not allow the remarriage of the divorced person, whereas the Lutheran Church permits second marriage (S.K. Lee 1969, 103). In the case of remarriage of a believing partner who was divorced by an unbelieving spouse, Paul did not explicitly state whether he or she could remarry or not. S.S.Kwon also comments on this point (S.S. Kwon, 2000, 641).

Presumably, the decision to remarry or remain unmarried is left to the individual. If the person does not have a gift of celibacy and cannot control his or her sexual desire, it would be better for him to remarry as Paul advised in 1 Corinthians 7:7 and 9. Otherwise he or she can choose to remain single as Paul also counseled in 1 Corinthians 7:27. Fee also thinks that it would be better to remain unmarried, judging from the context of the whole text (Fee 1987, 303).

Paul's advice to the widow and widower in 1 Corinthians 7:8-9 is in contrast to his engagement with the situation of the unmarried single person. Paul mentions the remarriage of a widow only once, in 7:39-40. In these two passages, Paul did not speak about the second marriage of the widower in a similar way. According to S.S. Kwon, the remarriage of the widower was considered as legitimate, but not that of the widow (S.S. Kwon 2000, 716). Perhaps, Deuteronomy 24:1-4 and Matthew 19:8 allude to an implicit Jewish culture in which a man was free to send away his wife and to get remarried in the first century. This may be the reason that Paul did not specifically comment on the remarriage of widower, since the remarriage of widower was apt to be more easily accepted than that of widow in the Jewish society of that time.

S. S. Kwon points out that unlike the privilege of men in the area of remarriage, the second marriage of the widow was despised. If a widow stayed unmarried until her death, an honourable title was engraved on her tombstone (S.S. Kwon 2000, 716). Likewise, S. K. Lee also suggests that ancient Jewish society did not simply allow a widow to be remarried, unlike a widower (S.K. Lee 1969, 112). It is possible that the Corinthian church had asked Paul about this problem, to which Paul responded in this text. In the light of the general Jewish custom, where the second marriage of widow was not recommended, it is remarkable that Paul recognised the right of remarriage of widows, which was contrary to Jewish culture. This equal right of the widow and widower in the area of remarriage indicates the attitude Paul had towards woman. As it was unmistakably suggested in 7:39: “A wife is bound to her husband as long as he lives. But if her husband dies, she is free to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord” (ESV).

In contrast to the advice given to a divorced wife in 1 Corinthians 7:11, a widow was given the freedom to be remarried to whomsoever she wished. The same guidance is also given in Romans 7:2-3:

Thus a married woman is bound by law to her husband while he lives, but if her husband dies she is released from the law of marriage. Accordingly, she will be called an adulteress if she lives with another man while her husband is alive. But if her husband dies, she is free from that law, and if she marries another man she is not an adulteress. (ESV)

The implication of 7:39 seems to be that the remarriage of a widow is not sinful. The same guidance is given to a widower as it was suggested in 7:11. In the same way, S. S. Kim also believes that based on the teaching of Paul, and given the equality in the marital relationship between a husband and a wife as described in 7:2-16, Paul would have given the same advice to the widower on the issue of his remarriage (S. Y. Kim 2011, 156).

Let us examine the last phrase, “only in the Lord” here. Just as 2 Corinthians 6:14-15 appears to endorse the marriage of a Christian to another believer, so this passage may point to the marriage of a widow or widower to another believer. S. A. Park is also in favour of this perspective, referring to other scholars such as Chrysostom, Jerome, Findlay, Lightfoot, Barrett and Fee (S. A. Park 2007, 132). Collins is in agreement with this comment (Collins 1999, 265).

1 Corinthians 7:40 takes a different tone compared to the permission for remarriage of widows in the previous verse. “Yet in my judgment she is happier if she remarries as she is. And I think that I too have the Spirit of God” (ESV). In other words, Paul encouraged widows to remain unmarried. Based on the context in 1 Corinthians 7:26-35, it is likely that the underlying reason for this advice may be that Paul hoped to save people from potential suffering in married life in the last days. Also, Paul wanted to encourage them to devote themselves to the ministry of God as single people.

Having in mind the advantages that an unmarried person might have in terms of ministry, as Paul had clearly said in 7:25-35, Paul hoped to remind a widow or widower who did not get remarried of their potential for wholehearted dedication to the work for God. It seems that in 7:36-38, Paul commented on the decision of the father of a single person on the matter of matrimony. By contrast, Paul did not mention the judgment of father of the widow in 7:39-40. S.S. Kwon also points out this distinction (S.S. Kwon 2000, 717). Perhaps the reason Paul did not state the opinion of the father of the widow in the text is that Paul acknowledged the maturity of the widow to make her own decision.

The last phrase of this passage refers to Paul offering his advice as inspiration from the Spirit of God. As a matter of fact, in regard to the subject of second marriage of a widow or widower, Jesus had not given any specific teaching. For this reason, Paul plainly stated that he was led by the Spirit in bringing up this situation in 7:40. This suggests that Paul hoped the believers would accept the authority of his admonition. Keener supports this observation, saying:

His claim that he may have the Spirit (7:40) might sound like a weak support for his opinion, but it is actually one of the strong implied claims to inspiration in this writing, though not absolute (cf. 14:37); early Judaism associated the Spirit especially with various forms of prophetic empowerment (Keener 2005, 72).

In summary, remarriage is permitted for the innocent party in the event of adultery and for the widow or widower after the death of one spouse. If this understanding is compared to the society of Confucianism in Korea, the remarriage of widower was culturally accepted without

any hindrance, whilst the second marriage of a widow was exclusively discouraged. In fact, the Chosun dynasty required celibacy of widows (M.J. Choi 2005, 36). Korean web news also points to the strict prohibition of remarriage of widows during the period of Chosun dynasty (Accessed June 24, 2014. <http://www.ohmynews.com>). Another website refers to a Korean king who made this bylaw in 1477, which was later abolished in 1894 (Accessed June 24, 2014. <http://www.ohmynews.com>). This influence has remained in Korean society for a long time.

The regulation for a widow, unlike that for a widower, was strict during the period of empire. After the death of a male spouse, according to another source, the government required widows not to get married but to maintain chastity. This was not expected from a widower (Accessed June 24, 2014. <http://encykorea.aks.ac.kr>). This unequal law obviously indicates that the Chosun dynasty held a different standard for man and woman in terms of divorce and remarriage. Even today Korean people tend to take the remarriage of widower for granted, but not that of a widow. Nevertheless, Paul did not ask widows to avoid any possibility of second marriage, but permitted the remarriage of a widow if she so wished.

Based on the studies thus far, most Korean scholars support the remarriage of a widow or widower, yet, they think that a person who is divorced, except on grounds of sexual immorality, should not get married again. Moreover, one scholar, S. S .Kwon, believes that if the divorced person was the guilty party in a marital breakdown caused by his or her having sex outside of the marriage, that person is not permitted to remarry. As a whole, the perspective of Korean scholars toward the topic of remarriage is stringent. The traditional rejection of remarriage in Confucianism is likely to have influenced the approach of Korean scholars to this subject. This viewpoint is in complete contrast to the actual practice of second marriage in Korea regardless of religion in modern times. The clear discrepancy between the strict view of Korean scholars and the present widespread practice of remarriage amongst believers requires serious consideration of how to apply the biblical principle in a realistic and appropriate way.

S.Y. Kim argues that in terms of interpretation and application of the teaching of Jesus, it is crucial that we do not stick to the guidelines literally with no awareness of changing

circumstances, but respect the intention of the instruction (S.Y. Kim 2011, 141). This is a sensible assertion, making the teaching of Jesus relevant to the contemporary state of affairs, whilst honouring the attitude implied in the text, but without a legalistic approach.

3.6 Conclusion

In summary, let us recap. Two significant elements in Korean biblical scholarship, the long-held belief in Confucianism and the theology of fundamentalism have been examined, alongside one minor element, the influence of liberal theology. The theology of fundamentalism has deep roots in Korean Presbyterianism through the influence of early missionaries, whose main church background was Presbyterianism (Accessed July 25, 2014. <http://www.duranno.com>). And the two mainline Protestant sects, Hapdong and Tonghap in Korea, are both Presbyterian.

On the topic of singleness, a number of scholars read the related texts from diverse perspectives. It used to be a church regulation in Korea that only unmarried women could be ordained, but this was recently abolished. By comparison, male ministers are inevitably asked to get married as a requirement of ordination. On the issue of marriage, most scholars agree that marriage is a normal status for Christians. As for the divorce and remarriage, most scholars appear to be stringent in their reading.

In the light of the findings so far, a number of scholars whose arguments are cited in this chapter are likely to have been influenced in their interpretation of the texts of Paul on the subjects of singleness, marriage, divorce and remarriage by one or both of two important factors in Korean scholarship: the long-held traditional belief in Confucianism and the theology of fundamentalism. As stated earlier, these scholars do not make any obvious mention of these possible influences in their reading of the texts of Paul on these issues. For this reason, an attempt has been made to try to see what kind of influences might have affected their understanding of the texts by looking into the particular ways that they read the related passages. A basic study of the cultural and religious background of Korea helped to make this clear.

4 WESTERN CHRISTIANITY

In this chapter, I will examine various viewpoints from which modern biblical scholars in the Western Christian traditions have interpreted the biblical texts on singleness and divorce. Clearly it would be impossible to refer to all of their opinions on these two subjects, so in this chapter the perspectives of some scholars with Protestant background and a number of people from a Roman Catholic tradition will be consulted. Those scholars are Anthony C. Thiselton, C.K.Barrett, Craig S. Keener, F.F. Bruce, Gordon Fee, Hans Conzelmann, Leon Morris as well as Roman Catholics R.F. Collins, Carolyn Osiek and Margaret Y. MacDonald.

It is noticeable that some scholars have distinctive points of interest in terms of their different way of approaching the pertinent biblical passages, because the lenses through which each scholar reads the text are varied. For instance Barrett, Bruce, Conzelmann, Fee, Morris, Thiselton and Collins take heed of specific original Greek words and phrases in the text. Collins also adds the element of the Cynics, Stoics, apocalyptic literature and a Roman cult. By comparison, Keener is more interested in interpreting the text by referring to a Greek philosopher, the Cynics and the two Jewish sects, Philo's group and the Essenes. Thiselton also consults the philosophical sects, the Cynics and Stoics, as well as Church Fathers. Thus these remarkable aspects raised by contemporary biblical scholars of Western Christianity provide a broad understanding of the background of the text and also the intention of Paul in writing on the issue of singleness.

This leads us to explore what factors might have influenced each of the scholars cited, in relation to the two topics in 1 Corinthians 7 and other related biblical texts. In other words, it is likely that the individual motives and contexts, internal and/or external, of each scholar will have had an impact on their understandings of the passages pertaining to the issue of singleness and divorce. One of the reasons why the Western scholars go back to ancient Jewish family law and Greek philosophy for their arguments on these two subjects may simply be due to their personal preference. It is widely understood that modern Western culture has been greatly influenced by that of Greece and Rome. By referring to these two

ancient well-recognised civilisations, contemporary scholars may be attempting to make their opinions look more academically authoritative.

Another reason may be that those scholars read the related passages for these two topics from a historical-critical point of view. This means that they attempt to look into the milieu, time and background of the Bible so as to have detailed understanding of the intention and meaning of biblical texts written in ancient times. To do this, they examine various factors such as language, culture, religion and philosophy in Greco-Roman civilisation in the first century, which was ruling the culture when the Scripture was written.

4.1 Singleness

4.1.1 Interpretation of singleness by Western Christian scholars

In the writings of Paul, the issue of singleness is mostly mentioned in 1 Corinthians 7:7, 8, 11 and from 7:25 to 40, so these passages will be mainly dealt with here. As we will now see, several Protestant scholars understand the text from a linguistic point of view by paying an attention to the peculiar Greek terms and phrases.

