

The Community of the Pastoral Epistles - A Religious Association

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1. Introduction

Many ancient societies and groups bear names that correspond to what modern scholarship defines as private or voluntary associations (*thiasoi, eranoi, collegia* etc.), or may be described as such with a reasonable degree of certainty.¹ The earliest Christian communities / *ekklēsiai* were not designated by any of these typical terms, nonetheless they shared some similarities with such societies. There is no consensus among New Testament scholars on whether the *ekklēsiai* could be regarded as associations. This comparison is often rejected on apologetic grounds, and differences are emphasised to such a degree as to make any assimilation of the Christian *ekklēsiai* to associations impossible.² However, the idea that these communities functioned as religious associations is not really a modern one. Early Christian writers from the second to the fourth century referred

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2. Judge (2005, 501-524) produces an almost caricatural portrait of cultic associations, denying them any real concern with religion, any doctrine, any capacity to transform the community. He questions the religious motivation for joining associations (see his depiction of the association of Sunion [Sokolowski, 53], pp. 506-507). '[N]either correct belief nor good behavior was part of what we choose to call "religion" in antiquity' (Judge 2005, 513). Conversely, Christian churches represent an intellectual and 'socially activist' religion, uninterested in cult properly speaking, identified here with sacrificial cult; 'their fundamentally innovatory remodelling of life puts them at the opposite end of the social scene from the classical cults' (Judge 2005, 514).

to Christian communities in terms of religious associations. They did so partly in a polemical or apologetic context (repeating criticism by non-Christians),³ partly in a natural way of speaking about these communities.⁴ The same language was used by non-Christian authors.⁵

In an often quoted passage, Tertullian applied the features of religious associations to Christian churches,⁶ to argue that they had to be accepted just as the *licitas factiones* were (*Apol.* 38.1), since they posed no threat to the social, political and moral order. Describing the Christian community, he mentioned precisely the features and functions of religious associations (*Apol.* 39): cult (without antisocial features), respect for ethical requirements, charity towards community members, burial of deceased members and a respectable organisation. Tertullian tackled these issues not without a polemical-apologetic edge. He contrasted superior Christian morals with alleged Greco-Roman immorality and opposed the holiness and moderate character of the Christian (eucharistic) meal (*coena nostra*) to the excesses related to conviviality in many associations (the *Salii*, the Hercules-devotees, the Apaturia, Dionysia, the Attic mysteries, the Sarapis-cult).

Although early Christian authors did not regard such comparison to be unconceivable, it was not until the late 19th century that New Testament scholars started to consider the analogy between

3. Origen., *C. Cels.* 1.1 (PG 11, 652A, ANF 4): Celsus accuses Christians of forming secret, illegal associations (*synthekas*, συνθήκας), a charge rejected by Origen (these *synthekai* are directed against the laws of the devil). Celsus assimilates Christians to members of foreign, ecstatic, superstitious or secretive cults (the Metragyrtae, the members of the Mithras-cult, the Sabbazians; 1.9, PG 11, 672A). Origen emphasises that Jesus appeared to the members of his cult (*thiasotai*, θιασώται; 3.23; PG 11, 945B). See also Lactant., *Div. Inst.* 5.1 (*cultores Dei summi*, PL 6,548A).

4. Euseb., *Hist. eccl.* 1.3.12: Christ committed to his *thiasota* (θιασώταις) 'the uncovered virtues'; cf. also 1.3.19 (PG 20, 73.59; 76.63; NPNF 2.1, 106-107); 10.1.8: a 'splendid day [...] illuminated [...] the churches of Christ (ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις τοῦ Χριστοῦ) [...]'. And not even those without our communion (τοῖς ἔχουθεν τοῦ καθ' ἡμᾶς θιάσου) were prevented from sharing in in the same blessings' (NPNF 2.1, 777).

5. Lucian, *De mort. Peregr.* 11 (the Christian leader as *thiasarches*); Celsus (Origen., *C. Cels.* 3.23, PG 11, 945B: Christians as *thiasotai*, θιασώται). See also Schmidt 1965, 515-516.

6. *Apol* 38-39, CSEL 69 (1939), 90-95; ANF 3, 67-70.

ekklēsiai and associations.⁷ Nevertheless, from the second half of the 20th century research on associations in the Greco-Roman world has been increasingly received and applied in New Testament scholarship, in the social analysis of earliest Christianity.⁸ Today many New Testament scholars think that ancient associations, notwithstanding the broad variety of their aims, structures and statutes, are social formations that may provide some insight into the way early Christian communities have functioned.

In this paper I argue that, although New Testament sources dealing with Christian, more specifically Pauline communities, are less explicit, certain texts allow us to infer that as early as the first-century Asia Minor communities were organised as religious associations. To this purpose I examine the ways in which features of ancient associations are reflected in the structure and functioning of the community addressed by the Pastoral Epistles. I analyse its organisation, membership, offices, internal regulations, as well as its interaction with society and the attitude toward the state.

The Pastoral Epistles [PE] are a corpus of three letters (1 and 2 Timothy, Titus) traditionally attributed to Paul, yet in fact pseudonymous writings⁹ most likely composed by the same (unknown) author, probably in a community of Western Asia Minor,¹⁰ toward the end of the first century. According to the underlying (fictitious) narrative, Paul has left two of his prominent disciples, Timothy and Titus, in Ephesus and Crete, respectively, to organise the local communities, to ensure continuity in ministry by appointing local leaders, to silence the opponents who teach a different doctrine and promote a different lifestyle, and to establish norms of behaviour for officials and for members, for men and women, for the wealthy and

7. Heinrici 1876; 1896, 5-9; Hatch 1882.

8. Barton and Horsley 1981, 7-41; Klauck 1995, 49-57; Kloppenborg and Wilson 1996; Ascough 2003; Harland 2003a; Gutsfeld and Koch 2006; Dunn 2009, 608-617.

9. Dibelius and Conzelmann 1972; Brox 1969; Roloff 1988; Oberlinner 1994; Wolter 1988; Collins 2002; Weiser 2003; Merz 2004.

10. Roloff 1988, 42-43; Oberlinner 1994: XLVI, 10; Weiser 2003, 59-61 (probably Ephesus); Wolter 1988, 22.

for slaves. The author is particularly interested in delineating group identity by emphasising the importance of established officials in leading the community, by adherence to what he calls sound doctrine and to contemporary social norms.

Before assessing the character of this Christian community, it is essential to consider the very different nature of the sources on associations on the one hand, and early Christian *ekklesiai* on the other.¹¹ For associations, inscriptions and some papyri have preserved the bylaws, lists of members and officials, the honorific decrees for benefactors, the epitaphs of members, but with few exceptions they provide very little insight into the day-to-day life of the group. Conversely, New Testament sources offer snapshots of the life of Christian communities; they may formulate some (often circumstantial) regulations, but hardly any statutes, except maybe for the household and station codes¹² of the deutero- and trito-Pauline epistles.¹³ These differences account for many of the difficulties encountered when comparing Christian *ekklesiai* to associations.

11. Rightly, Downs 2008, 77-78.

12. The household codes establish the norms of behaviour for the members of a household, and list pairs of addressees: husband and wife, parents and children, masters and slaves. Such codes are typically found in Col 3,18-4,1 and Eph 5,21-6,6. New Testament scholars trace back the roots of household codes to ancient literature on household management (Balch [1982]; Gielen [1990]), against earlier opinions that household codes were inspired by Stoic duty lists (Weidinger [1928]). Station codes regulate the behaviour of various groups in the community (e.g. the officials), and may be found in the PE (Verner 1983, 90, 92; Wagener 1994, 62; Marshall 1999, 232-236).

13. The corpus of thirteen epistles attributed to Paul comprises seven genuine epistles (Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, 1 Thessalonians, Philemon), as well as pseudonymous writings composed at various stages after the death of the apostle. There is no consensus about the authorship of the latter. The debated letters are sometimes classified, based on their similarities and the probable time of their composition, into deutero- and trito-Pauline. The first group includes Colossians, Ephesians and 2 Thessalonians, the latter the Pastoral Epistles. See Klauck 2006, 324.

