

**A SOCIAL-SCIENTIFIC KEY TO PAUL'S LETTER TO THE GALATIANS: AN
ALTERNATIVE TO OPPONENT HYPOTHESES AS A CYPHER KEY**

by

PIETER FRANCOIS CRAFFERT

submitted in accordance with the requirements
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF THEOLOGY

in the subject

NEW TESTAMENT

at the

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

PROMOTER: PROF W S VORSTER

JUNE 1992

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	vii
SUMMARY.....	viii

CHAPTER 1

OPPONENT HYPOTHESES AS A CYPHER KEY TO THE INTERPRETATION OF PAUL'S LETTER TO THE GALATIANS

1 OPPONENT HYPOTHESES AND THE PLAN OF THIS STUDY	1
2 THE SIGNIFICANCE OF OPPONENT HYPOTHESES AS CYPHER KEYS	5
3 THE SCHOLARLY CONSTRUCTION OF PAUL'S OPPONENTS IN THE LETTER TO THE GALATIANS	6
3.1 Some central issues	6
3.2 The recipients of the letter to the Galatians	8
3.3 What do we know about Paul's opponents in Galatia?	8
3.3.1 Were the opponents insiders or outsiders?	10
3.3.2 What was the opponents' message?	10
3.3.3 In dispute, Paul's gospel or apostleship?	11
3.3.4 Was Paul independent of the Jerusalem apostles or not?	11
3.3.5 Ethnic identity: Jews or Gentiles?	11
3.3.6 Judaizers?	12
4 MIRROR READING IN OPPONENT RESEARCH	13
4.1 Mirror reading in perspective: reflecting historical constructions	14
4.2 Can mirror reading be reconditioned?	16
4.3 Concluding remarks: situating mirror reading	18
5 OPPONENT HYPOTHESES AS A HISTORY-OF-IDEAS APPROACH	19
5.1 The fallacy of idealism and a challenge to (theological) reductionism	20
5.2 Opponent hypotheses and the fallacy of idealism	21
6 OPPONENT HYPOTHESES AND COMMUNICATIVE CONTEXT	23
6.1 Two trends regarding the occasion of the letter	24
6.1.1 Historical approaches	25
6.1.2 Literary approaches	28
6.2 Some observations on opponent hypotheses as a cypher key and the occasion of the letter	34
7 SOME CONCLUSIONS AND PROSPECTS	35
7.1 (Re)defining the nature of the conflict: a central question in Galatian studies	36
7.2 Paul's letter to the Galatians as a first-century document	37

CHAPTER 2

SOCIAL-SCIENTIFIC INTERPRETATION: THE QUEST FOR HISTORICAL SCHOLARSHIP

1 METHODOLOGICAL CONFIGURATIONS: AN INTRODUCTION	39
--	----

2 SOCIAL-SCIENTIFIC INTERPRETATION: A HISTORICAL ENTERPRISE	40
2.1 What is social-scientific interpretation?	41
2.1.1 Social-scientific interpretation as interdisciplinary research	42
2.1.2 Social-scientific interpretation as understanding from within	43
2.2 Conceptions of historical interpretation in New Testament research	43
2.2.1 Historical interpretation and background studies	44
2.2.2 Greek texts and historical interpretation	45
3 THE AIM OF INTERPRETATION: HISTORICAL OR NONHISTORICAL?	46
3.1 Studies in literature	47
3.2 Interpretation in the social sciences	48
3.3 Interpretation as communication or as exploitation	51
4 IS A COMMUNICATIVE APPROACH POSSIBLE?	52
4.1 The inescapability of historicity	53
4.2 Perspectivism and otherness	54
4.3 Historicity: the datedness of texts, cultures, and historical eras	56
4.4 <i>Objective historical knowledge</i> : the nature and status of interpretive claims	57
5 INTERPRETATION AS COMMUNICATION: VALUES AND ATTITUDES	59
5.1 Politics rather than epistemology	60
5.2 Values and scientific culture: the ethics of interpretation	60
5.3 Interpretive aim and the relevance of texts	62
5.3.1 Readers' interests and the independence of texts	62
5.3.2 The dilemma of relevance	64
6 SOCIAL-SCIENTIFIC INTERPRETATION AS A COMMUNICATIVE ENTERPRISE	67
6.1 Emics and etics: pointing to some possibilities of a communicative approach	67
6.2 A communicative approach as understanding from within	69
6.3 A communicative approach as thick description	71

CHAPTER 3

ON METHODOLOGICAL CONFIGURATIONS: TEXT AND CONTEXT

1 INTRODUCTION	74
2 A MAP OF METHODOLOGICAL COMPONENTS	75
2.1 The linear model in the dock	75
2.2 Accounting for paradoxical features in methodological positions	79
3 THE NATURE OF LANGUAGE AND OF TEXTS	80
3.1 Linguistic theories of meaning	80
3.2 Language and texts as cultural artifacts	82
4 TEXT AND CONTEXT: CENTRAL ISSUES IN A COMMUNICATIVE APPROACH	85

4.1	Epistemological crisis: every context has a context	85
4.2	What is this thing called context?	86
4.2.1	Categories and definitions	87
4.2.2	Sets and subsets of context	89
4.3	The interaction between text and context: hermeneutical circle/spiral	90
4.3.1	Retraining and the principle of validation	91
4.3.2	Retraining and the use of social-science models	93
4.4	The notion: <i>only the text</i>	94
5	INTERPRETATION AS CREATION	95
6	THE MEANING OF THE MEANING OF A TEXT	96
6.1	A concept in search of content	96
6.2	<i>Meaning^c</i> , significance, and <i>meaning^b</i> of a text	97
7	A COMMUNICATIVE METHODOLOGY: THE HISTORICAL- NONHISTORICAL CONTINUUM	100
8	THE LETTER TO THE GALATIANS AND BEING RETRAINED IN THE FIRST-CENTURY MEDITERRANEAN WORLD	102

CHAPTER 4

SOME (UNEXAMINED) ASSUMPTIONS AND PERSPECTIVES: ON THE NATURE AND CHARACTER OF THE PAULINE COMMUNITIES

1	INTRODUCTION	104
2	THE EXPANSION OF THE EARLY JESUS MOVEMENT	105
2.1	Opposing groups in early Christianity	105
2.2	The legacy of Baur	106
2.3	The stimulus of Heitmüller and Bultmann	109
2.4	Keeping a tradition on track: Von Harnack	110
2.5	An emerging picture of early Christian expansion	111
2.6	Paul's missionary practice and the assumed nature of the Pauline communities	111
3	<i>JEWISH CHRISTIANS: ARCHETYPE OF PAUL'S OPPONENTS</i>	112
3.1	The received view of Jewish Christianity	112
3.2	Defining Jewish Christianity: basic characteristic	113
3.3	Dogma and doctrine: criteria for demarcation	115
3.3.1	The circularity of the argument	116
3.3.2	The danger of anachronism	117
3.3.3	The danger of theological reductionism	117
3.4	Jewish Christianity and the development of the Pauline movement	118
4	FIRST-CENTURY JUDAISM: A SUBCULTURE FOR THE PAULINE MOVEMENT	119
4.1	The relationship between the Pauline movement and first-century Judaism	119
4.2	Conceptual and terminological clarity	124
4.2.1	Taxonomy and concepts describing the 'other'	125
4.2.2	Palestinian and Hellenistic/Diaspora Judaism	127

4.2.3	Admitting some limitations and possibilities	127
4.3	A new understanding of first-century Judaism	128
4.3.1	Rabbinic Judaism in the first century?	129
4.3.2	The case of normative Judaism	130
4.3.2.1	Normative Judaism: an impossible construct	130
4.3.2.2	The sects in first-century Judaism	131
4.3.2.3	A variety of Judaisms	132
4.3.3	Diversity amongst Diaspora Judaism	133
4.3.4	The Jesus (Pauline) movement as part of first-century Judaism	134
4.4	Jewish identity markers and self-understanding	135
4.4.1	The disappearance of the Jews from some scholarly quarters	137
4.4.2	The case of the so-called God-fearers	140
4.4.3	Circumcision: the sign of a Jew?	141
4.4.4	Orthopraxy rather than orthodoxy	143
5	THE NATURE OF THE PAULINE MOVEMENT, OPPONENT HYPOTHESES AND THE RECEIVED COMMUNICATIVE CONTEXT.....	145

CHAPTER 5

THE FIRST-CENTURY MEDITERRANEAN WORLD AS THE SETTING FOR THE PAULINE CORRESPONDENCE AND CONFLICT IN GALATIA

1	INTRODUCTION	147
2	SOCIAL LOCATION VERSUS SOCIAL CONDITIONS	148
3	THE FIRST-CENTURY MEDITERRANEAN SOCIETY AS AN AGRARIAN SOCIETY	149
3.1	The interconnectedness of agrarian societies	151
3.2	Some general features of an agrarian society	151
4	COMMUNICATION IN A PREDOMINANTLY ORAL CULTURE	155
4.1	The first-century Mediterranean world as a predominantly oral world ...	156
4.2	Some special features with regard to oral worlds	158
4.3	First-century letters, communication and authority	159
4.4	Contribution of studies on oral cultures to Paul's communicative context	162
5	RELIGION IN THE FIRST-CENTURY MEDITERRANEAN WORLD	163
5.1	Posing the problem of religious phenomena	163
5.2	Cross-cultural definitions of religion	165
5.2.1	Functional and substantive definitions	165
5.2.2	Mapping the area of religion	166
5.3	The outline of a first-century Mediterranean religious map	168
5.4	Some landmarks on a map of first-century substantive religion	170
6	WHERE IS THE FIRST-CENTURY MEDITERRANEAN MODEL TAKING US?	174

CHAPTER 6**THE NATURE OF THE PAULINE HOUSEHOLD COMMUNITIES IN GALATIA: ONE CONFIGURATION OF THE NETWORKS OF FIRST-CENTURY SOCIO-CULTURAL INTERACTION**

1 INTRODUCTION	176
2 SOCIAL GROUPS IN THE FIRST-CENTURY MEDITERRANEAN WORLD	177
2.1 The received view(s) on the organisation of the Pauline ἐκκλησίαι.....	178
2.2 The social location of groups in the first-century Mediterranean world .	179
2.3 Configurations of social networks	182
2.4 Advantages of a configuration metaphor	183
3 COMPARABLE GROUPS IN THE NETWORK OF SOCIO-CULTURAL ORGANISATIONS	184
3.1 Greco-Roman clubs and voluntary associations	185
3.2 Philosophical school or scholastic community	188
3.2.1 The problem of philosophy in Paul's world	188
3.2.2 Some scholarly proposals on Paul the philosopher	189
3.2.3 Reconsidering the model of the philosophical school	191
3.3 The Diaspora synagogue prior to 70 CE	192
3.3.1 The received view of Jewish synagogues	192
3.3.2 An alternative view of Jewish synagogues	193
3.3.3 Jewish synagogues and/as voluntary associations	195
4 THE HOUSEHOLD SETTING IN THE FIRST-CENTURY MEDITERRANEAN WORLD.....	199
4.1 Houses and housing	200
4.2 Households and hospitality	201
5 NETWORKS OF SOCIO-CULTURAL RELATIONS IN PAUL'S WORLD.....	204
5.1 Patron-client relationships	204
5.2 Honour and shame as pivotal values in the first-century world	206
6 THE NATURE OF THE PAULINE HOUSEHOLD COMMUNITIES IN GALATIA: A PROPOSAL	206

CHAPTER 7**A FIRST-CENTURY MEDITERRANEAN COMMUNICATIVE CONTEXT AND THE CONFLICT IN GALATIA: A QUESTION OF SOCIAL AUTHORITY**

1 INTRODUCTION	209
2 HOUSEHOLD STRUCTURES AND THE CHARACTER OF THE PAULINE COMMUNITIES IN GALATIA	210
2.1 The central role of household institutions in Paul's activities	210
2.2 Paul and patronage: a reversal of conventions?	212

2.3	Some concluding remarks on the character of the Pauline household communities	214
3	FIRST-CENTURY DIASPORA JUDAISM AND THE HOUSEHOLD SETTING	216
3.1	Membership of first-century Judaism: conversion or recruitment?	217
3.2	Merging the new understanding and the synagogue setting of first-century Judaism	219
3.3	A different role for Jewish identity markers, especially circumcision	221
3.4	Jewishness and who was a Jew	222
4	PAUL'S <i>RELIGIOUS</i> ACTIVITIES IN GALATIA: THE PROPAGANDA OF A DIVINE MAN	223
4.1	Paul's missionary practice: a man of magic and miracle	223
4.2	The letter to the Galatians as religious propaganda	225
4.3	Charismatic authority and patronal honour	226
5	THE NATURE OF THE CONFLICT IN GALATIA FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF A SOCIAL-SCIENTIFIC CYPHER KEY	228
5.1	The question as to the nature (not the cause) of the conflict in Galatia .	228
5.2	Conflicting convictions: a question of cultural values	229
5.3	A bipolar authority structure in the Pauline communities	231
5.4	A socio-religious conflict: a challenge to Paul's honour and authority	233
5.4.1	Divine revelations: pointing towards the nature of the conflict?	233
5.4.2	Apostleship and gospel: Elements in Paul's authority struggle?	234
5.4.3	Evil eye accusations and divine curses: components of a magical letter?	236
6	THE CONFLICT IN GALATIA IN A FIRST-CENTURY COMMUNICATIVE CONTEXT: THE EMERGENCE OF AN ALTERNATIVE CYPHER KEY	237
	WORKS CONSULTED	240

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Acknowledgments are due to the Human Sciences Research Council for its financial support in the completion of this study.

Sound scholarship – which is, after all, identical with the process of interpretation and understanding – does not take place in the minds of isolated individuals. My indebtedness regarding this study is acknowledged in the bibliographical references, but it is not so easy to acknowledge the contribution of those closer to home. That of my promoter, Prof. Willem Vorster, was far in excess of what one expects from a promoter. To thank him for his constant encouragement, his high standards of academic excellence – and especially for allowing me to make my own mistakes! – is to mention but a part of his role in the completion of this study.

The contribution of discussion partners, especially when they are also friends, is difficult to estimate at its true value. To Pieter Botha I can talk in incomplete sentences. He will probably recognise no single sentence in this study, but because of our many hours of conversation nothing will be new to him. Danie Goosen is one of the best listeners and conversational partners I have met. He often prompted me to rethink and reformulate attempts at methodological and theoretical reflection. While Vossie Vorster was at times more anxious than I for the completion of this thesis, his critical questions always reminded me not to take myself too seriously. All three of them at some stage read part of a preliminary draft of this study (and contributed to the proof reading). While the mistakes left are mine, their comments and encouragement helped to make it a better product.

Madeleine du Toit did an excellent job of correcting the English.

The completion of a thesis can never be divorced from the joys and sorrows of the real world out there. Many people share in it, and their sacrifices are more than can be acknowledged. This doctoral thesis is only the final stage of many years of study during which my parents contributed both financially and morally. My late father taught us that if something is worth undertaking, it is worth completing with pride. I hope he would have been proud of this work. From my mother I learned that love and appreciation of books and reading opens up new avenues for a curious mind.

I brought this thesis into our marriage. The support and encouragement Leona gave me, and the sacrifices she made are a token of her loyalty and friendship. I dedicate this thesis to you – for your love and patience. For the past two years Valmy often experienced the absence of a father working in his study. Being there for you (and Leonette – today only two days old) will make up for the time we lost.

SUMMARY

Opposition to Paul as central to the occasion of the letter to the Galatians (expressed in scholarly circles in terms of different opponent hypotheses) is identified as a pivotal factor in the interpretation of that letter. An analysis of some of the received opponent hypotheses reveals that today, as throughout the history of the critical interpretation of the letter, they are basically different proposals sharing the same historical and methodological components. Both components are critically examined and it is suggested that inadequate assumptions lead to an anachronistic and ethnocentric view of the nature of the conflict and consequently, from a historical point of view, a distorted cypher key to the interpretation of the letter.

The proposal of a social-scientific approach to the letter presents, at the methodological level, the components of an alternative cypher key. It attempts to be interdisciplinary in that it accounts for the otherness of foreign cultures and distant historical eras in an integrated and explicit way.

Because of the methodological components an alternative set of historical components can be suggested. A focus on contemporary views on first-century Judaism and the expansion of the Pauline communities in the first-century world not only points to shortcomings in the received views but provides an alternative perspective on the communicative context of the letter. A first but important step is taken to construct a probable first-century Mediterranean communicative context for the interpretation of the letter.

In view of this alternative communicative context it is possible to redefine the conflict as a truly first-century Mediterranean one in which Paul's authority and honour were at stake. This makes it possible to construe the text in a different way. Instead of regarding the letter to the Galatians as a document of intra-Christian struggle about conflicting theological or doctrinal convictions, it is suggested that the letter be construed as the product of Paul's missionary endeavour within the household setting, the subculture of first-century Judaism, and the confines of orality and religion in the first-century world.

CHAPTER 1

OPPONENT HYPOTHESES AS A CYPHER KEY TO THE INTERPRETATION OF PAUL'S LETTER TO THE GALATIANS

It is clear that Galatians is Paul's response to what he considered to be an alarming crisis in the Galatian churches; and ... the first step in understanding Paul's letter must be some attempt to reconstruct this Galatian crisis.

(Barclay 1988:36)

1 OPPONENT HYPOTHESES AND THE PLAN OF THIS STUDY

One issue, perhaps even the central one, in the interpretation of Paul's letter to the Galatians for at least the past hundred years is the part played by opponent hypotheses. In fact, virtually every study of the letter to the Galatians contains references to the identity of Paul's opponents, or constructions of their activities, either in the letter itself or in Galatia if not in both.

The term *opponent hypotheses* will be used to designate the different hypotheses about the identity of Paul's opponents. It should, however, be noted that none of these hypotheses refer exclusively to the identity of Paul's opponents without at the same time carrying a whole ballast of methodological and historical assumptions. They are, in short, complex configurations consisting of both historical and methodological components which function as cypher keys for interpreting the letter to the Galatians. It will be argued that they are particular instances of the selfsame methodological and historical components which constitute different versions of similar cypher keys applied to the letter to the Galatians. Thus (if a complex set of arguments can be combined in one sentence) it is this: constructions of the occasion of the letter to the Galatian – which are fundamentally affected by the conduct of opponents – are based on assumptions about the situation in Galatia. These, in short, are what opponent hypotheses are about. What is meant by methodological and historical components can be explained in passing.

A necessary distinction may be made between methods and research procedures on the one hand and methodology as the 'study of principles underlying, fundamental to and implicit in the conduct of scientific inquiry' (Mabry 1984:145) on the other. Methodological issues include philosophical questions about the 'principles, rules and assumptions which underlie the conduct of research,' together with epistemological questions regarding the 'possibility of gaining knowledge about that which we wish to study and the ways appropriate to the quest for such knowledge' (Mabry 1984:145). The philosophical questions will relate to the position in terms of the philosophy of history, which may vary from a history-of-ideas to a social-scientific approach to historical interpretation. Epistemological aspects, in this

study, include such issues as values and attitudes determining interpretive activities, the aim of interpretation and the nature of historical knowledge.

Historical components are concerned with assumptions about the social and historical conditions that are in turn assumed when reading the letter. In opponent hypotheses they primarily relate to the situation in Galatia and the specific occasion of the letter. The concept *communicative context*, rather than the situation in Galatia or the occasion of the letter, will be used in this study.

A *cypher key* is a construction by a reader or interpreter – consisting at the least of methodological components and historical components related to the topic of interpretation – by means of which a text is interpreted or construed. Each of these components may be explicitly argued or implicitly assumed, overt or covert, examined or unexamined. Each cypher key makes use of a communicative context (since interpretation without a context is impossible), which in turn consists of historical components garnered from the sources by means of some methodological approach.

Thus opponent hypotheses as cypher keys are particular scholarly constructions (consisting of both historical and methodological components) by means of which the letter to the Galatians is construed. Opponent hypotheses are taken in this study to be cypher keys of the same kind, since (as is to be argued) they share, broadly speaking, the same historical and methodological components.

The aim of this study is to examine whether opponent hypotheses are an appropriate cypher key to the interpretation of the letter to the Galatians and to suggest, as an alternative cypher key, a social-scientific approach. Both the methodological and the historical components of opponent hypotheses as a cypher key will be examined, and alternatives will be suggested in both regards.

In order to reach this aim, I shall start with an analysis of the part played by opponent hypotheses in the interpretation of the letter. From the analysis in the first chapter of opponent hypotheses as the generally approved cypher key to the letter to the Galatians, both the historical and the methodological components will be identified. The methodological approach that dominates opponent hypotheses will be described as a history-of-ideas approach, with Paul's letters themselves setting the interpretive agenda. That is to say, the letter to the Galatians itself serves as the primary source in establishing the communicative context. The two central sets of historical components consist, on the one hand, of assumptions on the expansion of the early Jesus movement and on the other hand a set of assumptions on first-century Judaism. One result of these cypher keys is that the cause of the conflict in Galatia becomes the focus. It will be argued that they usually disregard the question as to the nature of the conflict.

The thesis of this study, however, is that an alternative approach to the interpretation of the letter to the Galatians is possible once the investigation shifts from the

cause(s) to the nature of the conflict. In arguing this thesis, one can hardly do other than start at the point of *historical interpretation*. That is to say, apart from a critical examination of the methodological components of opponent hypotheses as a cypher key (together with the underlying assumptions on the nature of the conflict), an alternative view of historical interpretation will be presented. (That will be the topic of chapter 2.)

It should be kept in mind from the outset that assumptions on at least two levels are at stake. The choice of a particular definition of historical interpretation (as part of a cypher key consisting of certain configurations of historical and methodological components) should be kept apart from the interpretation itself. The first depends on one's aim of interpretation, which influences (but is not the same as) the specific way in which that aim is reached. To be concrete: the choice of a social-scientific cypher key (in contrast to any other cypher key) depends on a definite aim of interpretation, while the social-scientific cypher key itself (and the way in which it is utilised) can in turn be analysed in terms of its constituting elements.

Contrary to the received view of historical interpretation, which is labelled a history-of-ideas approach, it will be argued in the second chapter that claims of historical interpretation should be accompanied by a historical aim of interpretation. That is to say, the social-scientific methodological configuration to be suggested in this chapter is the product of a whole set of philosophical and epistemological choices. It represents a set of values and attitudes which fundamentally characterise the interpretive activity as a historical and interdisciplinary activity – thus as a particular aim-of-interpretation position.

Part and parcel of methodological configurations are views on aspects such as *text*, *context* and *meaning*. An exposition of these aspects in the third chapter should be seen in contrast to the view assumed in opponent hypotheses.

From the analysis of the historical components of opponent hypotheses in the first chapter it inevitably follows that two sets of components should be examined in greater detail. Although assumptions on the expansion of the early Jesus movement and fixed ideas on first-century Judaism are often only tacitly assumed in opponent hypotheses, they are not inoperative. As a matter of fact, viewpoints on the Pauline movement as constituted on the basis of (theological) ideas conflicting with Jewish Christianity on the one hand, and first-century Judaism on the other hand, are generally accepted. The result: the nature of the Pauline movement is fundamentally determined by idiosyncratic theological or dogmatic ideas. It will be argued that these criteria are the product of both historical and methodological assumptions which are well established in most opponent hypotheses. It therefore comes as no surprise that the majority of opponent hypotheses operate with a view of the conflict as primarily a conflict of convictions, hence a theological or doctrinal conflict.

It is to be argued that, despite the methodological shortcomings, these keys are flawed by several historical shortcomings. Apart from an examination of the his-

torical components in the fourth chapter, a first indication will be suggested of the direction in which research has to develop (if an alternative cypher key is to be presented).

Following on the discussion of methodological configurations, where the importance of a communicative context in the reading of any text will be stressed, a first step in constructing a first-century Mediterranean communicative context will be attempted in the fifth and sixth chapters. A recognition of the role of cultural context in the interpretive process, together with an acceptance of the differences between foreign cultures and distant historical eras, inevitably challenges the communicative context taken for granted in most opponent hypotheses. Description of the nature and expansion of the Pauline communities, it will be argued, can no longer be restricted to theological or doctrinal components.

In view of these historical problems, together with the methodological principles to be argued in this study, the investigation will then shift to the nature of the conflict and at least four areas of great significance will be marked down for critical examination and exposition.

The first will be an exploration of the first-century Mediterranean world (as the cultural context within which the conflict took place) as an example of an agrarian culture. Together with the oral nature and substantive character of first-century religion, the agrarian features will receive special attention in chapter 5.

As the environment within which the conflict took place, the first-century Mediterranean socio-cultural system and the nature of groups (especially the nature of the Pauline communities) in the first-century world will be investigated. Thus the social networks, together with the socio-cultural codes and conventions regulating social interaction within the smaller sphere of first-century groups in general and the Pauline communities in particular, will be the subject of chapter 6.

This will be followed, finally, by an attempt to describe the nature of the conflict in Galatia as a first-century Mediterranean conflict. Given the constructed communicative context, it will be suggested that the conflict was of a social nature and took place within the confines of first-century authority structures and authority networks of which Paul was a part. It should be noted from the outset that rejection of opponent hypotheses as a cypher key does not mean rejection of opponents, or of a conflict as such, in Galatia. Rather, a particular definition of the conflict (which takes it for granted that it was a conflict about conflicting convictions) is questioned. Although no attempt will be made to identify the opponents (in terms of the alternative cypher key), it seems unquestionable that there were people who opposed Paul.

While such distinctions as are described here cannot function as hard-and-fast rules (and are subject to several shortcomings), they are useful – from an analytical point of view – in identifying and evaluating the constituent aspects of different cypher

keys. However, prior to the discussion of methodological components it is necessary to scrutinise opponent hypotheses as a cypher key in the interpretation of the letter to the Galatians.

2 THE SIGNIFICANCE OF OPPONENT HYPOTHESES AS CYPHER KEYS

One of the two questions which traditionally dominated Pauline research is *Situationsanalyse* which is concerned with the question of Paul's *Gemeindesituation* and more precisely the identity of his opponents (see Theißen 1979:16).¹ As a matter of fact, Kümmel describes it as the 'wichtigste Frage' (1970:56) for the interpretation of Paul's letters.

The significance of opponent hypotheses in Pauline research can be seen, in the first instance, in the way the letters are interpreted. It was the Tübingen scholar FC Baur who first made Paul's opponents a decisive key to the whole body of the apostle's writings (see Ellis 1975:271-272; Eckert 1971:4; Howard 1979:1). In the words of Koester: '... without a reconstruction of the thoughts of the opponents, many sections of the Pauline letters would remain completely incomprehensible' (1982:117).

The epigraph (quotation) at the beginning of this chapter is more than representative of scholarly opinion on the occasion of the letter as well as the direction which a search for a solution should take. As far as it goes, the letter is Paul's response to a crisis in Galatia, and the very first step in understanding the letter is to reconstruct that crisis. As will be pointed out, even scholars who appear to be critical of constructions of the opponents' identity as a basis for interpreting the letter very often rely on such constructions, and especially on the assumed elements of the cypher key.

Even though the nature of the crisis and the communicative context assumed in constructing it are not immediately apparent, the nature of the crisis or conflict is directly related to the assumed or constructed nature of the Pauline movement. While the notion of a crisis created by opponents, and even the theological or doctrinal nature of the crisis, is well established as the cause of the letter, there is no general agreement in scholarly debate on the identity of the opponents.

Furthermore, the identity of the opponents is vital to 'das Gesamtbild von der Geschichte des Urchristentums' (Eckert 1971:229; and see Hawkins 1971:13). Regarding the construction of the history of the early Jesus movement, King (1983:342) says that 'everyone is agreed they [Paul's opponents] stand at the center of the issues involved'. The letter to the Galatians in particular (especially chapters 1 and 2) very

¹ The other one is the 'Traditionsanalyse, d.h. durch die Herausarbeitung traditioneller Redewendungen, Formeln und Lieder, wies man nach, wie sehr auch Paulus in Gemeindefraditionen eingebettet war' (Theißen 1979:16).

often plays an exclusive part in constructing the history of early Christianity (see Sanders 1966; Meyer 1981:320; Gaventa 1986:311). Many insights into the development of the early Jesus movement, the relationship between Jewish and Gentile believers and the bitter disputes within the movement emerge, according to the received view, from Paul's letter to the Galatians (see Barclay 1988:1).

Given the importance of the *opponents* notion in many scholarly circles, no stone was left unturned to determine their role and identity (see Betz 1973:88; Lyons 1985:76; Martyn 1985:313; Lategan 1987:50; Hawkins 1971; Fletcher 1982). At once, however, an inconsistency becomes apparent: the opponents are identified and located in terms of a specific construction of the history of early Christianity and a specific interpretation of the letter to the Galatians, and conversely the identity of the opponents has a decisive influence on how, for example, the letter to the Galatians is interpreted and the history of the early Jesus movement constructed.

One aim of this study is to make a critical examination of the primary assumptions underlying opponent hypotheses as cypher keys and to suggest some alternatives. Methodological assumptions accompanied by particular historical assumptions, which presuppose each other and function within identifiable configurations of assumptions, will be pointed out. Stated in terms of the title of this study, an alternative to opponent hypotheses as the cypher key to the interpretation of the letter to the Galatians will be suggested.² The cypher key to be suggested, just as in the *received view*,³ consists of a particular configuration of methodological and historical components.

3 THE SCHOLARLY CONSTRUCTION OF PAUL'S OPPONENTS IN THE LETTER TO THE GALATIANS

3.1 Some central issues

‘[F]ür die Darstellung des vor- und nebenpaulinischen Christentums haben wir keine direkten Zeugnisse’ (Eckert 1971:20). Similarly, there is no primary evidence of the opponents and apart from the construction based on Paul's letter, nothing is known of their existence prior to or after the encounter in Galatia (see Schmithals 1965:106). The result is ‘that we have no primary evidence with regard to the origin,

² As will be argued shortly, the choice between the two cypher keys is based on methodological as well as historical aspects. Given certain preferences and values, together with an aim of interpretation, a methodological choice is made as to the kind of scientific inquiry to be conducted. Historical assumptions, on the other hand, can more readily be related to particular studies and positions on historical aspects such as the nature of first-century Judaism.

³ The *received view* is the concept used in the philosophy of science ‘referring to the way of understanding things in vogue among a large number of practitioners and in the popular mind’ (Malina 1986^c:171). The *received view*, Malina says, is ‘a very powerful and dogmatic orthodoxy, controlling academic departments, key journals as well as grant and/or fellowship bestowing agencies’ (1986^c:171).

thoughts, and personalities that made up the opposition' (Betz 1979:5). Thus the problem in general is that the only evidence for scholarly constructions of the opponents is based on Paul's perspective.

Even if it were true that Paul described them in detail, a historian can hardly disagree with Mußner's view that 'er [Paulus] nicht eine objektive und unparteiische Beschreibung des gegnerischen Standpunktes bietet' (1974:23), or with that of Lyons that 'our only source of certain information about the Galatian opponents is Paul's obviously one-sided, probably exaggerated, even distorted characterizations of them' (1985:78; see also Barclay 1988:37). Thus the first point to note is that if there were opponents, opponent hypotheses are based on one-sided, hostile evidence.

Secondly, it is important to realise that Paul does not even identify or describe the so-called opponents (see Gunther 1975:14; Noack 1980:17-19; Gaston 1984:63; Lyons 1985:104). The picture of the opponents is a construction based on what Paul says, not necessarily to or about the opponents, but to the Galatians in general (see Walter 1986:355; Barclay 1987:74). What is needed is an imaginative construction that uses the text as a mirror reflecting the people and their arguments as supposedly resisted by Paul.

Thirdly, it will be pointed out that the idea of a theological or doctrinal crisis is a scholarly creation based on a specific interpretive tradition. Since Paul neither identifies any opponents nor unequivocally mentions any in the letter to the Galatians, all scholarly attempts to construct their identity presuppose a specific socio-historical setting and communication situation. In this regard neither the interpretive tradition started by Baur (which characterises early Christianity as consisting of rival parties)⁴ nor the *Religionsgeschichtliche* assumptions governing the theological viewpoints of the opponents⁵ can be overlooked. In short, given the state of the evidence, it needs to be pointed out that the assumed nature of the conflict more often than not reflects a particular communicative context. One point to be pressed home in this study is that most opponent hypotheses are simultaneously the product of and part and parcel of fixed views on the nature and historical development of the early Christian movement.⁶

⁴ See furthermore chapter 4 § 2.2.

⁵ Various kinds of background material on gnosticism, apocalypticism, Judaism and the Zealot movements (to name only a few) are used to identify the opponents' theological position (see Hawkins 1971:81; Fletcher 1982:6).

⁶ In many instances it is difficult to avoid concepts such as *early church*, *Pauline Christianity*, *Jewish*, or *Gentile Christianity* (once again to name only a few) which are anachronistic to Paul's world. The concepts *early Christianity/early Christian movement* and *Jesus movement* will be used synonymously in this study as blanket terms for the Jesus movement, in all its variety, where it took root in the Roman Empire and beyond in the pre-Constantine era (see Meyers & Strange 1981:197). The believers addressed in Paul's letters and associated with him in the different cities of the Empire will be referred to as *Pauline Christianity* or the *Pauline movement*. Often members of the Pauline movement will be included as members of the Jesus movement. It will, however, be clear that the concept *Jesus movement* is not used in Theißen's strict sense of 'the renewal movement within Judaism brought into being through Jesus and existing in the area of Syria and Palestine between AD 30 and AD 70' (1978:1). For this section of first-century Judaism associated with Jesus, Charlesworth's concept (see 1990:38)

Before introducing the question on what is known of the opponents, some remarks on the recipients of the letter would be helpful.

3.2 The recipients of the letter to the Galatians

Information on the ἐκκλησίαις τῆς Γαλατίας (1:2) to which the letter is addressed, is extremely scarce. In Galatians 3:1 Paul merely calls them Γαλάται. At present there is no solution in sight to the dispute as to where these churches were located (see for example Kümmel 1975:296-298; Johnson 1975:101; Betz 1979:3-5; Longenecker 1990:lxix-lxxii). The argument ranges between two theories – the territory hypothesis (the so-called *North Galatian* theory) and the province theory (the so-called *South Galatian* theory). Unlike the argument of, for example, Betz [who admits that the arguments on both sides are mostly speculative but then goes on to say: ‘it is more probable that the Galatian churches were located in central Anatolia’ (Betz 1979:5)], the location of the churches, though it would have been helpful, is not essential to the argument in this study.⁷ Since the argument is to be based on socio-cultural codes and conventions which, arguably, were widespread in the first-century Mediterranean world, such disputes do not affect this position.⁸ It is however not ruled out that newly discovered evidence on particularities regarding either the letter or the location of the churches might prove in some instances to alter this view.

3.3 What do we know about Paul’s opponents in Galatia?

What scholars actually mean by the question, *What do we know about Paul’s opponents?* is: *What does the text really say about the opponents?* The answer, however, is straightforward and simple: nothing! Nothing at least, in the sense that the text does not identify or describe opponents. There is, however, a sense in which the text does say things which are taken as references to, and descriptions of, opponents and interpreted accordingly. In this regard two questions have traditionally dominated the research: *Who were the opponents?* and *What was their*

Palestinian Jesus movement can be used in contradistinction to the Pauline movement.

⁷ It should be noted that preference for either of the two theories depends very largely on one’s evaluation of the historical reliability of Acts. Acceptance of the *South theory* favours the historical reliability of Acts whereas the *North theory* displays a sceptical attitude (see Bruce 1970:265, but disputed by Longenecker 1990:lxviii). The limited value of both theories should also be acknowledged. Only when the correlation with Acts is at issue does it really matter whether the southern or the northern locality is chosen. Once a scholar gets down to the interpretation of the letter or the identity of the opponents, both theories are of limited value, if not totally negligible (see also Tyson 1968:244-245).

⁸ The same argument applies to the dispute on the date of the letter (see Lategan 1984^b:105-106; Longenecker 1990:lxvii-lxxviii). Criticism of the received view on the interpretive tradition of the letter will, no doubt, also put the question as to the recipients and date into perspective as part and parcel of that tradition.

theological position? (or more precisely, *What were the charges against Paul?*) The aim of both is to identify the opponents.

Gunther identifies at least eight different positions in the history of research.⁹ The following incomplete list from the past twenty years or so give a complementary indication of the variety of scholarly answers: Syncretists (Talbert 1967:29); non-Christian Jews (Harvey 1968:330); non-Pharisaic Jewish Christians (Hawkins 1971:344); Judaizers with Essene and/or Qumran background (Ellis 1975:293-295); Hellenistic Jewish Christians (Schütz 1975:126); Judaizers, i.e. Jewish Christian missionaries (Koester 1982:118); Palestinian Jewish Christians (Lüdemann 1983:146-147; 1984:45); Jews proclaiming the Gospel (Martyn 1985:314); Jews, not Jewish Christians (Walter 1986:351); Jewish Christians from Jerusalem (Lategan 1987:51); Christian Jews (that is, Jewish Christians) from Jerusalem (Longenecker 1990:xcv).

It would be fair to say that, broadly speaking, the theories can still be divided into three basic types: opponents as Judaizers, as Gnostics, or the two front hypotheses (see Fletcher 1982). However, as should already be apparent from the above list, this distinction is of limited value, since within each type the differences are much greater than would appear from these categories. For example, were the Judaizers local Jews or Jews from beyond Galatia; were they Jews by birth or only proselytes?

With each new book or article on the topic it becomes more and more difficult to categorise clearly the different authors' viewpoints. Thus, in order to make sense of the variety of positions (all claiming to be based primarily on the letter itself), a different approach will be followed. Rather than trying to categorise each position, the spectrum of historical elements constituting each position will be identified. In this way each proposal can be seen as one configuration of different historical elements.¹⁰ Note how, very often, an alteration in any one of these elements results in a totally different configuration.

Lüdemann's configuration will serve as a point of departure to bring into the open the elements present in most configurations, hence constitutive of the occasion of the letter to the Galatians.

⁹ On Galatians Gunther (1975:1) mentions the following views: Local Jews (K. Lake); Judean pneumatic, syncretistic Jews (Crownfield); Judaizers (the vast majority of scholars); Local Judaizing Gentiles (Munck); Syncretistic Jewish Christians (Fitzmeyr); Gnostic Jewish Christians (Schlier, Stahlin, Wegenast, H Koester); Libertine Gnostic Jewish Christians (Schmithals); Judaizers AND libertine pneumatics (Lütgert, Ropes, Knox, Enslin, Richardson, Jewett).

¹⁰ It should be noted that most of the aspects to be considered do not concern the letter to the Galatians only but rather Paul's activities in general. For example, the question of whether he *preached* to Jews or Gentiles is a question that touches on fundamental aspects, not only in Pauline interpretation in general but also in the history of early Christianity in particular. For that reason answers to some of the issues obviously cannot be inferred from the letter alone.

3.3.1 Were the opponents insiders or outsiders?

Galatians 1:6ff, Lüdemann maintains, refers to 'eine antipaulinische Agitation in Galatien' (1983:144). What the text says is that *τινές εἰσι οἱ παράσσοντες ὑμᾶς καὶ θέλοντες μεταστρέψαι τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ Χριστοῦ* (Gl 1:7; and see 5:10), which is taken to mean that a group of persons proclaimed a gospel to the Galatian congregation that was diametrically opposed to that of Paul.

Lüdemann's position – as the majority view – is that they were missionaries from outside (see also Kümmel 1975:298; Jewett 1970/1:204; Sanders 1983:18; Barclay 1988:43; Smiles 1989:23). Some scholars argue that the opponents were members of the Galatian community (see Tyson 1968:252; Harvey 1985:86). Adherents of either group – those who see the opponents as insiders or those who see them as outsiders – are surely not in agreement among themselves on the identity or origin of the opponents.¹¹

3.3.2 What was the opponents' message?

A further anti-Pauline element can be inferred from the content of the opponents' preaching: according to Galatians 6:12, 'Die Gegner haben versucht, die Beschneidung der Galater einzuführen' (Lüdemann 1983:144) and in terms of Galatians 4:10 other legal prescriptions such as the observance of days, months, and years are ascribed to their gospel (see Kümmel 1975:299-300; Longenecker 1990:xcv).

Depending on the ethnic identity of the Galatians and their opponents, the demand for circumcision can be interpreted differently. For some scholars circumcision provided social security for Gentiles (see Barclay 1988:58-59); according to others, circumcision would have served to protect them from the antagonism of Zealots (see Jewett 1971/2:206; Longenecker 1990:xcv). Still others take circumcision to be the final step of full incorporation into the Jewish community (see Harvey 1968:323).

It is noteworthy that, while apparently there is unanimity concerning circumcision as (one of) the major feature(s) of the opponents' message, it is not immediately clear what is meant by circumcision. Cosgrove (1988:7), referring to studies of Sanders, Beker, and Jewett, points out that it is not clear whether the opponents 'defined circumcision as an entrance requirement, a matter of obedience towards God expected

¹¹ The arguments in support of both sides are as variegated as the identity of the opponents. For the outside position it shifts from the notion that Paul refers to them in the third person and to the Galatians in the second, which means they were geographically separate (Barclay 1988:43), to Jewett's arguments that the opponents' outside origin is indicated by the sudden shift of opinion among the Galatians, the struggle for allegiance in the congregation, the fact that Paul refers to them as separate from the Galatians, and the opponents' alleged orientation to Jerusalem (see 1970/1:204). This example will suffice to suggest the variety with regard to every single aspect.

of those regarded as already members of his people, a necessary step towards "full membership," or an initiation rite ... into a higher plane of Christian spirituality'. These examples point not only to different definitions but also to different configurations with other elements such as the relationship to Jerusalem and the ethnicity of both the Galatians and the opponents.

3.3.3 In dispute, Paul's gospel or apostleship?

In the third place 'die Opposition [hat] wahrscheinlich den Apostolat Pauli bestritten' (Lüdemann 1983:145). This inference is drawn from a combination of Galatians 1:1 and 1:12 which is taken as an emphatic declaration of the independence of his disputed apostleship (see also Schlier 1971:21). One alternative is that his gospel rather than his apostleship was the focus of dispute (see Lategan 1988^a; Smiles 1989:21; Longenecker 1990:xcv) while others maintain that, in his case, apostleship and gospel cannot be separated (see Schütz 1975:134; Betz 1976:105; Beker 1980:42; Roetzel 1982:64, 67; Brinsmead 1982:58; Meeks 1983:115).

3.3.4 Was Paul independent of the Jerusalem apostles or not?

Finally, 'bestand eine weitere antipaulinische Attacke darin, Paulus Abhängigkeit von den Jerusalemer Größen vorzuhalten' (Lüdemann 1983:145). Paul's emphatic denial of dependence on the Jerusalem church for his gospel (see Gl 1:17; 2:2) is taken to be a reaction to an accusation of dependence. It is interpreted in at least two adverse ways: (1) that the opponents brought up Paul's dependence on Jerusalem as an accusation, or (2) that the opponents made an explicit point of Paul's dependence on Jerusalem in order to point out his deviation from them (see Kümmel 1975:300).

Decisions on this question are closely related to the content of their message as well as the question of Paul's gospel or apostleship as the disputed issue.

3.3.5 Ethnic identity: Jews or Gentiles?

The question of ethnic identity (Jews or Gentiles) applies to both the Galatian recipients of the letter and the troublemakers. The central role attributed to circumcision in the construction of the crisis (see, for example, Barclay 1988:46) causes serious difficulties in explaining the ethnic identity of both the Galatians and their opponents.

The majority take it that the letter was addressed to Gentiles (see Harvey 1968:323; Betz 1979:4; Beker 1980:42; Barclay 1988:45). The main reasons are that they were not circumcised (Gl 6:12) and used to worship idols (Gl 4:8-9). Others argue strongly for a Jewish identity – either Gentiles who were formerly God-fearers or proselytes, or Jews of the Greek-Jewish communities in the Empire (see Davies

1981:311-312) – while yet others deny any prior connection with Jewish synagogues or communities (see Barclay 1988:52).¹²

The opponents, the majority of scholars maintain, were Jews by birth (see Jewett 1970/1:203; Betz 1979:7; Beker 1980:42; Walter 1986:351).¹³ Some, however, think they were Gentiles (see Munck 1959:87).

3.3.6 Judaizers?

As in the case of many other components, there is no broad consensus on what is meant by the term *ἰουδαῖζειν* in Galatians 2:14. *Judaize* and, correspondingly, *Judaizers* are typically used in contemporary literature to mean ‘to promote a Jewish lifestyle’ (see Cosgrove 1988:6 n 1). Betz, for example, argues that *ἰουδαῖζειν* in Galatians 2:14 ‘includes more than submitting to Jewish dietary laws; it describes forcing one to become a Jewish convert obliged to keep the whole Torah’ (1979:112). On the other hand, some scholars maintain that it means ‘to live like a Jew’ or to ‘adopt the lifestyle of a Jew’ and does not allude to forcing others to do so (see Harvey 1968:322; Cosgrove 1988:6 n 1; Barclay 1988:36; Hansen 1989:258 n 1). Taylor’s interesting conclusion on this topic is that (in the fourth century, at least) Judaizers who are traditionally taken to be Jews (*Jewish Christians*) turn out to be Gentiles who promoted a Jewish lifestyle (see 1990:319).

It is an almost impossible task to point out all the scholarly positions: virtually every possible configuration has a defender.¹⁴ Since it is not the aim of this study to adopt any of the existing opponent hypotheses or to elaborate on any of them, no attempt will be made to propose an alternative configuration of elements.

Despite the disagreement on particulars there is surprisingly widespread agreement that a crisis existed and also on the nature of the crisis. This calls for an examination of the preconditions for this state of affairs.

¹² Barclay maintains that while they were not former God-fearers or proselytes, they were nevertheless impressed by the message of the opponents, which provided in their social needs. Being dissociated from ancestral worship, the idea that circumcision provides a Jewish identity for the Christian movement also, was necessary for people with an insecure social identity (see Barclay 1988:58-59). Harvey on the other hand argues that these Gentiles were former God-fearers (see 1968:323, 1985:81).

¹³ It should be noted that while the majority (see for example Koester 1982:118; Lüdemann 1983:146; Lategan 1987:51) take it that they were Jews who were Christians (thus, Jewish Christians), others maintain they were Hellenistic Jewish Christians (see, for example, Schütz 1975:126). Still others take them to have been non-Christian Jews (see Harvey 1968:330; Walter 1986:351).

¹⁴ In the light of the great variety of suggestions on the identity of the opponents, the idea of a *general profile* (see for example Longenecker 1990:xciv) of the opponents is nothing other than *my view* (configuration) on them. It should be noted that such *general profiles* more often than not merely represent the majority view with, in many instances, close family resemblances between the proposed arguments.

To my mind, the above overview of the elements that constitute opponent hypotheses already suggests some indicators of the direction in which these preconditions should be sought. First, while the occasion of the letter is considered important, there is a tendency to restrict the debate to differences on ideas (belief systems). That is to say, a remarkable absence in scholarly arguments of allusions to the socio-cultural conditions in the first-century world within which ideas and beliefs functioned and originated (see further § 5). Secondly, it became apparent from the arguments that particular definitions of concepts are taken for granted. In fact, it seems as if a coherent notion of the nature of the Pauline movement and the development of the early Christian movement, together with a fixed idea of first-century Judaism, are tacitly assumed in the arguments and definitions. An analysis of the method used to pinpoint the opponents and their views, namely mirror reading, may expose the role of these aspects.

4 MIRROR READING IN OPPONENT RESEARCH

The generally accepted method of determining the identity of the opponents and their charges against Paul is referred to as *mirror reading*: the text is used as a mirror which reflects, in what Paul says, the position and views of the opponents.¹⁵ It is a widely accepted principle of exegesis in opponent research (see Berger 1980:372-378). According to Tyson it is precisely the diverse conclusions reached by equally competent scholars which force us to use the mirror reading method (1968:242-243). However, the majority of scholars use the method without reflecting on it or even admitting that they use it (see, for example, Talbert 1967:30-32; Schmithals 1972:20-21, 28; Ellis 1975:293; King 1983; Lategan 1987:50; Du Toit 1988:73-74).¹⁶ The reason may be that the mirror reading method is closely bound up with the assumed occasion of the letter. The letter to the Galatians should be seen as Paul's reaction to the crisis caused by his opponents (see Tyson 1968:243). Several assumptions internal to the method can be listed.

Firstly, it is assumed that the opponents 'must have held a theological conception diametrically opposed to Paul's' (Betz 1973:103), which implies that whatever Paul affirms or denies, his opponents must have done the opposite (see Gaston 1984:63; Lyons 1985:81, 104). To be more precise, it is assumed that what Paul says was rejected by his opponents and what he denies was actually their point of view.

Secondly, on the basis of Paul's defence (*answers* to them) it can thus be determined what the opponents' charges were and what their identity was. The assumption is that a defensive letter can supply reliable information regarding the opponents and

¹⁵ While most scholars use the term *mirror reading* (see Gaston 1984:63; Lyons 1985:80; Barclay 1987, 1988) Howard, referring to the same method, prefers *charge approach* (1979:8).

¹⁶ Sumney argues that, 'up to now, interpreters have given insufficient attention to questions of method when identifying Paul's opponents' (1990:11).

their position (see Lyons 1985:80-81; Barclay 1987:73). The letter can be used to construct, from Paul's supposed answers, not only the charges and accusations against Paul but even the opponents' own point of view.

In short, the mirror reading method works as follows: the conflict reflected in the letter to the Galatians (which should be seen as an apologetic or defensive letter) demands that the letter be understood as an answer to charges or accusations (not explicitly mentioned) made by opponents. If Paul's defence is read, the accusations and charges can be derived from the negative of his denials. Mirror reading, Longenecker correctly states, 'works only where there is reasonable assurance that we are dealing with either polemic or apology' (1990:lxxxix).¹⁷

4.1 Mirror reading in perspective: reflecting historical constructions

Since no single word from the opponents themselves is available, it is said that (assuming the letter to the Galatians to be Paul's apology towards or polemic against them) their charges and accusations can be deduced from the letter (see Berger 1980:375-377). Rather than listing the different charges identified within each configuration, which would cover a few pages, it is more important to question the method in principle. That can be done once some of the basic features of mirror reading have been uncovered.

The first is the great variety of the charges and accusations against Paul that are constructed by modern scholars.¹⁸ According to Tyson that situation calls for a uniform methodology, a mirror reading method (see 1968:242). He fails to realise, however, that it is the current practice of mirror reading which is responsible for the variety.

Secondly, a comparison between the different scholarly works shows that exactly the same answer by Paul is used to identify totally different charges (see Eckert 1971:1-18; Mußner 1974:14-24; Ellis 1975; Brinsmead 1982:19-22).

The problem, to my mind, is that the basic nature of mirror reading is not acknowledged: the mirror reflects the image in front of it. This is another way of saying that the charges and accusations, together with Paul's answers, are directly dependent on particular configurations of historical assumptions. Two examples will illustrate the point.

¹⁷ Interestingly, when other scholarly interpretations are unacceptable (e.g., on the Mosaic law) it is easy to conclude that mirror reading at this point 'seems to fail us' (Longenecker 1990:c).

¹⁸ For an indication of some charges and accusations by opponents see, for example, Talbert 1967:27-32; Tyson 1968:245-250; Jewett 1970/1:200-204; Schmithals 1972:19-21; Mußner 1974:12-13; Ellis 1975:293; Gunther 1975:14-16; Schütz 1975:125-126.

In the light of the fact that the charges themselves are not clearly stated, Howard – who questions the mirror reading method – asks whether there were any direct charges at all (see 1979:8). His solution is to propose an alternative scenario: it is possible that the opponents did not accuse Paul at all, directly or indirectly, but ‘actually considered him to teach circumcision as they themselves did and in fact treated him as ally’ (1979:9). He believes that

rather than assuming that the opponents held the opposite position from the one they ascribed to Paul, they held in fact the same position ... who preached circumcision and who said that Paul did the same because he like them was dependent on the Jerusalem apostles for his gospel.

(1979:9)

His position differs from that of Baur in that ‘it contends that the judaizers believed that Paul, like them, taught the necessity of circumcision and the law for salvation and were totally unaware of his non-circumcision gospel’ (1979:2).¹⁹ Primarily Howard accepts the basic assumption (or a modified form of it) of the historical construction proposed by Baur of early Christianity as characterised by a conflict between a Pauline and Petrine faction (see chapter 4).

Howard has, however, changed the scenario but not the method of mirror reading (see Lyons 1985:96). In fact, his change of scenario demonstrates that the mirror reflects the scenario and that the text only serves as a vehicle for that mirror image.

Similarly, in Jewett’s construction of a zealous nomistic Christian group in Judea (see 1970/1:204) it is not so much the text of Paul’s letter as his historical scenario that determines the mirror image.²⁰ Jewett argues that ‘a nomistic Christian group in Judea’ (1970/1:204), who offered a completion of Paul’s gospel, was responsible for the agitation in Galatia. His hypothesis is that

Jewish Christians in Judea were stimulated by Zealotic pressure into a nomistic campaign among their fellow Christians ... It appears that the Judean Christians convinced themselves that circumcision of Gentile Christians would thwart Zealot reprisals.

(1970/1:205)

The supposed situation becomes apparent in his interpretation of Galatians 6:12-13;

¹⁹ The Galatians were, according to Howard, unaware of Paul’s non-circumcision gospel. The Jewish Christians also, who assumed that Paul held by the same circumcision gospel as they, were unaware of Paul’s position. Learning of his illness, they inferred that Paul was afraid on that account to burden the Galatians with circumcision. Thus they only completed what Paul omitted because of the illness. This unawareness of the law-free gospel came about because Paul withheld it even from the Jerusalem apostles until much later (1979:9-10). Given such an exegesis, critical remarks are to be expected; Williams, for example, thinks that at several points ‘questionable logic, excessive imaginative exegesis, and overly speculative historical reconstructions interfere with a thorough and persuasive analysis of Paul’s argument in Galatians’ (1981:308).

²⁰ Jewett’s proposal is adopted by Longenecker (see 1990:xcvi) in his recent commentary on the letter to the Galatians.

Under what circumstances would a nomistic Christian group in Judea be in danger of anti-Pauline persecution and have an interest in converting the Gentile churches to nomism in order to save itself from such a threat?

(1970/1:204)

This historical construction is clearly suspect.²¹ However, it does show how the text is turned to fit the image in front of the mirror. Circumcision is interpreted and the opponent hypothesis developed according to a constructed historical context.

4.2 Can mirror reading be reconditioned?

To my mind, the debate on common pitfalls inherent in mirror reading suggests that mirror reading as a method can be modified only up to a point. However, it indicates a more serious pitfall, namely that the nature of the method, which becomes apparent from the use or application of it, cannot be changed by internal adjustments.

The *first pitfall* can be referred to as the temptation of *present-mindedness*. The mirror reading method readily lends itself to caricatures of opponents that are contemporary with the interpreter. The high incidence in Protestant circles of the view that Paul's opponents were 'legalistic, mean-minded Jewish Christian with a streak of fundamentalist biblicism' (see Barclay 1987:81) is significant. Hickling correctly warns that doctrinal conflict 'as it emerged in the church at later periods has been silently taken as a model for the time of Paul' (1975:286). Apart from the inherent weaknesses, it also points to the argument that mirror reading reflects more of the researcher than of the text. Not only an adjustment in the criteria but also a reconsideration of the use of the method in particular cases seems to be at stake.

A *second pitfall* is that proponents of mirror reading do not take the logic of the method seriously. Barclay (see 1987:80-81) refers to it as the *mishandling of polemics*. If it is true that the occasion of the letter was a polemical or apologetic situation, then that fact should be taken seriously when interpreting the letter. Paul can hardly be taken at face value in a situation where he is going out of his way to show the worst side of his opponents, putting them in the worst possible light (see Hickling 1975:285; Barclay 1987:75; Sanders 1985:361-362; Neyrey 1988:94). Neither the effects of polemics as such nor the assumption that Paul's account is a polemic are taken seriously (see Sumney 1990:97). Furthermore, Paul's interpreters are apt to take sides in the debate. Thus, one of the main assumptions that sanctions

²¹ Is it plausible that Jewish Christians in Judea would be influenced by Zealotic pressure to such an extent that they in order to avoid persecution would go to Galatia for a 'sudden missionary enterprise' (Jewett 1970/1:206)? If that much intimidated, would they then 'tactfully...not mention that circumcision imposed the obligation to obey the entire range of the law' (1970/1:207)? Barclay also suspects that Jewett takes the charge too seriously (1987:75).

the mirror reading method, namely that Paul was reacting to charges and accusations by opponents, would certainly distort the mirror image. Interpreting a polemic can be a tricky business, and the codes and conventions of first-century polemics may pose a further difficulty.

Thus the main objection to mirror reading as a method of identifying Paul's opponents is inherent not in the method but in the fact that the nature of the method is disregarded in the use of it. There is no recognition of its circular nature. Not only is it presumed that opponents were present but also what kind of opponents they were.²²

Since the nature of the conflict is assumed, the identity of the opponents follows suit. This is confirmed by the questions posed in the received view, which is not **whether** there were opponents or **what** the nature of the conflict was, but **who** they were. Not **what** constituted the conflict but **which** opponents caused the trouble. The textual witnesses are squeezed to the last drop to provide evidence for a theological or doctrinal conflict (that is, a conflict about ideas) and consequently the opponents are identified in the same vein.

In the previous section it became apparent that the questions assume a communicative context where the conflict was of a theological or doctrinal nature. Instead of seeing the necessity of historical constructions as a 'broad context' to identify opponents and as 'a test for a hypothesis about the opponents' identity' (Sumney 1989:52), it should be used as a constraint on the question about the nature of the conflict and the existence of opponents as such. Were there opponents primarily informed by adverse theological ideas? Was Paul reacting to their (deviant) ideas? In short, both the nature of the conflict and the nature of the Pauline movement (communities) are taken for granted.

The first two pitfalls mentioned by Barclay regarding the mirror reading method – *undue selectivity* and *over-interpretation* (see 1987:79-80) – merely emphasise this point.²³ Undue selectivity and over-interpretation are not the result of negligence or malice on the part of the researchers, or of inaccuracy, but simply reflect the true nature of mirror reading: the mirror reflects what is placed in front of it. The point is that the mirror not so much reflects Paul's opponents but rather the researcher's constructed communicative context and ideas with regard to them. What is

²² It should be noted that contemporary scholarly investigations of the *pitfalls* of mirror reading (see Barclay 1987:79-83; Hansen 1989:167-170) focus on the shortcomings inherent in the approach. In other words, they attempt to establish some fundamental principles of a sound methodology for the identification of the opponents (see Sumney 1990).

²³ *Undue selectivity* has to do with the practice of selecting certain words or phrases or certain kinds of phrases, such as possible slogans or defense statements, to determine the opponents' position. *Over-interpretation*, on the other hand, occurs when every single statement in the letter is read as if it were a rebuttal of some vigorous counterstatement by the opponents (see Barclay 1987:79).

apparently needed is not more mirror images but more reflection on the *object* – that is, the communicative context in front of the mirror.

In conclusion, the main objection to mirror reading as currently used in opponent hypotheses is not primarily directed at the inherent features of the method: it follows from the uncritical use of it. Without a critical discussion of the communicative context, it merely establishes what is presupposed. Mirror reading as such is not rejected, since historians and exegetes alike make use of it²⁴ and it can indeed be used as a critical tool. With regard to the identification of the opponents the method seems to fail the test, because its inherent weaknesses are not compensated for in its application. It is applied as a bag of tricks to solve a problem it is not intended for. Mirror reading can be used neither to fill historical gaps nor to construct the ignored or denied communicative context (see Sumney 1990:100). Instead, mirror reading should be used in conscious acknowledgement and awareness of the assumed or postulated communicative context. Only then can it be of any value as a historical method. What needs to be avoided is the vicious circle effect.²⁵ It calls for a critical methodology and a different philosophy of history (see further chapter 2).

4.3 Concluding remarks: situating mirror reading

Mirror reading, by assuming that Paul is reacting to charges and accusations by opponents, affirms exactly what has to be proved – namely **whether Paul in the letter to the Galatians is reacting against charges by opponents**. By assuming an apology, the charges (and ultimately the positions and identity of the opponents) can be identified. By assuming that Paul is answering the charges, it can be proved that it is an apology. From all that has been said, it seems to me justified to conclude that, regarding the well-known and conventional method of mirror reading, it is impossible to identify the opponents without assuming their existence and identity (see also Mußner 1974:25; Lyons 1985:120).

While the mirror reading method assumes opponents, the opponent hypotheses presuppose the mirror reading method. Thus not only mirror reading but more par-

²⁴ Anyone assuming or constructing the occasion of an ancient text, or postulating an audience, in some way makes use of the mirror effect. The understanding of what is in a text very often presupposes a construction of what is not there.

²⁵ Circularity, as will be argued in a subsequent chapter, is due to the nature of interpretation and the pre-understanding which is part of it. Keck (see 1979:16) is an exponent of the kind of circularity to be avoided. What is needed is to introduce some form of outside control over what is presupposed (for an example of this, see Stowers 1986:25). This can be achieved when the claim that the text alone should be used has been avoided, and when a communicative context is argued and not assumed.

ticularly the broader philosophical and historical frame within which it operates as an interpretive tool should be examined.²⁶

In the sections to follow, mirror reading and opponent hypotheses are placed in a wider frame. Both the philosophy-of-history position (methodological assumptions) and the assumed communicative context (historical assumptions) taken for granted in the application of mirror reading have to be considered. If, for example, one loses sight of the fact that in Paul's lifetime there was as yet no fixed body of doctrine and no generally accepted *ecclesiastical* – either Jewish or *Christian* – organisation (see Koester 1982:117), then anachronistic conceptions of these aspects can easily be projected into the first century.

It will be argued in the rest of this chapter that opponent hypotheses as cypher keys consist of two aspects, closely connected and mutually dependent. The first is the history-of-ideas approach to historical research (methodological components) which characterises the mirror reading method and consequently the nature of opponent hypotheses. Secondly there are some historical assumptions on the nature and expansion of the Pauline communities which provide the framework within which opponent hypotheses operate. Both aspects will be analysed critically in this study. Although historical and methodological components are closely connected and often presuppose each other, they will as far as possible be kept apart. First, we turn to the methodological components of the received cypher keys.

5 OPPONENT HYPOTHESES AS A HISTORY-OF-IDEAS APPROACH

It has been indicated that opponent hypotheses in general and the mirror reading method in particular are characterised by the assumed communicative context, which consists of both methodological and historical components. In this section it will be indicated that the historical components of opponent hypotheses are part and parcel of a *history-of-ideas* philosophy. It will be indicated that, in terms of this approach (a common one in opponent hypotheses), assumptions on the communicative context of the letter are sought in the realm of ideas, theologies and doctrine. In short, the (history-of-ideas) methodological components affect every single aspect of

²⁶ Very much aware of the problems regarding mirror reading, Barclay (see 1987; 1988) and Sumney (see 1990:97-113) still think that it can be salvaged. What is needed is 'a carefully controlled method of working which uses logical criteria and proceeds with suitable caution' (Barclay 1987:84). Barclay mentions seven of the most appropriate criteria. It may be true that these criteria would restrict many of the far-fetched constructions we have today. Barclay's own construction of what is virtually certain and highly probable proves that. The problem with his argument is that he does not respond to the fundamental objection to the method, namely that it only confirms what is supposed at the beginning - in other words, the illegitimate circularity of the method (see Lyons 1985:104). Barclay's use of the 'whole letter as in some sense a response to the crisis brought about by the opponents' (1988:38) differs from those scholars he criticises in that he tries to avoid being selective. It is not, however, difficult to see that even the criteria he uses (see 1988:41) still presuppose that Paul was responding to charges and accusations and that the letter should be read that way.

opponent hypotheses – from assumptions on the nature of the Pauline movement to assumptions on the nature of the conflict in Galatia.

5.1 The fallacy of idealism and a challenge to (theological) reductionism

What is meant by a *history-of-ideas approach* is that Paul is essentially seen as a 'theologischer Denker' (Theißen 1979:17) and the context of his communication as primarily that of a 'theological seminary' (Scroggs 1975:21). This, according to Holmberg (1978:201-203), leads to the *fallacy of idealism* where 'all developments, conflicts and influences are at bottom developments of, and conflicts and influences between ideas' (Holmberg 1978:201). Exegetically, says Elliott, 'we have failed to take account of the fact that all ideas, concepts and knowledge are socially determined' (1981:4). In fact, scholars have failed to explain not only that all ideas are socio-culturally determined, but also which socio-cultural setting has been taken for granted. The challenge it poses for the interpretation of language that has a location prior to one's own, is the tendency to see such language in terms of one's own perception of the pre-understood subject matter rather than that which may be unique to the original author (see further chapter 2).

An overemphasis in research on the literary and theological dimensions, to the detriment of historical or sociological aspects led to a justifiable reaction among New Testament scholars.²⁷ A strong reaction against the so-called *fallacy of idealism* has arisen in the past decade or so, especially among scholars who are interested in the social-scientific interpretation of the New Testament (see, for example, Smith 1975:19; Scroggs 1980:165; Meeks 1983:164; Malina 1983:131; Tidball 1983:11; Gallagher 1984:91; MacDonald 1988:23-24).

With regard to the question of Paul's opponents in the letter to the Galatians it implies that the problem should be seen, not one-sidedly as a matter of pure theology and doctrine, but in terms of the broader socio-cultural context. Then the conflict would no longer be between 'a good Paul and evil opponents' (Scroggs 1980:175) but would be described in terms of the socio-cultural codes and conventions applicable to the first-century Mediterranean world. The challenge is to 'begin with the early believers in their concrete, historical reality rather than with an abstract "early church" which is often merely a vehicle for the theology of the New Testament writings' (Best 1983:183). The reaction to the history-of-ideas approach insists that the New Testament words should be placed squarely in the first-century communicative context from which they came.

²⁷ Scholars concerned with the historical interpretation of the New Testament have long recognised this problem. It became clear, in the words of Schubert that 'the resurging insistence on a religious and theological interpretation of the New Testament' (1947:216), is a dangerous enterprise. Schmithals warned over twenty years ago that we should be careful not to overload the theological differences in the early church with a burden they can not carry - that is, to blame the differences and schisms in the early church solely on prevailing theological differences (see 1965:103 n 2).

Many scholars who jumped on the bandwagon of a sociological or social-scientific interpretation of Paul's letters (or of the New Testament) in actual fact merely interpret the text in terms of a new set of concepts or academic jargon, but the real challenge to the *fallacy of idealism* is a methodological one. It calls for an alteration in the philosophical and epistemological components of interpretive attempts (see Craffert 1991). In other words, it calls for a rejection of a history-of-ideas approach (philosophy) together with its accompanying tools and perspectives in favour of a social-scientific approach, and an explicitly historical aim-of-interpretation (epistemological) position instead of nonhistorical aims. In the following chapter the theoretical foundation and epistemological justification of a social-scientific approach to the historical study of the letter to the Galatians will be suggested.

5.2 Opponent hypotheses and the fallacy of idealism

Without suggesting that all opponent hypotheses share exactly the same view of historical components, it would be as well to point out that, broadly speaking, they have a salient feature in common at a fundamental level: a history-of-ideas construct of the situation in Galatia which may be referred to as the received communicative context.²⁸ Not only the main components but also the constituent parts of this (received) communicative context bear the stamp of the history-of-ideas approach. That is to say, the historical components of opponent hypotheses as a cypher key, together with their constitutive parts, share the same general traits: they are drawn from the realm of ideas, doctrines or dogmas.

The following components will be mentioned in brief to illustrate this point: the situation in Galatia, the nature of Paul's letter to the Galatians, assumptions on the nature of the Pauline movement and the nature of the conflict in Galatia.²⁹

Sanders's description of the situation in Galatia perfectly illustrates the history-of-ideas influence on the occasion of the letter:

Missionaries were attempting, apparently with some success, to convince Paul's Gentile converts that to be heirs of the biblical promises they had to accept the biblical law. To put it in terms used earlier: the Gentile converts could enter the people of God only on condition that they were circumcised and accepted the law.

(1983:18)

²⁸ In a subsequent chapter the notion of *communicative context* will be discussed in more detail (see chapter 3). Suffice it to point out that it consists, at the least, of the social, cultural and historical aspects which constitute the context of communication.

²⁹ While most components have already been mentioned in the previous section, and since the object is not to identify the opponents as such, the examples that follow are designed purely to illustrate the point with regard to the underlying methodological and historical assumptions in opponent hypotheses as cypher keys.

The key words and phrases in his description all reflect a situation where opposing dogmatic or doctrinal viewpoints were in some kind of competition (see also Meeks 1983:115). The point at issue was a theoretical dispute about entrance requirements for becoming part of the people of God.

To some the opponents were missionaries who 'trailed Paul from place to place seeking to correct his misrepresentation of the gospel' (Roetzel 1982:65; see also Schmithals 1983:49) while others prefer to see these missionaries as opposing Paul's apostleship. All in all, it would be fair to say that the crisis is described as a theological or doctrinal conflict between Paul and 'rival preachers', with the focus on conflicts in terms of 'conflicting theologies' (Neyrey 1988:94) or belief systems.

Therefore the letter is read with the assumption that Paul responded to what he considered an alarming crisis where either his gospel or his apostleship, or both, were disputed by some. In fact, Paul's letters, it is maintained, were written either to 'combat wrongheaded ideas, false Christologies or theological heresies' (Elliott 1981:4), or, on the other hand, to promote and propagate certain ideas or Christologies (see Hickling 1975:284).³⁰

Closely related to the assumed nature of the crisis are assumptions about the nature of the Pauline movement, including elements of the expansion of the early Christian movement as well as its perceived position within first-century Judaism.

It is commonly believed that there was by this time [Paul's lifetime] a well organized and theologically articulate judaizing party in Galatia who were not merely recommending certain Jewish observances, but also advocating "another gospel" – that is to say, a Jewish version of Christianity which differed, in important points of doctrine, from that originally preached by Paul.

(Harvey 1968:323)

Harvey's description gives a balanced view of the Pauline movement as competing with rival Christian factions (groups) with regard to matters of doctrine. Simultaneously, first-century Judaism is perceived as normative Judaism, implying that adverse positions would have been taken as apostasy.

