HORRELL DAVID G.

An Introduction to the Study of Paul 2015 London: Bloomsbury

P95

153 - ~~176~~ 180

7

Perspectives on the Pauline Assemblies

Introduction

Since the early 1970s a wide range of new methods and approaches has come into biblical studies, which is now (like many other humanities disciplines) a very diverse and often contested field: what some scholars regard as important and cutting-edge, others regard as faddish. Alongside the traditional focus on historical-critical study of mostly theological themes has come an enormous range of perspectives, from social-scientific and rhetorical to postcolonial and queer. Pauline studies has not always been in the vanguard of such experimental methods, but plenty of these new perspectives have been used to shed new light on Paul's letters and the churches to which they were sent. Some, such as the rhetorical criticism we encountered briefly in Chapter 4, have already been discussed. In this chapter I want to focus in particular on those approaches which have opened up new angles on the communities which Paul addressed. The focus thus shifts somewhat away from the single figure of Paul and his ideas, and onto others who were involved in the Christian movement, and the concrete circumstances of their gatherings. Indeed, one of the explicit motivations for the pioneers of social-scientific criticism of the New Testament was to redress what was seen as an over-emphasis on theological ideas and their interpretation, to the exclusion of the social context within which these ideas were formulated. Taking up both the concerns and the methods of the social sciences led to a rather different set of perspectives, and to a focus less exclusively on Paul and his 'grand' ideas and more on the people who comprised the membership of the Pauline communities. Thus questions

have been asked about the cultural and social world which the early Christians inhabited (see also pp. 4–6 above), about the relationship between the early Christian groups and the wider society within which they were located, about the kinds of people who joined the Christian movement, about the rituals and structures of the earliest congregations, about how power and authority were exercised and legitimated within them, and so on. With such a wide range of questions and issues, and such a diversity of work done, what follows can only be a restricted review of a few of the areas covered in recent studies.

The socio-economic level of the early Christians

One question of obvious sociological interest concerns the kind of people who joined the Pauline churches, specifically their social level, class or status. Broadly speaking, until the 1970s, the consensus was – or was said to be[1] – that the Pauline Christians came from among the poor and lowly of Greco-Roman society. However, following an initial challenge by Edwin Judge, in a book published in 1960,[2] this consensus was widely rejected and largely replaced by what came to be known as the 'New Consensus'. This New Consensus owes a great deal to a study by Gerd Theissen, first published in 1974, in which Theissen examines the evidence concerning the social status of the Pauline Christians in the church at Corinth.[3] Looking both at statements concerning groups within the congregation and at data relating to named individuals among the Corinthian Christians, Theissen concludes that the Corinthian congregation was marked by what he calls 'internal stratification': 'The majority of members, who come from the lower classes, stand in contrast to a few influential members who come from the upper classes'.[4] The individuals named in the Corinthian correspondence, Theissen suggests, probably came from the upper class – a conclusion Theissen draws from evidence pointing to their owning of houses, the offices they held and their ability to travel and to provide support for others.

Theissen's work was taken up and further developed by Wayne Meeks, in his wide-ranging and influential book *The First Urban Christians*.[5] Looking at the evidence for the Pauline movement as a whole, Meeks confirms Theissen's picture of the Pauline congregations as containing a wide mix of social levels, with only the very top and bottom levels missing. While subsequent work has modified Theissen's and Meeks' work in various respects, the general picture of social diversity within the Pauline congregations has been very widely accepted.

However, a book published in 1998 by Justin Meggitt presents a sharp challenge to this so-called New Consensus.[6] Meggitt argues that the available evidence is not sufficient to substantiate Theissen's and Meeks' arguments; he claims that the Pauline Christians, Paul included, did in fact come from among the poor, the non-elite, of Roman society – the 99 per cent of the population who, Meggitt maintains, lived close to subsistence level. The question of the social and economic level of the Pauline Christians was thus once again opened up to debate.[7] A 2004 article by Steven Friesen, for example, develops a position somewhat akin to Meggitt's, but attempts to nuance and refine the approach by building a 'poverty scale' for various economic groups in the Roman Empire and allocating the Christians mentioned in Paul's letters to different groups.[8] They are all 'poor' – here Friesen basically agrees with Meggitt – but while some lived around or below subsistence level, a few had at least some surplus resources.

An informed judgement on this question requires of course a clear understanding, as far as such is possible, of the social and economic structure of the Roman Empire itself. It also depends on the interpretation of evidence from the Pauline epistles, and on the possible correlations between this evidence and that available from inscriptions and other literary and archaeological data. For example, there is the question as to whether the Erastus Paul mentions in Romans 16.23 can be identified with the Erastus named on an inscription found in excavations at Corinth – in which case Paul's Erastus would be wealthy

and of high social standing. There is also the question as to what is implied by Paul's words near the opening of 1 Corinthians: 'Consider your own call, brothers and sisters: not many of you were wise by human standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth' (1 Cor 1.26).

Does the indication that there were a few ('not many') wise, powerful and well-born members of the Corinthian community imply that this minority were of high social status, as Theissen and Meeks conclude? Or is Meggitt right to argue that the verse really gives very little concrete information about their precise socio-economic standing? Indeed, does the limited data in the Pauline epistles enable us to say much at all about the precise economic level of the early Christians? Similar debate surrounds the interpretation of the conflict over the Lord's Supper, which Theissen argues represents a conflict between rich and poor members of the congregation.[9] Again Meggitt offers a different interpretation: that 'those who have nothing' at the Lord's Supper (1 Cor 11.22) are not the poor, but simply those who do not receive the bread and wine of the Eucharist.[10] The whole discussion is significant not only in terms of the perspective it suggests on the composition and character of the earliest Christian groups but also with regard to the implications for understanding early Christian ethics and practice: Were the groups socially diverse, with relatively wealthy patrons opening their homes and providing meals for the poorer members? Or were they essentially groups of the poor, who offered one another forms of mutual support? It seems in my view unlikely that there were members of the wealthy elite among the earliest Christian congregations; but there was most likely some degree of socio-economic diversity encompassed within these communities. Moreover, as Peter Oakes has shown, through the use of historically-informed imagination, our sense of where the early Christians were located in terms of socio-economic status, occupation and accommodation can help us to see what Paul's letters may have meant to such people, when they were heard 'on the ground'.[11]

