INTRODUCTION

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THE PROJECT

It is generally held that from the middle of the first century to the middle of the second century the church became more tightly organized. Most would put the kind of development evident in the years shortly following the resurrection of Jesus, as exhibited in 1 Thessalonians, at some distance from the more 'settled' church life reflected in the Pastoral Epistles. However, the nature of the historical circumstances related to the formation of a more established church continues to be a subject of debate. This socio-historical study traces the institutionalization of various aspects of community life: attitudes to the world/ethics, ministry structures, ritual forms and beliefs.

The Pauline and deutero-Pauline writings perhaps provide the most revealing material for a study of change in the early church; they have the advantage of manifesting continuity as works either written by Paul himself or by one of his disciples in his name. The Pauline corpus contains both the earliest church writings available to us (the authentic epistles) and writings dating from the early second century (the Pastoral Epistles). The documents probably bear witness to at least three church generations.

Demonstration of the thesis that the Pauline corpus reflects a movement that received its initial formation at the hands of Paul and his group of fellow workers but continued to develop after the death of the Apostle, depends on an illustration of continuity between Pauline and deutero-Pauline writings. Therefore, it will be necessary to begin with a brief study of Paul's communities. The general treatment of Pauline communities found in Part 1 of this book will rely substantially on past work on the social setting of Pauline Christianity and will focus especially on those aspects which are of direct relevance for understanding deutero-Pauline writings.

In investigating deutero-Pauline writings, one must be content to establish the probable and, often, only the possible. Important work has been accomplished by researchers using literary, linguistic and

theological criteria to establish the authorship of documents. Commentaries on the disputed letters are often largely concerned with answering the question of whether or not 'the real Paul wrote this'. Unfortunately, heavy concentration on the problem of authenticity has led to the neglect of other important questions. This is not to deny the importance of attempting to arrive at conclusions about authorship, but to point out that commentators only infrequently consider the implications of their conclusions for the nature of early Christianity. If, for example, Paul did not write Colossians and Ephesians, what can this reveal about the social setting of Pauline Christianity? How might the death of Paul have affected his associates? What kind of leadership structures might be operative in communities which continue to appeal to the authority of the Apostle in his absence?

In this study, the question of authenticity is to a large extent left to one side in order to devote attention to some thus far unexplored questions. In an investigation of development, discussion of authorship and approximate dating is, however, a fundamental starting point for enquiry. The constant provided by the fact that all of the writings bear witness to a Pauline tradition makes determining the approximate period of a particular writing, and whether or not it should be considered pseudonymous, crucial for comparison. If the writings can be viewed as representative of different stages or generations of the movement's development, they may be compared in the hope of tracing the formation of a cultural system.

For the study of development in deutero-Pauline writings found in Part 2 and Part 3 of this book, the following working hypothesis based on the conclusions of past scholars is proposed:

1.   Colossians will be understood as written by a fellow worker or disciple of Paul either shortly after the Apostle's death or when imprisonment meant that direct communication with the Colossian community was impossible.
2.   Ephesians will be viewed as dependent on Colossians. The affinity of this epistle with the undisputed Pauline writings and Colossians leads one to conclude that it was most likely written by a close associate of Paul, probably fairly soon after Colossians.
3.   Because of the similar outlooks discovered in Colossians and Ephesians, they will be considered together as reflecting proximate stages of development.
4.   The Pastoral Epistles will be dated somewhere between

100–40 C.E. because of the apparent late stage of church development they exhibit, resembling the picture evident in the writings of the Apostolic Fathers.

5. 2 Thessalonians will only be given peripheral treatment here. The notoriously difficult problems of its dating and authorship make it virtually impossible for it to be employed in this analysis.

A study of development in the Pauline movement beyond the death of the Apostle requires a methodological framework that will allow for the most productive investigation. When New Testament scholars have compared the life of Paul's communities with the kinds of Christianity that came after Paul, they have focused particularly on the formation of church offices; they have often noted the disappearance of a Spirit-centred style of ministry and the gradual emergence of hierarchical organization. Bultmann, for example, in his *Theology of the New Testament*, envisions the Ecclesia as an eschatological congregation ruled by the Spirit's sway:

> The chief persons of authority are those endowed with gifts of the Spirit, beside whom those who act for the external order and welfare of the congregation's life play at first a subordinate role. The character of those having Spirit-gifts is determined by the fact that the eschatological congregation knows itself called into existence by the proclaimed word, and therefore gathers about the word, listening and also speaking (1 Cor 14).[1]

According to Bultmann, the Spirit established what might be called a 'congregational democracy' in the Pauline communities:

> For the real question is just this: in what form will the rule of the Spirit, or of Christ, realize itself in history? At any rate, it is incontestable that the later order (in which congregational officials have superseded the Spirit-endowed, a monarchical episcopate has developed, and the distinction between priests and laymen has arisen) was preceded by an order that must be called democratic. For notwithstanding the authority of the Spirit-endowed – for this is not an authority of office – the congregation takes action as a totality.[2]