In view of these examples, together with the previously discussed components of the different configurations of opponent hypotheses, there can be little doubt that the debate on the identity of Paul's opponents and the opponent hypotheses as a cypher key takes place on the plane of ideas, doctrines and dogmas. The historical components are restricted to those which fit a history-of-ideas view. Consequently the

³⁰ Du Toit, for example, maintains that opponent hypotheses are misleading, since they reduce the struggle in the letter to a theological dispute about conflicting viewpoints (see 1990:156). However, a few pages further he states that the persuasive aim or pragmatic intent of the letter is to induce the Galatians to reject ('afswaar') the heresy ('dwaalbeskouings') and return to the true gospel (see 1990:160).

nature of the conflict is limited to the sphere of ideas, ideologies or theological viewpoints.

While the methodological issues will be discussed in greater detail in the next two chapters, it is also necessary to investigate the historical components of the received cypher keys.

6 OPPONENT HYPOTHESES AND COMMUNICATIVE CONTEXT

Given the generally approved history-of-ideas approach to Paul's letter to the Galatians, the thesis to be argued in this part of the study is that the majority of cypher keys are hallmarked not only by the history-of-ideas approach but also by a clearly identifiable communicative context. That is to say, the history-of-ideas methodology is accompanied by a (received) set of historical components which is not only determined by the history-of-ideas approach but has almost achieved the status of a self-evident fact. These methodological and historical components have, over the years, grown into a variety of configurations which allow variation within their confines but hardly ever break out of them.

It should furthermore be realised that this communicative context (to be referred to as the received communicative context) consists, broadly speaking, of some generally approved historical components which are firmly embedded in the wider setting of the early Jesus movement as well as the Jewish subculture and the first-century Mediterranean world.³¹ Generally approved components (such as circumcision and membership of the people of God) which are part and parcel of most cypher keys fit into a wider setting.³²

While most of the historical components contributing to scholarly constructions of the occasion of the letter to the Galatians have already been identified, it might not yet be perfectly clear to what extent they influence our interpretive attempts.

³¹ In a subsequent chapter the components generally referred to in discussions on the occasion of the letter will be considered in relation to their embeddedness in this wider setting (see chapter 4). At the moment the spotlight focuses on the presence of these components in the majority of opponent hypotheses as a cypher key.

³² Traditionally, discussions on the occasion of the letter are concerned with the events directly surrounding the activities of the troublemakers – that is, the identity of the opponents, circumcision as reason for the conflict, or the assumed situation in Galatia (such as the activities of deviant missionaries). The point at issue is that these aspects are embedded in assumptions on at least the wider framework of the expansion of the early Jesus movement and the subculture of first-century Judaism – both of which ultimately form part and parcel of one's view on the first-century Mediterranean setting of the communication.

6.1 Two trends regarding the occasion of the letter

While it has already been suggested that opponent hypotheses as cypher keys cannot be divorced from views on the occasion of the letter, at least two clear trends can be identified in research concerning the occasion of the letter to the Galatians. Despite differences between them – even claims that the occasion of the letter is omissible – it should be pointed out that they basically share the selfsame communicative context which has become part and parcel of Galatian studies to a point where it is taken for granted as a self-evident fact.³³ In studies on both trends the components (of the communicative context) covertly influence the outcome of the interpretation.

On the one hand, it has become commonplace in some circles (literary approaches) to be (at least in theory) highly critical of any reliance on a historical (re)construction of the occasion of the letter. There are scholars nowadays who devalue the occasional character of Paul's letters, particularly in view of some methodological considerations. Hartman proposes several reasons which, according to him, suggest that Paul had two intentions, 'the one regarding the specific occasion and, secondly, the one related to more general interest' (Hartman 1986:145; see also Lategan 1988^a:413). Hartman mentions several 'facts' (see 1986:137-139) regarding the Pauline letters which, according to him, are in tension with the occasional character of the letters.³⁴ To my mind, the most important aspect of his position concerns the arguments in favour of the idea that Paul had a wider audience in mind than those mentioned or intended as first addressees. On the basis of three aspects of text linguistics – the syntactic, semantic and pragmatic aspects (see 1986:141-142) – he argues that the same text can be read with each of the three aspects in mind; one can focus either on the syntactic aspect or on the semantic aspect (as Luther did) or in 'a third kind of rereading the text with its expressions and contents is strictly understood as a message in its concrete historical situation' (Hartman 1986:142). The point to be noted is that Hartman uses the different aspects of linguistics as subsequent or juxtaposed components which can, depending on the reader, be used at will.

In justifying this position he appeals to the philosophical position of Gadamer and Ricoeur, stating that once texts have left the author's hand 'we are free to read them according to our own minds' (Hartman 1986:144). A final argument is that Paul himself gave some indications that the letters were intended for a wider audience.³⁵

³³ Although the concept *communicative context* is preferred in this study, the generally approved concept (*occasion of the letter*) will be used when referring to the received viewpoints.

³⁴ Hartman's *facts* include aspects such as that they are real letters and not artificial 'epistles'; the letters contain rhetorical arguments, and styles which one would not expect in occasional private letters; Paul's letters, such as many other letters, were considered as a replacement or representation of the author (see 1986:137-139). I shall not discuss all these aspects in detail. Suffice to say that from the theoretical discussion which will follow it will become clear why I think these *facts* can be interpreted very differently.

³⁵ The letter to Philemon was intended not only to Philemon but also to those in his house, and 1 Corinthians also to 'all who call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ in every place, theirs and ours' (Hartman 1986:144).

The question is whether he is correct in deducing from this argument that Paul had two interests, the one occasional and the other more general. That Hartman's argument implies an ongoing communication process which includes present readers is confirmed by Lategan, who positively accepts Hartman's arguments (see 1988a:412-413). Their argument indeed 'presents a problem for exegetes trying to say what a text meant historically' (Hartman 1986:145). The influence of this position on the interpretation of the letter will be spelled out more clearly in the discussion of literary approaches to the letter.

On the other hand, the occasional nature of the letter was certainly not disregarded by the founding fathers of modern New Testament research in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Scholars such as Baur, Lightfoot, Lütgert, Ropes and Munck placed the controversies of Paul squarely within their respective constructions of the whole of early Christian history (see Hawkins 1972; Fletcher 1982; Ellis 1975). What is not always properly appreciated is the overall framework or matrix (the communicative context) which these fathers left behind and which is nowadays shared by proponents of both trends. Like them many scholars (historical approaches) still emphasise that the occasion of the letter is indispensable to any interpretation of the letter; they accept (if not explicitly, at least in theory) that Paul's letters were occasional writings 'in the sense of having been occasioned by some development in the relationship between Paul and the community or person in question' (Watson 1987:9 and see Keck 1979:15-16; Roetzel 1982:50; Du Toit 1984a:2-3; Jervell 1984d:55). To focus on the letter to the Galatians: it is taken to be a real letter written by Paul to a particular community within a very specific socio-historical situation (see Hansen 1989:22). Consequently there can be little doubt that Paul's theology was 'contextual theology' (Beker 1980:56).

It has already been suggested that, despite major differences about the identity and theology of the opponents, opponent hypotheses are all configurations comprising of the same historical elements. It will be pointed out that, broadly speaking, readings in terms of historical and literary convictions³⁶ – even when these are denied – basically share the same view on the expansion (development) of the early Jesus movement in the first-century world together with a view on (normative) Judaism in Paul's lifetime.

6.1.1 Historical approaches

According to Betz, the recipients and their situation are of vital importance for the interpretation of the letter; they are the reason why Paul wrote the letter (see

³⁶ In this context these two concepts refer, respectively, to an approach that explicitly argues some kind of context versus approaches that avoid explicit historical constructions. Literary approaches are those which approach the text from the viewpoint of some literary category, be it a reader-oriented, an epistolary or a rhetorical one.

1979:65). According to Betz, he was thinking, in the letter to the Galatians, of Christianity as 'a separate and self-conscious new religion' (1979:28) in contrast to the mother religion, Judaism. Paul's letter to the Galatians is one of the first documents testifying to this development (see also Betz 1979:246, 263; Davies 1981:314; Meyer 1981:321).

The importance of the above remarks for his interpretation of the letter and his identification of the opponents should not be underestimated. The opponents, Jewish-Christian missionaries (see Betz 1979:7), created the situation which forced Paul to write the letter.³⁷ Therefore an interpretation of Paul's letter without considering their agitation against him is inconceivable (see Betz 1979:88, 99).

His aim (to analyse the letter as an 'apologetic letter' which presupposes a 'court of law' (1979:24) situation where the Galatians are the jury, Paul the defendant and the opponents the accusers) reveals the importance of the supposed situation. Without the supposed context of the Pauline movement separate from Judaism, and the existence of rival groups within the Jesus movement, the scenario of an apologetic letter and a law case is not appropriate. The fact that the recipients were Gentiles and the opponents Jewish-Christian missionaries, and that the opponents attempted to persuade the Galatians to accept the Torah and circumcision, ultimately determines Betz's interpretation of the letter. The letter must be read as an intra-Christian debate and it must be accepted that early Christianity was at that stage organised into well-established groups,³⁸ all with their own missionaries opposing each other.

2 There can be little doubt that Betz's interpretation is fully in line with the received view on the expansion of the early Christian movement and with the assumption of a normative Judaism in Paul's lifetime (see further chapter 4).

The position of Barclay (1988) is interesting in that it is in many instances diametrically opposed to Harvey's configuration (1968, 1985). Harvey probably would not disagree with Barclay's position, as clearly stated in the epigraph to this chapter, that the first step in understanding Paul should be to reconstruct the occasion of the letter. They furthermore agree that the crisis which occasioned the letter was brought on by the question of circumcision (see Barclay 1988:45; Harvey 1968:323). To both of them the notion of God-fearers is important. While they disagree on some other points of detail, it will be argued that they share the assumption of some kind of

³⁷ It is Paul himself, Betz maintains, who 'puts the opponents in a historical perspective' (Betz 1979:7) since 'Galatians as a whole was written to be a defense of Paul's gospel as his reading of the tradition, contrasted with the way his opponents understood and interpreted it' (1979:65).

³⁸ According to Betz the letter to the Galatians and 2 Cor 6:14-7:1 represent opposing groups in early Christianity. The former (Gentile Christians) and the latter (Jewish Christians), and ultimately the Antioch incident and the situation which led Paul to write his letter to the Galatians, have to do with different **theological views** of the two groups (see 1973:99-102).

normative Judaism in terms of which Paul and the Pauline movement should be seen, as well as the received view on the expansion of the Pauline movement. Discussion of some of these points will serve as a final example of the historical approach.

According to Harvey, the Galatian Christians were Gentiles; but since they were well grounded in Old Testament and Jewish exegesis, they must have belonged to the class of God-fearers. The opponents were members of the local Jewish community (see 1985:86) who secured the support of the people; who only recently became proselytes but were now members of the Christian community (see 1968:323-324; 1985:87). While it is true that the Jewish community was anxious to take them back, Paul's real opponents were those Christians in Galatia who were ready to yield to this pressure and were persuading others to do the same (see 1968:327). Reacting to threats of persecution or discrimination from the Jews, they tended to return to the observances expected of God-fearers (see 1968:329-330).

A valuable insight in Harvey's argument is that the nature of the opposition in Galatia was not theological or doctrinal but a matter of practice. Behind the theological argument in the letter lies a practical matter – that of Jewish observances such as keeping the sabbath, Jewish festivals and ritual cleanliness (see 1968:327-329, 1985:87).³⁹

Barclay, on the other hand, maintains that while the majority of those addressed in the letter were Gentiles, the opponents were Jewish Christians (see 1988:59). He argues that the success of the opponents was due to the social situation of Paul's converts. They had left the social security of their Gentile religion and were not really part of the alternative social structure, the synagogue community (see 1988:58-60). They were very open to the Pauline message. After Paul left, their newly created social identity was endangered by a social insecurity that made them the targets of Jewish Christians.

The argument that the Galatians' conversion would have weakened their sense of social identity assumes that people joined the Pauline movement primarily on the basis of individual perceptions of cognitive aspects. They were impressed by the message of the agitators. Circumcision would have ensured proselyte status in the Jewish community, and as proselytes they could share in the social security of the Jewish religion with its long-established pedigree. Becoming proselytes would have

³⁹ Harvey's insistence that the conflict was not merely a theological or doctrinal dispute in the modern sense is noteworthy (see 1968:324). He however did not really go beyond the history-of-ideas approach. He merely refined (and correctly so) the theological and doctrinal debate. The point is that the content of first-century Jewish doctrine favoured orthopraxy rather than orthodoxy. But that is a long way from an expansion of research to the socio-cultural aspects that contributed to the conflict (see chapters 5 and 6).

meant minor social adjustments only. In short, it is assumed that adherence to such a religious group was based primarily on the acceptance of a belief system.

Despite differences in their respective configurations of opponents' identity, these scholars do share two views: the occasion of the letter is important for its interpretation, and the received view on the nature of the communicative context is taken for granted.

As against those who explicitly argue for some form of historical context within which to understand what Paul was saying, there are others who argue against it. They do so mainly for two related reasons: historical constructions are deemed speculative, and they prefer to rely on the text of Galatians only.

6.1.2 Literary approaches

This group of scholars maintains that the primary problem with the interpretation of the letter to the Galatians is that historical questions have so dominated the discussion (especially of chapters 1 and 2) that the literary aspects have been neglected. My intention is not to criticise their positions but to point out that they have merely opted for alternative configurations of the same historical elements, including the received view on the nature of the communicative context.

Their main argument is that we know less about the historical situation than has long been imagined. In fact, this should occasion no regret: the literary function of the autobiographical sections in the letter, or a reader-oriented approach, will provide the long awaited solution.

Let us begin with Lyons who, in criticising Betz for the 'ingenious reconstruction of the historical situation' (Lyons 1985:102) which influences his interpretation of the letter, assumes that he himself approaches the letter ahistorically. He strongly reacts to the role of historical constructions in determining the genre and thus the interpretation of the letter to the Galatians (see 1985:98, 102, 120), since they provide 'a precarious foundation upon which to construct solid exegetical conclusions' (1985:98). Since he does not pretend to solve the historical questions posed by the autobiographical remarks in Galatians 1 and 2, his aim is primarily literary – that is, to determine the role of the autobiographical narrative in the letter to the Galatians (see 1985:136), or as it subsequently became clear, its rhetorical function (see 1985:154, 159, 163). The illusion is created that this literary approach does not rely on any historical situation but rests only on 'textual evidence' (1985:124) from the letter to the Galatians.

I can partly agree with Lyons's diagnosis of the problem but not with his remedy. He correctly remarks that 'one's prior view of the historical context in which a piece of literature emerged decisively co-determines its interpretation' (1985:104) and furthermore that 'the unexamined historical assumption of nearly all studies of

Galatians ... that Paul's autobiographical remarks respond apologetically to specific accusations made by invading Judaizing opponents' (1985:76-77) has dominated the interpretation of the letter. His remedy, however, is to investigate the 'literary character and scope' (1985:105) of Paul's autobiographical statements, since 'we know less about the historical situation to which Paul's letters respond than "clairvoyant" scholars would lead us to believe' (1985:120). Says he (1985:79): '*Such historical reconstructions would scarcely seem to be secure bases for exegesis of the letter or for determining the function of Paul's autobiographical remarks*' (italics mine). Lyons's remedy assumes that the fault of the majority (and especially of Betz's) interpretation is a mistaken generic conception. He quotes Hirsch's famous dictum that 'an interpreter's preliminary generic conception of a text is constitutive of everything that he subsequently understands' (1985:117). On that basis he then concentrates solely on the letter to the Galatians, since his concern '*is primarily literary*' (italics mine) and his remedy is to determine (on the basis of the textual evidence) what ulterior motives Paul may have had in writing the letter, i.e. 'how Paul's autobiographical remarks function within the letter to the Galatians' (1985:124).

Although he admits the importance of the historical situation, Lyons tends to underestimate the influence of the historical situation⁴⁰ on his own reading, erroneously imagining that the historical element can be ignored and that the historical and literary questions are independent. How can he escape the truism – which he correctly states – that one's prior view of the historical context in which a piece of literature emerged decisively co-determines its interpretation? He himself has a very specific context in mind when he reads the letter to the Galatians.

Although not a response to the accusations of his opponents, Paul's letter to the Galatians is, according to Lyons, still occasioned by the conduct of *troublemakers* (see 1985:126, 136, 143, 151, 153). These were Christians and probably members of the Galatian churches (1985:127 n 17); it seems that they were all Gentile Christians (see 1985:129, 148, 151, 162-163, 165, 169), and Paul is trying to dissuade them from converting back to Judaism (see 1985:129, 150, 169, 173). Underlying the discussion

⁴⁰ One reason for the one-sided emphasis on the literary (to the detriment of the historical) may be his incorrect reading of Hirsch. For Hirsch *genre* is not a literary concept defining various literary forms (see Hirsch 1967:120); it is a historical and heuristic and not a 'species concept' (Hirsch 1967:110) used as a hermeneutical tool. As Hirsch says: 'A generic conception is apparently not something stable, but something that varies on the process of understanding' (1967:77). Hirsch uses the genre concept in a communicative or interpretative situation where 'types of meaning are always necessarily wedded to types of usage, and this entire, complex system of shared experiences, usage traits, and meaning expectations which the speaker relies on is the generic conception which controls his utterance. Understanding can occur only if the interpreter proceeds under the same system of expectations, and this shared generic conception, constitutive both of meaning and of understanding, is the intrinsic genre of the utterance' (1967:80). Thus genre for Hirsch is closely connected to the author's intention: 'The genre concept turned out to be the principle for determining whether a particular meaning was willed - whether it belonged' (1967:121), in other words, all valid interpretation 'is founded on the re-cognition of what an author meant' (1967:126). In a word, it refers to historical context (see further chapter 2).

of the *troublemakers*' situation and conduct is the assumption of a clear separation between Jewish and Gentile Christians (see 1985:151, 161, 164). These are all deductions from the letter itself – in other words, from Paul's perspective on the situation; but, as it transpires, Lyons has at least the following assumed context in mind which brought him to his interpretation of Paul's words: Pauline and Jewish Christianity were two separate entities within early Christianity, and the problems with troublemakers were all internal to Christianity as already distinct from Judaism. This assumption does not result from his reading of the text: it is assumed as a context from the very beginning of his interpretation.

Lategan voices an objection against Lyons similar to the latter's objection against Betz when he says, regarding the concept of autobiography, that it leads Lyons 'despite himself, to think primarily still in terms of a historical reconstruction when dealing with the Galatian material' (1988a:424). Although not primarily concerned with the identity of the opponents (he does base his own argument on it), Lategan constitutes a second example from the literary side of the influence of an assumed communicative context on the reading of the letter to the Galatians. This methodological position is furthermore becoming more and more influential in New Testament studies. To do justice to Lategan's approach, a summary of his intention is in order.

Lategan is interested in the 'present reader' and the way the 'meaning potential of the text is actualized' (1988a:413). An important point of departure is that the letter to the Galatians is part of 'an ongoing communication process which not only involves the original senders and addressees, but also the present readers' (1988a:412). We are among the addressees (recipients and readers of the letter) and are thus directed by the same clues in the text as the first readers. According to Lategan any statement about the present reading of the text is dependent on 'an as clear as possible understanding of the text as intended for its original readers' (1988a:412). He warns, however, that any reconstruction of the original real readers must depend on a prior encounter between the text and the present reader (see 1988a:413).⁴¹ He points out the circularity of such an endeavour: only through a present-day reading of the text can we encounter the original readers. His solution, given the fact that all we have is Paul's presentation of his audience as a literary construct (see 1988a:414), is to infer from clues in the text what the message was, what Paul wanted to communicate and who the opponents must have been – that is, doing exactly what the first readers had to do.

If I understand him correctly, Lategan is saying that in order to understand the letter to the Galatians – that is, to find the direct and indirect instructions and clues left

⁴¹ The implication of his position is clear from the distinction he makes between Paul's construct of the opponents and that of the present-day reader (see 1988a:412): Paul's construct has to be determined from the clues in the text, while that of the present-day reader is a historical activity.

for the reader in the text (see 1988a:418) – it is necessary to say something more about the ‘wider argumentative context of the letter’ (1987:50).⁴² This is derived entirely from the textual evidence, since we know almost nothing about the situation apart from what we read in the letter (see 1987:50). Furthermore, Lategan is hesitant about referring to Paul as the historical Paul – it is the author Paul, as we know him from the text and intertextually from the other letters (see 1987:50-51).

Regarding the opponents the exegete should distinguish carefully between the actual flesh-and-blood opponents (historical persons or groups) whom Paul is fighting, and Paul’s construct of them. A historical identification of the opponents depends on ‘an intermediate step, that is, on a reconstruction of Paul’s construct of his audience’ (1988a:414). Thus, it is possible to delineate the features of his audience as a ‘*literary construct*’ which can then, as a second step, be compared to the historical persons involved. Lategan scrutinises the text for clues and instructions in order to construct the opponents in the text, and as a second step he then looks beyond the text in order to identify the opponents in the text with the real flesh and blood opponents in the first-century world. Thus Lategan is concerned with the text and the reader clues in the text which provide the communicative thrust of it (see 1987). From the *textual evidence* Lategan obtains numerous pieces of information about the opponents – not the historical opponents (since that would be part of the second step) but the opponents in the text. They were envoys from Jerusalem, and Lategan can even pinpoint many of their arguments (see 1987:50, 52).⁴³

Given his claim that he concentrates on the textual evidence to construct the ‘wider argumentative context’, his fixation on the text misleads one into thinking that it really is the text that provides the information: he does not admit that, underlying his reading of the text, there is a tacit assumption about the historical situation in which Paul is writing. Lategan provides an excellent demonstration of two assumptions to be examined in this study. First, there is the history-of-ideas approach which concentrates only on Paul’s theological or doctrinal motive or argument (see 1988a:428). Secondly, a concentration on the function of the narratives in the devel-

⁴² He defines *argumentative situation* in close relation to the *rhetorical situation* of a letter. In the rhetorical situation, attention is directed in the first place to the strategies used by a writer to persuade; in the argumentative situation the focus is on ‘the issue for which persuasion is sought’ (1989:2). In short, these issues consist of the *topoi* in dispute between Paul and his opponents, which all arise in the theological/doctrinal sphere (see Lategan 1989:9-10). To be sure, as a basically literary or textual concept it can best be related to what is referred to as the co-text and the context of reference and not to the situational context - not to mention the context of culture (see subsequent chapters).

⁴³ Lategan’s hypothesis is based on the *textual evidence* of the letter: Paul is challenged both by the Galatian churches and by certain representatives from Jerusalem. The envoys from Jerusalem persuaded the Galatians to follow a different interpretation of the gospel, which probably runs as follows: in addition to faith in Christ they should accept the Jewish way of life, which would provide people from a Hellenistic background with the support of a moral system and guidelines by which to structure their lives (see 1987:50). Jerusalem, ‘the centre of authority of the young developing church’ (1987:50), supports and blesses the opponents who, according to Lategan, must be Jews (see 1987:55).

opment of Paul's thought (see 1988a:424) does not mean that Lategan's reading is context-neutral or asituational. The first readers did not have the text only, and Paul's clues in the text, and his construction of the opponents and situation in the text. They shared a context with Paul. He communicated with them in their real situation – and unless we assume that his attempt to communicate was totally unsuccessful, or even incomprehensible, we can assume that they received the letter within a specific communicative context.

If the clues in the text bear a social and cultural stamp, as we shall argue, how then can we, as *addressees and recipients*, expect simply to read the letter in order to understand the communication? What about the communicative context, especially the cultural context, in terms of which the interaction between Paul and the Galatians was actualised?

Lategan's argument – that we know almost nothing about the situation apart from what we read in Paul's letter(s) – does not seem to be valid in the light of everything he assumes as a context in which to search for readers clues. What he apparently assumes about the communication situation is that first-century people were very concerned about correct doctrine; that people would, on the basis of dogmatic convictions, have become members of the Pauline movement; that those groups were primarily religious groups – to name only a few aspects, apart from the wider situational context that is tacitly assumed: Paul is working outside Judaism and he is opposed by Jews from Jerusalem. The division between Pauline Christianity and Jewish Christianity is clearly implied. These are part of the frame within which the clues in the letter make sense.

We should remember that the clues for the first readers were given within a specific communicative context, which implies that they could only be understood in terms of the shared socio-historical and socio-cultural codes and conventions of their world. Were the clues identified by Lategan also the clues recognised by Paul's first readers? It is impossible to know for sure, unless more of their socio-cultural codes and conventions are taken into account in contemporary attempts to discern the communication.

A final example, to point out which assumptions are taken for granted and at what point in the argument they are introduced, is that of Cosgrove. He claims to make use of the insights of linguistics and literary criticism and his attempt is highly interesting. Two principles guide his discussion. The first is that not 'a reconstruction of the historical situation at Galatia but a reconstruction of the epistolary perspective on that situation comprises the prerequisite for interpreting the letter' (1988:16). Modern readers need to be 'briefed by Paul on the problem at Galatia before we can rightly *hear* the letter'; which implies that in order to enter the dialogue we need to subject the letter to '*two distinct readings*. And the first reading must lead to a definite *standpoint* from which the second reading can proceed' (1988:16).

Secondly, Cosgrove distinguishes between a text's 'marked' and 'unmarked' meanings (see 1988:19). Words, sentences and even larger textual complexes find their meaning in 'the context of certain situationally given assumptions' (1988:19). Only *if* the letter assumes marked meanings for words that are decisive in the debate is it justified to use these words to interpret the letter (see 1988:21). He maintains, however, that if 'there are no situationally marked meanings that we need to be aware of in order to follow Paul's argument, we may read the letter simply on the basis of our general understanding of the language Paul employs' (1988:21-22).

Only later do we learn that

we cannot determine the relevance of the autobiography for the Galatian situation without a prior understanding of that situation, so we cannot identify the apostle's specific purposes in the paraenesis without at least a prior understanding of the problem at Galatia as he sees it.

(1988:33)

Only at this point does he reveal that Betz's historical reconstruction is especially valuable. The point to note is that somehow this assumed historical viewpoint plays a more significant part than is spelled out. In fact, although he admits the significance for all subsequent exegetical work of a decision as to the nature of the Galatian problem (see 1988:38), the role and origin of the hypothesis is disregarded.

As in previous examples, the role of the assumed problem at Galatia and Paul's view of it is underplayed in the claim that the letter itself is the 'only one control on the immediate context of Galatians' (1988:21). What kind of conflict is reflected, if any? Is it a leadership struggle? Does it concern the nature of Paul's gospel, making it a theological or doctrinal matter? Or does it perhaps lie at a more social and personal level of entering into and living in the social network of the first-century world? The answer to these questions to a much greater extent is determined by the *more general semantic context* (what I call the context of culture and context of situation). This so-called *general understanding* is not unmarked but fundamentally marked by the assumed communicative context. Cosgrove's decision to take the opponent hypothesis and the Galatian problem for granted has determined the nature of this *general understanding*. To my mind he only pays lip service to the general semantic context which is supposed to indicate the instances of marked meaning and their meaning potential in particular cases (see 1988:21).

Studies in the literary vein which claim to focus on the text only (and avoid historical constructions with regard to opponents or the occasion of the letter as a means of interpretation)⁴⁴ are spotlighted for several reasons. The role of presuppositions in

⁴⁴ Apart from the examples already mentioned, Du Toit (see 1990) provides a text-immanent approach to the letter which represents these sentiments exceptionally well. He first of all warns against the *danger* of historical constructions of the opponents, since this leads to misrepresentations of the letter. Such constructions do not flow organically from the text but rather force frameworks on it which go against the grain of the text (see 1990:158).

interpretation, the nature of language and of texts, and the philosophy-of-history view expressed by them are all significant factors. However, the present objective was to point out the role of historical aspects in the form of an assumed communicative context which is present in one way or another. It should be noted that opponent hypotheses and the received view on the communicative context are present in these *literary* approaches despite the fact that a construction of the occasion is either denied or rejected. Being unaware or careless of the communicative context does not make it inoperative.

6.2 Some observations on opponent hypotheses as a cypher key and the occasion of the letter

If the above examples are representative of opponent hypotheses as a cypher key to the interpretation of the letter to the Galatians, some remarkable features may be noted.

Firstly, it can be concluded that what opponent hypotheses as a cypher key have in common is not only the importance they attach to the occasion of the letter; they also share, broadly speaking, the selfsame communicative context. That is to say, they have in common not only the fact that the occasion of the letter plays a central part in its interpretation, but also what the components are (both historically and methodologically speaking) of the generally approved occasion (communicative context). It turned out that opponent hypotheses consist of more than the identification of opponents and their theological viewpoints. They are complex configurations of a wide variety of historical components, most of which are tacitly assumed because they are part and parcel of a broader communicative context which nowadays is taken for granted.

Secondly, as to the structure of opponent hypotheses it became clear that not only the history-of-ideas methodology but also a very particular set of historical components contribute to making opponent hypotheses a cypher key to the letter to the Galatians.

Thirdly – moving to the content of the historical components – although a wide variety of opponents are identified, they all bear the mark of the generally approved occasion of the letter. That is to say, the situation in Galatia is constructed on the selfsame basis as the conflict.

Within the confines set by the assumed situation in Galatia, opponent hypotheses are different configurations of the same historical components, differently interpreted and differently assembled. The elements contributing to the received communicative context can be clearly analysed (and examined). It should be noted that

the debate operates at a particular level.⁴⁵ Generally approved assumptions include the notion that the Pauline movement had already seceded from first-century Judaism (read *normative Judaism*) and that, within the Jesus movement itself, the Pauline movement represented a very specific group – the Hellenistic (Gentile) wing as opposed to a more Jewish wing.

Fourthly, it seems as though the history-of-ideas approach ensures a remarkable unanimity with regard to the nature of the conflict: a theological or doctrinal conflict caused by conflicting definitions of aspects such as circumcision and membership of the people of God. Unwarranted elements such as social, political or personal aspects are ruled out beforehand. The conflict is seen as an intra-Christian dispute between proponents of rival theological positions on the spectrum of early Christian views. Jewish Christians were opposed to Gentile or Hellenistic Christians, of whom Paul was one.

Fifthly, what is absent from the assumptions about the communicative context is just as significant as what is part of it. Events, groups and social realities are described without taking cognisance of the social conditions and socio-cultural setting of the first-century Mediterranean world. An important step would be to situate the conflicts, with their theological or doctrinal components, within the religious and social network of the first-century world.

Finally, in this whole process the consequences of accepting uncritically Paul's perspective on the events and conflict should not be underestimated. He himself provides the interpretive agenda in that his view on the conflict is taken at face value without being interpreted within the plausible socio-cultural setting in which he operated. This is especially noteworthy on the premise that we know nothing about the context apart from what Paul says. On the contrary, the received communicative context (which usually functions implicitly) is tacitly assumed in most interpretations of the letter.

7 SOME CONCLUSIONS AND PROSPECTS

Scholarly viewpoints on the nature of the conflict in Galatia are, it seems, largely determined by assumptions about the occasion of the letter, which in turn result from the history-of-ideas approach together with historical assumptions on the situation in Galatia. Starting off as they did from assumptions that the conflict was

⁴⁵ Circumcision marked final entry into the Jewish community, while God-fearers were that group of Gentiles who were attracted to 'the synagogue in order to hear more about the celebrated monotheism of the Jews' (Harvey 1968:323). God-fearers were those, according to Barclay, who were 'attracted to Jewish practices and Jewish theology' (1988:57). Concepts such as *Judaism*, *Christianity*, *Jewish Christianity*, *membership of these entities*, and *circumcision as a universal identity marker* are an indication of the level at which the debate took place. These are all concepts divorced from the social realm and firmly part of the realm of ideas.

primarily constituted by conflicting convictions between different groups in the early Jesus movement, it is no wonder that opponent hypotheses as a cypher key mostly disregard social and cultural factors.

By way of pointing the direction to an alternative cypher key, two issues will briefly be mentioned: firstly, the need to focus on the nature of the conflict and, secondly, to bring into play (in the debate on the occasion of the letter) the fact that the letter to the Galatians is first and foremost a first-century document.

7.1 (Re)defining the nature of the conflict: a central question in Galatian studies

Not only the methodological but also the historical components associated with opponent hypotheses need to be reconsidered. Suffice it to say that the doubts cast on the history-of-ideas approach go hand in hand with an examination of the historical assumptions mentioned in previous sections. Meeks, for example, says it is time

that we took seriously the well-known fact that most of the New Testament documents, including the Pauline Epistles that have provided the central motifs of Protestant theology, were immediately addressed to problems of behavior within the communities.

(1986a:185)

Taking the communicative context seriously has consequences at both the methodological and the historical level. Was Paul's major concern in writing the letter to the Galatians really their theological differences, or is it only from a contemporary point of view (in the interest of theological purity and dogmatic certainty) that his letter is read in that way? Is Paul not seen too much as a modern pastor or theologian or, in the words of Schoeps, 'a fully matured professor of theology' (1969:2) defending his faith and ideas with regard to theological issues against others (the *sects* and Roman Catholics)? Answers to such questions have to address the methodological as well as the historical assumptions in the received view, but they must also be explicit about the assumptions of the alternative view.

To be sure, the intention is not to argue that Paul did not have a peculiar message or theological idea he wanted to convey. As a matter of fact, what Paul said is still the prime focus of any interpretation of his letters in a first-century Mediterranean communicative context. The point is that his message can hardly be determined unless his letters are interpreted historically. To repeat a 'provocative statement' of Scroggs: 'the *historical* understanding of theological and ethical affirmations is not completely achieved until the social reality of those making such affirmations is comprehended and brought to light' (1986:138). If it is true that '[l]ike every other aspect of culture, the meaning of theological ideas is determined contextually' (LaFargue 1988b:5), then Holmberg is right in saying that 'no serious theological discussion can in the long run do without the connection with reality that is mediated by historical investigation' (1978:1). A rejection of the history-of-ideas approach, together with an examination of the historical assumptions of the received view, should be seen in this light.

On the methodological side, the deficiencies of both the mirror reading method and the history-of-ideas approach to historical interpretation have been pointed out. Given an a-historical aim of interpretation represented by several attitudes and assumptions about historical interpretation, it will be argued that a social-scientific approach to the interpretation of the letter to the Galatians can provide an alternative cypher key. In terms of a consistent historical aim of interpretation, the differences between this and contemporary opponent hypotheses, especially literary approaches, to this text will become apparent.⁴⁶

7.2 Paul's letter to the Galatians as a first-century document

A second and related aspect which to my mind should be taken seriously, is that Paul's letters stem from a first-century world which differs in most aspects from our own world. Paul's world differs from our own and, in the words of Roetzel, '[t]o get the full force of Paul's remarks we need to know what brought them on, but we can only hope to do that by first getting an understanding of his correspondents' world view' (1982:20). The fact that the letter to the Galatians presents us with a cross-cultural and historical communicative event to be interpreted in a modern Western or even third-world African society implies that we should at least consider the possible effects of such a cultural and historical distance between the text and any other situation.

This point is well made by LaFargue when he says:

"God" exercises a dominant influence on the meaning of everything in Paul's life-world, but the essential content that "God" has for Paul is itself determined by the totality of other elements in that world. This God cannot then be placed in another cultural world, such as the medieval or modern one, and remain self-identical.

(1988a:349)

The selfsame principle applies to the possible conflicts, their nature and causes, reflected in the letter to the Galatians. If this principle is granted, modern interpreters have little choice but to attempt, as effectively as possible, to enter the frame of reference and the meaningful experiential world of the original recipients. The alternative, as will be argued, is to be satisfied with anachronistic and ethnocentric interpretations of the first-century Mediterranean world. Thus one of the aims will

⁴⁶ Although the communicative context of any text is extremely wide-ranging, only some of the often neglected aspects regarding Paul's communicative context will be discussed. Such relevance has to be argued: it cannot be assumed. It should furthermore be noted that despite the outcry for an explicit statement of assumptions in research, it remains a problem that many of the assumptions to be discussed have to be unearthed from scholarly arguments by means of implicit remarks and general attitudes. It should be granted that it is impossible to bring all assumptions into the open; but when they fundamentally prejudice research, as is believed to be the case with opponent hypotheses, they need to be raised to a conscious level for examination and evaluation.

be to determine, as well as possible, the original communicative context and communication event between Paul and the Galatians.

This historical aim of interpretation admittedly says nothing about either the possibility or the means to reach it. In this regard I fully agree with Vorster (see 1977:21) when he says, regarding the letters in the New Testament, that communication was possible only if there was a shared experience of meaning, frame of reference, and relevance. These letters can continue to communicate if contemporary readers are willing to build up the experience of meaning necessary to an understanding of those letters and to adapt to the author's frame of reference. This study is an attempt to add some flesh to the bones by critically testing the communicative context and experimentally proposing some alternative.

However, I have a fundamental disagreement with his final qualification – that today such a frame of reference can in most instances be deduced only from the text itself. This remark is true only as a second step or at a secondary level. In part it is this assumption, in a variety of disguises, which to my mind prevents research from grasping the communicative context in its entirety. One version (that of Cosgrove) reads: 'Not a reconstruction of the historical situation at Galatia but a reconstruction of the epistolary perspective on that situation comprises the prerequisite for interpreting the letter' (1988:16). The (methodological) reasons for this disagreement should become abundantly clear in the next chapter. What is called for is not only a foundation of interpretation as a historical enterprise but also a proposal on how to bridge the gap between the first-century and twentieth-century world. In doing so, most of the methodological issues touched upon in this chapter will be dealt with.

CHAPTER 2

SOCIAL-SCIENTIFIC INTERPRETATION: THE QUEST FOR HISTORICAL SCHOLARSHIP

In deliberate reaction to the unavoidable reductionism and anachronism of theologically oriented scholarship, the new social approach aims to be consistently historical and descriptively holistic.

(Stowers 1985:149)

1 METHODOLOGICAL CONFIGURATIONS: AN INTRODUCTION

It has been stated that the objective of this study is a critical evaluation of opponent hypotheses as a cypher key and the search for an alternative key to Paul's letter to the Galatians. It is in no way an attempt to provide an alternative suggestion as to the identity of the opponents or their theological position but only a suggested alternative approach to the problem of interpreting the letter as such. While the historical components of the cypher key will be discussed in subsequent chapters, the focus in this chapter (and the following one) will be on the methodological components and configuration of the cypher key. Thus it is not only a set of alternative historical assumptions that is at stake but an altogether different attitude toward texts, context, meaning and, ultimately, the interpretation of the letter to the Galatians as such.

While the main objective of this chapter is to present a social-scientific methodology (some of the components have already been mentioned) which underlies this study, it should be kept in mind that the presentation of a methodology has the character of a post-mortem rather than of a premedical examination. From the analytical (post-mortem) angle, the exposition of one's methodology means taking apart and analysing the components of what used to function as a living organism. It means explaining and justifying (in the sense of explaining how and why a certain position has been reached and held, not of telling right from wrong) the particular configuration of components, at a philosophical as well as an epistemological level, that is taken for granted in a study. From a reader's perspective, a methodological exposition functions as a mental map, an aid to a more meaningful understanding of the interpretation. More often than not a methodology functions covertly rather than overtly in determining interpretive choices and critical and evaluative remarks, and in directing a scholar's arguments. Hopefully the methodological discussion will enable the reader to keep track of the (covert) social-scientific methodology underlying this study.

The distinction between methods and methodology (see chapter 1, § 1) turns out to be useful. Methodology has to do with the assumptions and principles underlying a study at a philosophical and epistemological level. Methods are like tools or techniques that may be used for a variety of tasks. In theoretical jargon, methods may be

used in an almost infinite number of methodological configurations of values, assumptions, and principles.¹

The objective of this chapter can thus be stated more concretely: to set out explicitly the methodology, and some of its components, which underlies the social-scientific approach to be applied in this study. In doing so, several other methodological positions – or the spectrum of views on many of the components – will be introduced in such a way as to focus on the position taken in this study. This does not necessarily mean that adverse positions will be misrepresented.

As with the historical assumptions, the metaphor of a configuration² will be used as an analytical tool to bring into the open the different elements constituting the social-scientific methodology³ to be followed. Regarding the philosophical components, the philosophy-of-history position (history-of-ideas approach) has already been noted as a bone of contention in the search for an appropriate cypher key to the letter to the Galatians. What this study suggests is a social-scientific approach to the historical interpretation of the New Testament as opposed to both the history-of-ideas approach and certain other views on historical interpretation identified in opponent hypotheses. Arguments on epistemological as well as philosophical levels will be used to justify a social-scientific approach as a historical aim-of-interpretation activity.

2 SOCIAL-SCIENTIFIC INTERPRETATION: A HISTORICAL ENTERPRISE

As early as 1947, Schubert warned that '[m]ore than any other special field of historical study, New Testament research has always suffered from a curious inability to be thoroughly historical in method and in aim' (1947:214). Those words seem to be even truer today than forty years ago. However, in the field of New Testament research (as in many other fields) *historical interpretation* is, to say the least, a prejudiced concept which is understood in many different ways. For that reason alone it is imperative not only to describe clearly what is meant by historical inter-

¹ The very same tools may be used for a variety of tasks. Similarly, the same methods or models or, if you like, reading strategies (e.g. rhetorical analysis, speech act or reader-oriented approaches, approaches from the social sciences) may be used in a variety of methodological configurations.

² The advantages of this way of analysing and describing methodological positions will be discussed in the next chapter; but an advance awareness of some of the analytical advantages may be helpful in following the discussion. It can easily be demonstrated by means of the social-scientific approach. In itself, the use of the methods and models of the social sciences cannot guarantee any significant difference in interpretive results. Adopting different academic concepts and models of an existing aim-of-interpretation position (epistemology) and philosophy-of-science position would not make much of a difference. The same argument applies to alternative views on aspects such as texts and interpretation.

³ There is no unified social-scientific approach to the New Testament. The social-scientific approach referred to in this study consists of a particular configuration of methodological components. In that sense *the* social-scientific approach is used in this study to designate the particular definition of it as an interdisciplinary approach.

pretation in this study but also to indicate how it differs from some other notions of historical interpretation in New Testament studies.

2.1 What is social-scientific interpretation?

Social-scientific interpretation, in this study, is taken to be an interdisciplinary activity by historically-oriented social scientists. In the words of Stowers quoted in the epigraph to this chapter, it is a 'deliberate reaction to the unavoidable reductionism and anachronism of theologically oriented scholarship' and aims 'to be consistently historical and descriptively holistic' (1985:149). The aim of the approach, in other words, is to reduce 'socially anachronistic and ethnocentric reading' (Rohrbaugh 1987a:23) of New Testament texts and 'to achieve a more accurate and comprehensive understanding of the biblical documents and of the societies in which they emerged' (Elliott 1990b:6).

Malherbe's analysis of hospitality in the first-century Mediterranean world (see 1983:92-112) is a case in point, demonstrating some of the differences between the traditional (received) approach and this social-scientific approach.⁴ (It is further relevant in that hospitality is to be discussed as one of the historical components of the alternative cypher key.) Malina points out that 'Malherbe speaks of hospitality as though the meaning of the term were quite apparent to contemporary U.S. persons who use the term largely to refer to the entertaining of relatives and friends' (1986c:178). The main difficulties with Malherbe's historical interpretation are, firstly, the implicit use of contemporary social science models and, secondly, superficial psychology⁵ or disregard of the rules of hospitality in the first-century Mediterranean world (see Malina 1986c:179-180).

On the other hand, two features of a social-scientific interpretation as historical interpretation stand out pertinently. The first is the explicit objective of utilising the social sciences in a historical enterprise; the second is a commitment to respect cultural/historical differences which can be described as the ideal of understanding other cultures or historical eras *from within*.

⁴ I have dealt with this matter elsewhere, defining the social-scientific approach as an interdisciplinary approach (see Craffert 1991). For that reason the detailed discussion will not be repeated here. It should be noted that at least four different moulds of interaction between history and the social sciences are identified – each resulting in a different philosophy of history. Of the four moulds identified (see 1991:128-129), Malherbe's position is closest to that of traditional historians who are hostile to social theory and who use concepts and models from the social sciences in a more or less unconscious and implicit way.

⁵ This refers to the assumption in many New Testament studies that persons in the first-century Mediterranean world were very similar to contemporary Western persons. Their actions and reactions are evaluated in terms of a knowledge of people in industrial Western individualistic societies (see Malina 1981:51ff; Rohrbaugh 1987b:118 n 30).

2.1.1 Social-scientific interpretation as interdisciplinary research

Defined as an interdisciplinary approach, social-scientific interpretation needs to be distinguished not only from historical interpretation as it is understood in the received view on New Testament science (traditional historical criticism) but also from the ahistorical interpretation of literary and reader-oriented approaches (see Malina 1986^c:173) and even from other definitions of social-scientific interpretation (see Craffert 1991). Despite the differences, certain features of historical interpretation shared by these views are, from the social-scientific point of view, found to be insufficient or inappropriate in one way or another for historical interpretation.

The social-scientific approach is characterised by the development in historical research known as *new history* and the parallel development in the social sciences: referred to in sociology, for example, as *historical sociology* and in anthropology as 'interpretive anthropology' (Marcus & Fisher 1986:32). Both movements are marked by the removal of the antithetical relationship between history and the social sciences, the development of a philosophy of history which acknowledges the unity between history and the social sciences, and a philosophy of the social sciences which admits a perspective of change and contingency.

Different philosophies of history, some traditional, others interdisciplinary, compete for supporters.⁶ What we are beginning to see in the social sciences, history included,

is a rigorous combination of the sociologist's acute sense of structure and generalities with the historian's sharp sense of change and uniqueness. Attempts which take the two-sidedness – human beings as creators and creatures, makers and prisoners – seriously.

(Craffert 1991:139)

All interpreters use models. 'Human perception is selective, limited, culture-bound and prone to be unaware that it is any or all of the above' (Rohrbaugh 1987^a:23); perception is always by means of *cognitive filtering* and by the use of *cognitive maps* (see Carney 1975:1-4; Elliott 1986:6). Against the *received view* in biblical scholarship, the position of most practitioners of the social-scientific approach is significant in two respects. On the one hand it demands the explicit and conscious use of models as against the implicit and unconscious use of them, and on the other hand the use of accepted social-scientific models as against intuitive or common-sense models.

⁶ In the course of this chapter, the effect of the different philosophies of history will be spelled out in more detail. It will also become apparent that different philosophies of history affect the historical components of a cypher key. Thus this discussion is as essential to an understanding of the methodological component as it is to an appreciation of the historical components.

It follows logically from the assumption on the omnipresent nature of models or cognitive maps in human perception that if social-scientific models are not used, humans rely on common-sense models – that is, the accepted wisdom of their group in understanding, arranging and categorising (see Carney 1975:3). So many opinions and decisions are involved in scientific enquiry that ‘we cannot possibly support them all with personally examined evidence... "Good reasons" presuppose expert authority’ (Botha 1990^b:66). However, a social-science model is not different in kind from a common-sense model – ‘it is simply more general in form, more consistent internally (at least in appearance), and hence better able to support a process of scientific or quasi-scientific deduction and testing’ (Humphreys 1980:17). Models may therefore be seen as particularised contexts (see Craffert 1992:8).

2.1.2 Social-scientific interpretation as understanding from within

The social-scientific approach to be applied in this study also rules out the ahistorical aim of interpretation in many New Testament studies. Stated positively, its aim is to be consistently historical.

In a negative sense the object of understanding *from within*⁷ is to avoid the tendency to perceive ancient (or foreign) texts, distant historical eras or alien cultures as though they are very similar (commensurable) to that of the interpreter. The tendency, in fact (unless an interpreter explicitly and consciously tries to avoid it) is to see them in terms of one’s own perception of the pre-understood subject matter (see Rohrbaugh 1978:24).

2.2 Conceptions of historical interpretation in New Testament research

Many scholars today still regard historical criticism as the dominant approach in New Testament research⁸ (see Malina 1986^c:171-173; Schneiders 1982:57; WS Vorster 1991:18), and indeed the major approach not only to historical interpretation in general but also to research on Paul’s opponents. However, it is being rejected by many others as inadequate ‘*to its aims and claims, i.e. to interpret texts historically*’ (Malina 1986^c:172). If Krentz (see 1975:33-54) can be trusted with regard to the goals and aims of the historical-critical approach, then the social-scientific approach (which is one of the main objectors) does not reject the aims of historical criticism but rather tries to complement it. Krentz says:

We can thus expand our description to say that hearing texts on their own terms is not only the first, but even the "fundamental act of all

⁷ As a theoretical issue, understanding *from within* will be discussed later in this chapter (see § 6.2).

⁸ In New Testament research the received view for the past fifty years can broadly speaking be described as a literary and theological enterprise where ideology (theology) and the history of ideas dominated and history and the concrete social history, not to mention the social and cultural matrix within which those texts were produced, were almost totally neglected (see Holmberg 1990:1-3; Meeks 1983:1-5; Scroggs 1980; Malina 1986^c:172).

textual interpretation". It is the essential basis for all other use of the text, both in historical scholarship and in the proclamatory mission of the church.

(Krentz 1975:41)

However, in specifying such aims it often turns out to be inadequate as a historical interpretation.

From the point of view of the social-scientific approach, several definitions of historical interpretation in New Testament studies are unacceptable. Without presenting any of them in detail, I intend to indicate the most common elements of the received tradition of historical interpretation (appearing in a variety of configurations).

The first element has already been mentioned as a history-of-ideas approach where ideas are dealt with as though they are unrelated to concrete socio-cultural realities and conventions. A second element is expressed by Cosgrove amongst others (see 1988:21), who maintains that every interpreter who reads the text in Greek is engaged in a historical-critical understanding of the letter. His argument (that over and above the particular occasion of the letter, the interpreter brings to the text a pre-understanding of the language) presupposes that such knowledge is sufficient to designate it as a historical interpretation. A final element can be mentioned, namely the role of background information and the justification of historical interpretation in New Testament studies. In defining historical interpretation as a social-scientific enterprise, all three of these elements will be addressed in one way or another. To give an indication of the issues at stake, the notion of background studies and the argument that reading a Greek text justifies a historical interpretation will be mentioned shortly.

2.2.1 Historical interpretation and background studies

Closely related to the history-of-ideas approach, the best expression of the nature of historical interpretation in New Testament research is to be found in a recognition of the value of background information – hence the subdiscipline, *New Testament background* (see Marshall 1979:12; Herzog 1983:106; Meyers & Strange 1981:23). The function of New Testament background is to promote a better understanding of the theological or ethical statements of the texts.

The merit of background studies is stated in the justification of a historical interpretation of the New Testament. Background information is useful in settling difficult or obscure passages in ancient texts. Malherbe, for example, maintains that the early Christian communities

themselves came into existence in response to preaching, and social factors no doubt contributed to that response ... The social character of the communities does appear, in some cases, to have contributed to the conditions that called forth the documents and does enable us to

grasp more firmly the intention of those documents. It is therefore of the utmost importance that we know as much as we can about them in order to understand the issues under discussion.

(1983:11-12)

Much the same justification for historical interpretation is to be found in WS Vorster's argument that the very nature of the New Testament writings makes historical interpretation inevitable and necessary (see 1991:15). However, historical interpretation based primarily on the nature of the subject matter does not in itself reveal anything about the nature of the historical interpretation as such. Since the contrary is not argued (for New Testament studies), the suspicion cannot be avoided that what is at stake here is an endorsement of the received view (namely, that background information is helpful but not essential).

In short, historical (background) information, it is maintained, promotes a better understanding of the theological or ethical statements in texts. From a historical aim-of-interpretation position, however, texts are not understood *better* by using or referring to the background; they are understood *by means of it*. Background information is needed not to understand texts better but to understand them at all (see Elliott 1990^b:2). Unless we have an idea of how the first-century world worked, says Malina, we shall misunderstand the ideas in their texts (see 1986^d:92; 1987). Scroggs insists that the theological and ethical statements which cover virtually the whole of the New Testament can only be fully understood if one understands the social reality which gave rise to them (see 1986:138). Then a totally different picture of background information emerges: it is not *helpful* as *background* but *essential* as *feeding ground*. The main difference between historical information as background and as feeding ground lies in the definitions of the nature of historical interpretation. Each is characterised by a particular way of defining the problem of other cultures and a particular way of dealing with other cultures.

2.2.2 Greek texts and historical interpretation

The notion that reading a text in Greek counts as a historical interpretation is widespread in New Testament exegesis. In a sense it is obviously true. However, without an accompanying historical aim of interpretation it is all too easy to negate the otherness of the Greek text and the cultural system from which it came. Even foreign texts, alien cultures or distant historical eras can be dealt with without recognising their differentness.

The social-scientific approach to the problem of other cultures is characterised firstly, by the commitment to uphold the otherness of cultures and historical eras and secondly by the aim of adhering to the canons of historical scholarship. The received views lack both features which are regarded as essential to the social-scientific approach.

These differences call for a further examination of the relevant philosophies of historical interpretation.

3 THE AIM OF INTERPRETATION: HISTORICAL OR NONHISTORICAL?

Brett draws attention to the fact that 'any talk about method should be preceded by an analysis of interpretive *interest*' (1990:357). The question of method can indeed be explored fruitfully only when the prior discussion on interpretive interests has reached some clarity. However, interpretive interests are not neutral, ad hoc choices which can be decided on the spur of the moment. They function within the sphere of particular theories and philosophies of science which are inherent in and constitutive of interpretive interest, and they express core assumptions about views on reality. Any consideration of interpretive interests should thus be preceded and accompanied by an analysis of these philosophical aspects, without which all discussion on the levels of method and interpretive interests can be of little value. In explicit terms, then, interpretive interests are subject to and fundamentally determined by the aim of interpretation, which is a basic philosophical orientation towards interpretation.

At least two overarching aims of interpretation can be identified, the historical and the nonhistorical, and both consist of core assumptions and values. Thus, what Brett refers to as *interpretive interests* will, in this study, be distinguished from the *aim of interpretation*, which is a related but rather different matter. In other words, interpretive interests have their place within the parameters set by particular aim-of-interpretation positions.

An identical argument can be developed from at least two different perspectives (or, if you will, from the angle of two different academic disciplines) to illustrate the spectrum of theories, values, and attitudes (philosophies of science) which underlie particular aims of interpretation. The first is studies in literature; the second, interpretation in the social sciences.⁹ In both instances it will be restricted to two antithetical positions which consist of different beliefs, values and commitments, different orientations and attitudes.

⁹ Because the New Testament evidence is literary and originates from a foreign culture and a long-past historical era, arguments in New Testament research commonly arise both from literary studies and from the social sciences. Since arguments, models and insights from both these fields will be used and critically examined in this study, it is important to open the discussion by including both fields in the metatheoretical discussion. It goes without saying that at the metatheoretical level the same interpretive issues haunt academic discussions in both fields. Strictly speaking, what is to be presented as the *social sciences* consists in not one but several academic disciplines. However, at the level of theories and philosophies of science they can, broadly speaking, be treated as a unity. From an interdisciplinary point of view the division into different academic disciplines, such as sociology and anthropology, is a matter of practice and not of principle. Janssen points out that the same antithesis exists when writing the history of political thought (see 1985:116).

3.1 Studies in literature

Although not all his descriptions will find equal support in this study, a rather extensive quotation from Barton will exemplify the two orientations to be considered. He points out that

any critical judgments one may make on a literary work or on a biblical text must be either historical or non-historical in character. There is no middle way. To opt for the non-historical alternative means that all suggestions about the text's meaning are to be justified in terms of features within the text as read by a modern reader; questions of the author's intention, even of the author's *possible* intention, are irrelevant. Such a reading can never coherently be charged with anachronism, since it is not making historical proposals about how the text could have been understood when it was written: it is asking about its coherence as it stands. To opt, on the other hand, for the historical alternative is to be committed to asking questions about what the author or authors of the text meant it to mean; to be interested in the quest for the *ipsissima verba*; to seek out possible information about the literary conventions of the author's day

(1987:138)

Like Barton, Hirsch distinguishes between a 'historical, a posteriori approach' and a 'nonhistorical, a priori approach' to the interpretation of texts (1984a:91). In the first instance, he argues, an allocratic norm is used when interpreting a text and in the second an autocratic norm (see 1982:240).

Under the autocratic norm, authority resides in the reader, while under the allocratic norm, the reader delegates authority to the reconstructed historical act of another person or community.

(Hirsch 1982:241)

Fundamental to this distinction is the assumption (to be considered later) of '*no meaning without an author of meaning*' (Hirsch 1984a:90).¹⁰ The meaning of a text is construed by a reader, but the norm applied by a reader remains at issue. Several keys can be applied successfully to a particular text, but the ultimate question concerns the locus of authority. To the Humpty-Dumpty question, 'Who shall be the master?' only two answers are possible in textual interpretation: the *reader's norm* or the *writer's norm* (see Hirsch 1982:238-239; 1984a:91; 1985b:17). At the outset it should be stated very clearly that the choice is not between an author and a reader; it is a matter of whose norm or authority, the author's or the reader's, is given priority **by the reader**. Is the cypher key that of the reader, or is it one used by the

¹⁰ The notion of *the author's intention* is contentious and, to say the least, a concept widely familiar but understood in many different ways. It will be avoided as far as possible. To escape confusion, it will suffice to say that in this study it is understood as a synonym for the historical meaning of a text (e.g. Hirsch 1976:6, 1983:746; Skinner 1988:232).

reader but resting on an interpretive authority that lies in the past or in another culture?

Assuming for the moment that it is possible to choose a cypher key from an alien or distant culture or era, and that such a key can be applied with a certain amount of accuracy, interpretation in the historical vein has a very particular structure and character which differs from that of the nonhistorical one. Some of the differences have been pointed out in the lengthy quotation from Barton. In a strict sense, an interpretation which rests on the autocratic norm of the reader cannot be anachronistic. In other words, autocratic interpretations resting on the reader's norm, are always right; they cannot be called right or wrong, since they offer no external standard in respect of which they could be either one or the other.¹¹

Allocratic interpretations, on the other hand, can in principle be revised because the norm of interpretation lies in another culture or era. Interpretations following the allocratic norm might be subjected to historical discipline (testing) and critical scrutiny. They are 'revisable ex post facto on the basis of changing theories and evidence about a determinative historical event' (Hirsch 1982:242). Allocratic interpretations are thus the only sort which can in principle be right or wrong (see Hirsch 1982:244; Morgan 1988:11).

The difference, in short, seems to be the construction of the historical approach and its explicit appeal to an interpretive norm which is not that of the present reader. It can be that of any person or era in the past.¹² Given an allocratic norm, the inevitable demand is to explicate and argue one's cypher key.

3.2 Interpretation in the social sciences

It is important to note that, structurally, the problem is much the same whether we are trying to interpret a literary text, an alien culture or a historical event. Anything handed down to us which elicits the need for understanding partakes of the tension

¹¹ As an embodiment of the values and attitudes of the nonhistorical approach, the position occupied by poststructural critics on historical interpretation is that they can never be right, since there are no 'correct interpretations' (see Abrams 1977:427). If there is only a ceaseless play of anomalous meaning, full of 'indeterminable', 'undecipherable', 'unreadable', and 'undecidable' misreadings (see Abrams 1977:433), then deconstructive criticism cannot fail: there is no 'complex passage of verse or prose which could possibly serve as a counter-instance to test its validity or limits' (Abrams 1977:435).

¹² An example from a poker game illustrates the principles very clearly. The dealer could decide on a sub-code for playing the game, and that could be his/her reasoned or preferred key for the game. Suppose, however, the dealer says that the club's founder wanted them to follow a certain sub-code. To follow that sub-code they would have to determine it. The point Hirsch wishes to make with this example is that in the latter case 'it is not the dealer's reasoned preference for a sub-code that governs the decision, but rather his principle for a way of choosing principles' (1984^a:91). In practice it makes a significant difference: 'nothing less than the difference between a nonhistorical, a priori approach to interpretation, and an historical, a posteriori approach to interpretation' (1984^a:91).

between strangeness or alienness and familiarity (see Bernstein 1983:28, 141; Hernadi 1988:753). The basic problem we have to deal with, in anthropological terms, is the temptation to read into or project our own standards and concepts onto what is being studied, or, on the other hand, to 'go native' (see Bernstein 1983:93-94). Meaning realised in language, says Malina (1986^c:190), 'is rooted in a social system. Hence to derive meaning in some articulate way, one must somehow have recourse to a social system, *either one's own or that of the informants*' (italics mine). Several types of social theories have been developed in answer to this problem.

Powell identifies three types of social theories: *naturalist theories*, *deep structure social theories*, and *anti-necessitarian viewpoints* (see 1989:28-31). Stowers prefers three positions, namely *functionalism*, *strict intentionalism*, and *mediationism* (see 1985:152-154), while Haralambos (see 1980:18) distinguishes between *positivism* and *phenomenology*. Although they do not share the same terms, or even concepts from the same conceptual spheres, broadly speaking these descriptions tend to describe the same categories. The alternatives are a science generated by historical concerns or one generated by nonhistorical concerns.¹³

Different theories of science are at issue. Broadly speaking, the alternatives are between an experimental science close to the natural sciences, in search of law-like explanations (the *nonhistorical* approach), or on the other hand (the *historical* approach) an interpretive science in search of meaning and the illumination of context (see Geertz 1973:5; Holmberg 1990:12). At each pole two sides of the same coin will illuminate the assumptions and values of each position.

At the nonhistorical end, commensurability between different (even alien) cultures is presupposed. It is further assumed that 'all societies share a commensurable underlying "hidden teleology" of functions' (Stowers 1985:155-156). The same point is argued by Powell. A great deal of modern social science is naturalistic in that it rests on the assumption that 'there are inherent or necessary structures to human

¹³ In a recent study I have argued this issue in more detail (see Craffert 1992:2-7). Rather than identifying three positions in a linear order, I see the debate as a struggle at the antipositivist end, where a variety of positions can be identified of which a historical and a nonhistorical position form the extremes of a continuum which runs vertically at the antipositivist end of the horizontal spectrum. The positions on the second continuum are all in some way a reaction to the positivist position they wish to supersede, but by the same token they are related to it.

Rather than:

positivism -- mediationism -- anti-positivism

my suggestion is:

positivism	-----	historical antipositivism nonhistorical
------------	-------	---

nature and social life' (1989:28). His second category, *deep structure social theories* such as conflict theories (Marxism) 'are fatally flawed at the very beginning by their failure to carry out consistently the rejection of naturalism' (1989:29). *Anti-necessitarian* theories, on the other hand, reject the idea of *laws* and 'invariant sequences or unavoidable structures to social life' (1989:30).

The reverse side of the nonhistorical coin is reflected in the assumption, maintained by most functionalist sociologists (see Holmberg 1990:140; Stowers 1985:152; Saldarini 1988:19), that social phenomena can be analysed quite independently of the beliefs of the actors. The implication is that the interpreter's model and not the participants' point of view is dominant. Ignoring the intersubjective meanings of participants – that is, interpreting all other societies in the categories of one's own – can only be disastrous to a comparative science (see Taylor 1977:125).

At the other pole there is the historical approach with the general aim of understanding other societies *from within*.¹⁴ Contrary to the idea that social phenomena and societies can be analysed independently of the beliefs of the actors, social scientists have increasingly come to realise that 'any explanation which involves conceptions of structured social relations, has to be grounded empirically in knowledge of what different structural locations and relations actually meant to those assigned to them' (Abrams 1982:211). One central fact that anthropologists have discovered is that 'people lead meaningful lives' and 'these meanings can only be discovered within the context of those lives' (Cohn 1980:201). Thus, if one's aim is to reduce anachronistic and ethnocentric interpretations, the ideal of understanding these meanings *from within* increasingly becomes an imperative. Unless we begin by characterising a society or culture in its own terms, says MacIntyre, 'we shall be unable to identify the matter that requires explanation' (1971:223; see also Skocpol 1984:368; Geertz 1973:14, 18; Mommsen 1978:21).

While the nonhistorical approach treats social reality as a system, hence as a thing, the historical approach postulates that to 'treat social reality as anything other than a construction of meanings is to distort it' (Haralambos 1980:498 and see Stowers 1985:153-155). The *interpretive turn*, Rabinow and Sullivan says, 'refocuses attention on the concrete varieties of cultural meaning, in their particularity and complex texture, but without falling into the traps of historicism and cultural relativism in their classical forms' (1979b:4).¹⁵ The explanatory power of the *anti-necessitarian* type of

¹⁴ Burke adds that sociologists 'who concern themselves with the actor's point of view, whether they call themselves "phenomenologists", "symbolic interactionists", or whatever, are much closer than the functionalists to historians who have never ceased trying to look at the past through the eyes of contemporaries' (1980:28-29).

¹⁵ In the words of Marcus and Fischer: 'The authority of "grand theory" styles seems suspended for the moment in favor of a close consideration of such issues as contextuality, the meaning of social life to those who enact it, and the explanation of exceptions and indeterminants rather than regularities in phenomena observed – all issues that make problematic what were taken for granted as facts or certainties on which the validity of paradigms had rested' (1986:8).

theory identified by Unger 'comes from its capacity to render comprehensive contingency and change rather than to fit a particular society into a general framework' (Powell 1989:30).

When compatibility and commensurability between phenomena are not assumed, the alternatives are to *go native*¹⁶ (see Bernstein 1983:93-94) or adopt an interpretive stance where compatibility and commensurability are not assumed but demonstrated (see Janssen 1985:119).

3.3 Interpretation as communication or as exploitation

The same tendency is apparent in studies in the social sciences and in literary studies, namely the fundamental difference between studies with a historical or a nonhistorical aim of interpretation. Broadly speaking, two sets of values and assumptions with regard to interpretation can be identified. The assumption of commensurability between cultures and the neglect of the intersubjective meanings of another era or culture are two of the main features of the nonhistorical approach in literary studies and in the social sciences. The opposite is true of a historical aim of interpretation.

The question, it seems, is not whether the reader or interpreter construes a text or text-analogue to mean something but rather the way in which it is done. Whose norm is taken as authoritative? Granting authority to the historical author, actor, or native is to assign an allocratic norm to the cypher key. This aim of interpretation can be described in short as communicative: it is an attempt to interpret in two worlds at once. The term *communicative approach* is used to designate the aim of historical interpretation, if for no other reason than to indicate that interpretation is a two-way activity. In the words of LaCapra: 'A text is a network of resistances, and a dialogue is a two way affair; a good reader is also an attentive and patient listener' (1983:64). If the historicity (voice) of a text or text-analogue is not respected as something other than that of the interpreter, it cannot be heard.

On the other hand, authority of interpretation can be ascribed to the need for contemporary relevance where the authority of interpretation resides with the interpreter. This can be described as an *exploitative approach*: the ideal is to make valuable that which comes down from the past (see Hirsch 1985^b:17). Incommensurability and the intersubjective meanings of others are sacrificed at the shrine of contemporary relevance. To assign all power of interpretation to the reader's solitary act of reading is to evade history; it is to fail to recognise how not only the reader but also the text is contextual (see Dean 1986:270).

¹⁶ Obviously nothing forbids one to go native. However, anyone involved in teaching others cannot afford this choice (see Hanson & Martin 1973:205).

At the methodological level, which consists of philosophical and epistemological components, the differences between various definitions of historical interpretation seem to be sharply defined. A historical aim of interpretation within the confines of an interdisciplinary approach represents a different methodology. Commensurability is not assumed but demonstrated/argued, models are used explicitly and consciously as heuristic tools (not as iron matrixes) and the commitment to respect otherness is highly valued. However, the exact nature of such a methodology and especially the differences between a social-scientific and the received views of interpretation, should still be discussed in more detail (see § 6).

Given the choice (both in literary studies and in studies in the social sciences) of either a historical or a nonhistorical aim of interpretation, three basic questions still need to be addressed. First, is a communicative approach possible in principle? Secondly, why should a historical aim of interpretation be preferred to a nonhistorical one? Thirdly, how is a social-scientific communicative approach to be conducted?

4 IS A COMMUNICATIVE APPROACH POSSIBLE?

What is called 'the problem of other cultures' is succinctly expressed by Hanson and Martin:

The axiom of cultural difference leads us in conflicting directions. On the one hand it counsels internal understanding by sympathetic duplication in order to avoid ethnocentric distortion of other cultures; on the other hand it generates a barrage of arguments insisting that such internal understanding is impossible to achieve.

(1973:194)

To ask whether a communicative approach is possible in principle is to ask whether it is reasonable to maintain the differentness of other cultures in view of the subjective nature of interpretation.

In literary studies, few scholars deny that the interpreter can try to determine the historical meaning of a text. According to Hirsch, the actual questions are 'whether we should try' and 'whether we could succeed if we try' (Hirsch 1976:8). These questions are often met by two objections to a communicative approach: it is either seen as **uninteresting** and **unimportant** (e.g. Stout 1982:7) or else as **impossible** to determine (e.g. Wellek and Warren 1956:148-149). The first objection will be dealt with in the next section (as one answer to the question of whether we should try to determine the historical meaning) while some of the philosophical issues involved in the second will be explored in this section.

To be sure, the bone of contention is not whether it is possible to understand people or texts from another culture or era but whether interpretation is so contaminated by subjectivity that it is impossible to understand *from within*. Are all readings of texts and interpretation of cultures in the end merely subjectivistic; is a claim to the contrary an exercise in self-deception? Essentially it is a question of how to deal

with the acknowledgement of human subjectivity in view of the simultaneous experience of the otherness of texts or cultures. I am going to advocate a particular way of dealing with these issues.¹⁷ If understanding from within is not impossible, the way in which it can be approached will be dealt with shortly.

4.1 The inescapability of historicity

Gadamer argues that it is the naivety of so-called historicism to believe that a historical object can be seen as though it is ontologically independent of the subject (see 1960:283). With reference to Heidegger, Gadamer sees being historical as 'a mode of being for human *Dasein*' (Gadamer 1979a:132). Objectivity is an illusion. Historians are part of an unbroken chain through the past which addresses us (see Gadamer 1979a:145). Like understanding in general, the task of hermeneutics when considering a text demands not a method but 'a radical account of actual understanding' (Gadamer 1979a:150). According to Gadamer, the divide between past and present was part of the naivety of a historicism which did not take its own historicity seriously. 'Der Zeitenabstand ist daher nicht etwas, was überwunden werden muß' (Gadamer 1960:281; and see Gadamer 1979a:155-156), but rather a living continuity, a tradition with a continuing effect. Therefore the meaning of a work is not determined or fixed by authorial intention but transcends the author's understanding (see Gadamer 1960:281; Ermarth 1981:188; Linge 1976:xvii).