The character and location of the Pauline assemblies

Social-scientific interpretation has attempted to bring to the centre of attention realities all too often forgotten in the quest to understand Paul's theology: that Paul's letters are addressed to groups of ordinary people who met together, mostly in their homes and workplaces, and shared a common identity as brothers and sisters 'in Christ'. How then were membership, identity and community boundaries indicated? What kind of groups were the Pauline congregations? (As an aside, we should also beware the label 'Pauline' congregations – or churches, or assemblies – since this, while useful as a shorthand, can too easily give the impression that there were distinctly 'Pauline' groups which related only or primarily to Paul, when the New Testament evidence suggests otherwise.)[12] Investigating such questions from a social-scientific perspective involves, for example, studying the 'sacraments' of baptism and Lord's Supper as 'rituals', socially-significant acts which serve to initiate and confirm people in their membership of a group. Meeks, for example, has outlined the ways in which baptism works as a 'ritual of initiation', symbolizing and enacting the believer's separation from the former world of their existence and their integration into a new one. Similarly, Meeks shows how the Lord's Supper serves not only as a dramatized reminder of the story which is central to the faith of the Christian community but also as a 'ritual of solidarity', binding the members of the community together as one body in Christ (1 Cor 10.16–17).[13] But what kind of community was formed by these converts to Christ?

Some valuable information may be gained by comparing the Pauline assemblies with the various other kinds of groups and associations contemporary with them: Meeks examines the household, the voluntary association or club, the synagogue and the philosophical or rhetorical 'school', arguing that each of these four models bears some analogy with a Pauline *ekklēsia* (assembly) but that none fits it exactly.[14] Subsequent work has explored these ancient analogies further, especially focused on ancient associations, which were of diverse kinds.[15] Some associations, for example, were based around particular trades or

occupations, such as bakers, coppersmiths or merchants. Others were more ethnic or religious in their composition and character. Philip Harland has argued that Jewish and Christian groups would have looked essentially like associations, and that we should study them among the various associations of antiquity.[16]

The importance of the household as a context for early Christian groups and meetings is also clear: a number of what are most likely household groups are referred to in Paul's letters (e.g., Rom 16.10–15; 1 Cor 16.15) and he also speaks of 'the church/assembly that meets in so-and-so's house' (Rom 16.5; 1 Cor 16.19; Col 4.15; Phlmn 2).[17] Among the leading figures in the early Christian communities the heads of households probably played a significant part. Scholars have long presumed that houses almost exclusively formed the earliest Christian meeting places, and have tended to focus in particular on Roman villas or *domus*-style houses as the likely setting for such meetings. However, more recent work has challenged this focus in various ways. One challenge has been to broaden the kinds of domestic space that are considered, and in particular to consider the kinds of accommodation that would more likely have been occupied by people who were not from the rich or elite groups in society (see above, on their likely socio-economic level).[18] A second challenge, by Edward Adams, has been even more radical, questioning the consensus that Christians almost always met in houses and exploring the evidence for a wide range of alternative settings where meetings may have been held: in workshops, warehouses, rented dining rooms, gardens and other outdoor spaces.[19]

Further insight into the character of the Pauline churches may also be gained from comparing them with religious groups in other times and places, particularly those labelled by sociologists as 'sects'. Indeed, since its first detailed application to the New Testament in 1975, by Robin Scroggs, the model of the New Testament Church as a 'sectarian' movement has been widely employed.[20] By employing this model, scholars have been able to understand some of the features of early Christianity as characteristics typical of such sectarian

movements, like the stark distinctions drawn between insiders and outsiders (see, e.g., 1 Thess 5.5), the intensity of fellowship and love, the egalitarianism and lack of organized hierarchy, and so on. Nevertheless, criticisms have been raised concerning the use of the sect model as a means of understanding the early Christian churches: Does the model distort the evidence and squeeze it into the mould of a modern sociological category? Cross-cultural and cross-disciplinary comparisons can be highly illuminating, but there are always critical questions to be asked about the particular way in which such comparisons shape our perspective on the ancient evidence.

So what does the evidence from Paul's letters themselves reveal about the character of the Pauline assemblies, and specifically about Paul's attempts to shape that character? There is certainly some evidence to suggest that the Pauline churches were communities in which established distinctions between Jews and Gentiles, slaves and free persons, men and women, were transcended through the adoption of a new unity and identity in Christ, communities where all could participate fully according to whatever gift the Spirit gave them (Gal 3.28 – see further below). But it also seems clear that life in the churches fell short of the ideal vision, expressed in baptism and the Lord's Supper, that many different people had become one body in Christ. At Corinth, for example, the believers were divided in their loyalties to different missionary figures (1 Cor 1.10–17); they took one another to court to settle what Paul regards as petty differences (1 Cor 6.1–11); and the Lord's Supper had become an occasion for division and social distinction (1 Cor 11.17–34). Further examples of tension and division in the early churches, and of Paul's attempts to address and resolve those situations, could easily be listed (see, e.g., Gal 2.11–21; Rom 14.1–15.13). It is also clear that, whatever the equality supposed to exist between all Christians, some people held positions of power and authority, not least Paul himself, who claims his apostolic calling by God as the basis for his position of leadership (cf. 2 Cor 10.8ff; Gal 1.1 etc.; see below).

Leadership in the Pauline communities

In the preceding sections the subject of power and authority has already cropped up from time to time, and a social-scientific investigation into the character of the Pauline churches can hardly avoid it. New Testament scholars have long noted the apparent lack of formal Church offices in the communities to which Paul wrote, combined with Paul's emphasis on the Spirit's gifts of prophecy, teaching, and so on, which seem to be viewed as distributed to individual persons without regard for any established position or office they might or might not hold (1 Cor 12–14). Also well documented is the emergence of a somewhat more formal structure of named leadership positions (bishops, presbyters/elders, deacons) in the Pastoral Epistles, which most scholars believe to have been written some decades after Paul's death (see below, pp. 191–94). The change has often been expressed in terms of a development (or even a 'decline') from Spirit-led freedom to ecclesiastical order and law.