2. The *ekklesia* in the Pastoral Epistles. Organisation and functioning

To briefly rehearse the matter, private associations were groups or societies that transcended the private sphere (the *oikos*) and were not part of the political structures of the *polis*. They were founded on private initiative and members joined freely to achieve various common aims.¹⁴ These groups were rather well organised and developed statutes and offices that frequently reproduced those of the *polis*. Undoubtedly, every element of this definition may be challenged.¹⁵ Many associations were household-based and their (first) members were the free individuals (commonly relatives) and the slaves of an *oikos*. The private character of associations may also be debated, since, as Gabrielsen and Thomsen show in the Introduction to this volume, some originally private associations acquired a marked public dimension over time and carried out functions otherwise pertaining to the public sphere. The private/public dichotomy may also be simplistic, and Gabrielsen and Thomsen rightly argue that associations created a sort of ‘fourth space’. Further, even the voluntary character of membership is sometimes debatable, due to legal, social and religious coercive factors. The sphere of associations may perhaps not be assimilated to modern civil society. Yet, it is striking that many associations engaged the private initiative and action of

14. From the 19th century onwards associations were commonly classified according to their functions, into professional, religious and funerary associations (*collegia funeraticia*, a term coined by Mommsen, and assimilated to the *collegia tenuiorum* of Marc., Dig. 47.22.3.2). Mommsen 1843, 87-93; Waltzing 1895, 3-48 (religious), 141-153, 256-300 (funerary), 161-194, *passim* (professional); Kloppenborg 1996, 18; Ascough 2003, 20-21; Sirks 2006, 23-25. However, all associations fulfilled various functions (van Nijf 1997, 10; Gabrielsen 2001, 217), and irrespective of their main activity all had a religious dimension (Waltzing 1895, 195-211, Poland 1909, 5; Wilson 1996, 13; Kloppenborg 1996, 18). This makes the traditional taxonomy rather inappropriate. The classification proposed by Harland (2003a: 29-50), based on the type of underlying networks and connections (household, ethnic, geographic, neighbourhood, occupational and cultic) seems more apposite. I use the term religious association to refer to those groups that were mainly based on cultic relations.

15. See the discussion of these issues by Gabrielsen and Thomsen in this volume.

individuals within self-organising structures other than those of the *polis* in order to produce outcomes that shaped the larger society.

Ancient associations shared territorial proximity, a professional and/or religious community of interests, a cult, conviviality, and the duty to provide for the needs, in particular for the burial of members.¹⁶ Common meals had a major role in forming and delineating group-identity. They also expressed and consolidated rank and internal hierarchy,¹⁷ and often had a religious meaning.¹⁸

2.1. *Main features of the ekklesia*

Early Christian communities were analogous to private religious associations,¹⁹ insofar as they were rather well-defined socio-religious groups, with a distinct (although evolving) constitution, whose members joined voluntarily for the purpose of achieving religious and social aims. One may of course wonder how voluntary the membership of relatives and slaves of an *oikos* was, but this was not a specifically Christian problem.

1. In the case of the PE the *religious dimension* is rather obvious. It appears in the worship of God and of Jesus Christ the Saviour (Tit 1,4; 2,10-13; 3,4-6; 2 Tim 1,10), in the focus on the mystery of faith (1 Tim 3,9) and on piety (*eusebeia*, 1 Tim 3,16), issues that hardly need further elaboration. The religious element is also expressed in the regulations concerning behaviour at worship (1 Tim 2,1-9) and the performance of rites like baptism (Tit 3,5), an initiation rite,²⁰ and the introduction to office through the imposition of hands (1 Tim 4,14; 2 Tim 1,6). From earlier texts, like 1 Corinthians, it is evident that the cult comprised the Eucharistic celebration as well, i.e. a cultic meal that resulted in communion with Christ and among members and shaped the identity of the community (10, 16-17), in connection with a more profane side of conviviality (11,20-23.33-

16. van Nijf 1997, 11; Garnsey and Saller: 1997, 101.

17. van Nijf 1997, 53-54.

18. Wilson 1996, 12.

19. Contemporaries may well have perceived Christian communities as household based mystery cults (Klauck 2003, 225; Betz 2004, 88-89).

20. Betz 2004, 107-118.

34).²¹ Strikingly, this aspect, so central to any ancient association, is not mentioned in the PE. Yet, in view of multiple references in other New Testament texts, it is probable that by the end of the century the Eucharist was celebrated in all Christian communities (although there may have been local variations in terms of frequency and of rite).

2. *Participation in other cults* or associations does not seem to be a main issue for the author, unless one takes the anti-Jewish polemic as an indicator of demarcation from Judaism.²² Participation in non-Jewish cults is never mentioned, but this is no proof of exclusivity or of free involvement in other cults.²³

3. The community of the PE was concerned with the *welfare of its members*, looking after the destitute widows (1 Tim 5,4-8,16) and encouraging better-off members to care for the less fortunate (1 Tim 5,16; 6,17-18). A passage regulating admission to the community of widows (1 Tim 5,9-10) lists among other criteria the deeds of charity.²⁴ Burial of deceased members as an obligation of the community, a feature of many associations,²⁵ is nowhere mentioned in the PE (or in the Corpus Paulinum), yet certain passages in Acts (5,6.10; 8,2)

21. Theissen 1974, 188; Ebel 2004, 171, noting the role of the meal in community-formation and communication.

22. On this feature of the PE: Weidemann 2008, 49-54.

23. The commonly evoked Christian exclusivity (McCready 1996, 62, 66) may be true with respect to the ideal, yet reality was certainly different. Christians hardly broke all their ties to society and its religious life (Borgen 2004, 30-59). Paul's position concerning participation in sacrificial meals is telling for the Corinthian situation. Although he warns against idolatry (1 Cor 10, 14-21) and against scandalising the 'weak' (8,7-13; 10,28-29), he does not regard participation in meals offered by non-Christians a real threat to Christian identity (8,4-5). The very fact that he has to address the topic shows that some Christians did not regard participation in such meals as a repudiation of their religious identity. Ascough lists a number of associations that prohibited their members to leave the group and join another one (2003, 85, 88-90).

24. On widows as a community: Spicq 1969, 532-533; Dibelius 1955, 58; Roloff 1988, 292-293; Oberlinner 1994, 221-222, 231, 233-234; Verner 1983, 163-165.

25. The identification of the *collegia tenuiorum* with the *collegia funeraticia*, just as the existence of the latter is contested (van Nijf 1997, 10, 31-69; Perry 2006: esp. 30-35; Kloppenborg 1996, 20-23; Ascough 2003, 21, 24-25).

suggest that Christians also regarded this task as their duty toward community members. Probably, this was not different in the community of the PE.

4. The *ekklesia* was more than likely founded by Paul several decades before. This is suggested by the location of the epistles in the area of Pauline mission, by the references to persons known from Paul's entourage, and by the exceptional authority he is assigned in the epistles. (The author of the PE wrote these fictitious letters in the name of Paul, who was obviously an authority for the addressees). In establishing *ekklesiai* Paul acted very much like any other founder of private cults.²⁶ The fact that the PE were written several decades after the death of the founder created a rather special situation, compared to that of associations whose founders still actively influenced the community.²⁷ From this (and only this) perspective, the situation was comparable to that of testamentary associations. Nonetheless neither the community nor the letters served the commemoration of the founder, as in testamentary associations. 2 Timothy, although apparently a testament, aimed only on the surface to preserve the memory of Paul. The founder evoked in the epistles was turned into a paradigmatic character whose authority was used to support the drafting and/or rethinking of the statutes.

5. The community is *designated* as *ekklesia* (ἐκκλησία θεοῦ ζῶντος), i.e. as assembly of a community belonging to the living God, or, otherwise, the οἶκος Θεοῦ (1 Tim 3,15).²⁸ The theophoric appellation links *ekklesia* and *oikos* to the worshipped deity.