In 1 Corinthians 7:7, Paul used the word $\chi\alpha\rho\iota\sigma\mu\alpha$, which means a gift from God granted to each Christian. This implies that Paul believed that everyone has a calling, both those who are called to get married and those who remain unmarried. This indicates Paul's starting point in giving advice to the unmarried in his letter. In this regard, Thiselton says " $\chi\alpha\rho\iota\sigma\mu\alpha$ is a gift which enables one to make the best of celibacy not as being hardly "spontaneous," but rather than a settled attitude which becomes strengthened by a habituated stance" (Thiselton 2000, 514). Thiselton highlights the gift of celibacy, which enabled Paul to remain unmarried. Thiselton also views Paul as being a celibate who was never married with his special interest in the particular Greek term.

Thiselton examines the issue of singleness, giving heed to the particular Greek verb in 7:9. The text reads:

$\epsilon\gamma\omega\ \delta\epsilon\ \circ\kappa\ \gamma\kappa\rho\alpha\tau\epsilon\iota\sigma\tau\epsilon\iota\ \kappa\alpha\iota\ \kappa\rho\epsilon\iota\tau\tau\omega\ \gamma\alpha\rho\ \sigma\tau\iota\nu\ \gamma\alpha\mu\epsilon\iota\sigma\alpha\iota$

πυροσθαι (BGT).

The Greek dictionary (Bible Works) defines the word, ἡγκρατεῖομαι as meaning, ‘exercise self-control.’ According to Thiselton, the noun, ἡγκρατεία, more often means ‘self-control’ which is also specially seen in Galatians 5:23. He continues to give this further explanation of the term:

As many writers observe the verb in this verse is a straightforward present indicative and hardly justifies if they cannot control themselves (NIV) or ‘cannot exercise self-control (NJB).’ ἡγκρατεία has a long history in Greek, Hellenistic, and Roman philosophy from Plato to the first century Cynic and Stoic traditions. It appears to have been introduced by Socrates (Xenophon, *Memorabilia* 1.5.4.), and Plato uses it to mean ‘judicious moderation’ in contrast to over-indulgence or unrestrained self-gratification in matters of food or sex (*Republic* 3.390). But to negate the verb ἡγκρατεῖονται does not imply that self-control has collapsed. It denotes ‘the absence of the power to rank one’s feelings in relation to a strict goal,’ for which Paul transparently uses the image of ἡγκρατεία in 1 Corinthians 9:25 (Thiselton 2000, 518).

Thiselton throws light on the root meaning of the Greek vocabulary along with its diverse connotations and traces it back to the older use of the term from Greek philosophers in the Hellenistic period, to Rome and to the two ascetic philosophical groups, Cynics and Stoics. Thiselton expands his observation by adding more references. The nuance of this particular word is that the act of ‘self-control’ is not forced by outsiders but it is a voluntarily attitude of pulling the reins on self-indulgence ‘in the area of food or sex,’ which might otherwise be hindrances in pursuing a certain goal in life. In light of this linguistic understanding, it may well be that Paul was saying that if someone is not able to take the initiative in using ‘self-control’ with their own strength in the arena of sexuality, and is overwhelmed with sexual impulse beyond their ability, then it would be better if that person got married with an awareness of the absence of the gift of singleness.

Further, Conzelmann believes that the phrase, οὐχ ἵνα βρόχον μὴν πιβάλω, (‘not to lay any restraint upon you,’ ESV) can mean literally not to put a halter on man so as not to deprive him of freedom of action (Conzelmann 1975, 134). This passage reminds us of 1 Corinthians 7: 32, where Paul wanted people to be free from any distress so as to be fully attentive to the Lord. Conzelmann, a German theologian, gives a reasonable account of his liberal Protestant approach to this expression. Conzelmann does a good job in finding out the

particular Greek phrase for a better explanation of his argument. This observation is a useful aid in understanding what Paul tried to convey to his audience.

Barrett also refers to the phrase *kai memōristai* ('and his interests are divided,' ESV) in 1 Corinthians 7:34, which is taken as the ending of the sentence started in verse 33. Barrett thinks that what Paul said about men, married and unmarried in 7:32 and 33, can be equally applied to women. As was seen above, Paul dealt with the two genders on the same level in the same vocabularies (Barrett 1968, 180). It appears that Paul regarded men and women as equal human beings with the same rights, calling and responsibility. This also reflects the honour shown by Jesus in the Gospels to women, who were despised and less privileged in Jewish society. This point also reminds us of what Paul previously said in Galatians 3:28.

It is normally understood that certain words or phrases are used to reflect the life and/or mind-set of certain people in certain places/areas. The study of language can help us to understand what people try to communicate in using a particular word. Those scholars whose opinions we discussed earlier try to understand what Paul meant about the issue of singleness by looking into the particular Greek word and phrases that Paul used in the original text.

Another Protestant scholar, Morris makes reference to the phrase, 'as I myself am (ESV),' as being emphatic and also underlines that amongst many gifts Paul had, one of them was a gift of celibacy, which 'enabled him to remain unmarried' (Morris 1958, 108). Morris approaches a passage in the text from a linguistic viewpoint as below:

The man who has entered into the bonds of matrimony should not seek to loose them.
The man who has not, should not seek them. The verbs bound (δέδεσαι) and loosed (λέλυσαι) are both in the perfect tense. They indicate settled states (Morris 1958, 116).

The word 'binding' is a symbolic expression of the tie with one's marital partner. This statement reminds us of 1 Corinthians 7:27, "Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be free. Are you free from a wife? Do not seek a wife." It is usually recommended that those who are already married ought not to seek a divorce. In contrast, those who are not yet married should be allowed to get married if they wish to and/or they do not have a gift of celibacy. Even though married may bring some added troubles, it should be highlighted that it is not sinful to get married if one wishes, as Paul mentioned later in 1 Corinthians 7:36.

Morris goes on to point to the peculiar word ‘please,’ which is used three times in 7:32, 33 and 34 with two different objects before Christians. According to Morris, the Greek verb, πρέσχω (please), implies the ‘thought of service in the interests of another.’ (Morris 1958, 118) In 7:33 Paul put the phrase, “how to please his wife” just after the clause, “about worldly things.” Whether Paul intended it or not, it seems to signify that the human effort of a husband to try to satisfy his wife is not a thing of the Lord but a thing of the world. This is the opposite of the clause in the previous verse. The point that Paul might wish to highlight here is that the perspective of priority for the entity to please. For people in the world, pleasing their partner may be their first priority. Nonetheless, for Christians, to please their spouse may be second to the Lord. However, the Bible clearly states in several books that we have to please people (Romans 15:2, 1 Corinthians 10:33, 2 Timothy 2:4). Furthermore, a husband can express his love through his efforts to please his wife as suggested in Ephesians 5:25. So it is not wrong to please one’s spouse or other people. With the right motives it is not worldly, but a godly thing to do.

Moreover, Bruce points to 1 Corinthians 7:8, in which Paul addressed the unmarried and widows, “I say that it is good for them to remain single as I am (ESV).” By looking into the unique Greek vocabulary in this passage, Bruce understands that in the original text there is no specific expression corresponding to the connotation of singles as seen below: (Bruce 1971, 68) Ἄγω δὲ τοῖς ἄγαμοις καὶ ταῖς χήραις, καλὴν αὐτοῖς ἴψιν μενωσιν ὡς ἐγώ· (BGT)

It is true that Paul did not specifically describe his marital status at the time of writing of this text. If Paul had said ‘as I am single who have never been married’ or ‘as I am single after the death of my wife,’ then his admonition here would be more concrete. Bruce regards this as an indication that Paul might either have been a celibate, having never married, or else become a widower after his marriage, because celibate life could be considered only for people in those groups (Bruce 1971, 68).

Bruce’s point is apt, since a disciple of Jesus could get married as Peter was (Mark 1:30). This suggests that Paul may have been married yet later became a widower. If this is accepted,

another question is raised for the later text, 7:25-40. In this passage, Paul placed an emphasis on the convenience of single life, which helps the unmarried to devote themselves fully to the service of God. If the argument of Bruce makes sense, two presumptions may follow. On the one hand, Paul may be giving his advice on single life from his own personal experience. On the other hand, he may be giving his advice on single life after getting to know the benefits of being a widower.

Although either of these two assumptions is rational, this point needs further discussion. As Bruce points out, 1 Corinthians 7:8 is given to both groups; to the unmarried and the widows. Paul then singled out one of these two groups, the widows and widowers, so as to give them separate advice in 7:39-40. This makes it possible to suppose that in 7:8, Paul might have had those who were not yet married in mind in 7:25, so that he gave long words of advice with stress on the benefits of being celibate in the passages that follow. If this hypothesis does not digress too far from the main subject of this section, it means that Paul may have been a celibate who had never been married. John Calvin in his commentary on the Bible (which has been translated into Korean by three scholars), had the same perspective (B.Y. Shin, J.S. Lee, C.H. Han 1995, 203).

A similar presupposition can be found in the views of Morris and Collins. Even though Morris mentions some other scholars who are in agreement with what Bruce asserts, by referring to the Greek word ἀγαμοίς, which does not have simply mean unmarried but has broad connotations, Morris suggests that this word ‘includes all not bound by the married state.’ (Morris: 1958, 108) If this explanation is accepted, it indicates that Paul was a single person who encouraged the ἀγαμοίς to remain unmarried as he was (ὁς κἀγαγὼ) in 7:8. This offers strong support for the next opinion of Morris, who believes that Paul may have made special mention of widows and widowers in this passage partly because of their vulnerable situation and the subsequent temptation to remarriage (Morris 1958, 108).

This point is more appropriate since Paul did not appear to agree enthusiastically to remarriage, as seen in 1 Corinthians 7:39-40, even though he gave permission for the second marriage of these people if they wished. Collins also believes that because Paul’s main concern was the unmarried people, he expounded his view on the good reason for them to

remain unmarried as they were (Collins 1999, 290). Collins is a Roman Catholic priest and therefore celibate, so it may well be that his main interest here is to stress Paul's valuing of the state of singleness. So far, this study explicitly conveys the clear encouragement of Paul for the unmarried and widows/widowers to remain unmarried, as he himself was.

In understanding the texts on singleness, Keener consults some radical ancient Greek philosophers, especially Cynics, who avoided marriage, yet 'condoned the release of sexual passions on prostitutes (cf. 1 Corinthians 6:12-20).' (Keener 2005, 63) According to the *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, "[Cynics] are adherents of the Greek school of philosophers who held that virtue is the only good and that its essence lies in self-control and independence" (Freedman *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* Vol.1: 1992, 1221).

Keener goes back to the influential Greek philosophical movement to highlight that Cynics regarded marriage as a distraction from 'intellectual pursuits.' Yet they were not celibate as 'Jewish monastics' were (Keener 2005, 63). Perhaps Keener wants to draw attention to this sect because the audience of Paul's letter in Corinth was familiar with this ancient group. Paul hoped to remind the Corinthian Christians that they ought to live like these ascetic people in the secular world. It is most likely that this is what Paul admonished through 1 Corinthians 7:30-31, where he asked the believers at Corinth to be indifferent to worldly things and detach themselves from the ordinary concerns in life. Keener also makes reference to some Jewish sects, 'Philo's Therapeutae, for both genders and most male Essenes,' who practiced celibacy while regarding marriage as a disturbance in pursuing a higher religious goal (Keener 2005, 63). This group looks similar to the Cynics in their refraining from getting married and giving celibacy a higher status. Keener's reliance on these two ancient groups for his argument suggests his own favourable attitude toward singleness.

Richard Bare Jr. introduces Philo, the Hellenistic Jewish philosopher, as a person who 'shows considerable admiration for the ideal of sexual abstinence and perpetual virginity.' (Bare, Jr.1970, 75) The *Anchor Bible Dictionary* describes this group as below:

[Essenes] are a Jewish sect which is known to have flourished from the mid-2nd century C.E. to the time of the First Jewish Revolt against Rome (66-70 C.E.)---Abstention from marriage and sexual activity was one of the hallmarks of the Essenes according to Philo and Josephus (Freedman *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* Vol.2 : John J. Collins,1992, 619, 623).