Studies employing social-scientific resources have looked afresh at the evidence and suggested new ways of interpreting it. Bengt Holmberg, for example, surveys the evidence in the Pauline epistles relating to the structures of power and authority in the earliest churches, and then interprets this evidence using categories derived from Max Weber's sociology of authority.[21] Holmberg sees that there are relationships of power and authority at work at various levels, right from the very earliest years of Christianity: in Paul's relationships with the leaders in Jerusalem, in Paul's leadership over his own congregations and within those congregations themselves. There is a circle of apostolic leaders, among whom Paul certainly claims that he belongs, and a wide group of co-missionaries and workers who also travel to visit various churches. Within the congregations themselves there are evidently people with some local leadership responsibility, though the precise nature of their role and authority is not specified in Paul's letters (see, e.g., Gal 6.6; 1 Thess 5.12). Adopting Weber's terminology, it may be suggested that this stage in the development of Christian leadership patterns represents a time when authority is still essentially 'charismatic'[22] – that is, based

on people's acknowledgment of the extraordinary qualities of particular individuals – but is already in the process of being 'routinized' and institutionalized. As Margaret MacDonald has shown, this process of institutionalization continues through the decades after Paul's death, and the establishment of more formal leadership offices is a part of this sociological process, spurred on not least by the death of the first generation of apostles, especially Peter, James and Paul. In this process, it may be suggested, the early Christian 'sect' becomes gradually more like a 'church'.[23]

Questions may remain about whether this framework of interpretation is convincing and whether to some extent it merely labels with new terminology what was already known, though expressed in different language, in previous studies. At the very least, it seems to me, social-scientific studies have helped to bring to our attention some of the ways in which power and authority were operative even in the loosely structured period of Paul's activity as apostle, even if the rhetoric of Paul's letters sometimes implies that authority is attributed only to God, working through the Spirit. A social-scientific perspective helps to make clear that there is generally a connection between speaking of God's authority and a human being's claim to power. Paul, for example, insists both that *God* has appointed apostles at the top of the Church's hierarchy, and, of course, that God has appointed *him* as an apostle, and thereby given him authority (1 Cor 12.28; cf. 1 Cor 9.1–2; 2 Cor 10.8).

Women in the Pauline assemblies

As we saw in the opening chapter of this book, modern-day debate about the position of women in society and in the Church has led to vigorous investigation of Paul's views on such matters. Questions have been asked both about the participation of women in the Pauline movement and about Paul's attitudes to women, his teaching concerning their place in marriage, worship and leadership. And contrary to a popular perception that Paul was quite plainly a male chauvinist, a good

deal of this work has argued that Paul himself (leaving aside the letters whose authenticity is doubted – see Chapter 8) was rather more in favour of women's liberation and equality than is often supposed. Although the women's movement has been a major stimulus for such work, studies have been conducted not only by feminist writers, but by scholars from a wide range of persuasions and perspectives. Even when commitments are not openly declared, and even when the aim is explicitly a balanced and 'objective' investigation of the evidence, it is not hard to see that contemporary convictions often underpin the work on the Pauline letters – convictions for or against women's ordination, or equality in marriage, employment or whatever.

Feminist scholars do make their commitments clear. The perspective from which they interpret the Pauline evidence is one committed to the critique of male domination and women's exploitation and the promotion of liberation and equality. The best known and ground-breaking feminist study of early Christianity is Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza's book *In Memory of Her*, first published in 1983 and reprinted with a new introduction in 1995.[24] Although this book first appeared over thirty years ago, it remains an influential and agenda-setting work, which it is important to consider.

For some scholars, such an overtly committed stance – an explicitly feminist hermeneutic – runs the risk of distorting the evidence, of constructing a picture which is a reflection of its own values. Fiorenza responds, however, by insisting that all history writing is reconstruction, reflecting the values and commitments of the historian, and that those who claim objectivity for their work merely conceal their own position of commitment.[25] Certainly her book challenges its readers not only with a distinctive presentation of the historical evidence but also with its overt commitment to a particular contemporary vision of social and political liberation for women, and as such it has influenced a wide range of gender-critical and politically engaged approaches to Paul.[26]

Fiorenza spends the opening chapters of her book outlining and justifying her feminist interpretative perspective. Her aim is to reconstruct a history of early Christianity in which women's contribution and their struggles for equality against patriarchal domination are recovered from texts written largely from a male perspective and in which women are often silenced and excluded (sometimes implicitly, e.g., through the use of masculine language to denote the whole community). As she makes clear there are two levels of androcentrism ('male-centredness') to be exposed by the feminist critic. There is firstly that of the texts themselves, which were generally written by men (like Paul!); and secondly that of the traditions of those texts' interpretation, developed by male-biased commentators and translators over the years and through which the texts may come to be seen as more patriarchal than they really are.

Two good examples of this second level of androcentrism are found in translations of specific verses in Paul's letters. In Romans 16.7 Paul refers to two people as 'outstanding among the apostles' – which seems most likely to mean that they are regarded as part of the group of apostles. Their names are given in Paul's Greek text as *Andronikon* and *Iounian*. Since the nineteenth century, these names have often been translated as the names of two men (e.g. 'Andronicus and Junias', RSV), although it is much more likely that the latter name is that of a woman and should be rendered 'Junia', as in most older translations.[27] Not least because of Fiorenza's work, this is now widely accepted (cf. NRSV). For Christians for whom the Bible is an important source of authority and guidance, this is highly significant with regard to modern questions about women's ordination and access to positions of leadership and authority within the Church.

A second example concerns the translation and interpretation of 1 Cor 11.10. There, in a difficult and puzzling passage to which we shall return, Paul writes that a woman should have 'authority [Greek: *exousia*] on her head, because of the angels'. Because of their overall decisions (and assumptions?) about what the whole passage means, translators have often rendered this as implying that the woman is *under* authority. For example, the New Jerusalem Bible translation states that a woman should 'wear on her head a sign of the authority over her'. The Good News Bible

has: 'a woman should have a covering over her head to show that she is under her husband's authority'. But this is an extremely unnatural way to interpret the Greek, which suggests that Paul is talking about the *woman's* authority and not someone else's authority over her. The comments of the scholars Archibald Robertson and Alfred Plummer, writing in 1914, are revealing in this regard. Robertson and Plummer are clear about what the apostle means, but puzzled as to what he actually writes: 'Why does St Paul say "authority" when he means "subjection"?', they wonder.[28] Once again, in recent scholarship it has come to be widely accepted that Paul means what he writes, and is talking in some sense about the woman's own authority, although his precise meaning nonetheless remains obscure; it may well be that Paul sees the woman's head-covering as a symbol of her authority to pray and prophesy in church.[29]

Fiorenza argues that in earliest Christianity, both in the Jesus movement and the early Pauline churches, we can see an attempt to articulate and live a vision of equality, equality in the Spirit, or 'the discipleship of equals', as Fiorenza labels it. This vision may be seen, for example, in the baptismal declaration of Gal 3.28: 'There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus'.