The Christian *ekklesia*²⁹ has been derived from the Septuagint [LXX], as a translation of the Hebrew *qahal*, designating the (new) people of God.³⁰ However, the LXX more often translates *lqh* with

26. Betz 2004, 87-88, 99, 117. On individuals' role in founding and reforming associations: Poland 1909, 272-274.

27. On these associations: Ascough 2003, 32-34; Klauck 1995, 53-54.

28. In the authentic and deutero-Pauline epistles the most frequent term, the *ekklesia*, commonly refers to the community or gathering of members in a specific location or *oikos* (κατ' οἶκον αὐτῶν ἐκκλησίαν; Rom 16,5; cf. Col 4,15), or the *ekklesiai* of God assembled in various areas (1 Thess 2,14; cf. Gal 1,22; 1 Cor 1,2),

29. Schmidt 1965, 501-536; Roloff 1993, 83-85.

30. Dunn 2009, 600.

synagogē. This contradicts the hypothesis that Christians were compelled to use *ekklēsia* to refer to their community.³¹ Moreover, the political connotations of the term are obvious. In the Greek East it was expectedly associated with the public assembly of the free citizens of the *polis*; the translators of the LXX must have been aware of this meaning. More importantly, the term is not entirely unknown in the language of voluntary associations.³² Here *ekklēsia* is mostly functional, denoting the gathering or ‘business meeting’ of members. In earliest Christianity the term was very likely used in a functional sense as well, to denote the coming together of the community (e.g. for worship).³³

Oikos was also used for associations, denoting both the association and the locale of meetings.³⁴ It is not by accident that already earlier the authentic and deuterio-Pauline epistles designated the Christian community as the *ekklēsia* assembled in a specific *oikos* (Rom 16,5; cf. Col 4,15). This term is therefore again of some interest, as it approaches the community of the PE to household-based or household-like associations. These comprised the members of a household³⁵ and persons from outside the *oikos*. Such was the often quoted association in Philadelphia (Lydia), founded by a certain Dionysios, demanded by Zeus to allow entrance into his *oikos* to men and women, slaves and free, to perform rites of purification, sanctification and mysteries.³⁶ Several other examples of associations with

31. Rightly critical of this hypothesis: Ascough 2003, 73-74.

32. Ascough 2003, 74; Harland 2003b: 498: *ID* 1519 = CIG 2271, second cent. CE (the assembly of the *synodos* of merchants and shippers); *OGIS* 488 (the assembly in Kastollos near Philadelphia, second/third cent., but it may refer to the *ekklēsia* of the village: Buckler 1937); *IGLAM* 1381, 1382, from Pamphilian Aspendus; cf. also Poland 1909, 332: the Tyrian Herakleistai of Delos, and the ἀλειψόμενοι of Samos, *IG* XII.6 1. For *ekklēsia* as assembly, see also the decree of the *koimon* of Dionysiac *technitai* (Magnesia Mai., *I. Magnesia* 89. 9).

33. For *ekklēsia* as a *nomen actionis*: Roloff 1993, 85; Dunn 2009, 599-600.

34. Poland 1909, 459-463; Sokolowski 1955, 55. The *oikos* of the Theoi Megaloi appears in two inscriptions from Athens (112-110 BCE), Vélissaropoulos 1980, 105-106. See also *IG* XII.8 230 (Samothrace) (οἶκος θεοῦ μεγάλου); *I. Magnesia* 94. 3, 6.

35. Kloppenborg 1996, 23.

36. The association of Philadelphia dedicated to Zeus Eumenes and Hestia: *Syll.*³ 985; Sokolowski 1955, 53-58 (doc. 20); Barton and Horsley 1981, 7-41. Stowers argued that

a religious character founded in an *oikos/domus* are known.³⁷ Such associations could not always be identified with a household strictly speaking. Barton and Horsley have appropriately shown that even the association of Philadelphia was open to outsiders, as well.³⁸ These examples show that the *oikos* could be the centre and point of departure for a religious association that went beyond the limits of the household, a situation largely comparable to that of the early Christian communities.

These considerations allow us to regard the community of the PE, designated as ἐκκλησία θεοῦ and οἶκος Θεοῦ, as a religious association modelled after the household, which incorporated members belonging to more than one household. All the more so, as its officials – the *episkopoi* and *diakonoí*³⁹ – had a position analogous to that of the heads of households (1 Tim 3,4-5.12). This designation is understandable, as at an early stage Christian communities were probably gathering in the house of better-off members, though other

this was a household cult, not an association (Stowers 1998, 287-301). Yet the sharp distinction between these two entities is hardly convincing. Even Stowers admits the participation of friends, guests and relatives living outside the household in this cult (Stowers 1998, 288-289; Downs 2008, 84, n. 43). Moreover, while oaths could be made by members of a household, one wonders why a guest entering the *oikos* would take an oath sustaining the stability of a household foreign to him/her. Further, entering this *oikos* is conditional (it depends on respecting the regulations), but joining a household was not, neither for women, nor for slaves. As to the text, Dittenberger (in *Syll.*³ 985) restores τὰς θυσίας (l. 13) and τὰ μυστήρια (l. 41); Sokolowski, Barton and Horsley have τὰ μυστήρια in both lines; for other options, see Stowers 1998, 289, n. 31: τὰ ἱερά (Wilamowitz-Moellendorff; yet, admittedly too short, just as τὰς θυσίας), τὰ ἱερόθυσια (preferred by Stowers). Stowers wishes to discard the possibility that this cult celebrates mysteries.

37. To mention only a few: the association established by an Egyptian priest of Sarapis on Delos (second cent. BCE), *IG* XI.4 1299; an association dedicated to Sarapis and Isis in the Lokrian Opus, in the house of Sosinike, *IG* X.2 255, cf. Ascough 2003, 30-31; the second-cent. CE Dionysiac association established by Pompeia Agrippinilla in Tusculum, which included kin, slaves, freed persons, men and women: Alexander 1932, 240-242; Lietzmann 1933, 311; Meeks 1983, 31; Cancik 2007, 35-36.

38. Barton and Horsley 1981, 16-17; Sokolowski 1955, 55.

39. On these officials and the possible origin of these designations in the language of associations see further section 1.3: Statutes and offices.

settings were also possible.⁴⁰ Because of the conversion of some *oikoi*, at an initial stage, there was some overlap between *oikos* and *ekklesia*. Kloppenborg parallels with good reason formulae like κατ' οἶκον αὐτῶν ἐκκλησία in the Pauline corpus (Rom 16,5; cf. Col 4,15: τὴν κατ' οἶκον αὐτῆς [Νυμφῆς] ἐκκλησίαν), with the set phrase *collegium quod est in domo Sergiae L(uci) f(iliae) Paullinae* that appears in a good number of Roman inscriptions, arguing that early Christian communities functioned as domestic *collegia*.⁴¹ The claim that the *oikos* model embraced by 1 Timothy has nothing to do with the social gatherings of *collegia*, or with meetings of a philosophical *thiasos*, but should be seen merely as 'the *private invitation of a host* to the fellow Christians in his district of the city',⁴² is in no way convincing.

6. It is not clear whether the members of this community referred to themselves as *Christianoi*, a term with a theophoric resonance reminding of the theophoric name of many ancient associations. Yet the term is attested only in *Acts* 11,26; 26,28; 1 *Pet* 4,16, and not in the PE.⁴³

To sum up, this *ekklesia* was a community dedicated to the worship of God and Jesus Christ that had been founded some decades ago by Paul. Members joined freely (with the caveat that the freedom of slaves and subordinated family members was probably more limited), and pursued both religious and social aims, even when in the PE there is no explicit reference to conviviality and to the burial of deceased members. The designations of the community, though not the most typical, also appear in the case of other (religious) associations.

2.2. Membership

The *ekklesia* is comparable to religious associations with a *heterogeneous membership* in terms of gender and of social standing.

40. Horrell 2004, 349–369; Dunn 2009, 602–603, 606–608.

41. Kloppenborg 1996, 23, cf. *CIL* VI.9148–9149, 10260–10264; Mommsen 1843, 94. Whether the latter was indeed a Christian collegium that met in the house of Sergia Paullina, granddaughter of Sergius Paulus, the proconsul whom Paul allegedly converted in Cyprus (*Acts* 13,7–12), as argued by Sordi (1984, 222), is less certain.