Because a text has a 'Wirkungsgeschichte' (Gadamer 1960:283) it presents the possibility of dialogue between the interpreter and the text. For that reason the interpreter is already part of the tradition (or *Wirkungsgeschichte*) of the text. The position of the interpreter loses its present privileged nature and becomes a 'fluid and relative moment in the life of effective history' (Linge 1976:xix). By a process of fusion of horizons, understanding becomes possible; 'Vielmehr ist Verstehen immer der Vorgang der Verschmelzung solcher vermeintlich für sich seiender Horizonte' (Gadamer 1960:289). Meaning is transferred in the process whereby the horizons of interpreter and text are fused into a new understanding (see Linge 1976:xix; Bernstein 1983:142-144). For Gadamer there are two separate horizons. Historical consciousness notes the difference between its own horizon and that of the tradition. The projection of the historical horizon is only a phase in the process of understanding where the historical horizon is overtaken by our present horizon – not a placing of oneself within the former but a widening of one's own horizon to include it (see Gadamer 1960:289-290; Bleicher 1980:112; Schneiders 1982:61-62, 64). To Gadamer this means that understanding always implies a pre-understanding 'which is in turn pre-figured by the tradition in which the interpreter lives and which shapes his prejudices' (1979a:108).

¹⁷ The two approaches identified in this study, historical and non-historical – represented by the positions of Hirsch and Gadamer respectively – should be appreciated as overstatements in order to clarify their differing emphases.

However, Gadamer is often accused of subjectivism (see Bernstein 1983:124). In his attempts to warn against objectivism, foundationalism, and some kind of Archimedean point outside our historical situation, he did not make it clear how the interpreter guard against relativism or subjectivism (see Bernstein 1983:155; 167-169; Van Niekerk 1990:10-11). An instructive observation by Bernstein (who reads Gadamer quite sympathetically) is that Gadamer failed to make explicit his view that claims to truth must always be supported by argumentation. Interpretive claims need to be backed up by argument; '[f]or although all claims to truth are fallible and open to criticism, they still require validation – validation that can be realized only through offering the best reason and arguments that can be given in support of them' (Bernstein 1983:168). It is, however, Hirsch's criticism in particular that clearly spotlights Gadamer's neglect (and especially that of some of his followers) of the determinate aspect of texts and human action.

In the first instance, conflict in interpretations is resolved by an appeal to tradition. 'The determinate meaning of a text at a given point in time is what a present culture would generally take that meaning to be' (Hirsch 1967:250). Bernstein confirms that Gadamer's appeal to the truth of an interpretation 'amounts to what can be argumentatively validated by the community of interpreters who open themselves to what tradition "says to us"' (1983:154).

Secondly, the meaning of a text is determined by a fusion of horizons; but how can a fusion take place 'unless the things to be fused are made actual, which is to say, unless the original sense of the text has been understood' (Hirsch 1967:254).

Thirdly, to insist that people of different eras cannot understand each other (the past is ontologically alien to us) implies a denial of communication between contemporaries with different perspectives.

Differences in culture are manifestations of this root possibility of differences among men ... That is the real ontological gap – the one that subsists between persons, not the one that subsists between historical eras. If the former can be bridged, as Gadamer and Heidegger admit, then so can the latter.

(Hirsch 1967:258)

By emphasising the aspect of historicity, also in New Testament studies, the datedness or otherness of texts, cultures and historical eras is underplayed.

4.2 Perspectivism and otherness

Neither the historicist 'fallacy of the inscrutable past' (Hirsch 1976:39) nor the fallacy of the 'homogeneous present-day perspective' needs to be accepted (see Hirsch 1976:41). To admit that cultures often differ greatly is not to deny the possibility of understanding another culture *from within*. 'The distance between one culture and

another may not in every instance be bridgeable, but the same is true between persons who inhabit the same culture' (Hirsch 1976:42). In principle then, the argument goes, the gap of understanding remains the same in respect of any other person in any time or place. The argument concerning perspectivism, and its influence on human perception and interpretation, explicates the *dated* or determined side of the coin (see Hirsch 1976:44-49).

As to the fact that every act of textual interpretation involves at least two perspectives – that of the author/native and that of the interpreter, which are held simultaneously – Hirsch argues that one can no longer suppose that 'a meaning appears differently from different perspectives, but is compelled to concede the absolute impossibility of viewing *meaning* from different perspectives' (1976:48). How does he argue the case?

He argues against 'perspectivists', that is, scholars who see validity of interpretation as 'entirely a function of the encounter between a text and one's inescapable cultural self' (1976:45).¹⁸ Since each of us sees the world from a different perspective, we would each have to (mis)understand the other culture in our own way. But this is not entirely true. Two people standing even a few meters apart, looking at the same building, would see different things. But even if they were looking from different sides of the building, both would perceive (i.e. visually interpret) the same building: 'Even if I see only one side of a building, I still know that it has other sides, and that the object of my perception is a whole building, not just the side that I see' (1976:47). The first paradox, Hirsch points out – that of 'the intentionality of consciousness' (1976:48) – is that although the two can agree that they see different things, they are equally correct in saying that they see the same thing. The implication is that perspective effects do not necessarily distort or relativise what is understood, or 'a diversity of perspectives does not necessarily compel a diversity of understood meanings' (1976:48).

There is a second paradox of perspectivism. Perspectivists would do better to fall back on the Kantian argument that even if two people view the building from the identical physical perspective, they would still see different things because each sees the building in terms of his or her own categorical system. Every interpretation of verbal meaning is constituted by the categories in terms of which it is construed.

¹⁸ Perspectivism in its classical form is the legacy of the Kantian insight 'that man's experience is preaccommodated to his categories of experience ... Kant postulated a universal structure in human subjectivity which constitutes experience, and which thereby guarantees the possibility of scientific knowledge. Dilthey and others extended the insight to domains of cultural experience and postulated that, beyond this universal subjectivity, there exists a cultural subjectivity ... which are analogously constitutive of all cultural experience' (Hirsch 1976:46). But if all interpretation is determined by the interpreter's cultural categories, how is understanding of other cultural categories possible? Dilthey's answer is that human beings are capable of grasping culturally alien meanings because they are able to accept culturally alien categories. Individuals can imagine themselves other than they are (see Hirsch 1976:46-47).

However, unlike a physical object which stands there in some concrete form, verbal meaning does not exist as a object; it exists only in human consciousness. 'Apart from the categories through which it is construed, meaning can have no existence at all' (1976:48). The paradox then is that interpretive perspectivism as an extension of 'the great Kantian insight on which it is ultimately based ... argues for the constitutive nature of cultural categories' (1976:48). Hirsch thus concludes that the 'deepest significance' of perspectivism 'implies that verbal meaning exists *only* by virtue of the perspective which gives it existence' (1976:48). Verbal meaning can only exist from one perspective. In terms of this paradox, the perspectivist can no longer suppose that a meaning appears differently from different perspectives but is compelled to concede the absolute impossibility of viewing *meaning* from different perspectives.

The point to be pressed home is that the experience of the otherness of texts, cultures or historical eras adds a dimension to one's appreciation of the subjectivist nature of interpretation. If it is true that one's perception need not necessarily be merely subjectivistic, then understanding from within is possible in principle in the sense that otherness can be discovered. If the above argument holds, then a historical aim of interpretation is not a delusion (in the sense that all interpretations are, in the end, disguised brands of merely subjective encounters with the other).

4.3 Historicality: the datedness of texts, cultures, and historical eras

One of the real differences between a communicative and an exploitative approach is the way in which they deal with datedness or **historicality**. An apparent strength of exponents of the exploitative approach (certain interpretations of Gadamer, modern literary theorists following that line, and, I would add, social scientists working in the aftermath of functionalism and other grand theories) is that 'they make datedness a nonproblem' (Hirsch 1984^b:216).

Datedness, or the principle of historicality, can be expressed as follows:

[A] historical event, that is to say, an original communicative event, can determine forever the permanent, unchanging features of meaning ... Gadamer's historicity implies that meaning *must* change over time; but historicality maintains that meaning can stay the same if we choose to regard meaning as a historically determined object.

(Hirsch 1984^b:216)

The principle of historicality denies the claim of historicity that a text can only be read from the interpreter's perspective. Any text can be read by means of any possible cypher key and any word sequence can be respoken or *reauthored* in any possible way. However, stable meaning 'depends, then, on pastness' (Hirsch 1984^b:216). Historicality emphasises the pastness of meaning or the otherness of cultures and makes it a central issue of interpretation. While historicity focuses on the character of otherness from the perspective of the subject (see Schneiders 1982:54), historicality focuses on the possibility of escaping the perspective of the subject by

learning a new perspective. Historicity emphasises the commitment to otherness or differentness; datedness is a central aspect of interpretation.¹⁹

What has been argued here is that a reconstruction is not totally compromised by the interpreter's historicity. It is asserted, in fact, that a text can be read, a culture interpreted, or a historical era understood primarily in its pastness or otherness.²⁰

4.4 *Objective historical knowledge: the nature and status of interpretive claims*

Kuenzli (see 1980:47) is right in stating that reader-oriented approaches to literature have exposed all objective interpretations as subjective readings. In two respects, however, proponents of this exploitative approach have overstated their case.

They are simply wrong if they claim (see charge of impossibility) that a text can be approached with any set of questions except the one argued to be that of the author or natives. After all, why should all other readings be tolerated except this one (see Skinner 1988:232)? They are furthermore wrong if they assert that it is impossible to escape one's subjectivity – that is, that one cannot learn another set of codes and conventions or adopt a different perspective, that of an author or native (see Hirsch 1985a:195).

To be sure, the ideal of objective historical knowledge does not compromise the method used to obtain it or claims to have reached it.²¹ Emphasising objective historical knowledge has nothing to do with the view that language truthfully reflects extratextual reality, nor does it deny that it is the subject who construes meaning. Far from claiming *assured results* or a science devoid of values and interests, this view is objective in the sense that the interpreter consciously and explicitly attempts to reduce the subjectivity, both personal and cultural, which haunts all interpretation.²² The acknowledgement, in hermeneutical theory, of human subjectivity not

¹⁹ As will be argued (see § 6), the philosophical choice and theoretical commitment to upholding the otherness of texts or cultures have far-reaching effects on one's interpretive methodology.

²⁰ In a similar debate in the field of anthropology this position is expressed by Hanson (see 1976) in opposition to Caws (see 1974; 1976).

²¹ Hirsch (see 1976:82) accedes that we cannot escape our historical world as a pre-given which constitutes our experiences (and our perceptions). The challenge is to deal with this methodological difficulty. In fairness to competing views, the debate is more often conducted on a continuum where all participants are trying to express the kind of comparisons that are possible between different cultures or language games or the status of such knowledge. Very seldom does one find a total rejection of the possibility of comparing paradigms (total subjectivism) or an outright denial of one's subjectivity (total objectivism).

²² 'The naive objectivity advertised by traditional scientists – that scientists register, evaluate, and describe raw evidence without any additions, interpretations, or alterations – is now recognised as an elusive fiction' (De Beaugrande 1983:86). On the contrary, *objectivity* as described in this study is *relative objectivity*; 'a self-reflexive model that includes its own conditions for observation and application' (De Beaugrande 1983:86) or what Schneiders (see 1982:54) refers to as methodological objectivity. By submitting one's own models of science and society to the test of acknowledgement and criticism, one creates an awareness by which one can, paradoxically, 'achieve significant progress toward understand-

only brings realisation of another's subjectivity but also an explicit confrontation with one's own subjectivity.²³

What has been argued in this section is a particular philosophical and epistemological position from which to deal with the problem of other cultures. The subjectivity problem should not be exaggerated into something impossible to escape (see Hirsch 1976:148; 1985a:194). As Putnam (1984:239) says,

we do sometimes get things right ... [and the] contemporary tendency to regard interpretation as something second class reflects, I think, not a craving for objectivity but a craving for absolutes – a craving for absolutes and a tendency which is inseparable from that craving, the tendency to think that if the absolute is unobtainable, then "everything goes".

Subjectivity should be taken up as a methodological challenge.

The counter-argument (from an exploitative point of view) of a false dichotomy between an author's norm and a reader's norm rests on the assumption that we never have the author's or natives' key. It is, they maintain, no more than a construction. This is not, however, a valid objection, since

[d]eference to the wishes or intentions of other persons is always deference to *one's idea or construct* [italics mine] of their wishes. And when their intentions are at odds with our own, the fact that we have constructed those intentions does not remove the conflict.

(Hirsch 1985b:17)

Despite the subjective nature of perceptions and interpretations, the possibility of escaping mere subjectivity cannot be ruled out. This is not, however, a claim for all forms of objectivity.

It would be foolish to think that it is easy to determine what an author, especially an ancient one, wanted to convey or express, or what the natives are up to in what they do. As a matter of fact, '[w]hether or not an interpretation *is* telling the historical truth is a question that nobody can answer' (Hirsch 1982:247; see Skinner 1988:280). In this regard Skinner expresses an attitude worth adopting: 'My precepts, in short, are only claims about how best to proceed; they are not claims about how to guarantee success' (1988:281). It would furthermore be a mistake to think that even in face-to-face communication an understanding of the speaker's meaning is guaranteed. Even then, De Beaugrande says (1983:90), you do not **know** – 'you *build*

ing the "real" world' (De Beaugrande 1983:87).

²³ This position more or less resembles what is referred to as *scientific realism* as represented by such scholars as Putnam and Bhaskar (see Bhaskar 1978; Mouton 1988; Stowers 1985:162-166). It is ironic, says Rohrbaugh, that a 'positivist historicism' was the context out of which 'an overwhelming sense of the relativity of all human perspectives grew ... From an understanding of the historicity of events, it is not a very long step to seeing the inevitable historicity, and thus inevitable datedness, of human thought about those events' (1978:24).

a *model* of the discourse situation and the presented texts and *tune* the models as far as is expedient'. The paradox is not removed by the choice of a communicative approach: it is only a suggestion for dealing with it in a particular way, namely considering why all interpretations are not equally true. A communicative approach makes this a central issue of interpretive methodologies.

A choice for the objective side²⁴ has at least two advantages (which will be discussed in due time). Firstly, it fosters a society where the ideal is to discover the voice of the *other*. Secondly, it expects and provides results different from what one already has.

5 INTERPRETATION AS COMMUNICATION: VALUES AND ATTITUDES

The second issue to be commented on is this: why should a historical aim of interpretation be preferred to a nonhistorical one? Why should the author's meaning be preferred to what an ingenious reader can construe a text to mean, or why should an anthropologist be content with the native's point of view when the interpretive possibilities are almost unlimited? The major objection is that it is uninteresting and unimportant.

The defence of a communicative approach can hardly be other than, on the one hand, to appeal to the question of relevance (see Abrams 1977:434) and on the other hand to fall back on an appeal to values. It will be argued in this section that the historical aim of interpretation (avoiding anachronistic and ethnocentric interpretations) is based on values which are part and parcel of a particular view of reality. It is my contention that a communicative approach to texts, cultures or historical eras rests on a set of humanistic values which are not necessarily present in a

²⁴ To move beyond the categories of objectivism and relativism is more easily said than done. Rorty accuses even Gadamer of being a 'weak textualist' (Rorty 1981^b:167; and see 1981^b:168) who has not succeeded in escaping the categories of subjectivism and objectivism which he tries to defeat (see also Bernstein 1983:199-201). Although Gadamer would probably disagree with that criticism, it suggests that as yet the scholarly debate is still trying to cope with these categories: it has not yet moved beyond the categories in question. On the level of practical interpretation much still needs to be done in terms of the establishment of values before one can even think about moving beyond subjectivism and objectivism. A movement beyond objectivism or relativism presupposes a type of community of the very kind Bernstein tries to develop; 'the shared understandings and experience, intersubjective practice, sense of affinity, solidarity, and those tacit affective ties that bind individuals together into a community must already exist' (Bernstein 1983:226). Such a community presupposes a spectrum of values, and if these are absent one can hardly appeal to the kind of arguments represented by such a position (e.g. an appeal to Gadamer to secure absolute truths). These values include solidarity, public freedom, a willingness to talk and to listen, mutual debate, and a commitment to rational persuasion (see Bernstein 1983:226). These values and the knowledge they presuppose, rather than the establishment of an Archimedean point from which reality can be controlled and which ultimately controls us, are the ideal – to let others be themselves rather than to control or dominate them. The movement beyond objectivism and relativism 'gains "reality and power" only if we dedicate ourselves to the practical task of furthering the type of solidarity, participation, and mutual recognition that is founded in dialogical communities' (Bernstein 1983:231).

nonhistorical (exploitative) approach. The presence or absence of these values says something about the scientific culture fostered by a society.

5.1 Politics rather than epistemology

It has been argued that there are no compelling epistemological reasons why the historicity of a text should be sacrificed to the historicity of text or interpreter. In the words of Hirsch, 'nothing argued at the level of epistemology ... can decide the issue between autocratic and allocratic norms of interpretation' (1982:242). The choice of going native or impressing one's own standards on a text, culture or society is not made at an epistemological level, nor is it deduced from empirical fact or logic.²⁵ Both approaches (communicative and exploitative) deal with the subject-object dilemma, but in different ways. Consequently they presuppose different values and attitudes.

What became clear is that the choice – whether to be subject to one's own historicity or to emphasise the historicity of the other – takes place at the level of the politics of interpretation. Thus it is decided by values and attitudes.²⁶ In the paragraphs to follow it will be considered whether the option of a communicative approach is indeed worth pursuing.

5.2 Values and scientific culture: the ethics of interpretation

In the 'Age of Reading' the author was the first to go in the 'systematic dehumanizing' process (Abrams 1979:566-567). If we allow this dehumanisation, what we lose is 'access to the inexhaustible variety of literature as determinably meaningful texts *by, for, and about human beings* [italics mine] as well as access to the enlightening

²⁵ Hirsch maintains: 'We, not our texts, are the makers of the meanings we understand, a text being only an occasion for meaning, in itself an ambiguous form devoid of the consciousness where meaning abides. One meaning of a text can have no higher claim than another on the grounds that it derives from the "nature of interpretation," for all interpreted meanings are ontologically equal; they are all equally real' (1976:76).

²⁶ If there is truth in the argument that the choice of autocratic or allocratic norms is ultimately a question of politics rather than epistemology, then that position which provides the most desired or desirable practice should be chosen. Hirsch's version of Pascal's gamble in this specific case is illuminating. 'Let us weigh the practical gain and loss in calling heads – that is, that objective historical truth exists. Let us estimate the two chances. If you win, you win something. If you lose, you lose nothing. Do not hesitate then, gamble on the existence of objective truth' (1982:243; and see Wright 1984:87). The intention of this argument, says Hirsch, is to remove the delusion that it would ever be possible to show 'that objective truth is impossible or that accurate historical interpretation is a delusion' (1982:244; see also Marsh 1967:2-3). His reference to Max Weber's contribution in this regard is worth pondering: 'No one will venture to contend that Weber neglected or underestimated the cultural, personal, social, and political influences that impinge upon the seeking of objective truth. He was the master of that subject. Yet no one has spoken of the goal of objective truth – *Wissenschaft* – with more impressive and infectious fervor than Weber did in that 1919 lecture' (1982:244-245; see also Hanson & Martin 1973:207 n 1).

things that have been written about such texts by the humanists and critics who were our precursors' (Abrams 1979:588). Abrams questions whether that is not too high a cultural price to pay.

This presents a moral question which Rorty (who would not necessarily share the communicative approach) cannot really give an answer to since he likewise objects to, the 'inhumanism' of modern textualism in eliminating the author and, with the author, the idea of 'man' altogether (1981b:173). His passion for *the other* is well expressed when he says that scientific knowledge has value if it gives us *hope*: when it interprets other people to us, enlarges and deepens our sense of community. When it enables us, the 'educated, leisured, policy-makers of the West', to see 'exotic specimens of humanity as also "one of us," the sociologists as having done the same for the poor (and various sorts of nearby outsiders), the psychologists having done the same for the eccentric and the insane' (Rorty 1981a:581). The probability of truth and the possibility of increased humane action is expanded by the emphasis on our common humanity.

This moral argument is expressed by Hirsch in what he calls 'a fundamental ethical maxim for interpretation'.²⁷ Unless there is 'a powerful overriding value in disregarding an author's intention (i.e., original meaning), we who interpret as a vocation should not disregard it' (1976:90). Closely connected to this there is a second ethical injunction (which he also does not see as an absolute one) against anachronistic reading. We should not use an author's words for our own purposes any more than we should use another person for our own ends (see Hirsch 1976:90). Both injunctions boil down to respect for the *other*. To *save the text*, especially a traditional text, from becoming extinct, by '*making it true according to our current beliefs ... lowers the value and credibility of humanistic scholarship*' (Hirsch 1984b:218). In the words of Skinner:

It has proved a short step from emphasizing the public character of meaning to abandoning any concern with authorial intentionality. One way of making the move has simply been to disavow any interest in what authors may have meant in favour of explaining what their texts mean to us. The study of texts thus becomes a purely consumer-oriented study of 'reader response'.

(1988:272)

Talking about consumer interests, is it not too high a price for society to pay – not only to lose access to the variety of past literature and interpretations but also to drop from our repertoire the type of hermeneutics demanded in interpreting judicial and other normative texts (see Skinner 1988:281)?

²⁷ He is criticised by Danneberg and Müller for formulating this maxim as an extension of Kant's practical imperative (see 1984:12). Although Hirsch (see 1984a:89) admits that his reliance on Kant is not well founded, the justification of interpretive norms (ethical maxims) can be defended on other grounds.

The price to be paid for a disregard of the principle of understanding *from within* can be expressed more clearly in terms of the far-reaching effects on interpretive interests. Not only particular values but also interpretive interest brings to the fore the question: 'What sort of culture do we want to foster?' (Hirsch 1982:244). The kind advocated by a communicative approach is well expressed by Marcus and Fischer:

In the face of undeniable global structures of political and economic power, ethnography, as the practical embodiment of relativism and interpretive anthropology, challenges all those views of reality in social thought which permaturely [sic] overlook or reduce cultural diversity for the sake of the capacity to generalize or to affirm universal values, usually from the still-privileged vantage point of global homogenization emanating from the West.

(1986:33)

Somehow, a particular aim of interpretation in the final analysis reflects a particular view of reality. This, again, can be clearly illustrated in terms of the justification for particular interpretive aims: the appeal to relevance, for example.

5.3 Interpretive aim and the relevance of texts

At issue is the justification of interpretive interests. What kind of justification can one possibly have not only for reading a text but for reading it in any possible way? Knowledge for its own sake, like reading a text for its own sake, is a fallacy. Some knowledge is not worth having; or, conversely, if knowledge has no value it is not worth pursuing – which does not imply immediate relevance or value (e.g. with regard to racism, social justice or political ideologies) but potential value for someone. At the bottom line, even the decision to devote time and energy to a task for one's own sake raises the question of value and relevancy.

The relevance and value of interpretive interest are perceived differently from the point of view of different aims of interpretation. On the one hand it is asserted that texts are read in the light of prior interests; the opposite view is that relevance cannot be decided in advance. On the one hand it is maintained that a text may mean whatever the reader finds interesting and relevant according to contemporary needs; and on the other hand it is maintained that not present-mindedness but the contribution to human discourse of a text or culture should decide its relevance. The choice for the present relevance of a text or culture rests on a second closely connected assumption – the independent life of a text once it has left the hand of the author.

5.3.1 Readers' interests and the independence of texts

The view that texts are perceived as having independent lives of their own is part and parcel of the argument that texts are read because of their relevance. The argu-

ments of Gadamer and Ricoeur that are used in New Testament studies are well known.²⁸ Both assume that a text achieves a life of its own, since the text changes from one reading to the next. What happens in jurisprudence happens in every process of understanding, namely 'produktiver Rechtsergänzung' (Gadamer 1960:312; and see 1960:312-323; the English translation in *Truth and Method* 1979b:294 is 'creative supplementing'). A 'text's career escapes the finite horizon lived by its author. What the text says now matters more than what the author meant to say ...' (Ricoeur 1977:320). Once a historical text starts to create new meanings, what matters most is the *public meaning* of the text (see Skinner 1988:272). Such a view implies that a reader, by means of creative supplementing, adds (to) the meaning of a text. To read is to create meaning,²⁹ and reading is done out of prior interest in a text or with a view to 'the aesthetic pleasure a text provides' (Juhl 1984:71) or the 'possibilities for existence that the text opens for the reader' (Schneiders 1982:62).³⁰

Two pertinent objections to this position may be mentioned before the issue of relevance is discussed in the subsequent section. The first is that the meaning of a text or text-analogue is assumed and not subjected to interpretation (see Hirsch 1984b:215). As a result, the truth of the text is that of the reader, which is another way of saying that the historical gap between text and reader is bridged by tradition (see Stout 1982:8; Wright 1984:95-96). Conflict in interpretations is solved by an appeal to tradition. 'The determinate meaning of a text at a given point in time is what a present culture would generally take that meaning to be' (Hirsch 1967:250). Also Bernstein maintains that Gadamer's appeal to the truth of an interpretation 'amounts to what can be argumentatively validated by the community of interpreters who open themselves to what tradition "says to us"' (1983:154). The implication is that a 'papal-like authority' decides on the meaning of a text for 'the problem of determining the true character of a changing tradition is the same as the problem of determining the true character of a changing meaning' (Hirsch 1967:250). Gadamer's view, according to Van Niekerk, 'leaves an open door for dogmatism and irrationalism' (1990:12).

Secondly, if it is accepted that no linguistic code can determine the meaning of a text, then some human agency or act is needed to decide on the system of codes and conventions that shall determine textual meaning (see Hirsch 1984a:90). A text does

²⁸ With regards to the occasion of the letter to the Galatians, it has been pointed out (see chapter 1 § 6.1) that Hartman and Lategan, for example, rely on this argument in support of the view that the letter should be read from the vantage point of contemporary interests and not within its own historical situation.

²⁹ As will be argued in the next chapter, it is not disputed that to read is to create meaning. What is at issue is the norm by means of which a reader chooses to construe a text to mean something.

³⁰ This is no place to decide the different natures of *texts*. The object of this study is obviously not to talk about literary texts as objects of aesthetic pleasure but to apply particular principles to classic (in the sense of texts valuable to a society), normative or ancient texts.

not exist prior to being construed by a reader. A text has to represent '*somebody's* meaning – if not the author's, then the critic's' (Hirsch 1967:3). Contrary to scholars who believe that it is only possible to understand a text in our own terms, Hirsch says that if we 'do not construe a text in what we rightly or wrongly assume to be its own terms then we do not construe it at all' (1967:135). The point should be clear. Texts have independent lives in so far as they can, by means of a number of keys, be construed by readers to have meaning. Either way, it is confirmed that the text represents somebody's meaning – the question becomes, 'Who's meaning or interpretive norm should be preferred?' If some pertinent (historical) norm is not used, readers make use of such keys as happen to be around – usually their own (see also Skinner 1988:233; Rohrbaugh 1978:24).

The fact that texts can be read in any number of ways does not indicate that they should also be read according to the reader's norm. Nor is it an open invitation to see a text as leading a life of its own. In fact, readers' norms, more often than not, are simply the tradition controlled by those who happen to be in power. This will be pointed out more clearly in discussing to the dilemma of relevance.

5.3.2 The dilemma of relevance

The dilemma of relevance, in short, is that different concepts of it, to a large extent attributable to different values and attitudes, are currently used in support of individual aims of interpretation.

Gadamer argues that it is the naivety of so-called historicism to believe that a historical object can be seen as ontologically independent of the subject (see 1960:283). Suffice it to say that, according to him, the historicity of human nature does not allow a division between past and present – only a dialogue, since the interpreter is already part of the tradition of the text (his emphasis on historicity). One of the consequences of this philosophical position, highly valued in New Testament research, is that texts are read out of prior interest; 'The entire process of "exegeting" assumed the relevance of the text from the beginning' (Herzog 1983:110; and see Brett 1990:376). This task of exegesis is well expressed by Schneiders, 'namely, participation in the work of interpreting the text as the Church's normative source of revelation' (1982:57).

If it is true that interpretive interests cannot be separated from presuppositions about the aim of interpretation that carries them, then interpretive interests do not determine what is relevant and valuable: it works the other way round. In other words, what is regarded as a relevant and valuable reading will ultimately determine one's interpretive interests. This emerges clearly in the view expressed above. Some interesting choices are presented by opposing views on the aim of interpretation (see Hirsch 1985^a:189-190 for a brief summary of the opposing views).

From the point of view of a communicative approach, the ultimate aim of interpretation is to understand the text or text-analogue from within, thus to hear the

voice of the other – be it a text, a culture or a society. In the words of the anthropologist Geertz, the aim of interpretation in a historical approach is ‘not to answer our deepest questions, but to make available to us answers that others ... have given, and thus to include them in the consultable record of what man has said’ (Geertz 1973:30) or to enlarge ‘the universe of human discourse’ (1973:14). The ideal of discovering *from within* (rather than creating *from without*) expresses an acceptance of *others* as equally human and important and constitutes an aim of interpretation in the human sciences which respects that humanity. This is what Skinner calls the ‘anthropological justification’ (1988:286) for studying intellectual history. Three pertinent differences with an exploitative approach may be noted in particular.

The first is that, as in the case of the exploitative approach, the wish is to accommodate the past to the present, but without distorting the past.³¹ However, the value and relevance of a text or culture are not presupposed but are demonstrated by the contribution to human discourse. Before deciding whether a particular text is valuable, it is necessary to understand what the text *meant* (see Hirsch 1985a:190). Translatability between cross-cultural concepts overstates the urge for relevance while the objective of a communicative interpretation is not to translate but to learn ‘different styles of reasoning’ (Skinner 1988:252). What is needed is to be retrained ‘to new ideas (i.e., new for us) from the past’ (Hirsch 1985a:196).

Secondly, the investigation of alien systems of belief, whether text or culture, allows us to stand back from our own prevailing assumptions and structures and discover their contingency. This paves the way for a greater degree of understanding, hence tolerance, of cultural diversity. The greatest advantage, however, is the possibility of acquiring a perspective from which to view *our own* in a more self-critical way, thus enlarging our present horizon instead of simply ‘fortifying local prejudices’ or degenerating into ‘uncritically accepted ideologies’ (Skinner 1988:287).

The third and related advantage is that, unlike autocratic or exploitative interpretations, allocratic or communicative interpretations have the advantage of offering something *new* – in the sense of the *other* who is beyond the boundaries of the aesthetics and the text-in-itself. In the words of Hirsch (1982:246):

Interpretation, as the general term for cognition, is hardly limited to the boundaries of texts or to the arbitrary confines of fiction and poetry. Historical interpretation is the humanistic pursuit par excellence and embraces not just texts but contexts.

³¹ To avoid misunderstanding, it should be re-emphasised that *the past* is not seen in a positivistic sense as something to be discovered. The past is a construction by the interpreter or historian; but it can be constructed by means of allocratic or autocratic norms and concepts. The commitment to respect otherness indeed makes a difference. Moreover, the choice of this approach does not deny any other approach, nor does it claim to be the one and only way to deal with these interpretive problems. Indeed, the decision is taken in terms of values which are arbitrarily chosen.

For this reason, paradoxically, the 'stronger commitment to history and the authorial norm might yield a greater commitment to the demands of present relevance' (Hirsch 1985b:28). Says Wright, 'understand the past's otherness and it will speak most directly to us' (1984:85). Two features of the different definitions on *relevance* may be elaborated.

First, an apparent difficulty with the communicative approach is that pastness poses an obstacle to the present relevance of a text.³² If we adopt the writer's or actor's norm, are we not condemned to mere antiquarianism? The real job of interpretation, according to the objectors from an exploitative point of view, is to revitalise the texts of the past so that they mean something in the present.

However, the study of the past *for its own sake* is not simply to be equated with antiquarianism (see Tosh 1984:24).³³ It may just be surprising how much we come to learn about ourselves when confronted with the otherness and datedness of other or older socio-cultural systems. Rather than expecting a text or text-analogue to add to our problems and questions, it is read for its contribution to human discourse. Relevance is found in the imaginative application of historical meaning to a different world. The possibility of discovering something new is inherent in the use of an allocratic norm, whereas under an exploitative norm it is not a real possibility.

Secondly, breathing life into an outdated past meaning poses a problem to a communicative approach. In terms of the value determinacy of the aim of interpretation, the obvious answer from the communicative approach would be that outdatedness is preferable to making a text conform to the reader's truth. Rather than forcing texts into moulds which provide artificial respiration, outdatedness can lead to the replacement of such texts. What is often not appreciated is that under the exploitative reader norm, the preference of those who happen to be in power ultimately determines relevance and value (see Hirsch 1985b:17). When the value and relevance of a text is assumed, the discovery of something new or something other is hardly possible, since the meaning of the text is already mediated by tradition.

³² The fear is often expressed, in objecting to the historical paradigm, that to restrict the meaning of a text to the historical meaning is an unnecessary narrowing down of the hermeneutic project (see Palmer 1969:65). It is seen as a deadening, dry-as-dust enterprise which turns literary texts into museum objects (see Hirsch 1985a:190). Perhaps that is also what Vorster has in mind when he says that 'meaning and communicability of the New Testament text cannot be explained by the use of the historico-critical methodology ... What is needed is a text-oriented methodology' (1984:119).

³³ How a merely antiquarian interpretation can be avoided will be discussed at a later stage. Suffice it to say that the distinction between *meaning* and *significance* as applied by Hirsch is, to my mind, a useful analytical tool to do just that.

6 SOCIAL-SCIENTIFIC INTERPRETATION AS A COMMUNICATIVE ENTERPRISE

It has been argued that a communicative approach to historical interpretation is possible, and reasons have been stated why it is desirable. The third issue to be commented on is how such an approach is to be implemented. To do this, the theory and practice of interpretation have to be connected. In other words, the practical implications of a communicative approach to interpretation need to be pointed out.

At issue, therefore, is how to put into operation the methodological aspects claimed to be constitutive of social-scientific interpretation as a communicative approach. While the analysis of the methodological components of the cypher key was done by taking the components apart, a final consideration in dealing with the theory of the communicative approach is to explore the possible ways in which the whole fits together.

The nature of interpretation is directly related to the aim of interpretation and consequently to the values and attitudes constituting an approach. Different theories lead to different ways of fitting together the whole. However, possible conceptualisations of the whole and related issues are not entirely clear from the previous discussions. The emic-etic distinction in the social sciences will be used to explore some of these issues and to fill out the map of the practical nature of interpretation.

6.1 Emics and etics: pointing to some possibilities of a communicative approach

A mere distinction between emic and etic studies³⁴ does not adequately explain the nature of the problem to be addressed, since different dilemmas (depending on the aim of interpretation) face the interpreter dealing with the otherness of foreign texts, alien cultures or distant historical eras. Thus, in order to deal with the emic and etic problem it should be situated within the ambience already discussed, of the aim of interpretation. Both approaches accept, but understand in totally different terms, that the historical or cultural gap can be bridged.

From the point of view of nonhistorical approaches to the social sciences, the emic-etic distinction is used to designate a dichotomy between two separate ways of inter-

³⁴ Geertz prefers the concepts 'experience-near' and 'experience-distant'. 'An experience-near concept is roughly, one which an individual – a patient, a subject, in our case an informant – might himself naturally and effortlessly use to define what he or his fellows see, feel, think, imagine, and so on, and which he would readily understand when similarly applied by others. An experience-distant concept is one which various types of specialists – an analyst, an experimenter, an ethnographer, even a priest or an ideologist – employ to forward their scientific, philosophical, or practical aims' (Geertz 1979^b:226-227). These concepts (derived from a psychoanalyst, Kohut) express the same distinction as *emic* versus *etic* analyses (see Geertz 1979^b:226).

preting (see Pike 1966:153-155; Brett 1990:359-365; Segal 1990:20-21). An etic interpretation is one where *outside* concepts are used; an emic one, where the concepts of those involved are used. For example, speaking from a materialist perspective,³⁵ Harris's use of the concepts (see 1976:343) and that of his follower Silverman (see 1977:9-11) result in two separate studies, the one emic and the other etic, which can as a second step be related to one another (see Silverman 1977:10; Feleppa 1986:250).

It is not only the nature of interpretation that is important but also what is meant by the concepts. *Understanding from within* is seen in these approaches as correlated to an emic description/interpretation of a foreign or ancient society. Etic explanations on the other hand need to be defended before the bar of the modern sciences, not before the bar of history (see Brett 1990:362). According to Saliba, for example, functional studies typify the etic standpoint, since the concepts used to understand the *others* are 'more often than not, foreign to the native's world view' (1977:195). An 'anthropologist who adopts the etic outlook is interested in interpreting the data with little regard to the understanding which people have about what they are doing and thinking' (Saliba 1977:195).

Two features stand out clearly from an exploitative point of view. Two different kinds of interpretation are identified, the one internal and the other external, and the *grand-theory* style of etic interpretation has little regard for the native's point of view.

However, the 'methodological conception of the contrast is not predominant' (Feleppa 1986:244). From the point of view of a communicative approach, a totally different set of issues is at stake.

What is challenged is, first of all, the (erroneous) assumption that the nature of interpretation is determined by the set of concepts that is used. That is not the case, since – as has been argued – the nature of interpretation is determined mainly by the aim of interpretation. Both interpretations (those using emic and those using etic concepts) are challenged by the methodological assumptions of a communicative approach. Thus, from this point of view, emic and etic **concepts** and not emic and etic **interpretations** may be identified. In both instances, however, the interpretive problem is the same, namely whether the concepts and phenomena cover the same categories (see Runciman 1983:119). Both have to face the challenge presented by the commitment to respect otherness without distorting it by present-mindedness.

Secondly, the communicative point of view challenges a particular interpretation of *understanding from within*. Salmond (in Feleppa 1986:252) correctly points out that

³⁵ It has been argued that on this level functional and materialist studies share the same theory of science (see 3.2).

even in etic interpretations the subjects' views are material to the act of interpretation, and even in emic ones the anthropologist's questions and act of understanding are material to the way in which the conversation and analysis proceed. Whether insiders' or outsiders' concepts and categories are used, from a communicative point of view the very same dilemma has to be faced – namely, to establish a match between the concepts used and the meaningful experience of those involved in it.

From this point of view understanding from within is not a matter of the 'sympathetic duplication' (Hanson & Martin 1973:194) of other cultures, nor is it to 're-enact or re-create' (Skinner 1988:252) the experience of the natives. It also does not mean interpreting by means of native's or actor's concepts instead of one's own, but learning and being able to participate in certain practices (that of the others) and acting according to their rules (see Pauw 1987:84; Hanson & Martin 1973:204).

With reference to the discussion on interpretive assumptions, I would agree with Salmond (in Feleppa 1986:252) that "[e]mics" and "etics" are useful thumbnail-sketch terms for different interpretive attitudes, but I don't find them an adequate base for delineating anthropological theory'. The distinction may function for analytical and critical purposes, to indicate when one is speaking in one's own conceptual language and when one is using the actor's language (see Geertz 1975:74) – when one is using concepts related to contemporary models and theories and when one is dealing in concepts used by the natives. Social scientists are increasingly coming to realise that the use of etic concepts which are not grounded in the cultural or historical spheres of those involved, is a misrepresentation of them. The challenge is to know what the natives mean by their concepts and whether etic concepts do justice to the other world.

If one aspect is clear, it is that the distinction between emic and etic interpretations can hardly be maintained in terms of a communicative approach. To be pointed out in more detail are the necessary, concrete preconditions which distinguish a historical from a nonhistorical approach – the putting into operation of a communicative approach. Since the philosophical and epistemological differences have already been considered, the focus will be on the practical aspects that distinguish them.

6.2 A communicative approach as understanding from within

In this section it will become clear what interpretive constraints are, in this study, implied by the notion *understanding from within*. Theoretical notions and methodological commitments find their meaning (get teeth) in the practical implementation of interpretive principles. At issue is the task of implementing a communicative approach that avoids the trap of present-mindedness.

Winch is one of the philosophers who strongly objects to the idea (in mainstream social sciences) that the object, methods and aim of the social sciences are the same as, or even analogous to, those of the natural sciences (see Winch 1958:72). He does

not deny the possibility of developing and employing sociological concepts and categories other than those of the participants (see Winch 1977^b:161; Dallmayr & McCarthy 1977:139). As a matter of fact, on the possibility of comparing different societies and language games, he says: '...the question is not *whether* we can do this, but *what sort* of comparison is involved' (Winch 1977^a:208). His claim is that the social scientist's access to data, the formulation of the 'more reflective understanding' and the application of concepts must be mediated through the participant's way of viewing the world (see Winch 1958:89). The interpreter must understand the *language game* that is being played (see 1977^b:162; Dallmayr & McCarthy 1977:139).

Despite some criticism, Stowers expresses an important and lasting implication of Winch's position.³⁶ He says that

the explanation of a society in terms of its own beliefs, intentions and concepts (as the participants understand them) must come before explanations in terms of causes. Anthropologists or historians of antiquity who *a priori* assume that certain causes of "functions" belong to a certain "pattern of behavior" cannot justify their assumptions without reference to the particular beliefs and will almost certainly impose their own beliefs on the subjects of study.

(1985:159)

An understanding of human affairs – whether literary texts or socio-cultural codes, conventions and actions – from a communicative point of view is based on the fundamental humanistic value that 'the human world is essentially a network of meanings and that, therefore, nothing in this world can be adequately understood without understanding of these meanings "from within"' (Berger 1974:126).

Two interpretive constraints are to be deduced from these principles.

A **first constraint** may be designated as the avoidance of *insufficient puzzlement*. The historical question, according to Skinner, is incompletely posed in literary studies when the historian has failed to enquire up to the point of 'what the author of the text may have meant by it' (1988:282). In cultural and historical studies, historical interpretation of a communicative approach has not been achieved without explicit curiosity about others' meaningful lives converted into the question as to what the actors or natives are up to. Such studies are not necessarily unhistorical, they are historical studies characterised by insufficient puzzlement. The commitment to cultural/historical otherness, in short, needs to be put into operation by means of a definite curiosity about the author's or actor's point of view.

³⁶ Stowers sees Winch as a strict intentionalist – in other words, he takes it that Winch sees each society as a closed system. Since there is 'complete incommensurability between different cultures ... no one can evaluate a culture except on its own terms' (1985:157-158). The mediationist view would, according to Stowers, be situated between the two extreme mirror opposites. The kind of *extreme relativist* position attributed to Winch, which is rather a caricature, hardly exists (see Bernstein 1983:92) and neither does Winch maintain that view (see 1977^a:208).

A **second constraint** is to learn a new style of language and reasoning (see Skinner 1988:252; Hirsch 1985^a:196), a new set of categories and cultural concepts. Without being retrained into the world of the other culture or era and the commitment to apply a different style of reasoning, exploitative interpretation cannot be avoided. To be sure, if this is not an explicit and conscious process, the interpreter might be making too facile a use of those cultural tools that might be lying around. What is needed is to learn how 'to reach the same conclusions and prescriptions for action as natives would in the same circumstances' (Hanson & Martin 1973:204). Without the commitment to otherness being set in operation as a process of learning the codes and conventions – the system of meaning – of others, the chance of reducing anachronistic and ethnocentric interpretation is rather slim. If otherness is embedded in the socio-cultural network of the meaning of others, then otherness can never be assumed: it has to be demonstrated.

Given the commitment to maintain the historicity of texts, cultures or historical eras, the second aspect – well expressed by Winch – brings to the fore some further constraints on nonhistorical interpretations.

6.3 A communicative approach as thick description

Since it is we who want to understand the others, says Winch, the onus is on us to extend our understanding to make room for their concepts (see 1977^b:179). One such approach has been suggested by Geertz's notion of a *thick description*.

Thick description can be described as sorting out the structures of signification of the natives involved (see Geertz 1973:9). One cannot perceive what one's informants perceive. One has to gain access to the natives' or participants' interpretations of their symbolic forms – that is, 'words, images, institutions, behaviors – in terms of which, in each place, people actually represent themselves to themselves and to one another' (Geertz 1979^b:228). He emphasises that if we want to make sense of alien phenomena, the 'trick is to figure out what the devil they think they are up to' (Geertz 1979^b:228), or the 'culture of a people is an ensemble of texts ... which the anthropologist strains to read over the shoulders of those to whom they properly belong' (1979^a:222). Confronted with the Zande category of *magic*, Winch suggests as a general principle that since 'it is we who want to understand the Zande category, it appears that the onus is on us to extend our understanding so as to make room for the Zande category, rather than to insist on seeing it in terms of our own ready-made distinction' (Winch 1977^b:179).

The double task, Geertz (1973:27) says,

is to uncover the conceptual structures that inform our subjects' acts, the "said" of social discourse, and to construct a system of analysis in whose terms what is generic to those structures, what belongs to them because they are what they are, will stand out against the other determinants of human behavior.

In one word, thick description is an attempt to include simultaneously model and evidence, etic and emic concepts, into a dialogical process. It opens up the possibility of an analysis which does justice to the subjective experience of the participants, rather than reductive formulas which profess to account for them (see Geertz 1979^a:222). It starts with a guess as to what the others are up to, or what we think they are up to (see Geertz 1973:15; Ricoeur 1977:329).

If an interpreter neither starts intellectually empty-handed nor falls completely for the experience-near concepts of the participants, then two characteristics should simultaneously be kept in mind: the inevitability of using contemporary models, and secondly the way in which models are used.³⁷ Since I have discussed this issue in some detail elsewhere (see Craffert 1992), suffice it to touch in passing on the most important points.

Since all exegetes use models, the first set of issues has to do with the explicit and conscious use of models as opposed to the implicit and unconscious use of models. If models are not used explicitly and consciously, they function unconsciously and implicitly to structure and influence interpretive activities. As a **third interpretive constraint** the explicit and conscious use of models allows interpreters at least to be explicit about their own biases; and it allows criticism and dialogue. Implicitly assumed models are often no more than projections of the interpreter's world onto that of the natives or actors.

The second set of issues has to do with how models function in research activities. The culture- and time-specific nature of models accords them, by definition, a preliminary status. Far from representing everlasting and absolute features, they are abstracted representations of particular worlds (most often the interpreter's meaningful world). When not only the other culture but also the tools (models) are seen as constructions, it becomes easier to challenge their ability to uncover universals and laws.³⁸ Therefore models should not be *applied* to the evidence but should, as far as possible, be used as heuristic tools for their explanatory power to explicate context and world. The interaction between models and evidence is a matter of dialogue rather than of an application of the models. Thus, a **fourth constraint** is the use of models as heuristic tools rather than as iron matrixes.

³⁷ We cannot approach the *other* except by means of our models, concepts and categories (see Jarvie 1977:202; Mommsen 1978:20; Nipperdey 1978:4) but at the same time we should beware of forcing our standards onto them. Neither do we have to accept that what the subject thinks it's up to (the subject's own vocabulary) is always the best (see Rorty 1981^a:578-579). In fact, such a subject may not have used or even have been aware of the etic concepts or models used by modern interpreters (see Runciman 1983:13; Brett 1990:363; Segal 1990:21).

³⁸ The intricate relationship between data and model (text and context) will be discussed in the next chapter. Suffice it to point out that the relationship is seen, at one level, as an instance of the hermeneutical circle and not of breaking out of it. The assumed or constructed context of a particular text functions as a parameter within which a text is construed to be and mean something and not something else.

The constraints mentioned in this chapter will, in the next chapter, be linked to the validation of interpretive claims. With these remarks the table is set for the discussion of further methodological aspects before the historical components of traditional opponent hypotheses (cypher keys) are analysed in some detail. The present discussion can be extended to include other methodological components, such as those that apply to texts, language and context, but without repeating the whole theoretical debate.

CHAPTER 3

ON METHODOLOGICAL CONFIGURATIONS: TEXT AND CONTEXT

Meaning, then, may be conceived as a self-identical schema whose boundaries are determined by an originating speech event, while significance may be conceived as a relationship drawn between that self-identical meaning and something, anything, else.

(Hirsch 1984^b:204)

1 INTRODUCTION

In order to challenge interpretive traditions which underscore different readings of the letter to the Galatians, the constitutive components of various methodological positions need to be compared and examined. In doing so, it is necessary to find a way in which not only critical practices (methodological positions) but also individual components of such positions can be mapped and examined in a meaningful way. Apart from the philosophical and epistemological components already discussed (chapter 2), views on aspects such as *interpretation, meaning, text, and context* will be added in this chapter.

The aim of interpretation as a philosophical and epistemological category, has been identified as the constituting element of methodological positions. Two trends that comprise a reaction to a positivistically oriented science have been identified on a continuum: historical (communicative) and nonhistorical (exploitative) approaches. In elaborating on the variety of methodological positions, I propose – instead of being content with a linear model of critical practices – to explore the model of methodological configurations. Despite its apparent use in categorising critical practices, it will also be used to classify the variety of views on aspects such as interpretation, meaning, text and context.

The main objective of this chapter is to present the social-scientific approach as a particular configuration of methodological components, consisting of those aspects of a historical aim of interpretation that have already been mentioned and including a particular view on interpretation, meaning, text and context. Although no other methodological positions are to be discussed in detail, views on these components will enable us to compare and evaluate alternative proposals. The validation of interpretive claims is closely related to definitions, categories, and particular methodological positions. To put it differently, particular aim-of-interpretation positions become concrete within particular views on interpretation, meaning, text and context, and the evaluation and examination of such methodological positions should include reflection on these components.

2 A MAP OF METHODOLOGICAL COMPONENTS

Critical practices, whether social-scientific or historical-critical interpretation, literary or reader-oriented approaches, derive their individual features in part from aspects such as *interpretation, meaning, text* and *context*. They are identified in terms of different methodological configurations of these components. In order to give an adequate account of the interpretive strategy adopted in this study (a social-scientific approach as a communicative enterprise), it is necessary to account also for philosophical and epistemological views on these components. Because of the diversity of perspectives on these issues, it is necessary to have a model mapping the spectrum of critical practices.

The objective is to provide a coherent system by means of which the different components (text, context, interpretation, and so forth) can be described in terms of their meaning and contribution to the interpretive process. It should be remembered that the aim is not so much to locate methodological positions in the study of the letter to the Galatians on a map of critical practices as to compare and evaluate the foundational assumptions and interpretive claims of various opponent hypotheses. It is more important to consider each component of a methodological position in its own right than to map different critical practices.

In the previous chapter the configuration metaphor was used to designate different methodological positions and their constitutive components. It can also be applied in our understanding of the individual components of different critical practices. To obtain a clear grasp of the explanatory power of the configuration metaphor, it should be seen in contrast to one other model for the classification of critical practices: the linear model.

2.1 The linear model in the dock

The linear model of communication (author – text – reader) is a very popular one nowadays for the classification of interpretive literary criticism – not only in secular but also in New Testament studies (see Barton 1984:19-23; Lategan 1984^a:1-3). It is a classification system used to describe the individual components in methodological positions. Not only is it believed that this model can locate and relate most of the components which dominate the hermeneutical debate at present: it is also used to classify the chronological sequence of critical practices (see Lategan 1984^a:2-3; Rabinowitz 1989:81).

According to the linear model, the locus of meaning in biblical studies has shifted from the author to the text and thence to the reader/reading. The history of critical practices is accordingly located on this linear scale. Historical criticism is identified with an interest in the source; structural and text-immanent approaches are located in the text segment, and audience- and reader-oriented approaches represent the final development as the relationship text-reader (see Lategan 1984^a:3-4).

If common denominators of the reader sector were to be listed briefly, the following would undoubtedly be included. The notion of *text* became unstable in that it is no longer seen as a static object to be interpreted but as an ongoing process of communication (see Lategan 1988^b:70; Vorster 1988:36-40; Rabinowitz 1989:82). *Interpretation*, then is not a matter of discovery but of creation, and the *meaning* of a text is the result of this encounter between reader and text. Finally, the *context* of the author or original creation of the text is unimportant, for the text outlives its author. In a word, the subjective and creative elements in interpretation are taken seriously.

The advantages of a configuration model in mapping the variety of critical practices make it clear why the linear model should be avoided: not because it is wrong, but because it is inadequate to the variety of critical practices, and moreover misleading in that it misrepresents not only the spectrum of critical practices but also the features of individual components. While only two advantages will be discussed, the explanatory power of a configuration model will be further illustrated when discussing the individual components of a communicative methodological position.

Firstly, critical practices (particular methodological position) are not ascribed *in toto* to a particular position on a map but are described in terms of the features of individual components. Each component can be described in terms of its own features but also of its interaction with other components.

Secondly, the configuration model is not prescriptive but descriptive. It merely provides a frame within which the variety of components can be identified and described both as independent entities and in relation to and interaction with other components of the relevant methodological position.

These advantages make it possible to avoid several deficiencies of the linear model.

Firstly, the linear model is misleading in its presentation of individual components of the linear sectors. The notion *the reader* can be used to illustrate this point.

In explaining the shift regarding the status of *texts*, the reader is seen 'as the instance which attributes meaning to the text' (Vorster 1988:37). It should, however, be noted that the *reader* is equated with a contemporary reader in the sense of a reader using an autocratic norm; a reader not interested in the original communicative event but in actualising (creating) the text in a present encounter with it (see Vorster 1987:381-385; Lategan 1988^b:70; Rabinowitz 1989:87). In most instances the reader's authority is linked firstly with the notion that a text has a life of its own and secondly with the death of the author. This position characteristically accepts that 'the communication process is not simply a channel of information but the determinant of meaning' (Ryan 1985:20). The point to note is that the implied

meaning of *reader* is by definition ahistorical¹ in that the locus of meaning is qualified as 'not an historical first reader or any particular subsequent reader ... but a contemporary reader' (Porter 1990:278). It is not suggested that all reader- or audience-oriented approaches are alike in every respect² but only in the way in which they handle subjectivity and in their attitude to otherness (historicality).

According to this (very common) definition of the *reader/reading* sector, it is not surprising to find Porter (see 1990:281) arguing that Beavis (see 1987), who is interested in the first Greco-Roman readers, would not count as a reader-response critic despite the fact that she claims to be doing reader-response criticism. It should be apparent that a reader using an allocratic norm (constructing a first-century cypher key) to construct the historical meaning does not fit the linear model. At any rate, the aim of interpretation and the emphasis on the author and the datedness of the text do not fit.

The decisive aspect in the description of the *reader* is the creation of meaning, either by granting authority to the text or simply by claiming that the reader provides it in the act of reading.³ To emphasise just one (crucial) aspect: what is not done in practice is to develop a reader-oriented approach which accounts in an integrated way for the text's otherness in the sense argued in this study. Porter points out – to my mind, correctly – that

[r]eader-response criticism, as well as a number of other reading strategies [in New Testament studies], grew up in direct and conscious reaction to what was perceived to be the ahistorical or exclusivistic

¹ 'Ahistorical' is used in the exploitative sense defined in the previous chapter. To recapitulate this definition in one sentence, approaches are termed *exploitative* when they lack the commitment to historicality and certain built-in constraints designed to avoid mere subjectivity.

² Reader-response critics or 'audience critics are united more by their questions than by the directions they follow in trying to answer them' (Rabinowitz 1989:83; and see Ryan 1985:20ff). More accurately it might perhaps be called 'audience-oriented criticism' (Rabinowitz 1989:81), and more technically one should distinguish between a theory of response rooted in the text and a theory of reception which is more concerned with readers' judgment of texts (see Rabinowitz 1989:84). Audience criticism is used as an umbrella term to designate those approaches which focus on the 'text-reader pole'. It includes scholars such as Iser who, strictly speaking, is a reception critic (see Holub 1984:xii). Broadly speaking, two extremes can be identified: on the one hand those who have, 'to use a James Bondian phrase, license to fill – but that license is ultimately granted by the authority of the text'. The *construe* metaphor would suit this position best. On the other hand there are those who insist 'that readers *construct* the meaning of the text' (Rabinowitz 1989:87). In between the two poles, many have tried to define the locus of meaning as residing neither in the text nor in the reader but either in 'intertextuality' (that is, in the way texts find meaning in their relations with other texts) or in 'community norms' (see Rabinowitz 1989:87).

³ The situation of the reader in particular is emphasised (see Lategan 1984^a:4; Vorster 1988:42-44). It should, however, be noted that, unlike a communicative approach (where constraints are built into the interpretive approach to avoid or restrict the reader's subjectivity) these approaches assume the relevance of the texts – relevance in the sense that the texts are read with the explicit aim of creating their contribution to the ideological point of view, be it Marxist, feminist, liberationist or something else.

characteristics of New Criticism, although it may very well be recorded later as simply a fine-tuning of this method ... It is not surprising that so much of what is being called reader-response criticism is actually formalism, in other words the first step in reaction to historical criticism.

(1990:287)⁴

Secondly, the linear model imposes an exploitative view on the map of critical practices. It has already been mentioned that the notion of the changing status of texts implies the death of the author and the creation of meaning by a contemporary reader. The problem such a mapping system poses is that certain methodological positions can very easily be misrepresented. With regard to both positive and negative features, the mapping system as such attributes particular features to particular positions. To keep to the example of a Greco-Roman norm for the reading of New Testament texts, it would probably be assigned to the author sector of the linear model⁵ – the reason being that the application of an author's norm would conflict with the idea of the contemporary reader as the locus of authority in interpretation. However, despite the features usually ascribed to the author's position – for example, that of the traditional historical-critical approach (see Lategan 1984a:3) – a communicative methodological position would not fit the linear model.⁶

Perhaps the most serious danger of this kind of mapping system is that, once a straw man has been created, it is easy enough to burn it. Once a methodological position has been categorised in terms of an exploitative approach, it becomes almost impossible to do justice to it.

The point is that the linear model is misleading in that it creates a discourse on critical practices (methodological positions) which does not take account of the variety of ways in which the components can be related and combined. It leads to oversimplified generalisations on the variety of critical practices, due in part to the totality transfer of particular features of a sector to those methodological positions ascribed to the sector as a whole. The example of the reader, in contradistinction to the author, as the sole creator of meaning is a case in point.

⁴ Holub's judgement on Gadamer is significant in this regard. In fact, he expresses the selfsame point argued in this study, namely that Gadamer 'seems able to admit historicity only on an abstract theoretical level. When he himself analyzes texts ... the potentially radical notion of being-in-the-world produces a philosophical criticism akin to the most ahistorical, New Critical readings' (1984:45).

⁵ This is done, for example, by Herzog, who places Hirsch's application of an author's norm at this end of the spectrum (see 1983:110-111).

⁶ Obviously some approaches do fit the features of the linear model. It is true that, despite claims from some quarters that they cover all the features, some approaches do in fact fail to make provision for all the components (see Lategan 1988b:68).

A final, related reason why the linear model is to be avoided is because it pretends to separate the inseparable.⁷ To put it differently, the separation of elements in order to describe particular positions on the linear model does not account for the fact that interpretation (and thus the meaning of a text) always includes other aspects which do not come into focus in a particular theory (see Barton 1984:20). It follows from the discussion in the previous chapter (and the point will be taken up again) that marks on paper do not have meaning prior to being construed by a reader. The point at issue is, which set of cypher keys are used by a reader and in what way – not whether a reader construes a text as having meaning.

2.2 Accounting for paradoxical features in methodological positions

One of the challenges in developing an analytical tool for mapping the various theories and methods is the almost infinite number of possible scenarios of contributing elements. Rather than mapping critical practices or theories according to any predetermined model, I propose to explore the metaphor of configurations of methodological components. This does no more than provide a framework within which the constitutive elements (such as author, text, context and reader) can be identified and examined. These elements (depending on particular configurations) find their characteristics and definitions, fit into particular scenarios, and result in critical practices, none of which can readily be categorised by means of any of the constituting components. Furthermore, the identity of these elements depends *inter alia*, on being part of a particular methodological configuration.

Amid the variety of views on each component, and the variety of configurations of components, the objective is much rather to state what is meant in this study by interpretation, meaning, text and context than to get involved in either a justification or a defence of this position or an explication (and rejection) of all adverse views. In the sections that follow it will be indicated that, by mapping the social-scientific approach in terms of its constituting components, not only can the apparent paradoxical features (such as reader and author) be kept intact but also the particular methodological configuration can be described in such a way that as few as possible of the components are disregarded.

My argument is that one should be explicit about as many aspects as possible. That is the only way in which interpretive claims can be tested and neglected elements brought back into play. In explicating views on *interpretation, texts, meaning* and *con-*

⁷ Botha in a recent study has underscored this argument: 'When studying ancient documents the researcher actually functions as both transmitter and receiver *within* the communicative event. In other words, the transmission metaphor deceives with regard to the active role that the interpreter plays when interpreting, "creating" the author and the auditor/audience. One does not first study the author, then the text and then the audience (or in any other order). One can only look at the audience with the help of the text – a text construed by the interpreter. We only have a text-author and a text-audience' (1991^a:4).

text I hope to spell out just how a reader can also be a good listener, how textual in/determinacy can be respected without falling into the trap of positivism or subjectivism, how reading as a creative activity can be promoted without losing the *other* in the dialogue, how communicative context functions as one of the directive factors in interpretive events.

3 THE NATURE OF LANGUAGE AND OF TEXTS

Given the occasional nature of Paul's letter to the Galatians, the fact that it is a first-century communication, and this study's historical aim of interpretation, only two features of language and of texts will be emphasised: first, the fusion of semantic and pragmatic aspects of language and texts and secondly their socio-cultural nature.

To state the assumption that the 'essential function of language, then, is communication' (Feldman 1977:284; and see Harrison 1979:6) is a confirmation of the historical aim of interpretation to determine the communicative intent of a particular text. Feldman's argument (see 1977) that most (if not all) uses of language have communicative functions is especially true regarding letters since, as JN Vorster maintains, a letter 'is never without its communicative function' (1991:44).

3.1 Linguistic theories of meaning

Broadly speaking, at least two linguistic theories of meaning can be identified: on the one hand the 'communication-intention theorists' and on the other the 'formal-semantic theorists' (Feldman 1977:282; and see Harrison 1979:63-64). In the words of Olson (1977:258): 'One assumption is that meaning is in the shared intentions of the speaker and the hearer, while the opposite one is that meaning is conventionalized in a sentence itself, that "the meaning is in the text"'.

To start with the latter position, it is accepted that meaning is embedded 'in terms of abstract mental entities such as concepts' (Leech 1983:6). To give another description of such a view, 'what a sentence means is given in the sentence itself and hence remains the same however the sentence may be used' (Feldman 1977:285). Thus texts have meaning 'independently of the identity or intentions of the speakers who utter them, and independently of the particular contexts in which they may be uttered' (Harrison 1979:199). In New Criticism this idea has been formulated in the premise that 'a literary text is an autonomous object that can and should be analysed without regard to its context' (Rabinowitz 1989:82).

Few scholars will disagree that the meaning of a sentence depends, at least in part, upon the meaning of the words (semantics) of which it is composed, but also on the grammatical structure (syntax) of the sentence (see Lyons 1981:23 Harrison 1979:51). This includes aspects referred to as a text's static elements (see Lategan 1988b:70).

On the other hand, the communication-intention theories have assimilated semantics or the meaning of language to pragmatics, that is, meaning in language is defined relative to the speaker or user of language (see Leech 1983:6-7); '[t]he essential insight of the communication-intention theorists was that meaning is a property not of sentences but, rather, of their use' (Feldman 1977:283). It claims 'that sentences do not have fixed meanings but depend in every case on the context and purpose for which they were uttered' (Olson 1977:259).

From various angles it can be argued that the distinction made between the two approaches is much too acute (see also JN Vorster 1991:40ff). Whether one agrees with Lyons (see 1981:193) that the theories are in principle complementary, or with Harrison (see 1979:200-203) that an adequate theory of meaning should attempt to include insights from both sides, it is true that there is a definite attempt in the philosophy of language and the theories of meaning to attain a *third position*. What Leech refers to as *complementarism* includes both semantic and pragmatic aspects of meaning (see 1983:7).

From this short introduction to the field of theories of meaning it becomes clear, at the very least, that the meaning of a sentence or text is not a matter of choosing between the meaning of the constituent words and phrases (semantics and syntax) and the use of the language by an author or speaker; it comprises both.⁸ Thus, the dichotomy of the polar scheme turns out to be two complementary aspects of the meaning of a text. Theories which locate the meaning of a text in the encounter of the reader with the text are left aside for the moment.

In short: whatever else may be true of language and texts, the meaning of a sentence or text is seldom if ever determined by the words of the text alone, since both aspects (semantic and pragmatic) are usually present. Thus it would follow that efforts to understand language abstracted from the speaker's use of it are always misleading – more so for language used socially, less so for language used ideationally – and, therefore, that any specific claims made in the context of such efforts are, at best, of limited application.
(Feldman 1977:293)

An important principle can be derived from this. No attempt to understand Paul's letter to the Galatians can rely on the words of the text alone. In fact, his com-

⁸ This idea is very aptly expressed by Harrison: 'An adequate theory of meaning, it seems, would do justice both to Frege's insights concerning the objectivity and autonomy of meaning, and to the apparent indispensability, in the description of natural languages, of a whole family of intentional concepts of which the most salient and the most intractable member is, of course, "meaning itself". Truth theorists begin from Frege and run aground on the rocks of intensionality. Communication-intention theorists begin by taking intensionality for granted and run aground on the objectivity and publicity of meaning' (1979:201-202; and cf. 1979:206-207).

munication presupposes a speech activity which is to be understood not solely from the *text* but from the particular *use* of words and sentences in the text. Vorster cogently points out that the

pragmatic function of language is thus one of the most important aspects which the reader and interpreter of the New Testament has to keep in mind. Most of the texts of the New Testament were not written for the purpose of giving information, but for the purpose of convincing readers and hearers to do something. The purpose of most of the texts was to persuade people to accept a particular point of view.

(1988:39)

The analysis of letters as though the grammatical semantic aspects ('only the text') are sufficient to decide the meaning should be avoided.

Together with the first-century nature of the communicative event, a second principle should be acknowledged: if Paul's communicative intent is to be understood properly, it should be done *from within*. It is of special importance in studying New Testament letters to take seriously not only the fact that they are not objects but communicative events with pragmatic functions, but also that they are (past) speech acts from a distant culture.

3.2 Language and texts as cultural artifacts

Against the positivistic view, Vorster (see 1988:36-38) convincingly argues that reading is an active process of attributing meaning and that texts are no longer regarded as objects to be analysed. However, as argued in the previous chapter, the reaction to positivism both in the social sciences and in literary studies can be placed on a continuum between historical and nonhistorical approaches. Thus it will be explained in some detail what is meant, from a communicative point of view, by the rejection of positivistic views on texts and what language means in texts.⁹ Prior to saying what a text is and how texts communicate meaning, a brief explanation of two issues (from a communicative point of view) will suffice.

Firstly, once it is admitted that reading is an active process of attributing meaning, it should be remembered that 'language, unlike the physical world, is a cultural institution that developed expressly in order to mean something and to convey what is meant to members of a community who have learned how to use and interpret language' (Abrams 1977:432). Thus, in order to read and interpret the meaning of any writing or human action – whether a road sign or a restaurant check, a religious activity or a biblical book – 'the reader must share with the writer a scenario of how the world works' (Malina 1986^d:92). Unless this happens, Malina argues, 'the result

⁹ To recapitulate, what distinguishes the historical from the nonhistorical approaches are at least two philosophical choices: the commitment to historicity and the notion of relevance as determined not by present-mindedness but by understanding from within.

is noise, or putting words into the mouth of the sender: in other words, the result is a distorted message' (1986^b:150).

Thus, most speech acts¹⁰ 'are culture-specific in that they depend upon the legal, religious or ethical conventions and practices institutionalized in particular societies' (Lyons 1981:187). The active process of attributing meaning is restricted by socio-cultural contextual parameters. Unless a text is related to the socio-cultural world of origin, it is hardly possible to avoid misunderstanding it. As Meeks remarks: 'In order to determine what a given text meant, therefore, we must uncover the web of meaningful signs, actions, and relationships within which that text did its work' (1986^a:179). Unless the effect of a text in its own culture can be determined, the text is misrepresented.

Secondly, a text is not an object but neither is it an intentionless sequence of signs. To put it differently, it is indeed just marks on paper (or *marks-on-blanks*; a concept of Abrams 1977:429), but unless these marks are taken to have been made by someone, it does not make sense to read/interpret them. Even to talk about a science of interpretation one needs an object which makes sense, distinguishable from its expression, for or by a subject. It is impossible to interpret rock formations, patterns of driftwood on the seashore, or snow crystals as language because they lack the notion of a subject from whom they received meaning. Without the assumption of meaning imparted by a subject, such criteria as sameness and difference or coherence in the given pattern are arbitrary and senseless (see Taylor 1977:102). The implication is that 'unless we regard the text of a literary work as the record of someone's use of the words in question to say something, it would make no sense to attempt seriously to interpret it' (Juhl 1980:109). To call something a poem or even a text is to say, among other things, that the words, lines, or sentences of which it consists have not been arranged by chance but produced by a person with certain intentions (see Juhl 1980:84).

What is maintained here is that marks, sounds or signs fail to be words, language or communication without an agent capable of intention. Nonintentional signs will merely resemble words or language (see Knapp & Michaels 1982:728). For that reason it is impossible to have intentionless language or meaning. When meaning is intentionless, it also becomes meaningless (see Knapp & Michaels 1982:727f; Hirsch 1967:23; Luckmann 1981:223-230).¹¹ Knapp and Michaels (1987:60) argue that

¹⁰ A speech act, says JN Vorster, is 'an utterance produced by a speaker within a context and addressed to a hearer with an intended effect' (1991:45). The present study is not primarily concerned with Paul's speech acts in the letter to the Galatians but with some (historical and methodological) preconditions for understanding such speech or communicative acts. Thus the phrase 'within a context' in this definition is of the greatest importance.

¹¹ When an author's intention is taken to be irrelevant to the meaning of a text, the logical consequence is that the text becomes analogous to a series of physical movements which, if performed by an human agent, could have one of a number of meanings (see Juhl 1980:288-289). If not the author's intention, then the reader's intention functions to construe the marks to be more than marks: thus they become meaningful.

the dependence of meaning on context is simply another way of describing the determination of meaning by intention: because a mark means whatever it is intended to mean, the same mark can have different meanings when it is produced in different situations.

Thus a text does not have meaning simply because it represents an unalterable sequence of words (see Hirsch 1960:470).

In fact, a text does not exist 'until it is construed; until then, it is merely a sequence of signs' (Hirsch 1967:13); and since meaning is a matter of consciousness and not of physical signs or things (see Hirsch 1967:23), as a communicative event it is contextually determined.

- ✕ In answer to the question: 'what then is a text?', two remarks can be made. Firstly, texts are products of human attempts at communication which bear a socio-cultural stamp. Secondly, they are not objects in the positivistic sense and unless taken as the record of someone's intention, cannot be construed to mean anything in particular. Thus, on the one hand, a text does not exist as an object of communication prior to being construed, but on the other hand, it is a past speech act which needs to be understood as a historical event (see Hirsch 1985^a:190).