This statement finds support in the work of Sly, who describes this group ‘which does not marry.’ (Sly 1996, 141)

These two Jewish ascetic groups back up the understanding of Keener, who perceives the suggestion of Paul through the life of celibacy of several traditional rigorous Jewish sects and their philosophers. By introducing these sects, Keener may signify that the life style of these celibates has led Paul to give the advice in his text. Or Paul might have been trying to remind his fellow believers at Corinth, especially the group of unmarried people, of the importance and need of self-control and discipline in the immoral city of Corinth. This supposition is appropriate due to the troubled social background of the time and Paul’s sincere concern for the well-being of his fellow believers.

Thiselton continues by referring to those Church Fathers who had positive views on celibacy; Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Cyprian (Thiselton 2000, 496), Methodius as well as Ambrose between the second, the close of the third and fourth century. All these Fathers looked to 1 Corinthians 7 for support for “celibacy” or “virginity” as a “higher” or better calling (Thiselton: 2000, 497). This shows that the favourable attitude of Paul toward celibacy was well accepted and practiced by believers in the period following his death.

Two scholars with a Roman Catholic background, Carolyn Osiek & Margaret Y. MacDonald, also point out that the Western Church later developed the main text by commenting that the status of celibacy and virginity were all the more esteemed during the period of the third and fourth century (Osiek & MacDonald 2006, 59). It seems that both Osiek, a Catholic nun (and therefore celibate) and MacDonald, also a Catholic, seek to enhance the significance of being celibate or unmarried by pointing to the highly regarded status of singleness during these periods.

Thiselton is a Protestant scholar, neither a Coptic nor a Catholic. In contrast to Thiselton, Collins, a Roman Catholic scholar, does not refer to any biblical analysis of the Fathers in his interpretation of the main text. Yet, whilst thinking highly of the opinion of Fathers unlike other scholars in this section, Thiselton, Osiek and MacDonald as well as the Coptic writers in the chapter on Coptic Orthodox Christianity consult the authoritative and more recognised

biblical exegesis of the Church Fathers, who had positive attitude toward celibacy, as the significant foundation for their arguments on passages about the issue of singleness.

Let us turn to the various approaches through which Collins understands the main text on the subject of singleness. Like Keener and Thiselton, Collins also approaches the passages through the two philosophical sects. According to Collins, there was an ongoing debate in Corinth prior to the visit of Paul, between the ‘Stoic philosophers’ and the ‘more radical Cynics,’ about the character and intention of marriage (Collins 1999, 254). Collins gives details about this situation below:

While urging the avoidance of sexual promiscuity the Stoics generally considered marriage to be of benefit to the polis and in that way to have a cosmic purpose. The Cynics, on the other hand, were more inclined to urge sexual abstinence so that greater attention could be paid to the pursuit of philosophy. The “debates” between the Stoics and the Cynics in this regard were frequently linked to a discussion of freedom (Collins 1999, 254).

It seems that Paul was aware of what the ordinary people in the city of Corinth, including the Christians, thought about the nature of marriage and celibacy. Collins appears to underline that Paul attempted to bring the attention of Corinthian Christians to what he wanted to advise in the matter of singleness. Collins also gives attention to the frequent use of Greek term $\omega\varsigma \mu\eta$ ’ (as if not) in the text. According to Collins, this wording is found in ‘Stoic writings (e.g. Diogenes)’ and ‘apocalyptic literature (4 Ezra 16:42-45 etc.)’ with an indication that “Christian existence is existence in a situation of creative tension between the present and the future yet to come” (Collins 1999, 291).

Collins seeks to point out that the phrase $\omega\varsigma \mu\eta$ ’, (as if not), refers to the attitude of people who are not preoccupied with worldly matters including matrimony like that the Stoics in the Greek world. In general, the Catholic minister as celibate is required to give wholehearted devotion to their ministry while not being attached to worldly things, including marriage. As a Catholic priest himself, Collins may be mindful of this in his interpreting the texts on singleness. It may be that Collins is also aware that some of Paul’s readers had converted to Christianity from other religions, and were very much affected by the Greek-Roman culture of that time. Perhaps Collins’ wishes to emphasise that Paul’s intentions in using this

particular word stem from the influence of Greco-Roman way of thinking as well. Collins also comments on the genre of prophetic writing in ancient Jewish culture.

When Paul was writing his letter to the Corinthian Christians in the first century, the teaching of Jesus and the writings of His disciples were not yet gathered into a canon. The Christians of the time were likely to read the Torah, the Prophets and other ancient Jewish works such as the apocalyptic writings. These writings would often underscore the imminent coming of the last days. For this reason, the word used in this literature may possibly bear a similar connotation to the word used in the text of Paul. This term could have appealed particularly to the Jewish Christians in Corinth because of their exposure to and knowledge of the prophetic writings. The expression 'as if not' might also have been familiar to the readers of Paul's letter in Corinth. So this phrase may have supported what Paul aimed to convey in his writing, that is, his strong advocacy for celibacy due to the impending end times. This observation provides a deeper understanding of what Paul was trying to say in 1 Corinthians 7:27, 29 and 30.

The last perspective from which Collins approaches the text is that of the cults in Corinth during the life time of Paul. This can be seen in the following remark:

It may well be that sexual asceticism was "in the air" in first century Corinth. Literary and artifact evidence suggests that the cult of Isis, the Egyptian goddess, was celebrated in metropolitan Corinth during the imperial era. ---The Latin poets Ovid and Propertius tell us that worship of the deity implied sexual abstinence. ---Worshippers of Isis and other Egyptian deities had no monopoly on sexual abstinence for religious motives, but archaeological evidence attests to the presence of these Egyptian cults in mid-first-century Corinth. Some of them were well known for their promotion of sexual abstinence (Collins 1999, 253).

The city of Corinth was notorious for the sexual immorality due to many Greek and Hellenistic gods and goddesses. Yet this statement makes mention not of local but foreign cults in this city, which brought about the contradictory religious practice. By making reference to the unique atmosphere of these foreign deities about 'sexual abstinence' in Corinth, Collins considers that Paul was a person who promoted the status of celibacy to the Corinthian Christians, since this seemingly new lifestyle was not unfamiliar to people or religion and it was also supported even in the circle of the Egyptian cult in Corinth. This presumption is reasonable and also implies Collins' personal preferences on the issue of

singleness, as a celibate. However, it would not be sensible if Paul asked the single people to remain unmarried simply because the practice of celibacy was a well-recognised lifestyle in a cult in Corinth.

The way that Collins understands the main text on the subject of singleness is broader and deeper than any other scholars in this section. His detailed and wide-ranging research is helpful in catching the point that Paul attempted to communicate to his audience on the issue of singleness. Moreover, as a Roman Catholic priest and celibate, it seems that Collins is good at taking note of some specific phrases, in which Paul accentuated the benefits of singleness and a simple lifestyle free of anxieties about worldly things, including marriage. Two other Catholic scholars, MacDonald and Osiek, a Catholic nun and celibate, appear to take the same attitude in this area even though it is not explicitly expressed. In fact, this way of reading the text of Paul on the issue of singleness illustrates the distinctive difference between the standpoint of Roman Catholic scholars and that of Western Protestant scholars. It is perhaps strange that Collins does not consult any readings from the Church Fathers, who are regarded as people of authority in biblical analysis in the Catholic and Orthodox Church. The Catholic and Orthodox Churches share a long-established history and church tradition. Nevertheless, this general notion does not seem to affect Collins' reading of the text.

Based on the various findings of Western scholars, through which they read the pertinent texts on singleness, it seems most likely that Paul approved of the status of singleness. In fact, in 7:7, Paul appeared to admit his own personal preference for celibate life. This view will be further strengthened through the examination of a particular word, 'distress,' in the following section.

4.1.2 The meaning of "distress" in the context of 1 Corinthians 7

In 1 Corinthians 7:26, Paul offered advice to the unmarried Christian at Corinth out of his concern for them. In this verse the phrase, 'present distress' draws attention to what appears to be the main concern and motivation of Paul's counsel to this group. This word seems to allude to something difficult, which might confront the Christians either at the time of Paul's writing of the letter or later. In spite of its strong implication of urgency, Paul did not articulate explicitly what he was speaking about.

Accordingly, the difficulty we face here is that the word, “distress (□ν□γκη)” does not allow us to be sure exactly what advice Paul was trying to give to the Corinthian Christians. The Greek dictionary Bible Works gives several possible meanings; ‘necessity, ‘compulsion’, ‘pressure’, ‘distress’, and ‘calamity.’ If Paul wanted to convey the specific nuance of ‘distress,’ he may have been simply offering practical advice to help the unmarried Christians of Corinth to be aware of the possible hardships of ordinary life. In other words, Paul might try to draw the attention of unmarried people to the troubles that might arise in married life. Collins refers to another possible connotation of this term. It is based on Paul’s remark about the impending presence of the Lord in 1 Corinthians 7:29. Most scholars are in agreement that the ‘present distress’ in 7:26 refers to ‘eschatological woes.’(Collins 1999, 293)

This suggests that the word ‘present distress’ in the text may properly reflect the first century situation in which Paul lived. At that time Paul and his fellow Christians were enduring severe religious maltreatment from the Roman government. This recalls the persecution of the emperor Nero, who was in power in Rome during Paul’s lifetime. This peculiar circumstance might have led Paul to connect the hardship with the eschatological distress. Keener agrees with this perspective (Keener 2005, 69). Several scholars make special efforts to look into the implication of the word ‘distress (□νἀγκην).’ The first is Collins, who asserts that it does not necessarily have an eschatological connotation. Collins thinks that Paul used the term to indicate a variety of stressful situations as described in 7:37, 2 Corinthians 6:4 and 1 Thessalonians 3:7 (Collins: 1999, 293).

Likewise, Morris argues that Paul often commented on the second coming of the Lord, but he did not connect a ‘present distress’ with the advent of Jesus. Morris continues: “It is most naturally taken as indicating that Paul’s friends were at that time in unusually difficult circumstances. In view of the troubled times Paul felt it best for men to stay as they were” (Morris 1958, 116). This implies that ‘Paul’s friends’, who might be his fellow-believers or co-workers in his ministry, were for some reasons suffering hardship. Paul may have felt the need to advise them to remain ‘as they were,’ either married or unmarried. However, according to Morris, nowhere else did Paul give the same kind of guidance as is mentioned here. When it comes to Paul’s allusions to the possible second coming of Jesus, 1

Thessalonians 5:1-11 and Philipians 1:9-11 reflect Paul's intention to encourage Christians to live in blameless life style. Morris also makes reference to these passages (Morris 1958, 117).

Morris continues to argue that:

It is probably best to see a reference to circumstances at Corinth (as in the case of the 'distress' of verse 26). The crisis was not far off. The result is that all sorts of human values are transformed. In particular, those who had have wives must be as though they had none. The folly of marriage under such circumstances is obvious (Morris 1958, 117).

Morris seems to think that the intention of Paul in this text is not to emphasise the imminence of the eschaton, but to encourage the believers to live godly lives. The pious lifestyle of Christians need not have anything to do with their marital status. Whether someone is married or not, or whether the end of times are approaching or not, if one is a follower of Jesus, this kind of attitude is generally expected. Yet, it has been seen that the meaning of 'distress' in the previous passage might imply both the imminent last days and also the sufferings of Christians. 1 Corinthians 7:19-31 can be also understood from the standpoint of the warning of upcoming end times and also the devout life of a believer.

This suggests that the primary motivation for Paul's advice that single people should remain unmarried may come from his concern for a less troubled life for people in the end times. It is arguable that Paul was not a person who would be influenced by any tradition of Jewish religious groups when giving counsel to Christians. Throughout the text and the letters written by Paul, it is unmistakably clear that Paul was concerned about what would be the best for unmarried people for their own sake, and also from the perspective of God's kingdom as implied in 1 Corinthians 7:25. Hence, these would be the genuine intentions of Paul's advice to single people to remain unmarried.

Morris points to Calvin, who thought that Paul was expressing metaphorically his own upcoming departure from the world (Morris 1958, 117). Morris may have hoped to add weight to his opinion by referring to the influential French theologian and pastor of the Protestant Reformation. Nevertheless, if this is the reason, it gives rise to a further question. What does the death of Paul have anything to do with the instructions given in this text? Paul's impending death does not explain his counsel to his fellow believers to be mindful of

their marital status as stated in 7:29-31. Nonetheless, it is possible to think that Paul wanted to express his hope that Christians would be aware of the upcoming end times as a kind of last wish for their preparation. The implication of last days in 1 Corinthians 7:29-31 may be partially appropriate in the light of Paul's occasional comments on the return of the Lord in his other writings, as we have seen earlier. This concern might have led Paul to counsel the Christians not to get married.