42. Lampe 2003, 374, emphases in the original.

43. On the apparently external, hostile origin of the appellation: Horrell 2007.

1. The proliferation of associations in the Greek East was often associated with the decline of the classical polis, leading to the dissolution of political and social life, to geographic dislocation, uprootedness, and a shallow religious life.⁴⁴ Consequently associations provided opportunities and social status to the marginalised, to those excluded from political and social advancement, men and women of lower condition, foreigners, freedmen and slaves (*collegia tenuiorum*), who created a parallel polis.⁴⁵ There is some truth in this assessment, if one considers the social condition of the poor, of slaves and foreigners. Yet it would be mistaken to regard the associations as havens of the marginalised, who could in no other way obtain recognition.⁴⁶ This stereotyped view is contradicted by many associations that counted better-off members as well, some even representatives of the elites.⁴⁷ Moreover, *tenuior* is a relative term that did not designate the poor, but the one whose means, though not insignificant, did not suffice to make him qualify for public offices involving a much more important financial burden.⁴⁸ It would be mistaken to generally identify membership of *collegia* with the marginalised,⁴⁹ and one should not overlook their civic, political and socio-economic impact.⁵⁰

44. For a criticism of the 'decline of the polis' theory: Harland 2003a: 89-112; id. 2006, 21-49.

45. Kloppenborg 1996, 17-18; Meeks 1983, 31; Ascough 2003, 25; Walker-Ramisch 1996, 134.

46. Meeks 1983, 31; Ascough 2003, 25; Walker-Ramisch 1996, 134.

47. van Nijf 1997, 21-22; Sirks 2006, 30-31, Ascough 2003, 59; Bendlin 2002, 12. On Mithraism: Rüpke 2007, 113-115. Referring to the *collegium Lanuvianum*, Garnsey and Saller note that the membership fee and monthly dues (generally club dinners) envisaged 'modestly prosperous men'; the impoverished could not afford membership (1997, 101).

48. Sirks 2006, 31-32.

49. Wilson 1996, 13-14. On social heterogeneity: Harland 2003a: 27-28, 34, 42-44, 46-47.

50. Due to better-off members or patrons, associations could voice their interests (Walker-Ramisch 1996, 133; van Nijf 1997, 20-22). They created a social network that enhanced common action. Several associations carried out important building projects, contributing to the development of urban centres. Some acquired significant wealth and influence. On this issue: Gabrielsen 2007, 188, 193-194, 197-

The community of the PE was *socially heterogeneous*. Most of its members were probably non-elite, poor, free, freedmen and slaves. However, a number of passages show that some members were wealthy. The rich (πλούσιοι) are exhorted to avoid conceit and excessive reliance on wealth and are demanded to use their means for benefactions (1 Tim 6,9-10. 17-19).⁵¹ Women are demanded to give up expensive adornment and lavish lifestyle (1 Tim 2,9; 5,6).⁵² Social stratification is also suggested by the slave paraenesis (Tit 2,9-10; 1 Tim 6,1-2), implying that some members held slaves.⁵³ The application of the *oikos* paradigm to the church (1 Tim 3,15) and the use of the topos of household management in the station codes also shows that the wealthy were influential members of the community. The officials (the *episkopos* and *diakonos*) must have been aware of the responsibilities and social expectations pertaining to the status of a head of household.⁵⁴ The *episkopos* (overseer) and the *diakonos* were expected to be good managers of their own household, a requirement seen as the natural prerequisite for community leadership (1 Tim 3,4-5.12; Tit 1,6).

The heterogeneous social structure was responsible for the *internal tensions* between better-off and socially inferior members, as reflected in the exhortations addressed to slaves (1 Tim 6,1-2; Tit 2,9). These were warned against despising their masters on account of their shared Christian brotherhood. This means that some members, and clearly the author, feared the rebellion of their Christian slaves. Significantly, in the PE there is no exhortation to masters to treat their slaves as brothers and sisters in faith. The ἀδελφός (*adelphos*)-terminology is used in 1 Timothy to underpin the ideology of fuller service and submission.⁵⁵

198; Gabrielsen 2001, 176-177, passim.

51. Kidd 1990, 15-16.

52. Spicq 1969, 292, n. 3, 419-420, 423-425; Verner 1983, 171, 180; Kidd 1990, 102-103.

53. Holding a small number of slaves did not make one the representative of the elite (Meggitt 1998, 129-131). Yet people owning even a few slaves were financially better placed than the truly destitute. Should a master of only a few slaves have run out of funds, he could still sell or rent out the slaves (Martin 2001, 55).

54. Verner 1983, 91, 105, 133, 152-153, 155; Kidd 1990, 83; Oberlinner 2007, 306.

55. Horrell 2001, 307, 309. Merz shows how 1 Tim 6,1-2 rejects any egalitarian

2. It is often assumed that contrary to ancient associations Christian communities had a deeper sense of fraternity and equality, overriding social inequality.⁵⁶ Yet this is problematic on two counts. On the one hand, members of various associations were bound by ties of fictive kinship, given their shared (professional or religious) interests and their belonging to the community.⁵⁷ Kinship and friendship language was not uncommon in associations, as shown by the *adelphos* or *philos* terminology.⁵⁸ Fraternal love (*philadelphia*)⁵⁹ and affection (*philostorgia*)⁶⁰ were not unknown. On the other hand, while the sentiment of Christian brother(sister)hood may have been rather intense at earlier stages, the PE reinforced social order, as shown by the slave paraenesis.⁶¹ In addition, the emergence of offices (1 Tim 3,1-7; Tit 1,5-7) created an internal hierarchy. Hence, this community was comparable to associations which combined egalitarianism due to fictive kinship and hierarchy, in view of the heterogeneous social composition and of the internal struc-

conclusion that might have been derived from Phlm 16, confirming the privileges of the masters (Merz 2004, 257-267; Merz 2006, 113-132).

56. Cf. Gal 3,28; Rom 12,4-5; 1 Cor 3,8; 10,17; 12,12-13; Phil 2,2. McCready 1996, 62-63.

57. Waltzing 1895, 329-330; Poland 1909, 54-55; Harland 2005, 491-513; Wilson 1996, 2, 13; Ascough 2003, 76-77.

58. Harland (2005, 497-510) has numerous examples. The members of a first-cent. CE association of Lamos (Kilikia) *I.KilikiaBM* 2,201; those of an association of Sinope (Pontus) dedicated to Theos Hypsistos; the *mystai* of the Eleusian mysteries; priests or other cult officials in associations of Halikarnassos and Mylasa (*IGLAM* 503 a-b; *ἱερεῖς ἀδελφοί*; cf. *I.Mylasa* 544). The pater or mater collegii seem to be important members. Poland 1909, 371-373; Harland 2007: esp. 61, 69-75; Hemelrijk 2008, 120-122 passim (probably officials); Kloppenborg 1996, 25. In a *synodos* from Tanais dedicated to Theos Hypsistos the leader is called pater; members of another *thiasos* are called brothers (CIRB 1263, 1277, 1282, 1288, 1284, Harland 2005, 502-503).

Harland has several other examples. The members of the Mithraic associations are called *fraters*, while the *patres* are top officials: Beck 1996, 180.

59. A Latium association dedicated to Hygeia: Harland 2005, 500 (cf. *IG XIV* 902a, p. 694 [addenda]).

60. The commemoration of a deceased member by a *thiasos* of Tlos (Lycia): *IG XIV* 902a, Harland 2005, 500. A third-cent. Thessalonian association warns the 'brothers' against opening the tombs of members: *IG X.2.1* 824, Harland 2005, 501.

61. Already in the household codes (Col 3,18-4,1; Eph 5,23-69), and in the slave-paraenesis of 1 Pet 2,18-25.

ture.⁶² Belonging together bridged, but did not eliminate social differences.