A final word on 'past speech act'. As already noted, meaning (whether expressed in language or in by human action) cannot be adequately interpreted without reference to the social system in which it was expressed or lived (see Malina 1986^a:2). If the original author is disregarded, the reader acts as an 'author' of the signs by providing an alternative set of cultural codes and conventions by means of which the signs are construed. From a communicative point of view ancient texts are taken as past speech acts, to be understood as far as possible in terms of the system of socio-cultural codes and conventions from which the text originated.¹² The *past* is added to emphasise the fact that speech acts are pre-eminently socio-cultural products.

It is not claimed that interpretation becomes easy once these considerations are acknowledged, nor that cultural context is the new magic wand in interpretation. The complicated nature of the interaction between text and context forbids such overenthusiasm. As a matter of fact, determining what people of a foreign culture or era do in what they say is a more complicated matter than in one's own culture or era.

¹² It is thus not surprising to learn that Kennedy (quoted in Hester 1991:284) defines rhetorical criticism in the following way: '...[it] takes the text as we have it ... and looks at it from the point of view of the author's or editor's intent, the unified results, and how it would be perceived by an audience of near contemporaries ... The ultimate goal of rhetorical analysis, briefly put, is the discovery of the author's intent and how that is transmitted through a text to an audience'. That is to say, an author's manuscript is to be taken as a past speech act.

4 TEXT AND CONTEXT: CENTRAL ISSUES IN A COMMUNICATIVE APPROACH

The idea of context is a central but also a contentious aspect of New Testament studies. To some scholars context means co-text, to others historical situation; some reject the need for an explicitly constructed context because it leads to speculation, while others think interpretation without context is impossible. The inappropriate way in which context is dealt with in the history-of-ideas approach (mainly as background information), as well as the role social-science models play in the notion of context as a feeding ground, have already been pointed out. Context, as a central component of a social-scientific methodological configuration should still be raised to a conscious level.

It is one thing to admit the value and contribution of context,¹³ but it is quite another to make serious provision in one's methodology for giving an integrated account of context. My aim is not to present a new method, in the sense of an infallible recipe to ensure scientific results, but to present the notion of *context* as an interpretive principle of great value in the social-scientific approach. To be not only conscious of some of the issues concerning context but to state them explicitly constitutes an attempt to play the game according to the rules of the relevant interpretive aims and claims.

4.1 Epistemological crisis: every context has a context

The notion of context is, to say the least, a contentious matter and one of great complexity. It should be noted that, from the point of view of a nonhistorical aim of interpretation, datedness is a nonproblem; both the context of origin and the determining of texts by context are minor issues. It should, however, be noted that although historical context is considered unimportant, it is nonetheless present.

From the point of view of the communicative approach, context cannot be ignored. On the contrary, it is imperative that 'we must make the contextual study of its surrounding assumptions and conventions the pivot of our interpretive procedures' (Skinner 1975:218). In a word, meaning is context-bound. The problem is that every context has a context.

Deconstructive and other poststructural philosophies have made the idea of *context* a suspect one. In short, (inter)textuality undermines contextualisation (see Leitch 1983:123-163).¹⁴ With Leitch we can speak of the subversion of context (see

¹³ This is done often enough in New Testament studies to make its importance clear (see, for example, Vorster 1984:106-107, 1988:42; Lategan 1984^a:8).

¹⁴ Where a text is seen in a differential network, a fabric of traces referring endlessly to something other than itself (other differential traces), one encounters the concept of intertextuality (see Leitch 1983:105; Ryan 1985:16): 'Intertextuality, like textuality, is a strategic concept whereby the intermingling of all texts, including the mental texts of readers, may be accomplished' (Harty 1985:10).

1983:157-163) where intertextuality, 'a text's dependence on and infiltration by prior codes, concepts, conventions, unconscious practices, and texts' (1983:161) is in conflict with the old law of context.¹⁵ Culler explains why contexts are boundless. Firstly, any context is open to further description in the sense that there is no limit to what can be included in or what might be shown to be relevant to a specific context. Secondly, 'any attempt to codify context can always be grafted into the context it sought to describe' (Culler 1982:124).

[The epistemological given can be formulated in the following way:

... there is no natural point where one must call a halt to the adding of interpretive contexts. A context neither has meaning nor provides meaning apart from still other contexts. But there is an infinite supply of contexts, of prisms refracting meanings from other prisms.

(Barnhart 1980:504; and see LaCapra 1983:35)

As Hernadi says, one can argue in principle that 'the proper context of anything written is everything written' (Hernadi 1988:751), but once a text is understood 'its actual context is much more narrow and far less textual than that' (Hernadi 1988:751). It is accepted, in everyday conversation, as in murder trials, that it is possible to determine what someone intended. If this is possible in principle and in ordinary life, asks Juhl, 'then why not in literary interpretation?' (1984:61). If there is a possibility in principle that a speaker, author or native's intentions can be determined, 'then we have good reason to suppose that there is a definite point at which the play of signifiers ends and the signified is reached' (Juhl 1984:62). Not only the notion of context but also its subversion in intertextuality needs to be placed in perspective.¹⁶

*like contextes but of
→ must use
contextes*

4.2 What is this thing called context?

Before discussing the interaction between text and context(s), we need to address the question of what context is.¹⁷

¹⁵ Context in this sense 'is figured as a constitutive moment or period in cultural history or as a regulated practice of interpretation or evaluation, it functions to curtail both textual dissemination and interpretive free play' (Leitch 1983:161).

¹⁶ Derrida (quoted in Culler 1982:123) writes: 'This is my starting point: no meaning can be determined out of context, but no context permits saturation'. A context, to Derrida, 'is never absolutely determinable, or rather, ...its determination can never be entirely certain or saturated' (1977:174). Harty for one interprets Derrida's statement that 'meaning is context-bound, but context is boundless' to confirm the indeterminacy of meaning (see 1985:9). Derrida's notorious statement 'There is nothing outside the text' thus means that everything relevant to reading, including the context, is contained within the intertext (see Harty 1985:11). It should however be said that, given his philosophical interests, it would be wrong to conclude that contextual interpretation is rejected by Derrida (see Culler 1982:215; Gasché 1979:190).

¹⁷ It should be noted that this discussion does not aim at being exhaustive. Indeed, the philosophical and epistemological choice (aim of interpretation) of focusing on historical meaning implies that only certain aspects of the context of origin are considered. Since two worlds intersect one another in an interpretive activity, not only the levels of context of a text or text-analogue but also the interpreter's existential context should be taken into account (see LaCapra 1983:35-61; Herzog 1983). That issue has been discussed in the previous chapter (methodological components of a cypher key) and will be

Several concepts are used to designate the notion of context: *context*, *scenario of how the world works*, *socio-cultural situation*, *communication situation*, *situational context*, *argumentative situation*, *mental world*, the *environment* of a text, to name only a few. Since most of them are used as umbrella terms, they fail to express clearly what categories are covered. A more precise description of what is meant by context will make it clear that in actual fact several categories of context are at stake.

4.2.1 Categories and definitions

The concept *context* was for a long time used to denote *con-text* – the words and sentences coming before and after a particular sentence (see Halliday & Hasan 1985:6) – or, as Lyons puts it, context very often is *textual context* or *co-text* (see 1981:206). This is what Halliday and Hasan call the *intratextual context* – the coherence within a text (see 1985:48-49). Every part of a text, they say, is both text and context. MB

However, context means much more than that. Fowler (see 1986:86) points out that at least three more meanings can be distinguished: *context of utterance*, *context of culture*, and *context of reference*.

Context of reference has to do with ‘the topic or subject-matter of a text’ (Fowler 1986:89). A remarkable feature of human communication is the relative independence of subject matter from any other context. A device called *displacement* allows human speech to refer to things and events removed in time and space from the immediate context of utterance; a prerequisite for fiction and narrative. Unless *defamiliarisation* occurs, context of reference usually reflects the accepted context of culture. Lyons maintains that the reference of an utterance cannot be determined without regard to its context of utterance (1981:220).

By *context of utterance* is meant ‘the situation within which discourse is conducted’ (Fowler 1986:86), which refers to the physical surroundings, the location of participants *vis-à-vis* one another, and the channel employed in communication. This is what Halliday and Hasan (1985:6) and Lyons (1981:217), following Malinowski and Firth, refer to as the *context of situation* or the *environment* of a text.

The third is the *context of culture*:¹⁸ ‘the whole network of social and economic conventions and institutions constituting the culture at large’ (Fowler 1986:88). Various scholars have pointed out that

touched on again when the role of models in social-scientific interpretation is briefly examined.

¹⁸ With Halliday and Hasan we can define *culture* as ‘a set of semiotic systems, a set of systems of meaning, all of which interrelate’ (1985:4).

in a conversation between two people, there is always at least a third, that is, the mediation of the embedded or unconscious cultural structures in language, terminologies, nonverbal codes of behavior, and assumptions about what constitutes the imaginary, real, and symbolic ... Each historical period has its own assumptions and prejudices, and the process of communication is the engaging of the notions of one's period (or culture) with those of another.

(Marcus & Fischer 1986:31)

Especially the disciplines of history and anthropology foster the awareness that 'different cultures each have their own sets of absolute presuppositions' (Stanford 1986:92). In order to understand what has occurred or what was meant, an interpreter between cultures must grasp these absolute presuppositions. Stanford reminds us that an eavesdropper sometimes can hear every word and yet fail to understand the conversation. The reason is simply that, to understand another mind, we need to share not only the same symbolic usages and conceptual system but also the same understanding of the situation or context (see Stanford 1986:118-119).

Fowler maintains that 'all discourse has a definite context of *culture* which may – I would say 'ought to' – be studied as an influence on the linguistic structure of literary texts and as a guide to their interpretation' (1986:88).¹⁹ While both context of situation and context of culture are necessary for the adequate understanding of a text (see Halliday & Hasan 1985:7), Lyons argues that scholars often fail to bring out as clearly as they should the fact that language-behaviour is 'a culture-dependent activity' (1981:217). The context of culture is the institutional and ideological background that gives value to the text and constrains its interpretation (see Halliday & Hasan 1985:49). The concepts *socio-cultural context* and *socio-cultural (system of) codes and conventions* will be used in this study.

While every speech event is in a sense unique, having its own idiosyncrasies, there are strong recognisable features which group utterances into clear types thanks to the cultural conventions (see Fowler 1986:87). For example, while it may be true that there is a universal definition of linguistic politeness or sincerity (see Lakoff 1972:911), what constitutes it may differ considerably from one society to another (see Lyons 1981:217). Lakoff says: 'What may differ from language to language, or culture to culture – or from subculture to subculture within a language – is the question of WHEN it is polite to be polite, to what extent, and how it is shown in terms of superficial linguistic behavior' (1972:911). Leech assures us that 'the Cooperative Principle and the Politeness Principle operate variably in different cultures or language communities, in different social situations, among different social classes, etc.'

¹⁹ Fowler maintains: '[I]t cannot be emphasised too strongly that it is not this particular text alone which by its own unique structure creates the opening position in *King Lear*: rather, it is the relationship between the textual structure and the cultural context which in Elizabethan England, and now, gives the text meaning' (1986:101).

(1983:10). Lyons emphasises that 'even if the allegedly basic act of making statements, asking questions and using commands are universal, they too are regulated, in all societies, by more or less culture-specific institutions, practices and beliefs' (1981:188).

The most significant point to note is that contexts of situation and contexts of reference are both dependent on and constituted by the context of culture (see Fowler 1986:87, 89; Halliday & Hasan 1985:46-47, 49). In a word, the locus of meaning is situated in the cultural system. Meaning is culture-specific; in other words, meaning is stamped by context of culture. This is exactly what has been neglected both by historical criticism and by literary- and reader-oriented approaches in New Testament scholarship (see Malina 1986c:171-176).

4.2.2 Sets and subsets of context

The notion of *context* as an umbrella term turns out to be inappropriate, since it embraces no single aspect of an utterance's milieu but the 'entire physical, psychological, social, and historical milieu in which the utterance occurs' (Hirsch 1967:86). Thus, the concept *communicative context* will be used in contrast to context as co-text. It consists at the very least of a socio-cultural context, which provides the codes and conventions within that socio-cultural milieu, as well as the communication situation which is the more immediate milieu of communication. The codes and conventions of the latter are indeed determined by those of the socio-cultural context.

De Beaugrande is right when he says that theoretically 'the investigator obeying Hirsch's ethical mandate incurs a historical, biographical and psychological task of staggering dimensions' (1983:107).²⁰ To recover the context in any particular case, says Skinner, 'we may have to engage in extremely wide-ranging as well as extremely detailed historical research' (1988:275). LaCapra argues that for complex texts 'one has a set of interacting contexts' (1983:35); a more appropriate designation would thus be a *set of contexts* and within it a *subset of contexts*. If there is truth in the argument that the context of culture is constitutive of meaning, then a set of contexts would comprise at least subsets of contexts consisting of a context of reference and a context of utterance which are embedded in a particular context of culture.

The variety and possible subsets of context should be complemented by a discussion of the possible relationships of these subsets to each other and within the set of

²⁰ He is, however, wrong in implying that, since evidence may ultimately prove incomplete or even contradictory, this task is impossible. The objection confuses meaning with subject matter. The subject matter is inexhaustible and probably much wider than the author's meaning. A reader may, for example, know much more about the subject matter than an author, which does not imply that an author may not have an intention (meaning) and that it cannot be determined (see Hirsch 1967:57ff).

interacting contexts. While any subset of context is situated within a context of culture, there is still a problem as to the appropriate communicative context. Which set and subset of codes and conventions are to be applied to interpret a particular text? Does a text carry clues to its communicative context? To put it differently, which has priority, text or context?

4.3 The interaction between text and context: hermeneutical circle/spiral

The interaction between text and context is not only a very complex matter but views with regard to it are far from clear and anything but homogeneous. Halliday and Hasan maintain that 'the relationship between text and context is a dialectical one: the text creates the context as much as the context creates the text. Meaning arises from the friction between the two' (Halliday & Hasan 1985:47;²¹ see Barnhart 1980:504). While text and context in some way or other form part of a hermeneutical circle process, the range of possible interactions between them should still be explored.

Firstly, if it is true that every context has a context, it has been argued that it is equally true that neither communication nor interpretation can be successful without context. It is in fact, a basic premise – expressed in the notion of the hermeneutical circle (widely accepted today in hermeneutical theories) – that without a certain pre-understanding of a subject no communication will take place (see Maddox 1983:66; Rohrbaugh 1978:21-27). In the words of Hirsch's well-known dictum: 'All understanding of verbal meaning is necessarily genre-bound' (1967:76). Let us be more specific about this pre-understanding. The point of success of any act of communication, Skinner argues,

depends on at least a mutual intuiting by S [speaker] and A [audience] of a whole complex of conventions, social as well as linguistic, about what can and cannot be stated, what sorts of meanings and allusions can be expected to be understood without having to be explicitly stated at all, and in general what criteria for the application of any given concept (e.g. that of warning) are conventionally accepted as applying in that given situation and society.

(1970:137)

Without a pre-understanding of (socio-cultural) sets of contexts, particular socio-cultural codes and conventions, communication is impossible.

²¹ It should be noted that these remarks refer to context of situation or communication situation and are not necessarily true with regard to context of culture. The same is true of Lyons's argument that text and context are complementary. 'Texts are constituents of the contexts in which they are produced; and contexts are created, and continually transformed and refashioned, by the texts that speakers and writers produce in particular situations' (1981:195). *Context* in this sense refers both to the co-text and to context of utterance and should not be taken as referring to all contexts as such (see Lyons 1981:206).

Secondly, even if these aspects of the communicative context are not explicitly argued in the interpretive process, they are implicitly assumed from the point of view of the interpreter's world. Even in communication within a shared culture a reader cannot, without further ado, take an utterance literally, since even in such situations the speech act has to be constructed on the basis of an assumed context (see Fowler 1986:90). Even 'sentence-sized utterances', Lyons maintains, 'are interpreted on a good deal of contextual information, most of which is implicit' (1981:195).

Thirdly, this point in the argument is usually the parting of ways for interpretive theories. The problem of the hermeneutical circle or spiral can be formulated in a number of ways. In the previous chapter it was done by way of the communicative and exploitative approaches.

It should be noted that the circle from text to context is not disputed; 'Every interpreter labors under the handicap of an inevitable circularity: all his [or her] internal evidence tends to support his [or her] hypothesis because much of it was constituted by his [or her] hypothesis' (Hirsch 1967:166). Interpreters are not mistaken in claiming the support of a text for their interpretations. The dilemma of the variety of opponent hypotheses based on the same text springs to mind. The extent to which text and context presuppose one another in the circle should not be underestimated.

If, however, it is maintained that a text cannot sponsor an unlimited number of readings (or that some readings are more valid than others), conflicting interpretations pose a problem.

From an exploitative point of view the notion of historicity emphasises that an interpreter's prior understanding prejudices interpretation (see also Maddox 1983:72) and the notion of *tradition* is introduced to restrain 'wild' interpretations. From a communicative point of view, certain constraints are introduced which point to the possibility of turning the circle into a spiral.

At the level of text-context interaction the vicious effects of the hermeneutical circle, as well as the breaking out of it, can be dealt with by means of two more perspectives to the debate: the principle of validation, and the use of social-science models in cross-cultural research. Both are introduced into the methodological configuration in order to escape the vicious hermeneutical circle in the interpretive process.

4.3.1 Retraining and the principle of validation

To postulate that the circle need not be vicious is not to deny the power of the hermeneutical circle in the interpretive process. Unless certain critical, selfconscious steps are taken in interpretive methodologies, there would be little hope of escaping the vicious effects. Because of the nature of communicative contexts, three assump-

tions facilitate the process of breaking out of it: firstly, that contexts are brought to a text; secondly, that they are human constructions of a hypothetical nature (one can escape, alter or reject a particular horizon); and thirdly, that a circle can grow into a spiral (see Maddox 1983:73) when the idea of prescribing communicative contexts is replaced by the idea of validating contexts.

Although it is true that most texts, depending on their type, carry indications of their context of situation (see Halliday & Hasan 1985:38), clues to a text's context of culture very seldom occur in the text (see Barnhart 1980:504). The problem is that clues in the text may be interpreted differently, depending not only on the assumed context of situation but especially on the context of culture. The identification of clues in a text is determined by what we bring to the text; and what we bring, first and foremost, is the framework of the context of culture.

If a text does not contain any clues – to its possible context of culture or context of situation – either in the text itself or in the transmission history, then, strictly speaking, it cannot be interpreted. Stated in a positive way, it can then be interpreted in an infinite number of ways. An apparent dilemma is: how do we decide on an appropriate context prior to reading a text, and how do we read a text prior to construing it by means of a particular cypher key (context)? Skinner rightly stresses that before we can hope to identify the context which helps to disclose the meaning of a text, we must have settled on an interpretation that suggests which context(s) may most profitably be explored to that end (see 1975:227). What is needed is a guess at the genre or cultural activity, as in a thick description.

Communicative contexts are never given, they are construed by the reader (see Hirsch 1967:88). This implies that interaction across cultures or historical eras requires the interpreter to learn a new style of language and reasoning (see Skinner 1988:252; Hirsch 1985a:196). The interpreter needs some training in the world of another culture (see Marsh 1967:18). The historian, Tosh (1986:116) formulates this principle in more general terms by saying that the historian 'before anything else can be achieved ... must first try to enter the mental world of those who created the sources'. Reading a foreign text or culture demands that a new set of codes and conventions be learned and applied.

There 'are no rules for making good guesses', only 'methods for validating guesses' (Ricoeur 1977:329; and see Hirsch 1967:263). A guess at the communicative context, whether by way of a particular social-science model or any other model, should have the status of a heuristic device which can be tested, extended or rejected (see Craffert 1992; Maddox 1983:73).

A double warning on the interaction between text and context seems appropriate at this stage. Context is no magic wand that will solve all interpretive problems (see Skinner 1975:227), and it is not true that once an appropriate context has been constructed, all that remains is to match the text with it. To be sure, no claim on the text

alone can settle interpretive disputes, neither does the provision of a context guarantee that the meaning can simply be read off.

Rather than basing one's interpretive claim on the text as such, it would perhaps be meaningful to take up the debate on the text within one's own assumed communicative context as opposed to that of the opponent. Neither the idea of contextless texts nor the claim that only the text is used finds any support in this methodological configuration. In fact, interpretive claims with regard to *text* can no longer be made without reference to the aim of interpretation and the assumed communicative context – at any rate, not if one is to avoid mere subjectivism and unverifiable interpretive claims.

4.3.2 Retraining and the use of social-science models

Since communicative contexts are constructed and brought to a text, discovering the appropriate communicative context is not an instance of the hermeneutical circle: the context is not derived from the text. This contradicts the belief of many New Testament scholars, which is true in a limited sense only. Petersen, for example, maintains that the biblical scholar 'has to reconstruct from one and the same narrative text both its contextual and its referential history' (Petersen 1985:7). While this may be true with regard to context of reference and context of situation (see Halliday & Hasan 1985:36), it very seldom applies to context of culture. Retraining into the socio-cultural codes and conventions of a foreign era or culture is done by means of comparative material in the form, at the very least, of authors or texts from the same era or milieu and/or cross-cultural models used as heuristic tools.

Although comparative material is also approached by means of contemporary models, it has been argued that such models can, in the search for typical and contingent elements, be turned into heuristic devices of interpretation. A communicative context, consciously constructed by means of comparative material and (heuristic) social-science models, presents a possibility of introducing into the circle some form of outside verification of assumptions. It goes without saying that contemporary social-science models also make it possible to raise contemporary prejudices and biases to a conscious level. Used as heuristic tools, such models can pinpoint what is different from the own.

In this way an important constraint is added to the ones already discussed. The interaction between text and context is such that a text exists by virtue of the assumed communicative context, and the nature of such contexts allows debate, criticism and rejection (if necessary) of the assumed or constructed communicative context. In fact, debate on conflicting interpretive claims based on the selfsame document can hardly do other than delve not into the text but into the assumed communicative context by means of which the text is, in each instance, construed.

The implication for opponent hypotheses and for research into the interpretation of the letter to the Galatians should be apparent. It is not so much the text as assumed

communicative contexts which engender interpretive traditions and can change such traditions.

4.4 The notion: *only the text*

The central role of the notion *the text* in several opponent hypotheses can now, to my mind, be seen in a different light. It applies to the notion *only the text* as in some claims, and also to claims that *the text* provides or confirms a particular reading or construction (usually in opposition to another). This point can hardly be over-emphasised in view of the preoccupation of New Testament scholarship with the *text* – an aspect which became abundantly clear in discussing the occasion of the letter to the Galatians.

Firstly, a text can sponsor different data, and each set of data will support the interpretive theory or assumed context sponsored by it in the first place (the instance of the hermeneutical circle between text and context). That is why one sometimes hears that a certain interpretation does not correspond to *the text* (the opponent's interpretation), but another (one's own interpretation) is confirmed by the *text* (see Hirsch 1967:166).

However, if a text does not exist prior to being construed, and if a text can be construed by means of any number of socio-cultural systems, then the claim that *only the text* has been read is misleading if not false. Thus, the second principle is that we cannot sharply distinguish between what is *in a text* and *what we bring to a text* (see Juhl 1980:293). If, in the case of a foreign text, a particular socio-cultural system is not argued, it is implicitly provided: that of the interpreter's world.

My intention is not to deny that a text should be 'investigated with a view to indicators given in the text as clues for how the text should be read' (Vorster 1984:108). On the contrary, this should merely be done in a more controlled manner where external measures prevent the confirmation of assumed positions. Indicators as well as clues are embedded and find their meaning in a socio-cultural system of codes and conventions. Thus clues are identified by means of such a system, and since different systems result in different indicators and clues identified by the reader, the claim that the text provides them is misleading.

Apart from the effect of this argument on claims that only Paul's letter to the Galatians is read, that the text is the only source for constructing the context or that a particular reading is supported by the text, it also has far-reaching effects on claims using other ancient sources in support of an argument. An ancient text unrelated to the construing of the text within its own (argued) communicative context cannot serve as outright evidence. Ancient sources become evidence once they are interpreted in the same manner. In some instances, paradoxically, a modern

scholar's interpretation of a particular (ancient) text may provide likelier evidence than a quotation from the text itself.²²

5 INTERPRETATION AS CREATION

Unlike the linear model, where author, text and reader are separated and interpretation is accordingly designated as either creation or discovery (see Herzog 1983; Vorster 1984:108-110), interpretation as discovery from an communicative point of view has a different content. If it is accepted that *texts* have changed from objects not only to reader-marks interaction but to an intricate relationship between marks, context and reader, then the meaning of interpretation as creation should be found within the boundaries of this methodological configuration and the resulting interpretive practice. Interpretation as creation is constrained by a historical aim of interpretation, by a new (learned) socio-cultural system of codes and conventions, and lately by the quest for validation of interpretive claims. Thus the nature of creation is not open-ended but contained within these parameters.

Interpretation in its traditional sense (see Morgan 1988:1-5) is to make clear or to make sense of a text or text-analogue which is in some way unclear, vague, incomplete or seemingly contradictory. It aims to 'bring to light an underlying coherence or sense' (Taylor 1977:101; and see Skinner 1975:210-211). In this sense, says Collins, human beings will interpret as long as they think (see 1973:393). The problem, in short, is that the concept *interpretation* is used with a deplorable looseness both by critics and by philosophers (see Skinner 1972:392), and New Testament studies are no exemption.

It was argued that a text can be interpreted according to an *allocratic* norm, where the reader allocates authority to the reconstructed historical act of another person or community (to be referred to as *interpretation*^a) or an *autocratic* norm, where the authority of interpretation resides in the reader's uncritically accepted cypher key (to be referred to as *interpretation*^b). There need be no difference between the acts of creation involved, since a reader construes a text depending on the cypher key used. The difference is not between discovery and creation but between two kinds of creation: one that uses a past set of cypher keys as opposed to one that uses a contemporary set. The difference, in short, is between an interpretive act where two explicitly constructed worlds intersect and an interpretive act where the horizons to be fused are not made explicit but are embedded or incorporated into the interpreter's world.

While the end result of interpretation^a is the discovery of an author's or actor's meaning in saying or doing, the act itself is far from a mere discovery. A focus on the

²² *Evidence* can no longer be seen as words quoted from an ancient text but rather the interpretation of these words in a responsible way. If one claims to give a historical interpretation, it should obviously adhere to the principles of historical interpretation.

original cypher key can indeed be seen as a discovery of the communicative intent of the author or actor, but without claiming any final authority for the text or reading, and without adhering to any positivistic assumptions. The aim of interpretation is to make clear 'the meaning originally present in a confused, fragmentary, cloudy form (Taylor 1977:103). The same assumption is expressed by Botha when he says that the purpose in interpreting a text is 'the discovery of the communicative event', since communication – that is, 'the making manifest of an informative intention to others, in the sense of producing and interpreting evidence' (1990b:60) – is a fundamental human activity.

Primarily, interpretation in the sense of the exploitative approach is not only the creation of **meaning** by a reader (*interpretation*^b) but **present-minded** meaning. Too strong a focus on creation causes a reader to read his or her own creation, since the words of a text are *re-spoken* from a new perspective and the words become an ownerless sequence of signs (see Abrams 1979:567). While the ideal of this approach (that understanding a text is like understanding a person) is acceptable, Wright correctly points out that understanding is primarily defined as agreement with the other person (see 1984:96) or the aesthetic pleasure a text provides (see Juhl 1984:71). It cannot be confrontation in the sense of discovering differentness.

Two concluding remarks will suffice. Firstly, the discovery-creation distinction is misleading in that creation by the reader which does not focus on the present cypher key is wrongly regarded as an act of discovery. Secondly, the distinction between *interpretation*^a and *interpretation*^b becomes important when interpretive claims are to be evaluated. In terms of the exploitative approach, this conceptual distinction between *interpretation*^a and *interpretation*^b is either neglected or rejected if not considered impossible. The meaning, significance and application of a text are necessarily one and the same thing according to this view. The dangers of conceptual hijacking should be apparent.

6 THE MEANING OF THE MEANING OF A TEXT

6.1 A concept in search of content

The words *mean* and *meaning* are used in a wide range of contexts and with several different meanings (see Lyons 1981:13; Stout 1982:3). Skinner (1972:396-397) distinguishes at least three different meanings of the word *meaning*: 'what specific words mean' in a work (*meaning*^a), secondly, what a work means to me (*meaning*^b), and thirdly, meaning in the sense of 'What does the writer mean by what he says in this work?' (*meaning*^c).

What, then, is the rationale of pointing out the distinctive meanings attributed to the concept *meaning*? Especially in the case of texts from ancient or foreign cultures, the distinction is in fact significant.

The distinction between different meanings, or the failure to make one, strikes at the heart of the argument. It either allows differences to be apparent or it allows the hijacking of concepts and definitions to further the nonhistorical paradigm. Although few scholars would deny the possibility of determining *meaning^c* of a text, the concept *meaning* is taken over by proponents of the exploitative approach as if such a possibility does not exist. By claiming the concept *meaning* for *meaning^b* exclusively, the onus of argument is placed on those who see a necessity to distinguish *meaning^b* from *meaning^c*. It is even more noticeable in that scholars who do make the distinction are not judged by the standards of their own paradigm. One example will suffice. In comparing the viewpoints of Gadamer and Hirsch, Herzog (see 1983:110-111) fails to point out that the concept *meaning* as used by them refers to different entities: *meaning^b* and *meaning^c* respectively. Hirsch prefers *meaning^c* without denying that any other cypher key can be used in reading a text, thus, of the *meaning^b* kind (see for example 1969:58).

Secondly, interpretive claims should match interpretive aims. Suffice it to point out that when the historical meaning (*meaning^c*) is taken seriously, it has far-reaching effects not only on method but also on interpretive claims. Without using a historical methodological configuration (cypher key), no claim as to historical meaning can be made.

Given the nature of Paul's letters as texts of communication and not literary works of art, together with interpretive claims that Paul's message is important, interpretations can hardly consist of anything other than historical claims. From a *meaning^b* point of view Paul's communication is most often seen as a mere confirmation of tradition – perhaps one of the reasons why the opponent question keeps on haunting modern interpreters. It provides a useful peg on which contemporary theological conflicts can be hung. Small wonder the identified opponents are so often reminiscent of contemporary ecclesiastical or religious conflicts.

6.2 *Meaning^c*, significance, and *meaning^b* of a text

It has been argued in the previous chapter (§ 5.3.2) that an emphasis on the (present) relevance of an ancient text, a foreign culture or a distant historical era need not result in mere antiquarianism. In fact, it is given in the different definitions of what is relevant: the contribution to human discourse versus present-minded meaning. The question, however, remains: in what way can the meaning of a text still be of value from a communicative point of view?

If one's aim of interpretation is to escape from a mere recreation of texts to satisfy the need for present relevance, and to build in some constraints against subjectivism – thus, to respect the datedness of texts and cultures – then at least two aspects of the meaning of a text (what the text means and what the author may have meant) become relevant (see Skinner 1988:271; LaCapra 1983:29-30). Scholars, however, differ on how to deal with them. It will be argued that the distinction between *mean-*

ing^c, significance, and *meaning*^b of a text creates room for interpreting a text without falling into the trap of mere subjectivism or objectivism. A few proposals will suffice.

Juhl and others argue that 'to understand a literary work *is*, in virtue of our concept of the meaning of a literary work, to understand what the author intended to convey or express' (Juhl 1980:47; and see Juhl 1980:12).²³ The difficulty with this position is that it can very easily be interpreted as a neglect of historical scholarship (see Hirsch 1983:747). Secondly, this empirical claim is open to criticism. Most critics do not search for the historical author's intention.

Skinner takes another route. He argues that any text must include an intended meaning and 'the recovery of that meaning certainly constitutes a precondition of understanding what its author may have meant' (1988:271-272). Thus, while the meaning of a text is not to be identified with the intentions of the author, he correctly emphasises that texts may have much more *meaning* than an author intended at a specific moment.²⁴ Hirsch and Skinner would certainly agree with Abrams that '[i]f we set out not to create meanings, but to understand what the sequence of sentences in a literary work mean, then we have no choice except to read according to the linguistic strategy the author of the work employed, and expected us to employ' (1979:587).

Hirsch, to my mind, takes one further step to avoid not only the present-minded but also the antiquarian interpretations characteristic of the communicative approach. He provides a further category, namely the significance of a text. In short, he (see 1985^b:17-18) distinguishes between the meaning, significance, and re-authoring of a text; in other words, between *meaning*^c, *significance*, and *meaning*^b (which includes all subsequent re-authoring of the word sequence of a text by anyone in a situation different from that of the author) respectively.

Since the historical meaning (*meaning*^c) of a text or culture is important, Hirsch imported the analytical distinction which functions as a heuristic device to distin-

²³ The implication is that critics always do understand what the author intended. Juhl argues that what critics do when they interpret a text is to appeal (mostly implicitly) to the author's intention (see 1980:45-65). This view is shared by Knapp and Michaels: '... what a text means and what its author intends it to mean are identical' (1982:731). Knapp and Michaels believe, according to Hirsch, that the author's intention 'is already present in every construing' (Hirsch 1983:746), since they argue that 'the object of all reading is always the historical author's intention, even if the historical author is the universal muse' (1983:798).

²⁴ Skinner's difference with Hirsch on this point is a matter of strategy and not of principle. Hirsch would certainly agree with Skinner that it would be amazing 'if all the meanings, implications, connotations and resonances that an ingenious interpreter might legitimately claim to find in a given text could in turn be shown to reflect its author's intentions at every point' (Skinner 1988:269). Hirsch confirms that the words of a given text can be interpreted in terms of almost any number of cypher keys and an ingenious interpreter can indeed know much more about the subject matter than an author, or detect much more meaning than an author intended to convey (see 1984^b).

guish between the meaning and significance of a text or text-analogue. This distinction is inevitable if one accepts the argument that meaning is an intentional object.²⁵ To repeat the words from the epigraph of this chapter:

Meaning, then, may be conceived as a self-identical schema whose boundaries are determined by an originating speech event, while *significance* may be conceived as a relationship drawn between that self-identical meaning and something, anything, else.

(Hirsch 1984b:204)²⁶

However much he came to amend²⁷ his original description of the content of *meaning* (see 1984b:210), he has not given up the analytical distinction between meaning and significance. He came to accept that certain present applications of a text can still belong to the meaning rather than the significance of a text. Thus he has come much closer to Gadamer's view on application, but with one clear difference: while Gadamer argues for the necessity of differentness of meaning in different applications of a text, Hirsch argues for the possibility of sameness (see 1984b:214). The real differences lie in the commitment (or lack of commitment) to datedness or historicity, and the accompanied exposition (or lack) of critical standards.

²⁵ He bases this on Husserl's argument concerning the human ability to *bracket* experiences (see Hirsch 1960:467-469; 1975:308; 1976:3-6; 1984b:204). "The brackets implied by the terms "meaning" and "significance" do in fact represent something that most of us believe we experience in verbal discourse, namely, an alien meaning, something meant by an implied author or speaker who is not ourselves' (1976:6). He finds support for it in the cognitive psychology of Piaget's research on children's construction of reality. It is concerned with the way we come 'to understand a stable self-identity of physical objects, despite great variations in our perceptual experience of those objects' (Hirsch 1975:309). By using 'schemata' (1975:309) which we construct and which correspond to what, in our linguistic experiences, we call *meanings*, we are able to overcome 'our infantile confusions of content and context' (Hirsch 1976:3). Those who deny the possibility of recognising an object or content from its context do not live by this view. If it were not possible, it would be impossible to know any object whatsoever or to identify the same object (or content) in another context.

²⁶ Much of the criticism against Hirsch may be due to his imprecise formulation of this distinction between fixed meaning and changing significance. In his initial work he relates *meaning* exclusively to what the author meant by the use of a particular sign sequence (see 1967:8). He has, however, extended this concept to include meaning as distinct from significance in that 'meaning is the determinate representation of a text for an interpreter' (Hirsch 1976:79). Significance, then, is 'meaning-as-related-to-something-else' (Hirsch 1979:80). Although the meaning for an interpreter stays the same, the significance of that meaning 'can change with the changing contexts in which that meaning is applied' (1976:80). That the distinction between meaning and significance is not limited to the field of literary studies is argued in terms of another example, that of biography: 'everyone would agree that there is a difference between a man's life on the one hand, and its significance within various historical, moral, and social contexts, on the other' (Hirsch 1967:141).

²⁷ Two amendments of his original explication of the concept *meaning* are as follows. Firstly, some present applications may still be considered to belong to the *meaning* of a text provided the datedness of the meaning intent has not changed (see 1984b:217). Secondly, he allows for the provisionality of speech and meaning. In everyday life as in scientific language, Hirsch argues, we allow for a certain amount of alteration and deviation regarding datedness and sameness: 'It appears from this that meaning can tolerate a small revision in mental content and remain the same – but not a big revision' (1984b:221).

From the point of view of a communicative approach a certain distinction between what an author meant and what a text means is inevitable.²⁸ But even further, between a stable meaning and its application (*significance*) and the re-authoring of the words of a text by any reader by means of any other set of socio-cultural codes and conventions. A critic's **first job** however is to recover the past speech act.

This distinction gives contemporary readers of Paul's letter to the Galatians an entry into Paul's world of meaning and allows the possibility of transposing it to another world. Lafargue expresses this aptly. He accepts the necessity of distinguishing between meaning and significance, especially with regard to texts from another culture (ancient texts). He prefers 'two stages of interpretation' (1988a:356), which implies – in the case of Mark (hence also of Paul) – a first stage where one 'can see reality as he saw it' and then a second stage 'in which one reflects on the relevance to the modern situation of this experience with Mark' (1988a:356).²⁹

7 A COMMUNICATIVE METHODOLOGY: THE HISTORICAL-NONHISTORICAL CONTINUUM

The notion has been fostered that a clear-cut black-and-white distinction is possible (at the theoretical level at any rate) between historical and nonhistorical interpretations (communicative and exploitative approaches), but this issue requires critical consideration. In actual fact, hardly any scholar falls into any extreme position on the continuum. Objectors from an exploitative point of view in particular often refer to theoretical or potential objectives as historical (see Wright 1984:84). Thus the question remains whether it is possible to decide when a nonhistorical interpretation crosses the boundary to become historical and vice versa – in other words, what the exact preconditions are for a communicative approach. Evidently this question originates both from the variety of definitions of historical interpretation and from the practical situation of scholarly claims to historical interpretation.³⁰

²⁸ If it is accepted that the marks on paper become a text only when it is construed by means of a particular cypher key, then, strictly speaking, there is no such category as the literal meaning of a text or 'what a text means' as distinct from what a reader construes it to mean. To put it differently, every construing of the marks to mean presents a literal meaning. To know whether an author was joking or conveying information, whether an actor was praying or threatening, holds the key to presenting or misrepresenting a text. Without stating it absolutely, the difficulty of bypassing the author or actor of a text leads to the risk of misreading and misrepresenting the source (see Morgan 1988:10).

²⁹ LaFargue claims to differ from Hirsch in that, according to him, Hirsch would define *meaning* as an understanding of an author's mind (see 1988a:356 n 27). This is clearly a misrepresentation of Hirsch's position.

³⁰ It is perfectly possible that an expert historian or anthropologist may get to a position to claim understanding from within of another culture or era (see Hanson & Martin 1973:206). A New Testament or a classical scholar may get to know the first-century Mediterranean world to a point where it becomes possible to act and operate as natives would have done. It would not, however, be fit for teaching purposes (see Hanson & Martin 1973:206), since the cross-cultural dilemma has to be faced all over again. This can only happen by means of the whole process of learning a new set of codes and conventions, and a new system of meaning, together with the intricate process of mediating between contemporary models and ancient meanings. Similarly, the claims of historical interpretations (which can be criticised on these methodological points) cannot escape critical testing in relation both to aims and to the methodological means of reaching them.

My answer is a matter of both principle and practice. **The commitment to respect the historicity of texts, cultures and historical eras should, in practice, be complemented by a methodological configuration which makes provision in an integrated and explicit way for dealing with otherness.** Without this, historical interpretation in a communicative approach remains a mirage.

It should be noted that, in the actual practice of interpretation and the construction of a communicative context, the idea of a historical-nonhistorical continuum would be helpful in dealing with the issue of claims to historical interpretation. In what sense could it be claimed that a communicative interpretation of a text or a culture has been reached?

Historical interpretations of a communicative nature are in principle, always open to questioning, revision and even correction. Thus we need to accept the idea of a continuum of historical interpretations, which may to a greater or lesser degree resemble other attempts at historical interpretation. In practice it should be accepted that, by means of a well-argued case, the defects of a particular interpretation can be indicated and alternatives proposed. In the words of Geertz (1973:29), interpretive anthropology 'is a science whose progress is marked less by a perfection of consensus than by a *refinement of debate*' (italics mine).

The basis on which an ideal communicative approach is grounded (the theory and philosophy of science) should be distinguished from the basis on which results (their epistemic status) are decided and justified. Nobody can be sure that a historical interpretation has been reached, but the results can be presented for discussion, dialogue and critique. Bernstein's ideal of 'dialogical communities' in which in everyday life, we 'reconcile differences through debate, conversation, and dialogue' (1983:223) is an appropriate metaphor to describe it.

In the idea of validation I find openness to dialogue and the possibility of persuasion. At a practical level of interpretation, what is needed is that we should seek to 'discover some common ground to reconcile differences through debate, conversation, and dialogue' (Bernstein 1983:223). In a word, the relative objectivity of a hermeneutical theory of science is guaranteed by intersubjective approval by the scientific community – approval not of results and predictions but of procedures, argument and debate. One can do nothing but convince, argue for and against, and rely on the critical faculty of fellow scholars. The strength of a hermeneutic activity lies in the 'realism of continual assessment in place of the illusion of final proof' (Richardson in Shankman 1984:275).

8 THE LETTER TO THE GALATIANS AND BEING RETAINED IN THE FIRST-CENTURY MEDITERRANEAN WORLD

This has been a long-drawn-out, but necessary exercise to justify the methodological configuration of the social-scientific approach to be used as a cypher key in reading Paul's letter to the Galatians. My aim of interpretation is to interpret Paul's communication within the context of his first-century world; to make clear what answers he gave and what contribution he made to human discourse. Thus what **St Paul** says cannot in such an enterprise determine what **Paul** said, but what **Paul** said can and should influence what **St Paul** is saying. My plea is simply: *let Paul in the first place be Paul before we make him St Paul*. The *meaning* of Paul for present-day readers, according to the values and attitudes of a (communicative) historical interpretation, depends on being retained in the socio-cultural system of his first-century world.

To achieve that aim, the methodological components of the social-scientific cypher key has been spelled out – especially in view of the deficiencies identified in a history-of-ideas and other nonhistorical approaches to Paul's communication.

Basically, three issues have been argued. Firstly, a case has been made for a particular definition of historical interpretation: a definition amplified by the values and attitudes of a particular (historical) aim of interpretation which, to my mind, are closely connected to some humanistic values. It has been argued secondly, that since it is possible to escape one's own horizon, it is possible to devise a methodology which provides in an integrated way for the possibility of understanding from within and the commitment to respect otherness. Finally, the methodological configuration has been spelled out by explicating some views on central components (such as text, context and interpretation) in the interpretive process.

This exercise is hopefully not without its rewards, since its effects reach into the realms of both the methodological and the historical components of the present cypher key. It provides a basis not only for justifying the social-scientific methodology to be used but also for situating and criticising adverse positions and interpretive (historical) claims. Not only methodological components but also the historical components of a cypher key can benefit from this discussion. This methodological discussion will prove to be the silent but effective partner in interpretive decisions, arguments, evidence and criticism of other views in the debate on an appropriate communicative context for the interpretation of Paul's letter to the Galatians.

Taken as an alternative interpretive strategy to a history-of-ideas approach, the constraints of a communicative approach will have far-reaching effects on studies of the conflict in Galatia. Interpretations of the letter to the Galatians which mostly rely on the notion of opponents as a cypher key (even the opponents in the letter and not the real opponents assuming a historical basis) have to engage in learning and explicating the context and world of first-century Mediterranean people. In the light

of the developments in historical and especially interdisciplinary research, New Testament scholars can hardly continue to avoid or ignore the standards set for historical interpretations. Claims such as that only the text is read, or the practice of quoting or referring to ancient documents without reference to the meaningful world of those documents, can hardly go unchallenged. Neither can the historical and cultural gap between the first-century Mediterranean world and contemporary worlds be ignored or else bridged by assuming commensurability – at least, not if historical respectability is to be claimed. What should be avoided as far as possible is to leave contemporary biases unchallenged not only because of insufficient historical studies but also because of insufficient methodological configurations.

Determining what Paul was doing in what he said in the first-century Mediterranean world is an altogether different and difficult matter. In the chapters that follow, a beginning will be made in challenging some of the obvious (historical) assumptions on the nature of the conflict. An alternative communicative context will be suggested without trying to present a complete analysis of the communication. At best, the nature of the conflict and the occasion of the letter can be more meaningfully situated in the first-century Mediterranean world.

CHAPTER 4

SOME (UNEXAMINED) ASSUMPTIONS AND PERSPECTIVES: ON THE NATURE AND CHARACTER OF THE PAULINE COMMUNITIES

A new understanding of Early Judaism (ca. 250 BCE to 200 CE) is now appearing in scholarly publications. The old view of first-century (CE) Judaism was simplistic ... It was monolithic, orthodox, and normative ... Now this historical reconstruction has collapsed.

(Charlesworth 1990:37)

1 INTRODUCTION

In the first chapter of this study it was indicated that a particular communicative context is presupposed in most opponent hypotheses. In this chapter the objective is to elaborate on **what** that communicative context consists of. That is to say, the focus in this chapter will shift to an examination of some of the main historical assumptions underlying the communicative context of opponent hypotheses.¹

The concept *communicative context* is deliberately used in order to avoid concepts such as the *occasion of the letter* or the *situation in Galatia*, which are often very narrowly defined. Contrary to the notion that the occasion of the letter (or the situation in Galatia) can be spelled out in a paragraph or two, it will be indicated that the whole cultural context – as well as the socio-cultural codes and conventions implied in one's construction of the conflict and accompanying construction of the nature of the Pauline communities – must be included in the debate.

Although the wider communicative context is usually disregarded in discussions on the occasion of the letter or the situation in Galatia, at least two sets of historical components (subsets of context) were identified in the first chapter as determining most constructions of the nature of the Pauline communities: the Pauline movement within the expansion of the early Jesus movement and, secondly, first-century Judaism as a subculture for Paul's activities. The first assumes a particular view with regard to the expansion of the early Jesus movement; the second a normative Judaism from which the Pauline movement had seceded. I shall therefore proceed to examine the received view on the expansion of the Pauline communities and their setting within first-century Judaism as the subculture for Paul's activities.

¹ It should be realised that these aspects are seldom raised to a conscious level in opponent hypotheses. More often than not, the aspects to be discussed function implicitly and even, sometimes, unconsciously. For that reason it is no easy task to pinpoint their presence in any particular opponent hypothesis.

The reasons given for, and the consequences of, the separation between the Pauline movement on the one hand and Jewish Christianity or first-century Judaism on the other provide several arguments which form the building blocks of opponent hypotheses. The history-of-ideas approach to the conflict in Galatia has left its mark on the historical components of the assumed communicative context. Together they provide the framework for the early Jesus movement and for first-century Judaism within which the nature of the conflict is determined. If assumptions in these fields are rejected as outdated or inappropriate, opponent hypotheses as a cypher key can hardly be maintained unchanged.

2 THE EXPANSION OF THE EARLY JESUS MOVEMENT

Since the mutual relationships between the different groups within the early Jesus movement are focal to this study – particularly Paul and his so-called opponents in the letter to the Galatians – the historical expansion of the movement is of great concern. In fact, more than forty years ago Schubert suggested that the ‘ultimate task of the historical student of Paul is to determine his place and influence in the Christian movement during its first three decades’ (1947:223). However, ‘[v]ery difficult and still a controversial matter’ Schoeps says, ‘is the exact demarcation of the groups within primitive Christianity’ (1961:63). This point should, to my mind, be stretched even further. Not only the maps but also the principles and criteria applied in drawing the maps are in question. Willis reminds us that ‘since the provocative work of F.C. Baur ... there has developed and expanded a consensus that the earliest Christian church was characterized by partisan strife and dogmatic disagreement’ (1987:265). Maps are apparently drawn on the basis of conflicting viewpoints on dogmatic or doctrinal matters.

To be sure, the existence of doctrinal differences and dogmatic disagreements in the Jesus movement are not questioned. The issue is whether such differences and disagreements should be taken as the major principle in drawing the maps of early Christian group formation and expansion.

It goes without saying that an alteration in the received view on the expansion of early Christianity will have an important bearing on how the opponents are viewed, their identity determined and their relationship with other members of the Jesus movement described. In discussing the history of research, I shall therefore touch in passing on some leading views on the expansion of the early Jesus movement.

2.1 Opposing groups in early Christianity

Jervell roughly identifies three stages commonly accepted in scholarly circles with regard to the development of the early Jesus movement:

Christianity was in the beginning (Palestinian) Jewish Christianity.
After that came a period where we find side by side the Hellenistic Jewish Christianity, Gentile Hellenistic Christianity, and Paul – with

Palestinian Jewish Christianity somewhere in the background. In this period, the second one, Jewish Christianity was forced back and acted solely in defense. In the third period Gentile Christianity triumphed, whereas the Jewish Christians returned to the synagogue or lived as Gentile Christians or settled as an isolated and sectarian Christianity or Christian Judaism, half Jewish, half Christian.

(1984b:29)

The second phase, 'ending with the total victory of Gentile Christianity about A.D. 70' (Jervell 1984^a:13), is the setting commonly assumed as a context for the interpretation of Paul's letters and the identification of his opponents.

Part of the legacy of Baur, with whom the search for Paul's opponents started in modern New Testament scholarship, is a tradition of interpretation which still determines the direction of research. Paul's letter to the Galatians is read with the aim of identifying the opponents, since it reflects the theological and doctrinal controversy between Jewish and Gentile Christianity. Thus, in the words of Schmithals, since the time of the Tübingen school our scholars have taken for granted as the presupposition of all their studies of primitive Christianity that there were weighty theological antagonisms between Paul and James.

(1965:104 n 2)

Most scholars, however implicitly and unconsciously, share the premise of Hawkins (see 1971:79) that at least one assumption can safely be brought to the study of early Christianity, namely that there were judaizers or, as he says, Jewish Christians in the early Jesus movement who were theologically opposed to Paul and to the Gentile Christian groups. In short, the argument goes, these groups originated, were defined, and came into conflict over theology and doctrine.²

2.2 The legacy of Baur

But it is the letter to the Galatians that offers us the choicest parallel to the polemical tendency of both Letters to the Corinthians and

² Hawkins aptly illustrates the influence of assumptions about the expansion of the Jesus movement on the search for Paul's opponents. His reliance on 'general human experience' for analogies is illuminating as a general practice in many studies. He says that 'there will always be people who naturally believe that their version of Christianity (or of whatever might be in question) is the only valid version. To defend such a proposition methodologically, I suppose I would have to enter into some kind of historical or sociological or psychological or philosophical discussion as to whether we can expect to find the same tendencies of "human nature" in all ages and climes' (1971:85). That such a task is not undertaken is significant in the light of the fact that his assumption is tacitly taken for granted in most interpretations of Paul's letters. First-century people, the assumption goes, were as much concerned about conceptual matters (whether theological, doctrinal or something else) as Western people are today. This is a perfect example of what has been designated *superficial psychologism* (see chapter 2 § 2.1), which is to be avoided in a social-scientific interpretation.

which throws further light on the nature of the attacks against which the apostle had to defend himself. The opponents whom the apostle attacks in the letter to the Galatians belong wholly in the same class with those with whom he had to do in the Letters to the Corinthians ... The attack on these Judaizing false teachers makes up a large part of the Letter to the Galatians, and here there can be no doubt about the matter.

(Baur quoted by Kümmel 1972:129)

Baur identified two groups in early Christianity, namely Pauline (i.e. Hellenistic or Gentile) Christianity and Jewish Christianity (see Klijn 1974:419; Riegel 1978:411; Taylor 1990:314). The most important witnesses he used for the Petrine or Jewish Christian group were the Pseudo-Clementine writings (see Klijn 1974:420; Lüdemann 1983:15-16) and Paul's letters. Jewish Christianity was the oldest group in the early church. They were found in the church of Jerusalem, later in sects like the Ebionites, and 'Paul's opponents in Galatia, Philippi and especially Corinth were representatives of the same group' (Klijn 1974:420; see Lüdemann 1983:14, 19-20). 'According to F.C. Baur it was the Judaizers from Jerusalem who must be held responsible for the violent controversies in the Pauline mission area' says Schmithals (1965:13) and, as is clear from Baur's quotation above, Paul developed his doctrine in complete opposition to that of the primitive church (see Furnish 1964/5:342).

The legacy of Baur on Pauline research can be stated in the words of Kümmel: 'die Argumentation des Paulus wird durch die jeweilige Front entscheidend bestimmt, und nur das Verständnis dieser Front ermöglicht es, die Gedanken des Paulus voll zu begreifen' (1970:56). It is clear that the detail of Baur's construction is not accepted any more (see Wilson 1984:9; Lyons 1985:77). However, in one way or another his theory on the nature of the conflict has persisted. Today it is most often not Peter but James, Jesus's brother, who is credited with the leadership of the Jewish Christian group in Jerusalem (see Keck 1979:5). Schmithals points out that anyone who takes the usual view of the agitation of the Judaizers against Paul 'generally attributes the responsibility for it to a separate extremist movement amongst the Palestinian Jewish Christians' (1965:13).

In order to modify and tone down F.C. Baur's historical sketch it has today become customary to assign these opponents, or perhaps groups of them, to some kind of Jewish-Christian circles in Palestine with an ultra-Jacobean bias, who had not been sent directly by James, but who had a certain right to appeal to him.

(Schmithals 1965:106)

In final analysis, Paul's letter to the Galatians is to be understood both as the product of theological and doctrinal disputes in early Christianity and as part and parcel thereof.

While Baur's outline is widely accepted, the particulars are vigorously debated. As Howard (see 1979:1) suggests, it is the influence of the Tübingen school's perception

of the problem which is still prevalent today. In the words of Meeks, it is the 'ghost of Baur' that still haunts us (see Meeks 1983:229 n 41; Keck 1979:5; Willis 1987:268-269).

At least three dimensions of the direction Baur gave to Pauline research are significant. First of all, since the existence of opposing groups, and the assumption that Paul's letters are a reaction to opponents, are taken for granted (see Schmithals 1965:103-104 n 2; Noack 1980:17), the occasion of the letter is very seldom disputed. In fact, all Paul's letters are seldom if ever read without the aim of identifying opponents and their views. Even scholars aware of the dubious character of mirror reading continue to read Paul's letters (and especially the letter to the Galatians) as an answer to and/or attack on opponents. Even scholars who have trouble with a too narrow view of the occasion of the letter do not abandon the notion of opponents with an alternative version of the gospel as a/the significant interpretive key (e.g. Lategan 1988^a).

Secondly it is accepted that, if Paul did write in reaction to opponents, his perspective on events and the opponents can be unconditionally accepted. Without much fear of contradiction it can be said that most (if not all) scholars who write on the identity of Paul's opponents (and most New Testament scholars do at one time or another make a comment in that regard) accept that, historically speaking, Paul was the leading figure in early Christianity (in its expansion at any rate) and was opposed by deviant and malicious Judaizers. His views on other followers of Jesus are usually taken not only at face value but also as normative. It may be that the history of interpretation turned the traitor into the hero and vice versa. Perhaps Schubert's warning that to 'see in Paul the creator or even the one great figure in the history of the first century is a case of misplaced hero-worship' (1947:223) needs to be taken to heart.

Thirdly Baur, in explicating the nature of the early Christian groups, gave prominence to the doctrinal or theological disagreements between Jewish and Hellenistic Christianity (see Fletcher 1982:86). To put it differently, groups in the early Jesus movement were constituted primarily on the basis of theological or doctrinal differences and of their respective belief systems. Other dimensions, such as social and cultural factors, are neglected or ignored. It is, however, a moot point whether justice is done by reading Paul's letters as if the *great theologian* is fighting for the *true doctrine* and *pure theology*, widely accepted in the Jesus movement and now under threat from malicious Jewish Christians (e.g. Du Toit 1990).

Although Baur's construction of the communicative context is no longer taken for granted, his insistence on clearly circumscribed groups with theological or doctrinal disagreements is still widely accepted. It received a new stimulus in the work of Heitmüller and Bultmann especially.

2.3 The stimulus of Heitmüller and Bultmann

Although the issue of opponents cannot be detached from the Jesus-Paul debate, no exhaustive overview of that debate will be undertaken here. The Jesus-Paul debate is strongly influenced by Baur's hypotheses, and modern scholarly debates on the issue usually start with Baur. I only mention some of the highlights which are still prevalent in much research.³

Meeks says that Heitmüller made a fundamental and irreversible discovery about Paul. Contrary to Baur's, and subsequently Wrede's idea that Paul was *the second founder of Christianity* (see Meeks 1972:275, 440; Furnish 1964/5:350; Wilson 1984:4-5), Heitmüller considered that the Hellenisation of Christianity had taken place before Paul (see Hengel 1983:32).

Heitmüller argues that Paul probably got to know Christianity not in Jerusalem but at Damascus. The implication is that Paul did not receive his first impressions of Christianity from 'der Urgemeinde ... auf jüdischem Boden in Jerusalem und Judäa' but from 'eine bereits weiter entwickelte Form ... ein hellenistisches Christentum' (Heitmüller 1912:326). He concludes that it is clear that on the soil of Diaspora Judaism the gospel 'eine andere Nuance erhalten konnte und mußte als auf spezifisch jüdischem Boden wie Jerusalem' (1912:329). The character of this kind of Christianity we see 'aber auch ganz deutlich und sicher an der Gestalt des "Hellenisten", d.h. des griechisch redenden Diasporajuden' (1912:329). According to Heitmüller, the external and internal development of early Christianity can best be perceived from this construction. What is commonplace today as the line of development from Jesus to Paul (see Jervell 1984a:13; Willis 1987:265) was expressed by Heitmüller as 'Jesus – Urgemeinde – hellenistisches Christentum – Paulus' (1912:330; see also Furnish 1964/5:359).

Heitmüller's influence not only on the Hellenist hypothesis in general (and with it the popularisation of the existence of Hellenistic Christianity and its domination of Jewish Christianity) but especially on Bultmann should not be underestimated (see Bultmann 1960:185; Furnish 1964/5:365-366; Marshall 1972/3:271-273). Says Bultmann: 'Geschichtliche Voraussetzung für die paulinische Theologie ist einfach das Kerygma der Urgemeinde, vielmehr das der hellenistischen Gemeinde, durch deren Vermittlung jenes erst an Paulus gelangte' (1980:66).

In a sense Bultmann in his *Theologie des Neuen Testaments* (1980), first published in 1948, popularised the idea of the role of the primitive Hellenistic community in the

³ 'The Jesus-Paul debate can be divided conveniently into two main stages: from Baur to Wrede, and from Bultmann to the present' (Wilson 1984:3). For that *convenient* reason I only mention Baur and Heitmüller/Bultmann when focusing on the prevalent construction of opposing groups in early Christianity. For a useful review of the Jesus-Paul debate, see especially Furnish (1964/5). A more recent discussion of some of the issues involved occur in the studies by Wedderburn (1985 and 1988).

life of Paul (see Goppelt 1970:63). In the very early stages of the Jesus movement he finds clear evidence of *Das Kerygma der Urgemeinde* which was changed considerably by *das vorpaulinische hellenistische Christentum* (see Bultmann 1980:34-186). The work of Hahn expanded this two-stage hypothesis to a three-stage hypothesis comprising at least three distinguishable positions in the pre-Pauline Church: Palestinian Jewish – Jewish Hellenistic – Hellenistic Gentile (see Marshall 1972/3:272; Hengel 1983:35).

Unlike Baur, who saw in Paul the deviation from the original Jewish Christianity, they succeeded in leaving behind the idea of Paul as influenced by a Hellenistic Christianity which was not interested in the historical Jesus (see Wilson 1984:4-5). The perception of the domination of Hellenistic (or Gentile) Christianity over Jewish Christianity was established by these founders and fathers of modern New Testament research on Paul. Furthermore, this basic scenario of conflicting wings within the Jesus movement provided the milieu for speculations about the identity of Paul's opponents.

The point is that Heitmüller, and later Bultmann, perpetuated an interpretation tradition – to be referred to as the traditional or received view – which to this day functions as one of the cornerstones upholding the idea of opposing forms of Christianity and hence as the breeding-ground for opponent hypotheses. In this line of argument the Hellenistic wing dominated the Jesus movement from very early on. The group around Stephen, the Hellenists, plays an important part in the arguments (see Heitmüller 1912:329-333; Bultmann 1980:67f), and one can hardly accept the Hellenist hypothesis without accepting the assumption that the Jewish Christian church in Jerusalem declined in power and influence. With this line of argument the scene was set for opponent hypotheses to flourish in New Testament research.

2.4 Keeping a tradition on track: Von Harnack

Without suggesting that there was a unified approach to the construction of the history of early Christianity, the predominant history-of-ideas approach can be pointed out as common denominator. Harnack, a near contemporary of Heitmüller, fiercely objected to the history-of-religions view (which was predominantly concerned with religious ideas: see Kümmel 1972:206-225, 310). Harnack rejected notions of conflict in the early Jesus movement which imply religious influences from the environment on the early Jesus movement (see Kümmel 1972:178). He maintained that 'it was the atemporal message of Jesus, understood rightly by Paul alone, that was at the center of the growth of Christianity' (White 1985/6:99).

In opposition to other views on the expansion of the early Jesus movement he held that on clearly theological grounds Christianity was superior to all other religions (see Kümmel 1972:310). His line of argument focuses on the internal theological reasons for the expansion of early Christianity in almost complete isolation not only from social and cultural processes but often also from the historical realities. The

expansion of the Christian movement (even up to the present day) is powered by the atemporal, constant essence of the Christian message (see White 1985/6:99). Doctrinal, not historical or cultural reasons are given for the expansion of the early Jesus movement.

The significance of Harnack's contribution lies in the subsequent separation, in many scholarly works, of religious ideas (theological or doctrinal) from the socio-cultural and historical realities of the first-century Mediterranean world. In a distinct sense he confirmed the notion that the expansion of the Christian movement is to be described by means of the theological or doctrinal differences which may have existed.

2.5 An emerging picture of early Christian expansion

By way of summary we may list several (unexamined) assumptions which have developed to the status of received facts in many contemporary studies.

First of all, not only the Pauline movement but also the other wings of the early Jesus movement were constituted and typified primarily by dogmatic or doctrinal issues.

Secondly, scholarly constructions assume that both the conflict between and the interaction within these groups were based on such matters.

Thirdly, the distinction between *Jewish* and *Hellenistic* Christianity is taken as self-explanatory.

Finally, what is meant by *Jew/Jewish* in opposition to *Gentile* or *Hellenistic* is taken for granted.

2.6 Paul's missionary practice and the assumed nature of the Pauline communities

The contribution both from Acts and from Paul's letters forms an unmistakable part of most scholarly constructions of Paul's missionary practice. According to the generally approved view in scholarly circles, the contribution from Acts usually consists of the notion of God-fearers and the argument that Paul started his missionary activities in Greco-Roman cities in Jewish synagogues (e.g. Malherbe 1983:64). Paul, on the other hand, provides the scholarly community with letters which apparently deal with doctrinal or dogmatic matters.

Since all these issues will be discussed in greater detail in the course of this study, they are merely mentioned here for their contribution to the assumed social conditions in which Paul carried on his activities. Notions about the nature of the Pauline communities, about the expansion of the Jesus movement, about the existence of conflicting groups, about Paul's missionary practice and about the assumed nature

of the Pauline communities all contribute to the received communicative context. However, they are rarely subjected to critical examination.

While most of these issues will be addressed in the course of this study, the notion of *Jewish Christianity* will serve to challenge some of the *facts* about the existence of opposing groups in the early Jesus movement which are taken for granted in many scholarly circles.

3 JEWISH CHRISTIANS: ARCHETYPE OF PAUL'S OPPONENTS

The search for the opponents in the letter to the Galatians, as Fletcher points out, is most often done 'within the framework of a larger picture of the history of the early church' (1982:85). Crucial to that historical construction is the existence of Jewish and Hellenistic (or Gentile) Christianity. Jewish Christianity in most instances forms the dark backdrop against which the conduct of the opponents is described (see Klijn 1974:420). In the words of Schmithals:

Whoever takes the usual view, when dealing with the agitation, whether great or small, of the Judaizers against Paul, generally attributes the responsibility for it to a separate extremist movement amongst the Palestinian Jewish Christians.

(1965:13)

Of the many issues discussed in scholarly circles to indicate the possible expansion of, and relationship between, the assumed groups within the early Jesus movement, Jewish Christianity is picked out as a test case. The Jerusalem conference, the Antioch incident, or the narratives in Acts about the Hellenists may also be examined in this regard. Jewish Christianity will be used as an example to demonstrate that the received view of the expansion of the early Jesus movement creates rather than solves problems.

3.1 The received view of Jewish Christianity

The received view of Jewish Christianity, although not unanimously accepted, at least contains most of the following elements. During the first few years after Jesus's death, the community in Jerusalem did not have a definite structure. The disciples who fled after his death probably returned to Jerusalem and established the circle of the 'Twelve'. At the time, round about 35-50 CE, the leaders of the Jerusalem community (Peter, John and James) were probably known as the 'pillars'. When Paul returned to Jerusalem somewhere between 55-60 CE, 'Jesus' brother James was alone the uncontested leader of the church' (Koester 1982:87; see Conzelmann 1973:55). Prior to the Jewish war, just after the martyrdom of James in 62, they probably fled to Pella on the Jordan (see Koester 1982:87), but it is uncertain whether they ever returned to Jerusalem. Although there were Christians in Jerusalem after the war, it is generally accepted that the original community disappeared during the war (see Conzelmann 1973:111).

Many factors indicate 'that at first the Christians in Jerusalem understood themselves as a special group within the Jewish community' (Koester 1982:87; see Conzelmann 1973:43-44). Although they participated in the temple cult, practised circumcision and observed the dietary laws, they were radically different from the other Jews in that they saw themselves as possessing the Spirit. Very early there must have been tensions and controversies in the Christian community at Jerusalem.

3.2 Defining Jewish Christianity: basic characteristic

'Jewish Christianity is, to be sure, a complex thing' (Strecker 1971:243). The concept *Jewish Christianity*⁴ is used for several separate entities; the term has been variously defined and there is no agreement on terminology (see Riegel 1978:410). If it is true that **separate entities** are represented by the selfsame concept while their definitions vary, obvious dangers are the problem of illegitimate transfer between them or else a vagueness that refers to no historical entity.

Longenecker (see 1970:1-3) indicates that the history of research provides at least four different sets of criteria used in defining the concept: divisions on the basis of nationality, doctrine, imagery and chronology.

In an **ethnic** sense the concept would refer to 'derjenigen Mitglieder der christliche Gemeinde, die Juden sind' (Lüdemann 1983:54). Since almost all the missionaries of the first generation were Jews, even if some (such as Paul and Barnabas) came from the Diaspora (see Koester 1982:198; Hengel 1983:40), such a designation would hardly be meaningful. Furthermore, it is much too wide a definition of the first Christian century, for that is 'to make Jewish Christianity synonymous with almost the entirety of the New Testament, with only the Lukan writings as possible exception' (Longenecker 1970:2).

The first studies of Jewish Christianity were largely based on **doctrinal** criteria. They include the studies of Baur and Schoeps (see Riegel 1978:414). The variety in this field includes those who see Jewish Christians as people who, along with their Christian beliefs, held fast to the Mosaic law; or in terms of christology they were those who held that Jesus was God's promised Messiah, but he was not divine (see Longenecker 1970:2; Riegel 1978:414; Lüdemann 1983:54). Taylor, however, argues that there is 'no sure way of defining the Christian Jews from the Gentiles on theological terms' (1990:314).

In its **chronological** sense some wish to limit Jewish Christianity to the period prior to 70 CE while others want to speak in heterodox terms and date it after 70 CE (see

⁴ According to Klijn, the modern study of Jewish Christianity began with FC Baur (see 1974:419; Longenecker 1970:5; Riegel 1978:411). For an overview of the history of research subsequent to Baur, see especially Klijn (1974:419-426), Velasco and Sabourin (1976) and Lüdemann (1983:13-57).

Longenecker 1970:2-3; Riegel 1978:414). Chronological demarcations, says Longenecker, can even be included in any of the other definitions – as is the case in some studies focusing on the Ebionites and related *heterodox* groups in the second century (see Schoeps 1969:18-19; Kraft 1972:87; Klijn 1974:425).

According to Lüdemann, the use of Jewish conceptual **imagery** and **terminology** to define Jewish Christianity enjoys the greatest support (see 1983:53). Daniélou and his student Longenecker use it as an umbrella term to designate ‘a type of Christian outlook – the expression of Christianity in thought forms borrowed from “*Spätjudentum*” (Kraft 1972:87). Longenecker uses the concept Jewish Christianity:

1. Ideologically, with reference to early Christians whose conceptual frame of reference and whose expressions were rooted in semitic thought generally and Judaism in particular.
2. Geographically, with reference to early Christianity which was either centred in Jerusalem or looked to the church in Jerusalem (whether actually or ideally) as its ‘Mother Church’, and sought to continue its ministry’.

(1970:5)

In the search for Paul’s opponents this definition (accompanied by approaches focusing on doctrinal features) is arguably the predominant one.⁵

However, ‘as soon as we become aware of the fact that Christians of Jewish as well as those of Gentile descent can be called Jewish Christians since their ideas were taken from Judaism’ (Klijn 1974:421), this turns out to be much too broad to facilitate historical understanding. Even Paul can be considered a Jewish Christian within this broad definition (see Velasco & Sabourin 1976:8). Kraft is even more critical of Daniélou’s construction of Jewish Christianity: ‘It seems to me legitimate to ask whether any historically identifiable and selfconscious entity (person or group) ever existed behind Daniélou’s “Jewish Christian theology” (1972:87; see also Strecker 1971:243 n 5).

Given the state of affairs (by the time he wrote), Klijn concludes that

[i]t is impossible to isolate the Jerusalem Church, Palestinian or Syriac Christianity from the rest of the Church in the Graeco-Roman world. We are dealing with one Christian movement in which the Jewish ideas and practices and the Jews themselves played their part in Jerusalem and Rome, Ephesus and Alexandria. For this reason it is impossible to define the term ‘Jewish-Christian’ because it proved to be a name that can readily be replaced by ‘Christian’.