The starting point for Bultmann's investigation of the development of church offices is the question of whether or not incipient regulations were appropriate to the nature of the Ecclesia.[3] Implicit in his analysis is the idea that the Pauline correspondence provides standards for measuring all later development: '... did this budding ecclesiastical law have regulative character or constitutive, and did it retain its original character?'[4]

In works written within the first two decades of the publication of Bultmann's *Theology of the New Testament*, similar assumptions about the organization of Pauline communities are operative. H. von Campenhausen underlines the discontinuity between the kind of development he discovers in Paul's churches and what came later:

> Paul knows of no leading figures to whom is entrusted the safe keeping of the Gospel on behalf of everyone else, and *a fortiori* it never occurs to him to call upon facts of the natural order to supply the framework for the community. Paul bases everything on the Spirit. But however significant this may be for him and for his particular 'style', the distinctive approach which he exhibits at this point should not be pressed too far in interpreting his theological thinking. For Paul, too, knows and affirms the special Christian tradition which is no less a primary constituent of the Church than is the Spirit. It is simply that he drew no conclusions from it for the life and organisation of the community. The next generation was unable to maintain this position.[5]

In his investigation of church order in the New Testament, E. Schweizer states that historical investigation of the Church's development is subsidiary to his interest in how the New Testament church understood itself.[6] His interpretation of the situation in Paul's churches greatly resembles Bultmann's description of the eschatological congregation:

> As a Church that is still living in time, it consists of many members, none of whom is perfect, so that each depends on the other's service; and there is therefore an abundance of different gifts and tasks. At the same time, however, the Church is a new entity, established solely by God's action and not to be regarded as a historical development. The miracle of this newness is shown by there being no fundamental organization of superior or subordinate ranks,

because the gift of the Spirit is adapted to every Church member. Whenever such working of the Spirit actually takes place, superiority and subordination will always follow.[7]

An extreme view of the contrast between the concept of ministry and organization found in the Pastorals and that discovered in the authentic Pauline writings is held by E. Käsemann: a charismatic ministry involving all Christians stands before hierarchical structures upheld by church officials. According to Käsemann, hierarchy is an attribute of 'early catholicism' – a development which he connects with the disappearance of imminent expectation and the threat of gnostic take-over.[8] Writing on the relation between Paul and 'early catholicism', he states the crucial starting point for his thesis: 'To put it pointedly, but without exaggeration, the Pauline church is composed of nothing but laymen, who nevertheless are all, within their possibilities, at the same time priests and officeholders, that is, instruments of the Spirit for the enactment of the Gospel in the every-day world.'[9]

Work conducted during the past fifteen years with the explicit intention of relating Paul's letters to the realities of a human society, casts doubt on the depiction of the Pauline churches as purely Spirit-governed communities. Studies by J. H. Schütz (1975), B. Holmberg (1978), W. Meeks (1983) and N. Petersen (1985) stress the importance of investigating the nature of authority structures operating in the Pauline communities.[10] Work by Gerd Theissen (1974) on the leader-ship of Paul's communities leads one to question the validity of the statement that those who were in charge of the external order and welfare of the congregation played only a subordinate role.[11] These scholars illustrate the fruitfulness of attempting to discover what sorts of persons were able to issue demands in the early church and what kinds of social mechanisms were involved in the prevention of deviant behaviour. Moreover, their investigations cast doubt on approaches to the study of New Testament communities which presuppose that the straightforward action of ideas shapes development. The nature of community life cannot be explained simply by drawing a causal connection between a theological position and a style of organization.

Despite recent work on the nature of the social structures involved in the exercise of ministry in the Pauline communities, scholars have yet to resolve the issue of how one should understand the nature of the transformation of the church from its charismatic beginnings, evident in the authentic Pauline writings, to its more tightly organized

form, evident in the Pastoral Epistles. A common understanding of
the nature of the organization of Paul's communities formed through
a comparison with what is known about later development is well
represented in the conclusions of H. Conzelmann (1968):

> There is no organization of the whole church, but only
> minimal beginnings of organization in the individual com-
> munities. But no form of organization is capable as such of
> bringing salvation; there is no holy form of community life;
> only one which is appropriate to its end. There is no hierarchy
> of ministries, no priestly state with a position of mediating
> salvation, no separation of clergy and laity, no firm regu-
> lating of the cult, but only the occasional instruction when
> the 'management' threatens to get out of control (1 Cor 14).
> Even here, however, no definite liturgy is introduced – cultic
> enthusiasm is guarded against, but that is all. The Corinthians
> are not initiated into fixed forms of cult, but are called to
> 'οἰκοδομή'.[12]

This common understanding is also evident in H. Koester's study
(1980) of the transformation of Pauline theology into ecclesiastical
doctrine:

> The primary accomplishment of Paul is seen to be the
> organization of his congregations – which was indeed a task
> to which Paul had once devoted considerable time and effort,
> and which had occupied a central place in his missionary
> activities! But now the offices are fixed: one bishop or
> presiding presbyter (who should receive twice the salary of
> other officers, 1 Tim 4:17); under him presbyters, deacons,
> and widows (the latter are to be supported by the congrega-
> tion, but should be thoroughly scrutinized so that they would
> not constitute an unnecessary burden to the community,
> 1 Tim 5:3–16); ordination by the laying on of hands (1 Tim
> 5:22; cf. 4:14), so that the charisma of the office can be
> passed on in an orderly fashion (2 Tim 1:6). The Pauline
> concept that all members of the church have special gifts as
> part of their possession of the spirit, thus qualifying them for
> service in the church, recedes into the background. Instead,
> moral qualifications are required for church officers, and the
> members of the congregation are reminded not of their
> Christian charismata, but of their general moral duties as
> good citizens.[13]

Although C. Rowland (1985) refers to the possibility of some kind of continuity between the patterns of ministry visible in Paul's writings and those visible in the Pastoral Epistles, he identifies a sharp contrast between the two:

> So the absence of specific details of ecclesiastical order should not lead us to suppose that Paul was indifferent to such things. He had a clear vision of the equal responsibility before God of all believers, to reflect the heart of discipleship, symbolically represented at baptism in their dying with Christ. How Paul maintained that aim, particularly when there was a possibility that he would be removed from the scene by death, we cannot now answer, unless that is, we consider that the Pastoral Epistles reflect at least in general terms the mind of Paul. If they do, we should have to say that the seeds of order already sown, grow into a pattern of ministry which, whatever its suitability for the peculiar needs of the period, inevitably did quench the prophetic spirit at work within the whole body of Christ.[14]

Rowland's remarks raise the question of how one should investigate the relationship between the community life discovered in the authentic Pauline writings and that found in the Pastorals. Conzelmann, Koester and Rowland's comments about the great disparity between the two find clear historical support. However, if sociological, as well as historical, methods are employed, one may arrive at a more complete understanding of how and why the transformation took place. A socio-historical investigation is not content with pointing to the existence of a contrast between stages of development, but seeks to discover relations between the stages in terms of the institution building process. With respect to the Pastoral Epistles, for example, it will be argued here that for those who recognize institutionalization as a process beginning in the earliest church and authority structures as being present in Pauline communities from the very beginning, the kind of leadership structures discovered in the Pastorals cannot be held up either as evidence of a sudden inculturalization into the ways of the world, nor as being completely opposite to the concept of ministry visible in Paul's writings. One of the major concerns of this work will be to investigate assumptions about the nature of Paul's communities upon which conclusions about development after Paul are based.

The following study is conducted with an eye for uncovering

aspects of the organization of Paul's communities which may be connected with the development that continued in the Pauline tradition after the Apostle's death. With the aid of sociological analysis, the process of institutionalization is traced from its earliest stages. Furthermore, this socio-historical investigation not only attempts to outline the effects of a particular theological position in the organizational realm, but also endeavours to explore the dialectical relationship existing between beliefs and social structures. Without denying the connection between the vision of salvation and church organization, nor the fact that decisions about the truth of doctrinal assertions are related to the establishment of mechanisms to protect truth, the investigation questions whether cerebral activities are the only, or even the primary, factors determining development within the early church. For example, a cursory glance at the Pastoral Epistles reveals the close association of household ethics with leadership structures. Although it is undoubtedly true that the establishment of offices is related to a perceived requirement to protect truth from false teaching, it is also clear that the Greco-Roman household − the foundational structure of Greco-Roman society − is a major factor in determining who is eligible for office. Indeed, the requirement to protect truth is not perceived in isolation from existing structures. This investigation illustrates that in the early church, not only do ideas shape social reality, but also, social reality affects the construction of ideas.

2

THE SOCIAL SCIENCES AND NEW TESTAMENT INTERPRETATION

In this investigation, insights from the social sciences will be drawn upon in addition to relying on historical methods with the aim of presenting a more complete description of development in the Pauline/deutero-Pauline circle. The following discussion sets out the social scientific theory that will be employed.

2.1 The symbolic universe

Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann's *The Social Construction of Reality* is of primary significance for this investigation of institutionalization in the Pauline movement.[15] *The Social Construction of Reality* is a treatise on the sociology of knowledge – a branch of sociology devoted to the study of the relation between human thought and the social context in which it arises.[16] The fundamental thesis of Berger and Luckmann's study is that the relationship between the individual as producer, and the individual's social world, the product, is a dialectical one.[17] Berger and Luckmann consider society in terms of both subjective and objective reality; they explore how externalized products of human activity attain the character of objectivity. They assert that the objectivity of the institutional world is a humanly produced objectivity. However, the institutional world acts back on the producer. Internalization occurs when this world is retrojected into the consciousness of the individual in the course of socialization and becomes subjectively meaningful. In other words, the individual and the individual's social world interact with each other. Berger and Luckmann speak of three moments in social reality which must be considered in any study of the social world – externalization, objectivation and internalization. They stress the fact that these three moments characterize an ongoing dialectical process; they are not to be thought of as occurring in a temporal sequence. Society and the individual within society are simultaneously shaped by these three

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