In contrast to the perspective of Collins and Morris, Keener believes that the word 'crisis' in 1 Corinthians 7:26 probably points to the 'eschatological tribulation' which will take place prior to the last days: "The language of inversion of normal relationships he uses fits many traditional Jewish expectations for the end (although cf. Luke. 17:27-28)" (Keener 2005, 69). With the various connotations of the phrase 'present distress' in 7:29 in mind, Paul went on to refer to another potential distress, which he believed would take place shortly. He said that "the appointed time has grown very short" (ESV). A similar expression can be also found in these two passages:

Besides this you know the time that the hour has come for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed. The night is far gone; the day is at hand (Romans 13:11-12, ESV).

For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night (1 Thessalonians 5:2, ESV).

These verses imply that Paul was alluding to his eschatological perspective in writing this epistle to the Corinthian Christians. This attitude toward the end times gives a fine basis for the subsequent advice of Paul in the paragraphs that follow, 1 Corinthians 7:29-31. His counsel in those passages is that Christians should remain faithful in what they were doing in their lives. Yet Paul also advised them to keep some distance from their everyday mundane activities.

Based on these findings so far, Paul seems to have preferred singleness to marriage based for three significant reasons; the impending eschatological distress, the increased troubles stemming from married life, and the convenience of single lifestyle for serving the Lord wholeheartedly. These three suggestions appear to indicate clearly Paul's preference for the state of celibacy. His sincere encouragement for a single person not to get married if possible,

which is indicated in 7:7, 8, 11, 28, 32, 34, 38 and 40, also supports the stance Paul took in this regard.

Hence a female Roman Catholic scholar, Perkins, asserts that:

He presents celibacy as preferable because it frees individuals from concern over worldly things, how to please a husband or wife (7:33b-34). The unmarried man, woman, or young woman is concerned about things of the Lord (Perkins 2012, 112).

Traditionally, the Roman Catholic Church tends to think of celibacy very highly to the extent that the Church has institutionalised its status. Therefore it is no wonder that Perkins affirms the calling to celibacy. In the same way Collins, a Roman Catholic scholar, also echoes this concern: “The impending eschaton and undivided attention to the Lord are the key elements in his exposition” (Collins 1999, 290). The comment of Collins is a fine conclusion of the key points in the text here.

Furthermore, Osiek and MacDonald are also in agreement with Paul’s strong inclination for celibacy, which is so evidently seen in 1 Corinthians 7 (Osiek & MacDonald 2006, 28). However, in spite of a variety of evidences for the preference of Paul for the status of celibacy, Scripture does not say that the status of singleness is superior to that of matrimony. On this issue, Paul clearly stated in 7:25 and 40 that this was his own personal view. In other words, Paul did not say that one status is good and the other is bad. The text was simply reflecting the personal opinions of Paul on these two topics.

In view of several cited philosophies, religious groups and specific Greek terms, it is argued that the scholars and their various views of the text go in one direction. In other words, according to the several scholarly discussions so far, the advice of Paul about the matter of singleness in his epistle is similar to the ascetic religious groups in Corinth during his lifetime. It is clear that Paul gave full details about the rationale of his advice to the single to remain unmarried on three grounds; the imminent coming of the end times, as a way to spare eschatological suffering, and to give undivided attention to the ministry of the Lord. For these reasons, Paul appeared to strongly encourage Christians, especially unmarried people, to keep

a distance from ordinary concerns so as to gain the inner freedom and control which the ancient celibates highly valued and pursued.

The studies of the two sections so far are a tremendous help in examining the various arguments made by Western Christian scholars of both Protestant and Roman Catholic traditions about Paul's text on the topic of singleness. The findings indicate that the Western commentators read Paul's text on singleness largely by exploring the Greek and Roman culture, religion and language. It is well known that the Greek-Roman culture greatly affected the foundation of the Western world. Furthermore, 1 Corinthians was written for the city of Corinth, where this culture was dominant. It is apparent that most of serious endeavours of Western scholars are done by looking into the factors underlying the Greek-Roman culture of the first century.

It is remarkable that none of the Western Protestant commentators except Morris interpret the text through the readings of scholars of the Reformation in the sixteenth century. They skip over the Middle Ages to go directly to the original context of the text. This seems unusual since Western Protestantism is regarded as a product of the Reformation. Nevertheless scholars in the Protestant Christian tradition in the West do not attempt to interpret Paul's writing through the lens of the Reformers. This differs from what the researcher initially expected at the beginning of this exploration of Western scholarship.

It is clear that there are a diversity of interpretations of Paul's writing, but the reason why each scholar approaches the same text from a different perspective is less clear. The different way that each scholar interprets the related passage on the subject of singleness does not suggest an obvious reason for the particular findings of their academic research. Despite this ambiguity a few scholars, Conzelmann, Collins and Osiek, appear to hint that their particular way of reading the text draws on their personal background. For instance, it looks as though the Catholic scholars, Collins and Osiek, emphasise the status of singleness in their arguments more than the Protestant academics. Even though they do not overtly elucidate their preference for celibacy in their writings, this stance implies that the individual circumstance of the scholar is likely to have some influence on the way that he or she understands the relevant text of Paul on the subject of singleness.

4.2 Divorce

4.2.1. Interpretation of divorce by Western Christian scholars

The topic of divorce was largely mentioned in 1 Corinthians 7:10 -7:16, so these passages will be primarily explored in this part. As it was stated in the section on singleness, there are many Western biblical scholars from various religious backgrounds who have dealt with this issue. It is not possible to consider all of their arguments, so the views of some researchers with a Protestant background and two Roman Catholic scholars will be chiefly examined in this section. They are Anthony C. Thiselton, C.K.Barrett, Craig S. Keener, David Instone-Brewer, F.F. Bruce, Gordon Fee and Leon Morris, who are Protestants, and PHEME Perkins and R.F. Collins, who are Roman Catholics.

Most scholars read the pertinent text of Paul for divorce from different perspectives. For instance Fee pays attention to Jewish culture, the teaching of Jesus and a certain Greek word; Bruce refers to a particular Greek phrase and passage; Collins is more interested in Jewish marriage law in addition to a Greek phrase; Morris and Instone-Brewer point to specific Greek verbs in their reading of text. With these aspects in mind, this section will attempt to survey how each of these Western Christian scholars understand the pertinent biblical passages on the subject of divorce and what factors might have possibly affected their various points of view.

a. Divorce customs in 1st Century Greco-Roman and Jewish Culture

According to Instone-Brewer, one of Jesus' most characteristic teachings dealing with cultural customs in Jewish and Greco-Roman world in the first century was 'on family life and his prohibition of divorce' (Instone-Brewer 2002, 190). Actually there are no particular passages where Jesus mentions family life in the Scripture, even though some of his disciples did, such as Paul in Ephesians 6:1-4. Nevertheless, when it comes to the teaching of Jesus on marriage, this comment is true since Jesus' saying about this issue in the Gospels clearly

reflects the Christian moral ethics and is completely dissimilar from that of the first century society in which he and his disciples lived.

In connection with this observation, the related verses about Christian marriage can be clearly found in Ephesians 5:22-33 where Paul gave detail about allusive imagery of Christian matrimony. Paul said that the characteristic of permanency in Christian marriage reveals the nature of the permanent relationship between Christ and the church. In contrast to this ideal pattern for a marriage, however, Paul's suggestion for various facets of marriage as seen in 1 Corinthians 7:10-16 alludes to the possibly troubled reality of marital problems in the Corinthian church. Instone-Brewer points to the same situation at the Corinthian church (Instone-Brewer 2002, 190).

It is also generally understood that the recipients of 1 Corinthians were the believers in the Corinthian church, who were under the colonial rule of Rome in the first century. This implies that the Corinthian Christians were also expected to follow the Roman marriage and divorce law as ordinary citizens of the society. It is likely that the church was composed of a mixture of Jewish and converted gentile Christians. In light of this unique situation it is necessary to examine the divorce law of the Greco-Roman world, followed by that of the Jewish culture of the time, so as to have a basic comprehension of the setting of Paul's letter.

Instone- Brewer explains that Greco-Roman law in Corinth permitted men and women to divorce their partner without difficulty by 'unilateral separation' (Instone-Brewer 2002, 190). According to Fee, this means that women in the Greco-Roman society could, and did divorce their husbands (Fee 1987, 294). Bruce, Collins and Thiselton all agree with this point (Bruce 1971, 69) (Collins 1999, 264) (Thiselton 2000, 523). Keener also states that the Greco-Roman law allowed divorce and remarriage on the ground of reciprocal agreement, unlike Jewish customs (Keener: 2005, p.64). This suggests that Greco-Roman culture gave more equality and freedom to women than Jewish society in the areas of marriage breakdown and second marriage.

Nevertheless, it is likely that it would not be easy for women to take the initiative to end a marriage due to possible social prejudice towards divorced women, and also due to financial

difficulty. In fact, this kind of lower treatment of women is common in most cultures in the world. It is unusual that Fee also refers to this observation, commenting that it would not be normal for women to divorce their spouse because of ‘socio-economic reasons.’ (Fee 1987, 294) Furthermore, Thiselton points to the frequent occasions of divorce for ‘selfish reasons’ in the Roman world (Thiselton 2000, 540). The ‘selfish reasons’ would not apply only to ancient civilisation since this motive for divorce can often be found in the current day. Fee develops this observation further by stating that even though a legal certificate was needed to authorise divorce in Greco-Roman society, divorce took place in that culture ‘whether established by a document or not.’ (Fee 1987, 293) This implies that there was a prevalent social trend for easy divorce regardless of legal recognition. This is also applicable to the current situation in the world, where people do not tend to be bound by the permit of civil court. Perhaps Thiselton and Fee attempt to make mention of these particular points with an awareness of the corresponding situation in the arena of divorce and remarriage in modern days.

The general customs of divorce in the Greco-Roman world in the first century, where marital breakdown was so widespread and could be initiated by husband or wife, indicates that people of that time did not take matrimony seriously. This is in sharp contrast to the divorce law in the Jewish society that time. Fee states that among the Jews, divorce was the man’s privilege. A woman was not permitted to initiate divorce for almost any reason in Jewish society (Fee 1987, 294). Both Instone-Brewer and Collins support this understanding. (Instone-Brewer 2002, 198) (Collins 1999, 263) Thiselton also adds that a husband could divorce his wife ‘for a variety of reasons’ like that of the Greco-Roman culture (Thiselton 2000, 523).

This practice appears to be based on their interpretation of the Jewish law in Deuteronomy 24:1-4 and also probably on the patriarchal social structure. Instone-Brewer also refers to the same passage, where only a man could initiate a marital split (Instone-Brewer 2002, 198). This is the major difference in terms of divorce law between the two cultures. This is a clear indication that the rights of women were less recognised in Jewish society in contrast to that of the Greco-Roman world.

Instone-Brewer suggests marriage in Jewish society was based on a view of ‘mutual bondage,’ unlike that of the Greco-Roman culture. This means that both husband and wife were obligated to observe the responsibilities indicated in their ‘marriage contract.’ A divorce certificate was required for the sake of freedom for the divorced wife in the case of marital breakdown on reasonable grounds (Instone-Brewer 2002, 191). Instone-Brewer gives an excellent explanation of the main dissimilarities between the two cultures:

A (Jewish) man could get a divorce on the ground of “any matter.” In some ways this was similar to the right under Greco-Roman law to get a divorce without any grounds, but there were two major differences. First, in Judaism this type of divorce was available only to men, and, second, the man still had to give his wife a divorce certificate. Jewish marriage certificates, unlike the Greco-Roman ones, were written with the assumption that the marriage would be ended by death; they had far less emphasis on what would happen in the event of a divorce. Nevertheless, the certificate laid out clearly the obligations within marriage, which implied the right to divorce if those obligations were neglected (Instone-Brewer 2002, 191).