(1974:426)

⁵ In this wider perspective the concept is used by many scholars concerned with Christianity as such in the first century (e.g. Riegel 1978:415; Hartin 1991:40).

Several scholars have tried to escape the definitional deadlock by refining definitions and terminology (see Riegel 1978:414-415;⁶ Murray 1982:198-208;⁷ Malina 1976;⁸ Brown 1983:77-78;⁹ Taylor 1990¹⁰). In the light of the discussion that follows, it is, however doubtful whether the problem can be solved more meaningfully until some of the basic assumptions underlying these definitional approaches have been reconsidered.

3.3 Dogma and doctrine: criteria for demarcation

Fletcher argues that 'the *religionsgeschichtliche* approach has been determinative for the exegesis of Galatians in the last century' (1982:6). That was also indicated in the remarks on Baur, Heitmüller, and Bultmann earlier on, as well as in the definitional disputes regarding Jewish Christianity. The basic assumption is that the groups were formed, and functioned, on a theological or doctrinal basis (see Fletcher 1982:86-87). At least one methodological and two historical problems haunt an approach which assumes that the divisions (and conflicts) in the Jesus movement can be attributed to such causes.

The methodological problem concerns the (undue) circularity of the argument while the historical problems include: (1) that there were, at that stage, groups with fully developed conceptual systems, and (2) that theological and doctrinal issues played an important part in the self-definition of first-century people and in their drawing of group boundaries.

⁶ What Riegel tries to prevent is the transfer of concepts over time (from the second century to the first). He proposes that *Judaeo-Christianity* be used in the broad ideological sense to refer collectively to many Jewish-Christian ideas. Jewish Christianity, then, is restricted geographically and chronologically to Jerusalem prior to 70 CE. The question remains on what basis Jewish Christianity is then constituted.

⁷ Murray suggests that a distinction be made between *Jewish* and *Hebrew*, where the former refers to all groups who wish to identify themselves by relationship to Jerusalem and the temple while *Hebrew* is reserved for those hostile to Jerusalem (see 1982:199). Thus, the diversity of first-century Judaism is dealt with in a specific way which does have some potential. He realises, however, that the 'whole "map" of early Christianity, in all its forms and connexions, calls for more sociological analysis, and that of the greatest possible perceptiveness and command of relevant detail' (1982:207).

⁸ Malina proposes a hypothetical distinction between Jewish Christianity and Christian Judaism by focussing on *ideology*, by which he means 'the views and values produced by any social group to legitimate and reinforce their present order of things and protect that order against competing groups' (1976:49). His definitions, quite apart from the question whether such groups ever existed, are determined solely by the theological or doctrinal convictions of the participants.

⁹ Brown identifies at least four different types of Jewish/Gentile Christians in the New Testament. For that reason the concept of *Jewish Christianity* is considered theologically meaningless. He uses a combination of ethnic and doctrinal/imagery criteria to describe the variety within the Jesus movement.

¹⁰ Taylor maintains that Jewishness had nothing to do with heterodoxy, referring instead to Jewish praxis (see 1990:318). The distinguishing mark of Jewish Christianity, she maintains, was the upholding of Jewish praxis and only that (see 1990:327). Within the parameters of *religious activities* only, orthopraxis cannot escape doctrine.

3.3.1 The circularity of the argument

Barclay's remark (1988:43) that we have 'a certain amount of information about Jewish Christianity in Jerusalem, not only from Paul (Gal 1-2) but also from Acts (see esp. Acts 15, 21)' is very typical of research on the history of the early Jesus movement (see Schoeps 1969:18-19; Goppelt 1970:56-60; Conzelmann & Lindemann 1980:404-405). On the other hand, for a description of Jewish Christianity in the early phases (which is no easy task) it is necessary, according to Koester, to begin with the Jerusalem community:

There is some specific information from the early history of Christianity which demonstrates that particular criteria for the faithfulness to the Jewish law could lead to the identification of a clearly defined group as "Jewish Christian": the controversy of Paul with Jerusalem about the question of circumcision, and the subsequent fight against the Judaizers in Galatia.

(1982:199)

A curious feature is apparent in the above two quotations. The identification of the opponents presupposes the existence of a separate Jewish Christian group in the Jesus movement, while the identification of a clearly defined group of Jewish Christians is based *inter alia* on evidence concerning the opponents in Galatia.¹¹ The circular nature of the studies both on the opponents and on Jewish Christianity certainly crosses the accepted boundaries of scholarly research.

Historical investigation, says Kraft, 'must by its very nature frequently involve circularity of argument', but the question, he says, is 'what "controls" exist by which to regulate the argument as adequately as possible' (1972:82). With regard to a particular Jewish Christian theology, he doubts whether it is possible to break out of the circularity of the argument whereby the reconstructed theology provides the primary evidence for the existence of Jewish Christianity while the supposed existence of

¹¹ The construction of Jewish Christianity is largely dependent on arguments related to the opponent question. Koester's argument on the Apostolic Council confirms it. In order to understand the so-called Apostolic Council, it is important to reconstruct the situation in early Christianity at the time. At that stage there were two different centres of Christianity, namely Jerusalem and Antioch; and the latter, because of the Hellenists (see Acts 7), consisted for the most part of uncircumcised Gentile Christians who did not regard the law as binding. The sole reason for the Council was the disagreement between the Christians in Antioch and those in Jerusalem concerning the law. Since Jewish Christians were raising objections against Gentile Christians regarding the law, the community at Antioch sent a delegation to Jerusalem to clarify their position. According to Paul, the independence of the Gentile mission and their freedom from the law was acknowledged by the leaders of the Jerusalem community (see Koester 1982:105). Many scholars agree that it was the question of a large number of Gentile Christians who were not bound to the law which gave rise to the Apostolic Council (see Conzelmann 1973:83). It is argued that the Apostolic Council provides evidence for the existence of a clearly defined group named Jewish Christians, but in order to interpret the event correctly it is necessary to assume the existence of a group of Jewish Christians who raised a dispute at Antioch (see 1982:105).

Jewish Christianity makes it possible to reconstruct Jewish Christian theology (see 1972:87). The same argument applies to the circularity of constructions concerning opponents and assumptions of the existence of a specific brand of Jewish Christianity. It will become quite clear in my argument that not only is there no such external control but also very difficult to introduce one, one of the reasons being that the theoretical framework of the question does not readily allow such external control.

3.3.2 The danger of anachronism

Kraft asks whether Daniélou's abstraction *Jewish Christianity* is any help in understanding what was happening among the early Christians.

Does it not, in fact, tend to blind me to the problems of which the historical participants were conscious in their own times, by viewing them from later perspectives quite foreign to them (e.g. Semitic-Jewish, hellenistic, Latin)?

(1972:89)

The doubtful assumption behind such attempts is that such well-formulated belief systems existed in the first century (see Schoeps 1969:2; Meeks 1983:33). Furthermore, given the fact that first-century people were much less concerned about theological and doctrinal orthodoxy than those of later periods when the canons of the Jewish and Christian sides had been established, theological or doctrinal motivations become even less plausible (see also White 1990:61).

Anachronism in a different guise is found in the projection of second-century Jewish-Christian constructions onto the first-century situation.

It is often assumed that the construction of Jewish Christianity from second-century (and later) sources sheds some light on Jewish Christianity prior to 70 CE (see Schoeps 1969:18-19; Koester 1982:200). That was one of Baur's arguments (see Klijn 1974:420) but, as Schmithals says, no-one today would use the Clementine literature and apocryphal gospels as the Tübingen school did (see 1965:13, 105).

3.3.3 The danger of theological reductionism

It is a moot point whether the search for the identity of Jewish Christianity is not an example of the theological reductionism to which the social-scientific approach objects. It was said at the beginning of the chapter that the description and demarcation of groups in the Jesus movement is a difficult problem. Can the demarcation and mapping of groups be done meaningfully in this way unless it is accepted that theological or doctrinal aspects were the sole criteria?

Groups are by definition social abstracts, and social, political and cultural aspects always contribute to their formation, legitimation and maintenance. Conflicts of all

sorts are rarely untouched by personal attributes such as class, status and position or social attributes such as socio-cultural codes and conventions – be it in contemporary society or in first-century Mediterranean society. Part of the challenge is to ascertain these attributes, codes and conventions in first-century society. It is in this regard that the present study is intended to contribute to the description and understanding of groups, and the conflicts in the first-century Jesus movement.

3.4 Jewish Christianity and the development of the Pauline movement

Since the focus of this debate is not Jewish Christianity as such but the assumption of its existence in describing the nature and character of the Pauline movement – and especially that of Paul's opponents – some of the issues to be settled may be highlighted by way of a summary.

Jewish Christianity was a multiple phenomenon or, more correctly, scholars refer to a variety of phenomena as *Jewish Christianity*. In the light of the variety of phenomena named, together with the variety in definitions, Klijn concludes that

it is impossible to compile 'a' or 'the' theology of Jewish Christianity ...

We are dealing with isolated phenomena and can, therefore, only speak of the Jewish Christianity of a particular writing or of a particular group of Christians.

(1974:431)

If this argument holds, the assumption of Jewish Christianity as opposed to either Pauline or Gentile Christianity should be reconsidered. In fact, the assumption of Jewish Christianity in the maintenance of opponent hypotheses becomes highly dubious. While one hypothesis cannot uphold another and vice versa, several individual components of both tend to overlap.

The *Jewish* in Jewish Christianity and in opponent hypotheses poses a problem. Paul is a case in point. He claims to be a *Jewish* follower of Jesus who had the right to present his brand of Judaism to Jew and Gentile alike (see Rm 9:1-5, 11:1; 1 Cor 9:19-23; and cf Riddle 1943:241; Stowers 1984:64); opponent hypotheses, however, assume that Paul was opposed by *Jewish* Christians or Judaizers for not being *Jewish*. One issue to be settled is precisely what constituted Jewishness in the first-century world.

Secondly, opponent hypotheses and constructions of Jewish Christianity alike focus primarily on dogmatic and doctrinal matters. Even if it is accepted that such matters played a significant part in constituting groups in the early Jesus movement and in the conflicts in Galatia, it still needs to be ascertained what is meant, in that context, by a conflict over the 'true gospel'. In theoretical jargon (that of the sociology of knowledge), the relationship between social and symbolic structures needs to be settled. In this regard the nature of religion and of Jewish religion in the first-century world need to be examined.

Thirdly, describing the expansion of the Jesus movement in terms of fixed and well-established groupings with clearly developed belief systems not only assumes that the Jesus movement seceded from Judaism but also that it consisted of Pauline Christianity as distinct from Jewish Christianity. A further issue to be settled is what constituted groups, especially *religious* groups, in the first-century world.

While opponent hypotheses fit neatly into the received interpretive tradition on the expansion of the early Jesus movement in general and the assumption of internal conflicts between different wings or factions of the Jesus movement in particular, the above questions as to the viability of most constructions of Jewish Christianity places a question mark over the existence of this particular faction. If an identifiable Jewish Christianity did not exist as a particular faction against which Paul reacted, and which provided the backdrop to opponent hypotheses, then the received view of expansion along such lines becomes improbable. Too many indicators point to an interpretive tradition which maintains itself by means of mutually supporting hypotheses. It calls for an alternative view of the expansion of the early Jesus movement and particularly of the nature and character of the Pauline communities as part and parcel of it.

4 FIRST-CENTURY JUDAISM: A SUBCULTURE FOR THE PAULINE MOVEMENT

The second field of research identified as significant in opponent hypotheses is the assumption of a separation between the Pauline movement and first-century Judaism. In this regard several factors (such as circumcision as an identity marker, and the character of first-century Judaism) fundamentally determine all views on the nature of the Pauline communities. That is to say, opponent hypotheses thrive on particular features of scholarly constructions of the Pauline communities which are determined by a preconceived idea of first-century Judaism.

Perhaps more than any other component of the received interpretive tradition, the notion of a separation (in its very early stages) between the Pauline movement and Judaism creates the milieu and provides the basic assumptions on which many opponent hypotheses develop.

4.1 The relationship between the Pauline movement and first-century Judaism

The majority of New Testament scholars today, as Sanders points out, accept that Paul was creating a new religion independent of Judaism, especially Rabbinic Judaism (see 1977:9). He identifies three positions in current research on Paul's relationship with Palestinian Judaism:

Paul should be seen as essentially a Rabbi who thought that the Messiah had come (Davies); that in spite of some agreements in detail, Paul's religion is basically antithetical to that of Palestinian Judaism (probably the majority view); and that Paul had little relationship to Palestinian Judaism one way or another (Sandmel).

(Sanders 1977:11)

My intention is not to review the scholarly debate and all the different positions on the relationship between Paul and the Pauline movement on the one hand and first-century Judaism on the other,¹² but to point out what is typical of the majority view. Or rather, it is to point out (by means of a few examples from leading scholars in the field), that the enterprise is compromised from the start by the way in which the issue is dealt with. To phrase it differently, the way in which the question of the relationship is posed predetermines the answer.

Paul (the Pauline movement or Paulinism) is compared to Judaism (or Jewish religion/organisations) in order to determine the dis/similarities. From the differences it is usually concluded that they were indeed separate movements. In doing so, the received view of the Pauline movement as a separate religion is confirmed without adducing any arguments as to whether they should indeed be separated. The crucial question, *What would have counted as separation from first-century Judaism?* is conveniently left aside. Sanders is a case in point.

In comparing *Paulinism* to Judaism, Sanders does not consider **whether** Pauline Christianity and Rabbinic Judaism are separate religions; rather, he considers what the elements of dis/agreement between the two separate religions are (see Sanders 1977:11, 19). Compared to covenantal nomism, Paul's arguments are not typical of it, nor do they constitute a new covenantal nomism (see Sanders 1977:514, 543). The basic difference is that Paul's type or pattern is described as 'participationist eschatology' (Sanders 1977:549). For that reason Sanders can say in his now famous dictum (1977:552): '*this is what Paul finds wrong in Judaism: it is not Christianity*' (italics EPS).¹³

He compares two patterns of religion and unless it is accepted that a deviation from covenantal nomism (as in Paul's case) would have implied a break with Judaism, it cannot be decided what, sociologically speaking, the relationship between them was. In other words, the question of whether the Pauline movement, which had a different pattern of religion from Palestinian Judaism, was still part of Judaism cannot be decided on the basis of a comparison of the different patterns unless it can be clearly demonstrated (or is assumed) that a deviation from the pattern of covenantal nomism would have disqualified a movement from being considered part of Judaism. A second example will confirm the entrenched position of the received construction.

¹² For extensive overviews of Paul and Judaism in New Testament research, see Sanders (1977:1-12), Davies (1955:1-16) and Schoeps (1961:13-50).

¹³ This is confirmed by his arguments in a later work (see Sanders 1983) where he is more outspoken: not only does Paul's pattern of religion not accord with the Jewish pattern, but Paul himself argues against the traditional doctrine of election and against faithfulness to the Mosaic law (see Sanders 1983:207-208). In his own words: 'What is wrong with the law, and thus with Judaism, is that it does not provide for God's ultimate purpose, that of saving the entire world through faith in Christ, and without the privilege accorded to Jews through the promises, the covenant, and the law' (Sanders 1983:47).

Although Dunn proposes a correction to what he finds unacceptable in Sanders' position, he does not escape the assumptions of the very same position.

According to him, Sanders too readily replaces the 'Lutheran Paul' with an 'idiosyncratic Paul who in arbitrary and irrational manner turns his face against the glory and greatness of Judaism's covenant theology and abandons Judaism simply because it is not Christianity' (1983^b:101). Dunn argues that early Christianity was not yet separate and distinct from Judaism; although they had some peculiar beliefs about Jesus, 'their religion was the religion of the Jews' (Dunn 1983^a:5). What caused a problem was that more and more Gentiles accepted this belief, and this raised the question of what requirements were necessary for them to worship the one God who had sent his Messiah, Jesus (see Dunn 1983^a:5).

Dunn apparently does not presuppose that the Pauline movement stood outside Judaism, but sees it rather as a struggle by the 'Christians' about how to relate their Jewish beliefs of covenantal nomism (their 'works of the law') to their new conviction concerning Jesus as the Christ (see Dunn 1983^b:113). The covenant is not abandoned but broadened to transcend the racial or nationalistic restrictions placed on it by the Jews and to include those other than circumcised Jews (see Dunn 1983^b:114-116). Dunn sees these works as having become a too narrowly nationalistic and racial concept of the covenant; 'they had become a badge not of Abraham's faith but of Israel's boast' (Dunn 1983^b:120).¹⁴

According to Dunn, Paul redefined the identity markers of Judaism when he added faith in Jesus as Messiah. Paul accepts that alongside other identity markers 'faith in Jesus as Christ becomes the primary identity marker which renders the others superfluous' (Dunn 1983^b:113). He concludes that in effect the seed had been planted of a faith which sooner or later must break away from Judaism (see Dunn 1983^b:115). Theologically or, in Dunn's phrase (see 1983^b:113), salvation-historically, covenantal nomism was redefined from Paul's point of view to include the most important identity marker, namely faith in Jesus as Messiah.¹⁵ So far so good.

To my mind, however, Dunn does not exploit to its logical consequence the insight that the Jesus movement was basically still part of Judaism. In his analyses of 'works

¹⁴ The major difference from Sanders is that the latter takes 'works of the law' as equivalent to 'doing the law', and that led Sanders to the conclusion that Paul had disparaged the law as such, which amounts to a break with Judaism (see Dunn 1983^b:120).

¹⁵ In terms of Paul's self-understanding and his exposition of the self-understanding of the Jesus movement at that time, Gl 2:16 might very well represent a basic turning point 'from a Jewish Messianism to a faith which sooner or later must break away from Judaism to exist in its own terms' (Dunn 1983^b:115).

of the law,¹⁶ his analysis of the incident at Antioch, and his exposition of the letters to the Romans (see 1988a)¹⁷ and the Galatians (see 1988b), he follows a particular interpretive frame. A frame which adds to the notion of normative Judaism a second assumption, namely a fixed idea on Jewishness and Jewish identity symbols.

If it is true that Paul redefined the identity markers of Judaism (and it seems to me a sound description of what, sociologically speaking, he was doing), how is that act of redefinition to be interpreted? From one perspective it might be interpreted (as Dunn does) to mean that he was separating the Jesus movement from Judaism; but from another perspective he was not separating but simply defining (the true) Judaism as he saw it. The first is an act of **redefining** Judaism, the second of **defining** it. The first presupposes a normative Judaism, the second an open variety of Judaisms.

To be sure, the difference between the two lies not in the data and evidence but in the interpreters' frame of mind and the interpretive categories applied in order to understand the evidence. When Gordon, for example, maintains that Jewish identity symbols are at the centre of the dispute in Galatia (see 1987:40), he perfectly expresses this second sentiment in Pauline studies which is most often taken for granted. The notion of normative Judaism, together with a fixed idea of the content of Jewish identity markers, constitutes the interpretive framework.

A final example from a different angle highlights the tendency to compare (the Pauline movement and first-century Judaism) without arguing the criteria for separation from first-century Judaism. Despite his use of social-science models (such as a sect model), Meeks confirms rather than questions or adjusts the assumptions of the received view on the nature of the Pauline movement. He points out that, socially, 'the Pauline groups were never a sect of Judaism' (1985:106). At several levels he finds traces that indicate a clear break between the two.

¹⁶ Dunn maintains that the identity markers for a Jew living in the pattern of covenantal nomism were circumcision, purity and food taboos, and the Sabbath. This is what Paul refers to as 'works of the law' (see Dunn 1983^b:107). What are antithetical opposites for Paul are justification by works of the law and justification by faith in Jesus. Paul is thus attacking the basic self-understanding of the Jews when he denies the possibility of 'justification by works of the law' (Gl 2:16).

¹⁷ Dunn interprets the letter to the Romans as if the church and Judaism were already separate movements. The sociological position accepted in his construction of the context is, however, one of separation between the synagogues (Jewish communities) and the Pauline movement (house churches). It can best be seen in his argument that Paul was writing primarily for Gentiles. In principle that issue cannot be settled by simply accepting 'what Paul is saying' if those words are read *a priori* in a context which presupposes that the two movements were already separated. To state it anachronistically, Dunn reads Romans as if the church and Judaism were already separate religions. I refer to his argument that Christianity probably first emerged in Rome within the Jewish communities (see 1988^a:xlvi) and consisted of both Jews and God-worshipping Gentiles (see 1988^a:xlviii). Their meetings in each others' homes were initially not seen as a break with or as opposed to the wider Jewish community. But when the Jews were supposedly expelled from the city in 49 CE the Christians were untouched (see 1988^a:xlix and 1988^a:liii). Paul wrote primarily to Gentiles because the Jews were expelled in 49, which resulted in the house churches becoming largely gentile (see 1988^a:liii).

The first is the organisational level. When comparing the Christian household to voluntary associations (such as clubs), synagogues or philosophical or rhetorical schools (see 1983:75-84; 1986b:108-119), he concludes that the Pauline household was, organisationally speaking, unique. Although all present significant analogies, none of the models capture the whole of the Pauline ἐκκλησία (1983:84). 'Something new was emerging in the private homes where believers in "Jesus the Christ" gathered' and therefore, according to Meeks, we have to turn to the primary sources left behind by the Pauline movement itself to determine its structures, 'which may after all have been unique' (1983:84). The organisational uniqueness of the Pauline congregations depends on a distinctive social organisation. It is, however, a question whether a distinct organisational structure, even with idiosyncratic features, can be taken as an indication of independence or separation from Judaism. Meeks assumes that groups were defined and the boundaries between them determined by means of such organisational differences or similarities. More to the point, his argument goes, separation from Judaism could be achieved by means of organisational and structural independence.

Since they had an independent organisation, he argues, secondly, that the Pauline congregations had an identity distinct from that of other Jews. Says he: 'In order to persist, a social organisation must have boundaries, must maintain structural stability as well as flexibility, and must create a unique culture' (1983:84). So far so good. The topics Meeks deals with in the development of this *unique culture* of the Pauline Christians are related to aspects of language, practice, ritual, patterns of belief, group cohesion and leadership, conflict management, to name only a few. They are, however, an indication of separation only if it is true that they were the preconditions for group formation and group boundaries. Only if Jewish identity markers and symbols were generally defined or taken as fixed would deviation have meant independence from Judaism. Judaism is taken to have been well defined and its features well established.

Thirdly, at a theological/ideological level Meeks maintains that 'the scriptures and traditions of Judaism are a central and inextinguishable part of the Pauline Christians' identity. *Socially*, however, the Pauline groups were never a sect of Judaism' (1985:106). However, it is meaningless to state that one group is theologically indebted to another and socially distinct unless that information is related to the way in which the groups were constituted, perceived each other, reacted to one another, reacted proactively in view of what they expected, and perceived their co-existence within the same society. If theological/ideological indebtedness did not count as a legitimate claim of Jewishness, on what basis then was Jewishness defined?

The point I am trying to make is that many New Testament scholars deal with the issue of Jewish – *Christian* relations (in Paul's lifetime) in terms of much later developments. One result is that Paul's view of, for example, circumcision is interpreted

within the setting of conflicting perspectives (usually between himself and other Jews) on identity markers. Thus the conflict was constituted by the larger setting of opposing religions.

The history-of-ideas assumption (that ideas basically determine social realities) is especially powerful when it comes to the comparison of religious systems or *patterns of religion*, to use Sanders's concept (see 1977). It is not denied in this study that ideas do indeed play an important part in self-definition and exposition; even in the creation of groups and the maintenance of boundaries. My objection is to the notion that such ideas are themselves unattached to particular social realities such as, for example, that of the first-century Mediterranean world or contemporary Western societies. What needs to be determined is the appropriate criteria for deciding, within a first-century world, what constituted Jewishness and what would accordingly have counted as separation from Judaism.

In short, the interpreter's frame of mind moulds the evidence and shapes the arguments. In Pauline studies – and in opponent hypotheses in particular – at least two features clearly mark that frame with regard to the relationship to Judaism: a fixed idea on what constituted Jewishness, and a view of normative Judaism (mostly of a rabbinical brand) as the main characteristic of first-century Judaism. In the pages to follow an attempt will be made to examine both in view of recent studies on first-century Judaism.

4.2 Conceptual and terminological clarity

In the pages that follow there is no claim to original research as to the sources¹⁸ but, thanks to the work of others, an attempt to summarise the findings of those who have done the research. As Charlesworth cogently states it (see the epigraph to this chapter), a new understanding of early Judaism is now appearing in scholarly publications. The challenge facing New Testament scholarship is to abandon the picture of Judaism in the first century, pre-70, that never existed (see also Neusner 1989:18) and consequently the interpretation of New Testament documents (opponent hypotheses) that was built on it.

In this final section of the present chapter my intention is to report some of the most significant findings on first-century Judaism that have a special bearing on the nature of the Pauline movement and especially the nature of the conflicts encountered. In the subsequent chapter this line of argument on the new understanding of first-century Judaism will be extended even further when, amongst

¹⁸ It is accepted in this study that the problem cannot be solved by a simple return to the sources. The methodological framework within which the ancient sources are understood and interpreted is just as important as the sources themselves. As Judge says, 'What we lack is not good first-hand sources, but a good secondary tradition and an adequate context' (1972:20).

others, the nature of religion in the first-century Mediterranean world is brought into play. The first step in dealing with the new understanding of first-century Judaism would be to attend in passing to some conceptual and terminological difficulties.

The 'conventional categories' used in describing first-century Judaism 'suffer from vagueness, anachronism, and inappropriate definition' (Meeks 1983:33; and see Murray 1982:196 and Smith 1983). It will be pointed out that the insufficient use of categories and terminology in this case is related to another (more serious) problem, namely that of conceptualising ancient society. A new set of concepts will lead to a re-conceptualisation not only of first-century Judaism (and the Pauline movement as part of it) but also of its place in the organisational and social structures of the first-century world.

4.2.1 Taxonomy and concepts describing the 'other'

The theoretical difficulties of understanding the *other* have been dealt with extensively. To press home the principles that relate specifically to first-century Judaism and the Pauline movement, some aspects may be highlighted.

The theory of the other expresses the sense of self. The lines of structure mark out, to begin with, insider from outsider ... So, in all, in the heart and center of the study of humanity we take up the divided heart, the uncertain vision, the off-center perspective, that, in the eye of the beholder, tells a person who is like, and who is unlike.

(Neusner & Frerichs 1985^a:xi)

Some principles that need to be kept in mind in studying Paul's interaction with first-century Judaism will be deduced from the illuminating article by Smith: *What a difference a difference makes* (1985).

Otherness, says, Smith 'is not so much a matter of separation as it is a description of interaction' (1985:10), and it is 'a matter of relative rather than absolute difference' (1985:15). Thus a theory of *otherness* is, in this sense, a political category that functions within relative modes of relationships where there are degrees of difference. The distinctions are found to be drawn most sharply between *near neighbours*. Secondly, he deals with the concept of *otherness* as a linguistic category (see 1985:15-44). He concludes that *otherness* is neither a descriptive category nor the result of the determination of biological descent or affinity; not an ontological category, not some absolute state of being (see 1985:46). 'Something is "other" only with respect to something "else"' (1985:46). Thus, whether the concept is used politically or linguistically, Smith argues that *otherness* 'is a situational category' (1985:46).

Otherness matters in situations where the *self* is in question or in dispute. For that reason *otherness* has to do with the *self* and with the way the *near-self* has been defined. 'A "theory of the other" requires those complex political and linguistic pro-

jects necessary to enable us to think, to situate, and to speak of "others" in relation to the way in which we think, situate, and speak about ourselves' (1985:48).

The implications for our understanding of what Paul was doing are numerous.¹⁹ Paul was not concerned with the *other* because they were intrinsically important or interesting but because they were close to him. He struggled with fellow Jews and *near-Christians* in his attempt at self-definition. Rather than describing Paul in contradistinction to first-century Judaism, it follows from this discussion that Paul should be described in interaction with first-century Judaism.

A second implication may be referred to as *perspectivism*. If interchange with *others* is situational, accounts of such interaction can very seldom be taken as a true representation of the relationship. It is often one-sided, emphasising those aspects considered important from the author's point of view. If this is true with regard to Paul, then he described the *others* – that is, the Jews and Gentiles, followers of Jesus and non-believers, members of his fictive kinship group (the households) and members of the larger fictive kinship group of Jesus followers – in language and terminology which reflect his struggle at self-definition. His presentation of social and historical realities is biased and one-sided (not in a pejorative sense), and an acknowledgement of this fact can preserve many arguments in New Testament studies from making absolutist claims. Paul's views are as situational as those of his contemporaries.

Thirdly (and still part of the issue of perspectivism), if something is *other* only in respect of something else, there is an obligation on contemporary scholarship to be as clear as possible as to which aspect of the other is at stake. Since I shall return to this issue, suffice it to say that sociological and theological categories (for example) cannot be mixed in support of each other.²⁰

Finally and perhaps most importantly, the theory of the *other* implies that a concept is only a means by which a specific person in a specific situation classifies other people or groups. The meaning of concepts such as *Jews* or *Israel* in the first-century world is not a fixed one: it depends on who uses it in what situation. This is well expressed by Neusner when he says that 'as everyone now recognizes full well – Jews' histories yield not one but many Judaisms, not one but many theories of who, and what, is (an) "Israel"' (1987:333). If it is true that the description of the other is in the eye of the beholder (especially with regard to first-century Judaism), then universal definitions and clear-cut concepts and terminology should be used with great caution.

¹⁹ Not all the implications may be intended by Smith. To my mind his argument opens up many possibilities and when read together with insights from other quarters, can be very useful in trying to understand Paul's communication situation.

²⁰ For an excellent example, see the discussion of Cohen (1989:18) on a related topic. Also the discussion below on the concept *Jew*.

4.2.2 Palestinian and Hellenistic/Diaspora Judaism

A distinction is very often drawn in New Testament research between Palestinian and Hellenistic Judaism (see Marshall 1972/3:274; Borgen 1983:75). Even before the time of Alexander, however, Palestine was increasingly affected by the 'all-pervasive cultural influence of Greek language and education' (Murray 1982:202).

Not only the regions of Galilee and Samaria but even Jerusalem and the surrounding countryside did not escape the Hellenistic influences (see Murray 1982:202). Even Jews in Rabbinic circles were not untouched by Greek influence for, as Smith says, 'many Jews in Rabbinic circles not only knew Greek, but read the Bible in it and prayed in it' (1956:70). His conclusion is that 'Palestine in the first century was profoundly Hellenized' and 'the Hellenization extended even to the basic structure of much Rabbinic thought' (1956:71; and see White 1987^a:135; Judge 1972:29).

Not only the above distinction but also the one between Palestinian and Diaspora Judaism is fraught with serious problems. Smith maintains that the concepts both of Hellenistic Judaism and of Diaspora Judaism are unfortunate. He warns against the 'common *in toto* distinction' (1983:300) between *Palestinian* and *Diasporic* Judaism. What is 'diasporic'? 'Does "Palestine" include Ptolemais, Sepphoris, Sebaste, Tiberias, Scythopolis, Caesarea, Appolonia, Antipatris ... to mention only the bigger places? Was the Judaism in these places "Palestinian" or "diasporic"?' (Smith 1983:299). Of the so-called 'hellenistic Jewish authors' he says, 'half a dozen ... have plausibly been assigned to Palestine' (1983:299). Were the translators of the Septuagint, who reportedly went from Palestine to Alexandria for the translation, diasporic?

Kraabel (1979:477-479) demonstrates that at the levels of building structures and organisation it may be useful to distinguish between such categories as Palestinian and Diasporic. In more concrete terms: though it might be insufficient to distinguish between Palestinian and Diaspora Judaism in terms of ideological/theological categories, that distinction might be very suitable for structural or organisational categories.

The point is that the *in toto* comparison between Palestinian and Hellenistic/Diaspora Judaism cannot be upheld. The distinction between Jewish and Hellenistic Christianity on the basis of Hellenistic influence or the absence of it, or even on the use of Greek language, hardly carries any weight. Distinctions between them should be demonstrated and can no longer be assumed a priori.

4.2.3 Admitting some limitations and possibilities

This is as good a place as any other to admit some further limitations and constraints of this enterprise.

Firstly, students of Christianity have 'inflated the Christian part of the canvas beyond all reasonable proportion. The historian of Christianity has given the impression that the rest of the canvas is simply background for the closeup' (Wilken 1984:xiv). The oversimplification of complex phenomena, societies, and events to confirm contemporary interpretive results is something to be avoided. First-century Judaism should rather be seen in all its complexity than in an oversimplified form that distorts rather than improves understanding.

Secondly, it is often forgotten that for almost a century 'Christianity went unnoticed by most men and women in the Roman Empire' (Wilken 1984:xiv). Most of the archaeological evidence from what is today known as the state of Israel comes from the early Rabbinic era, while the evidence for synagogues in places outside the Holy land comes mainly from the second to the fourth centuries (see Kraabel 1979:477-479; 1981^b:79-80). Thus from both the Jewish and the Roman sides one has to rely on sources from a much later date, when Christianity was in all probability already a movement separated from Judaism.

Thirdly, some consequences of these remarks should be kept in mind. Any construction of first-century Judaism is necessarily precarious and preliminary. As in most other historical fields of research, we have to rely on conjecture and often fanciful guesswork. As Smith (1977:45) says,

it is fashionable among the stupid to attack explanations they don't like as "conjectural". Such attacks show that the men who make them either do not understand the problem, or are deliverately [sic] trying to conceal the state of the evidence. You may take it as a rule that anyone who attacks a work on these subjects [first-century Judaism] as "conjectural" is either stupid, or ignorant, or a fraud.

Finally, on the other hand, much more evidence is available than is often acknowledged. Once the perspective changes from 'the study of various canonical anthologies made from it – i.e. the different Old and New Testaments' (Smith 1983:305) to the study of the literary remains of the various forms of Judaism prior to 70, more information is available than to historians in many other fields of research. Comparative materials in the form of contemporary social-science studies too, are abundantly available on many aspects of the first-century Mediterranean world.

4.3 A new understanding of first-century Judaism

Charlesworth (1990:37) provides a striking description of the received view on first-century Judaism:

The Jewish religion was centered in Jerusalem, with the Temple as the magnet of world Jewry. From this citadel emanated the proper interpretation of the Torah (the embodiment of God's will, Law). The

Jewish religion was affirmed to be immune from pagan influences. It was monolithic, orthodox, and normative; and diversity in the system was expressed through four sects, two of which (the Sadducees and the Pharisees) belonged to "normative Judaism".

There is however widespread agreement (e.g. Sanders 1977:426; Davies 1978; Neusner 1983:2-3) when Morton Smith (see 1956:81) claims that the scholarly picture of first-century Judaism is today far different from that conceived by earlier students.

4.3.1 Rabbinic Judaism in the first century?

Although Rabbinic Judaism had not yet developed by 70 CE, it is commonly accepted that 'something very like it was the common form of the religion, at least in Palestine, and all groups are to be seen as divergent from this primitive stock' (Smith 1983:304). Alongside the idea that there was a normative Judaism in the first century and that it was very similar to what later became Rabbinic Judaism, the idea exists that Judaism in the first century was very much a unified movement. This is assumed both for Palestine and for the cities of the Roman Empire.

For Palestine the idea is that there was a main body of Judaism (some form of Pharisaic or Rabbinic Judaism) with several smaller sects. The sects (which, apart from Pharisees, included the Essenes, Sadducees, and Qumran group) did not, however, have much of an effect on the average man in the street, since they were for the greater part isolated as sects. For the cities in the Diaspora the assumption is that these Jewish communities were similarly organised, had the same basic structure and basically shared a Rabbinic or Pharisaic theology.

What is hardly disputed in scholarly circles is that the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE brought a change to pre-70 Judaism (see Neusner 1984:47-48). One of the effects was the rise of Rabbinic (a normative) Judaism (see Neusner 1984:35-45; Cohen 1987^a:124-173). The symbols united in the rabbi-figure were distinct in the time prior to 70 CE when there still was a temple. A first response in describing the features of first-century Judaism would be to conceive a Judaism distinct from Rabbinic Judaism. To be more precise, try to imagine Judaism in the first century not only **without** but also **before** a unification of the different symbols in the figure of the rabbi.

Judaism which emerged subsequent to the destruction of the Temple 'would unite the ethics of wisdom, the ethos of the priesthood, and the social focus of messianism, into the peoplehood of Israel' (Neusner 1983:60). The central symbol was the rabbi, so Judaism became *rabbinic*: 'the entirety of Judaic existence, from remote past to yearned-for future, sustained a process of rabbinization: the rereading of everything in terms of the system of the rabbi' (Neusner 1983:60). It is important to realise that the court at Jamnia (if there ever was such a meeting) did not

simply continue the traditions of the Pharisees²¹ but should rather be seen as 'the result of an effort to find a moderate legal position acceptable to the largest number of survivors from the wrecks of the earlier parties' (Smith 1977:55; and see Cohen 1987a:154).

4.3.2 The case of normative Judaism

A response to the question, 'What actually were the beliefs and observances of "the average Palestinian Jew" – if there was any such animal – before 70?' (Smith 1983:304) should be complemented by a second one: 'What about the beliefs and practices of Diaspora Jews?' In that way something of the nature of first-century Judaism might begin to appear.

During the past few decades there has been such a constant flow of new information from recently discovered sources (new *realia*), as well as a fresh approach to the sources (see Kraabel 1982:446; Nickelsburg & Kraft 1986:11; White 1985/6:103), that it is hardly surprising that scholars in the field claim that they cannot share the views of many of their predecessors. The uncritical and biased use of the sources in former approaches, especially those of New Testament scholars,²² (see Sandmel 1979:138; Sanders 1977, 1985) has led to a description of first-century Judaism – as Rabbinic Judaism – far removed from the real situation (see Neusner 1977; 1983; Cohen 1987a). Furthermore, the biased perspective of many of the post-70 sources has misled scholars about the real character of Judaism pre-70.

Several features of the new understanding of first-century Judaism are emerging all the more clearly.

4.3.2.1 Normative Judaism: an impossible construct

During this period, 'no such thing as "normative Judaism" existed, from which one or another "heretical" group might diverge' (Neusner 1984:29). Rather, a fresh study of the sources has revealed that culturally, socially, and theologically, early Judaism was 'a complex and variegated phenomenon' (Kraft & Nickelsburg 1986:11; see Judge 1972:22; Neusner 1983:88). There just was no 'uniform "Judaism" to which all evidence attested equally well' (Neusner 1983:4) and Judaism was in what we might call 'an experimental stage' (Schiffman 1981:147).

²¹ During the first century a great deal of Palestinian Judaism was not Pharisaic (see Smith 1956:77). It would therefore in principle be a mistake to equate the later Rabbinic Jewish perspective with the real pre-70 situation. The natural prejudice of the Rabbinic material for the Pharisees should never be forgotten (see Cohen 1987a:154; Smith 1956:74). Smith names, as a second reason why tradition made the Pharisees the dominant group, the role of Josephus, who attributed to the Pharisees the dominant influence over the people (see 1956:74).

²² What is not addressed at all in this study is the anti-Judaist bias of many New Testament scholars – many of whose writings are still regarded as standard works on first-century Judaism (see especially the discussion by Klein 1978:15-38).

If it simply is no longer possible to sustain the impossible construct of a normative Judaism, we should rather conceive of 'a variety of early Judaisms, clustered in varying configurations' (Smith 1982:14). This variety in first-century Judaism reveals a deeper-lying characteristic, namely a general dissatisfaction with what was presented on the *religious market* together with the possibility that each and everyone could start his or her own movement, call on the Jahweh traditions and symbols, and define itself as the true Israel or as a messianic movement. There was as yet no voice calling for unity in Judaism; each group or sect, although a minority, argued for its own primacy and superiority (see Smith 1957:125-126; Freyne 1980:100; Schiffman 1981:148). Cohen remarks that 'no other ancient society was so torn by religious strife' (1986:48). A distinctive characteristic of first-century Judaism was, in brief, a common claim to Israel's traditions and symbols coupled with varying interpretations thereof.

4.3.2.2 The sects in first-century Judaism

The origin (and existence) of different sects²³ or groups is one of the main features of first-century Judaism. As Smith says,

the appearance of these sects within Judaism is not a mere accident, but draws its origins from the same sources as did that (originally sectarian) Pharisaic side of the religion which ultimately prevailed, namely, from the prophetic tradition, from the codification of that tradition in a sacred Law, from the conception of piety as the learning, interpretation and practice of the sacred Law, and from the identification of the individual learned in the Law as, in the last analysis, the final religious authority.

(1961:359)

When the different interpretations of the law were also 'fixed by the entrance of the members into special covenants' (Smith 1961:360), a superb recipe for the formation of a variety of sects was established.

The latter part of the second Temple period, which started with the Maccabean era (164 BCE), marked the rise of sects (Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, the Qumran community, Christians, Sicarri, Zealots, and others) and with it 'sectarian literature' (Cohen 1987^a:17) – various apocalypses speculating about the rule of God, the end of time, and so on. The rejection of the legitimacy of the priesthood and their authority to mediate between the people and God is clearly reflected in the attempts of the different groups to argue their own case as a replacement for the

²³ The concept *sect* is often used in a very loose and undifferentiated way (see Elliott 1990^b:1-5). Following the trend in current research (see Smith 1956; Rofé 1988:39) it will, in this section, be used in that sense to designate the Jewish groups mentioned by Josephus.

Temple and the priests. The creation of new social organisations (synagogues and sects) with a non-sacrificial form of worship consisting of prayer and the ceremonial reading of the Torah was one of the strongest forces facilitating the formation of small, private cultgroups which even the poor could afford (see Smith 1961:351). The scribes and sages became the new social elite that took the place of the priests (see Cohen 1987^a:160-161).

The existence of the sects and the tradition which attributed a leading role to the Pharisees so blurred perceptions that first-century Judaism is thought to be all Pharisaic. However, the man in the street (the average Palestinian Jew, who was not without religion) was not part of any of the groups²⁴ (see Smith 1956:73). The drawback of an approach which focuses on these groups or 'sects' is that 'it tends to focus primarily on a very limited sub-section of the overall picture' and 'it ignores the great masses of the people who do not seem to have been "card-carrying members" of any formal group' (Kraft 1975^b:189).

4.3.2.3 A variety of Judaisms

If, in its formative century, Rabbinic Judaism had a 'sectarian character' which 'in no way achieved the normative status later on accorded to it' (Neusner 1977:217), then if there was an *orthodox* or *normative Judaism* 'it must have been that which is now almost unknown to us, the religion of the average "people of the land"' (Smith 1956:81; see Isenberg 1974:42 n 10). They had their own synagogues and legal traditions (see Smith 1963:171). The people of the land were not the outcasts and lowly classes. Their leaders 'seem to have been the well-to-do landholders and business men who probably had more Greek education than the average Pharisee' (Smith 1963:172; and see Neusner 1988:175). The principal elements of what can be described as normative Judaism in the time prior to the fall of the Temple are 'the Pentateuch, the Temple, and the *'amme ha'arez*, the ordinary Jews who were not members of any sect' (Smith 1961:356; and see Cohen 1986:47).²⁵

But still that does not cover the whole spectrum of first-century Judaism. There were also the 'worldly Jews – the Herodians, tax gatherers, usurers, gamblers, shepherds, and robbers (by the thousands) who fill the pages of the Gospels, the Talmuds, and Josephus' (Smith 1956:74). In addition there were large differences

²⁴ It is often forgotten that the major 'philosophical sects' as identified by Josephus represented a very small proportion of the Jewish population. The largest and probably most influential group, the Pharisees, in all probability numbered only 6000, whereas the number of the Essenes was allegedly not more than 4000 (see Lohse 1976:79, 85; McEleney 1973:23). That was when the total number of Jews was round about four and a half million (see Lohse 1976:122), of which the numbers outside Palestine exceeded those inside (see Stern 1974:122).

²⁵ Even so it should not mistakenly be assumed that there was any general agreement as to any of these symbols. Symbols such as Temple and Torah 'were open for debate: Which Torah? Consisting of how many books? In which translation? Interpreted from what standpoint? Which temple? Run by which priesthood?' (Johnson 1989:427).

between the various parts of the country, and between different areas in the Diaspora, not to mention local differences between the special sects, each devoted to its own tradition (see Smith 1956:81).

In conclusion, what then was first-century Judaism? Smith (1983:304) suggests that we 'had better think of pre-70 Judaism simply as the sum of its parts, plus other elements of which we know little more than that they existed, plus yet more elements of which even the existence is now unknown'. In the words of Charlesworth (1990:37):

There were not four sects, but at least a dozen groups and many sub-groups. We should not think in terms of a monolithic first-century Palestinian Judaism; perhaps we should attempt to contemplate a post-70 Pharisaic type of Judaism and a variety of pre-70 "Judaisms".

4.3.3 Diversity amongst Diaspora Judaism

While studies on Palestinian Judaism make it clear that Rabbinic Judaism was neither normative nor the major force in first-century Palestine, recent studies on the Diaspora remind us that there were vast differences among Jewish groups: not only from city to city in western Asia Minor but also within specific cities (see Judge 1972:22; White 1988:18). Kraabel notes, as one of the questionable assumptions on Diaspora Judaism research, that it is 'seen to be *monolithic*, inter-connected and even directly controlled from Palestine' (1982:453). Neither ideologically nor organisationally were these communities directed or controlled by any mother organisation.

If first-century Judaism in Palestine was not monolithic, 'much less [was it so] in the diverse and alien environment of the Diaspora' (White 1985/6:108). As far as is known, the diversity of Judaism in Palestine was not typical of Jewish communities in the Greco-Roman cities of the Empire. The two Jewish revolts (66-70 and 132-135), for example, had little effect on the Diaspora Jews, who offered almost no direct support to the revolutionaries (see Kraabel 1981^b:86; Meeks 1983:38). Instead, they displayed a diversity more variegated and depending on local circumstances.

Current evidence suggests that the Judaism of the synagogue communities of the Roman Diaspora is best understood 'as the grafting of a transformed biblical "exile" ideology onto a Greco-Roman form of social organization' (Kraabel 1987:49). Segal maintains that the period 586 BCE – 70 CE

produced an enormous variety of Jewish communities, adapted to the plethora of new and different social, political, and economic environments brought about by the dispersion of Jews throughout the ancient world. In each place where Jews sought to dwell, the meaning of the covenant seemed different.

(1986:12)

It should further be remembered that in the first century more Jews lived outside the borders of Palestine than inside (see Meeks 1983:34; Stern 1974:122). It is known that there was often, even in the same city, more than one synagogue or Jewish community (see White 1985/6:109; 1987a:154) – a circumstance that caused ‘considerable diversity from place to place and network to network, just as much in Christian communities as in diaspora synagogues’ (White 1985/6:120). If the Jews of the Diaspora outnumbered their compatriots in Palestine, were the *real Jews* of the first century not living outside the land of Israel, asks Johnson (see 1989:427).

The nature of the Pauline movement and of synagogue communities in the cities of the Roman Empire will be considered again in a subsequent chapter. Suffice it to say that while the heterogeneous character of Diaspora Judaism makes generalisations extremely difficult, if not impossible, it has the advantage that it is at any rate impossible to project some form of normative Judaism (Rabbinic Judaism) onto them. If there was no normative Judaism at the time, even in Palestine, much less should such a Judaism be assumed in the areas where Paul operated. In fact, the notion of *a/the* Judaism in Paul’s lifetime (filled out in doctrinal jargon) had best be abandoned, at least in respect of the Diaspora.

4.3.4 The Jesus (Pauline) movement as part of first-century Judaism

It may seem strange to some that the Jesus movement is included in a discussion of the character and identity of first-century Judaism. As Smith says, ‘it is rare to find an account of first-century Judaism which recognizes that Christianity was one of its most important forms’ (1983:301). Just as easily is it forgotten in discussions of Pharisaism that besides Josephus the only Pharisee about whom we are really informed is Paul (see also Saldarini 1988:134). However, the Jesus movement is in all probability the best-documented section of first-century Judaism.

While the Jesus movement is dealt with as Christianity,²⁶ other groups – such as baptist groups in the Jordan valley (John “the baptizer”) and the group around Simon “the magician” (Simon *Magus*) – are treated as ‘peripheral figures of “Christianity”’ (Smith 1983:301). However, argues Smith, no one would exclude Judas of Galilee and his followers from a discussion of first-century Judaism. Why then exclude Jesus of Nazareth? As Charlesworth remarks:

Since they have the same parent, we must again stress that the origins of Rabbinic Judaism and Early Christianity must not be studied in isolation ... In a profound sense both Rabbinic Judaism and Earliest Christianity not only preserve but are part of Early Judaism.

(1990:42; see also Segal 1986:1)

²⁶ Even some Jewish scholars adhere to this viewpoint. Christianity which began on the first Easter is absolute in the reading of its circumstances and context and therefore Christianity ‘is not a kind of Judaism. It is wholly other’ (Neusner 1989:19).

It goes without saying that the details of this view still need to be filled in – something that will be partially attempted in the course of this study. In fact, much of the rest of this study will be concerned with locating one section of the Jesus movement (namely the Pauline movement) as part of the subculture of first-century Judaism.²⁷ There is no *a priori* reason why a separation between two religions, Judaism and Christianity, should be assumed in Paul's lifetime (see Johnson 1989:423, 427). Such a case would have to be argued. Given the abovementioned characteristics of first-century Judaism, the opposite should rather be assumed. To emphasise the point: **sociologically speaking, it should not be assumed *a priori* that the Pauline movement was separate from Judaism. If Paul did what many other Jews did (namely to claim the traditions and symbols of Israel for the definition and self-definition of his congregations) then the interaction with Judaism may be seen as an insider's struggle.**

If there is truth in this argument, the assumptions in Pauline research of a normative Judaism and the monolithic character of first-century Judaism have fallen apart – not to mention the assumption of a separation between the Pauline communities and first-century Judaism. In fact, the changing picture of first-century Judaism should bring about a revolution in Pauline studies, which have operated mainly on the notion of either normative or Rabbinic Judaism or else both.

4.4 Jewish identity markers and self-understanding

Both the theoretical principles and the new understanding of first-century Judaism suggest that several assumptions taken for granted in opponent hypotheses should be re-examined if not be abandoned. While the collapse of the received construction has been indicated in the previous section, the new features are still very much an unknown quantity. Only a few will be touched on.

If it is true that there was such a diversity of *Judaisms* (rather than a normative Judaism) in the first-century world, it goes without saying that the notion of what constituted *Jewishness* has to be reconsidered. It includes elements such as the meaning of the words *Jew* and *Judaizer*, *coming in* and *staying in*, the way in which identity markers such as circumcision functioned, and the assumption that God-fearers were the link between Jewish and Pauline communities.

What constituted Jewishness, Neusner says, is a small question about a large problem. However, he formulates the question differently and therefore falls short of what seems to me the main issue. He wants to know 'how a religious system brings to concrete and vivid expression a definition of those who live within that system,

²⁷ In the light of the diversity identified within first-century Judaism, not only in Palestine but also in the Greco-Roman Diaspora, it should not be forgotten that the Jesus movement 'was quite literally a new invention every place it appeared' (Johnson 1989:425).

how it characterizes its members as a distinctive sort of social entity' (1987:331). His aim has to do with the *how* of the process, while to my mind the *what* of the social facts²⁸ in the world out there is present in his final hypothesis but not explicitly argued.²⁹

He argues that the system-builders' social (including political) situation 'defines the generative problematic that imparts self-evidence to the systemically-definitive logic, encompassing its social component' (1987:353). Thus the 'particular politically-generative crisis' (1987:355) in each case (that of Paul, the Essenes of Qumran and the sages of the Dual Torah) determines the system's construction and content. The question is, how does Neusner determine Paul's particular generative crisis? He simply falls back, says he, onto the 'consensus of learning at this time' (1987:344 n 5) while the logic of his whole argument is that the use of a metaphor such as the concept *Israel* can only be grasped once it is related to the generative crisis as well as to the larger interest of the system (see 1987:343-353). What needs to be argued in Paul's case – namely the driving force of the social facts and the generative crisis – is unfortunately presupposed as a point of departure.

While to my mind his application fails to do justice to the socio-historical setting which in each case generated the crisis demanding a response, the distinction between the symbol system and the generative crisis is a useful one.³⁰ An especially helpful insight is the perception that different politically generative crises created different systems of Judaism within Judaism.

Taking an analytical cue from Neusner, my aim will be to concentrate on the *what* of the social system (facts) that underlies the differences between various systems of Judaism and definitions of Jewishness – especially the particular crisis underlying Paul's letter to the Galatians. That is another way of expressing the importance of the communicative context in understanding the communicative message.

²⁸ A typical social fact Neusner maintains, is that a village exists or that extended families exist (see 1987:323).

²⁹ Neusner is more interested in how social facts are *metaphorised* in a specific system to shape the meaning and promote the interests of the system builders. Social facts can be seen as something more than the mere here and now of their existence. An extended family can be transformed into the 'mythic "Israel"' (1987:323) so that the social unit adopts for itself and adapts for its purposes the social entity of Scripture. The social group is dealt with as something other than it actually is, for example as 'the body of Christ' or the 'true Israel'. Such a transformation of a social fact into something more entails 'a metaphorical reading of the social entity' (1987:332). Neusner uses the concept *systemopoeia*, a symbolic transaction worked out in the imagination (see 1987:351) to describe the out-there in the world where system-builders are confronted with a (theological) crisis which they try to explain (see Neusner 1987:353). He argues furthermore that there is a dialectical relation between system-change, and social-change with symbol-change as the primary partner and system-change as the consequent event (see 1987:356).

³⁰ The same principle has been argued in the previous two chapters: that ideas bear a socio-cultural stamp, and unless such socio-cultural and historical realities are explicitly and consciously taken into account, the chances are that the ideas will be misinterpreted.

Also Jewish identity markers and self-understanding come under fire during such crises. Without returning to every single point of disagreement on the received communicative context, some aspects of first-century Judaism will be introduced with a view to subjecting such assumptions to critical examination. The particular aim is to explicate some of the components which, in view of the new understanding of first-century Judaism, form part of the different systems of Judaism. It should be kept in mind that the discussion of individual aspects is hallmarked by their entrenchment in either the new understanding or the received view of first-century Judaism.

4.4.1 The disappearance of the Jews from some scholarly quarters

Not only in opponent hypotheses but in Pauline studies in general, the concepts *Judaizers*, *Jewish Christians* and *Gentile Christians* are frequently used and their meanings are taken to be well established. It is accepted that *Jewishness* and *Jew* refer to the religious identity markers such as circumcision, food laws, Sabbath, and Torah. That is to say, the features of normative Judaism are taken for granted.

A different picture is, however, beginning to crystallise. The variety of meanings assigned to the word *Jew* not only perfectly illustrates the principles of the abovementioned theory of otherness but also serves as a warning against the dangers of conceptual confusion. As a description or self-definition, what then does the word *Jew* refer to? or: who were referred to as *Jews* in the first-century world?

According to Lowe there are at least three different meanings of the word 'Ιουδαῖοι: members of the tribe of Judah as opposed to members of other tribes; Judeans as opposed to people living in other areas; and Jews as opposed to members of other religions (see 1976:102-103; Kraabel 1982:455). Besides the ethnic, geographic, or religious usages, Kraemer adds a fourth usage. The word was also used by 'non-Jews who affiliated with Judaism' (1989:52), who used the word either as self-designation or as a proper name for their children.

Lowe indicates that 'any nationality-word has a variety of stronger and weaker senses' (see 1976:107). (Think of all the different meanings of the word *Afrikaner*.) The word 'Ιουδαῖοι shares all the characteristics of this word – and more, since it was not only an ethnic or cultural but also a religious and geographical indicator.³¹ A closer look at the word in its different senses would be illuminating.

In its religious sense it is commonly used to refer to all adherents of the Jerusalem or Judean cult or, as Murray says, for all 'heirs of ancient Israelite Yahwism'

³¹ To a large extent, due to the assumption of a *normative Judaism* in the first century, it is often assumed that the meaning of the concept 'Ιουδαῖοι is perfectly clear. Since it is commonly taken for granted that Rabbinic Judaism or some normative Judaism close to it existed pre-70, 'Ιουδαῖοι refers to a Rabbinic Jew or something very close to it (see Smith 1983:304; Lowe 1976:119; Kraemer 1989:35).

(1982:198).³² However, that does not help us much: who would be included under that epithet? The Hasmonean High-Priesthood, for example, considered even the Samaritans eligible to bring their sacrifices to Jerusalem (see Smith 1983:301). Furthermore, the distinction suggested by Murray (see 1982:199) between *Jews* and *Hebrews* carries the implication that acceptance or rejection of the Jerusalem temple and its scribal establishment was one of the major dividing factors between Jewish groups.³³ He argues that many issues raised in Christian texts can be understood as part of the stream of 'disaffected Judaism' which, in opposition to the Jewish establishment which (controlled the Temple cult and its surroundings, did not want to be called Jewish (see 1985:276). Smith adds the additional ambiguity of the term (in its religious sense) in the fluctuation between references to Temple adherence and to general religious patterns (see 1983:303).

In the ethnic sense, too, the issue can be complicated. Jews, says Smith, were never identified by physical appearance (see 1983:302). He cannot recall one reference to a *Jew* being identified on this basis – not even circumcision, since Arabs and Egyptians also practised circumcision. Another fact of which we can be reasonably sure is that in the Greco-Roman period the followers of the Jerusalem or Judean Jahweh cult 'had been so diversified by intermarriage, adoption, conversion, and adherence, that its spread cannot be considered as that of a single genetic stock' (Smith 1983:302).

In the geographical sense 'Ιουδαία can refer to at least three distinctive entities: Judea in the strict sense meaning the area west of the Jordan between Samaria and Idumea, the procurate of Pontius Pilate, or the kingdom of Herod the Great (see Lowe 1976:103). Similarly 'Ιουδαῖοι can be used for inhabitants of any one of these areas; it may have had a wider or narrower application depending on speaker and context (see Lowe 1976:106-107). Lowe suggests that, in the Diaspora, 'Ιουδαῖοι may mean either the *inhabitants of Palestine* or *Jews* in general (see 1976:129-130). According to him, the geographical sense of 'Ιουδαῖοι 'formed the *primary* meaning of the term in the New Testament times' (Lowe 1976:105).³⁴ Even if it is true that the geographical sense was the primary indicator, it is still not really known which

³² According to Smith, the one thing common to all forms of the cult was 'the god called Yahweh, Yah, Iao, etc., who was often associated with various titles and epithets – Elohim, Adonai, Sabaoth, He who hears prayers, He whose name is blessed, etc.' (1983:302).

³³ Murray traces the distinctions in Israelite families to the period when exiles under the Persians returned from Babylon. They forced their revision of the Jewish religion onto those who remained in Palestine. Among the matters he mentions as revisions are: a new way of thinking about the powers in heaven and on earth, a change from the older calendar to the lunar-solar calendar brought back from Babylon, other forms of ideological oppression which include the breaking up of marriages and the disqualification of people as Levites, rejection of the Temple and its cult (see Murray 1985:266-279).

³⁴ He assumes that the Gospels represent a Palestinian usage, as opposed to the rest of the New Testament books which represent a Diaspora usage of the concepts. He argues that the translation for 'Ιουδαῖοι in the vast majority of cases in the Gospels should probably be *Judeans* and not *Jews* (see 1976:128).

criteria were used and who used the concept to refer to whom. It is certainly confusing to call people *Jews* who did not wish to answer to the name (see Murray 1982:199).

Above all, the different viewpoints are subject to the reality of perspectivism. From whose point of view is someone or some group seen as Jewish, be it in an ethnic, geographical or religious sense? Cohen (see 1989:23) argues that a Gentile who destroyed his ancestral gods and declared his exclusive loyalty to the god of the Jews would have been regarded as a Jew by his neighbours but not by the Jews. Different sets of criteria are applied. Here is another example to demonstrate the dilemma of perspectivism. To inhabitants of Palestine the strict geographical sense would be important whereas to people in the Diaspora it would make little difference. On the other hand, the exact opposite would be true of the religious meaning (see Lowe 1976:104). Finally, to the Roman government and possibly to most Roman citizens the most important fact about the Jews of Palestine was a 'military fact: these Jews were located at a crucial point on the eastern frontier, and their attitude toward Rome had had much to do with the security of the eastern end of the Empire' (Kraabel 1982:454).

At least one point should be clear. The concept 'Ἰουδαῖοι is a situational category which did not refer to a general identifiable group in the first-century Greco-Roman world: **there were no Jews except from a specific point of view and in terms of a very specific setting.** Who is a Jew, Johnson says (1989:427), 'was an open question, debated fiercely and even violently by rival claimants'.

To adopt an argument used by Grabbe (see 1977:152) on a similar point: the definition of *a Jew* is in the eye of the beholder. The exact content of identity markers and symbols which were, in each particular case, central to a group's self-definition, is a matter of argument and cannot merely be assumed. A diversity of people in the Roman world were referred to as *Jews* by their neighbours and came to call themselves so. It would be a gross error to go on using a single formula to cover all the instances – especially if the later Rabbinic idea of identity markers provides the content of the formula. Thus Smith advocates the need for a study of the ancient definitions of *Jew* and *Judaism* 'with careful attention to the different users of the terms and the circumstances of the usage' (1983:303).

Finally, a few remarks on the word *Ἰουδαΐζειν* (e.g. Gl 2:14). The received view that its meaning is self-evident ('to live like a Jew'), turns out to be a mistaken assumption. Like the notion of *God-fearers* (to be discussed shortly), Cohen argues that if 'we seek to produce a single definition of a "judaizer"...and if we limit that definition to the realm of Jewish practices alone, we labor in vain' (1989:33).

What is beginning to emerge in some scholarly circles is an attempt to avoid the stock phrases and clear-cut definitions of groups and entities within first-century Judaism. The issue of Jewishness was, at least in Paul's lifetime, a highly disputed

and anything but established matter. If one theoretical pointer in the debate can be emphasised, it is that identity markers and self-definition function within the realms of a group's socio-cultural setting.

4.4.2 The case of the so-called God-fearers

There can be no doubt that the existence of the category of *God-fearers* is important in the arguments of many New Testament scholars on how to interpret Paul's missionary practice and the identity of the opponents. In the words of Harvey: '[T]he story of Paul's mission, and indeed of the influence of Judaism on the pagan world generally, would be unintelligible without the existence of *some* half-way stage before becoming a full proselyte' (1985:94 n 14; and see Malherbe 1983:64). For the moment one, and only one, aspect concerns us.

Some would immediately point out that the evidence for the existence of God-fearers as a group attached to Judaism is well attested (see Levinskaya 1990:315; and cf Rajak 1985:257-258). A great deal of the debate concerned the issue whether there ever was such a group (see Collins 1985:180ff; Gager 1986). The description of a *God-fearer* by Reynolds and Tannenbaum is significant in that it presents one side of the debate.

He is someone who is attracted enough to what he has heard of Judaism to come to the synagogue to learn more; who is, after a time, willing, as a result, to imitate the Jewish way of life in whatever way and to whatever degree he wishes (up to and including membership in community associations, where that includes legal studies and prayer); who may have had held out to him various short codes of moral behaviour to follow, but does not seem to have been required to follow any one; who may follow the exclusive monotheism of the Jews and give up his ancestral gods, but need not do so; who can, if he wishes, take the ultimate step to convert, but need not do so, and is, whether he does or not, promised a share in the resurrection for his pains.

(1987:65)

Contrary to this idea, several scholars have questioned the existence of an identifiable class of Gentiles attached to Jewish communities, especially in the Diaspora (see Kraabel 1981a; 1985; 1986). If Kraabel's argument on the disappearance of the God-fearers (that they were an invention by the author of Acts) was overstated, his overall argument is sound. Perhaps his objection should be adjusted slightly so as to admit the existence of God-fearers 'in some meaningful and official sense' (Gager 1986:98) as members of the Jewish community. We shall now touch briefly on to what is excluded from this *meaningful and official sense* in which Gentiles were attached to Jewish communities.

The question is: In what way were Gentiles attached to Jewish communities? And how can such an attachment be described in appropriate terms? On the one hand,

the objection is not so much against the existence of Gentiles attached to Jewish communities; it is against the identification of such a group in the singular terms of religious attachment. There is a persistent tendency, according to Kraabel, to see Judaism in antiquity first of all as a religion that makes it hard to understand openness towards Jews in any but 'religious terms' (1982:454; and see Kraabel 1985:231; Cohen 1989:33). A study of White indicates that 'designation by Jews of non-Jewish members of the collegial association as "god-fearers," however, would not have required them to be attracted actively towards Jewish worship, though some surely were' (1990:89).

A closely related factor, on the other hand, is the general, illusory impression that both Jews and Christians lived in 'total apartness' from their pagan neighbours in the cities of the Empire (Rajak 1985:250). It should be realised that, despite all the reservations on the part of Jews and Christians against taking part in festivals and pagan sacrifices (which contributed to the impression), to be outside these activities would have meant, in effect, to be outside the city (see Rajak 1985:252). Despite such reservations, both the New Testament (see Harvey 1985:81) and archaeological evidence on Diaspora synagogues (see Kraabel 1978:20-21) provide evidence of intimate contact of Gentiles with Jewish institutions (see Kraabel 1982:452; White 1990:92). The notion of God-fearers is indispensable when such contact is limited to Gentile interest in the Jewish religion. Collins argues that 'we find a broad range of degrees of attachment, not a class with specific requirements or with a clearly defined status in the synagogue' (1985:184).

Thus, errors to be avoided are, firstly, defining God-fearers in exclusivistic religious terms and, secondly, letting one's definition of God-fearers be influenced by the incorrect impression of restricted interaction between Jews and Gentiles. Both the nature of religion in the first-century world and the embeddedness of Jewish communities in the social network of that world need to be taken into account.

If God-fearers in any meaningful way formed a bridge between the pagan and Jewish worlds of Paul's ministry, then their proper place within the appropriate socio-cultural networks should be established. One should also avoid defining God-fearers in Pauline studies in exclusively religious terms – especially modern religious terms.

4.4.3 Circumcision: the sign of a Jew?

It has been indicated in chapter 1 that, while it is widely accepted that circumcision is the crisis that occasioned the letter to the Galatians (see § 3.3), it is not immediately clear what exactly is meant by *circumcision* (see Cosgrove 1988:7). Even so (in popular opinion at least) circumcision is seen as a major identity marker of Judaism (see Collins 1985:179). A few scholarly positions will confirm it.

According to the Tannaitic literature, the minimum requirements or identity markers of a Jew were 'ancestry through the mother or conversion including circum-

cision for males, immersion, acceptance of the Torah, and sacrifice' (Schiffman 1981:147). The identity markers for a Jew living in the pattern of covenantal nomism, Dunn maintains, were circumcision, purity and food taboos, and the Sabbath. This is what Paul refers to as 'works of the law' (see Dunn 1983b:107-108). He argues that 'we know that *just these observances were widely regarded as characteristically and distinctively Jewish*' (1983b:107, italics JDGD). Cohen argues that the central symbol that indicated one's status as a Jew was circumcision.

In the second century BCE circumcision achieved prominence, for Jews and gentile alike, as *the* Jewish ritual, and in subsequent centuries many gentile writers (e.g. Tacitus and Juvenal) confirmed Josephus's (and Paul's!) view that the acceptance of circumcision is the acceptance of Judaism.

(Cohen 1989:27)

According to him, no Jewish community in antiquity accepted male proselytes who were not circumcised.

Supporting the remarks by Dunn and expressing the view of the majority of New Testament scholars, Collins says that 'circumcision was widely perceived by Gentiles as a symbol of Judaism's otherness' (Collins 1985:163). It is further widely held that Paul's rejection of circumcision as a requirement for Gentiles to enter the covenant fellowship 'was surely a significant factor in emergent Christianity's "breaking away" from its Jewish matrix' (Collins 1985:163).

However, not only is there no agreement on what was meant by those Jews who did adhere to circumcision, but more and more evidence points to the fact that many Jews from different locations and different forms of Judaism did not consider circumcision necessary for salvation (see Collins 1985:179). Not only Paul but also Philo and other Jews in the Diaspora did not regard physical circumcision as a prerequisite for salvation or membership of the community (see also Borgen 1980; 1985; McEleney 1973/4). In fact, Neusner maintains:

For his taxic indicator of "Israel," Paul appeals to circumcision, a consideration we have not found commonplace at all. It is certainly implicit in the Torah, but the Mishnah's laws accommodate as "Israel" persons who (for good and sufficient reasons) are not circumcised, and treat as "not-Israel" persons who are circumcised but who otherwise do not qualify. So for the Mishnah's system circumcision forms a premise, not a presence, a datum, but not a decisive taxic indicator.

(1987:344)

Even if it is true that circumcision was widely perceived by Gentiles as a symbol of the otherness of Judaism (see Smith 1982:10; Collins 1985:163), it seems that idiosyncratic interpretation or even rejection of this notion was the order of the day. Apart from the example of Paul, Smith points out that it was possible for a group of Jews 'to define themselves as Jews without circumcision' (Smith 1982:13; and see Gilbert 1991).

Two observations seem appropriate. At least circumcision, taken as a prime identity marker, did not have a fixed content and application in Jewish circles. Secondly, with the new understanding of first-century Judaism came a new appreciation of the role of identity markers. While they indeed distinguish insiders from outsiders – define Jewishness – they apparently did not function to constitute such groups. Identity markers described Jewishness, but Jewish groups were apparently constituted on some basis other than these religious identity markers. Thus neither Paul's rejection of circumcision as an identity marker nor his reinterpretation of it would necessarily have resulted in excommunication from Judaism. In fact, while some Jews did take it as the prime identity marker, it was not a universal sign of Jewishness.

4.4.4 Orthopraxy rather than orthodoxy

A final feature emphasised in the new understanding of first-century Judaism, is its concern with orthopraxy rather than orthodoxy. In fact, it is commonplace in New Testament circles nowadays (see McEleney 1973:19) to claim that first-century Judaism was much more concerned with *orthopraxy* (accepted practice) than with *orthodoxy* (right belief).³⁵ In opponent hypotheses this description is expressed in arguments that the conflict in Galatia was about proper conduct and not so much about beliefs (e.g. Harvey 1985). While the value of this insight should not be underestimated, neither should it be overestimated.