As a matter of fact, one may hardly contrast Christian egalitarianism with the hierarchical structure of associations. In the PE fictive kinship and egalitarianism gradually lost ground to the hierarchic perspective. The *adelphos* terminology in 1 Tim 6,2 is a reminiscence of the egalitarian dimension, reflecting a self-understanding of the members as brothers and sisters in the household of God, certainly owing to the Pauline inheritance. Yet precisely this dimension was problematic for better-off members, and if not theoretically rejected, it was practically neutralised. The fraternal perspective was replaced by one of patriarchy.

3. In terms of *gender*, some associations only accepted members of one sex, others were inclusive.⁶³ The often-quoted religious association from Philadelphia, dedicated to Zeus Eumenes and Hestia, was gender-inclusive,⁶⁴ just as several other associations.⁶⁵ In a good number of associations women held offices and priesthoods, or they were founders and patrons.⁶⁶

The community of the PE included men and women alike, as opposed to certain ancient gender-exclusive associations, but not unlike many inclusive ones. However, the PE are extremely negative about the participation of women in the life of the community.⁶⁷

4. The *ethnic* composition is unknown. The fictitious character of the setting makes it difficult to draw any conclusions from the names

62. Mithraism is one of the eminent examples. Beck 1996, 180; id., 2006, 180-181, 191; Rüpke 2007, 113. Another good example of social heterogeneity is provided by the Philadelphian association (of *Syll.*³ 985): Barton and Horsley 1981, 22.

63. On women in associations: Poland 1909, 289-298; Kloppenborg 1996, 25.

64. *Syll.*³ 985; Sokolowski 1955, no. 20; Barton and Horsley 1981, 8-10.

65. The mysteries of Andanya, the *dendrophori* of Magna Mater (Regium Iulium), the Dionysian *thiasoi* all over the empire (the Tusculanean association founded by Pompeia Agripinilla; the one of Amphipolis [Macedonia]; the *collegium Asianorum* in Napoca; the *collegium Bachii* in Nikopolis [Moes. Inf.], the *collegium Romanorum* in Tomis). Alexander 1932, 240-242; Ascough 2003, 54-59; Hemelrijk 2008, 123-125.

66. Poland 1909, 295, 345-346; Hemelrijk 2008, 120-122 *passim*.

67. See further section 1.3: Statutes and offices on the exclusion of women from offices.

mentioned in the epistles. The community was probably made up essentially of Gentile Christians, but we cannot know more. If the reference to Jewish myths and to those of the circumcision (Tit 1,10.14) was not merely meant to create the 'feel' of authenticity, there may have been a minority Jewish (Christian) group. We cannot know whether there were foreigners or resident aliens among the members. But if the *philoxenia* demanded from the *episkopos/presbyteros* (Tit 1,8; 1 Tim 3,2) was not simply a conventional virtue of the official, it may well be that the community admitted Christians coming from other geographic areas. All the more so as other sources – admittedly earlier than the PE – still know of itinerant teachers. (The PE focus on local leaders). There is no reason to suppose that Christians were less mobile than their contemporaries.

2.3. Statutes and offices

It is a commonplace that associations were modelled after the *polis*, in terms of organisation, offices and hierarchy.⁶⁸ The (assembly of the) association drafted statutes and decrees.⁶⁹ Associations elected their officials, attended to religious duties and common celebrations, managed their finances, and settled conflicts within the association.⁷⁰ In doing so, associations actually mirrored the structures and functioning of the *polis*.

1. In an analogous manner the *ekklesia* organised itself, established bylaws, appointed officials, performed religious celebrations, and certainly managed finances. Important parts of 1 Timothy and Titus may be regarded as an attempt to shape the *statutes* of the group. Such are the church orders and/or station codes, i.e. the regulations concerning offices (Tit 1,5-9; 1 Tim 3,1-7.8-13; 5,9-14.17-20) and the roles of the members, in particular women (1 Tim 2,9-15; 5,14; Tit 2,3-5) and slaves (Tit 2,9-10, 1 Tim 6,1-2).

2. As an important element of their organisation, all associations

68. Walker-Ramisch 1996, 134; Ascough 2003, 25; Gabrielsen 2001, 217; Gabrielsen 2007, 188-190; Garnsey and Saller 1997, 101.

69. Gabrielsen 2007, 189.

70. Walker-Ramisch 1996, 133.

had a number of officials, bearing a broad variety of titles.⁷¹ Offices led to the creation of an internal hierarchy, often expressed in the regulations concerning benefits received by officials, in particular at common meals. At gatherings officials received honorary allotments according to the internal hierarchy.⁷² The *quinquennales* of the *cultores Dianae et Antinoi* in Lanuvium, as well as the officials of the Roman *collegium Aesculapi et Hygiae*, received a double or triple share of the meal portions, occasional allotments in food, wine or money.⁷³ The officials of the Athenian *Iobacchoi* may also have enjoyed preferential treatment at meals, if the order of the officials named as receiving alimentary allotments can be taken to suggest such a hierarchy.⁷⁴

The role of officials (the *episkopos/presbyteroi*,⁷⁵ and the *diakonoi*; Tit 1,5-7; 1 Tim 3) increased in the PE, compared to earlier periods.⁷⁶ The names of these offices were attested in associations.⁷⁷ The *episkopos* could be a supervisor of cultic or financial matters.⁷⁸ The *dia-*

71. *Epistatai*, *archontes*, *epimeletai*, *episkopoi*; the president as *archeranistes*, *archithiasites*, *archisynagogos*, female *proeranistria*. Other offices include the *tamias*, *diakonos*, *grammateus*, *curator*, or are referred to with terms employed for public magistracies (*prytanis*, *gymnasiarch*). Cultic functions are exercised by priest(esse)s. Poland 1909, 337-423; Ascough 2003, 79-83; Meeks 1983, 31; Gabrielsen 2007, 189.

72. Waltzing 1895, 305-306, 367, 402-403; Kloppenborg 1996, 22; Schöllgen 1989, 236-237.

73. *ILS* 2.7212 (= *CIL* 14.2112); van Nijf 1997, 54; Schöllgen 1989, 237-238; Klauck 1995, 57; Garnsey and Saller 1997, 101; Theissen 1974, 190.

74. *IG* II^a 1368, cf. also van Nijf 1997, 54.

75. On the integration of two terms of different origins (*episkopos* and *presbyteros*) in the PE and in *Acts* 20: Oberlinner 1994, 248-250; Brown 1992, 1345; Schneider, G. 1982, 294-296.

76. In Paul's lifetime offices are not as developed as in many Greco-Roman associations, probably in view of their recent establishment. Local officials (the *proistamenoi* in the early 1 Thess 5,12; the *episkopoi* and *diakonoi* in Phil 1,1) play an important role in the community, but we do not know much of their actual tasks.

77. Poland 1909, 373, 377, 381 (*episkopoi*); Beyer 1935, 604-617, esp. 607-610; Ascough 2003, 80-81 (*episkopoi*). For Egyptian *presbyteroi*, see Thompson in this volume.

78. Beyer 1935, 608-609; Poland 1909, 377, 381, 448; Ascough 2003, 80-81. *Episkopoi* (Dion and Melleipos) as financial officers of an association of Thera lend money and use the interests to finance a festival (*IG* XII.3 329, second cent. BCE). *Episkopoi* as financial officials of a temple are recorded in *IGL* 1990. An *episkopos* of a Dionysiac *synodos* is charged with the bestowal of honours (*ID* 1522). At Lindos *episkopoi* appear

konos, male or female, had various auxiliary roles.⁷⁹ One may not presume a single pattern of attributions for one specific office designation, since (with some exceptions) the same title could refer to different functions in different associations. One may assume with good reason that in the PE the offices of *episkopos/presbyteros* and *diakonos* (1 Tim 3,2.8.11-12; Tit 1,5.7) were taken from the practice and language of associations. Yet, one may not draw any conclusion about the role of the officials with the same name in (different) Christian communities. Candidates for office had to be scrutinised (δοκιμαζέσθωσαν in 1 Tim 3,10), a requirement reminding the scrutiny to which candidates for office were submitted in public life and sometimes in associations.⁸⁰

3. As opposed to many other religious associations, priesthoods are entirely absent, probably because of the lack of sacrificial rites proper. A *tamias* is not mentioned, yet, as the community looked af-

in lists of various officials (along priests, prytnes, *grammateis* and *hypogrammateis*, treasurers and others); I.Lindos II 208 (160 BCE); 378 (27 BCE); Spicq 1969, 441. See also *IG XII.1* 731 (a list of officials of a religious association of Ialysos, Rhodes); *IGBulg IV*. 2214 (a list of officials of an *oikos* dedicated to the Olympian gods, Pautalia [Kystendil], Shatrovo); *IScM I*, 58 (Istros, second cent. BCE, decree bestowing honours on Meniskos). Although Poland (1909, 377) had argued for the relative rarity of the title and cautioned against tracing back the Christian office to the world of associations, the term is more frequent than he supposed.