Evidence of the full and active participation of women in the Pauline churches, and of Paul's acceptance of it, can be found in Paul's letters. In Romans 16, for example, a number of women are commended or greeted by Paul, including: Phoebe, a leading figure in the church at Cenchreae (one of Corinth's ports); Prisca and Junia, missionary partners with Aquila and Andronicus respectively; Mary, Tryphena and Tryphosa, all of whom are described as workers for the Lord. Likewise in Phil 4.2–4, two women to whom Paul appeals to settle their differences are described as having struggled in the work of the gospel alongside Paul and the rest of his co-workers.

But while Paul appears warmly to welcome the full participation of women in the work of ministry alongside him, he also seems to introduce some modifications of the baptismal vision of Gal 3.28. In 1 Corinthians in particular he addresses various issues arising concerning

the place of women in marriage and in worship. In 1 Corinthians 7 Paul begins to answer the Corinthians' questions concerning marriage and sexual relations. In outlining the mutual responsibilities which husband and wife owe to one another he consistently implies an equal and parallel status for both partners. The fact that Paul writes *both* parts of verse 4, for example, is particularly striking: 'For the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does; likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does'. It has often been noted that Paul's view of marriage throughout this chapter is somewhat less positive than modern readers might like: it appears (though some would disagree) that Paul regards it as preferable to remain single and views marriage as an outlet for those who cannot control their passions. Fiorenza, however, highlights the positive possibilities for women implied by Paul's encouragement to remain unmarried, an encouragement which went strongly against the customs and imperial decrees of the time, when marriage and child-bearing was very much the approved norm. According to Fiorenza, 'Paul's advice to remain free from the marriage bond was a frontal assault on the intentions of existing law and the general cultural ethos'. Paul 'thus offered a possibility for "ordinary" women to become independent'.[30]

In 1 Cor 11.2–16, Paul turns to address his concerns about the proper conduct of the Corinthians in their communal worship. This whole passage is notoriously difficult to interpret. (However, the argument, occasionally proposed, that it was added later to the text of 1 Corinthians has too little evidence to substantiate it with any degree of plausibility.) Paul is clearly concerned that in worship meetings women should only pray and prophesy with their heads covered and that men should only do so with their heads uncovered (11.4–5, 13). In order to support this exhortation, Paul seems to present a created 'order' in which man has priority over woman:

> Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of woman,[31] and God is the head of Christ (v. 3) . . . A man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God; but the woman is the glory of man. For man did not come from woman,

> but woman from man (cf. Gen 2.21–23); and man was not created because of woman, but woman because of man.
>
> (vv. 7–9, DGH; cf. Gen 2.18)

But, as if to correct any impression that he is thereby seeking to subordinate women to men, Paul then insists:

> Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man or man independent of woman. For just as woman came from man, so man comes through woman; but all things come from God.
>
> (vv. 11–12)

Many of the words and phrases in this passage have been discussed and debated at length, especially the meaning of the word 'head', which Paul uses in verse 3. Does it imply a relationship of authority, or rather one of source (man being the source of woman in the creation account: Gen 2.21–23)? Also much debated is Paul's underlying intention here. Is he primarily concerned, as many commentators have suggested, to ensure that the created *differences* between men and women are retained and reflected in the congregational gatherings? Or is he, as Fiorenza argues, mainly concerned with decency and order in the congregation, to avoid the possibility that it might appear like one of the cults which gathered in Corinth?[32] Whatever his intentions, a major question, of course, concerns the extent to which Paul has here introduced a hierarchical distinction between the sexes, undergirded with theological and scriptural arguments, into early Christianity.

One final passage in 1 Corinthians is also of relevance to this topic: 1 Cor 14.34–35. Here Paul instructs women to be silent during meetings of the church; if they have any questions they should ask their husbands at home. Once again there has been much discussion of these few verses and their meaning. Many scholars have argued, on the basis of textual and contextual evidence, that they have been added later to the text of 1 Corinthians and are not authentically Paul's.[33] Those who accept them as authentic have to find some way of explaining the apparent tension with 1 Cor 11.2–16, where it is clearly assumed that women have the right to pray and prophesy in church. Fiorenza's suggestion is that it is

wives in particular whom Paul instructs to be silent, and that the women who may pray and prophesy are the unmarried, whom Paul regards as 'holy in body and spirit' (1 Cor 7.34).[34] Other proposals include the idea that Paul is again concerned with decency and order in the congregation, and seeks to prevent women from disrupting the meeting with questions or conversation. If the verses are authentic (which I personally doubt) then again we have to ask about the extent to which Paul has taken steps to exclude women from participation in the church's worship. Even if there is a local and contextual reason for his instructions (as in 11.2–16) they nevertheless play their part in shaping the developing rules of the Christian community, particularly as they come (somewhat later) to be regarded as scripture.

Whether we should take other evidence into account in determining *Paul's* attitudes to women depends on our decisions on debated questions of authorship (see Chapter 8). If Paul wrote Colossians and/or Ephesians, then we must take account of the so-called 'household codes' (Col 3.18–4.1; Eph 5.21–6.9) where husbands are urged to love their wives and wives to submit to their husbands. And if Paul wrote the Pastoral Epistles, then we must consider the passages there where women are apparently excluded from positions of authority and from teaching in the Church (1 Tim 2.9–15), allowed to teach only other women (Titus 2.3–5), and urged to play their 'proper' role within the household (1 Tim 2.15; 5.14; Titus 2.4–5). Of course, whether Paul wrote these letters or not, they are in the New Testament and so have to be taken into account by those who accept some sense of the Bible's authority for the Church. Taking them into account, however, does not necessarily mean believing that their teaching needs to be seen as a legitimate and abiding expression of the gospel. Moreover, scholars take various positions as to the degree to which these various passages do subordinate women to an inferior and secondary position in church and society. Some stress the particular and contextual reasons why the instructions were given in that specific time and place, thus implying that they need not be taken as universal and binding Christian injunctions. Others maintain that these texts do give strong backing to

the opinion that the Church's ministry should be male and that the man should be the head of the household.