The burning issue, says Aune, 'lies in the necessity of making a balanced assessment of the relative structural significance and function of the belief system vis-à-vis ritual practice and ethical behavior within the Judaism of the Graeco-Roman period' (1976:3). Based on the interpretative principle of avoiding the 'blatantly anachronistic subjectivities of modern scholars', he claims that the 'belief system was definitely subordinate in both a functional and structural way to Jewish traditions of ritual practice and ethical behavior' (1976:10).³⁶ Orthopraxy and not orthodoxy reigns supreme, since first-century Judaism 'had an intentional-behavioral rather than intellectual focus' (Aune 1976:5).

³⁵ Grabbe correctly draws attention to the need to distinguish between the question of *orthodoxy/orthopraxy* and what constituted Jewishness. If such a thing as normative Judaism existed, a denial of some of its central elements would have resulted in unorthodoxy but not necessarily in unJewishness. It should be noted that McEleney in this debate takes the issue of *orthodoxy* to be a question of Jewish identity also (see 1973; 1978). It should furthermore be remembered that the current debate about orthodoxy stems from the assumption that Pharisaic/rabbinic Judaism was the normative orthodox form of Judaism in the first century (see Grabbe 1977:150).

³⁶ The anachronistic dilemma scholars are facing is well exemplified in McEleney's question: 'What, then, is the meaning of doctrinal disputes even in the earliest days of Christianity? To what were new adherents converted?' (1973:20). A less anachronistic approach would be to ask what was the character of the disputes, and what part did doctrinal elements play in the disputes. As will be argued, the assumption of an outright doctrinal dispute in a first-century context is highly unlikely.

However, as Phillips (see 1984:289) cogently emphasises, it should not be forgotten that a religious system without beliefs is a self-contradiction. We should guard against the fallacy that someone could maintain proper praxis without holding some belief about it (see also McEleney 1978:86). For example, excommunication on account of idolatry cannot be a deviation in a matter of ritual or ethics unless it was believed to be a doctrinal or theological deviation as well (see Aune 1976:4-5; McEleney 1978:86).

Thus, the point at issue is to describe the interface between the belief component and the ritual component in the first-century religious world. Whether the orthodoxy – orthopraxy distinction sufficiently accounts for it is to be doubted.

The difficulty, says MacMullen, is that ‘we who stand inside the Judeo-Christian heritage and study the Greco-Roman are forever (though quite unconsciously) defining the latter in terms of the former. We are continually looking for what is not there, namely, philosophy’ (MacMullen 1985/6:71).³⁷ It causes a problem in that both orthodoxy and orthopraxy are viewed from the point of view of a particular structure of religion. Both belief systems and ritual actions should be situated within the framework of the first-century world and religious structure.

Some clues are to be found in the study of ancient paganism. De Ste. Croix points out that all Greco-Roman paganism ‘was essentially a matter of *cult acts* and not of *beliefs*’ (1972:61). That, however, does not imply that someone might not be mistaken about such acts. It was indeed possible to be wrong about one’s conduct; as MacMullen puts it, ‘there were suitable, just as there were unsuitable, forms of address’ (1985/6:72). Essentially, however, the structure of belief was not to accept a belief system but to adhere to beliefs which were part of social behaviour (see De Ste. Croix 1972:64). Although it was possible to be mistaken as to what is suitable conduct in paganism, such ideas were not about what was thought to be true about the gods (see MacMullen 1985/6:72).³⁸ It is important to notice that a different definition of religion is at stake; not only other beliefs but different *structures* of belief (see MacMullen 1985/6:76). Claims to be right or wrong seem to have had very particular functions.

³⁷ McEleney fits well into this frame. He maintains that the ‘present separation of Judaism and Christianity is explicable historically *only* if one recognizes that there existed a firmly accepted Jewish orthodoxy in the first century and that this was even then a *definable* belief ... which was accepted by all who called themselves Israelites’ (1973:20). The problem as pointed out by MacMullen is that, when looking for such *orthodox beliefs*, one will at least find some hints – which are then blown up out of proportion (see 1985/6:71). As argued in a previous chapter of this study, a text can sponsor more than one reading, and often it is not difficult to find in the evidence support for some theory or another.

³⁸ Searching for some identifiable set of beliefs or some mythology or god-story woven around the deities just was not the point of worship (see MacMullen 1985/6:72; De Ste. Croix 1972:69).

Thus, not only is it necessary to abandon the (erroneous) assumption that first-century Judaism was primarily concerned with a 'belief system' (Aune 1976:5), but religious beliefs and practices need to be described within their first-century contexts. In this regard the new understanding of first-century Judaism needs to be elaborated in order to encompass the insights obtained from comparative studies on religious activities.

Apparently, to be part of the Jewish community was not at all analogous to slipping in or out of a contemporary parish church – either as regards belief or as regards practice. Religious allegiance was more than adhering to certain cultic or ethical practices, as some proponents of the idea of orthopraxy would have us believe. It involved membership of a social network. Along that line the argument on the new understanding of first-century Judaism will be further developed in a next chapter.

5 THE NATURE OF THE PAULINE MOVEMENT, OPPONENT HYPOTHESES AND THE RECEIVED COMMUNICATIVE CONTEXT

Several assumptions taken for granted in opponent hypotheses cannot be maintained any longer. They include several of the historical components and the social conditions of the received communicative context, derived primarily from assumptions from two related fields: the nature (and expansion) of the early Jesus movement, and first-century Judaism. The notion of conflicting groups (which were responsible for the expansion of the movement along certain lines) in the early Jesus movement can no longer be taken as a secure basis when describing the nature of the Pauline communities. Furthermore, the new understanding of first-century Judaism contributes to the dismantling of categories describing the nature of the Pauline communities. For too long, New Testament studies have considered Judaism in religious terms only (see Kraabel 1982:454).

If the received view on the expansion and organisation of the Jesus movement is placed in doubt, it goes without saying that the received view of the nature of the Pauline communities too, will have to be changed. It has become clear that the expansion of the early Jesus movement was more strongly influenced by socio-cultural factors in the first-century Mediterranean world. In describing the nature of the Pauline communities we should accordingly adopt a social perspective.

Consequently the nature of the Pauline movement and of first-century Judaism were inferred from the sphere of religion. Symbolic and social structures are totally detached, if not ignored, in the sense that doctrinal and dogmatic disputes are dealt with as though no other social and cultural factors were involved.

However, it also became clear that the new understanding does not go far enough in providing a first-century context for the understanding of religious activities. While this initiated a process by which first-century Judaism was freed from the distortions

by *dogmatically focussed glasses*, it also needs to be freed from anachronistic views on other historical components such as the structure of first-century religion.³⁹

Perhaps the truth of the matter is that 'dogmatically focussed glasses' (Schoeps 1969:4) are distorting our view, not only on the expansion of the Jesus movement and the very nature of first-century Judaism but also on the very nature of the Pauline movement – to such an extent that it became impossible to obtain a clear view of the issues at stake.

If my argument is sound, then the changing view on first-century Judaism, together with an awareness of the problems that surround the received view on the expansion of the early Jesus movement, warrants a suspension of opponent hypotheses built on that foundation. It calls, first of all, for an alternative construction as regards the nature of the Pauline movement (Pauline communities) within the early Jesus movement as well as within the subculture of first-century Judaism. Secondly, my suggestion is that we shift the focus of the opponent question from their identity and viewpoint to an enquiry as to what may have triggered conflict where both the Pauline movement and first-century Judaism were embedded in the larger matrix of the first-century Mediterranean world.

³⁹ As argued in the previous chapter, theoretical and methodological components are not only essential in any cypher key but often determine social, cultural and historical components. This point is eloquently stated by Kraabel: 'The other *novum* in the understanding of ancient Jewry is as important as the new material evidence: it is a new point of view, new presuppositions and new methodology' (1982:446).

CHAPTER 5

THE FIRST-CENTURY MEDITERRANEAN WORLD AS THE SETTING FOR THE PAULINE CORRESPONDENCE AND CONFLICT IN GALATIA

While words and sentences do, in fact, need to be understood, interpretation requires fitting the whole text into some larger frame of reference. If we are seeking historical meaning, and meaning derives from and constitutes the social system, then this larger frame for New Testament texts is first-century Mediterranean society in general, and a given, concrete audience in particular.

(Malina 1986:176)

1 INTRODUCTION

While the aim of this study is to provide an alternative cypher key for interpreting the letter to the Galatians and dealing with the conflict, it inevitably includes a study of the nature and character of the Pauline communities and consequently the nature of the conflict. These are to be constructed in first-century Mediterranean terms since, true to the methodological presuppositions of this study, it is accepted that Paul's words and acts are embedded in the social and cultural script of his world. The more we succeed in determining that script, the better our chances are of understanding what he was doing in what he was saying.

If the first-century Mediterranean world provided the larger frame for an understanding of the Pauline movement (and there can be no doubt about this), then it goes without saying that the socio-cultural system – that is, the social networks, the socio-cultural codes and conventions and the cultural features of that society – provided the general matrix for an understanding of the nature and character of the Pauline communities and the nature of the conflicts encountered within it. To paraphrase the epigraph of this chapter in terms of the conflict: while some kind of conflict was encountered by Paul in Galatia (and reflected in his letter), it was embedded in the socio-cultural system of first-century Mediterranean society. To do justice to the conflict, its nature should be described in terms of this social system: a cultural system designated in this chapter by the concepts *agrarian society* or *agrarian world*.

In addition to a broad overview of the general features of the first-century Mediterranean world as an agrarian world, two special features significant for an understanding of the nature of Paul's correspondence will be discussed in some detail. The first is the pre-print nature and the second the structure of first-century religion as substantive religion. Historical interpretation of first-century texts can hardly refrain from taking into account their pre-industrial and pre-print origin. The task of contextualising Paul's communicative act within the first-century Mediterranean cultural system is, however, no easy task.

At several levels the interpretive principles argued in this study will appear in the discussion to be indispensable to an understanding of the argument. In the first place, the importance of relying on comparative material from the social sciences should not be underestimated. To avoid projecting merely anachronistic and ethnocentric biases from a Western world into Paul's communicative context, the basic nature and structure of that socio-cultural system should be thoroughly examined. As many aspects as possible should be explicitly stated, and social-science models used in the process should be consciously applied. It should not be forgotten that a neglect of these aspects does not prevent the interpreter from projecting common-sense models and views onto the first-century world. Thus it is not a question of accepting a whole set of assumptions regarding the Greco-Roman world as a cypher key when reading the letter. The question is whether these assumptions belong to the first century (conscious and explicit) or the twentieth century (unconscious and implicit).

In terms of the received view on background knowledge, most of the issues discussed in this chapter have no immediate application to an understanding of the letter. However, the gist of my theoretical argument is that we cannot wish to construe the letter as a first-century letter unless we have been retrained to a different style of language and reasoning. Being retrained to the first-century Mediterranean world serves a double purpose: it creates an awareness of the differentness of that world in comparison to a twentieth-century industrial world, and it induces a cautious attitude towards one's own cultural biases.

2 SOCIAL LOCATION VERSUS SOCIAL CONDITIONS

Fundamental to the argument in this study is the assumption that the meaningful experience of people should be understood in terms of the socio-cultural system within which they lived. In discussing the emic – etic dilemma in a previous chapter (chapter 2 § 6.1), one of the problems identified was how, on the one hand, to determine the meaning of the concepts used by participants (actors or natives), while on the other hand avoiding a projection of one's own concepts onto another world. This dilemma is acute when it comes to notions such as *group* or *conflict*, which are apparently very straightforward concepts. When not only the application of concepts but the concepts themselves become the object of interpretation, a distinction between different levels of interpretation is inevitable.

The distinction between social location and social conditions will prove useful in doing just that. Social location of thought is a sociology-of-knowledge problem. One of the working principles of any sociology of knowledge is that 'thought is a *social* act. Thus all sociologists of knowledge assume that there is a relation between thought and the social conditions under which it occurs' (Rohrbaugh 1987^b:104). While the organisational structure and other social conditions focusing on the organisational networks and institutions in society might be clear, it may not be

immediately apparent what is meant by the social location, which deals with the symbolic media and structures of interaction. Rohrbaugh gives a helpful description:

It is what Peter Berger calls a 'plausibility structure', a socially constructed *province of meaning*. It is *not* reducible to the material conditions of life because it is itself a mental construct, a socially produced and maintained picture of the world. This means that the social base is not the cause of other ideas, but the context in which other ideas are interpreted and understood as realistic possibilities.

(1987^b:113-114)

Social locations are heuristic constructs and not explanatory ones. However, as Rohrbaugh says:

It is not that certain experiences produce certain beliefs, but that given certain experiences a limited range of beliefs should be plausible options for most of those who share the social location. Even if rejected for other alternatives, a given belief within that range should be understood by those who share the common location.

(1987^b:114-115)

Translated to the question of groups in the first-century Mediterranean world, the social location deals with the question: 'What is a group?' while the social condition question would be, 'What constitutes this group?' It is just as important to know the preconditions of group formation in the first-century Mediterranean world as it is to know what constituted a particular group. The same argument pertains to any other aspect of that world.

While remarks about the social context (e.g. the Pauline movement as a *group*) are common in New Testament studies, the social location of groups as such is very seldom explicated. Information regarding a group is meaningless without reference to the social structure and social system of which it is a part. Thus, what social location adds to the description of the nature of the Pauline communities is an openness to the social system underlying particular social conditions.

The lack of vision concerning the social location has a twofold consequence. It does not account for the different cultural contexts within which concepts, words and institutions find their meaning, nor does it account for the transfer of contemporary contents to the first-century world. This is true not only of the notion of *groups* but applies equally well to aspects such as *preaching* or *missionary* activities and the notion of *conflict*. Part of the affirmative action of rescuing the discussion on the nature and character of the Pauline movement from anachronistic and ethnocentric interpretations would be to address both sides of the issue.

3 THE FIRST-CENTURY MEDITERRANEAN SOCIETY AS AN AGRARIAN SOCIETY

While nobody would seriously dispute the fact that the first-century Mediterranean world was the setting for Paul's communication, or even that Paul's world (and that

of his opponents) was a pre-industrial and pre-print world, these facts have been consistently disregarded by Pauline scholarship. To avoid any misunderstanding, let us put it this way: while scholars may claim to have taken seriously the fact that Paul's world was the first-century Mediterranean world, it has been argued in this study that such claims cannot be taken seriously unless they are supported by an integrated methodology dealing with the otherness of that world. The assumption of commensurability between modern and first-century Mediterranean societies and the disregard of a historical aim of interpretation simply amount to a common-sense construction of the first-century Mediterranean social world.

In this study some important assumptions about the first-century Mediterranean world will be raised to an explicit and conscious level. This is not to claim assured knowledge of the Greco-Roman world. On the contrary, it is a way of explicitly dealing with the differences – apparently not a bone of contention in the received view, where such matters are rarely raised to a conscious level.

What is typical of the first-century Mediterranean world, says Malina, 'is that it is a nearly perfect example of what anthropologists call classic peasant society: a set of villages socially bound up with the preindustrial city' (1981:71).¹ Prior to a general description of an agrarian society, some remarks will suffice to put into perspective both the significance and the dilemma represented by this insight for a description of the matrix as well as the nature the Pauline movement.

At the outset it is necessary to exorcise a misunderstanding that often arises in connection with generalisations at this level. The notions of *first-century Mediterranean* and *Greco-Roman* world/people/religion are not the only ones used in this study. The common objection that there never was such an entity as *the* first-century Mediterranean world or person need not be taken seriously if that objection is intended to nullify the level of generalisation. It goes without saying that such a level of generalisation should also be based on the historical particularities of specific cultures or eras. However, just as scholars today often refer to *African religion*, *Western politics* or *capitalist economy*, or *industrial/pre-industrial* society, generalisations such as *Greco-Roman* or *first-century Mediterranean* are possible and inevitable.² As long as different levels of abstraction are kept separate, it is not only possible but necessary to distinguish between them when analysing any particular society (see Malina 1981:1-24). The paramount objective of this kind of exercise is to avoid what Rohrbaugh calls *sociocentrism*: 'the tendency to see things the other side of the industrial revolution as if that revolution changed nothing in our patterns of social perception' (1987^b:113).

¹ Scholars use different concepts to describe the same phenomenon. *Peasant* (Malina 1981), *agrarian* (see Rohrbaugh 1978:116 n 4; Saldarini 1988:35) or *traditional pre-industrial* (Carney 1975:83) are synonyms used to describe the same kind of pre-industrial societies, which stand in sharp contrast to modern industrialised societies. *Agrarian* will be used in this study.

² For a treatment of the history of *Western religion* see, for example, Smith (1962:15-50).

3.1 The interconnectedness of agrarian societies

It should be realised, first of all, that agrarian societies probably differ fundamentally from contemporary Western industrialised societies in almost every single respect (see Carney 1975): not only with regard to economic structures (which were changed by technological developments and industrialisation) but also with regard to social, political, military and cultural features. In short, the change from pre-industrial to industrial societies entails a change of whole cultural systems (see Rohrbaugh 1978:30). In fact, even the dominant system of values, attitudes and personality structures and the perception of human existence underwent a change.

At an ontological level nobody can seriously dispute the otherness of such societies. However, the description of this otherness presents serious theoretical and practical difficulties.

Secondly, as in any other society, an underlying system of values and attitudes determines the broad spectrum of a society's institutions (see Carney 1975:102, 106-111). Different facets of society are all mutually related and interconnected, which means that – to take one example – the level of literacy cannot be divorced from basic economic circumstances, the level of technological development, psychological attitudes towards words, and the predominant values in a society (this example will shortly be discussed in more detail). Carney refers to this interconnectedness as the 'inter-locking traditional trap' (1975:108) or the realisation that traditional society (or, for that matter, any society) is 'a system, seamless web, or whatever else one wishes to term the intermeshing institutions and practices' (1975:111). The point to stress is that assumptions at one level of society should take into account the accompanying conditions in that society. The cultural system should be taken as a whole and each part as embedded in this cultural system in a meaningful way.

We shall now proceed to touch on some of the more general features of first-century Mediterranean society.

3.2 Some general features of an agrarian society

Perhaps the best starting point, from a twentieth-century Western industrial perspective, in setting out to grasp the otherness of agrarian societies³ is to realise that social institutions so well known to us did not exist as independent institutions. There were 'only two significant and discernible social institutions in the first-century Mediterranean world of the New Testament: kinship or family and politics or government' (Malina 1986a:85). Other social institutions (religion, education,

³ For the discussion that follows I am indebted to several scholars who have discussed these issues more extensively (see Malina 1981; Saldarini 1988; and especially Carney 1975 and Rohrbaugh 1978).

economics, and the like) did not function independently but were embedded in either kinship or politics.⁴

Economically speaking, agrarian societies are fundamentally dependent on agriculture (see Meeks 1986^b:38). Saldarini estimates that 90 percent of people in antiquity were involved in agriculture (see 1988:51). Agricultural and fishing villages linked to pre-industrial cities were the predominant environment where someone in the first-century Mediterranean world would be born (see Malina 1981:71). Such pre-industrial cities contained not more than ten percent of the total population, which implies that the majority of people were living in villages or rural areas surrounding the cities. Unlike modern market economies, the majority of the population were not free to grow and sell their produce for their own benefit (see Saldarini 1988:39). Most of the peasants living in these villages were in fact engaged in subsistence farming (see Carney 1975:102).

Economic activities embedded in other institutions are called *substantive economics* whereas an independent economic institution represents *formal economics*. Economics in the first-century Mediterranean world was embedded in either kinship or politics. 'There was a political economy and a householding economy but no formal economy with special rules and theories' (Malina 1986^a:85). The 'dominant economic unit in ancient society was not the firm but the extended household with its estates and household economy' (Carney 1975:149).

The pre-industrial city should not be confused with anything referred to as a city today. In antiquity, Saldarini points out, a city was nothing but 'an administrative center' and what would today be called a 'large village or town'. It qualified as a city because the majority of people in it did not work directly at agriculture and because the activities of the city dominated the cultural, religious, political and economic life of the empire, region or society.

(Saldarini 1988:46)

One of the most striking features of the traditional societies of antiquity, as compared to modern industrialised societies, is the lack of technological development, a fact which influenced almost every other aspect – from the levels of literacy to the world view to the economic and power structure of society (see Botha 1990^a:35).⁵ Such cultures were locked into a developmental trap where the dominant values enhance an anti-technological climate (see Carney 1975:106). Although it was technological innovation which (at least in part) brought about the industrial revolution

⁴ If this is true, its importance for an understanding of the nature of the Pauline communities should be obvious. The different structure of religious activities in such a world, as compared to contemporary Western religious structures, is immediately apparent.

⁵ This is not to say that they lacked any technology, but in comparison to contemporary industrialised society they did indeed lack a great deal of technology (see Rohrbaugh 1978:41).

in Western Europe, this revolution did not take place in isolation from a change in the predominant cultural and value system.

Agrarian societies, in contrast to industrial societies, consist of two major classes which are widely separated. A very steep hierarchy and great inequality between classes are the outcome of power and wealth concentrated in the hands of a very few. Military power plays a dominant part in maintaining the steep social pyramid which results from this political and economic dispensation. Everybody in the Empire came under the general jurisdiction of Roman authorities (see Stambaugh & Balch 1986:31). In terms of control and power, the most significant role player in agrarian societies is the military. To talk about 'the economic, political or social thought of antiquity without emphasizing the overriding military preoccupations of the ancients is grossly to distort one's picture of their world' (Carney 1975:245-247).

On the basis of these criteria, scholars argue that in the Greco-Roman world the wealthy and powerful constituted less than two percent of a population of round about 50 – 80 million people. Members of these families made up the local councils and filled the magisterial positions in the more than one thousand towns and cities of the Empire (see Holmberg 1990:22). Consequently, noble birth was the passport to social success (see Carney 1975:93). While the elite group were not directly involved in agriculture, they controlled agricultural activities in at least two ways: by owning the land⁶ and by controlling the markets.

Following Lenski, Saldarini (see 1988:39-45) presents a stratification system of such agrarian societies in terms of nine *classes*, five within the ruling group and the remaining four in the lower group. The *peasants* made up the bulk of the lower group (see Saldarini 1988:43). These classes represent functional differences rather than politico-economic power (although they had different levels of access to such power). Even within the urban sectors people of different *classes* were very much stratified (see Malina 1981:72-73). Talking about urban life, most urbanites (not more than five to ten percent of the total population) were in administrative functions serving the needs of the ruling class. Most of the artisans (a small percentage of the population) were grouped together in voluntary associations where they gained some social importance (see Verner 1982:54).

The divide between the pre-industrial city and the rural village is clearly implied in the above picture (see Meeks 1983:13-15). The cultural distance between city and village (city and country) was enormous. Indeed, it led some to speak of a 'plural society', which means that 'different sectors of the populations of such societies each

⁶ Wealth in the ancient world, says Rohrbaugh, ultimately came from the owning of land. Yet the critical distinction is not between those who owned and those who did not own land but rather between those who owned enough to be freed from the necessity to work and those who owned only enough to make farming a necessary occupation (see 1983:541).

hold completely different, and mutually unintelligible, pictures of their "world" and life space' (Carney 1975:100). This difference is expressed by the terms *little tradition*, which was scorned and little understood by the men of the *great tradition* – that is, the body of classical writings which formed the common education of the tiny literate elite of gentlemen⁷ (see Carney 1975:100).

As already stated, social status was marked by citizenship and family. Wealth was necessary to an upper-class person, but its possession did not secure a position in the upper class; in contrast to modern capitalist societies, where wealth is often a means to power, power was the means to wealth (see Rohrbaugh 1983:542). Thus 'status and power were more important than wealth in ancient society' (Saldarini 1988:28).

The importance of this view is also reflected in two more cultural presuppositions of the first-century Mediterranean world, namely that 'all goods are limited,' and the 'debt of gratitude' (see Malina 1988^b:5 n 7). The latter will be discussed in due course.

A pivotal value expressing the life experience of the first-century Mediterranean world is expressed in the concept of *limited goods*. Most probably the experience of powerlessness contributed to the perception, quite typical of agrarian societies, 'that all goods available to a person are, in fact, limited' (Malina 1981:75). As a result, individual and group advancement always entails detriment to others (see Malina 1987:362). Social or material benefit could only be obtained at the expense of others.

In an intricate and complex way, the concept of limited goods expresses something of the predominant cultural values of first-century Mediterranean society. Neither the social power base nor the value system of elites was ever seriously challenged (see Carney 1975:97). Together with an authoritarian political structure (1975:118) dominated by the military, and the political economy⁸ it engendered, it 'generates a slaveholder psychology, with deep-rooted authoritarian beliefs about innate superiority and high valuation of conspicuous consumption together with disdain for manual labour' (1975:103). Faced with this potent cultural reality, the majority of people in an agrarian society could not hope to experience abundance. In fact, land, food, honour, and status 'were all seen (accurately) as in short supply' (1975:100).

⁷ It is sobering to recognise that they are the ones we know best, since they produced the majority of surviving literature and their picture of the world has survived (see Verner 1982:47; Meeks 1986^b:33). As Malina says, they were the 'bearers of the culture's "Great Tradition"' (1981:73), who also controlled the majority of the priestly class in Palestine (see Saldarini 1988:43). They could read and/or write, or knew somebody who could (see Carney 1975:100). It would be wise not to take their view as representative of the Greco-Roman world as a whole.

⁸ *Political economy* is an economy where relationships centre on power and status rather than the maximisation of profit (see Carney 1975:102).

Since money could not change one's social class nor secure power, as it can in modern capitalist systems, different attitudes regarding money were the order of the day. One way in which first-century people could survive in a world of limited goods was by means of dyadic relationships, especially patron-client relationships (see Malina 1981:80), because the emphasis on honour produced a situation where money served the purpose of building up patron-client relationships and led to the system of reciprocity. Since the accumulation of wealth as such was seen as inflicting loss and injury on someone else, hence as a dishonourable step, wealth was a means to engage in reciprocal relationships conducive to honour (see Malina 1981:82-85; 1987). In the words of White: 'the display of one's wealth through benefaction was a sign of status' (1990:145). Unlike the situation in the Western world, however, a token of gratitude was never seen as a *free gift*. Gifts implied obligation towards the patron and were made 'culturally with strings attached' (Malina 1988^b:5 n 7).

An explicit statement of the differences between first-century agrarian society and contemporary Western industrialised societies brings into focus the distance between two cultural worlds. Besides, recognition of the interconnectedness of various components of first-century Mediterranean society makes it even more important to establish an alternative communicative context for Paul's letter to the Galatians.

The otherness of first-century Mediterranean society, to put it bluntly, is not cosmetic or artificial but strikes at the heart of New Testament studies. Overall features may serve to establish at a general level the dis/similarities between two cultural worlds: a first-century Mediterranean culture and a Western industrialised culture. However, historical conclusions require the elaboration of generalisations in each context in its entirety and uniqueness. In the pages that follow, an attempt will be made to elaborate, expand and alter, to add and to link some of the historical components relevant to an understanding of Paul's communicative context as a first-century context. Two aspects of special significance to Paul's social environment are the oral features of first-century society and, secondly, the substantive nature of religion in that world.

4 COMMUNICATION IN A PREDOMINANTLY ORAL CULTURE

A definite fact about the audience Paul was writing for is that it lived in an oral culture – that is, his letter constituted communication in a pre-print world. Since first-century people lived in a pre-print world, where the need for and application of reading and writing were arguably different from those of a predominantly literate society, it seems appropriate to ask about the nature of such communication and the conventions and attitudes which accompanied it. This may help to limit modern biases. Botha justifiably warns that 'interpretation of New Testament texts which fails to take cultural differences seriously when it comes to concepts like *texts*, *tradition* and even *writing* can only misrepresent those texts' (1990^a:36).

Again, Achtemeier warns that the New Testament documents originated in 'a culture of high residual orality' and such 'a predominantly oral environment presented a situation almost totally different from that within which we currently operate, even though they had written documents as do we' (1990:3). It goes without saying that, when it comes to the differences between oral and literary cultures, New Testament scholarship is deeply indebted to comparative studies in the social sciences.

4.1 The first-century Mediterranean world as a predominantly oral world

While it is a truism to state that the ancients lived in a pre-print world, the significance of this observation for an understanding of Paul's letters is seldom grasped. In fact, anachronistic (if not downright fallacious) assumptions on the nature of literary activities and the level of literacy in the first-century Mediterranean world hamper balanced assessments of both aspects in New Testament studies. It needs to be pointed out that both literary activities and the level of literacy in the first-century Mediterranean world are either misinterpreted or overestimated in New Testament studies.

Since a variety of movements went into the making of modernity, the technological and industrial revolutions were accompanied by the printing revolution. The first point to grasp is that the printing revolution contributed to a cultural change of great significance (see Botha 1990a:37, 41; Achtemeier 1990:4). Both literacy and orality are embedded in specific cultural contexts. They do not refer to the in/ability to read and write as such. Spoken discourse is not yet orality and the ability to read/write is not yet literacy (see Botha 1990a:39-40; 1991b:4). Botha suggests that orality,

as a condition, exists by virtue of communication that is not dependent on modern media processes and techniques. It is negatively formed by the lack of technology and positively created by specific forms of education and cultural activities.

(1991b:5)

On the other hand, 'literacy is about an ideologically laden social activity which is part of a cultural system' (Botha 1990a:41) rather than a simple familiarity with reading and writing.

On the orality – literacy continuum, Botha (1990a:42) maintains that the first-century Mediterranean world can best be depicted as a *scribal culture*:

culture familiar with writing but in essence still significantly, even predominantly, oral. In scribal culture reading is largely vocal and illiteracy the rule rather than the exception ... Though no one will deny that orality was part of the Greco-Roman world, we need to realise to what extent orality was the *norm*.

Orality, together with the other features of agrarian society, presents us with modes of communication largely dissimilar to those of post-print industrial societies. To

avoid projecting literary biases onto a pre-print world, the cultural phenomenon of orality embedded in an agrarian world must form part and parcel of the construction of Paul's communicative context. If the medium is the message (see the arguments in Botha 1991^b:3), great care must be taken in establishing scribal modes of communication in Paul's world (in the section to follow, some of the special features will be pointed out in more detail).

The second point to note is that the assumption of mass literacy is one of the fallacies created by the great tradition of late Western antiquity. Not only the explicit (but problematic) assertion that 'Christianity emerged in a Mediterranean culture that was not illiterate' (Talbert quoted by Botha 1989:39), but the all-pervasive 'literate bias' (Botha 1990^a:43) which dominates New Testament studies is disquieting from a historical point of view (see also Achtemeier 1990:25-27).

Literate biases contribute to fallacious assumptions of a high level of literacy in the Greco-Roman Mediterranean world. Notions that there was a large reading public, and that a thriving book trade existed, are common but arguably a misrepresentation that keeps cropping up in New Testament studies (see Botha 1992^a:1-2 for some examples).

Since 'literacy is a technology *with a history*' (Botha 1992^a:3), there are several arguments against mass literacy in the first-century Mediterranean world. The assumption of a high level of literacy – in a culture which had little use for reading and writing; which lacked the technological and especially the economic basis for a literate culture; and where both the day-to-day lifestyle and the facts of demography would militate against it⁹ (see Carney 1975:109-110; Botha 1992^a:7-8) – seems to reflect a modern bias in favour of literacy that is unaccountable in the context of the first-century Mediterranean world. Botha concludes:

The possibility of widespread literacy, and the probability of a literate culture cannot be very great with regard to Greco-Roman antiquity; as a society the major factors creating literacy were absent and many factors making it unlikely were fully present.

(1992^a:8)

Says Carney: 'So mass literacy did not exist; indeed, probably only the elite and local subelite, a tiny fraction of the total population, could read and write' (1975:110; and

⁹ The interconnectedness of cultural phenomena should once again be kept in mind. Schooling is expensive in any society but even more so in pre-industrial societies. With a high mortality rate among children in agrarian societies, barely 40 percent reach the age of 16, and few of those live out a long working life (see Carney 1975:111). The economic demands in such a society would have been too costly. 'Mass literacy is impossible without mass education' (Kenney quoted by Botha 1992^a:9). Add to that the low demand for reading and writing (see Botha 1992^a:7), especially in an economic world of limited goods, as well as the subsistence economy of the majority of people, which would not allow such luxuries as leisure-time reading. The high cost both of writing material and of the act of writing should be interpreted within the economic context of mainly subsistence economic activities – all in all, not conditions conducive to a high level of literacy.

see MacMullen's estimate 1984:21). In view of the fact that even some slaves could read and/or write, it is better to rephrase this remark: only a small fraction of the population had a real need for reading and writing. Still, in interpreting this evidence one needs to take into account the overall socio-economic and cultural context of the first-century Mediterranean world. Most likely the texts of the small elite group, which had little relevance for the situation and culture of the majority of people, mislead us into mistaking the part for the whole.

4.2 Some special features with regard to oral worlds

If it is true that Paul's world was a predominantly oral world, then some important features need to be discussed in order to avoid projecting onto his communication the literate biases that are so common to our world.

Firstly, the fact that letters were written documents does not negate the fact that Paul's letters, as first-century letters, communicated first of all within a scribal culture. It should, however, be noted from the outset, as Botha insists, that they 'facilitated and served *oral communication* ... Letters create appearance in the experience of the recipient(s) by evoking the physical presence of the author(s)' (1992a:14). Stowers emphasises that ancient letters largely consisted in the literary expression of social situations 'where two or more people interacted, usually in face-to-face encounters' (1988:79). The letter to the Galatians, as an example relevant to the present study, was not merely a literary artifact which conveyed some cognitive information: it presupposed a social relationship for its successful communication of a message.

Secondly, the spectrum of orality – literacy represents a continuum of mindsets or attitudes towards reality and experience (see Botha 1992b:9). The printing revolution which accompanied the technological and industrial revolutions of Western Europe in the seventeenth century brought with it a new culture, referred to as modernity or the modern era; aspects such as 'control over one's own life', the possibility of critical thinking, different states of mental health and illness – in short, different experiences of reality (see Botha 1990a:38) – became part of the cultural package.

Thirdly, the human experience of words in pre-industrial traditional societies differs from the equivalent experience in modern societies. The former are, as Carney says, 'still largely at the word-magic stage' (1975:110). The magic power of words to affect people is widely experienced in these societies (see Botha 1992b:15). Whatever else they are, to such people words are at the very least (and probably to a significant degree) means and tools of power. In a short letter such as Galatians, where Paul uses bewitchment language (Gl 3:1) and curses those who do not agree with him (Gl 1:8-9), the content of the letter may well be subordinate to a power struggle in which the magical power of words plays a decisive role.

This point is supported, fourthly, by research on predominantly oral cultures which indicates that such cultures 'can believe themselves traditional no matter how far

they stray from the past, because they gradually adjust their myths without knowing it, and no text will disabuse them' (Hirsch 1985a:26). The principle should be apparent. In predominantly oral cultures there is no question of a belief system which can be checked independently from the persons in authority. Tradition and truth reside in authoritative leaders. The situation in the Pauline communities can be better pictured in terms of Johnson's description: 'The earliest Christians in his churches heard Paul *viva voce* (and met other Christians also), remembered some things, and misheard and forgot others' (1975:106). Truth was not exclusively (nor even primarily) linked to correspondence with a manuscript but to the authoritative figure behind the words and to the people who transmitted them.

Finally, the difficulties (both economic and technological) of producing the writing materials and written manuscripts should be kept in mind when presupposing widespread literary activities (see especially Achtemeier 1990). According to Saldarini, it is doubtful whether small villages in Palestine 'had their own Torah scroll or a teacher learned in more than the basics of the law' (1988:53). Was this also the case in the cities of the Greco-Roman world? It is unlikely that each city (town or village) had, to put it in anachronistic terms, a standard version of the Bible (Old Testament). And even if they had (which manuscript version?), it should be remembered that traditions (religious traditions) are kept alive in an oral world in a way that presupposes neither a fixed dogma or doctrine, nor a set of manuscripts against which it can be checked. Tradition was linked with authority figures.

This aspect highlights the importance of the bearer of the letter. Such a person in all probability performed the letter on delivery (Achtemeier 1990:25), and the act of communication was as dependent on the carrier of the letter as on its content (see Botha 1992b:8-9). Communication in a scribal world does not depend primarily on manuscripts, even when these were involved in the communicative process. A closely related observation is that the body of ancient letters is not merely information to be communicated. Rather, as Stowers points out, it is the 'medium through which a person performs an action or a social transaction with someone from whom he or she is physically separated' (1988:85; and see Stowers 1986:15-16).

4.3 First-century letters, communication and authority

Since first-century Mediterranean society was, by definition, pre-print, hence predominantly oral, this finally brings us to the issue of authority and the accompanying personality structure in such societies. 'Authoritarian thought-ways were pervasive in this hierarchically ordered and power-ridden society' (Carney 1975:61). In fact, it affected most spheres of life. Within the steep pyramid of political culture – which was authoritarian (1975:118) – one finds a society of little pyramids, the extended families headed by autocrats (1975:90); the political economy was structured in such a way that authority ran vertically downwards (1975:102); the 'personality structure produced by such a background largely tended, inevitably, to be authoritarian' (1975:92). The authoritarian pyramid, Stowers maintains,

was replicated countless times on a smaller scale in all sorts of institutions and relationships. Religious groups, estates, workers guilds, and families were organized hierarchically.

(1986:28)

Socialisation tends to foster and reinforce an anti-individualistic pattern of behaviour. Group norms and traditional prescriptions, which were predominantly determined by authority figures, were much more important than individualistic concerns.

An appropriate concept to describe such a personality complex is *dyadic personality*. The term is used to describe people who are brought up not to be individuals in the first instance or to think and act accordingly but to be members of a group. Thought and behaviour are collectively determined and controlled (see Malina 1981:51-60; 1989).¹⁰ In this regard Carney (1975:118) remarks:

In his family a youth was thoroughly socialized to regard autocratic paternalism and hierarchical relationships as the norm for behaviour between senior and junior, superior and subordinate, male and female. Schooling was a matter of acquainting oneself with authorities.

Given these cultural particulars, social networks of patronage (as well as systems of honour and shame) take on a special significance (both aspects are to be discussed shortly). For the moment the spotlight is on the importance of centralised authority for tradition and the written word.

Although the written word, according to MacMullen, 'naturally implies authority, doctrine, and all that sort of thing', all that sort of thing 'strangely did not follow as a necessary consequence of writing' (1985/6:72). That is especially the case in cultures which were/are predominantly oral.

To bring these insights to bear on Paul's letters, their authority lay not in the fact of being written (for the illiterate majority written words, in any case, had no meaning) but in being recognised as words of authority by a group or community. Their authority derived not from being written but from a prior, recognised position of authority. Authority was embedded in the context of a recognised authority network. In other words, the authority of Paul's *gospel*, as expressed in the letter to the Galatians, could not have resided in its being recognised as Scripture or as one version of the salvation message, but rather in his social credentials. His social standing

¹⁰ It should be kept in mind that individuality and communality should not be pictured as clear opposites. Although modern Western cultures put a high premium on individuality, this does not negate the fact that such cultures share a clear community perspective. It also does not invalidate the claim that the spectrum individuality – communality was different in a first-century agrarian society.

and honour underwrote the authority of his gospel. If the latter was in dispute, he had no choice but to defend his honour. In a society structured along authoritarian lines, the credentials of the sender of a message and of the messenger are much more important than the message itself. This insight places the dispute over Paul's (apostolic) authority or gospel on a totally different plane.

If the conflict in Galatia was over Paul's authority, argues Botha, then the oral presentation of Paul's story and that of his opponents must have contributed significantly to it (see 1992b:13-14). According to his scenario, the Pauline correspondence can be situated in the context of Jewish missionary activities, where the Judaizers presented Jewish communities with oral performances. Paul was losing some of his support to them because of their more adequate or convincing performances.

To connect the cause of the conflict with oral performances is, to my mind, to make too much of such performances. It furthermore underestimates the socio-cultural setting of authority. Could authority and loyalty have been shattered so easily – by an alternative oral performance? I suggest that authority was embedded in a social network, and if Paul's authority was imperilled, the conflict started within that social setting, although other factors could have contributed. The emphasis on Jewish missionary activities (see Georgi 1971:124) on which Botha bases his argument overstates the theological or doctrinal aspects of the message and underestimates the social network along which, I believe, the missionary practice and expansion of Jewish and Christian communities primarily took place (see following chapter).¹¹

If Paul's authority was at stake in Galatia (which, it will be argued, was indeed the case), then I would suggest that the dispute was embedded in first-century social networks. (Authority and honour as important cultural phenomena in the first-century Mediterranean world will be discussed in the next two chapters.) Like literacy, which was embedded in specific cultural conditions, authority existed under similar preconditions: it was embedded in specific socio-cultural conditions. Thus, while oral performances could have contributed to the conflict (and especially to the build-up and resolution of it), surely the power and authority linked with such performances were derived from existing lines of authority. This is not to deny that oral performances might have played a part in household worship – provided such activities are seen within the parameters set by the nature of household communities, and the occasion for such meetings is not reduced to a purely theological or doctrinal affair – missionary activity, in other words.¹² Opponents could not have

¹¹ It is furthermore a questionable assumption that Judaism in the first century was an aggressively missionary affair (see Kraabel 1982:451; 1985:227-229).

¹² The nature and character of Pauline household-based communities will be discussed in the subsequent chapter. Suffice it to point out that the nature of these communities is, to my mind, the chief matrix in which to locate any conflicts that arose.

challenged Paul's message by means of alternative performances without at the same time challenging his honour and position of authority in the community.

4.4 Contribution of studies on oral cultures to Paul's communicative context

If the special features attributed to oral cultures can withstand critical investigation, and if they can be applied with a reasonable degree of certainty to the situation in Galatia, some interesting conclusions can be drawn.

Firstly, if Paul wrote his letter to rectify or oppose an alternative version of the Jesus message (gospel), then the conflict was by definition social in nature. If truth and tradition resided in authoritative persons (persons of honour), then a dispute over the appropriate gospel can be nothing other than a challenge to honour.

The intricate relationship between authority, truth and written texts warrants a second conclusion. If the truth of a tradition was linked to persons in authority (and not to correspondence with a text), then the content of a belief system is of less importance than membership of the community who share the belief system. If so, and if Paul was defending his gospel, it is likely that he was not so much giving an exposition of (his version of) the Jesus gospel as justifying the truth (that is, authority) thereof.

Thirdly, if the validity of Paul's gospel was in dispute in Galatia, it probably started with a dispute over his authority or honour. In such a setting oral performances could have contributed to the tension. The exposition of his gospel in the letter could easily have been a means of protecting his honour. The features of oral worlds and communication suggest the implausibility of a primarily theological or doctrinal type of conflict in Paul's world – that is, a conflict primarily concerned with conflicting convictions.

The authority as well as the dogmatic or doctrinal features associated with written texts in literary societies can easily blind us to the nature and function of written texts in scribal cultures. Certain literate biases and assumptions can, at any rate, be ruled out on the basis of these studies. These conclusions should, however, be complemented by an investigation of several other aspects of Paul's world (such as the networks of social interaction).

Together with the particular nature of religion in the first-century Mediterranean world (which is to be considered next), the oral culture provides some of the socio-cultural parameters outside which Paul's communication cannot be perceived – unless one is content with an anachronistic and ethnocentric reading.

5 RELIGION IN THE FIRST-CENTURY MEDITERRANEAN WORLD

Few New Testament scholars see fit to make *religion* the object of serious reflection. In New Testament studies, Judge warns (even the History of Religion School is guilty in this regard):

Too many questions were begged about the nature of religion, and the New Testament tended to be consigned in advance to a place defined according to the conventions of comparative religion, without sufficient regard to its historical singularity.

(1972:23)

The absence of any real debate in New Testament studies on the topic of religion confirms this viewpoint.

More often than not, a definition of religion is taken for granted in opponent hypotheses. In fact, one of the central historical components of opponent hypotheses is a definite assumption on the nature of *religion*, the Pauline movement as a *religious* movement, the conflict as a *religious* one and the *religious* nature of first-century Judaism.

It will be argued that all interpretations of Paul's letter to the Galatians that wish to avoid outright anachronistic and ethnocentric biases have to take account of the first-century nature of the religious component of his communicative context. From a kaleidoscopic perspective on religion, religious activities and the structure of religion in the first-century Mediterranean world, one can better understand what Paul was doing in what he was saying. Was he, after all, explicating a belief system as assumed in most opponent hypotheses?

5.1 Posing the problem of religious phenomena

Western man, Carney maintains,

tends to equate the Judaeo-Christian definition of religion with the essence of religious experience. Until relatively late in antiquity, however, most of its peoples lived in a religious world which was vastly different from this.

(1975:125)

Smith points out that we cannot uncritically presume that other peoples' and other ages' 'meaning for words are the same as ours' (1962:16). This is true regarding the concept *religion* which, he further argues, is a concept which (because of its ambiguities) should be disregarded, since it cannot readily be translated into languages outside of Western civilisation (see 1962:18; and see Judge 1980:212; Segal 1986:3). Like other social and cultural products, religion is historically and culturally produced and shaped (see Asad 1982:238).

MacMullen, for example, presents a striking cultural shock when he confronts his students with some cult group passing wine around a table and actually getting

drunk while at worship. The reaction is: *'That's not religion'*. To Western students, religion is 'all the things you never do except inside the walls of some place of worship' (MacMullen 1985/6:81). The point is not simply that what is called *religion* in Western twentieth-century society is slightly different from what is called religion in other societies: it is something totally different. MacMullen's timely warning is to the point:

It serves as a reminder that we who observe long-distant periods on their own terms, freeing ourselves of theological presuppositions, must be ready to recognize and to treat as religious history an almost unmanageable broad range of psychological phenomena, of which the most historically significant need not have been at all intense or complicated intellectually.

(1984:5)

When it comes to the specific definition of religion as something to do with a belief system, Asad's criticism of anthropologists' use of universal definitions of religion is also applicable to New Testament scholars:

Thus what appears today to be self-evident, namely that 'religion' is essentially a matter of meanings linked to ideas of general order (expressed in either or both rite and doctrine) and that it has universal functions, is in fact a view which has a specific Christian history.

(1982:245)

What has been argued with regard to the interpretation of texts is true of cultural phenomena. Just as a text can support a variety of readings, MacMullen warns that if one is looking for what is not there, such as *orthodox beliefs* in first-century religion, hints will often be found but blown out of proportion (see 1985/6:71). What is needed in this regard is a historical aim of interpretation with the accompanying interpretive constraints which attempt to escape the hermeneutical circle of confirming what is presupposed about religion. The outside control of cross-cultural studies is indispensable. The historical aim of interpretation should be, in the words of Ogilvie, that 'we must try to get under the skin of the Romans, see how their religion worked and appreciate how they thought about it' (1969:1).

Three related issues have been brought to the fore. Firstly, without a clear and conscious reflection on the nature of religion, too many questions are simply begged in favour of an anachronistic definition. Secondly, religion in many cultures is, unlike contemporary Western religion, not exclusively concerned with a belief system. Thirdly, religion and religious activities are not easily separated from their socio-cultural matrixes. In short, different structures of religion fit into and are part and parcel of different cultural systems. These aspects pose not only a serious practical (historical) but also a theoretical problem in defining and grasping the nature and structure of religion in the first-century Mediterranean world. I begin with the theoretical dilemma.

5.2 Cross-cultural definitions of religion

If every aspect of society changed at the time of what are termed the industrial and technological revolutions (accompanied by the print revolution) from the sixteenth centuries onwards, it is highly unlikely that religion escaped the cultural rearrangement. The way in which social scientists deal with the emic – etic distinction in definitions of religion may provide valuable clues to grasp the nature of religion in the first-century world.

5.2.1 Functional and substantive definitions¹³

As a folk category of discourse, the concept religion is used with relative ease in popular speech.¹⁴ Most scholars, however, find it much more perplexing to postulate such a universal definition when comparing views on religion from different cultures and societies (see Wax 1984:6). As I have already pointed out, the concept *religion* is culture-specific to Western societies and what is referred to as religion did not exist in that form in the first-century world.¹⁵ How, then, do social scientists generalise beyond a specific culture by drawing comparisons with other cultures (see Guenther 1979:122)?

According to Berger there are two predominant approaches to the definition of religion in the social sciences: 'Religion has been *substantively* defined, in terms of the meaning contents of the phenomena. And it has been *functionally* defined, in terms of its place in the social and/or psychological system' (1974:126). No one definition of religion has, however, commanded a wide acceptance in recent decades (see Wax 1984:6; O'Toole 1984:39). On the other hand it is also true that in the theory of religion the functionalist approach¹⁶ is the chief theoretical approach adopted by contemporary anthropologists (see Guenther 1979:114) as well as in other social sciences (see Berger 1974:126). For a number of years it 'attained the status of orthodoxy in the fields of anthropology and sociology', but a highly effective sub-

¹³ The methodological discussion in chapters two and three is highly relevant to the present argument.

¹⁴ Stark and Bainbridge take pride in the fact that their definition of religion 'parallels what the term *religion* has always meant in everyday speech' (1985:8). As New Testament scholars we should, however, not only be aware of their commitment as sociologists (and not anthropologists) to the study of contemporary Western religious movements but should also be sceptical about what the term *has always meant* (see Barnhart 1975:128; Wax 1984:16).

¹⁵ The term *religion*, Wax maintains, 'is a valid term of popular and administrative discourse within the United States and the English-speaking world; it also may be useful as a term for designating a societal universal, but with most definitions the overlap between the two ranges of discourse is so minimal as to lead to severe distortion' (1984:16).

¹⁶ In functional definitions of religion '*religion is defined in terms of what it does* – be it for society, for the individual, or for both' (Berger 1974:127); its focus can thus be either sociological or psychological (see O'Toole 1984:24-25). Functional definitions of religion are very broad (see Berger 1974:127). They can be as broad and inclusive as that of Luckmann, to include systems of belief and practice such as communism, nationalism, Americanism, humanism or psychoanalysis (see O'Toole 1984:25).

stantivist¹⁷ reaction has emerged 'to challenge the functionalist definitional monopoly in the sphere of religion' (O'Toole 1984:27).

The usefulness of functional definitions of religion for anthropological study is widely questioned (see for example, Goody 1961; Spiro 1966; Berger 1967:176-177, 1974:127-128; Koepping 1977:126-128; Guenther 1979:115-119; Asad 1982; O'Toole 1984:24-27). One should not, however, be misled by the criticism, since (as O'Toole points out) the pitfalls of vagueness and circularity threaten the substantivist no less than the functionalist definitions (see 1984:30).

The theoretical dilemma argued with regard to the emic and etic distinction is applicable to the historical dilemma presented by the above arguments. The functionalist (etic) definition of religion is confronted with the dilemma of fitting culture-specific phenomena into an etic definition. Such definitions either function imperialistically to incorporate other cultures and societies into that of the researcher, or they function as Wax says, like 'the chaplain's prayer before the opening of the sessions of the Congress: it has no effect on what subsequently occurs' (1984:15).

Substantive (emic) definitions pose the problem of clearly grasping and recognising what specific cultural phenomena are about. The interpretive principle, as argued in this study, is that etic viewpoints should be used heuristically to facilitate a grasp of the language game (of first-century religion). The challenge of a communicative approach is to attempt a thick description which brings into dialogue the meaningful world of the participants and the inquisitive mind of the interpreter. On the other hand, scholars should avoid falling back on popular discourse – that is, on the views of religion taken for granted in their own, usually Western, cultures which are then projected onto foreign cultures.

5.2.2 Mapping the area of religion

The otherness of foreign cultures or historical eras, as well as the inevitability of using models and concepts foreign to them, should simultaneously be kept in mind.¹⁸ Spiro quite correctly argues that no inquiry into religious phenomena can proceed without a minimalist definition of religion. If it is not explicitly stated, it is implicitly supplied (see Spiro 1966:90; O'Toole 1984:35). In Spiro's words: 'It is

¹⁷ The 'classical substantive definition of religion' which, according to O'Toole, inspired the substantive reaction to the functionalist monopoly in the definition of religion is the description by Tylor of religion as 'belief in Spiritual Beings' (O'Toole 1984:27). 'Whatever its merits or faults, this definition focusses clearly on the substance of religion as a particular kind of belief that might be readily apprehended in the social world' (O'Toole 1984:27).

¹⁸ The position taken by two eminent anthropologists of religion, Goody (1961) and Spiro (1966), is 'that it is impossible to escape from the fact that the category of magico-religious acts and beliefs can be defined only by the observer and that attempts to see either this or the sacred-profane dichotomy as a universal part of the actor's perception of his situation are misleading' (Goody 1961:160).

obvious, then, that while a definition cannot take the place of inquiry, in the absence of definitions there can be no inquiry' (1966:90). Furthermore, 'when the term "religion" is given no explicit ostensive definition, the observer, perforce, employs an implicit one' (1966:90). A minimalist definition does not remove *religion* from the arena of definitional disputes,

but it does remove it from the context of fruitless controversy over what religion 'really is' to the context of the formulation of empirically testable hypotheses which, in anthropology, means hypotheses susceptible to cross-cultural testing.

(Spiro 1966:91)

However, the proof of the pudding lies in the eating, for the other aspect to be emphasised is the culture-specific and idiosyncratic nature of religion. Spiro (1966:87) remarks that an

examination of the endemic definitional controversies concerning religion leads to the conclusion that they are not so much controversies over the meaning either of the term 'religion' or of the concept which it expresses, *as they are jurisdictional disputes over the phenomenon or range of phenomena which are considered to constitute legitimately the empirical referent of the term* (italics mine).

In this situation Barnhart's map metaphor proves useful in manoeuvring between the Scylla of being captured by one's minimalist definition (the essence of religion) and the Charybdis of not taking into account the culture-specific nature of religion. He suggests that definitions are like maps: 'It would be as foolish to boast that one has the definitive definition of "religion" as to claim that one has drawn up the final and absolute map of an area' (Barnhart 1975:122). Certain maps may indicate the area in which the tunnels of underground mines may be found without giving any detailed information. The function of such maps is merely to direct one to certain areas. A minimalist definition of religion may function in the same way. Since a minimalist definition is unavoidable, such a definition should be a working definition and not one that tries to capture the so-called *essence* of religion. It should function as a heuristic tool and not an iron matrix. Such a 'preliminary definition ... isolates the core-concern around which a variety of other concerns, rituals, scriptures, prayers, beliefs, experiences, etc. tend to cluster' (Barnhart 1975:125).¹⁹ In short, a map facilitates the breaking down of the phenomenon into its manageable smaller parts (see Segal 1986:3).

¹⁹ I find Guenther's definition of religion similar to Barnhart's core-concern (see 1975:125-128): in its 'essence ... religion is utterly symbolic, intensely affective and consequently fundamentally irrational' (Guenther 1979:124). As a broad working definition religion can be distinguished from other cultural activities, for 'unlike the "real" things of technology, the "real" commodities of economics, and the "real" people of social and political relationships, supernatural phenomena exist only within the imagination of man, who postulated them and who believes in them' (Guenther 1979:123). It should be noted that he does not use *essence* in the pejorative sense.

Just as a map-maker has to study the territory, the drawing of mental maps of cultural phenomena requires us to be alert to the 'interchange of communication in the appropriate field of inquiry' (Barnhart 1975:122). Drawing the map of religion in a particular cultural milieu is perhaps more like drawing a geological map. Not only what is apparent but also what is underneath has to be mapped. Not only the social conditions but also the social location of these phenomena should be expounded.

This has been a long but in no way fruitless attempt to create an awareness of the challenge facing New Testament scholarship – a challenge which is rarely raised to a conscious, critical level. The exercise of drawing a map, pointing out the dis/similarities and introducing a dialogue on models and data, is needed with regard to the field of first-century Mediterranean religion. Only in that way can Paul's activities and communication be located within and properly related to the context of his first-century cultural system. The dissatisfaction with the functionalist style (assuming a similarity in structure between the religion of the first-century Mediterranean world and that of the contemporary Western world) is a dissatisfaction with the imposition of a particular structure of religion on the evidence.

5.3 The outline of a first-century Mediterranean religious map

Malina argues that 'if people today see first-century Mediterranean religion as though it were just like religion in our society, it is possible they may be suffering from an optical illusion' (1986^b:92). Thus the objective of this section is to map religion within the life-experience and cultural system of first-century Mediterranean people in such a way that the optical illusion is avoided.²⁰

First, the most significant observation on the structure of first-century religious phenomena is that prior to the Christian church of the Middle Ages there was 'no clear compartmentalization between religious and other institutions in society' (Carney 1975:126) and no groups 'formed solely for and based on religious activities' alone (Malina 1986^b:97). Broadly speaking, in contemporary Western society it is assumed that 'there is in human life and society something distinctive called "religion"' (Smith 1962:15). During most of human history that was not the case (see Carney 1975:125-126; Guenther 1979:126; Wax 1984:6). It has been pointed out that one of the striking features of agrarian societies is the lack of differentiation between social institutions. One single system performed a greater variety of functions than is possible in contemporary Western societies (see Goody 1961:155-156).

²⁰ It goes without saying that the level of abstraction at which *religion* is dealt with should be acknowledged. Despite the obvious problems already discussed, the need to supplement generalisations by means of historical and cultural particulars cannot be avoided. It should also be noted that there is no pretension to research into the original sources. Scholarly findings on the nature of first-century Mediterranean religion, compiled into a comprehensive argument, are presented and introduced to the field of New Testament studies.

Secondly, religious denominations in a Western society are instances of formal religion.²¹ In contrast to *formal religion*, which describes religion in a modern Western context, the concept *substantive religion*²² will be used to designate first-century religion. Unlike industrialised Western societies, religion in the first-century world was embedded either in politics or in kinship relations (see Malina 1986^b:95). Religious groups depended for their operation on existing social relations and not on personal convictions as to the truth of some belief system or other. The functioning of religious activities included other motivations than pure belief (see Judge 1980:213; Momigliano 1985:13). As a result, there were 'multiple religions used for special ranges of meanings and behaviors' (Malina 1986^b:95) – depending on whether people were concerned chiefly with kinship or with political matters.

Thirdly, hardly any human activities in antiquity were devoid of religious elements. Says Ogilvie:

To drive a nail into a piece of wood required not only a good nail, a good hammer and good co-ordination of hand and eye but also a well-tried ritual: otherwise the nail might bend or the deity concerned see to it that you hit your thumb.

(1969:20)

Thus, by and large, 'if "man" in antiquity was anything he was a religious man' (Carney 1975:109).

Fourthly, it should be noted that 'Classical Greek has no word which covers religion as we use the term' (Nock 1952:10).

It could speak of a particular system of rites (a cult or an initiation), or a particular set of beliefs (doctrines or opinions), or a legal code, or a body of national customs or traditions; but for the peculiar synthesis of all these which we call a "religion," the one Hellenistic word which came closest was "philosophy".

(Smith 1956:79)²³

²¹ For a detailed description of the differences between formal and substantive religion, see especially Malina (1986^b:95-97).

²² This term was coined by Malina in analogy to *substantive economy* as used in economic anthropology (see 1986^a:86-87; 1986^b:94). It means religion embedded in other institutions. The term should however not be confused with what amongst others Berger (1974) calls a substantive definition of religion. With that Berger advocates a return to a perspective which views the phenomenon *from within* and does not focus on the social or psychological functions in a society (see 1974:128-129).

²³ There is widespread acceptance of this argument as expressed by Smith. It is endorsed by, for example, De Ste. Croix (1972:62-63), Aune 1980; Kraabel (1982:454), Collins (1985:175), MacMullen (1985/6:71), Malina (1986^a:85) and Neusner (1988:175). However, for lack of a satisfactory alternative, the concept *religion* and *religious activities* will still be used to refer to those spheres of life to which we refer as religion – bearing in mind all the differences and the fact that *religion* to them was something else. A modern concept or theory of religion should thus function heuristically and probably evokes more differences with first-century society that it will actually illuminate in a positive way.

Rather than one distinct socio-cultural phenomenon called *religion*, at least three types of phenomena can be identified: (1) state cults, (2) mystery cults and (3) philosophical sects or schools (see Aune 1980:1520).

Finally, in any city in the Greco-Roman Empire 'the religious landscape was dominated by monumental public temples' (White 1990:26) which served as social centres, banks, markets, and centres of public welfare. Apart from this, and the Emperor worship which could hardly be ignored by any citizen, there developed more privately-oriented cults dedicated to Isis, Serapis, Mithras and some other gods. Eventually, according to White, these cults 'took their places alongside the classical temples of old Rome' (1990:26). Religion embedded in political relations will receive less attention. It has been pointed out by Winslow that it was a civic duty to worship the Roman gods (see 1971:240), but also that neither in Rome nor in the Empire as a whole 'was the major thrust of religious life politically oriented' (1971:239). What we are currently concerned with are the non-religious spheres or religious activities related to a lower level of polity (see Malina 1986^b:95). Malina points out that Jesus represents a focus on the political sphere whereas with Paul the focus shifts from the polity to the fictive kin group (see 1986^b:96).

5.4 Some landmarks on a map of first-century substantive religion

Firstly, there is no point in ignoring the great diversity of religious practices in the first-century Mediterranean world. It is well expressed by Wilken:

Religious practices among the many people of the Mediterranean world were as sundry and heterogenous as a meadow bursting into bloom in spring. Some people, for example, worshipped crocodiles, others honored birds, some considered the goat divine, and others adored the calf. Some people sacrificed children, others abstained from certain foods, and yet others worshipped fire.

(1986:382).

Despite these differences, scholars point out that 'the same basic understanding of the gods' (Marcus 1988:144) was to be found throughout the Empire.

A second landmark for anyone brought up in a twentieth-century Protestant world, is the high degree of religious tolerance in the Roman Empire. Different kinds of religious practices were tolerated 'so long as they do not endanger public order or infringe upon common decency, and so long as they seemed to have some ancient pedigrees' (Meeks 1985:104). Membership of one cult furthermore did not preclude participation in another, and the multiplication of cults in the Empire (especially of Oriental origin) did not cause major upsets (see Ogilvie 1969:3; Winslow 1971:241; Marcus 1988:145). One result of this state of affairs was that religious life was highly syncretistic (see Winslow 1971:243).

MacMullen argues that all had the right to say or believe anything they wished to about a deity, as long as it was not aggressively hostile to other beliefs (see 1984:8

and 1985/6:72). 'A Roman was free to think what he liked about the gods; what mattered was what religious action he performed' (Ogilvie 1969:2). In the same vein Momigliano (1985:11) points to the 'strange absence of information about religious education' (except perhaps in Judaism), something that casts doubt on the existence of any strong emphasis on dogma or doctrine. Malina provides us with a useful summary:

As in most systems of substantive religion, so too in the first-century Mediterranean world the close calculation of "truth," dogma, credo, ideological deviance, and the like was often impossible or simply irrelevant.

(1986^b:98)

Not only was religion separated with difficulty from other social activities (especially politics or kinship), but religious activities in the first-century Mediterranean world were, thirdly, not primarily concerned with doctrine or dogma. One did not speak of "believing in the gods" but of "having gods," just as a city might "have laws or customs" (Wilken 1984:58). Religion was part of one's civic or familial duty (see Freyne 1980:23; Ogilvie 1969:21). As Wilken says:

Religion was less a matter of holding beliefs than of observing annual festivals or public rituals, less concerned with conversion than adherence, of participating in local cults without, however, excluding others, of identifying with the traditions of the city in which one lived. Seldom did it require conscious choice.

(1986:380)

Religious festivals, which were simultaneously civic festivals, were occasions of public charity. The distribution of money and sacrificial meat generated trade, stimulated the flow of money from a community's benefactors and created opportunities to accord honour to one's benefactors (see Rajak 1985:252).

A fourth landmark. In contrast to Western religiosity with its emphasis on one ultimate All, people in the first-century Mediterranean world shared the belief that demons of various sorts (both good and evil), angels and spirits all contribute to the misfortune or well-being of human beings.²⁴ Religion was a battle against the powers of sickness, poverty, hunger, misfortune, failure of crops; a particular Greek influence on the New Testament environment was to create an atmosphere of universal anxiety in the face of impersonal forces (see Freyne 1980:28). While

²⁴ The monotheistic faith (at least in our modern sense of the word) of the Jewish/Christian tradition becomes suspect once one realises that although they believed in 'one God, a spiritual being, supreme and transcendent' they also recognised 'many lesser gods, or intermediary beings'; Christians, in particular 'in this early period thought of Christ as a "second god"' (Wilken 1986:383). The notion of monotheism is subject in every case to world view and cultural specifics (see Malina 1981:27). The adoption of monotheism (in its radical sense of taking away power from all other subordinate gods) would have resulted in 'obliterating everything in the pyramid save the top. To have done so would have involved the destruction of their whole culture' (MacMullen 1981:88).

demons were responsible for sickness, negative weather patterns, death and the like, good demons were responsible for positive aspects such as insight and dreams (see Malina 1986^b:95; Smith 1978^b:4, 107).²⁵ The way to manipulate these powers, combat misfortune and ensure good fortune was by means of mysteries and magic (see Ogilvie 1969:105; Carney 1975:126; MacMullen 1984:13, 40).²⁶ The true importance of these remarks becomes apparent when the cultural values in a pre-industrial society are recognised. Superstition and magic rather than technology or science are highly valued (see Carney 1975:93, 250).

Fifthly, both first-century and contemporary Western religions offer their adherents rescue (σωτηρία = salvation) from some overwhelmingly difficult situation. Salvation cults, of which the early Christian movement was one (see Noack 1980:25), were popular among the lower classes. In the Western world the subject of rescue is 'the individualistic achiever' whereas the threats to well-being in the first-century Mediterranean world were 'loss of honor' (Malina 1986^b:96), or physical dangers such as illness or crop failure. Honour was achieved or lost by virtue of the individual's acceptance into or rejection from a group (see Malina 1981:25-50). 'The ongoing growth and social acceptance within the larger cultural setting for any given religious group often depends on the important and conspicuous practice of patronage and benefaction' (White 1985/6:117).

On the physical side, Nock argues that σωτηρία and related words 'carried no theological implications; they applied to deliverance from perils by sea and land and disease and darkness and false opinions, all perils of which men were fully aware' (1952:9). In fact, *saviour* and *salvation* very often 'had to do with health or other matters on this earth, not of the soul for life eternal' (MacMullen 1981:57). To be healed, to achieve power, to find patrons and clients, to have a proper funeral, to take part in weekly communal meals would all count as reasons why people would join *religious* activities or a salvation cult (see Malina 1986^b:97). Within household and kinship relations people could ensure participation in these activities. The extended household offered the structures and means to fulfil many of these socio-religious needs. Anyone who claimed to be a messiah and offered *salvation* could obtain power over others (see Georgi 1971:125-126; Smith 1978^b:114ff; Malina 1986^b:97-98). Regarding concepts such as *faith* and *hope*,²⁷ Momigliano argues that

²⁵ Ogilvie (see 1969:9-23) offers many more examples. The object of religion was, inter alia, to discover the correct procedure for securing the goodwill of the gods in all day-to-day activities, both the personal ones and those of the community at large (see also Wilken 1984:62-67).

²⁶ Underscoring this point, Smith argues that mysteries and magic cannot always be sharply distinguished (see 1980:249; Winslow 1971:243-245). The same applies to the distinction between *magic* and *religion* (see Aune 1980:1510-1516). The goals of magic in Paul's world may be characterised as 'providing protection, healing, success and knowledge for magical practitioners and their clients, and harm for their opponents' (Aune 1980:1518).

²⁷ Wilken points out that 'piety (*eusebeia* in Greek, *pietas* in Latin) was the word used most frequently to designate religious acts and feelings, but it was not used denominatively (i.e., to designate "a religion," a particular form of piety' (1986:380). Smith furthermore points out that the word πίστις is very often mistranslated as *faith*, while it should rather be confidence or trust in supernatural powers (see 1978^b:205).

there is not necessarily a connection between these concepts and the gods, that they were not specific terms of classical religious language (see 1985:3; Nock 1952:10). Together with power (*δύναμις*), they very often appear in association with miracles (see MacMullen 1984:4-5, 123 n 10); someone came to *faith* (*πίστις*) when rescued from a difficult situation (see Malina 1981:80) by some supernatural act.

Finally, a leader in *religious* affairs functioned as a broker mediating between the man in the street and the gods. In most agrarian societies, and particularly in the first-century Mediterranean society, Malina argues, 'religion dealt with respect for those who controlled human existence, hence the non-human and human persons above us to whom we owe a debt of honor and respect' (1981:88). Access to persons (human and non-human) who controlled or had contacts to control social, political, economic, agricultural, and other matters was a key to success and respect (see 1981:26-27). Malina provides clear pointers to the social network of first-century Mediterranean society when he says:

The key to success, then, is to get to know the power of the person with whom an honorable man can actually or potentially interact and to use those persons for one's own ends, for salvation from a difficult situation ... In other words, for the first-century Mediterranean person, nearly all the social realities singled out in our modern textbooks and courses on sociology, social psychology, and the natural sciences would be perceived as "religious" phenomena.

(1981:87, 88)

Generally speaking, *religious* leaders in Paul's world never became religious authorities for that world as a whole outside their own communities (see Armstrong 1986c:xvii).

As a general background picture this is of great significance for grasping the nature of the Pauline communities (and other Diaspora Jewish groups) in the first-century world. Starting from these three elements (religious phenomena closely intertwined with a variety of social and human factors, the non-existence of a separate religious institution, and the specific embeddedness of religion in political and kinship relations), will bring us closer to the experiential world of Paul and his contemporaries. Belief systems and programmes of salvation, such as the one propagated by Paul, formed part of intricate networks of social and human interaction.

If these features are applicable to Paul's *religious* world, that world was characterised by a lack of scripture and creed and was created by the need for salvation and the provision of protection on a variety of levels. If Paul shared the world of first-century religion, magic and miracles must have played a significant part in his missionary activities (see furthermore chapter 7 § 4.1). His authority as a man of piety was established and maintained to the extent that he could provide protection

against evil and misfortune, play a powerful part in ensuring salvation, and be recognised for his control over human beings (and demons). According to this perspective, Paul's religious activities can no longer be reduced to the level of a creed and belief system but should be described in terms of the variety of functions and components associated with first-century religion in general.

In short, these insights provide an alternative approach to Paul's activities. The *socio-religious* matrix in which Paul founded *religious* communities cannot be seen in isolation from the cultural system of the first-century agrarian world. We should think about first-century religion, and for that matter all other aspects of that society, **not in terms of compartments but in terms of configurations**. If this is true, then serious reflection on the nature and character of the Pauline communities as first-century religious communities remains to be done; and indeed the Jewish sub-culture of Paul's activities is in the same boat. That is to say, many more elements of his socio-religious environment need to be examined and brought into play when constructing the communicative context of the letter to the Galatians.