It appears unfair to Jewish women since both parties in the marriage were required to keep marital duties and responsibilities, but the right of initiating divorce was granted only to men. Instone-Brewer continues:

There is no division in the marriage papyri between divorce and separation. Separation with purpose to finish the marriage is viewed as divorce in the Greco-Roman law (Instone-Brewer *Tyndale Bulletin* 52.1 2001. 101-116, 106-107).

One interesting point here is that marriage certificates were stipulated. It is as if the two parties involved in the marriage might hope that their marriage would end not by death but in divorce, because of the divorce certificate for wife, in spite of their assumption that the marriage would be ended by death. For this reason, it is possible to imagine that the certificate might include some details about what should be done on the occasion of a marital breakdown other than ‘the obligations within marriage.’ Instone-Brewer also refers to this presumption (Instone-Brewer 2002, 191).

Instone-Brewer is well-versed in the marriage law of the Greco-Roman world and also he is the only scholar who makes mention of the ancient marriage certificate of the Greco-Roman culture in this section. This evidence seems to strengthen his argument on this issue. It also seems to point to the fact that marriage in the Greco-Roman world was not viewed with the same significance as it was among the Jews. What is more the use of the term ‘marriage

bondage' in Jewish society adds seriousness to the perception of matrimony, as opposed to the term 'marriage contract' used in the Greco-Roman culture.

The difference in marriage and divorce law between the Greco-Roman and the Jews in the first century may have caused some conflict in the Corinthian church, due to the believers having various religious and social backgrounds. This would be especially true between the Greco-Roman and Jewish converts. This observation leads us to the next section, where we will look at Paul's opinion on the subject of divorce in a Christian couple and in a mixed marriage. Perkins is also aware of the concern of Paul, stating that the complicated situation of various forms of marriage at the Corinthian church which were not covered by the guideline of dominical ruling motivated Paul to consider giving his own advice (Perkins 2012, 109).

b. Divorce amongst believers

In the main text Paul gave his simple but important advice to a Christian couple, "Stay together." This indicates a strong request by Paul for those who were already married to remain as they were. This suggests that they should not seek to separate from each other as suggested in 1 Corinthians 7:27. It draws our attention the fact that in the Jewish society, where divorce was man's privilege, Paul started off his counsel by talking first to the wife, and then focused his admonition chiefly on the woman. This is rather remarkable, and Fee also stresses this point (Fee 1987, 294).

According to Bruce the phrase in the parenthesis in 7:12, "but if she does, she should remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband (ESV)," may be Paul's interpretation of the logion in accordance with the instruction in Mark 10:12 as found in the following: "if she does" separate from her husband, "let her remain single" (i.e. unmarried to anyone else). The phrase "or else be reconciled to her husband" in 7:11 may be Paul's gloss on the dominical ruling, but is in keeping with Mark 10:12 (Bruce 1971, 69).

Mark 10:12 is a passage in which Jesus forbade a divorced woman to get remarried. If she does so after her divorce, according to the teaching of Jesus, she commits adultery. Thus,

when Paul asked a woman who separated herself from her husband to remain unmarried in 7:11, he might have been aware of what Jesus taught in the book of Mark. Moreover, this counsel may have come out of Paul's concern for the separated woman, so that she would not fall into the sin of infidelity through her possible remarriage after a marital split.

It is not certain whether or not, whilst he was writing this text, Paul was aware of any Christian wife who already separated herself from her husband. Nonetheless, according to Collins, 'the casuistic aside of verse 7:11 is a strong indication' that the case of marital split was already known to Paul (Collins 1999, 264). Collins here tries to read the text from a contextual point of view. There are some further remarkable issues that are worth mentioning here. First of all, Paul asked the wife not to separate from her husband in a Christian marriage. If what Collins suggests is appropriate, this passage indicates that a woman could and/or did take the initiative in asking for divorce, and this was already taking place. Since it was contrary to the marital law of the first century Jewish society as observed earlier, this kind of occasion is ground-breaking. Fee also emphasises this observation (Fee 1987, 294).

In this troubled situation, Paul might be attempting to remind the Corinthian Christians (or some Christian couples in marital trouble) of the word of Jesus, so that they could abide by his teaching. Paul's reference to the directive of Jesus may have helped the believers to take Paul's admonition seriously. Fee sheds light on the logion of Jesus in connection with the quotations of Paul for the subject of divorce:

The divorce sayings come to us in two forms: one in Mark 10:11, Matthew 19:9 and one in the double tradition in Luke 16:16 and Matthew 5:32. In each case the form is casuistic law, If. Or Whoever---then---, and the matter that Jesus ultimately addresses is the seventh commandment, not the divorce provision per se. Both versions of the saying have: "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery." This is the perspective that Paul picks up. Since his concern is strictly with divorce, he remoulds the saying of Jesus into its apodictic form, "You shall not --", and, as Mark will in his Gospel (in reverse order), applies it to both wives and husband (Fee 1987, 294).

Fee offers a profound insight in which Paul seems to underline that the act of separation could lead to the possible sin of adultery if the separated person does not remain unmarried. This leads us to think of one possible scenario here. It is generally known that 1 Corinthians was written earlier than any of the Gospels. This implies that the teaching of Jesus had not

been passed around amongst believers in written form by the time of Paul's writing this text. Perhaps the word of Jesus was passed down to the Christians through word of mouth. Therefore, it is likely that Christians at that time probably did not have a deep understanding of what Jesus intended to say through his guideline about divorce. In his letter to them Paul appears to be helping them to grasp the gist of Jesus' teaching about divorce.

The study so far indicates the admonition that the married couple should not get divorced. However, Paul allowed an exceptional case, saying "but if she does, she should remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband."(ESV). Fee believes that this is 'a present general condition,' which may signify, 'if for any reason this condition may possibly occur.' (Fee 1987, 295) This echoes the suggestion of Collins in the same section. Fee continues:

In this kind of construction, where the general condition qualifies what has already been said, the previous sentence expresses the ideal situation (in this case, no divorce), while the following conditional clause introduced by a 'δ□' (but) "describes the alternative possibility which is permissible but not ideal" (in this case separation, but without remarriage). Thus "no divorce" is not turned into law, and the woman who does so is not put out of the community (Fee 1987, 295).

Fee pays special attention to the use of the conjunction, δ□, in this verse. From a linguistic perspective, this word connotes that the thing prior to this word may not be allowed and/or not be accepted. Nevertheless, if that happens, Paul stressed that the woman who sought a marital split from her spouse should either remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband. This advice is consistent with the viewpoint of Paul, who regarded marriage as permanent even though he recognised the occasion of marriage breakdown in the earlier passage.

Fee's argument helps to make Paul's admonition look stronger. Other scholars whose arguments are cited in this section agree on this point. It is obvious that Paul asked a husband who wanted to ask for divorce not to send his wife away. This also reflects what Paul suggested in Romans 7:2. The last phrase "the woman who does so is not put out of the community" attracts our attention since it implies that the Jewish community in the first century put a divorced woman outside of their circle of fellowship. The biblical directive for this way of dealing with a divorced woman is not found in the Scripture. A divorced man would most certainly not be kept at a distance from the Jewish society.

1 Corinthians 7:10-12 shows that Paul appeared to emphasise the equal rights and worth of men and women as equal human beings, and also the honour that Jesus and Paul showed to both men and women in the Bible. Therefore, this advice should be also applied to the husband, who initiated divorce in the Jewish culture. Perhaps Paul continued to emphasise the same matter on the side of husband in the later part of 1 Corinthians 7:12. Keener also supports this understanding by stating that the principle for divorce appears to be given to both genders as indicated in Mark.10:12 and 1 Corinthians 7:10-11, though it is not overtly described in Matthew 5:32, 19:9 and Luke 16:18 (Keener 2005, 64). Nevertheless, it was seen that it was a man's privilege to take the initiative in asking for divorce in the Jewish culture in the first century. Fee points out that this admonition has become a 'bone of contention' (Fee 1987, 296).

Two scholars, Morris and Instone-Brewer, remark on two Greek verbs in this phrase; χωρῖζω in 7:10 and φημι in 7:11. According to Morris, each form is different from the other, but the meaning and consequence is the same (Morris 1958, 108). Instone-Brewer points to the evident dissimilarity of tense between the two Greek verbs in the text, χωρισθῆναι, a verb infinitive aorist passive from χωρῖζω, and φημι, a verb infinitive present active from φημι. As regards this matter, Instone-Brewer says:

It was mentioned that Paul made use of two different verbs for the meaning of separation and divorce in this text, which are χωρῖζω and φημι. Both of them have the sense of 'to divorce' although χωρῖζω has been translated here by 'to separate' (ESV) (Instone-Brewer 2002, 198).

Instone-Brewer brings up a translation difficulty in the use of the passive/middle mood for the verb χωρῖζω (to separate). He considers that this verb can be translated either in the passive mood (to be separated) or middle (i.e. reflexive, to separate oneself) (Instone-Brewer 2002, 198).

Instone-Brewer further explains that it is impossible to differentiate between ἀφῆμι, 'a legal divorce' and χωρῖζω, 'just a separation.' The latter term was generally used to refer to divorce in Greco-Roman culture, where separation was considered as an officially authorised divorce. In the main text it looks as if both verbs clarify the way that someone has settled on divorcing their spouse (Instone-Brewer 2002, 199). If both of these two Greek terms have the

same connotation, meaning one's decision about marriage breakup, then this gives rise to a question. Why did Paul not use the same word, but two dissimilar expressions for the implication of divorce? Perhaps Paul was aware of two different kinds of audience for his epistle. One might be the Jewish Christians and the other might be the gentile believers who had converted to Christianity from the Greco-Roman culture. This can be inferred from the use of $\chi\omega\rho\iota\zeta\omega$ as pointed out earlier. As a whole, Instone-Brewer does excellent work in going deeper into the context of original language for the text.

In addition, based on the knowledge of divorce law in the Greco-Roman society in the first century, divorce was extremely prevalent in Corinth, especially amongst people in the Greco-Roman world, as Thiselton has already pointed out (Thiselton: 2000, 540). In this social circumstance, Paul asked Christian couples not to get divorced. This request would put the couple in strong contrast to non-Christian couples in the culture of that time. This again reminds us of the commandment of Jesus for married Christians not to get divorced, as seen in Luke 16:18 and Matthew 5:32. Nevertheless, what can be done if the marriage is broken against one's will by the other spouse? For this occurrence, Keener consults Matthew 5:32 and 19:9, which elucidate that the guideline of Jesus does not confine a spouse 'betrayed by an unfaithful partner' (Keener: 2005, 64). In other words, divorce is permissible for the person whose spouse commits adultery. Keener adds a further detail, saying:

This reveals early Christians' flexibility in applying Jesus' teachings to a new situation according to the spirit rather than the letter of the law. Many Corinthians, mostly converted after their marriages, apparently wanted more "spiritual" unions (cf. 7:5), hence wanted to end their marriages on grounds of spiritual incompatibility (Keener 2005, 65).

The point Keener makes here is interesting. He is the only scholar in this section who talks about the possibility of ending matrimony on the side of Christian with a hope of a spiritual union. Keener refers to 1 Corinthians 7:5 for the basis of his assumption. Nevertheless it is not clear whether the behaviour that Keener makes mention of in this verse indicates an action that has already happened, or one that is happening at that time. Also, it is not obvious whether it points to an event which will happen in the future. For a detailed argument, let us see 1 Corinthians 7:5:

Do not deprive one another except perhaps by agreement for a limited time, that you may devote yourselves to prayer; but then come together again, so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control (ESV).

This passage suggests that some married Christians wanted to be on their own to pursue a devoted prayer life. However, it is not evident here whether the person wanted to be alone within married life, or by ending their marriage. Either way, Paul gave his admonition to them not to ‘deprive’ each other. The original Greek for this word, $\square\pi\sigma\tau\epsilon\rho\epsilon\square\tau\epsilon$, is verb imperative present active. Judging from the tense of this word it is not clear whether some Christian were ‘depriving’ themselves from their spouse for the pursuit of a higher spirituality, or whether this admonition was given to them as a warning against a future behaviour. Therefore, on the basis of this observation, Keener’s assumption is questionable.