Fiorenza adopts the common (though by no means universally held) position that Colossians, Ephesians and the Pastoral Epistles were written after Paul's death, the Pastoral Epistles some time later than Colossians and Ephesians. For Fiorenza, these epistles reveal the increasing 'patriarchalization' within the Pauline churches, the gradual assertion of male dominance and the marginalization of women, though there continues to be an ongoing struggle between patriarchy and those who keep alive the vision of the discipleship of equals. In these post-Pauline letters there is a clear attempt to exclude women from ministry and authority, and to confine them to a subordinate role within both household and church.

What then should be our assessment of the evidence concerning the participation of women in the earliest Christian movement and Paul's attitudes to that participation? Scholarship has by no means provided a unanimous answer to that question, and even those who share a similar contemporary commitment (e.g., to feminism, or to evangelical Christianity) do not necessarily agree as to how to assess Paul. For some he is a voice for equality and liberation, for others a voice of male domination and women's oppression. This kind of stark polarity of extreme alternatives is, however, one that should probably be deconstructed, as Carolyn Osiek and Margaret MacDonald argue.[35] It seems clear enough that women played a significant role in the earliest Christian movement and that women occupied roles of significance and leadership, working along with men as missionaries, apostles and providers of various kinds of support. It seems clear that Paul regarded this as entirely acceptable, as is indicated by the various greetings and commendations he offers in his letters to named women as well as men. Yet it is also clear that Paul felt some need, particularly at Corinth, to regulate (and in some ways restrict) the participation of women in the Christian assemblies. Indeed, Osiek and MacDonald suggest that the 'greater social freedom for women' evidenced to some degree in the NT writings was a broader trend in Roman society at the time, and not a

radically distinctive contribution of earliest Christianity.[36] There is also good reason to be suspicious of perspectives that depict a kind of radical 'feminist' Paul liberating women from a patriarchal Judaism. As in many other aspects of Pauline studies, that can too easily represent an assumption of Christian superiority more than historical evidence. Perhaps Fiorenza is right to stress that any assessment of Paul in this regard must accept the ambivalent legacy which his letters represent; otherwise he may be somewhat one-sidedly claimed either as 'chauvinist', or as 'feminist' and 'liberationist'. Fiorenza's own conclusions on Paul are worth quoting:

> Paul's impact on women's leadership in the Christian missionary movement is double-edged. On the one hand he affirms Christian equality and freedom. He opens up a new independent lifestyle for women by encouraging them to remain free of the bondage of marriage. On the other hand, he subordinates women's behaviour in marriage and in the worship assembly to the interests of Christian mission, and restricts their rights not only as 'pneumatics' but also as 'women' . . . The post-Pauline and pseudo-Pauline tradition will draw out these restrictions in order to change the equality in Christ between women and men, slaves and free, into a relationship of subordination in the household which, on the one hand, eliminates women from the leadership of worship and community and, on the other, restricts their ministry to women.[37]

Paul and the Roman Empire

Until relatively recently, the subject of Paul's relationship to the Roman Empire was somewhat neglected, especially compared with the dominant (and important) topic of Paul's relationship to Judaism (see Chapter 6). Much earlier in the twentieth century, however, scholars like Adolf Deissmann had insisted on the importance of the imperial context of the New Testament, but this interest rather dwindled as

the century went on. According to Deissmann, unless we imagine that 'St. Paul and his fellow believers went through the world blindfolded' we must consider how the terms and images that confronted them every day formed the conscious backdrop against which the Christian message was formulated: 'the New Testament is a book of the Imperial age'.[38] Indeed, Deissmann proposed, Christian claims about Christ were expressed using terms also familiar from their application to the deified emperors or from the context of emperor worship: 'Thus there arises a polemical parallelism between the cult of the emperor and the cult of Christ'.[39]

Recent years, however, have seen a renewed interest in the subject of Christianity and the Roman Empire, and more specifically the New Testament and the imperial cult. The 'cult of the emperor', or the 'imperial cult', describes the wide variety of practices and customs whereby the emperor was the recipient of prayer, devotion and cultic worship. Indeed, the variety of practices means, as some have suggested, that it is probably better to speak of 'imperial cults' in the plural.[40] Ancient historians have come to emphasize the importance of this phenomenon in the Empire of Paul's time, thus encouraging a reconsideration of its significance for Paul and the early Christians.[41] In addition, just as contemporary factors (such as the post-Holocaust reassessment of the relations between Christianity and Judaism) help to explain the intense interest in Paul's view of Judaism, so here too there are contemporary social factors that help to explain the renewed interest in Paul's stance towards the Roman Empire, not least a growing and often critical awareness of the globalized operations of what may be seen as a modern equivalent of empire.[42]

Of particular interest and influence is the work of the 'Paul and Politics' group at the annual meetings of the US-based Society of Biblical Literature, published in a series of volumes edited by Richard Horsley. Paul's political stance is often assumed to be rather conservative and conformist, with Romans 13.1–7 and its call to submit to the governing authorities the most influential text. Here Paul seems to urge Christians to quiet submission to the state, and regards the imperial

authorities positively as instruments of God's justice in the world. A different perspective, however, is presented in the work of Horsley and his colleagues, notably in the 1997 collection entitled *Paul and Empire*.[43] Here and in subsequent works Horsley and others have sought to show how we should understand Paul as engaged in a thoroughly political task, one which showed his 'adamant opposition to Roman imperial society': he was building exclusive communities 'of a new society, alternative to the dominant imperial society'.[44] Paul, for example, urged the Corinthian converts to avoid eating meat sacrificed to idols (1 Cor 8–10) and in doing so pressed them to withdraw from 'participation in the fundamental forms of social relations in the dominant society'. And their household-based assemblies were to be independent communities in which patterns of solidarity and economic exchange were 'diametrically opposed' to those of the wider political society.[45] Paul's critical perspective on the Roman Empire may be conveyed in 1 Thess 5.3: 'When they say "There is peace and security", then sudden destruction will come upon them . . . and there will be no escape!' Here Paul seems to be deliberately echoing the established way of talking about the achievements of the Empire, the *pax Romana* (the 'Roman peace'), and announcing that the destruction of this supposedly eternal empire will come soon.