79. For *diakonois* performing various offices connected to the cult, see Poland 1909, 42-43, 71, 165, 391-392; Ascough 2003, 82-83; *CIG* 1739b, *IG IV* 774 and 824, both from Troizen, third cent. BCE; *IG IX.1* 486; *RIG* 1226 (cf. also *CCAA*, 95-96, no. 289, Kyzikos, first cent. BCE, *diakonois* take part in an offering to Magna Mater); *I. Magnesia* 217 (first cent. BCE, *diakonois* set up a statue to Hermes); *CIG* 1800 (an association of *diakonois* dedicated to an Egyptian deity). Associations from Metropolis, Lydia (*CIG* 3037) and Kyzikos (Mouseion 93) have male and female *diakonois*. For a *diakonos* among other religious officials see also *IG IX.1*² 2:247; 2:251; 2:248, all from Thyrrheum, Acarnania, second cent. BCE. *Diakonois* may also denote the members of a cult-association (Ambrakia; Poland 1909, 42-43).

80. *Dokimasia*, a procedure typical of Athenian democracy and generally of public life, was also applied in associations. See the second-cent. CE Athenian *eranos*: *IG II*² 1369, ll. 31-36: [μη]δενι ἐξέστω ἰσι[έν]αι ἰς τὴν σεμνοτάτην/ σύνδοδον τῶν ἐραριστῶν πρὶν ἂν δοκι/μασθῆ εἴ ἐστι ἀ[γν]ός και εὐσεβής και ἀγ/α[θ]ός· δοκιμα[ξέ]τω δὲ ὁ προστάτης [και]/[ὁ] ἀρχεραγιστής και ὁ γ[ρ]αμματεὺς και[ι]/ [οἰ] ταμίαι και σύνδικοι. For the admission of the Iobacchoi, see also *IG II*² 1368.32-37.

ter the destitute widows (1 Tim 5,1), there must have existed a fund and someone to manage it.⁸¹

4. Leaders probably came from better-off householders.⁸² The aspiration to the position of *episkopos* is described as *kalon ergon* (1 Tim 3,1), a perception that corresponds to contemporary views on public office having a strongly liturgical dimension,⁸³ performed by the better-off for the benefit of the community.⁸⁴ The *bathmos kalos* (βαθμὸς καλός), a noble standing acquired by the *diakonoi* (1 Tim 3,13), may also be read in this light.⁸⁵ Leaders were expected to attest qualifications and abilities similar to those demanded from political leaders or from heads of private associations.⁸⁶ The concern of the *episkopos* with hospitality and common welfare matches the same pattern of public service.⁸⁷ Besides, the leader had to dispose of certain means to provide hospitality.⁸⁸

5. While many religious associations were gender-inclusive in terms of leadership as well,⁸⁹ in marked contrast to these, in the community of the Pastorals women could probably exert auxiliary roles (the female *diakonoi*, and the widows), but were excluded from leadership. Female *diakonoi* are dealt with ambiguously (*gynaikes* in 1 Tim 3,11).⁹⁰ Widows belonged to a community probably engaging in charity. The author strived to reduce their influence. The patriarchal character of the *oikos*-ecclesiology (1 Tim 3,16) restricted the public role of women (1 Tim 2,11-12; 5,11-14) and limited their responsibilities to traditional female roles (motherhood and domestic

81. That administering finances was the task of the *episkopos* (Hatch 1882, 39-41), as in many associations, is possible, but difficult to know.

82. Verner 1983, 128-134, 151-157.

83. Spicq 1969, 428-429.

84. Verner 1983, 151, 155-156, 160; Kidd 1990, 84-85.

85. Verner 1983, 155-156,

86. Oberlinner 2007, 306.

87. Spicq 1969, 428; Oster 1987, 82.

88. MacDonald 1988, 212.

89. Waltzing 1895, 349; Poland 1909, 295, 345-346; Ascough 2003, 33-34; 54-59.

90. On *gynaikes* as *diakonoi*: Spicq 1969, 460; Roloff 1988, 164-165; Oberlinner 1994, 139-142; Marshall 1999, 492-494; Collins 2002, 90-91.

tasks).⁹¹ In doing so, the author restricted the roles that were carried out by women in the lifetime of Paul.⁹²

6. The *financial aspect of holding offices* also deserves consideration. The passages referring to this aspect are quite ambiguous. ‘Timothy’ is exhorted to honour the true widows (1 Tim 5,3). The expression *cheras tima* (χήρας τίμα) is understood either as instruction to give financial support to widows with no relatives,⁹³ or as remuneration for officials (*Amtsehre/-besoldung*, cf. 5,17).⁹⁴ Worthy presbyters are said to deserve double honour (*diple time* in 1 Tim 5,17). Given the reference to material/financial reward in the context (v. 18 is an allusion to 1 Cor 9,9-14 endorsing the right of the ministers of the gospel to material reward), *time* is often taken to refer to a remuneration for the services of the *presbyteroi*.⁹⁵ Yet *time* cannot refer to an established routine of paying salaries to professional clergy, a practice attested only from the end of the second century.⁹⁶ The practice of paying wages, properly-speaking, would also contradict ancient mentality and practice according to which offices were undertaken at one’s own expense. All the more so as the *presbyteroi/episkopoi* presumably came from the better-off. Therefore some commentators read this *diple time* (διπλή τιμή) against the background of granting allotments

91. On the consequences of the *oikos* model: Roloff 1988, 214-216; Wagener 1994, 65, 113, 235-245; Oberlinner 2007: esp. 304-306

92. Dautzenberg 1983, 160-162, 167-181; Bieringer 2007, 221-237, 316-336; Schrage 1995, 506; Lindemann 2000, 240-241.

93. Quinn and Wacker 2000, 430; Roloff 1988, 287; Fiore 2007, 102. Kidd (1990, 103) and Marshall (1999, 582) assume that τίμα implies an expression of honour involving material support for the destitute widows.

94. Wagener 1994, 148. Dibelius and Conzelmann (1972, 73-74) read 5, 3 only as an instruction to honour the widows. Schneider, J. (1969, 180) thinks that honour has a material aspect as well.

95. Schneider, J. 1969, 178; Wilson 1979, 53 (stipend); Roloff 1988, 308 (‘Ehre’ and ‘Besoldungsleistung’); Verner 1983, 156 (‘financial support of regular church officers’); Wagener 1994, 144; Fiore 2007, 102 (at 1 Tim 5,3), yet more cautious with respect to the remuneration of the presbyters (111). Dibelius and Conzelmann understand διπλή τιμή as an approval of presbyters holding two offices, for double financial compensation (1972, 78).