6 WHERE IS THE FIRST-CENTURY MEDITERRANEAN MODEL TAKING US?

The discovery of the agrarian nature of Paul's world, and in particular its oral culture and substantive religion, places the communicative context of the letter to the Galatians clearly in focus. In fact, both contribute to a retraining in the values and conventions of Paul's distant cultural system.

The world of oral cultures opens our eyes to see the letter as part and parcel of a network of social interaction where authority figures and social relations contribute much to communication. The letter was not intended as creed or Scripture but as communication in an environment where the letter and its words were subject to a first-century social interaction.

The world of first-century religion, on the other hand, creates the awareness that religion and religious activities were firmly embedded in the social networks and core values of Paul's society. Belief systems were part of, but also interconnected with a variety of socio-religious activities. Therefore Paul's exposition of matters of belief in the letter should be seen in relation to their place and function within the overall system.

Given the insights of the present chapter, it appears that a portrayal of the Pauline communities and the conflict in Galatia as primarily theological or doctrinal may well be a misrepresentation. I am suggesting the exact opposite of the view that the Pauline communities came into existence as a result of preaching and that the founder's theological ideas were seminal (e.g. Malherbe 1983:11-13). The discussion of only two special features of the first-century agrarian society (oral culture and substantive religion) already makes it possible to present a rather different setting

for Paul's activities. The importance and content of their *theology* and theological views should be evaluated in terms of the concrete social network and accompanying codes and conventions – as far as these can be reconstructed today.

In answering the question as to whether Paul's opponents in Galatia were a 'clearly defined unified movement with its own well-formulated doctrine and message', Koester expresses a clear warning. He maintains that

it must be understood first of all that we can presuppose neither firmly formulated doctrines nor unified organizations for the early Christian missionary movement. A fixed body of doctrines (creed and canon) and a generally accepted ecclesiastical organization (episcopate) were developed much later and over many generations, especially in the course of the ongoing controversies with the heretics.

(1982:117)

Following up the above portrayal of the first-century Mediterranean world, I would argue that this insight should be stretched much further. The theological or doctrinal tail should not wag the first-century dog. That is to say, the apparent exposition and discussion of Paul's belief system (theology) should find its true place within the structure of religion as substantive religion. In other words, the dog of the social network should wag the tail of dogma and doctrine (theology and belief system).

Given the interconnectedness of first-century Mediterranean social institutions, the predominantly oral nature of that society and the substantive nature of religious activities, a different framework for dealing with the letter to the Galatians can already be visualised. Though some constructive points can be noted after a first introduction to Paul's Mediterranean world, several fields have been identified which need further examination.

On the nature of Paul's communicative context my suggestion, to be argued in the pages that follow, is that it can best be determined as a particular configuration of first-century social interaction. Within this general matrix of first-century Mediterranean society, the network of social interaction can (for the sake of argument) be divided into socio-cultural relations and socio-cultural organisations constituting such networks. The first are the codes and conventions which direct individual and group relations; the second, the network of structures and organisations within a society.

CHAPTER 6

THE NATURE OF THE PAULINE HOUSEHOLD COMMUNITIES IN GALATIA: ONE CONFIGURATION OF THE NETWORKS OF FIRST-CENTURY SOCIO-CULTURAL INTERACTION

To understand early Christian letters more nearly as ancient writers and readers would have understood them requires some understanding of the typical social contexts of letter writing in the Greco-Roman world. Three sets of social relations were central to that culture. First are hierarchical relations between subordinates and superordinates, best exemplified by the social institutions of the patron-client relationship. Second are relationships between equals epitomized by the Greek and Roman institutions of friendship. Third are the social relations of the household, which combine characteristics of both hierarchical relations and relations between equals.

(Stowers 1986:27)

1 INTRODUCTION

The picture of Paul's first-century Mediterranean society as an agrarian society suggests the greater environment within which it is to be determined what Paul did in what he was saying. To get closer to his communicative context, however, at least two areas of that socio-cultural system which regulated socio-religious interaction in Paul's world need to be examined more closely. They are, firstly, the network of socio-cultural organisations and, secondly, the network of socio-cultural relations. The first has to do with the organisational structure of the first-century world, which forms the basis for group formation and also for understanding the Pauline communities¹ as groups; the second with the codes and conventions regulating social relations.

It goes without saying that it is impossible to discuss, in a study such as this, the total network of socio-cultural organisations or social relations in the first-century world. For that reason the discussion is limited to a few aspects relevant to an understanding of the Pauline communities: that is to say, determining the socio-cultural codes and conventions constituting social groups in the first-century Mediterranean world and consequently trying to determine on what basis the Pauline communities were constituted.

¹ Just as the concept *communicative context* is preferred to *occasion of the letter*, the concept *Pauline communities* will be used instead of *Pauline movement*. It will be qualified later as *Pauline household communities*.

There is a strong tendency nowadays to accept that Paul's mission took place along the 'natural networks of relationships in each city and between cities' (Meeks 1983:28). Of these, the household setting is acknowledged as the primary one. Thus the household setting, together with the socio-cultural networks of codes and conventions associated with that institution, will be examined as the specific communicative context of the letter to the Galatians. In this enterprise the sets of social relations mentioned by Stowers in the epigraph to this chapter, together with insights from other fields (such as the oral nature and substantive religion), will turn out to be of great significance for an understanding of Paul's letter to the Galatians.

While the network of socio-cultural organisations (groups) and the network of socio-cultural relations (codes and conventions) operative within society can be distinguished for analytical purposes, it should be remembered that they presuppose each other and are in fact closely connected.

This chapter will demonstrate the full force of a social-scientific approach to the New Testament as a historical enterprise. Most of the studies and findings to be presented are a product of the interface between studies in the social sciences and a historical study of the first-century Mediterranean world. By constructing social-system scenarios I shall try to achieve a clearer perception of the communicative context and of the shared social system between the Galatians and Paul. It should be emphasised that the letter to the Galatians need not provide the clues as to which codes and conventions should be applied. They were, given the agrarian nature of first-century Mediterranean societies, probably implicit in the communicative act.²

The first step will be to investigate the organisational structure of the first-century Mediterranean world: social groups and the household institution as focal points. This will be complemented, secondly, by a discussion of some of the central codes and conventions of socio-cultural interaction in Paul's world.

2 SOCIAL GROUPS IN THE FIRST-CENTURY MEDITERRANEAN WORLD

In addition to the social conditions in the first-century Mediterranean world, which have already been discussed, the organisational setting of Pauline communities within and alongside other social groups should be considered. To be concrete: in addition to the new understanding of first-century Judaism, the Pauline communities as an integral part of first-century Judaism, the agrarian and oral nature of that world and the substantive nature of first-century religion, the organisation of the Pauline household communities should be taken into account. If these communities

² Neither is it suggested that Paul must have adhered or agreed to those conventions. Whatever his position might have been, however – whether operating within the framework or rejecting those values – it is equally essential to spell them out and get their parameters quite clear. To know whether he rejected them, it is just as vital to establish what they were as to know whether he acted within the confines of the specific codes and conventions.

were the setting for Paul's activities, then their nature as first-century groups and institutions should provide us with the appropriate codes and conventions for establishing the cause and nature of the conflict and consequently a proper communicative context for the interpretation of the letter to the Galatians.

What, then, was the nature of the Pauline communities within the social networks of the first-century world? To answer this question, let us first take a brief look at the received view on the organisation of the Pauline communities.

2.1 The received view(s) on the organisation of the Pauline ἐκκλησία

There is no single scholarly perception of the organisation of the Pauline communities. Indeed, there are at least two approaches. The first is to compare the Pauline communities to other groups which have family resemblances; the second is to use some of these models (comparable groups) to describe the nature of the Pauline communities. The theoretical assumptions that govern these comparative activities should be carefully noted.

On the one hand, the Pauline ἐκκλησία are compared to groups and organisations in the Greco-Roman world (philosophical schools, voluntary associations, the synagogue, and the household) to which 'they bear at least a family resemblance' (Meeks 1983:74; see also Stambaugh & Balch 1986:138-143). The generally approved conclusion is familiar: none of these models offers an exact parallel, although all present significant analogies. Meeks, for example, finds that none of them 'captures the whole' of the Pauline ἐκκλησία; the structures worked out by the Pauline communities 'may after all have been unique' (Meeks 1983:84; see also Stambaugh & Balch 1986:138). At the very least Meeks thinks that 'something new' (1986b:119) was emerging in the private homes where the followers of Jesus gathered. It is difficult not to take this *new* as unique, since he continues to define the *newness*: it was

all the old things that observers in the first century might have seen in it: a Jewish sect, a club meeting in a household, an initiatory cult, a school. Yet it was more than the sum of those things, and different from the mere synthesis of their contradictory tendencies.

(Meeks 1986b:120)

He compares different entities from the first-century world without arguing why and in what way they were different kinds of groups – that is to say, without taking into account what really constituted the differences between them. To justify a conclusion that the Pauline communities were unique, one either has to point out that (and why) the identified features were taken in that world as typifying different groups; or else one has to take the same road as, for example, Meeks – in other words, to presuppose that the dissimilarities identified at the level of particular features point convincingly to a difference in nature. This way of comparing the groups implicitly

assumes a particular social location of groups (see following subsection), namely that groups were formed on the basis of features such as social functions.³

On the other hand, a rather different approach results in the same type of shortcomings. The model either of a philosophical school or of a voluntary association is taken in isolation to describe the nature of the Pauline communities. In these instances (which will be referred to when these models are discussed) those aspects of the Pauline communities that resemble features of either of the two models are highlighted in order to press home the point that the Pauline communities should indeed be seen as either a voluntary association or a philosophical school – depending on the model that is used.

While the evidence in these instances is scrutinised for similarities to whichever model is used, the interesting thing is that the similarities become the constituting features of the Pauline communities. In other words, a particular social location of groups is once again presupposed in that the formation of groups is subject to the features of the model used for the comparison (in most instances the philosophical school).

However, several issues remain undecided. With regard to the first approach used by scholars, it has to be asked anew: were the Pauline communities indeed unique, and if they were, in what way? As regards the second approach: if the Pauline communities are identical with any one of the models, what about the evidence identified when other models are used?

To my mind, both roads end in one-sided views which simplify complex phenomena and consequently misrepresent the nature of the Pauline groups. What is too seldom taken into account is the social location of groups in the first-century Mediterranean world.

2.2 The social location of groups in the first-century Mediterranean world

It is hard to tell whether the Pauline communities were indeed *groups* in the first-century world and, if so, what kind of groups. It is commonplace to take an impressionistic guess and describe these communities as a conglomerate of Jew and Gentile, slave and free, locals and foreigners, men and women, and people from varying social strata, without paying attention to the social location of such groups. But was there room for such social engineering and if so, in what way? If they were a group, which conventions applied?

³ In comparing the different models to the Pauline communities, several of the reasons why the Pauline communities differed from the models will support this view. The point is not to deny the dissimilarities but to question the assumption that the dissimilarities are a sufficient basis to decide the nature of the Pauline communities.

The example of Meeks is instructive in a context where the question is mostly ignored. He is not unaware of the question, 'What makes a group a group?' (see 1983:74) but to my mind answers it in a way unlikely to do justice to the social location of groups in the first-century Mediterranean world. His answer to the question is twofold.

On the one hand he provides a theological explanation for the formation of the Pauline communities. They held to a particular set of beliefs which constituted their groups and maintained the cohesiveness and boundaries needed for any group to survive (see 1983:84-110).⁴ As was argued in the previous chapters, this reason has long been traditional in New Testament studies as a rationale for the formation of the Pauline groups (see also Rohrbaugh 1987^b:118 n 28). Apart from the problem created by Meeks's presentation of the Pauline communities as atypical (see Rohrbaugh 1987^b:110), the question remains whether the theological factors actually were responsible for the formation of the groups. If so, what type of group?

On the other hand, Meeks maintains that a group needs a social structure. No group can persist without patterns of leadership, differentiation of roles by members, or ways of dealing with conflict, to mention only a few aspects (see Meeks 1983:111). This unfortunately does not answer the question of what constitutes a group: it merely explains the measures taken to maintain a group once it is formed. To put it differently, the Pauline communities were not a group simply because they had boundaries and so forth – they had all these things because they were a group of some sort.

This lack of reflection on what constituted groups in the first-century Mediterranean world, hence the social location of groups, is one of the reasons why so many scholars jump onto the bandwagon of the *uniqueness* explanation when it comes to the Pauline communities. Given all this, the question still needs to be answered: so what constituted a group in the first-century Mediterranean world? That question is directed at the overall social system and tries to find out something about group formation in a particular socio-cultural system.

Given the agrarian nature of first-century society, it is necessary to establish the facts of group formation in such societies. A distinction between *corporate* and *non-corporate* groups is fundamental to the theory of group formation and should prove useful for an understanding of the early Christian groups in the Greco-Roman

⁴ Another example speaks for itself in demonstrating the failure to account for the social location of groups in the first-century world. Koptak maintains: 'A Burkean approach has shown that Paul also depicts a community created by a common response to the gospel. The community remains intact as long as its members seek to please God on the basis of the revealed, circumcision-free gospel rather than seeking to please other humans' (1990:109).

Empire. For a better understanding of non-corporate groups it is necessary to know what corporate groups are.

The *corporate group* ... might be defined as a collection of people forming a corporate body with a permanent existence, recruited on recognized principles, with common interests and rules or norms giving the rights and duties of the members in relation to each other and to these common interests. If property is very broadly defined as the right to something or someone in some exclusive way, then the common interests can be called property interests. Obviously such property interests are sacred by definition, and therefore are perceived as divinely sanctioned. The resultant structure is rightly called a *hierarchy*.

(Malina 1988^b:19-20)

The non-corporate group, most often called a coalition, 'is at home in non-individualistic societies where values and experience do not match' (Malina 1988^b:19). Thus they are typical of agrarian societies and probably also of the first-century Mediterranean world.

Corporate structures predominate

where the community as such can provide security and thus can protect individuals as well as their enterprises. Such protection is accorded in societies with a high level of integration, such as certain small-scale societies and some highly industrialized Western societies.

(Boissevain 1974:203)

Malina adds, societies 'with greater homogeneity of values and integration of institutions, and with smaller differences of relative power' (1988^b:19). Such conditions, according to him, did not apply in the first-century Mediterranean world except for 'minuscule ruling elites' (1988^b:19). Coalitions or non-corporate groups thrive where security cannot be guaranteed by the community at large. This is the case in fragmented plural societies or highly stratified societies, such as peasant societies, frontier areas and colonies, where a heterogeneity of values and great differences in relative power exist between social groups.

(Boissevain 1974:203)

Non-corporate groups, such as voluntary associations offering protection from psychological as well as physical threats, predominate where other means of protection (such as kinship or political groups, or other corporate entities such as the state) do exist but do not guarantee protection to individuals, a certain group, or a portion of the community (see Boissevain 1974:203; Saldarini 1988:59-60). Very often non-corporate groups mimic kinship groups and are therefore called fictive kinship groups.

Coalitions or non-corporate groups, 'though present in all societies, play a more important part in organizing activities in some than in others where formal associa-

tions rather than coalitions organize the same activities' (Boissevain 1974:170).⁵ This apparently has to do with the degree to which a nation state or community of interests has developed within a society.

It would be misleading to equate group formation in Paul's world with the formation of predominant corporate groups. It would, however, be just as misleading to lose sight of the matrix of Paul's cultural systems at large and specifically of the role of non-corporate groups, such as coalitions and factions, which dominate agrarian societies. An awareness of the role of non-corporate groups in the cultural systems of Paul's world opens up some new avenues for dealing both with the Pauline communities and with the comparable groups from the environment. As will become perfectly evident in the rest of this chapter, an acceptance of them as non-corporate groups within the context of the first-century Mediterranean world explains their nature in a more meaningful way.⁶

While the discussion of this issue is suggestive rather than conclusive, we should not make the mistake of seeing it as unimportant. In fact, the whole issue of group formation is closely linked to other social dimensions such as people's experience of space, their view of the individual, and the effect (at least in the first-century Mediterranean world) of the dominant role of the kinship institution (see Malina 1989 for a discussion of these aspects).

2.3 Configurations of social networks

Rather than an uncritical acceptance of the principles of group formation implicitly assumed in the received view, the discussion suggests that non-corporate groups as a dominant route to group formation in agrarian society should be seen as a heuristic tool to explore the nature of the Pauline communities (and of other models from the environment). Indeed, in terms of the social location of groups in the first-century agrarian society it makes perfect sense to describe both the Pauline household communities and the comparable models from the environment as non-corporate groups – a suggestion supported, to my mind, by White's significant observation that the watertight compartments between these groups can no longer be maintained. These four models are

variations on organizational networks which overlap, especially at two key points of social structure: (1) they use and adapt private, often domestic, settings; and (2) they depend on patronage for ongoing

⁵ Boissevain further remarks that 'factions are conflicting units formed within a larger encapsulating social entity such as a village, association or even another coalition, which had previously been united' (1974:195). Factions operate simply as alternative social mechanisms where the encapsulating or corporate body fails to provide protection. Malina argues that the Jesus faction 'fits within the polity of Israel with its embedded religion and economics' (1988^b:25).

⁶ The question of the formative force constituting the Pauline communities as non-corporate groups will be addressed in the next chapter (see § 4).

expansion (including numerical growth, architectural elaboration, and public acceptance). If the house church is related to these models it is because it, too, was operating within similar social networks.

(1985/6:120)

These groups are characterised not so much by their idiosyncratic features as by their connectedness to the basic structure of the social organisation of the first-century Mediterranean world. Each *group* is one configuration of the first-century social network. All were particular configurations of first-century non-corporate groups constituted on a household basis and consisting of components from a variety of social networks. That is to say, they were similar in nature but different in character.⁷

White did not, as far as I can see build on this insight in constructing a comprehensive picture of the Pauline communities. To my mind he provides us with a very promising idea for dealing with a variety of problems regarding the nature of the Pauline communities. This is already clear when we consider the advantages of the configuration model.

2.4 Advantages of a configuration metaphor

To be sure, a configuration of components is different from a mere combination of components; it is also more than a combination of special features from the different components. The configuration metaphor starts off from a different basis, namely the social location of groups, which means that the contributing elements are not merely added up to form a group. This calls for some explanation.

The configuration metaphor can, at least, (1) account for the broad spectrum of components which contributed to the making of Pauline household communities, (2) open up the possibility of interpreting all these components in connection and interaction with the other components as well as with the social location of groups in first-century Mediterranean society, and (3) provide a different structure for the investigation.

First, like the spokes of a wheel, a whole range of factors contributes to the constitution of, say, the Pauline household communities as non-corporate groups. Even the general features of agrarian societies suggest that a Western, individualistically oriented perspective is inappropriate when considering first-century groups and institutions. Institutions and human activities do not lend themselves to compartmentalisation. It is more likely, given the fact that clear-cut distinctions and separations between different institutions (which underlie attempts to focus on these models in isolation) did not exist, that these groups were all different in character

⁷ By *nature* is meant that they were of the same kind (that is, non-corporate groups), while *character* refers to the fact that they were different instances of such groups.

and self-definition but similar in nature. Their uniqueness did not influence their nature as groups, only their character.

Secondly, each component can be described in terms of the social location of non-corporate groups, but taking into account the other components also. It is not denied, that for analytical purposes one needs to identify different categories and components. Neither should it be supposed that the description of any side of the Pauline communities (e.g. the philosophical aspect) is being rejected. On the contrary, the objection is that analytical perspectives turn into explanatory ones when interpreting Paul's letters. That is when, say, the philosophical aspect operates in such a way that the evidence is read as though the Pauline communities were (purely) philosophical or scholastic communities. The point of the configuration metaphor is that the relative weight of each component is decided and described in terms of the overall picture.

Thirdly, viewed in terms of the configuration metaphor, these models from the environment serve a different purpose. No longer are they being examined in order to identify dissimilarities from the Pauline communities. Firstly, they are studied for the sake of a better understanding of Paul's activities. Secondly, each of them contributes a significant emphasis to particular components which went to the making of the Pauline configuration of elements. As different exponents of the selfsame type of group (nature: non-corporate) they displayed the possible variety within it (characteristics).

When these models are presented in this way (see subsequent section), it necessarily follows that several of the generally approved notions have to be rejected. Those which arguably helped to present the Pauline communities as unique were in fact misrepresenting these communities in the first-century environment. Contrary to the received view, which scrutinises the evidence for dissimilarities, the configuration metaphor focuses on the constituting elements. In this way the Pauline communities are seen as one configuration of first-century social networks.

3 COMPARABLE GROUPS IN THE NETWORK OF SOCIO-CULTURAL ORGANISATIONS

As we have seen, it is customary to compare the Pauline communities to other institutions in the Greco-Roman cities with which they share a family resemblance. These are: the household, the Jewish synagogue, the philosophical school, and voluntary associations. Leaving aside the household model (which will be discussed separately), the other three will be introduced in this section.

3.1 Greco-Roman clubs and voluntary associations

The term *voluntary association* is used as an umbrella term to describe what is referred to in the literature as *clubs*, *private cults*, *collegia*, or *burial societies*.⁸ There were all kinds of associations – groups for artisans and merchants, interest groups of all sorts, burial or dining associations, mutual aid societies (see Kraabel 1987:53).

They can, according to Wilken, be divided into three main types:

- (1) professional corporations, as for example, a guild of shipowners, fruit merchants, wool-workers, or plasterers;
- (2) funerary societies whose chief purpose was to provide burial expenses for deceased members and to insure that each member received a decent burial;
- (3) religious societies composed of the worshipers of a particular deity, such as the devotees of Bacchus or Isis.

(1984:36)

Seldom, however, were the activities of an association limited to one of these functions. Most combined several if not all of them (see Wilken 1984:36). This state of affairs led to the growth of hundreds of voluntary associations, many of which did not have more than twenty-five members (see Saldarini 1988:68). These voluntary associations complemented the political and familial spheres (which provided *politeia* and *oikonomia*) in bonding together people from different backgrounds, races and legal positions. The shared principle was *koinonia*, i.e. 'a voluntary sharing of partnership' (Banks 1980:16).

Such voluntary associations held regular meetings in private homes. Wilken's description of a typical meeting gives some idea of the part they played in first-century social networks.⁹

The regular meetings were occasions for eating and drinking, conversation, recreation. These meetings not only provided relief from the daily round of work; they also provided friends and associates for mutual support, an opportunity for recognition and honor, a vehicle by which ordinary men could feel a sense of worth. The society also gave people an opportunity for religious worship in a setting that was supportive, personal, and familiar.

(1984:39)

Entry into voluntary association would be marked by an initiation ceremony (see Tidball 1983:87); usually baptism as the initiation rite, followed by ceremonial meals

⁸ Although it is almost impossible to find a consistent technical meaning for the terms used to describe voluntary association in both the Greek and the Roman periods (see Malherbe 1983:87-90; Saldarini 1988:67-68), such terminological disputes do not affect the main argument. The intention is not to argue that the different kinds of voluntary association were in all respects the same. The gist of the argument is to point to their common nature and not to elaborate on the differences in character.

⁹ It should be noted that most of the information about these voluntary associations comes from the third and fourth centuries. This limiting factor applies to everything that is said about them, whether the received view or some alternative viewpoint.

or fasting. They often made provision for burial needs also (see Judge 1960^b:47). It should be noted that most of these functions are perfectly commensurate with the needs and structures of the first-century agrarian world. Some of these will be listed briefly.

First, non-corporate voluntary associations are a basic feature of agrarian societies. Voluntary associations were not marginal to mainline society but constitutive of the network of social organisations in the cities of the Greco-Roman Empire, especially the Greek areas. Although they lacked official legal and political recognition, this made them not so much illegal as unincorporated (see Judge 1960^b:43) into mainstream political and power structures. In part they supplied what the individual had lost in the Empire, namely a sense of belonging (see Banks 1980:16; Meeks 1983:31; Wilken 1984:35-36).¹⁰ They furthermore fulfilled community needs such as education, wealth, politics and power at almost all levels of society (see Kraabel 1987:52-53; Saldarini 1988:66). Sampley remarks that the atmosphere of the time was such that it could aptly be called an era of voluntary associations (see 1980:6-7).

Their non-corporate nature perhaps constituted their strongest appeal and reason for existence. In a political system where the majority of citizens were excluded from power and the means to power, voluntary associations provided a channel for significant communal participation. While such voluntary associations are nowadays classified as economic, ethnic, cultural, social or religious, they were in actual fact attempts to create a small cosmos or social unit. The temptation should be resisted to equate them with clubs and associations in contemporary industrialised societies (see Saldarini 1988:61).¹¹

Secondly, voluntary associations were structured along the lines of the social networks intrinsic to the first-century Mediterranean world. They were located for the most part in private homes, linked to household conventions and dominated by patron-client relationships and the system of honour and shame (see Malherbe 1983:88; White 1990:44-45). New voluntary associations, say for immigrants, entered the social mainstream by way of conventions such as patronage and benefaction related to household networks (see White 1990:59).

Thirdly, few associations were primarily religious in nature although, like most other activities in that world, they were not totally divorced from religion. 'They all wor-

¹⁰ Voluntary associations were very popular and extremely varied in their concerns. However, the bulk of them were designed to meet the social, charitable and funerary needs of their members, of whom there could be any number between ten and a hundred, the average presumably being 10-35 members (see Banks 1980:16-17; Saldarini 1988:68).

¹¹ Those who were excluded from political and economic power in the Empire had to protect their wealth and provide for their own security. Voluntary association provided the social structures where patron-client relationships could be built up and where and could be maintained. The conventions of friendship in particular provided the necessary symbolic culture (see Kraabel 1987:53).

shipped some god. The professional, social, and burial societies all adopted a patron deity, to whom sacrifice was made as a central ceremony of the regular (usually monthly) meeting' (Stambaugh & Balch 1986:140). Most associations had a patron deity (see Kraabel 1987:52; Tidball 1983:86).

There are, however, examples of small cults, both foreign and local, organised as voluntary associations (see Kraabel 1987:53; White 1990:37, 46). Some consisted entirely of members of one household (see White 1990:45) while others were linked to a particular profession (e.g. the cultic association set up by Tyrian merchants in the city of Puteoli in 79 CE – see White 1990:32). Even if a public or official cult already existed in a city, private cultic associations were often dedicated to the same deity (1990:59). Other features of these cults were communal dining and the accepted practice of adopting a household setting (see 1990:46-47). The Jews in the Diaspora likewise formed their own communities (voluntary associations?) in the Greco-Roman world (see § 3.3). When the early Pauline communities are discussed shortly, it should come as no surprise that in the cities of the Roman Empire they appeared, to the casual observer at any rate, very similar to these voluntary associations (see Wilken 1984:44). As will be pointed out in the discussion of Jewish synagogues, they were explicitly referred to (e.g. by Josephus) in terms of concepts commonly used in the sphere of voluntary associations.

Fourthly, the most significant feature is the discovery that these voluntary associations can hardly be described in terms of any central binding characteristic such as occupation, religion or social function. Saldarini (see 1988:68) warns that, given the variety of voluntary associations, no generalisations can confidently be applied to any one of them in the first-century Mediterranean world. This claim is supported by the recognition that often there is very little evidence for scholarly portrayals of typical voluntary associations (see Judge 1960^b:42-44).

In terms of the feature mentioned above, however, several factors do point to a similarity between these associations. As voluntary associations they operated as non-corporate groups in search of power and *koinonia*. Fundamental features were their integration into household structures and the various conventions, such as patron-client relationships and systems of honour and shame, that directed social interaction and social structures. They were all, in short, different configurations of social networks. These features suggest that although the various associations differed in character, they were very similar in that they all had their roots in the social organisational networks of the first-century world. In so far as they did share typical traits, voluntary associations derived their character from any one or more of the different features such as occupation, patron deity or interest group. They all shared the same nature – that of non-corporate groups – in that they were situated within household structures and shared the socio-cultural codes and conventions operative within that setting.

It is commonplace to argue that the Christian groups did not consciously model themselves on the voluntary associations (see, for example, Meeks 1983:79).

However, it is just as easy to demonstrate that most individual voluntary associations on which we have any information did not model themselves on what scholarly handbooks describe as *typical voluntary association*. If each was a configuration of a variety of elements, it may well be worthwhile to reconsider the approach which compares Pauline communities and voluntary associations and, by calculating the dis/similarities, decides whether the Pauline communities were indeed typical voluntary associations. In view of the configuration metaphor it seems likely that this is the type of group and the kind of social networks that should be assumed in order to describe the nature of the Pauline communities. They were different exemplars of household groups.

3.2 Philosophical school or scholastic community

There can be no doubt that Paul, like other leaders in the early Christian movement, carried on teaching activities. For that reason a second model of comparison for the Pauline communities – the philosophical school – has attracted scholarly attention. The configuration metaphor is especially valuable when it comes to the ‘academic’ or philosophical side of the Pauline communities. Judge (to my mind, quite correctly) observes:

Indeed it is owing to this academic character of the Christian mission that we are so much better informed about it than about other religious movements, and the Christian literature itself is devoted almost entirely to this aspect of its affairs. We know less about the religious practices of the Christians than we do about their arguments over points of ethical and theological doctrine.

(1961:125)

The fact that we are so well informed about this aspect of the Pauline communities should not prevent us from examining their relative value and position within their first-century setting. The configuration metaphor allows us to pull the whole picture into focus by supplying a frame for it.

A first step would be to establish what we are talking about. Secondly, some scholarly proposals in this regard should be evaluated, and finally the contribution of the philosophical-school model to an understanding of the Pauline communities should be pointed out.

3.2.1 The problem of philosophy in Paul’s world

As Freyne points out, the variety of philosophical systems in the first-century world, to some degree ‘took on the role that religion previously played in the city-state’ (1980:28).¹² Philosophy in the first-century world was concerned not so much with

¹² Both Philo and Josephus describe synagogue activities as a devotion to philosophy (for references, see Malherbe 1983:54).

metaphysics as with morals; with the search for an acceptable way of life (see Wilken 1971:272; Stambaugh & Balch 1986:142). '[S]alvation was at stake' (Johnson 1989:429), which means that philosophy as a way of life meant giving up vice and pursuing virtue. Ethics was central. It would, however, be a mistake to assume that all philosophical schools were alike. A wide variety of philosophical or scholastic activities can be found in the first-century world.¹³

As was argued in a previous chapter, Judaism in the ancient world closely resembled philosophy; conversion was impossible, except in the realm of philosophy (see also Wilken 1971:272). Several scholars suggest that, since they were without temple, cult, statue or ritual, they belong to the realm of philosophy rather than religion (see Judge 1980:212); the closest point of comparison with the activities of the Pauline communities they maintain, is philosophy (see Banks 1980:22; Johnson 1989:429).

Given the wide diversity, together with the emphasis on morals and the apparent religious differences in that world, it is inevitable that there should be scholarly perceptions of the Pauline communities as resembling philosophical schools.

3.2.2 Some scholarly proposals on Paul the philosopher

Visiting professional preachers, who resembled the itinerant teachers of philosophical movements (see Judge 1961:125), played an important part in establishing and maintaining the early Jesus groups. Thus, what Paul referred to as the *preaching* of his *gospel* can easily be seen as the actions of a philosopher (see Meeks 1983:82-83). But it is not immediately apparent with what trend in contemporary philosophical and scholastic activities Paul should be compared. It is obvious that when entering one of the Greco-Roman cities, Paul must have 'carried on his activities under the umbrella of some accepted social convention or institution' (Judge 1972:32). To resolve this dilemma, Judge proposes the model of the sophist:

As a Roman citizen he belonged to the social elite of the Hellenistic states. He found that the most effective way of countering the opposition of the synagogues was to create an alternative platform on the strength of this connection. His mission now has the patronage of eminent persons; he preaches under their auspices; they provided him with a retinue of assistants and with an audience, including their social dependents.

(1961:127)

What makes Paul a sophist like Dio Chrysostom and Aelius Aristides was, according to Judge, that 'they were all travellers, relying upon the hospitality of their admirers, all expert talkers and persuaders, all dedicated to their mission and intolerant of criticism' (1961:126).

¹³ Philosophical schools range from Stoics and Epicureans to Cynics (see Freyne 1980:28-35; Lohse 1976:243-252). Some scholars lump them all together under the heading *sophists* (see Judge 1961:126).

Malherbe supports this general picture (see 1983:47-59). He maintains that the kind of philosophers with whom Paul should be compared

were not metaphysicians who specialized in systematic abstractions, but, like Paul, were preachers and teachers who saw their main goal to be the reformation of the lives of people they encountered in a variety of contexts, ranging from the imperial court and the salons of the rich to the street corners.

(1989:68)

There is, however, a point of divergence. While, according to Judge, Paul entered the household of some wealthy patron and acted as the resident intellectual, Malherbe (following Hock) prefers the workshop setting for Paul's intellectual activities. At the level of Paul's provision of his own livelihood in the workshop, Malherbe finds some similarities between Paul and contemporary philosophers (see 1983:24-27). Since Hock was the one who worked out this position in greater detail, we shall turn to his discussion on Paul's activities as an artisan.

Hock (see 1980:52-59) argues that, unlike philosophers who begged, charged fees or entered the household of a rich and powerful patron (as Judge would have it), Paul opted to earn his keep by working as an artisan (tentmaker). In that way he stayed financially independent, but still had access to members of households where he could continue the preaching of his message. Hock's objection to Judge's view is that the latter neglects the workshop setting. Interestingly enough, this viewpoint does not affect Hock's estimate of Paul's social standing.¹⁴

Malherbe argues that as a maker of tents, 'Paul plied his trade in a workshop, probably within the setting of a household of artisans, and there offered his practice as an example to be imitated' (1989:69-70; and see Hock 1980 for more detail). Paul's philosopher-like act in relying on his craft for a livelihood, finds a counterpart in the philosophical traditions. Paul adapted this Greco-Roman philosophical moral tradition to express his theological understanding and to form communities of believers (see Malherbe 1989:71). Hock argues that the artisan's workshop was a conventional social setting for intellectual discourse and philosophical discussions (see 1980:41).

Since this point of disagreement does not affect their respective views on Paul's social status, the choice between the household setting and the workshop should not be overemphasised. In both instances the household setting served as the basis for Paul's philosophical activities.

¹⁴ Hock maintains that Paul's action in working at a trade confirms his elite status. The main evidence is that Paul shared the aristocratic view that working as an artisan was 'slavish and demeaning' (Hock 1978:562).

3.2.3 Reconsidering the model of the philosophical school

Meeks (to my mind, justifiably) warns that it is

useful to know that there was a strong scholarly, academic, and rhetorical element in the activities of the Pauline groups, but it will not do to make those elements constitutive of the movement.

(1983:84)

Judge, it should be acknowledged, clearly states that when he presents Paul as a sophist, he is not excluding other aspects such as cultic or welfare activities (see 1960^a:8). Even so both Judge and Malherbe fall short in two respects. Firstly, the other components of the philosophical school (e.g. the household setting) are not dealt with in an integrated way. The portrayal of philosophical schools as primarily institutions of learning and academic activity does not do justice to other equally important components. Like other groups, many philosophers and philosophical schools made use of the private homes of patrons (see Stowers 1984:66) and furthermore shared many features with voluntary associations (see Wilken 1971:279; Meeks 1983:83-84). Secondly, Paul's academic activities are not interpreted in conjunction with the other components. For example, the fact that Paul took either the workshop or the household of a wealthy patron as his headquarters must have influenced his academic activities.

Academic activities based on the household setting were subject to household conventions and the implied social relations, such as patron-client relationships. That is to say, Paul's philosophical activities were subject to the social conditions of his world. The occasional nature of his teaching activities highlights the embeddedness in the conventions of the household (be it that of a wealthy patron or of a fellow artisan) where he must have been a client.

Thus, although more is known of Paul's teaching activities compared to the cultic or religious side of his ministry, his teaching must be interpreted within the social setting in which it took root. While a great deal is known about Paul's teaching activities, very little is done to interpret it within the overall context of his social situation. In fact, much of the argument in this study has been devoted to pointing out that several anachronistic assumptions have for a very long time been imposed on the text in question. As a result, opponent hypotheses for the greater part assume that the issue in Galatia was a theological or doctrinal conflict over conflicting convictions. Despite the fact that Paul's letters apparently deal with the exposition of a belief system, it should be borne in mind that these theological, doctrinal or moral discussions may have had another function – they were subordinate to and embedded in social conditions. In fact, this letter should be construed in terms of the insight that academic activities were part of first-century social interaction.

3.3 The Diaspora synagogue prior to 70 CE

The third model from the environment to be compared to the Pauline communities is the Jewish synagogue. It is commonplace to assert that since Christianity is an offshoot of Judaism, 'the urban Christian groups obviously had the Diaspora synagogue as the nearest and most natural model' (Meeks 1983:80). Nonetheless, the Pauline household communities were still, according to the received view, significantly different from the Jewish synagogues. At least three aspects may be pointed out: the organisational terminology of the synagogues is not used, the role of women is different, and the Pauline communities were not bound by the ethnic community (see Stambaugh & Balch 1986:142; Meeks 1983:81).

It would furthermore not be far off the mark to say that, according to the received view, the synagogue in the first century was a building set aside for cultic and religious purposes where people met once a week on the Sabbath for worship, scripture reading and prayer. Within this sphere one would find the proselytes and God-fearers who are regarded as the bridge between the Jewish synagogue and the Pauline communities. Finally, the synagogues provided the setting for Paul's initial preaching activities in the cities of the Greco-Roman Empire. Are all these insights entirely correct?

While most of these aspects are being questioned today (especially in view of the configuration metaphor, together with the new understanding of first-century Judaism) it would be helpful to obtain a better understanding of the received view.

3.3.1 The received view of Jewish synagogues

Both the nature of the Jewish synagogue in the first century CE and the relationship between Paul, the Pauline groups and the Jewish synagogues come under the spotlight. Without an elaboration on some of these aspects, the arguments concerning an alternative view would be more difficult to understand.

First, it is maintained that in the cities where Paul founded congregations 'the Jews had already advanced to the stage of possessing buildings used exclusively for the community functions' (Meeks 1983:80; and see Banks 1980:18).

Secondly, the synagogue was basically a place of cultic and religious assembly – thus of prayer, worship and scripture reading (see Meeks 1983:80; and cf Kee 1990:5; White 1990:87). In fact, scholars more often than not use clerical language when referring to the Jewish synagogue.¹⁵ Part and parcel of this view is the undisputed assumption (undisputed, at least, in many New Testament studies) that the origin of

¹⁵ Georgi is a case in point. Someone 'attending' a synagogue 'service' (1971:124) sounds all too much like a modern churchgoer who can attend services at random.

the synagogue lies several centuries in the past during the Babylonian exile when Jews began to gather out of a need to read the Law and pray together in a foreign country (see, for example, Lohse 1976:158-160; Banks 1980:18; Neal 1988:18, 21). The giveaway can be found in something along the lines of Neal's statement (1988:1): 'The first Christians were primarily Jewish *believers* who had grown up *worshipping* in the synagogue' (italics mine).

Thirdly, according to the received view women in the Pauline household communities were much more equal to men than in contemporary Judaism (see Meeks 1983:81). In this regard the much later situation – where, under the tyranny of Rabbinic Judaism, women were practically excluded from the synagogue activities – is often invoked to illustrate the differences from the Pauline communities (see, for example, Banks 1980:128-129; Tidball 1983:85).

Fourth, the synagogue provides a handy basis to project the God-fearers as the necessary link between the synagogue and the Pauline movement. Malherbe (see 1983:64), for example, maintains that Paul usually preferred synagogues as a venue, since there he would have encountered the God-fearers who were vital to his mission (see also Stowers 1984:64).

Finally, Stambaugh and Balch go so far as to maintain that '[s]ocially and religiously, the existence of Jewish synagogues in Greco-Roman cities was crucial for the success of the early Christian mission' (1986:141). The locus of Paul's preaching activity is identified as the synagogue. It is often taken for granted that Paul must, at least in some cities, have started in the synagogue and only moved elsewhere when he encountered opposition. His remark in 2 Corinthians 11:24 (that five times he had received forty lashes less one at the hands of the Jews) support this view (see, for example, Stowers 1984:64; Harvey 1985).

3.3.2 An alternative view of Jewish synagogues

An alternative perception of the nature of Jewish synagogues in the pre-70 era is developing in some scholarly circles. Together with the new understanding of first-century Judaism, this alternative view of Jewish organisations in the Greco-Roman Diaspora points to a rather different view of the relationship between the Pauline communities and synagogues before 70 CE.

It should be noted, first of all, that the term *συναγωγή* can refer to a place of assembly (building), a group of people (assembly), a community or a congregation (see Stambaugh & Balch 1986:48; Kee 1990:8). However, the notion that the word refers to a building set aside exclusively for community functions cannot be derived from the literary sources (as is done, for example, by Neal 1988:8). White points out that, while references to synagogues are common in late first-century sources, it does not appear that there was a formerly ordered rabbinical institution as such prior to the second century C.E. Moreover, there is

no archaeological evidence for exclusively synagogue buildings in the Homeland dating to the first century.

(1990:61)

Since archaeological evidence can rarely be found for any place of assembly prior to 70, 'a synagogue could well have been nothing more than a large meeting room in a private house or part of a larger structure set apart for worship' (Meyers & Strange 1981:141). Amongst other arguments, this leads Kee to maintain that it would be more accurate to say that synagogues met in homes and public spaces (see 1990:9).

Secondly, synagogues, suggests Gutmann, were Pharisaic institutions which did not fully develop as important meeting-places for worship and instruction until after 70 CE (see 1981^b:3-4; Hoenig 1975:69-70). The construction history, together with the epigraphic and other archaeological evidence, suggests that synagogue buildings which were primarily places of worship and instruction did not exist until the third century (see Kee 1990:10). As Cohen points out, only from the second century onwards did writers refer to the presence of sacred scrolls in the synagogue (see 1987^b:164).

It is significant that these developments probably coincided with a subtle change in religious self-definition among Jewish communities; the rabbinisation of Judaism affected the symbolic as well as the material culture of the Jews (see White 1990:61, 90). Prior to the destruction of the Temple and the Rabbinic reconstruction of Judaism, the synagogue as the central institution in the life of Jewish communities should not be confused with the institution of later centuries (see White 1987^a:154). One of the consequences of this view is that room should be left for a subtle change in religious self-consciousness among the Jews. In the third to fourth centuries a more restrictive definition of synagogues, as religious institutions as opposed to collegial or voluntary associations, could have accompanied the changing circumstances under rabbinisation. Thus a *synagogue* during Paul's lifetime must have been quite different from a synagogue in the Rabbinic era that lay ahead (see White 1990:87, 90; Kraabel 1979).¹⁶

Thirdly, analyses of the construction history of several synagogue buildings in the Diaspora suggest that there were great divergences in organisation and theology due to varying degrees of adaptation to local cultures. Of the eleven synagogue communities identified in ancient Rome, epigraphic remains suggest that they differed widely in respect of such features as language, social standing and organisation (see White 1990:61).¹⁷

¹⁶ It is important to realise that the rise of an institution such as the synagogue 'must be rooted in a determinate historical reality for historical silence is hardly sufficient proof for the existence of an institution, such as the synagogue' (Gutmann 1981^b:3). In this regard it is meaningful that the term *synagogue* never appears in Paul's letters (see Kraabel 1985:228 for a discussion of the issue).

¹⁷ Information about the alleged eleven Jewish synagogues in Rome on which data are available suggests that they were constituted along social and status lines. The spectrum varied from 'the virtually illiterate funerary inscriptions from the *Synagogue of the Hebrews*' (White 1985/6:110 n 61) to the *Synagogue of the Augustasians*, which apparently owed allegiance to the Emperor.

Kee's conclusion as regards Jewish synagogues in the Homeland is probably truer of the situation in the Diaspora:

Thus there is simply no evidence to speak of synagogues in Palestine as architecturally distinguishable edifices prior to 200 C.E. Evidence of meeting places: "Yes", both in private homes and in public buildings. Evidence of distinctive architectural features of a place of worship or for study of Torah: "No".

(Kee 1990:9)

These three features should, however, be explored in greater detail. They are: the household setting of synagogues; the fact that in Paul's lifetime they were not yet Pharisaic institutions; and, thirdly the fact that they were highly diversified as regards both organisation and theology.

3.3.3 Jewish synagogues and/as voluntary associations

Several clues, both archaeological and literary, point to the adaptation by Jewish communities in the Diaspora of 'a Hellenistic gentile social form, the private organisation, to its particular social and religious purposes' (Kraabel 1987:54).

The first clue has already been mentioned. There is widespread evidence that many new or imported religious and ethnic associations made use, at least initially, of private homes (see White 1990:39). The renovation history of the Delos synagogue, the oldest known synagogue building either in the Diaspora or in the Homeland, suggests, that it probably had this kind of background.¹⁸ It dates from the late second century or mid first century BCE and was probably a private house at first (see Kraabel 1979:493). Since it has no permanent Torah shrine or Jewish symbols, the chances are that it was used primarily as an assembly hall and community centre (see Kraabel 1979:493). White adds that the nature of the renovations (which suggest similarities to the collegial halls of other foreign groups on the island) gives some indication of the nature of this synagogue establishment: it was a kind of guild or voluntary association (see 1987^a:153, 1990:66).

A second clue comes from Caesar's ban on all collegia with the exception of 'certain long established groups' (Meeks 1983:35). The synagogues were one of those explicitly exempted.

A further clue comes from Josephus's references to the Jewish community at Sardis. Responding to an appeal by the Jews of Sardis, the proquaestor and proprator of the province of Asia, Lucius Antonius (49 BCE) said (according to Josephus) that

¹⁸ Whether this particular building really was a synagogue is hotly debated (see Kraabel 1979:491; White 1987^a).

Jewish citizens of ours have come to me and pointed out that from the earliest times they have had an association of their own in accordance with their native laws and a place of their own, in which they decide their affairs and controversies with one another; and upon their request that it be permitted them to do these things, I decided that they might be maintained, and permitted them so to do.

(Jewish Antiquities 14.235)

On another occasion the city council and citizens of Sardis, according to Josephus, decided as follows:

Whereas the Jewish citizens living in our city have continually received many great privileges from the people and have now come before the council and the people and have pleaded that as their laws and freedom have been restored to them by the Roman Senate and people, they may, in accordance with their ancestral customs, come together and have a communal life and adjudicate suits among themselves, and that a place be given them in which they may gather together with their wives and children and offer their ancestral prayers and sacrifices to God, it has therefore been decreed by the council and people that permission shall be given them to come together on stated days to do these things which are in accordance with their laws, and also that a place shall be set apart by the magistrates for them to build and inhabit, such as they may consider suitable for this purpose, and that the market-officials of the city shall be charged with the duty of having suitable food for them brought in.

(Jewish Antiquities 14.260-261)

These references are significant for several reasons. First, Josephus calls the synagogue a *synodos*, which is one of the most common and general terms for a club, guild or voluntary association. For legal purposes, says Meeks (see 1983:35), the Romans classified the Jewish synagogues in each city as *collegia* (or associations). Secondly, it sheds light on some community practices. The participation of women (and children), the sorting out of legal disputes, and communal meals were often features of voluntary associations also.

The Jews, like other groups, established ethnic associations by means of community gatherings since before the first century (see Gutmann 1981^b:3; White 1990:66). Furthermore, the occurrence of *προσευχαί* (houses of prayer) do not automatically guarantee the existence of the synagogue as a separate institution (see Gutmann 1975^a:xi; 1981^b:3). What needs to be examined is the precise nature of these gatherings. Kraabel suggests that

the synagogue Judaism of the Roman Diaspora is best understood as the grafting of a biblical Diaspora theology onto a Greco-Roman social organization. The shift to minority status in places outside the Homeland led to the abandonment of many elements of the ancestral

religion, a new emphasis on others, and the adoption of the new environment's iconography, architecture, and organisational form.

(1987:58)

This picture can be filled out in more detail by focusing on some aspects only: the role of patrons and the position of women in Jewish synagogues.¹⁹ The excavations at Delos and especially the inscriptions found there, amongst other indications do much to establish the nature of the Jewish synagogue at Delos as a kind of a voluntary association.

'Honoring pagan benefactors (both men and women) in a synagogue' White maintains, 'reflects on both the internal order of the Jewish community and its social place within the larger environment' (1987a:154). More precisely, dependence on the benefaction of patrons reflects something of the nature of Jewish communities in the Diaspora as well as their gatherings. Meeks mentions the synagogue of the Augustesians in Rome which honoured the Emperor, either as a patron or for his general policy of favouring Jewish rights (see 1983:206 n 161). In addition to many Jewish patrons – in all probability wealthy members of the community who, by virtue of their generosity, were accorded leadership roles and honoured accordingly – a number of non-Jewish patrons fulfilled the same role (see White 1987a; 1990:78-85; Meeks 1983:206 n 161). It seems likely that 'leadership roles in the synagogue, as in other religious associations, entailed benefactions' (White 1990:81). Two examples will suffice to demonstrate the significance of this point.²⁰

At Acmonia in Roman Phrygia, a certain Julia Severa – also known to have been a priestess of the imperial cult – donated a building to the Jewish community (see White 1990:81). She was duly honoured. A second woman, Tation, at Phocaea in Roman Lydia (during the reign of Nero) built an edifice and court and donated it to the Jewish community. The inscription honouring her reads:

Tation, wife of Straton son of Empadon, made a gift to the Jews of the house and the walls of the (peristyle) court, which she had built from her own resources. The Congregation of the Jews has honored Tation, wife of Straton son of Empadon, with a gold crown and a seat of honor.

(translation in White 1987a:143)

The position of women in the synagogue organisation is noteworthy, while the position of patrons as such discloses something about the adaption by Jews in the Diaspora from the domestic cultures.

¹⁹ Several other features, such as providing for burial needs and communal meals, were very typical of voluntary associations as well as Jewish synagogue communities (see for example Meeks 1983:35; Stambaugh & Balch 1986:49).

²⁰ The fact is often overlooked that even the New Testament mentions a non-Jew as a benefactor in connection with the building of a synagogue. Luke, (7:3-6) towards the end of the first century, mentions a Roman centurion as the benefactor who sponsored the building of the synagogue.

The role of women was evidently different in earlier times (at least the first century) from their role during the time of Talmudic supremacy. The segregated place for women in the synagogue is a feature of Galilean synagogues only from the fourth century onwards (see White 1990:80).

The great diversity in Diaspora Judaism prior to the fall of the Temple, together with the open attitudes between Jews and non-Jews, probably point to a less rigid demarcation in some places. Non-Jews may even have been allowed access to the assembly and worship (see White 1990:92). The role of benefactors to the synagogue community, especially non-Jews, undoubtedly left its mark on local conditions.

Perhaps the most significant conclusion to be drawn from the levels of social interaction in Jewish synagogues, as reflected in the above discussion, is that although ethnicity was important, the distinction between Jew and non-Jew was drawn in different ways. Neither purely ethnic nor clearly religious reasons should be singled out as the touchstone of Jewishness. The important role of social and organisational links in Jewish synagogue communities should deter us from using unilateral categories for these distinctions. In particular, the question of *who was a Jew* and *what were God-fearers* as already discussed (see chapter 4), will patently be elucidated if these aspects are taken into account.

These conditions rather than the Rabbinic ones should be pictured as the first-century backdrop to Paul's activities. If Paul did go to synagogues, he did not go to them as institutions in the Talmudic sense. What he encountered would most probably have resembled other voluntary associations, with an ethnic colour and Jahweh worship, which fulfilled a variety of social functions rather than some exclusively religious ones. The social organisation was modelled on conventions of social interaction rather than on purely ethnic or religious markers. Furthermore, membership, leadership and entrance requirements were largely dependent on social networks.

It should come as no surprise that scholars, especially those defending the notion of uniqueness and adhering to the received view, have tried to minimise the similarities between Jewish synagogues and voluntary associations and by and large neglected the social conditions in which synagogues were situated. However, some of the arguments raised to minimise the similarities do need to be reviewed – especially since this could contribute to uncover some further features of Jewish synagogues. Three arguments only will be mentioned in passing. First, unlike other voluntary associations, the Jews attempted to extend their network across national boundaries (see Judge 1960^b:44; Meeks 1983:80, 108). Secondly, there was a central body in each city representing all the Jews (see Meeks 1983:35; Applebaum 1974:478). Thirdly, membership was automatic by virtue of Jewish birth.

As regards the first argument, Georgi points out that Judaism and Christianity were not the only cults with a worldwide mission or international fraternity. The mysteries of Dionysus 'were the first Greek mystery cult to conduct a world-wide mission, to

form mystery fraternities everywhere, and to keep them in some sort of contact with each other, not least by wandering preachers working as missionaries' (1971:128). In fact, Freyne points out that several philosophical traditions (especially that of the Stoics) arose in reaction to the downfall of the city state. Instead, the whole world was now to be perceived as one huge city state (see 1980:28-29).

The second objection can hardly be maintained in view of the meagre evidence for such central bodies. It would be dangerous, given the lack of evidence, to assume a central body like the one in Alexandria for every other city (see Kraabel 1981^b:87; White 1990:91). It should furthermore be noted that the Pauline group(s) are distinguished from *the* Jewish synagogues as if all synagogues were identical. Seen in terms of the configuration metaphor, the question should read: on what basis could the different synagogues as well as the Pauline communities in the same city be distinguished?

Thirdly, since it is accepted that Paul 'considered himself a Jew with the right to present his brand of Judaism' (Stowers 1984:64), many New Testament scholars uncritically accept Luke's viewpoint as trustworthy: Paul presented his message in synagogues and only after rejection went to the Gentiles via a God-fearer (see also Meeks 1983:35).

In view of the above discussion, only a few remarks need be made. First of all, the disregard for the social network and the social location of groups in this third argument is remarkable. The argument that the concept *Jew* was a situational term (see chapter 4) can, in view of the social conditions of synagogues, be filled out in more detail. Jewishness was embedded and defined within the parameters of a particular social network: the synagogue institution. Thus Jews were indeed automatically welcomed, but it would be stretching it too far to assume a universal recognition of Jewishness. The notions of Jewishness and God-fearers urgently need to be revised from the point of view of the social conditions provided by synagogue communities (see furthermore chapter 7 § 3).

4 THE HOUSEHOLD SETTING IN THE FIRST-CENTURY MEDITERRANEAN WORLD

As has been argued, the household is one of the central social institutions in agrarian societies. That the private household was the centre of Paul's activities in the cities of the Greco-Roman Empire is confirmed by several indicators (see further chapter 7 § 2.1).

While household institutions are emphasised as the basis of the variety of non-corporate groups, the *realia* about housing in the first-century Mediterranean world

are rarely perceived at a conscious level.²¹ In addition the socio-cultural conventions related to that part of the cultural system are almost totally neglected.

4.1 Houses and housing

If the excavations at Ostia and Ephesus are any indication of the general pattern of housing in the first-century Mediterranean world, housing conditions were far from convenient for the majority of people who did not own a proper house. These conditions obviously have to be kept in mind when the household institution is taken as a matrix for the Pauline movement.

Two basic types of houses occurred (see Verner 1982:57): private mansions (*domi*) and multi-storeyed apartment houses (*insulae*).²² Most of the population lived in one- or two-room apartments and must have done most of their eating, drinking, and socialising in public places. Many lived in single-room apartments on top of their workshops. A high percentage of people were not even in a position to obtain such apartments. They slept in and around public buildings and other structures (see Verner 1982:57-58; Stambaugh & Balch 1986:109-110; White 1987^b:6-10). Given the high population density in an average city of the Greco-Roman Empire (see Meeks 1983:28), it follows that privacy was rare and much of a person's social life was lived on the street and sidewalks and in public places.

Bearing in mind those features of cities in the first-century Mediterranean world that have already been discussed, the attitude towards space and the planning of residential quarters is a noteworthy one. Despite the high population density, even a small town might, in the perception of its residents, have had thirty to forty neighbourhoods or quarters (see Malina 1989:134). Given the lack of walls and space to separate and differentiate people, social barriers in the form of social conventions played an important part (see Stowers 1984:82). Furthermore, people from the lower levels were dependent on patrons not only to satisfy intangible needs (see patron-client relationship, and honour and shame) but also for tangible needs such as household space for socialising and public meetings. If the meeting-place of the Pauline communities was a private house, it goes without saying that the physical conditions contributed immensely to the social structures (see for example Murphy-O'Connor 1983:153-161). Household institutions would necessarily have left their mark on such meetings in the form of social codes and conventions.

²¹ Information on the social institution of *households* is abundant (see, for example, Meeks 1983:75-77; Stambaugh & Balch 1986:123-124, 138-140; Tidball 1983:79-86).

²² A *domus* was built on the traditional Roman plan, with a number of rooms clustered around a central atrium. A few apartment houses were more luxurious in that they included rooms for slaves and perhaps a room large enough for social gatherings (for more detail see Verner 1982:56-59).

4.2 Households and hospitality

At this point the focus shifts from organisational and physical structures to symbolic and social structures.

It should be realised that in the first-century Mediterranean world the household, with its social networks, was not an optional structure but a fundamental social phenomenon. It has even been termed the 'primary structure of the Empire' (Tidball 1983:79; and see Stambaugh & Balch 1986:123) or 'a basic political unit' (Malherbe 1983:69). Although it provided the basic channel of political movement by way of patronage and benefaction, household structures were subordinate to the political power in the Empire. Thus one should first of all avoid thinking of the extended household in the first-century world as a bigger but otherwise not very dissimilar version of the contemporary Western household. It was something quite different: an important economic, political and religious unit.

Family in the first-century Mediterranean world was primarily defined not by kinship but 'by the relations of dependence and subordination' (Meeks 1983:30). Families consisted of extended families which constituted a household (see Carney 1975:90). Thus the household often included 'the entire circle of relatives, slaves, free workers lodged on the premises, dependents and their families' (MacMullen 1984:107) and even included business associates (see Malherbe 1983:69 and Neusner 1987:332).

These extended households were the dominant economic units in ancient society (see Carney 1975:149). Such households acted as resource bases, economically and in terms of intangible needs, for the extended household connected to them. The patron was responsible for the household but he also expected a certain degree of respect and obedience.

The household was furthermore a religious unit (see Verner 1982:28): 'The household, like the republic, expressed its solidarity in a common religion' (Judge 1960^b:35). Everyone who became part of it passed into the service and under the protection of the god of the house. Because of the clear hierarchy of authority culminating in the patron, the religion of the household – chosen by the patron – was a way of expressing household solidarity (see also Tidball 1983:81, 84). The god of the household was the god of the individual member, and this happened freely without coercion.

A household was, in a real sense, a community (see Tidball 1983:79). As already pointed out, not only various cult groups and Jewish communities but also private clubs, voluntary associations, and philosophical schools used the household as their organisational basis. Thus it makes sense when Banks calls the gospel a communal affair; to 'embrace the gospel, then, is to enter into community' (1980:33). It would perhaps be more correct to say: to enter a Christian household community was to embrace the gospel.

To be part of a household was to be part of an intricate network of relations. At least two sets of social networks (not always clearly distinguishable) should be identified: the ties of friendship (equals) and patron-client relationship (unequals). The organisation of households and the terminology used both in households and in voluntary associations very often resembled that of the greater Empire (see, for example, Judge 1960^a:6-7). Within the household, 'a vertical but not quite unilinear chain' (Meeks 1983:30) connected unequals. Apart from the bond between the *paterfamilias* and his next of kin, the predominant relationship was a patron-client relationship with inferiors (clients) in the household setting. This intricate set of social networks can be explained in terms of the practice of hospitality. An insight into the rules of hospitality typical of first-century Mediterranean culture sheds some light on the importance of this social practice for an understanding of Paul's travelling (and that of his co-workers) as well as his letter-writing.²³

In the household context, 'the primary mechanism of social organization and leadership (and even missionary expansion) was the practice of hospitality' (White 1987^c:216). *Hospitality* in the Mediterranean world, then and now, has nothing to do with the contemporary Western usage of entertaining relatives and friends; it has to do with 'the problem of how to deal with strangers' (Pitt-Rivers 1977:94). In fact, it might be defined as 'the process by means of which an outsider's status is changed from stranger to guest' (Malina 1986^c:181). Hospitality was, first and foremost, closely tied up with patron-client relationships. Through their patrons, for instance, clients gained protection from local laws and gods (see Pitt-Rivers 1977:96). The status of a guest – halfway between a stranger and a community member – clearly indicates the precarious nature of patron-client relationships and the risk of over-playing one's hand. In this regard letters of recommendation played a significant role: they could spare a stranger the ordeal of a test or even help to convert a stranger into a guest.

It should furthermore be emphasised that the relationship between benefactor and beneficiary was a reciprocal one.²⁴ Mott points out that

in ancient Greek and Roman society reciprocity was at the heart of benevolence. An important societal bond in the Hellenistic and Roman periods was the relationship between benefactor and

²³ To be sure, the notion of *hospitality* is another field (although related to the other aspects) where current anthropological research and relevant models may serve as heuristic tools for a historical study of the first-century Mediterranean world. In terms of social-science research, the notion of hospitality should be classified under the heading of a category such as *rites of incorporation* (see Pitt-Rivers 1977:96).

²⁴ Especially in a world where one's social position was not determined by a universal norm or hierarchical status (e.g. by economic potential or the ability to obtain status and power by economic means), status positions could not be transferred between communities (see Pitt-Rivers 1977:97). Status was closely linked to patron-client relationships and positions of honour *inter alia*.

beneficiary. The formal obligations of rendering appropriate honor and gratitude to one's benefactor at once motivated and controlled personal, political and diplomatic conduct.

(1975:60)

The principle of reciprocity is closely bound up with patronage and obligations of honour (see Malina 1988^b:5 n 7; Mott 1975:69), which will be discussed shortly. By contrast with the custom of *free* gifts in some societies, giftexchange in the first-century world (as in many other cultures) was a reciprocal action; 'no one gave anything in goods, services, or honors without proper recompense to himself or his kin' (Mott 1975:68).²⁵ I have already indicated, social relationships operated on the same reciprocal principle. Gifts 'implied obligations and were made culturally with strings attached' (Malina 1988^b:5 n 7). But, as Judge indicates, refusing a gift was no easier, since such refusal incurred the burden of enmity (see 1980:214).²⁶ The principle of benefaction was widespread and inherent in both patron-client relationships and relationships of enmity.

As White points out, letter-writing itself was part of the social fabric of securing and maintaining social conventions. Letter-writing served not only to transmit information but to secure hospitality for the writer or a protégé (see White 1990:106). Both travel and the formation of communities were dependent on the social conventions of hospitality. In fact, 'house church hospitality also establishes the context for letter writing' (White 1987^c:216; see also Meeks 1983:109; Malherbe 1983:94-103).²⁷ A technical vocabulary was developed in letters of recommendation by means of which a traveller was introduced and recommended to a patron with a view to securing hospitality (see Malherbe 1983:102; Malina 1986^c:187; White 1987^c:217).²⁸

In the context of the Pauline household communities, patronage was the model for hospitality extended by the householder to the community (see White 1987^c:217). A household patron provided an extended household with tangible and often

²⁵ Malina argues that the vocabulary of *grace* often found in the New Testament derives from the favouritism of patronage: 'I suggest *charizomai* refers to showing patronage, *charis* to willingness to be a patron, and *charisma* to the outcomes of patronage. This is what Paul (and the rest of the New Testament) mean with this set of terms' (1988^b:5 n 7).

²⁶ Judge's description of friendship relationships makes it clear that even friendship in Paul's world was different from friendship in our world: 'One made friends by money. In accepting it, the beneficiaries acquired also an inescapable train of obligations, enforced by the threat of renunciation of friendship' (1980:214).

²⁷ The importance of the conventions of hospitality for the writing of letters and the ability to travel is argued by Malherbe (1983:95-96). However, he fails to bring out adequately the social obligations and conventions to which hospitality committed people. This is demonstrated, for example, in his failure to explain clearly the rules of hospitality typical of that culture (see criticism by Malina 1986^c:179-181).

²⁸ Paul was very much aware of the practice and even made use of it – as can be detected, for example, in 1 Cor 16:3, 15-16, Phlp 2:29-30, 1 Th 2:29-30, Rm 16:1-2.

intangible benefits for which he (in exceptional cases, she) in return received honour (see Meeks 1986b:111).

If Paul entered into the social network of household institutions in the cities where he travelled, then it can be taken for granted that a significant part of his social interaction was regulated by the above conventions of hospitality.

5 NETWORKS OF SOCIO-CULTURAL RELATIONS IN PAUL'S WORLD

5.1 Patron-client relationships

On the one hand, patron-client relationships were a supplement to class and status categories (see Saldarini 1988:57), and on the other hand they were regulated by the values of honour and shame (see Moxnes 1988b:62). While class structures defined vertical differences between people, patron-client relationship filled out the 'horizontal dimension based on interpersonal loyalty, commitment and influence, both within and across class boundaries' (Saldarini 1988:57). Ancient society, according to Saldarini, had a 'very strong horizontal dimension based on interpersonal loyalty, commitment and influence' (1988:57) as compared to modern industrialised societies. This is reflected especially in the high value that was attached to honour (see following section).

Patron-client relations, Elliott points out, 'played a key role in Roman public and private life' (1987:46) and have survived in the Mediterranean world, in various forms, to the present day (see Eisenstadt & Roninger 1980).²⁹ Since the focus in this study is on the private and not the public political spheres, emphasis will be placed on the function of patron-client relationships in the household setting. Patronage and benefaction were furthermore the pillars of the extended household social structure in the Roman world (see White 1986:260). As one of the sets of social networks in the first-century Mediterranean world, it played an important part in establishing social relations. The hierarchically based social structure fundamental to the Greco-Roman Empire was replicated countless times, on a smaller scale, in all sorts of personal relationships; religious groups, estates, workers' guilds, families and even friendship ties were organised hierarchically (see Stowers 1986:28). Patron-client conventions lay at the root of these relationships.

The basic features of a patron-client relationship, as described by Elliott, include the following:

²⁹ Following the interpretive principle that models from contemporary anthropological studies should serve as heuristic tools for a cross-cultural interpretation of first-century Mediterranean world, patronage in contemporary Mediterranean societies fits perfectly. To this day Mediterranean societies are 'all undercapitalized agrarian civilizations. They are characterised by sharp social stratification and by both a relative and absolute scarcity of natural resources ... There is little social mobility. Power is highly concentrated in a few hands' (Gilmore 1982:192). Such conditions are conducive to patron-client ties. The parallels with the first-century Mediterranean world should be apparent.

It is a personal relationship of some duration entered into voluntarily by two or more persons of unequal status based on differences in social roles and access to power, and involves the reciprocal exchange of different kinds of 'goods and services' of value to each partner. In this relationship of binding and long-range character designed to advance the interests of both partners, a 'patron' is one who uses his/her influence to protect and assist some other person who becomes his/her 'client,' who in turn provides to this patron certain valued services.

(1987:42)

Patrons and clients exchanged favours; while patrons most often intervened on behalf of clients to provide physical protection, financial help, support in legal cases and the like; clients in return were obligated, *inter alia*, to enhance the 'prestige, reputation and honor of his patron in public and private life, favor him with daily early-morning salutations, support his political campaigns, supply him information, refuse to testify against him in the courts, and give constant public attestation and memorials of his patron's benefactions, generosity, and virtue' (Elliott 1987:43; and see Judge 1960^a:6-7; Saldarini 1988:57-58; Malina 1988^b:3-8). These patron-client relationships of which friendship was a part, formed the basis of political activities; access to power and security ran along the lines of a relationship with a social superior.

Where central institutions in a society are weak and do not fulfil the basic needs of social inferiors, patron-client relations are used to remedy the inadequacies (see Saldarini 1988:58; Malina 1988^b:7-8). Given the social conditions of the first-century Mediterranean world, it is hardly surprising that patron-client relations played such a significant part not only in voluntary associations and Jewish synagogue communities but also in the social interaction of the Pauline communities.³⁰

The quest for public honour in support of one's status will be discussed shortly. Suffice it to say that patronage was encouraged and expected of the wealthy, to support the social structure; 'Giving money to others was not a mark of subordination but of superiority' (Judge 1982:26). The fact of patron-client relationships becomes all the more real when viewed in the light of the socio-economic structure of first-century societies, where the vast majority of people had virtually no access to power. Obviously the social conditions surrounding houses and social space have to be included. A patron-client relationship was an indispensable access route to honour and status. As will be indicated in the following chapter, patrons saw in Paul's house churches opportunities to extend their power bases.

³⁰ Without implying that patron-client relationships are always and everywhere the same, the basic point holds that in each case the particular manifestation needs to be determined (see Gilmore 1982:193). In cases where the evidence is insufficient, a guess along the lines of the typical probably has more value than ignoring the point altogether.

5.2 Honour and shame as pivotal values in the first-century world

In an honour culture, honour plays a crucial part in establishing a sense of worth and social standing. It presumes that people are community-oriented, that community values and esteem are highly regarded (see Moxnes 1988^b:62; Saldarini 1988:56). In fact, people perceive themselves first and foremost as community members who are in a relationship to other people and groups. One of the major differences between twentieth-century people and first-century Mediterranean people lies in the honour system. *Significant others* have to recognise one's claim to honour, or the result is shame (see Moxnes 1988^b:63).

The personality structure which corresponds to honour and shame cultures is described as a *dyadic* personality (see Malina 1989:128-131). While most Westerners are brought up as individuals, children in the first-century Mediterranean world were brought up to be primarily members of the community. While individualism was rare in that world, self-perception was very much determined by the perception of others (see Malina 1981:53-60). First-century people, as Malina points out, knew other people socially in terms of gender-based roles, in terms of the groups they were embedded in, and with constant regard to public awards of respect and honour (see 1989:127).

These social networks, which form part of the landscape of socio-cultural interaction in Paul's world, all help to open the door to a world where the nature of Paul's conflict in Galatia can be described in terms relevant to his socio-cultural system. That Paul adhered to the conventions of honour and shame is convincingly argued by Moxnes (see 1988^a, 1988^b).

6 THE NATURE OF THE PAULINE HOUSEHOLD COMMUNITIES IN GALATIA: A PROPOSAL

There can be no doubt that valuable information and insights are gained by comparing the Pauline communities to models from the environment. However, the social location of groups cannot be established either by accepting one model to the exclusion of all others or by arguing the uniqueness of the Pauline communities.³¹ As a conclusion to this chapter it will suffice it to draw some of the loose ends together.

³¹ It should be noted that, contrary to the conclusion that the Pauline communities were unique when compared to models from the environment, some scholars did propose alternative combinations. Wilkens suggests that the 'combination of "philosophical school" and "association" suited the Christian community remarkably well' (1971:287). Judge argues for a kind of 'national community' (1980:213) which is a combination of at least cultic, welfare and scholastic activities (see 1960^a:8). All these proposals have the same shortcoming: they ignore the fundamental issue of the social location of groups. The Pauline household communities did have features of voluntary (private) associations and 'way of life' (philosophical) schools, but were not simply a combination of some of their special features.