Particular significance has also been found in the ways Paul talks about Christ. As we have seen above (pp. 83–92), Paul's Christology has been much discussed, particularly in terms of its relation to Jewish monotheism and its possible elevation of Christ to divine status. But recent interest in the imperial cults has drawn attention to the parallels – recognized long ago by Deissmann – between Paul's depictions of Christ's identity and those of the Roman emperors. For example, Augustus (the first Roman emperor, 31 BCE–14 CE) was acclaimed as the 'saviour' who had brought good news by his establishment of peace. He and other emperors were addressed as 'lord' (Latin: *dominus*, Greek: *kurios*) and acclaimed as 'son of god' (Latin: *divi filius*, Greek: *huios theou*). Seen against this backdrop, Paul's declaration that Jesus is the saviour (Phil 3.20), the exalted Lord,

and the one to whom every knee shall bow (Phil 2.9–11) may be seen to have a polemical and political force.[46] This may also help to explain why the early Christians, Paul included, were not infrequently regarded as dangerous political rebels, proclaiming 'another king' but Caesar (Acts 17.7).

However, reading Paul as adamantly and intentionally anti-imperial has not gone unchallenged. For example, Karl Galinsky, an ancient historian, warns about the ways in which historical analysis may be skewed by contemporary political and religious convictions, and stresses that the imperial cult(s) were a flexible and diverse set of phenomena that cannot be isolated from the worship of other gods in Roman religion.[47] Seyoon Kim and John Barclay, in rather different ways, have questioned whether Paul's stance should really be seen as anti-imperial in the manner claimed by Horsley and others. Barclay – criticizing N.T. Wright in particular – points out the lack of explicit reference in Paul's letters to the emperor and the cultic activity focused on him, and suggests that Paul is 'subversive', not in consciously and polemically juxtaposing Christ and Caesar but rather in simply leaving the Empire and the Emperor 'off the stage', treating them as insignificant in the wider drama of God's battle against evil and plan of salvation: 'Paul's theology is political precisely in rendering the Roman empire theologically insignificant'.[48] It is certainly the case, it seems to me, that we need carefully nuanced and historically detailed analyses of the ways in which the early Christians responded to the Roman Empire, analyses that are not too heavily shaped either by convictions that value Christianity positively and thus depict the Empire as a contrast in solely negative terms, or by contemporary political convictions about the negative impact of (e.g.) American imperialism. Nonetheless, I think it clear that Horsley and others have brought an important dimension back to studies of Paul, namely the focus on the most significant 'given' in Paul's social and historical context: the domination of Rome. What that domination meant in practice and how it impinged on the earliest Christians needs to be carefully explored, and should certainly not be ignored.

Conclusion

This chapter has outlined some of the areas of contemporary Pauline studies where the focus is not so much on the theological ideas which Paul expressed but on various aspects of the socio-political context and social realities of the earliest Christian communities. Whether we focus on meeting places and ancient associations, on leadership structures and socio-economic composition, on the participation of women or on the imperial context, these issues take us beyond the figure of Paul and into the broader social and political world in which Paul operated. The topics surveyed here generally entail some direct engagement with material and literary evidence from the Roman world (e.g., on types of housing or the imperial cults), but scholarly treatments of them often draw also on various contemporary theoretical and interpretative perspectives (e.g., social-scientific theory or feminist criticism). One thing this chapter should make clear – not least when juxtaposed with Chapters 5 and 6 – is the diversity of contemporary Pauline studies, in which different scholars focus on very different themes and approaches. While some may regard the approaches outlined in this chapter as relatively marginal and unimportant to the key issues in the study of Paul, others may feel that the questions raised by such methods are of greater relevance to the world in which we now live than debates over, say, the meaning of the word 'righteousness' in Paul's letters.[49]

The approaches surveyed in this chapter, albeit very selectively, offer methods by which we may gain greater insight into the everyday worlds the early Christians inhabited, rooting the study of their theology in its concrete social context. Such socially-orientated questions, especially when informed by critical theory, also help to focus attention on the questions without which theology can be naive and unself-critical: How does Paul's teaching shape social relationships among members of the churches? How is power in the churches distributed and in whose interests is it used? How are women regarded and treated? What stance did Paul and the early Christian groups take towards the Roman Empire?

Depending on your own commitments and beliefs, you may or may not find such perspectives and questions congenial and engaging. What is important, in my opinion, is an openness to listen (or rather, to read!) with a desire to understand the arguments, to appreciate the issues raised and perhaps to change one's point of view. Just as an openness to learn and perhaps to change is important in our attempts to listen to Paul's letters themselves, so it is important too in listening to the different voices of those who interpret Paul, whatever their perspective and however different it may be from our own.

Further reading

The best places to begin further study of Paul and his churches from a social-scientific perspective are the classic treatments by W.A. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians* (London and New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983) and G. Theissen, *The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1982). Meeks' book in particular gives a wide-ranging and engaging presentation of the Pauline communities. For discussions of developments in this areas since the publication of Meeks' work, see T.D. Still and D.G. Horrell (eds), *After the First Urban Christians: Social-Scientific Study of Pauline Christianity Twenty-Five Years Later* (London & New York: T&T Clark, 2009). See also the works of Malina and Neyrey mentioned in Chapter 1, in the section listing further reading and also in note 4. For examples of the range of social-scientific methods employed, together with an introduction to the discipline and suggestions for further reading, see D.G. Horrell (ed.), *Social-Scientific Approaches to New Testament Interpretation* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999); A. Blasi, J. Duhaime and P.-A. Turcotte (eds), *Handbook of Early Christianity: Social Science Approaches* (Walnut Creek: Alta Mira, 2002). Among the brief introductions to the area are B. Holmberg, *Sociology and the New Testament* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990); D. Tidball, *The Social Context of the New Testament* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1997, first published as *An Introduction to the Sociology of the New Testament* in 1983); J.H. Elliott, *What is Social-Scientific Criticism?* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993).

Along with Fiorenza's classic *In Memory of Her* (London: SCM, 1983, 2nd edn 1995), feminist perspectives on Paul and his letters (as well as on other biblical and extra-biblical texts) can be found in E.S. Fiorenza (ed.), *Searching the Scriptures. Vol. 2: A Feminist Commentary* (London: SCM, 1995) and in L. Schottroff, *Let the Oppressed Go Free: Feminist Perspectives on the New Testament* (Louisville: Westminster/ John Knox, 1993). An initial orientation to feminist perspectives may be found in C.B. Kittredge, 'Feminist Approaches: Rethinking History and Resisting Ideologies', in J.A. Marchal (ed.), *Studying Paul's Letters* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2012), pp. 117–33. A clear and valuable overview of the relevant texts and main interpretative options is provided by T.G. Gombis, *Paul: A Guide for the Perplexed* (London & New York: T&T Clark, 2010), pp. 117–32. Other useful books on the subject of Paul and women include B. Byrne, *Paul and the Christian Woman* (Homebush, NSW: St Paul Publications, 1988); B. Witherington, *Women and the Genesis of Christianity* (Cambridge: CUP, 1990); and C.S. Keener, *Paul, Women and Wives* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1992). An important study exploring the place of women in Roman households and society more generally, as the setting to understand their contribution to the early Christian movement, is C. Osiek and M.Y. MacDonald, with J.H. Tulloch, *A Woman's Place: House Churches in Earliest Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2006).