96. Schöllgen 1989, 232-239; Oberlinner 1994, 252; Fiore 2007, 111.

to officials of voluntary associations, according to the internal hierarchy.⁹⁷

7. *Time/tima* (τιμή/τιμιά) is very common in honorary inscriptions and decrees for office holders and benefactors.⁹⁸ *Time* (τιμή) means honouring the official and/or benefactor by giving a – mostly material – return on benefactions. In the Pastorals (*tima/time*) should also be understood as recognition of the honour to which prominent groups and officials, the widows and the presbyters were entitled, honour that more than likely had a material expression. Whether these honours meant a larger share in community meals, honorific seats, or something else is difficult to tell. The *diple time* (διπλή τιμή) to which presbyters were entitled may suggest that these were worthy of higher consideration compared to other members of the community, maybe to widows,⁹⁹ if one takes into account that in associations, provision with double or triple share in various allowances was a recognition of one's rank.¹⁰⁰

8. Well-to-do members and especially *patrons* of associations acted as benefactors, sponsored the meals, bequeathed, built and equipped shrines and meeting places, and donated funerary plots.¹⁰¹ They were also patronage brokers, providing legal defence in court,¹⁰² or forwarding the interests of professional associations.¹⁰³ Patronage was also important for Christian communities, if one

97. Schöllgen 1989, 236-237. Somewhat similarly Quinn and Wacker 2000, 460-461 (a honorarium, the gift of food).

98. See e.g. the reference to Titus Aelius Marcianus Priscus, leader of the festival in honour of Artemis in Ephesus: Oster 1987, 74. The bestowal of honours on benefactors is often introduced with ἄξιός τιμῆς, comparable to 1 Tim 5,17. See e.g. the honorary decree for Dionysius, at Mylasa (ll. 2-5; Harrison 2002, 1). For women: *I.Ephesos* III 630a, 681, 892.

99. Oberlinner 1994, 254.

100. Oberlinner 1994, 245-247, 251-254.

101. On the roles and obligations of patrons: van Nijf 1997, 48, 82-111; Garnsey and Saller 1997, 101. On female patrons: van Nijf: 113, 123-124, 149-150; Hemelrijk 2008, 115-162. On the financial contribution of benefactors: Ascough 2003, 62-64; 79; Barclay 2006, 113-127. Even associations that collected membership dues were largely dependant on benefactors (Ascough 2003, 62).

102. van Nijf 1997, 77, 95-100 (brokers).

103. van Nijf 1997, 84-95.

considers that the better-off hosted community gatherings, offered hospitality to other Christians and provided support in various other ways.¹⁰⁴ In the community of the PE the wealthy were also expected to act as benefactors: they were to share their wealth for the benefit of the community (ἀγαθοεργεῖν, πλουτεῖν ἐν ἔργοις καλοῖς, εὐμεταδότους εἶναι, κοινωνικούς, 1 Tim 6,18).¹⁰⁵ Better-off women were expected to take care of the destitute widows they hosted in their house (1 Tim 5,16).

3. Interaction with the state. Attitudes toward the *polis* and toward civic authorities

1. The author of the Pastorals promotes respect for and submission to civil authorities (1 Tim 2,1-2; Tit 3,1), encouraging thereby a positive attitude toward society and social order.¹⁰⁶

This deference to authorities is probably inspired by Paul's exhortation in Rom 13,1-8.¹⁰⁷ Paul urges Roman Christians to submit unconditionally to authorities (ἐρχουσίας ὑπερεχούσας ὑποτασέσθω, 13,1). As their power comes from God, submission is ultimately obedience to the divine will. Civil authorities are guardians of legality and morality. For this reason Christians are expected to fulfil their obligations toward the state.¹⁰⁸ We do not know what made Paul

104. One may consider the service of Stephanas and his *oikos* (1 Cor 16,15), of Phoebe, *prostatis* of many (Paul included: Rom 16,1-2), the role of Prisca and Aquila, co-workers of Paul hosting a household church, just as Philemon and Apphia (Phlm 1-2), Nympha (Col 4,15), and Onesiphoros (2 Tim 1,16).

105. Kidd 1990, 127-129. For μεταδίδωμι and derivatives referring to benefactors: *SIG* 2.762 (Dionysopolis, first cent. BCE); *I.Priene* 55 (ll. 22, 24: the *koinon* of the Ionians for priest Dionysios Ameniou, 128/7 BCE); *I.Priene* 113 (Aulus Aemilius Zosimos, 84/01 BCE).

106. Dibelius 1955, 32-33: 'das Ideal christlicher Bürgerlichkeit'; Dibelius and Conzelmann 1972, 8, 39-41; Roloff 1988, 383-384; Wilson 1979, 42; Harland 2003a: 230-232.

107. Oberlinner 1994, 69; Oberlinner 1996, 161-162.

108. Schlier 1977, 386-393; Wilckens 1989, 28-66. The passage may take over an early Christian topos (Wilckens 1989, 31). I am not convinced that Rom 13 would contain a hidden transcript reflecting resistance to the imperial order (*pace* Elliott 1997, 184-204).

write this paraenesis that puzzles commentators with its optimistic view of the state and of Roman authority. It may have been part of his missionary strategy, and it clearly antedated the Neronian persecution.¹⁰⁹

The PE show even stronger deference for (Roman) authorities. Tit 3,1 catches up with Paul's exhortation in Romans ('remind them') without motivating the need to submit to authorities (*archais exousias hypotasessthai*, ἀρχαῖς ἐξουσίαις ὑποτάσσεσθαι). This attitude is the first in the list of virtues to which Christians should subscribe, followed by readiness for good deeds, forestalling slander, meekness and gentleness toward everyone. Submission has a unifying function in the worldview of the Pastorals; it is required in the family, in the church and in society.¹¹⁰

1 Tim 2,1-2 goes further, demanding public prayers for all humans, chiefly for civil authorities (ὕπερ βασιλέων καὶ πάντων τῶν ἐν ὑπεροχῇ ὄντων), obviously for the emperor and the representatives of the imperial government. The twofold motivation given is different from that proposed by Paul in Romans. First, submission to authorities may provide for Christians the likelihood of a quiet and peaceful life (*eremon kai hesychion bion*, ἡρεμιον καὶ ἡσύχιον βίον), in piety (*eusebeia*) and dignity (*semnotes*).¹¹¹ Respect for authority is thereby connected with social peace. Second, compliance with the worldly powers is congruent with the universal saving will of God (vv. 3-4). In Titus and 1 Timothy such deference toward authorities indicates a concern for respectability and hope for earning the esteem of the outsiders. This positive attitude toward authority and society suggests that Christian allegiance is compatible with civic loyalty. How-

109. Viviano 2009, 237-238. Roman (Jewish) Christians had already been affected by Claudius' decision to expel the Jews and probably Jewish Christians (Wilckens 1989, 36, cf. Suet., *Claud.* 25.4).

110. Oberlinner 1996, 162-163.

111. On the political significance of *eusebeia/pietas* in the imperial propaganda from Augustus up to the second century: Standhartinger 2006. The theological dimension of *eusebeia* in this context is slightly overstated by Marshall (1999, 423). I do not see how prayer would imply a hope for the rulers' conversion (pace Marshall 1999, 422).

ever, the ideal of good citizenship may not go so far as to deny the ultimate fidelity to Christian faith.¹¹²

M. Gill discovers in this passage elements of polemic against the imperial cult.¹¹³ He rightly notes that the exhortation takes up language and practice connected to the imperial cult¹¹⁴ (prayer for the authorities as an expression of *eusebeia*,¹¹⁵ and hope that civic loyalty will secure a peaceful existence). Yet one wonders whether the references to the one saviour God and to Christ as sole mediator (2, 3-5) are indeed as political and polemical as he argues.¹¹⁶ Gill's arguments rest on the fact that these divine and Christological attributes challenge the imperial cult that assigns a divine character as well as a mediating and salvific function to the emperor. Actually, one may not be sure whether 1 Timothy is inspired by the traditional Old Testament depiction of God as saviour, mediated by the LXX,¹¹⁷ whether it takes over a title of prestigious deities,¹¹⁸ or whether it assigns to the (Jewish) Christian God the title of the emperor and other officials and benefactors.¹¹⁹ Given the religious use of the term

112. These views are shared with Acts, which is a political apology directed at Christian readers, demonstrating the fairness of Roman rule and its role in securing social order. Nevertheless, it also expects Christians to remain faithful. The PE manifest a similar acceptance of the political rule, limited by the demand to preserve Christian fidelity (Wilson 1979, 36-52).