When it comes to the appropriate grounds for divorce, Instone-Brewer asserts that Paul attempted to alert the believers that the neglect of ‘material and emotional support’ could be a reason for a marital breakdown (Instone-Brewer 2002, 212). This appears to be a reasonable suggestion and reflects the sympathetic attitude of Instone-Brewer especially to women after divorce, who are likely to be treated with less respect in society. This also is a good indication that this scholar is a lenient researcher, unlike other scholars. Nevertheless, Instone-Brewer does not explain the basis of his opinion here. Perhaps he is trying to remind us of what a Christian spouse should do based on love and respect principle as signified in Ephesians 5: 25-32. If the argument of Instone-Brewer is going to be accepted on the basis of this passage, then some additional grounds can be introduced beyond these two things. They might possibly include alcohol addiction, gambling, domestic violence etc. Amongst all scholars whose opinions are cited in this section, Instone-Brewer is the only one who makes mention of these two exceptional grounds. In a sense his remarks seem to be more practical, since some women (and men too) may suffer in this way in the contemporary world.

In summary, based on the studies thus far, all scholars whose opinions are cited in this section point to these findings in the following. Paul asked a Christian couple not to get divorced. Paul’s citation of the command of Jesus in 1 Corinthians 7:10 shines a spotlight on the word of Jesus on divorce. The teaching of Jesus on this topic is widely attested in the gospels, in Matthew 5:32 and 19:9, Mark 10:11-12 as well as Luke 16:18. Also, the admonition of Paul

reminds us of a traditional view of Jewish toward divorce. Collins also supports this perspective (Collins 1999, 264). Thus it is clear that Paul prohibited a Christian couple from divorcing their spouse. Nevertheless, both Jesus and Paul allowed a marital split solely on one ground, that of adultery. Paul did not bring up this issue in his text, but it is clearly mentioned in Matthew 5: 31-32 and 19:9. Instone-Brewer also thinks that:

“There are an enormous number of synonyms for ‘divorce’ used in the Jewish Greek marriage and divorce papyri. Thus, there are always ample words for a writ writer to select from (Instone-Brewer Tyndale Bulletin 52.1 2001. 101-116, 106-107).

Among all the commentators, Instone-Brewer introduces various valuable ancient documents and is also learned in the original language of the text. However, it would be better if we could know what the ‘number of synonyms for divorce’ in the old Jewish Greek papers is, so that we can arrive at more appropriate grounds for divorce in our contemporary culture. Also, if that were feasible, his suggestion of two possible reasons for divorce would have a stronger foundation.

Based on these findings regarding the advice of Paul for the subject of divorce among believers, Paul’s fundamental principle for a Christian couple was to encourage them to remain married by all means if that were possible. Nevertheless, Paul showed a flexible attitude when he also admitted the occasion of divorce among Christians, and most scholars in this section are in line with Paul on that.

c. Divorce in a mixed marriage

In regards to Paul’s advice to mixed couples on the matter of divorce, it is likely that he was concerned about some members of the Corinthian church who had been married to an unbeliever before conversion. For reference, in the Old Testament, God gave his commandment to the Israelites through his prophets not to marry foreign (gentile) women. It is attested in Deuteronomy 7:3, Ezra 10:10-11 and Nehemiah 13:26. In the New Testament, Paul also asked Christians to refrain from getting married to unbelievers in 1 Corinthians 6:14. Arguably, these words are given to Christians who were to get married. However, neither Jesus nor Paul asked a Christian spouse to separate themselves from their partner on the ground of a dissimilar faith.

Since Paul gave the same advice to both a Christian husband and a Christian wife on equal terms in 7:10-12, he also appeared to recognise the equal right to divorce of husband and wife in a mixed marriage. What is noteworthy here is that a woman was not permitted to send her husband away in the Jewish world, but Paul acknowledged that same right on the side of woman. Fee and Barrett also point this out (Fee 1987, 294) (Barrett 1968, 163). The explanation can also be found in the book of Mark, since both Paul and Mark gave the same guidance to man and woman equally. This is unlike the writing of Matthew and Luke. Paul might have affected Mark, since the Gospel of Mark was written later than 1 Corinthians. Both of them show the same attitude in recognising the rights of woman to commence divorce proceedings. Barrett supports this assumption by pointing out the parallel between 1 Corinthians 7:10-11 and Mark 10:2-12 (Barrett 1968, 162).

Barrett also argues that perhaps Paul quotes the sayings of Jesus when he could, although he might only have known a few of them. This verse may be one of those few verses of which Paul might have been aware. Further, Paul would select only those where the teaching of Jesus differed greatly from that which was already widespread in Judaism (Barrett 1968, 162). Thus, since 1 Corinthians was written earlier than any of the Gospels, this passage is most likely to present the original form of Jesus' saying on divorce rather than Mark 10:11-12. This also means that when an unbeliever, either husband or wife, asks for a marital split, divorce is allowed. Morris, Keener, and most scholars agree on this point. This opinion is in accord with the implication of 1 Corinthians 7:15 where Paul allowed the divorce to happen. Bruce also thinks that the unbelieving spouse who wants a divorce should not be forced either to remain or return (Bruce 1971, 70). Paul did not comment directly on this matter, but the latter part of 1 Corinthians 7:15 suggests that the separated partner who is a Christian does not need to remain entangled with the unbeliever who has already left the marriage. If this is the situation, Paul states plainly that the believing partner is not bound to maintain the matrimony as implied in 7:15. Fee pays attention to the word "loose, (not enslaved)" in this passage. He states that "[This word] is found throughout the ancient papyri as a technical term for discharging someone from the obligation of a contract" (Fee 1987, 331-332).

The reading of the verse thus suggests that the Christian partner in a mixed marriage does not need to wait for the separated unbeliever to come back or to be reconciled. This stands in contrast to what Paul asked from the Christian spouse who has divorced themselves from their partner to get reconciled later. In the similar way, Keener also points out that the phrase “is not enslaved” (ESV) in 1 Corinthians 7:14 was the ‘language of ancient divorce contracts,’ which specified freedom for a remarriage. This indicates that Paul confirmed the right of a believing partner to remarry unless the marital breakdown was caused by the believer (Keener 2005, 65). Keener is the only scholar who makes reference to the ancient marriage writings about divorce in a mixed marriage. However the last part of Keener’s argument is uncertain since Paul did not explicitly comment on the remarriage of a believing spouse divorced by an unbelieving partner. Barrett is another scholar who regards 1 Corinthians 7:15 as saying that the believing partner does not need to be reconciled to their unbelieving spouse who does not wish to be so reconciled, just for the sake of following the Christian moral ethics (Barrett 1968, 163). Barrett’s interpretation is more appropriate in the context of the passage.

The following text seems to say that this kind of mixed marriage creates an opportunity for the unbelieving spouse to be saved through the godly influence of their Christian spouse. It is sensible for Fee to state that this kind of exceptional matrimony is not ideal. It is permitted but ‘it is not to be pursued’ (Fee: 1987, p. 298). Since it is obvious that Paul advised the believing partner not to break up with the unbelieving spouse on the ground of their different faith, the passage here evidently asks the believing partner to remain with unbelieving spouse in the hope of salvation for the unbeliever.

Instone-Brewer develops this point further by commenting:

Paul did not allow any Christian to use the Greco-Roman procedure of divorce by separation. He based this both on Jesus’ teaching and on his own understanding of marriage. Jesus taught that one cannot get divorced on the Hillelite ground of “any matter,” which was very similar to the Greco-Roman divorce by separation. Paul added that one could not use this procedure even if one was married to a non-Christian. However, if a non-Christian used this procedure, there was nothing that the Christian could do to prevent it (Instone-Brewer 2002, 201).

This remark shows that Paul considered marriage between a Christian and non-believer as

permanent as one between two believers. This leads us to refer to the days when Jewish men were prohibited from getting married to gentile women. One prophet, Ezra, even commanded married Jewish men to separate themselves from their foreign wives (Ezra 10: 11). If the Jewish people in the first century were still observing this marital regulation without any proper understanding of the word of Jesus about divorce, the different religion may belong to the category of “any matter” for divorce as mentioned here, whether or not the men in the first century were followers of Jesus. Paul asked them not to send their unbelieving spouse away regardless of their difference in faith. It is questionable how some Christian Jewish married men and women in the Corinthian church at that time responded to this advice.

It is seen that 1 Corinthians 7:14 provides a sensible ground for the admonition of Paul for the believing partner not to separate themselves from their spouse due to a difference of religion. In other words, Paul hoped to see the salvation of the unbeliever in a mixed marriage through the godly influence of the believer. Collins reiterates this by stating that as long as the marriage continues, the unbelieving partner may convert and eventually be saved (Collins 1999, 271).

To sum up, all scholars whose arguments are cited in this section consent to the observations suggested here. They are that the advice given to a mixed couple in this text was not based on the divine revelation from the Lord but on Paul’s personal judgment. Paul also commanded a believing partner to stay married as long as the unbeliever, regardless of different faith, agreed to remain married. Nevertheless, if the unbelieving partner does not want to stay together, Paul allowed the believing partner to let him/her go. This also means that the believer ought to wish to maintain the matrimony and also the believing partner should not be the one who initiates a divorce from their spouse. The main reason for this advice appears to come out of Paul’s concern for the possible salvation of an unbelieving spouse through the godly influence of the believing spouse.

So far, two occasions of divorce have been examined in 1 Corinthians 7:10-16. They are, a marital split amongst believers, and a marital split in a mixed marriage. Various Western Christian scholars read this text on divorce from diverse views; from that of Jewish marriage law, the teaching of Jesus, certain Greek words, Greek phrases and others. Nonetheless, this

varied approach to the text does not indicate what factors might have influenced them to understand the passage in the way they do. Furthermore, there is not much difference in understanding the text between scholars with Protestant background and those with non-Protestant background.

4.3 Conclusion

This chapter is a survey of the discussion about singleness and divorce amongst Western scholars. We have learnt the ways that Western scholars understand the related biblical passages on singleness and divorce are rather different from the approach of Coptic and most Korean scholars. This point is worth mentioning here again as it was expressed at the beginning of this chapter. The reason why the Western scholars read the text in the way they do may come partially from their personal preference. Also, they may attempt to make their arguments more academically convincing by referring to the two well-known ancient civilisations. Furthermore, they make use of the historical-critical way of interpreting the Scripture by looking into the diverse elements of the place and time of the setting in which the Bible was written so as to glean as much detailed information as possible. For this purpose, they survey a variety of factors; language, religion, philosophy and others in the Greco-Roman world in the first century, which was ruling the surrounding area when the Scripture was written.

5 CONCLUSION

Before moving to the conclusion in this chapter, it may be helpful to remind ourselves of the initial purpose of this research. In the introductory chapter we set out the diverse usage of the Bible on the topics of singleness, marriage, divorce and remarriage by various church traditions. For instance, the Coptic Church strictly abides by two permissible grounds for divorce: adultery or the conversion of one spouse. By comparison, the Korean Protestant Church does not have any established church ruling on the same subject. The policy of the Western Church varies widely, but in general terms, the Roman Catholic Church does not permit divorce whereas the Protestant Church does.

These differences between the churches led the author to choose three church groupings, as case studies, namely the Egyptian Coptic Orthodox church, the Korean Protestant Church and Western Christianity, so as to explore their reading of Scripture and factors that might possibly have influenced their understanding and consequent church practice. Not many biblical scholars appear to have made in-depth studies in this area, so the lack of current research also encouraged me to examine this previously neglected field.

With this aim in mind, the introductory chapter commenced by referring to the previous studies of reception in general and of the Bible in particular, followed by the interpretation by a few selected scholars of New Testament texts referring to singleness, marriage, divorce and remarriage, particularly 1 Corinthians 7. In other words, in an effort to expand this subject, the existing studies of reception by Hays, Luz, Thiselton, Vásquez and Instone-Brewer have been explored. After examining their understanding of these four issues, I made a brief study of past biblical scholarship in two church traditions to lay the groundwork for the main research. These were the previous studies of Korean biblical scholarship and that of Coptic biblical scholarship regarding the Bible in general and singleness, marriage, divorce and remarriage in particular.