The best way to begin a study of Paul and the Roman Empire is with R.A. Horsley (ed.) *Paul and Empire* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 1997). For a collection of essays on the imperial cult and the New Testament, see the March 2005 issue of the *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* (volume 27). To develop critical perspectives on the 'Paul and Empire' discussion, see the important collection of essays in J. Brodd and J.L. Reed (eds), *Rome and Religion: A Cross-Disciplinary Dialogue on the Imperial Cult* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011), as well as J.M.G. Barclay, 'Why the Roman Empire Was Insignificant to Paul', in *Pauline Churches and Diaspora Jews*

(Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), pp. 363–87 and S. Kim, *Christ and Caesar: the Gospel and the Roman Empire in the Writings of Paul and Luke* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008). A good example of sophisticated and nuanced appraisal of Paul's engagement with the Roman Empire (though focused primarily on the disputed letters Colossians, Ephesians and the Pastoral Epistles) is H.O. Maier, *Picturing Paul in Empire* (London & New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2013). A very valuable collection of primary materials is available in M. Reasoner, *Roman Imperial Texts: A Sourcebook* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2013).

For a sense of the range of critical approaches in contemporary Pauline studies, see J.A. Marchal, (ed.), *Studying Paul's Letters: Contemporary Perspectives and Methods* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2012). A valuable survey of the wide range of approaches currently practised in biblical studies as a whole can be found in S.L. McKenzie and S.R. Haynes (eds), *To Each Its Own Meaning: An Introduction to Biblical Criticisms and Their Application* (revised and expanded edn., Louisville: Westminster/ John Knox, 1999) and a subsequent volume that explores new methods since 1999, S.L. McKenzie and J. Kaltner (eds), *New Meanings for Ancient Texts: Recent Approaches to Biblical Criticisms and Their Applications* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2013). For the New Testament in particular, see also P. Gooder (ed.), *Searching for Meaning: An Introduction to Interpreting the New Testament* (London: SPCK, 2008).

Questions for further study

- How far can reconstructions of the socioeconomic situation of the recipients of Paul's letters help us to understand those letters better?
- Do you agree with Fiorenza that Paul's 'impact on women's leadership' is 'double-edged' (p. 169 above), in some ways liberating, in other ways suppressing? What is your assessment of the ongoing legacy of Paul's teaching in this regard?
- How far are you convinced by the view that Paul was adamantly opposed to the Roman Empire and to the cult of the emperor? To what extent does an awareness of the imperial context lead us to read Paul's letters differently?

Notes

1 I make this qualification since it has been pointed out that the depiction of an 'old consensus' is not entirely true to what was in fact presented in earlier scholarship on this subject. See, e.g., G. Theissen, 'The Social Structure of Pauline Communities: Some Critical Remarks on J.J. Meggitt, *Paul, Poverty and Survival*', *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 84 (2001), p. 66.

2 E.A. Judge, *The Social Pattern of Christian Groups in the First Century* (London: Tyndale, 1960), pp. 49–61.

3 G. Theissen, 'Social Stratification in the Corinthian Community', in *The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1982), pp. 69–119.

4 Theissen, *The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity*, p. 69.

5 W.A. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians* (London and New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983).

6 J.J. Meggitt, *Paul, Poverty and Survival* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998).

7 For responses to Meggitt's book, see Theissen, 'The Social Structure of Pauline Communities'; G. Theissen, 'Social Conflicts in the Corinthian Community: Further Remarks on J.J. Meggitt, *Paul, Poverty and Survival*', *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 25 (2003), pp. 371–91; D.B. Martin, 'Review Essay: Justin J. Meggitt, *Paul, Poverty and Survival*', *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 84 (2001), pp. 51–64; J.J. Meggitt, 'Response to Martin and Theissen', *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 84 (2001), pp. 85–94.

8 S.J. Friesen, 'Poverty in Pauline Studies: Beyond the So-Called New Consensus', *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 26 (2004), pp. 323–61 (a discussion article with responses by John Barclay and Peter Oakes). Friesen's approach is further discussed and amended in B.W. Longenecker, *Remember the Poor* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), pp. 36–59.

9 Theissen, *The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity*, pp. 145–74.

10 Meggitt, *Paul, Poverty and Survival*, pp. 118–22, 189–93.

11 See P. Oakes, *Reading Romans in Pompeii* (London/Minneapolis: SPCK/ Fortress, 2009).

12 See further D.G. Horrell, 'Pauline Churches or Early Christian Churches? Unity, Disagreement, and the Eucharist', in A. Alexeev *et al.*, *Einheit der Kirche im Neuen Testament* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), pp. 185–203.

13 See Meeks, *The First Urban Christians*, pp. 150–62.

14 Meeks, *The First Urban Christians*, pp. 75–84. See further R. Ascough, *What Are They Saying About the Formation of the Pauline Churches?* (New York: Paulist, 1998).

15 For an overview, see E. Adams, 'First-Century Models for Paul's Churches: Selected Scholarly Developments since Meeks', in T.D. Still and D.G. Horrell (eds), *After the First Urban Christians* (New York & London: T&T Clark, 2009), pp. 60–78.

16 P.A. Harland, *Dynamics of Identity in the World of the Early Christians* (London & New York: T&T Clark, 2009).

17 For more on this, see, e.g., R. Gehring, *House Church and Mission* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2004); C. Osiek and M.Y. MacDonald, with J.H. Tulloch, *A Woman's Place: House Churches in Earliest Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2006).

18 See, e.g., Oakes, *Reading Romans*; D.G. Horrell, 'Domestic Space and Christian Meetings at Corinth: Imagining New Contexts and the Buildings East of the Theatre', *New Testament Studies* 50 (2004), pp. 349–69.