113. Gill 2008.

114. Gill 2008, 141-144, 147-152.

115. So also Price 1984, 3, 232.

116. Spicq 1969, 251; 346, 360, 573-574; Roloff 1988, 355; Collins 2002, 59-61; Gill 2008, 152-156, 158-160. Collins asserts that 1 Tim 2 emphasises the humanity of Christ against the claimed divinity of the emperor. Yet, this is difficult to sustain: for that purpose one would emphasise the *divinity* of Christ against the *human* nature of the emperor.

117. *Soter* (σωτήρ) for God may be traditional, drawn from the LXX. In this particular text it may merely be used as a *nomen agentis* (Dibelius and Conzelmann 1972, 41).

118. *Soter* (σωτήρ) was the attribute of various divinities: Zeus, Asclepius, Athena or Artemis: Poland 1909, 238; Price 1984, 39, 225; also *I.Ephesos* 3402; *Milet* VI 1 308; *I.Stratonikeia* 1122; *I.Tralleis* 10; IG II² 2869; *I.Ephesos* 26; 2928 with add. p. 22; 1265; *I.Magnesia* 79; Manganaro 1965, no. 24.

119. To Asia Minor Christians *soter* may have brought to mind the title of emperors or other officials (Augustus: Price 1984, 54; Claudius: Scramuzza 1940, 261-266 θεός;

both in Hellenistic Judaism and in the Greek-speaking world, the term could simply be a title of God. Even if the author *was* inspired by the imperial cult, this does not mean that *soter* is used polemically. Writers commonly applied to God titles borrowed from the political sphere (God as king and ruler of the earth in the OT; Greek gods and goddesses as kings or queens¹²⁰), not because they wished to defy the rule of earthly monarchs, but simply because they described God (the gods) with the title of the highest known authority. It is therefore possible that God is perceived as *the* saviour of all humans, just as officials are saviours of a city and the emperor is the saviour of the empire.

Respect for and obedience to authorities was an essential virtue in ancient societies. This attitude was trusted to secure social concord and the very existence of a state.¹²¹ *Hesychia* (ἡσυχία) marked the assent of the masses to the decisions of political leaders.¹²² These convictions are shared by the PE. In 1 Tim 2,2, *hesychia* is directed against involvement in political turmoil. Christians, as loyal citizens, should respect the social and political hierarchy, avoiding to be charged with unruliness. It is difficult to tell whether this has to do with the attempt of the Roman authorities to restrain associations, in order to prevent social and political disruption.¹²³ From an inner perspective, this position resulted from the loss of the sense of eschatological immediacy. At any rate, this expression of loyalty also shows that the attitude of this community (or at least of the

σωτήρ και εὐεργέτης: *IGRR* IV.584, Aezani; σωτήρ τῆς οἰκουμένης: *IG* XII.2 541, Erebus, Lesbos; σωτήρ και εὐεργέτης: *IGRR* 4.1099, Halasarna, Cos]. See also Vespasian (I.Iasos 602). For senators, and for Titus Flaminus, Price, 42, 46-47. A search on *soter* (σωτήρ) in the epigraphic database of the Packard Institute of Humanities shows numerous cases where the term is used for benefactors and/or lower officials. Therefore the term in itself need not be taken as indicative of the imperial cult.

120. Neyrey 2005, 66-67.

121. Plut., *Prae. ger. reip.* 20-21, *Mor.* 816A-F.

122. Plut., *Fab.* 9.2; Alc. 26.2.9.

123. Plin., *Ep.* 10.33, 34; 10.92, 93; 10.96, 97. On legal regulations and on Roman fear of illicit and disruptive actions of *collegia*: Waltzing 1895, 115-121, 132-140; Cotter 1996, 74-89; Sirks 2006, 21-40; Ascough 2003, 42-46. The impact of restrictive Roman legislation in the Eastern provinces has been challenged: Arnaoutoglou 2002, 27-44; Harland 2003a: 161-173. See also Perry in this volume.

author) did not differ so much from that of contemporary associations.¹²⁴

2. Nothing is known about the way in which the state, through the local representatives of the imperial government, related to this *ekklesia*. The group was probably too insignificant to attract much attention. Whether the exhortations to submit to authorities and the wish for a quiet life, discussed above, indirectly reflect some sort of pressure from the local authorities is merely a matter of speculation.

4. Summary. Was the community of the Pastoral Epistles a religious association?

This essay has explored the features of the *ekklesia* of the PE, to check the hypothesis that this community can be assimilated to a private religious association. To sum up, religious associations were established on private initiative, sometimes by a single founder, and members were tied together by a common cult. These associations could bear specific names (*thiasos, mystai, cultores*), yet other, less specific appellations were also known. The name often carried a theophoric element. Religious associations were frequently related to the structures of the *oikos*. Although subject to state control, generally such associations were not part of the public cult. They had a more or less established organisation, officials and statutes. In terms of gender, religious associations were more frequently gender-inclusive, compared to professional ones. Members not infrequently belonged to various social strata.

The community envisaged by the PE was more than likely founded by Paul, whose role was analogous to that of numerous other persons who established religious associations. Members joined freely, because of their common devotion to and worship of God and Jesus Christ. Their community is named *ekklesia Theou* and *oikos Theou*, both clearly theophoric. Whereas the origin of the term *ekklesia* is debated, it is not unknown in associations. The *oikos* (*do-*

124. On the participation of associations in the imperial cult: Harland 2003a: 115-136. The PE would certainly not promote participation in the imperial cult.

mus) is rather common as a reference to associations, and some religious associations even bear the name of *oikos* of the worshipped god(s) (e.g. the *oikos* of the *Theoi Megaloi*), just as the Christian *ekklesia* does.

The *ekklesia*, though replicating in a sense the *oikos*, includes members belonging to more than one household. Both men and women, better-off householders and slaves can be members. The ethnic and geographic heterogeneity is difficult to assess. In the PE we find merely a reminiscence of the *adelphos* terminology so typical of the authentic Pauline epistles, and even that is used for an ideological purpose. This challenges the often quoted contrast between the familial relations in Christian communities and the alleged lack of such dimension in associations.¹²⁵

Two aspects very typical of associations, namely conviviality and the burial of deceased members, are not mentioned. Yet New Testament scholars would probably not conclude from this silence that the Eucharist was not celebrated in this community or that Christians were unconcerned about the decent burial of their fellows.

The station codes and church orders of the PE may be regarded as drafts of statutes. Yet, these writings pertain to a different genre than the bylaws of some known associations. One should not therefore expect to find any full-fledged statutes here. In terms of organisation, the institutionalisation is more advanced compared to the lifetime of the founder, not only because of the offices, but also because of the emphasis on the exclusive authority of officeholders. The offices named here (*episkopoi*, *diakonoi*) can be found in associations, as well.

The PE report about the attitude to be displayed toward the state. The author expects members to submit to civil authorities, moreover, to organise public prayers on their behalf, in the hope that Christians may live a quiet life, in *eusebeia*. Whereas some modern authors discover signs of anti-imperial polemic, in fact these epistles express loyalty toward Roman authorities. It may well be that this loyalty is motivated by the hope to avoid censure. At any

125. McCready 1996, 64.

rate, we do not find here anything of the harsh anti-Roman, anti-imperial polemic of the Book of Revelation.¹²⁶

The PE, as otherwise other New Testament writings, do suggest a marked concern with teaching, probably to a greater extent than in Greco-Roman associations. This concern is largely due to the Jewish roots of the Christian faith, and as such should not be used to oppose Christian communities to associations. Although Judaism was deeply concerned with teaching, Jewish communities were also organised as associations. On the other hand, it would be anachronistic to project our perception of doctrine (that inevitably includes the system of Christian dogmas developed through centuries) into the first century, and to regard the Christian *ekklesiai* as a sort of theological institutes.

Christian communities developed within a given society and from its members. At the formative stage, these inevitably drew from the experience of their society. In terms of organisation, early Christian communities come very close to religious associations. The community of the PE is a good illustration of this point.

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126. For the sectarian, anti-Roman character of Revelation, and its contrast to the PE and 1 Peter: Harland 2003a: 239-264.

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