On the basis of this preliminary study, this thesis has attempted to build on the current scholarship to the extent of understanding how each church community group - Coptic Orthodox, Korean Protestant and Western Christianity- has interpreted the related biblical

texts and applied their interpretations in their church policy. Furthermore, the various individual church practices led me to study what might possibly have affected the way they read the pertinent passages of Paul on these four topics.

This concluding chapter will begin by highlighting some similarities and dissimilarities between the three church groups in the area of four subjects. This will be followed by some personal observations.

5.1 Comparison between Coptic Orthodox, Western and Korean Protestant Christianity (Singleness)

When it comes to the definition of singleness, the Coptic scholars assume that single people are celibate, in other words they are not sexually active. By contrast, in Korean Christianity, single people may or may not be sexually active. Also, it is helpful to look briefly at the ways in which Western writers differ from writers of Coptic Orthodox and Korean Christianity in their perspective on the issue of celibacy. Firstly, in terms of the reasons for celibacy, more reasons are observed amongst Western and Korean Christianity, whereas within Coptic Orthodox Christianity there is only one motivation: a calling of celibacy. However, the grounds for celibacy highlighted in Western Christianity are slightly dissimilar from those of Korean Protestant Christianity. For Western Christianity, they are the imminent eschatological distress, possibly increased difficulty from a married life, and the higher spiritual pursuit. By comparison, Korean scholars refer to the potential temptation to sexual immorality, additional trouble coming from a married life, and an expedient lifestyle for the sake of God's kingdom. The views within Western and Korean Protestant Christianity on this topic are varied, whereas that of the Coptic Church is unified.

When it comes to the primary resources and references for interpretation, several Western scholars refer to two ancient Greek philosophical groups, the Cynics and Stoics, two religious Jewish sects, Philo's Therapeutae and the Essenes, some Church Fathers, apocalyptic literature and Roman cults in the city of Corinth. By contrast, not one of Korean sources cited quotes any works of the Church Fathers in support of singleness. Their primary reference is Scripture. Moreover, none of Korean scholars refers to any possible influence coming from long-held conservative cultural influence of Confucianism and the traditional fundamentalism

of mainline theological doctrine in Korea. What is noticeable is that only J. H. Lee out of the six Korean scholars refers to Western scholars such as B. W. Winter, W.F. Orr and D.E. Garland, whose views Lee shares. By contrast, the Coptic Church points to the Bible and to the interpretations of some well-known Church Fathers for their strong evidence in this area. In part of Coptic Christianity, the major resources cited are from the Bible, some well-known Church Fathers and the Council of Gangra, an ecumenical council held in Asia Minor (modern Turkey) in 345 AD. Various Korean Christian writers make mention of the Bible as a key source of a variety of opinions.

In addition, the Korean scholars are divided in their views on whether celibacy or matrimony is to be preferred. Coptic scholars appear to give singleness a higher status, with a strong emphasis on the passages in 1 Corinthians 7:26-35. Western exegetes also tend to have a similar argument in terms of their inclination toward celibacy. The attitude of the Coptic Church may well come from their respect for the famous Church Fathers and their authoritative interpretation of the text on the topic of singleness. Western scholars try to understand Paul's thoughts about singleness by looking into the writings of the two ancient Greek philosophical groups (Cynics and Stoics), and two religious Jewish sects (Philo's Therapeutae and the Essenes), who promoted celibacy. Their readings of these sources may have affected the way that the Western scholars understand the pertinent passages on this subject.

Amongst contemporary Western Christians, evangelical scholars are the major commentators. For Coptic Christians it is the Bishop whose opinions are recognised as authoritative. In the Korean Church a mixture of theologians, pastors and lay people are cited. By contrast to those of the Bishop, the varied arguments of Korean writers may be less persuasive to their readers. Moreover, the Copts highlight Jewish culture in the first century, where celibates such as Daniel, Jeremiah and John the Baptist were highly esteemed. This understanding can be also found in Western Christianity. Nevertheless, the writers in the Korean Church do not often mention those recognised Bible celibates.

In Coptic Christianity, priests are allowed to get married only prior to ordination. Bishops are selected from amongst monks and are then required to remain celibate. In Western

Christianity, any single Christian is generally allowed to get married unless he or she chooses to remain unmarried on their own volition. The exception is the Roman Catholic priest, monk, friar or nun, for whom celibacy is a mandatory requirement. In the Korean Church, until recently, it was required for a woman to remain unmarried if they sought ordination, whereas men in Korean churches were usually required to be married prior to ordination. Hapdong, one of foremost Presbyterian denominations, specifies this in their regulations for ordination, which became effective in October in 2010 (Accessed September 17, 2014. <http://gapck.org>).

Finally, the Coptic Church appears to interpret the strong encouragement of Paul towards celibacy as a result of the unstable social situation, political turmoil and continual religious persecution under Roman rule in the first century. Scholars in the Western Church describe what they believe Paul wanted the believers to do in this area. It looks as though Korean Christianity attempts to apply the warning of Paul in terms of being single to their current modern situation.

5.2 Comparison between Coptic Orthodox, Western and Korean Protestant Christianity (Marriage)

The topic of marriage was not examined in the section on Western Christianity, so only two church groups, the Coptic and Korean traditions, will be dealt with in this section. As for the commonality between Coptic Orthodox Christianity and Korean Protestant Christianity, both groups equally make reference to Genesis 1:28 and 2:24 in which they believe that marriage is initiated by God. The institution of marriage is commonly accepted in both groups as a gift of God. Both groups consider Christian matrimony to be more than simply a matter of a contract between two people where the two parties are asked to meet the conditions of the marriage.

Coptic and Korean Christianity alike view marriage as a holy vow of two people united by faith in God. Also, both expressions of Christianity point to Ephesians 5:29-32, where a Christian marriage is pictured as sacred through the imagery of the union between Christ and the Church. The view of marriage as a sacrament may add an exceptional and spiritual

meaning to Christian marriage, which will distinguish the concept of Christian marriage from that of other religions. The difference between these two traditions is that for Copts the more conservative opinion of the Bishop is authoritative, and will be easily accepted. Conversely, the writers in the Korean section are a mixture of ministers, theologians and lecturers who put forward a variety of viewpoints.

The Korean Church does not appear to put such a strong emphasis as the Coptic Church does on the characteristic of marriage as a sacrament. Unlike the previous group, the Coptic Church points to John 2:1-11 for its basic notion of the sacramental nature of matrimony. For that reason, a Coptic marriage ceremony can only be performed in the presence of a Coptic priest in a church, followed by a registration ceremony by the secular government. This is quite unlike the practice of Korean Christianity, where a wedding can take place anywhere according to the couple's preference, either with or without the presence of a minister.

Another interesting difference is that in Coptic Christianity a wedding must be presided over by a Coptic priest in full ministerial robe without shoes. Amongst Copts, only a wedding that was conducted through the prayers of the church would be considered legitimate, since the prayer of the church is the means by which a man and a woman become legitimately joined. This is not so in Korean Christianity. In the Coptic tradition, the priest appears to have great authority over the choices regarding marital status of his congregation, which is not found in the Korean church tradition.

5.3 Comparison between Coptic Orthodox, Western and Korean Protestant Christianity (Divorce)

Let us have a brief look at the ways in which Western writers are dissimilar in their opinions about divorce from scholars of Coptic Orthodox and Korean Christianity. With regard to this issue, Paul's writing in 1 Corinthians 7:10-16 is divided into two sections. First he addressed the divorce of a Christian couple and then he addresses divorce in a mixed marriage, where one partner is Christian and the other is not believer. In Coptic Orthodox Christianity there are two main grounds for divorce: adultery and a change of religion. Yet divorce on the

ground of religious conversion is unbiblical, since it is not in line with the teaching of Paul in 1 Corinthians 7.

In Korean Protestant Christianity, by comparison, the views of scholars range across a wider spectrum, from strict to liberal. One perspective is that sexual unfaithfulness in married life is the only reasonable reason for divorce. In Western Christian traditions, a Christian couple is asked not to get divorced except in the case of adultery. Only one Western Christian scholar I have consulted, Instone-Brewer, suggests two further reasons, which are lack of material and emotional support. This is not suggested in either Coptic or Korean Christianity. Also, a mixed couple is encouraged to stay married unless an unbelieving partner asks for a divorce.

When it comes to the primary sources and references for the interpretation, most Western scholars refer to the teaching of Jesus in the Gospels. Some of them additionally make mention of the Old Testament and the epistle of Paul to the Ephesians. Some commentators point to the Greco-Roman and Jewish divorce law of the first century, and also read the texts from a linguistic point of view. A few scholars also make reference to ancient divorce documents. However, like the Korean scholars, not one of them cites any works of the Church Fathers in their support of divorce. This is a huge difference from Coptic Christianity, where the church depends heavily on the reading of the Church Fathers for their understanding of the text. This may imply that Western Christianity is not apparently influenced by the Church Fathers.

None of the Western scholars, either Protestant or Catholic, with the exception of Morris, quote John Calvin or his reading of the text. This is contrary to my initial expectation, since Calvin is considered to be one of the fathers of Reformation. Perhaps this indicates that the theological foundation of Western Christianity does not rely on the understanding of the reformers John Calvin and Martin Luther for their biblical exegesis. Rather, they tend to trace directly back to their first-hand studies of various aspects and laws of the Greco-Roman world and Jewish culture in the first century. This kind of research is not so evident in either the Coptic or the Korean tradition; only one Korean scholar, S.K.Lee, makes reference to John Calvin.

Contemporary scholars are the most significant commentators in Western Christianity, with Roman Catholics having a smaller influence. In Coptic Christianity bishops have the major influence, and in the Korean Church a mixture of theologians, pastors and lay people hold sway. Interestingly, divorce between Muslims and Copts in Egypt is relatively common, since each of them allows a married couple to break up if one of them changes his or her religion.

Finally, the Coptic Church in Egypt strictly requires their followers to comply with their divorce law in their personal married life. On the contrary, both of the Western and Korean Christian groups do not have such a strong binding authority in terms of applying their reading of the related texts to the real lives of their believers. I have been unable to find any scholar who can explain how the Western Church applies their understanding of the passage to church doctrine. In the Korean Protestant church we find that the constitution of Tonghap (in Korean 통합) one of the major Presbyterian church groups, comments on the reasonable grounds for divorce in a vague way without any clearly specified reason. By comparison, no such grounds have been identified by another mainline Presbyterian group, Hapdong (in Korean 합동). One famous Korean pastor in this denomination, Jong Yoon Lee, discussed this topic in a recent Christian newspaper, saying that divorce is not allowed under any circumstances. The two different approaches here indicate the different reading of biblical texts on divorce by the two main Presbyterian Church groups. In interviews with some Korean Protestant ministers I learnt that divorce is dealt with by the individual church tradition or by a consensus of the church leadership.

5.4 Comparison between Coptic Orthodox, Western and Korean Protestant Christianity (Remarriage)

The topic of remarriage in Western Christianity was not examined, so only two groups, the Coptic and Korean confessions, will be explored in this section. In the Coptic Church, the innocent party in the event of adultery and a spouse whose partner converts to other religion are permitted to remarry. A widow or widower is also allowed a second marriage.

I initially expected that Korean Protestant scholars, the majority of whom are Presbyterian members, would make extensive reference to the work of John Calvin on the subject of remarriage. But in fact most Korean scholars do not explicitly refer to Calvin, who proposed three permissible grounds for divorce and remarriage other than adultery. These are impotence, extreme religious incompatibility and abandonment. Furthermore, Korean commentators interpret the teaching of Paul concerning remarriage quite literally. This means that they allow remarriage to take place on only two grounds: adultery or the death of one spouse. They do not allow any other possible grounds for second marriage. It appears that the Korean scholars' readings of the passages pertinent to second marriage are more conservative than those of the Coptic Church and John Calvin. Yet, unlike the Coptic Church, the Korean Protestant churches do not have any official church regulation on this topic. Korean believers can remarry as they wish.