19 E. Adams, *The Earliest Christian Meeting Places: Almost Exclusively Houses?* (London & New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2013).

20 R. Scroggs, 'Earliest Christianity as Sectarian Movement', in J. Neusner (ed.), *Christianity, Judaism and Other Greco-Roman Cults: Studies for Morton Smith at Sixty. Part Two: Early Christianity* (Leiden: Brill, 1975), pp. 1–23; reprinted in D.G. Horrell (ed.), *Social-Scientific Approaches to New Testament Interpretation* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999), pp. 69–91.

21 B. Holmberg, *Paul and Power* (Lund: CWK Gleerup, 1978; reprinted Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980).

22 We should note that Weber intends this category as a general sociological type, and not specifically as a description of the Spirit-gifted leadership which Paul describes.

23 M.Y. MacDonald, *The Pauline Churches: A Socio-Historical Study of Institutionalization in the Pauline and Deutero-Pauline Epistles* (Cambridge: CUP, 1988).

24 E.S. Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (London: SCM, 1983; 2nd edn 1995).

25 See the introduction to the second edition of *In Memory of Her*, esp. pp. xxii–xxix.

26 For a recent survey of such approaches, see J.A. Marchal (ed.), *Studying Paul's Letters: Contemporary Perspectives and Methods* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2012).

27 On this, see the detailed study by E.J. Epp, *Junia: the First Woman Apostle* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005).

28 A. Robertson and A. Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians* (2nd edn, Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1914), p. 232.

29 Of some influence here is the article by M.D. Hooker, 'Authority on Her Head: An Examination of 1 Cor. XI. 10', *New Testament Studies* 10 (1964), pp. 410–16, reprinted in *From Adam to Christ: Essays on Paul* (Cambridge: CUP, 1990), pp. 113–20.

30 Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, pp. 225–26.

31 The Greek words *anēr* and *gunē* can mean man or husband and woman or wife respectively. The NRSV translates them in this phrase as husband and wife, but I am not convinced that this more restricted meaning is implied by Paul here.

32 See Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, pp. 227–30.

33 For an argument to this effect, see D.G. Horrell, *The Social Ethos of the Corinthian Correspondence* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), pp. 184–95.

34 Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, pp. 230–33.

35 Osiek and MacDonald, *A Woman's Place*, pp. 1–3.

36 Osiek and MacDonald, *A Woman's Place*, p. 2. For example, they discuss in detail the evidence for the extent of women's authority and autonomy in the household (pp. 144–57) as the backdrop for the evidence for women leading early Christian house-groups (pp. 157–63).

37 Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, p. 236; see also p. 241 note 99.

38 G.A. Deissmann, *Light from the Ancient East* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1910), p. 344.

39 Deissmann, *Light*, p. 346.

40 See, e.g., S.J. Friesen, 'Normal Religion, or, Words Fail Us: A Response to Karl Galinksy's "The Cult of the Roman Emperor: Uniter or Divider?"', in J. Brodd and J.L. Reed (eds), *Rome and Religion: A Cross-Disciplinary*

Dialogue on the Imperial Cult (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011), p. 24.

41 Particularly influential is the work of S.R.F. Price, *Rituals and Power: The Roman Imperial Cult in Asia Minor* (Cambridge: CUP, 1984).

42 See, e.g., R.A. Horsley, *Jesus and Empire* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002), esp. pp. 137–49.

43 R.A. Horsley (ed.) *Paul and Empire* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 1997). See also R.A. Horsley (ed.), *Paul and Politics* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 2000); R.A. Horsley (ed.), *Paul and the Roman Imperial Order* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 2004).

44 See Horsley, '1 Corinthians: A Case Study of Paul's Assembly as an Alternative Society', in *Paul and Empire*, pp. 242, 244.

45 Horsley, '1 Corinthians', pp. 247, 251.

46 See e.g. N.T. Wright, 'Paul's Gospel and Caesar's Empire', in Horsley (ed.), *Paul and Politics*, pp. 160–83.

47 See K. Galinsky, 'The Cult of the Roman Emperor: Uniter or Divider?' and 'In the Shadow (or Not) of the Imperial Cult: A Cooperative Agenda', in J. Brodd and J.L. Reed (eds), *Rome and Religion: A Cross-Disciplinary Dialogue on the Imperial Cult* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011), pp. 1–21 and 215–25.

48 J.M.G. Barclay, 'Why the Roman Empire Was Insignificant to Paul', in *Pauline Churches and Diaspora Jews* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), p. 387. See also S. Kim, *Christ and Caesar: The Gospel and the Roman Empire in the Writings of Paul and Luke* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008).

49 A good sense of the contrasting priorities and perspectives may be gained by comparing two recent edited handbooks: Westerholm's focuses heavily on Paul's influence on Christian theology, in figures such as Origen, Augustine, Luther, Calvin and Barth, while Marchal's offers, among others, economic, postcolonial, queer, feminist and African American approaches. See S. Westerholm (ed.), *The Blackwell Companion to Paul* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011); J.A. Marchal, (ed.), *Studying Paul's Letters: Contemporary Perspectives and Methods* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2012).

8

Paul's Legacy in the New Testament and Beyond

Introduction

It is beyond dispute that Paul was a figure significant enough to leave a legacy after his death, unquestionable that his writings continued to have an influence on the ongoing life of the Christian churches. What is rather more open to dispute is where Paul's work ends and his legacy begins. In other words, where does Paul's writing stop and that of his successors commence? There are thirteen letters in the New Testament that explicitly claim to be written by Paul. (In addition, early tradition included the letter to the Hebrews – which nowhere mentions its author's name – among the Pauline letters. But no one today argues that Paul wrote Hebrews.[1]) In the opening chapter of this book, I outlined very briefly the position among scholars: that there are seven letters unanimously accepted as being by Paul himself and six letters which are frequently regarded as pseudo-Pauline, that is, written in Paul's name by someone other than Paul (Colossians, Ephesians, 2 Thessalonians, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus; see pp. 8–9 above). Throughout the book, I have by and large used only the undisputed letters as primary sources of Paul's own views. However, as I made clear in Chapter 1, opinions on the authorship of the other letters vary, with some scholars – especially those of a more conservative evangelical persuasion – arguing that all the epistles attributed to Paul in the New Testament are probably authentic. The weight of scholarly support for the hypothesis of pseudonymity (see p. 8) also varies according to which letter(s) we are discussing: most scholars agree that the Pastoral Epistles (1–2 Tim,