5.5 Personal observation

Scholars of every tradition tend to read the pertinent biblical passages according to their particular context. This is true of the two church groups whose understandings of Paul's writings concerning singleness, marriage, divorce and remarriage I have studied. Coptic scholars, for instance, say that they have followed the readings of the Church Fathers for their understanding of the relevant texts. Yet it appears that the Church has adapted its reading to the particular circumstances in which they find themselves. For example, none of Fathers argued that a change of religion should be one of legitimate grounds for divorce, but the Church considers this a legitimate reason for a marital split, due to their complex religious position in Egypt.

Moreover, the Coptic Church tends to accept those of the Father's viewpoints that are more stringent rather than more lenient on divorce and remarriage. The Church does not give any explanation for their specific choice in this regard, but their decision to abide by strict principles regarding marital status is likely to come from their effort to maintain their religious purity and preserve their identity in a Muslim country. It is true that the Coptic Church is explicit in terms of their understanding of the biblical texts related to those four

topics and its church practice, even though their reading and application is not lenient. In one sense, this clear-cut church regulation may help Copts not to get confused about what the Coptic Church wants from them in the arena of their personal affairs. In another sense, however, the strict church bylaw has been the cause of many troubled situations amongst Copts who hope to divorce on grounds other than those which are officially permitted.

A few examples in the following paragraphs may illustrate the negative side effects of the stern ruling of Coptic Church. For instance, the public Coptic website in the UK reveals that some Coptic Christians have converted to Protestant denominations or other religions in order to end their unhappy marriages (Accessed October 17, 2011. <http://www.coptsunited.com>). The prominent Arabic broadcaster, *Al Jazeera*, also commented at one point in 2011 that more than 100 Coptic Christians in Egypt had left the Church in recent weeks (October 2011) due to intense arguments over the strict divorce laws of the Church. Some Christian believers are now wondering whether the law of the Church should be changed (Accessed October 10, 2011. <http://english.aljazeera.net>).

Al-Masry Al-Youm has published more than 120 individual notices which the Coptic Church has received from Christians informing them that they have permanently left the denomination, declaring their intention to split from the Church in order to make use of Islamic law to give them the freedom to divorce. Some said that they would join the Protestant or Catholic Church. It is notable that the Evangelical Church in Egypt still applies the 1938 code, which, unlike the Coptic Church, allows nine reasons for divorce. The head of the Anglican Communion, Safwat al-Bayaadi, told *Al-Masry Al-Youm*, “So far, we have not received any requests to join the Evangelical Church. If those wanting divorce asked to join, the requests would be examined on a case-by-case basis.” (Accessed January 14, 2012. <http://www.almasryalyoum.com>) Perhaps these current tragic situations indicate that now is the time for the Coptic Church to think about their stringent church policy in this area.

By contrast, the interpretations of Western and Korean churches are so various as to be liberal on the one hand and extremely strict on the other. Due to this wide spectrum in their understanding of the pertinent biblical passages for those four topics, it is not possible for the Western and Korean Church to choose one particular reading as the foundational basis for

church policy. I have not attempted to examine the Western Church in this area.

Despite this ambiguity in the Korean churches, it is possible cautiously to detect some possible factors influencing their reading of Paul's texts on these four issues. Factors from both conservative culture and fundamentalism are evident in the reading of some Korean scholars. For example, when it comes to the issue of divorce in contemporary culture, one Korean minister says that:

The most significant social factor for currently causing divorce these days results from women in modern society seeking to restore their equal rights. Before the revolutionary period, the rights of women was neglected under the influence of a male-oriented system, since the patriarchal family structure of the past was built on the sacrifices of women whose human rights were ignored. However, through modernisation, women came to acquire equal rights to those of men and also began to change their view of divorce, which has come to be regarded as a personal issue unlike before. Thus, this change in the way of thinking has brought about the high proportion of marital splits in modern times (M.K.Ha July 2014).

According to Korean Christian News, the divorce rate is rising amongst Christians (Accessed July 26, 2014. <http://www.cknews.co.kr>). These statements suggest that the traditional Korean culture, which has not held women in equal esteem to men, may have been a factor in causing more divorces amongst believing and non-believing couples. Nevertheless, some Korean scholars seemed to still adhere to the traditional Korean culture and read the text of Paul on the topic of divorce with that perspective.

Another example is remarriage in modern Korean society. Even though the long-held legal constitution for the prohibition of remarriage of widows under the ancient Korean dynasty, where Confucianism was the major moral force, was abolished in 1894, the lingering negative influence of this law has for a long time affected the way that Korean people regard remarriage in general. One website says, "Remarriage is no longer a disgraceful matter in Korea, but the general viewpoint of Korean people toward this issue is still not positive." (Accessed July 26, 2014. <http://news.naver.com>). This implies that the traditional culture of Confucianism is still influencing the mentality of Korean people, including Christians, on the subject of remarriage.

Most of the scholars considered in the chapter on Korea happen to be Protestants, who are usually regarded as Reformers after the theological tradition of John Calvin. Nevertheless some of the Korean Protestant scholars appear to be stricter than Calvin when it comes to grounds for divorce. It even looks as if one Korean Presbyterian denomination, Tonghap, has changed the original version of the Westminster Confession (1647) associated with Presbyterian Churches to a Korean version to suit a Korean setting. When we discovered that the Korean churches do not have their own clearly defined church rule based on their appropriate biblical interpretation, it seemed that the Korean churches need seriously to consider bringing about some change in this area, in order to develop church policy that is appropriate to their followers.

It is evident that Paul spoke of men and women as equal in terms of their rights and responsibilities of personal status. In this connection, it is also significant to know one's own gift and calling, be it celibacy or marriage. Each believer is asked to follow their calling, regardless of any possible difficulties in their pursuit of it. Christians, whether married or unmarried, are called to serve the Lord wholeheartedly. Furthermore, sexual purity is considered as important in the life of a Christian, whether single or married. In various ways, contemporary secular culture tends to promote sexual freedom either prior to or outside of one's marriage. A commitment to chastity is one of the godly characteristics that Christians are encouraged to pursue. Furthermore, divorce is discouraged amongst believers, although it is allowed in event of a request by an unbelieving spouse in a mixed marriage.

Another notable finding is the extent to which Paul acknowledged the rights of woman, who were not highly thought of in the first century. This may be the personal reflection of the writer as a Korean woman encountering this material, since some current Korean scholarship does not appear to pay heed to this passage in relating to the status of women in Korea. It is significant to notice that various passages in the main text reflect the attitude Paul had toward women, as follows.

The first passage is 1 Corinthians 7:4, where Paul says that a wife has authority over the body of her husband. This implies the mutually equal rights of both husband and wife in the conjugal relationship. This is a remarkable suggestion by Paul, and contrary to several

cultures. For instance, in ancient times, according to S.S. Kwon, neither Roman nor Jewish culture recognised the equal rights of a man and a woman each other's bodies (S.S. Kwon, 2000, 601). This finds support from J. C. Kim, who also says that this equality of rights is not found in either Jewish society or Stoic philosophy (J.C. Kim: 1999, 278). Even in Korean culture, both past and present, a man is still regarded as superior to a woman. S. Y. Kim also points this out (S. Y. Kim, 2011, 127). But Collins states that 'in marriage what is most appropriate is the mutual submission of spouses to one another.' (Collins 1999, 259)

The second text is 1 Corinthians 7:10, where Paul says "the wife should not separate from her husband, but if she does..." Paul asked the wife not to dismiss her husband. Yet the latter part of this verse shows that Paul that there might be times when the wife would do against his suggestion. He implies that a wife might initiate a divorce in just the same way as a husband could in Jewish culture. Fee comments on this matter as follows:

What needs to be noted is that such an action by a woman was generally allowed among the Jewish. Divorce was the man's prerogative, and for almost any reason whatsoever. ---But women could, and did, divorce their husbands in the Greco-Roman world, although for obvious socio-economic reasons it was not common for them to do so. Under any circumstances-and especially if Paul were merely answering questions put by the Corinthians on the permissibility of divorce-it is remarkable that Paul should begin his response by speaking to the wife, and speak primarily to her, where the word to the husband in verse 11 appears almost as afterthought. (Fee 1987, 294)

The first phrase implies that a Jewish woman could also initiate divorce if she wanted to, just as women did in Greco-Roman culture; however, a Jewish woman would possibly not do so due for socio-economic reasons. Nonetheless, this remark clearly reflects the high regard Paul had toward the equal rights of women in the area of marital separation.

The third set of examples is taken from 1 Corinthians 7:12 - 13, where Paul again acknowledged the right of divorce for both husband and wife equally. In Jewish society, unlike Roman culture, a wife was not allowed to initiate divorce proceedings against her husband. Yet Paul treated the matter of divorce equally for both genders. Paul's suggestion that both parties have the same right to initiate divorce is almost revolutionary. Both S.S.Kwon and S.Y.Kim agree on this point. (S.S.Kwon 2000, 628) (S.Y.Kim 2011, 132) Keener also alludes to this in his writing (Keener 2005, 64), and Hays indirectly points to it

as well (Hays 1996, 358).

The last example is found in 1 Corinthians 7:39-40, where Paul allowed for a widow to get remarried if she wished. According to S.S. Kwon, the remarriage of widows in the first century Jewish custom was a matter of contempt amongst Jews. Nor was it favourably accepted amongst Christian believers at that time (S.S.Kwon: 2000, 718). In Korean culture, this has been almost taboo for over five hundred years until the twentieth century due to the conventional ideology of Confucianism. In contemporary Korean society, however, the remarriage of a widower is better recognised than that of a widow. In the midst of this circumstance, Paul commented specifically on the remarriage of widows. This reflects Paul's concern for widows as well as his recognition of the rights of women. S.Y.Kim is also in agreement with this point (S.S. Kim 2011, 156).

Last but not least, both Jesus in the Gospels and Paul in the epistles demonstrated their honourable attitude towards women, in spite of the fact that they were treated as inferior to men in the first century Jewish and Roman world. Through several passages in the main text, Paul indicated that husband and wife have completely equal rights and responsibilities. This is also echoed in the argument of S.Y. Kim (S. Y. Kim 2011, 143). In contrast to the first century cultures in which Paul lived, he was aware of the respect and concern that Jesus had had for women, and he continued this mind-set in his own writing.

This is truly good news for women and wives, not only in the UK or Korea but all over the world. The truth which is found in the Bible should set women free from all types of bondage and all physical, social, economic and political disadvantages in which they find themselves, so that the rights of downtrodden women can be restored to the original intention of God expressed in Genesis 1:27-28. Through appropriate reading of Scripture and its teaching and church practice in the arena of personal status, biblical scholars, church groups their church leaders are asked to pay more attention to improving the standing of women in family, church and society. Paul proclaims in the Bible that "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus (Galatians 3:28, ESV).

The lengthy research for this thesis was hard work but ultimately worthwhile, since this work has attempted to explore areas which no scholar or theological student appears to have undertaken before. In an effort to shed light on this neglected field, the understanding and church practice of three church traditions on the relevant Pauline passages concerning the issues of singleness, marriage, divorce and remarriage, the readings of scholars and the church practices of each group (with the exception of the church application in the case of Western Christianity) as well as the possible factors of influence in the area of biblical interpretation, have been explored.

Also, as a result of this study, several other points have been brought out. The endeavour to find out the factors of influence on the reading of pertinent biblical passages in three church groups helped me to understand the development and application of church policy in the church traditions. Additionally, the critical comparison of three church communities in terms of their divergent interpretations and applications of the same biblical passages also helped me to be aware of the strengths and weaknesses of each reading, which may make the research of this thesis unique. What is more, even though biblical scholars reported the various interpretations of the usage of related biblical texts, they failed to consider the negative ways in which these readings might apply in real life. This hitherto overlooked aspect was also explored, leading us to consider some potential problems in the understanding of pertinent passages when the text is applied or enforced inflexibly in each church tradition.

In view of these various findings, and using my current work as a case study, this undertaking will hopefully move current scholarship towards further development. It is my hope and expectation that what has been examined in this thesis may provide a useful reference for future scholars who wish to study the reception of the Bible in general, or the reception of the texts on singleness, marriage, divorce and remarriage.

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For convenient reference for each chapter, I have arranged a bibliography for each in this section. The bibliographic items listed under the introduction will not be repeated in the bibliographies for later chapters.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

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