In the very first chapter (see § 3.2) it was stated that we are concerned with the social location of groups in the first-century Mediterranean world – not with the geographical location of the addressees (ἐκκλησία τῆς Γαλατίας). Unless it can be argued that the specific geographical location will in any sense alter the picture presented, it is not essential to include it. In other words, unless it can be indicated that the specific geographical location of addressees has a bearing on or will alter the social location of groups in the first-century world, it is in a sense immaterial where they were located. As far as I can see, such evidence is not yet available.

It is therefore assumed that, broadly speaking, those addressed in this letter shared the basic features of non-corporate groups in the agrarian society under Greco-Roman rule. It is also assumed that the social location of groups, the socio-cultural codes and conventions associated with such groups, and the basic features operative in institutions such as the Pauline household communities were also present in the Galatian communities. It is assumed, furthermore, that the new understanding of first-century Judaism – together with the setting provided by the Jewish synagogue, which is taken as a subculture for the emergence of the Pauline communities (movement) in general – also applies in this case. It goes without saying that these assumptions should be measured against those pointed out as tacitly assumed in the received view.

The Galatian communities may be described as typical Pauline communities, if such a thing ever existed. Whether the ἐκκλησία τῆς Γαλατίας were different household communities in the same city, or different ones in different cities, it does not really detract from the point that it is more plausible to proceed from the codes and conventions linked to the household setting than (as in the received view) from those operative in modern *church* settings. After all, the whole thrust of this study is to provide an alternative cypher key, consisting at the very least of a definite first-century Mediterranean communicative context, for reading the letter to the Galatians.

In a broader sense, the Pauline household communities were non-corporate groups. Such groups were a central feature of the first-century Mediterranean world and were constituted primarily on the basis of the household institution and the household communities assembled around a patron. As household institutions they formed the backbone of Greco-Roman social, cultural, economic and political life – at least in so far as the household institution was, alongside the Roman Empire with its military politics, the major social force in that world.

As non-corporate groups the Galatian household communities were probably constituted under the supervision and protection of a patron and provided in a variety of social and economic needs. They provided salvation – that is, protection and relief from these needs. They ensured benefits for the clients who participated in the Galatian households and provided the setting in which patrons received honour.

The patron god was the Jewish God, and the patron religion of the Galatian household communities was a specific brand of Jewish messianic and apocalyptic thought. The Galatian household communities, in short, were particular configurations of a variety of first-century Mediterranean social networks. The specific character of these communities will be discussed in the next chapter. Paul gained entry to these households in some way or another. From the point of view of the household institution he could have been nothing more than a client under the protection and authority of the household patron. He was, however, involved in a more complicated network of social interaction in that he acted as a typical wandering philosopher, which added a second dimension to his social interaction in Galatia. He furthermore claimed divine authority in apparent disregard of other forms of authority, especially that of the household institution on which he depended.

CHAPTER 7

A FIRST-CENTURY MEDITERRANEAN COMMUNICATIVE CONTEXT AND THE CONFLICT IN GALATIA: A QUESTION OF SOCIAL AUTHORITY

To detect and understand religious phenomena in the ancient world it is necessary to analyse the totality of social and cultural phenomena and the manner in which symbols considered sacred permeate and affect the flow of the totality of social life.

(Elliott 1986:16)

1 INTRODUCTION

It has been indicated in the first chapter of this study that conflict in Galatia (that is, the situation which caused Paul to write the letter) is a crucial element of the communicative context assumed when reading the letter. In view of the alternative communicative context suggested thus far (that is, the alternative methodological and historical components) it is necessary to return to the issue of the conflict in Galatia. However, an attempt will now be made to understand the nature of the conflict and, consequently, the communicative context assumed when reading the letter in terms of the constructed first-century Mediterranean setting.

Since particular socio-cultural codes and conventions regulate social interaction, it is assumed in this study that the best place to discover the nature of the conflict would be the household setting, together with the Jewish subculture in the first-century Mediterranean world. Paul's academic activities as a philosopher-like prophet took root within the broader setting provided by these two fields of research at the very least.¹ Within that context, the proper codes and conventions for analysing the communication and the reflected conflict may be looked for.

It should be noted that the focus of this study will shift from a primary concern with the cause of the conflict to the issue which should be addressed first, namely the nature of the conflict in Galatia.² In view of the first-century Mediterranean com-

¹ It should again be kept in mind that the setting within which Paul operated was not divided in this artificial (analytical) way between his Jewish traditions and the conventions of the household institution. What is needed is, by way of imaginative construction, to visualise (with all its shortcomings) a possible configuration of the Pauline household communities in Galatia.

² This shift should be seen in the context of, and in contrast to, the received view on opponent hypotheses, where the debate focuses on the cause of the conflict in Galatia. The nature thereof is, given the history-of-ideas approach and the received communicative context, generally taken for granted (see chapter 1).

municative context, as well as the methodological components argued in this study, it is inevitable that the shift should have taken place. The communicative context suggested in this study provides room for redefining the conflict which was apparently the basic occasion of the letter.

Thus, in this chapter an attempt will first of all be made to be more precise about the character of the Pauline household communities in Galatia. Secondly, the Diaspora Jewish subculture, as it probably existed in Paul's lifetime, will be sketched as a part of Paul's mental world. Thirdly, Paul's academic activities as a philosopher-like prophet will be placed in perspective. Taking these points of view into account, the nature of the conflict in Galatia will be redefined as a socio-religious one. Finally, in view of the redefined nature of the conflict (using a few examples only from the letter to the Galatians), an indication will be given that some clues in the letter (when read in terms of this alternative cypher key) do indeed support the suggestion of a socio-religious conflict.

2 HOUSEHOLD STRUCTURES AND THE CHARACTER OF THE PAULINE COMMUNITIES IN GALATIA

The previous two chapters dealt with the historical components of the cypher key – that is, with the construction of a concrete communicative context for the communication. The nature of the Pauline household communities has been identified, but we still need to be more precise as to the exact character of the Pauline configuration of first-century Mediterranean non-corporate groups.

2.1 The central role of household institutions in Paul's activities

Household structures have been pointed out as central to voluntary associations and Jewish synagogues as well as philosophical schools. In fact, the household institution with its accompanying social conventions was identified as the central location of all these groups. But what about the Pauline communities?

There is widespread agreement nowadays that the members of Pauline communities assembled in private homes. At least five times in Paul's letters specific households are designated by the phrase (or derivatives of it) τῆ κατ' οἴκου αὐτῶν ἐκκλησίᾳ (1 Cor 16:19). The other instances are Philemon 2, Romans 16:3 (only in a text-critical variant, see Nestle-Aland²⁶), Romans 16:5 and Colossians 4:15 (if taken as authentically Pauline). Several other remarks indicate that Paul's congregations met in the home of a wealthy member of a community (e.g. Rm 16:3ff). That the followers of Jesus in the cities of the Greco-Roman Empire assembled in the houses of members from the earliest times is supported by evidence from Luke (e.g. Ac 2:46; 5:42; 12:12).

Paul furthermore mentions that he baptised the household of Stephen (1 Cor 1:16), which certainly implies that the whole household was *converted* to the religion

accepted by its head (1 Cor 16:15). Although Acts cannot be taken at face value, Luke attributes to Paul as a typical missionary practice that he converted whole households (e.g. Acts 10:1ff, 16:15ff, 31ff.; 17:6; 18:1-8). Given the basic features of the first-century religious structure as well as the central position of households in the Greco-Roman social structure, the following comment by Judge makes perfect sense:

Not only was the conversion of a household the natural or even the necessary way of establishing the new cult in unfamiliar surroundings, but the household remained the soundest basis for the meeting of Christians.

(1960b:36)

The household setting, one might say, was basic to the social fabric of the expansion of the Pauline communities and was also the centre of assembly and worship within the local group (see White 1990:107).

Taken together, all the evidence suggests that the household structure provided the basic social setting both for the expansion and for the assembly of the Pauline communities in the cities of the Greco-Roman Empire (see also Banks 1980:33-42; Malherbe 1983:60-70; Meeks 1983:75; Stowers 1984:68; White 1987c:215; 1990:103). Existing households served as nuclei for the expansion of the movement as well as for the assembly of these communities.

The social conditions under which the majority became members of the Pauline communities have far-reaching consequences for our estimate of the character of these communities. Our current focus of interest is the role and relevance of belief systems and the authority structures in Paul's world.

Although it is often mentioned, the implications are seldom spelled out of the fact that whole households were converted. It clearly reflects, even in the Pauline communities, the practice of the time – that the religious choice of the *paterfamilias* was genuinely followed by the household. Once the individualistic lenses of modern society are replaced by a community-oriented point of view, the conversion of households suggests that the social convention of following the choice of one's household patron was more important than an individual's change of allegiance with regard to his or her belief system. If this was the case, it can be stated with a certain degree of certainty that the members of Pauline household communities **were not just converted to a belief system but were recruited to a definite socio-religious network**. Embeddedness into the social network of a household community apparently weighed more heavily than individual (religious) preferences.

Generally speaking, becoming a member of a parish nowadays would not decide one's political affiliation, economic welfare and the primary education of one's children. In Paul's world the grip of household structures and conventions on the participating members was much stronger. In view of all this, it is not at all far-fetched to say that acceptance of the gospel was very often the consequence and not the

precondition of entering a community. Accepting or rejecting Paul's gospel was very much a community affair, and one for which we should develop some sensitivity. It resulted in inclusion or exclusion from community affairs and could even be disastrous if it disrupted the social order. Perhaps the emphasis on social arrangements in Paul's letter reflects something of the precarious nature of their social networks.

The benefits of a household religion in assuring salvation, and protection from and access to power, should be kept in mind as central values in the socio-religious system of the first-century world. Religion as a means to power, as discussed in a previous chapter (chapter 5 § 5.4), needs to be included in our estimate of the role of belief systems in that world. This will shortly be linked to the cultural codes and conventions pertaining to Paul's scribal culture.

2.2 Paul and patronage: a reversal of conventions?

The possible influence of patron-client relationships in the Pauline communities can be distinguished on at least two levels. The first is the relationship between Paul and the household patrons who extended hospitality to him or his co-workers. The second is the patron-client relationships as one of the basic social conventions contributing to the household setting.

As many as forty persons have been identified by Judge as actually having sponsored Paul's activities, or as having been prepared to do so had the occasion arisen (see Judge 1961:129-130). Paul supported especially the system of patronage in that it provided a platform for his preaching (missionary) activities. Judge argues that 'Christianity was a movement sponsored by local patrons to their social dependents' (1960^a:8); Paul depended on them privately rather than upon the church as an organised group to sponsor him (see Judge 1961:130).

The exact nature of Paul's relationship to his hosts is difficult to determine.³ The important point to grasp is that the conventions of patronage (see Marshall 1987^a:144), which implied benefits and obligations on Paul's part, were fundamental to his relationships with household patrons. On the one hand Paul on occasion acknowledges his debt to his hosts for the lengths to which they went in order to extend hospitality to him (e.g. Rm 16:4; Phlp 2:25-30). On the other hand, the notion of reciprocity is at stake in his request to Philemon to accept his runaway slave Onesimus. Paul's appeal is based on Philemon's obligation (that of a household patron) towards him, Paul (v 19).

³ Marshall suggests that 'patronal friendship' as a particular expression of the patronage system is the most appropriate social context for understanding Paul's relationship to the household patrons (see 1987^a:145). It should be remembered that the conventions of patronage applied to relationships between equals and unequals (see chapter 6 § 4.2; 5.1).

Generally speaking, Paul deliberately entrusted himself to the patronage of social equals or superiors (see Marshall 1987a:145) in accepting household hospitality from them. While it is difficult to know how these relationships started,⁴ it is not unlikely that Paul used the workshop setting as his point of contact when entering a new city. That he initially stayed at an inn or public place when entering a city is possible (see Hock 1980:29). It seems likely, as Hock (see 1980) argues, that he sometimes followed the practice of making contact with fellow artisans in the same craft and even found lodgings with them (e.g. Ac 18:3). As against the idea that he went to the local synagogue, the argument runs that wherever he went – whether to the household of a Jew or to a Gentile who served as a patron – he entered into a social relationship. He gained entry not by virtue of membership credentials (in other words, as a *Jew*), but by virtue of the credentials gained by entrusting himself as a client (and later as a friend) to a local patron.

An important feature is the mutual responsibilities and obligations created by the patron-client relationship as a reciprocal relationship. If Paul was involved with the communities in Galatia in such a way, it is reasonable to assume that the basis of their interaction was patron-client relationships that carried obligations. Judge's summary is to the point:

I think it would be fair to say that the persons in the Greek cities who protected him [Paul] and promoted his activities were from the social point of view occupying positions of elevated status and conferring benefits on Paul and upon the others who came to his meetings that should have created obligations.

(1974:196)

In acting as patrons who met Paul with household hospitality, they did indeed obtain a position of status and superiority over Paul. He, on the other hand, was placed in a subordinate position and left with the obligation to honour his benefactors. Some scholars have drawn attention to the possibility that the Pauline communities provided yet another social platform for household patrons to extend their social bases. The particular nature of the Pauline household communities allowed access to power and status for people who would otherwise not have had it (e.g. Meeks 1983:73). While such patrons extended hospitality, they did so for a prize – a reward of honour.

That the household patrons had authority over the Pauline communities – even in the eyes of Paul – is confirmed by Paul's own admonitions. In commending Stephanas he urged the community to subject themselves to Stephanas's authority (1 Cor 16:15-16; and see 1 Ts 5:12-13). Taken in conjunction with the emphasis in his letters on other relationships, it might provide a clue as to the constant threat of disruption of the social order and authority structures.

⁴ This issue will be discussed soon (see § 4.1). Suffice it to say that our estimate of Paul's way of entering household communities should also conform to typical household conventions.

One indication in the letter to the Galatians of the relationship between Paul and the Galatians, interestingly enough, is a confirmation that they extended a hand of friendship to him when he first came to them in his illness (Gal 4:13-15). They neither despised (ἐξουθενεῖν) nor rejected (ἐκπύειν) him. Both terms have demonological connotations (see Betz 1979:225). On the contrary, they accepted him as a messenger of God and were willing to pluck out their eyes and give them to Paul (Gal 4:14-15).⁵ Their friendship, however, has turned into enmity (see Marshall 1987a:154-155).

Given these clues, it may be concluded at the least that a patronal relationship of some kind existed on account of their hospitality towards Paul and he must have been indebted to them. A certain mutuality of attitudes must have accompanied this relationship. Is it possible that he did not respond to their gratitude with honour?

A second set of clues to Paul's relationship with household patrons is very interesting in this regard; that is, the strange and idiosyncratic way in which Paul refers to the household patrons. As a rule Paul underplayed the authority of the household patrons. He used terms deliberately drawn from the language of servitude and subordination rather than from that of patronage when referring to the household patrons (see Judge 1974:196-197; Meeks 1983:79-80). He refers to them as co-workers, but more often as slaves or co-slaves or even servants (see Marshall 1987a:133 for detail).

2.3 Some concluding remarks on the character of the Pauline household communities

In view of Paul's idiosyncratic terminology in describing his hosts (see Judge 1974:196), a second sphere of his cultural system needs to be taken into account in constructing his communicative contexts – that is, the Jewish subculture and specifically Paul's academic activities as a philosopher-like prophet. He acted in an idiosyncratic way, and part of the challenge of determining the communicative context of the letter to the Galatians would be to combine the insights from the different spheres of first-century Mediterranean cultural systems. Given the different sets of social networks and the social fabric in which the household communities developed, a great deal of tension could easily develop with regard to authority – especially if the social conventions of that fabric were disrupted. As will be argued shortly, Paul's idiosyncratic way of referring to the household patrons is not, to my mind, a matter of a reversal of conventions, but was typical of Paul's apocalyptic and charismatic orientation (see furthermore § 4).

⁵ Marshall argues that the ἀσθένεια does not simply signify a physical illness but alludes to Paul's status – that is, a 'socially debilitating disease' (1987a:153). For a discussion of some of these issues in more detail, see § 5.4.3.

Since Paul's activities were carried out under the umbrella of some kind of social organisation and socio-cultural conventions, the household setting appears to be the main contender. This institution, with its values and conventions, should be seen in contrast to the customary notion of a *Christian community* or *congregation* (in the modern sense) in each city where he operated.⁶ In view of the location of households in the first-century Mediterranean social networks (which were fundamental to both the expansion and the assembly of the Pauline communities), it is difficult to see what kind of social entity is implied by these descriptions. Perhaps these concepts are used in an attempt (consciously or unconsciously) to avoid taking into account the influence of household conventions on Paul's activities.⁷

The *unique-syndrome* (see chapter 6 § 2.1) is widespread when it comes to Paul and the Pauline communities.⁸ Banks (see 1980:49-50) maintains that Paul had a 'decided advantage' over his first-century competitors. Psychologically and socially he combined three elements – voluntary associations, household characteristics, and supranational and supratemporal elements – into a distinctive institution.⁹ The tacit assumption, clearly, is that these aspects were separated in other groups. What has not yet been mentioned is the biased ideological evaluation by New Testament scholars (which has been traditional for a long time) as expressed, for example, by Banks: 'the *ekklesia* is not merely a human association, a gathering of like-minded individuals for a religious purpose, but a divinely-created affair' (1980:37).¹⁰

⁶ Although Theißen is well informed about the household setting of Paul's activities, he postulates such a vague (*Christian*) *community* or *congregation* in Corinth, for example (see 1982:54ff). This *Christian congregation* was furthermore divided into several groups. Holmberg is even more explicit: 'Through Paul every local church has a direct relation to the whole Church and to salvation-history and is incorporated into a movement with universal dimensions' (Holmberg 1978:72). The difficulty of picturing the Pauline groups is also seen in Betz's rather vague description of the Galatian communities as 'clusters of Christian congregations' (1976:102). These are but three examples of the received view which describes the location of the Pauline communities in such unhistorical terms.

⁷ Unlike Theißen, who maintains that the overarching bond was membership of the congregation or Christian community in a city such as Corinth (see 1982:56), I think that different house community cells were more loosely linked (see White 1990:105). That is to say, given their embeddedness in social networks, different household communities existed first and foremost within the confines of these networks. Thus Paul's *converts* were members of a specific socio-cultural unit and not of the *Christian community* in, for example, Corinth or one of the cities in Galatia.

⁸ It should come as no surprise that scholars very often claim the same uniqueness for the Jewish synagogue. Cohen, for example, maintains: 'In their philosophical schools, the Greeks and Romans studied the definition of virtue and the knowledge of their gods; in their temples, they offered prayers on various occasions. They had, however, no institution that approximated the synagogue. Many modern writers ... have observed the uniqueness of the synagogue....' (1987^b:160).

⁹ Meeks maintains that the notion of a 'universal people of God' (1983:108) which came from Judaism, distinguished the Pauline communities from other clubs and cults.

¹⁰ If we want to be fair to the historical and social realities of Paul's world we should at least avoid such biased, if not outright faulty, arguments. Note Banks's conclusion: 'Only Paul's understanding of *ekklesia* embraces all three ideas of community to which people gave their commitment in the ancient world at the time' (1980:49).

It should, however, be noted that the arguments as to the uniqueness of the Pauline communities are based on dissimilarities which do not touch the constitution (nature) of any of these groups. The recognition of the social location of groups (see chapter 5 § 2; chapter 6 § 2.2) gives us, at the very least, an opportunity to argue a definite set of criteria in terms of which group formation and interaction in the first-century Mediterranean world can be dealt with. Assuming the existence of non-corporate groups is one way of limiting wild (or nonhistorical) guesses as to what constituted the Pauline groups. If my arguments on these issues are valid, then the 'unique' tag only fits the specific character of Pauline household communities and not their constitution (nature) as groups.

One example will suffice to make it clear that, apart from scholarly prejudices, there are hardly sufficient reasons for holding onto the notion of the uniqueness of the Pauline communities.

Judge maintains that the Christians were unlike other associations drawn from the broad spectrum of social stratification. Other associations 'were generally socially and economically as homogeneous as possible' (1960^b:60; and see Meeks 1983:79). If they were all configurations of the household setting, then both could include members from a broad spectrum of the social stratification. Conversely, a specific Pauline household community could just as easily have been formed around a particular occupational group and thus qualify as socially and economically homogeneous. This could have been the case with the household community in the home of Aquila and Prisca, who were also tentmakers (see 1 Cor 16:19; Rm 16:3-5; Ac 18:2-3). Such a household community could easily have included clients who worked as day labourers in their workshop, even slept in the workshop, and were in that way part of the household.

In view of the foregoing discussion, the received communicative context assumed in most opponent hypothesis can hardly be maintained. The apparent social conditions and cultural setting of the Pauline communities present us, in fact, with a totally different set of historical components to be taken into consideration when dealing with Paul.

3 FIRST-CENTURY DIASPORA JUDAISM AND THE HOUSEHOLD SETTING

While there hardly can be any doubt that the household setting was central to both the expansion and the assembly of Pauline communities in the cities of the Greco-Roman Empire, the precise configuration of Pauline household communities in these cities still needs some refinement. At the very least, the backdrop of the Jewish subculture, together with the preaching (academic) activities of Paul in the context of the urban centres of the agrarian and oral worlds where religious activities were substantively embedded in the household setting, needs to be taken into account when considering Paul's communicative context in Galatia.

The word *backdrop* is used not in the traditional sense of background knowledge but rather in the sense that a clear picture of Jewish activities in the Diaspora will help us to grasp what Paul was up to. Several clues may be garnered from the practices of other Jewish groups in the Diaspora for a proper understanding of Paul's communicative context.

While the new understanding of first-century Judaism did a great deal to bring into focus the subculture of first-century Judaism,¹¹ an important link still needs to be made: that between the new understanding of first-century Judaism (especially Jewish identity markers) and the Jewish synagogue as the social setting where Judaism took root. To indicate the direction in which research should develop (on the issues of Jewishness, who was a Jew, and circumcision as an identity marker in Paul's letter to the Galatians), it is necessary to reopen the file on these aspects as they functioned in first-century Diaspora Judaism.

If the Jewish synagogue was the pivot of Jewish community life in the Diaspora, then it certainly was the place where Judaism took root, where identity markers functioned and where Jewishness was determined and defined. The first issue to be examined is that of membership of Judaism.

3.1 Membership of first-century Judaism: conversion or recruitment?

The special case of conversion and excommunication in first-century Judaism provides an excellent opportunity to examine some components present in the constitution, membership and self-definition of Jewish communities.

The concept *conversion* can be used in at least two different ways. It can be defined as the reorientation of the individual soul from an earlier form of piety to another, as is the case in prophetic religions (see Nock 1952:7). This may be referred to as conversion in a *narrower* sense, namely as an 'individualistic psychological choice and/or transaction between religious groups' (Malina 1986b:99). However, this definition reflects a modern cultural prejudice expressed in the individualistic choice resulting from cognitive or psychological factors, where ultimately a change of allegiance with regard to belief system or doctrinal matters is at stake.¹² In a *broader*

¹¹ An important reservation has, however, been spelled out: the new understanding still deals with matters such as identity markers, circumcision, and Jewishness in isolation from the concrete social conditions in the first-century world (see chapter 4 § 4.4). That is to say, first-century Judaism is primarily dealt with as an entity in itself without linking this entity to the social and historical conditions of the first-century world – very much the same condition that governs assumptions on *the Christian community*.

¹² This point is underscored by research into the characteristics of oral cultures. Botha argues that 'a society with a heavy oral residue will lack the experience of "religious conversion"' (1990a:40). This is not surprising, since (as has been argued) the means of controlling dogmatic or doctrinal aspects of a belief system are absent in predominantly oral (scribal) cultures. Indeed, it was often impossible or irrelevant (see chapter 5 § 4). The fact that the conditions in early Christianity and Judaism have changed from the second and especially from the fourth centuries onwards can be ascribed to a variety

sense conversion can refer to a *change of worlds*.¹³ In this sense it is perhaps more useful in dealing with first-century phenomena.

In first-century Mediterranean religion, however, it does not make sense to talk about *conversion* in the sense of someone turning on the basis of a rational decision to embrace a certain creed, doctrine or way of life (see Wilken 1984:64). The rationale for crossing from one religion to another, especially cross-ethnic conversion, would include several factors apart from particular beliefs (see Malina 1986^b:95). In fact, conversion was often closely linked to demonstrations of supernatural power to bestow benefits (that is, salvation) on the *convert* (see MacMullen 1984:4; 123 n 10). A change of religion resulted from other factors. It can hardly be expressed more eloquently than it is by Malina when he says that *conversion* in the first-century Mediterranean world

resulted from the operation of the system of kinship (e.g. marriage, adoption, remarriage, householding, slaveholding) and fictive kinship (e.g. friendship, group affiliation, voluntary association groups, patronage) rather than through individualistic psychological choice and/or transactions between religious groups.

(1986^b:99)

In terms of the argument that religion in the first-century world was basically a *substantive* type of religion embedded in kinship (and polity) relations, a change of *religious* allegiance involved and presupposed these (kinship or polity) social networks. The common custom of household conversions is a case in point. MacMullen (see 1984:5) points out that in terms of the modern meanings of the concept *conversion*, few members of the Jesus movement in Paul's area were really converted. Some of the Pauline followers who became members of households 'were not really converted at all'; as a matter of fact, 'in the whole early church, more than a trivial portion at any given moment can have been Christian only in name' (1984:107).

Referring to first-century Judaism, Cohen mentions different ways in which Gentiles could become members of the Jewish community: conversion of a household, the acquisition of a Gentile slave by a Jew, conversion for the sake of marriage and by intermarriage. Regarding the conversion of a household, he maintains that it can be assumed that

involuntary members of the household (*oikia*) had substantially less enthusiasm, at least at first, for the new religion than did the chieftain

of factors. Not the least would be the development of different canons as well as the development (at least in Christian circles) of particular dogmas and the necessary ecclesiastical structure to administer dogma and doctrine (see Frend 1979).

¹³ This is the sense in which *conversion* is used by Berger and Luckmann. I have discussed their model of conversion in another study (see Craffert 1989). It was argued that in the sense of a *change of worlds* it is quite appropriate to refer to Paul's Damascus experience as a conversion experience.

who initiated the conversion, but all alike became members of the new community.

(Cohen 1989:24)

First-century people, as I have said, were not converted to a belief system only but were recruited into a socio-religious network. It should be realised to what extent Jewish groups were similar in this regard to other religious groups in the first-century world. Religion was embedded in prior social and kinship structures which precluded the possibility of a quick change of denomination, so to speak.

Falling out is arguably no less bound up with social factors. In Judaism, neither heresy nor apostasy in itself could lose people their status as Jews; not even for 'the most heinous offences against Jewish law and doctrine' (Schiffman 1981:147). Harvey supports this by arguing that 'a Jew was free to understand the Old Testament as he wished' (1968:327). Aune (see 1976:5) points out that deviation in matters of ritual practice and ethical behaviour were the only known causes for expulsion from Judaism. This tendency clearly corresponds to the nature of religion in the first-century Mediterranean world as well as the attitudes in a scribal culture, where doctrine and dogma were only marginally important.

Despite all attempts to link the idea of conversion and excommunication exclusively to dogmatic or doctrinal matters, it simply will not do. Something more is needed, and that something more is to be sought in the socio-cultural setting within which these *dogmatic or doctrinal* disputes took place.

3.2 Merging the new understanding and the synagogue setting of first-century Judaism

The new understanding of first-century Judaism (that is, rejection of the notion of a normative Judaism discussed in chapter 4) can be pressed a few steps further by bringing into play the synagogue setting discussed in the previous chapter. The lack of a unified belief system in Judaism during Paul's lifetime (chapter 4 § 4.4) finds support in the alternative view of Jewish synagogues which is starting to emerge in scholarly circles (see chapter 6 § 3.3.2). If a common denominator can be identified, it is the fact that there was no worldwide Judaism with a universally accepted membership. Both symbolically and organisationally, a variety of Judaisms can be identified, all of them subject to local conditions.

Thus, contrary to the assumptions in Pauline research (as found, for example, in the argument that Paul, by virtue of being a Jew, had the right to appear and speak in synagogue assemblies in the cities where he happened to travel), no worldwide Judaism with a universally accepted membership existed. Two features of Jewish synagogues, already discussed, support this viewpoint.

Firstly, if Jewish synagogues were basically formed around the household institution of a wealthy (Jewish) patron, then entry into a synagogue (not to speak of member-

ship) depended largely on social structures. Secondly, the existence of different synagogues in the same city, constituted on the basis of social stratification, suggests that membership was not an open affair but was decided along the lines of social status and stratification. If this was the case, then membership of Jewish communities was very much a social affair. Taking into account, furthermore, the variety of definitions of a *Jew* already pointed out (see chapter 4 § 4.4.1) as well as the variety of Judaisms in the first-century world, it becomes all the more likely that membership of Judaisms in the Diaspora was locally determined.

If that was the case, as I think it may have been, then Jewish identity markers, traditions and symbols did not serve to constitute Jewish synagogue communities but were afterwards applied or called on as labels for the purpose of self-definition.¹⁴

It would be fair to say that Judaisms in the Jewish Diaspora existed by virtue of the synagogue institution. At an organisational level, local conditions and particular social circumstances gave birth to Jewish synagogue communities which are to be seen as the bedrock where Jewish symbols and traditions were applied, adopted and adapted. If so, then a reversal of membership conditions as well as the role of identity markers can be put to test, since these aspects would then have been determined by being part of a community – that is, a household community.

If this reversal of conditions for membership is trustworthy, it may prove a significant factor in our estimate of Paul's exposition of matters of belief. While it is impossible to discuss in full the results on first-century Judaisms of the overlapping and merging of these two planes, it constitutes sufficient reason to explore it as a possible setting for the one exemplar of Judaism that concerns us here: the Pauline household communities. The main point is that Paul's activities in a broad sense (such as preaching, teaching, letter-writing) should be interpreted not against the background of these activities in first-century Judaisms but in terms thereof. Thus the character of Paul's academic activities can, from the point of view of this exposition, be placed in some sort of perspective as typical of his world.

If we thus merge the perspectives of the new understanding of first-century Judaism and the social matrix of Diaspora Judaism, it arguably shifts the battlefield of dispute in respect of several generally approved assumptions in Pauline studies. Some suggestions will now be highlighted.

¹⁴ After formulating this thesis I discovered that Borgen argues along the very same lines with regard to Philo and Hillel: 'Philo's and Hillel's understanding has thus been that bodily circumcision was not the requirement for entering the Jewish community, but was one of the commandments which they had to obey after having received the status as a Jew' (1983:67). This reflects the same reversal of conditions that I have in mind (see also Gilbert 1991).

3.3 A different role for Jewish identity markers, especially circumcision

It is not uncommon in New Testament studies to learn that in the first-century world the boundaries of the law were the boundaries of Judaism (see for example Theißen 1982:35), or that circumcision¹⁵ was the central identity marker distinguishing Jews from non-Jews (see chapter 4 § 4.4.3). In opponent hypotheses one often hears that in giving up circumcision in particular, Paul gave up the most effective way in which the Jewish community had maintained its separate identity in the pagan world (see Meeks 1983:97). That is generally recognised as the practical point at issue in Galatia. The assumption, clearly, is that adherence to the law, or circumcision, as identity markers functioned somewhat like a universal membership ticket which ensured worldwide or universal entry into and membership of Judaism. In view of the merging of perspectives, however, the way in which identity markers functioned should be reconsidered.

Given the social conditions under which Jewish synagogue communities were constituted, it seems likely that identity markers were applied subsequently as a label rather than as identity tickets which ensured entrance. Although nowadays circumcision is widely regarded as the sign of a Jew, it was not in itself sufficient to ensure entrance and membership – neither to a particular Jewish synagogue community nor to a worldwide movement. Circumcision was not a worldwide mark of membership of Judaism, but it was acknowledged worldwide as an identity marker in Judaism. Thus it was universally recognised as an identity marker, but it did not secure membership all over the first-century Mediterranean world.

If this is so, it explains the diverse ways in which different Jewish groups in the first-century world invoked the traditions, symbols and identity markers of the Jahweh religion, especially circumcision, as label for their own self-definition. As in the case of synagogue architecture and social organisation, local conditions contributed greatly to the adaptation of traditions and identity markers within particular communities. Given the local conditions together with the absence of a controlling body, and taking into account the predominantly oral culture, a variegated interpretation of the symbols and traditions of Israel is hardly surprising.

That Paul could claim to (re)present the *true Israel* (e.g. Gl 3:21-29), without circumcision as an identity marker, was different but not new – different in the selfsame sense in which some of his contemporaries interpreted the Jewish symbols and traditions for their own advantage (see also Gilbert 1991:303-305), but not new in the sense of a breaking away from Judaism(s). This happened, firstly, because there was as yet no normative Judaism and consequently no uniform identity marker such as

¹⁵ It goes without saying that the section on circumcision in chapter 4 is especially applicable to this discussion. All the arguments and evidence for the variety of views on circumcision will not be repeated.

circumcision (the new understanding of Judaism has already provided this insight). Secondly, given the social organisation of Jewish communities as household synagogues, there could have been no worldwide membership of Judaism.

In view of this suggestion the issue of circumcision, which in all probability was a bone of contention in Galatia (or part of it), takes on a totally different status. Perhaps the dispute about circumcision in Galatians (see 2:3-10; 5:2-12; 6:12-16) should be reinterpreted as a means used in the conflict and not an end in itself. Paul, on this view, was not rejecting Judaism per se and neither was he discussing circumcision as such. Indeed, in view of the overall function of circumcision within the setting of household communities, Paul's discussion of it should be seen as part of his way of expressing a conflict that existed on a social issue.¹⁶

3.4 Jewishness and who was a Jew

Generally speaking, to say that membership of first-century Judaism was open to all Jews is stating the obvious. It should be admitted that in theory membership was open to all Jews – as was the case with other voluntary associations and mystery cults where initiation was theoretically open to all (see Tidball 1983:87). However, the real issue turned out to be: who was a *Jew*? Who possessed the required credentials which, according to the above argument did not consist of a worldwide accepted membership ticket but was socially determined?

It has already been indicated (see chapter 4 § 4.4.1) that Jewishness and the question, who was a Jew? were (on account of the great variety of definitions) situationally and locally determined – something not at all surprising in view of the basic features of the first-century agrarian cultural system. Prior to the process of rabbinisation, the oral nature of first-century culture – together with the features of the social networks – contributed to this state of affairs, where a fixed or normative definition could not be propagated.

This insight can be stretched even further. First-century Judaisms were not much concerned with a definition applicable to all Jews. Claims to uniqueness and claims to absolute truth should all be seen within the framework of the nature of Jewish synagogue communities (see also the notion of divine revelations, to be discussed shortly). In the absence of ways and means to support a claim such as 'the worldwide people of God', or 'a universal fraternity', such claims should be evaluated for what they are worth – given the factual situation in first-century Judaism.¹⁷

¹⁶ Perhaps circumcision (as well as other Jewish identity markers) should furthermore be examined as a token in a magico-religious sense.

¹⁷ Where ways and means exist (such as a controlling body, international communication lines, the mentality of a nation state, social structures) to support the idea of a worldwide movement with a universal membership, the claim 'a worldwide people of God' seems quite common. Without such support, however, it should be read as nothing more than religious legitimation in terms of a very old Jewish tradition.

Since different societies lived, in a sense, in different worlds (cities were, in a sense, worlds apart) they were for a large part content to live with the idea that their interpretation and application of the tradition was normative. Prior to the development of a unifying and controlling body, each community could believe its definition to be normative. In fact, outsiders – not only in Judaism but in the first-century Mediterranean world in general – were treated accordingly.

In view of these developments, the assumption that Paul had the right to propagate his message in the synagogue needs to be reconsidered. An alternative criterion – the possession of the appropriate social credentials – would allow entry and eventually membership.¹⁸ The argument that God-fearers would easily have changed their allegiance from the Jewish synagogue to Paul is well known but equally improbable. People who were or became members of a household community were connected by a variety of cultural strings – they were partners in a community. If this is taken into account when dealing with the notion of God-fearers, Kraabel's argument becomes all the more convincing (see chapter 4 § 4.4.2).

It should be obvious that a rather different picture of the Jewish subculture in Paul's time is emerging (as opposed to the received view). While it is not the object of this study to reread the letter to the Galatians in terms of the alternative cypher key (but only to present such a key), it goes without saying that several new vistas are opened up by this perspective on first-century Judaism.

4 PAUL'S RELIGIOUS ACTIVITIES IN GALATIA: THE PROPAGANDA OF A DIVINE MAN

Although proportionally much better informed about Paul's academic activities, the warning was expressed that the tail should not wag the dog. Paul's academic and *religious* sides should therefore also be seen as part of the first-century religious fabric. Two aspects only will be touched on: Paul's missionary practice, and the letter to the Galatians as an instance of religious propaganda. Both help to provide a more authentically first-century communicative context for the interpretation of the letter.

4.1 Paul's missionary practice: a man of magic and miracle

The questions concerning the formative force of the Pauline household communities and what kept them together have been partly answered by postulating the household setting. However, an important facet of Paul's missionary practice (which

¹⁸ The point is that it was not impossible for Paul to have preached in synagogues, but then such activities were subject to the conventions operative in the patronage relationships implied by such an invitation. It is, for example, possible that Crispus (the patron of a synagogue in Corinth – see Ac 18:7-8) provided Paul with such an opportunity.

is closely linked to the general features of first-century religion) needs to be added to the equation if we are to arrive at a better understanding of the academic activities reported in Paul's letters.

The all-pervasive presence of magic and miracles¹⁹ in the first-century religious world has already been pointed out (see chapter 5 § 5.4). Indeed Georgi argues that wandering preachers who propagated their various schemes of salvation in the city streets and marketplaces of the Greco-Roman Empire set out to demonstrate the exceptional character of their messages by exceptional means (see 1971:124-125). They sought to attract the attention of their audiences by means of miraculous deeds and forceful speech (see Fiorenza 1976^b:10). A rather lengthy quote from Georgi will press the point home:

The divine power exhibited in the performance of the messenger had to extend clearly into the realm of the supernatural, in knowledge of nature and the universe and in supreme mastery over the forces at work in these fields. Only in this way could the offer made by the particular form of propaganda carry any conviction, the offer of this particular scheme of salvation to change human fortune to eternal blessing, peace, and well-being. So the missionaries tended, because of their profession, to become 'god-men'.

(1971:125)

A tradition widely acknowledged is that a truly wise man (god-man) 'was a divine man whose wisdom was proved by his miraculous powers' (Smith 1978^a:344). Magic was not only widely practiced on all levels of first-century society, it was also widely believed to be effective (see Smith 1980:241).

So what do we learn about Paul? It is not impossible, given the general features of religion in Paul's world, that he gained entry to household patrons by means of miracles or other pneumatic activities. In a world with a high demand for salvation, where an honourable man was continuously in search of people who had access to power (see chapter 5 § 5.4), Paul's attributes as performer of healing miracles (2 Cor 12:12; Rm 15:19; Gl 3:5), his claims to gifts of prophecy (1 Ts 3:4; 1 Cor 15:51) and his power of glossolalia (1 Cor 14:18) were certainly impressive recommendations. As a matter of fact, Paul admits that he relied on signs, marvels, and miracles (see 2 Cor 12:12; 1 Cor 2:4) and 'not ... his skills as a preacher' to convince people (see Smith 1980:249). The world of the magical power of words (see Carney 1975:110, 112, 126), magic, curses and Evil Eye accusations imply a magico-religious world-view (see Elliott 1990^a:263) in which access to power and protection against threats were considered important. (It will shortly be argued that Paul did indeed

¹⁹ Since it is very difficult to distinguish the category of miracle from that of magic in ancient literature (see Fiorenza 1976^b:12; Aune 1980:1521), no serious differences should be read into the expression *magic and miracle* as used here. According to Aune's definition (see 1980:1518) of magic accepted in this study (see chapter 5 § 5.4), magic typically has to do with magical practices or miracles such as healing, protection, power over demons and the like.

believe in and even practised magic as a way to power; see § 5.4.3). The goals of magic and religion in the Greco-Roman world were very similar 'as providing protection, healing, success and knowledge for magical practitioners and their clients, and harm for their opponents' (Aune 1980:1518).

It is furthermore interesting that the traditions in Luke's Acts portray Paul as a 'visionary, charismatic preacher, healer and miracle worker' (Jervell 1984c:71; see also Fiorenza 1976b:8-20). Even the Pauline worship as reflected in his letters, argues Smith (see 1980), suggests features of magical rites.

In view of the evidence on missionary practices and the traditions regarding Paul's missionary activities it seems reasonable to conclude that one factor (possibly the major one) in the formation of Pauline household communities was Paul's practice of magic and his performance of miracles (accompanied by powerful oratory and even glossolalia).

Given the oral nature of Paul's world, it was argued (see chapter 5 § 4.3) that his social standing and honour underwrote the authority of his message. If the present argument is sound, it supports that view that Paul's gospel was subject to his honour and authority. In view of his missionary practices it may be suggested that Paul's authority was closely linked to his magical and miracle activities. In other words, his standing among the Galatians was fundamentally determined by (among other social conventions) his position as a divine man who propagated salvation.

4.2 The letter to the Galatians as religious propaganda

Paul, the follower of Jesus who displayed a remarkable number of similarities with contemporary moral philosophers, stood in the tradition of prophetic or charismatic wisdom – not unlike Jesus and the prophets. Stendahl remarks that in Galatians (1:13-16) Paul describes the experience of his call 'in terms of a prophetic call similar to that of Isaiah and Jeremiah' (1976:8). Furthermore, a (Jewish) apocalyptic world-view shaped much of Paul's thinking and provides currently an important context for comprehending his thinking. Paul's offer of salvation should be seen within its apocalyptic setting (e.g. Gl 1:4).²⁰ Like his contemporaries in Judaism, Paul believed that salvation basically depends on membership in the in-group – that is, the people of God (see Sanders 1983:5, 111). The imminent expectation of the kingdom of God and the salvation of the people of God were central to his theological convictions.

So far, so good – as long as Paul's exposition of this apocalyptic message in the letter to the Galatians is not taken primarily as a definition of his gospel. Piety in Paul's

²⁰ That apocalyptic language and an apocalyptic world-view formed part and parcel of Paul's package cannot be doubted (for a discussion of these topics, see Meeks 1983:171-180; Beker 1980:16-19, 135-138; Branick 1985).

world was without creed and Scripture, and it took several decades before Paul's letters were declared to be Scripture (see Armstrong 1986^c:xvii). Thus the letter to the Galatians, at the time of writing, represented something else; it was, I would suggest in view of the above discussion, part of Paul's propaganda. In fact, his *gospel* and preaching as such should be seen as part of the socio-cultural fabric – especially if it is further remembered that (even as an exposition of a belief system) it could not be compared to the Galatians' existing (or any other) set of beliefs, because – apart from the memories of household members and especially of the authority figure(s) – their belief system was non-existent.

The notion that Paul, in the letter to the Galatians, was conveying his gospel (message) should, in view of the social conditions, be turned on its head. He had a position to defend (I would suggest his authority and honour were at stake) and he used every means at his disposal to do so – including some elements of the belief system, traditions interpreted in a particular way, and especially calls on divine revelation. What he possessed was not so much the true gospel as truth.

Revealed secrets, speaking in tongues, magic and miracles, and a capacity for rhetoric are all mentioned by Georgi (see 1971) as methods of religious propaganda. Most of them are amply attested to in Paul's writings (some even in the letter to the Galatians). I do not wish to repeat (or to get involved in the debate on) the different interpretations of the *στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου* (Gl 4:3, 8-9). However, if Paul shared the view expressed in Ephesians 6:12 (that their struggle was against powers and demons), it is possible to read Galatians 4:1-11 as part of his attempt to outlaw the magic practised among the Galatians (see Hawkins 1971:247) in favour of his own magical and salvific package. The downplaying of others' magic was nothing new in religious propaganda (see Fiorenza 1976^b:13).

Although we shall shortly turn to the nature of the conflict which prompted Paul to define his gospel of salvation, it is important to see the letter to the Galatians not as the exposition of a creed or doctrine but as part and parcel of his socio-religious propaganda.

4.3 Charismatic authority and patronal honour

One consequence of the above mentioned features of Paul's missionary activities is his claim to authority. There can be no doubt that, due to his access to power and salvation, Paul's authority was recognised by his communities – except when he came into conflict with them. In Paul's self-designation, two features are of special importance: firstly, his charismatic authority and secondly, his claim to be the founding patron of the Galatians.

Holmberg argues: 'Paul exercises charismatic authority in his churches' (1978:154).²¹ That is to say, he claims authority which was derived not from a human source but directly from the revealed Christ (see Best 1986:14). Even when it is not specifically mentioned, it seems that Paul always expected it to be present. Nowhere did Paul claim prophetic authority or a divine commission for his preaching activities more clearly than in the letter to the Galatians. He received his gospel and apostolic commission by way of divine revelation (Gl 1:11-12, 16; 2:2). According to his own account (Gl 2:11ff) this revealed gospel brought him into conflict with other apostles.

The claim to divine revelation, as Nickelsburg points out, is a feature of many Jewish literary texts: 'Outsiders are damned because they lack or reject the revelation that enables them properly to observe divine Law and to read the signs of the times' (Nickelsburg 1985:89; and see Meeks 1983:92). Paul's access to power was direct (see Gl 1:11-12), for he curses anyone who proclaims a message contrary to his own (see Gl 1:12, 15-16), even in the face of counterclaims of angelic revelation (see also Kraft 1975a:49; Isenberg 1975:47-51; Phillips 1986:2736). He fully identifies his interpretation of the gospel with the truth of the gospel (Gl 2:14). He demands recognition for himself and his own message – a respect which he conspicuously fails to accord to the apostles in Jerusalem (see Shaw 1983:44). The point is, he claims for himself ultimate (divine) authority by identifying his view with the divine viewpoint.

Paul's charismatic authority in relation to the household communities should not, however, be overemphasised to the point where only one source of authority is recognised. The assumption that in Paul's lifetime 'his churches are not autonomous with an independent leadership worth mentioning' (Holmberg 1978:158) is an example of current scholarly disregard for the social conditions under which Paul presented his claims to authority. Paul's disregard of or failure to mention the household patrons as leaders may be due to his self-perception as the 'founding father' (Best 1986:17) of the communities.

It is noteworthy that Paul often describes his relationship with his communities by means of a parent-child metaphor. He perceived himself as their parent (most often their father) and the *converts* are his children (e.g. 1 Cor 4:17; 2 Cor 6:13, 12:14; Phlp 2:22; 1 Th 2:11; Phlm 10). By calling himself the 'father' (or 'mother') of his churches, Paul conveys, according to Holmberg, 'the fact that he has begotten them or given them life by the transmission of the Gospel of Christ' (1978:78).

Paul's use in Galatians 4:19 of the image of a mother suffering birth pangs until Christ is formed in them does not necessarily mean that their relationship was not characterised by a parental authority. The way in which he addresses them indicates

²¹ I follow Holmberg in his definition and description of charismatic authority (see 1978:137-154).

that Paul considered himself the lawful founding patron (see 4:11) of the Galatian communities. Indeed, the call to imitate him (Gl 4:12) is a consequence of the father-child relation (see Holmberg 1978:78).

It should be realised that the social values assumed by these metaphors are those of patronage in the extended household relationship, which should be characterised by patronal authority and, on the other side, the debt of gratitude and honour.

In view of the foregoing it would be profitable to examine the possible nature of the conflict in Galatia by taking into account the variety of authority structures at work in the social interaction between Paul and the Galatians.

5 THE NATURE OF THE CONFLICT IN GALATIA FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF A SOCIAL-SCIENTIFIC CYPHER KEY

Given the constructed communicative context, it is time to turn to the crucial issue regarding the occasion of the letter: the conflict in Galatia which moved Paul to write this letter. Although we today possess only a part of the discussion (actually only a part of one side of it), many attempts are made to discover the probable occasion of the letter. It has already been suggested that the debate should be shifted from the cause of the conflict (which was the focal point of the situation) to its nature.

The first step will be to point out, in terms of the first-century communicative context, why the nature and not the cause of the conflict should form the starting point of the debate. Secondly, I shall pause to consider why the received view of the nature of the conflict (as consisting of conflicting theological or doctrinal convictions) can no longer be maintained. Thirdly, the conflict will be examined in the light of the authority structures in the Pauline communities. Finally, it will be indicated by means of a few examples from the letter that a socio-religious conflict about Paul's authority in the letter to the Galatians makes perfect sense when the letter is read through a first-century lens.

5.1 The question as to the nature (not the cause) of the conflict in Galatia

What Elliott, in the epigraph to this chapter, maintains to be true of religious phenomena in the first-century Mediterranean world (that they should be seen within the totality of social and cultural phenomena) is actually true of all other human activities. Applied to the conflict in Galatia, it means that the notion of conflict in the first-century Mediterranean world as such should be subjected to critical examination. In particular, the conflict encountered by Paul in Galatia should be understood in terms of the totality of the social and cultural phenomena contributing to the setting – especially in view of the one-dimensional theological or doctrinal nature of the conflict assumed in the received view. This one-dimensional perspective should be replaced by a recognition of the complexity of the socio-cultural components contributing to the conflict.

In view of some of the methodological principles it will become clear why the shift in focus from the cause to the nature of the conflict is inevitable.

The first principle is that the social conditions for conflict – that is, the socio-cultural codes and conventions which served as preconditions and parameters for conflict in that world – should be in the forefront. Instead of simply assuming some kind of conflict about ‘conflicting convictions’, to use the concept of Du Toit (1992:1), the nature of the conflict should itself be subjected to interpretation. The socio-cultural codes and conventions prerequisite for conflict in the first-century Mediterranean world should be argued and cannot be assumed.

Secondly, the nature of the *text* should be kept clearly in mind. It was argued (see chapter 3) that it is rather futile to debate whether the text does or does not support a given interpretation (unless it is done in terms of an explicit communicative context). In fact, the claim that only the text is read has been pointed out as a fallacious one. A text is always construed with a particular communicative context in mind. In the case of the letter to the Galatians the components of a first-century Mediterranean communicative context can no longer be left out of account if any claim is made to a historical valid interpretation. It goes without saying that from such a position the debate on the conflict cannot start with the cause but has to revert to the nature of conflicts in the type of communicative context in which Paul was involved. Only as a secondary step would it be necessary to determine whether the text yields any clues which support such a typical conflict.

It was argued that the apparent theological or doctrinal conflict (a conflict about conflicting convictions) in the letter to the Galatians, for which many pieces of evidence are put forward in well-reasoned scholarly works, is the product of the interpretation of textual clues arising from the received communicative context. The clues in the text obviously have to be reinterpreted from the point of view of an alternative communicative context. The aim of this study is to provide such an alternative cypher key. **In view of the alternative (social-scientific) communicative context, it is to be suggested that the conflict Paul encountered in Galatia was probably due to a rejection of his authority – thus it was of a socio-religious nature.** The letter to the Galatians provides a rather different picture of the conflict once we learn to look at it from a first-century Mediterranean viewpoint.

It is, however, necessary to return briefly to the assumed nature of the conflict in the received opponent hypotheses.

5.2 Conflicting convictions: a question of cultural values

It has been pointed out (see chapter 1) that in most opponent hypotheses it is taken for granted that the dispute in Galatia concerned conflicting convictions. It is believed that circumcision especially, but also the salvation of the Galatians in gen-

eral, were in one way or another in dispute between missionaries with a different message. Meeks's formulation of the conflict in Galatia is in many respects typical of the hypotheses which assume a theological or doctrinal type of conflict:

In Paul's absence other Christian missionaries had appeared in the Anatolian cities, seeking to persuade Paul's converts that their faith was imperfect and their salvation in question unless they were circumcised and observed at least Sabbath and Jewish festivals (*kashrut* is not specifically mentioned). Paul sees this as a direct attack on his own authority as apostle and founder of the Galatian churches and as a perversion of the one gospel.

(1983:115)

The assumption of a theological or doctrinal conflict overlooks, firstly, the networks of socio-cultural organisations within which the Pauline communities took root, secondly, the networks of socio-cultural relations, and, thirdly, religion in the first-century Mediterranean world. A few examples will demonstrate the point.

The notion that *missionaries* could spread a different gospel disregards the household setting with its first-century Mediterranean networks of social interaction. Missionaries needed social credentials to present their message within these household communities. Without a position of honour, or the protection and privileges of patronage, such missionaries could not have had access to (not to mention membership of) the Pauline household communities.

A recognition of the importance of Paul's references in the letter to his *gospel* and his *apostleship* has led to a variety of suggestions that either his gospel or his apostleship, or both,²² were under attack in Galatia and therefore defended by Paul (see Lategan 1988^a; Du Toit 1990:155-156; Koptak 1990; and for further references see chapter 1 § 4.3). While many scholars who defend the gospel thesis do so in preference to the apostleship thesis, it is not necessarily true the other way round. Those who defend the apostleship thesis very often take apostleship and gospel to be closely linked. Beker, for example, argues that the opponents undermined Paul's apostolic authority (apostolate) in order to discredit his gospel (1980:42-43).

The main point in apostleship theses is that there was a dispute as to whether Paul really was an apostle similar to, say, Peter (see also Best 1986). In view of the doubt cast on his apostleship, it is then suggested that his gospel was placed in jeopardy by the opponents. Despite arguments from the letter itself which suggest that this was not at the root of the conflict in Galatia (see Lategan 1988^a:416-417), there are historical reasons against this position.

It is commonly recognised that the term *apostle* represents no office in Paul's own lifetime (see Meeks 1983:131; Best 1986; Schütz 1975:2, 21). Thus the question

²² It should be admitted that it is often difficult to decide whether someone holds either of the two positions, clearly excluding the other, aspect or merely emphasises the one position above the other.

whether Paul fitted that office is premature – an anachronism. Best argues that apostleship was not an issue of great concern to Paul and functioned only in very specific contexts in his letters (see 1986:8-12). The point is that the suggestion of a dispute concerning Paul's *apostolic* authority does not take into account the social conditions in which Paul wrote. The selfsame thing happens in gospel theses in that the letter itself is (apparently) used as the only source to determine the situation against which Paul reacted. When I refer to his authority as an apostle, I am speaking of his claims to be a divine man in possession of power. Nickelsburg argues that Paul's self-designation in Galatians 1 should indeed be interpreted as implying that God had intervened in his conception (see 1986:203): he is worthy to be trusted with authority and to be honoured.

The notion that different versions of the *gospel* (a message), in the sense of an alternative set of convictions, could bring about such disarray furthermore disregards both the cultural values of a scribal culture, the primary features of household communities and the all-pervasiveness of magic in religious affairs. It should be realised that, given these conditions, it is very likely that members of the Pauline household communities could not at any particular moment express the exact content of their belief system. And if so, the truth of their beliefs was decided not by correlation to a written doctrine (since such a thing did not exist) but by the decision of authority figures. It is therefore not surprising that access to powerful people and the assurance of salvation was much more important than personal conviction.

Belief systems and the truth of a message were not unaffected by status and honour positions. The gospel in Paul's world represented not only a set of beliefs but a total life orientation. Embracing the gospel, even for persons who became members of the Pauline communities by default and not by personal choice, meant incorporation into a particular community. The message and the messenger in an oral world are inextricably connected. The truth of the message and the authority of the sender are part and parcel of a network of social relationships. Additions or, alterations to or rejection of matters of belief was not restricted to a cognitive act: it affected the whole social network. To challenge their 'imperfect faith' and to put the Galatians' 'salvation in question' was to challenge not only their belief system but their social existence as a household community.

In view of these factors it seems likely that a conflict about conflicting convictions fits the criteria of a literate culture (such as ours) and a definition of religion primarily concerned with dogma or doctrine. Apparently that was not the case with Paul. I am suggesting that we learn a new set of keys to understand what Paul was doing-in-saying in the first-century Mediterranean world. Describing the conflict as being of a social nature has such potential.

5.3 A bipolar authority structure in the Pauline communities

From a rapid survey of two examples from Paul's letters (Philemon and 2 Cor 10-13), White suggests that a bipolar authority structure underlies the relations

between Paul and these particular communities (see 1987c:218-220). While each case needs elaboration, the underlying principle of his argument, to my mind, is sound, namely to describe the levels of authority in terms of the social conventions identified in each case. It seems worthwhile to push his insight a bit further, specifically in dealing with the conflict in Galatia.

It seems reasonable to assume that, for a conflict in the household communities in Galatia, a configuration consisting of cultural values and conventions both of the household institution and of Paul's academic activities has to be kept in mind. These communities, after all, provided the main networks within which interaction took place, while the specifically Pauline configuration of components forms the setting for their interaction. The foregoing discussion on authority claims at least suggests that the conflict in Galatia be redefined as a conflict that includes honour and authority.

In view of the historical components of Paul's communicative context as discussed in this study, it seems likely that a variety of socio-cultural conditions paved the way for a conflict which can best be described as a *socio-religious* conflict. The agrarian nature of the socio-cultural system, characterised by the interconnectedness of cultural phenomena together with the substantive nature of first-century religious phenomena, explains the use of this concept. It does not refer to a religious conflict (in the received sense) involving some social aspects (such as circumcision as an identity marker). Instead, it refers to the particular configuration of complex components which contributed to the constitution of the Pauline household communities: the household setting (the codes and conventions of social interaction), scribal culture (creed and doctrine existing in the memory of authority figures), substantive religion, missionary practices (magic and miracle).

The strength of the configuration metaphor is that it provides a model in which as many components as possible can be taken into account when deciding on any individual aspect. In view of Paul's idiosyncratic way of dealing with the authority of household patrons, together with the claims of charismatic authority prevalent in his letters, a social conflict about authority positions cannot be excluded. It should furthermore be remembered that Paul did not reside in these communities in Galatia. He must have left and, given the continuous striving for honour and authority, it is not at all unlikely that Paul, when out of sight, was also out of mind (and honour) in Galatia. In view of his missionary practice, it is not unlikely that his power to mediate salvation declined (or disappeared) with his departure. Magic typically did not work in the absence of the magician.

It is not that these conditions predict the cause of the conflict. Taken together, they merely suggest the framework within which any discussion of aspects of the conflict becomes intelligible. Since it would be mere speculation to identify, from this complex set of components, any specific cause of the conflict, it seems more profitable to explore the possibilities suggested by the socio-religious conditions which probably

prevailed. If this is so, the conflict in Galatia can be described as a social (socio-religious) conflict with regard to the authority structures in the household community. Paul's authority and honour were being challenged (if not rejected).

5.4 A socio-religious conflict: a challenge to Paul's honour and authority

The (social-scientific) communicative context discussed in this study provides an aid to rereading the letter to the Galatians (as well as Paul's other letters) and constructing the nature of the conflict as a socio-religious conflict. Given the high value placed on honour in Paul's society, it would not come as a surprise to learn that his honour was challenged. Although the traditional concepts related to honour and shame are not explicitly mentioned in the letter to the Galatians, it would be reasonable to assume that honour was tacitly assumed as part and parcel of his interaction with the Galatians.

In view of the constructed communicative context, Paul's letter to the Galatians as an occasional writing (document of religious propaganda) can be construed in a way rather different from the received view. Once one is aware of the socio-cultural conventions and the conditions of their interaction, and the respective positions of authority, it is remarkable to what lengths Paul went in the letter to the Galatians (as in no other letter) to (re)establish his authority.²³

5.4.1 Divine revelations: pointing towards the nature of the conflict?

The part played by revelations and divine sanction in the letter to the Galatians is noteworthy.

Paul insisted that the gospel the Galatians had heard from him was not based on human tradition or teaching but 'was a revelation of Jesus Christ' (1:12). He went to great lengths to deny any human contribution (1:11) and to (re)affirm the divine origin of his gospel; he even went so far as to identify his version of the gospel with the truth of the gospel (1:12). This viewpoint is reaffirmed by his insistence that his apostleship was of divine origin (this point will be discussed shortly), but also by the first recorded anathema in Christian history (1:8-9). In his own mind he identified the authority of his gospel with the truth of the gospel. By ruling out any subsequent revision of his original message, Paul demanded a respect for his authority which he conspicuously failed to accord to the other apostles in Jerusalem.

²³ It should be clearly kept in mind that by *authority* I do not mean something like 'Paul's apostolic authority' (Lategan 1988^a:417; and see Meeks 1983:115). As has been argued, *apostolic* authority did not exist as a recognised social office or level of authority in Paul's world. What I mean is social authority in the sense of position, power and honour (see § 5.4.2). It has already been argued that honour in the first-century world was closely linked to power and authority (see chapter 6 § 5.2; and cf Moxnes 1988^a:210).

Similarly, his apostleship, as he states in the very first verse of the letter, 'was not from humans nor from human agency' (1:1). In fact, his commission as an apostle (we learn from him) was revealed to him during his conversion. He tells the story of his conversion (1:15-17) which, as a 'post-conversion account', can easily be seen as another reference to divine revelation. In this post-conversion account, as I have argued elsewhere, it was important at the time of writing to refer to his conversion experience as a divine call to be an apostle (see Craffert 1989).

While Paul did not find it difficult to ascribe bewitchment to those who questioned his authority (3:1) or even to invoke a divine curse on anybody who dared to differ from him in these matters (1:8-9), he saw his own identity as taken over in some mystical way by the crucified Christ (2:20). He maintains: 'I have been crucified with Christ' and 'it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me' (2:20). He even claims that they, the Galatians, have received him as if he was an angel of God, as if he was Jesus himself (4:14). He indeed tried to incorporate the Galatians into his camp, but immediately made it clear that if they did not agree with him they would have to bear (God's) judgment (5:10). It is noteworthy that Paul has no scruples about equating the rejection of his gospel (authority) with the rejection of God himself.

It should be noted that in Paul's mind, because of the close identification of his gospel and apostleship with the divine origin, it would not be surprising if in Galatians 1:6 Paul meant that they had turned away not from Christ or God but from him, Paul (see Shaw 1983:41). In Galatians 5:8 too, it is not perfectly clear who has called them – God or Paul.²⁴

5.4.2 Apostleship and gospel: Elements in Paul's authority struggle?

An altogether different reading of the references to Paul's apostleship and gospel is possible. In fact, my suggestion is that the references to these two issues in the letter to the Galatians are equally part of his strategy, not to define or expound the content of his gospel or the legitimacy of his apostleship but to defend and uphold his authority and honour in Galatia.

Four times in the letter to the Galatians Paul uses the term ἀπόστολος (or derivatives). At least twice he emphatically states that his apostolic *office* was the product of divine intervention and sanction (see 1:1, 2:8).²⁵ What he apparently tries to emphasise is that he has both historic and divine sanction for his activities.

²⁴ It may be that (as these verses are usually interpreted) Paul refers to himself merely as God's agent who gave the actual summons. That is, however, to underplay the very strong identification between himself and God/Jesus in this letter.

²⁵ The other references are not significant in this regard, since they refer to apostleship in general (see 1:17, 1:19).

The fact that Paul downplays his own position as compared to the authority of the gospel (noted by Schütz 1975:123 and Lategan 1988^a) should not mislead us into thinking that in his mind his gospel existed independently of his person: his insistence on the truth of his gospel is much too strong for that (see below).

Once the pivotal role of divine revelation in the letter is recognised, even the story of Paul's gospel being *tested* and *approved* by the Jerusalem apostles depends not on human decision but on divine revelation (2:1). He went up to Jerusalem, he says, in obedience to a revelation. The word εὐαγγέλιον (or derivatives) occurs at least fourteen times in the letter to the Galatians; several times in chapters 1 and 2 and once in chapter 4. The latter will be passed over since it merely refers to the fact of Paul's first bringing them the gospel (as is the case in 1:23, which will also be disregarded).

Seven of these instances occur in Galatians 1:6-11, where Paul argues that there is no other (true) gospel except his own. There are other gospels, since he accused the Galatians of turning to such a gospel (1:6). The core of his argument is that only his gospel is divinely sanctioned (1:8-9, 11). His gospel was received not from a human being but by revelation from God (1:16).

Two of the four occurrences in chapter 2 are just as interesting in view of Paul's objectives; the other two (2:2 and 2:7), again, simply refer to his preaching of the gospel. However, in 2:5 and 2:14 he equates his version of the gospel with the truth of the gospel (see § 5.4.1). The result, says Betz (see 1979:49), is that he denies other gospels the salvific power of the gospel (see 2:17, 21).

It should be noted that a clear shift from the received approaches is taking place in this interpretation. Reading Paul's letter in the light of the communicative context of the first-century world, what is considered primary in the received view emerges as secondary whereas elements that are secondary in that view manifest themselves as primary. To be more concrete: the object in the received approaches is to establish the content and truth of Paul's gospel. In terms of the alternative cypher key it seems that he was not, in the first instance, concerned with the content of the gospel but with its potential as a means to power. He used his gospel and apostolate as a means of re-establishing his authority and honour. A further feature of the letter – his reliance on Scripture – confirms this interpretation.

Paul's appeal to the authority of the Old Testament (3:6-14, 4:21-5:1), argues Shaw, is his way of dressing his convictions in Old Testament clothing (see 1983:44-45). Scripture, in his hands, becomes a 'ventriloquist's dummy' (Shaw 1983:44) by which Paul speaks while attributing the responsibility to God. In terms of such selective and idiosyncratic exegesis Paul is the master of the message, while the rhetorical power of his reliance on *Scripture* confers a gratuitous authority. An appeal to old documents in Paul's world may have been an attempt to establish the authority of his doctrine – something which could be done by claiming ancient tradition or customs (see Bossman 1987:8).

There is a final set of clues in the letter which points away from a conflict about conflicting convictions and affirms, instead, the thesis of a socio-religious conflict over Paul's authority: the traits of a magical letter.

5.4.3 Evil eye accusations and divine curses: components of a magical letter?

The symbolic means by which people in Paul's world could have an effect on others are quite different from those that are current in modern Western society. In fact, one of the functions of magic was social control (see Aune 1980:1523). Belief in the *evil eye*, widely accepted in the ancient world and also by Paul (see Elliott 1988), is an excellent example of such a symbolism. Basic to belief in the evil eye and related protective strategies is

the conviction that certain individuals, animals, demons, or gods have the power of producing a spell or causing some malignant effect upon every object, animate or inanimate, upon which their eye or glance may rest.

(Elliott 1988:46)

Not only the practice of but also protection against the evil eye arguably contributed to the conflict and tension in Paul's group in Galatia (see Elliott 1988:63ff).

It is furthermore not sufficiently appreciated to what extent Paul's letters are contaminated by evil eye accusations, especially threats related to heavenly powers and beings (see Neyrey 1988:88-90). In fact, Elliott argues that accusations and counter-accusations concerning the evil eye play a greater part in the Galatian conflict than is generally realised (see 1990a:263).

The explicit evil eye accusation in the letter to the Galatians (3:1) is therefore highly significant. It is seldom recognised that Paul also refers (ἐκπτύειω Gl 4:14) to one of the means of defending oneself against possible injury from the evil eye: by spitting (see Elliott 1990a:265). Instead of treating him as a possible possessor of the evil eye, the Galatians received Paul as an angel of God – another indicator of evil eye activities by drawing on the evil eye vocabulary in his reference to their willingness to pluck out their eyes on his behalf (4:15).²⁶

Neyrey argues that such accusations often occur in contexts of competition about leadership and authority (see 1988:94). In trying to understand the academic components of Paul's activities in their historical context, the accusation of bewitchment which is said to confuse them should not necessarily be interpreted as referring to cognitive confusion over the content of their belief system (the most frequent interpretation). Given the other indicators of an authority conflict about Paul's position,

²⁶ Elliott mentions several more indicators of the evil eye repertoire in the letter to the Galatians (see 1990a:268), but it is not necessary to recapitulate them all.

it is more likely that in this case he is falling back on one of the most potent weapons of his time – an evil eye accusation against those people who challenged his honour. A rereading of the letter (as in, for example, Elliott 1990a:269-270), taking into account the codes and conventions of the evil eye cultural script, may confirm the suggestion that the conflict was, after all, fought only at a secondary, on the level of conflicting convictions.²⁷

Paul furthermore expresses the wish that those who cause confusion should mutilate their own bodies (5:12) by castrating themselves – another indication, in his world, that they were to be rendered permanently unclean and shameful (see Neyrey 1988:83).

Given all these indicators of a socio-religious conflict, Betz's suggestion (that the letter to the Galatians should be seen as a 'magical letter', where Paul does not leave things to be rationally decided by the Galatians but instead introduces magic – Betz 1979:25) becomes all the more attractive. On the basis of the curse at the beginning of the letter (1:8-9) and the conditional blessing at the end (6:16), he maintains that the 'letter is not merely a piece of rhetoric, but it is composed in such a way that it functions at the same time as an efficacious display of the divine Spirit and Power' (1979:25).

Curses and blessings in early Christianity were magical phenomena (see Aune 1980:1552) which, as one variety of magical prayers, constituted magical letters (see Aune 1980:1554).

The defence of Paul's authority in the letter to the Galatians confirms the thesis that the root of the conflict in the household communities in Galatia was a rejection or denial of Paul's authority or honour.

6 THE CONFLICT IN GALATIA IN A FIRST-CENTURY COMMUNICATIVE CONTEXT: THE EMERGENCE OF AN ALTERNATIVE CYPHER KEY

It is widely agreed that the conflict in Galatia was central to the occasion of Paul's letter to the Galatians. However, an analysis of opponent hypotheses as a cypher key (which are simply different proposals for the interpretation of the letter) revealed that opponent hypotheses, broadly speaking, share the same historical and methodological points of departure.

²⁷ Elliott still thinks that the issue in Galatia was two different ways in which righteousness and membership in the Israel in God could be attained (see 1990a:270-271). In fact, his description of the situation in Galatia focuses on the elements identified in most opponent hypotheses (see 1990a:266). The point of the exercise in this study is to suggest that the totality of the socio-cultural and historical world of Paul should be taken into consideration when reading his letter. Thus not only the social mechanisms of evil eye accusations but also the popular culture of household religion and the features of the scribal culture, to mention only a few aspects, should all contribute to our estimate of Paul's exposition of the two different ways of attaining membership of the people of God.

A social-scientific methodology has been suggested which remedies the shortcomings of the history-of-ideas approach. Even from the point of view of alternative methodological principles it became clear that the historical components of opponent hypotheses as a cypher key are also in need of reconsideration. Instead of defining the Pauline communities primarily in terms of their creed or confession, and instead of taking the history of the early Jesus movement as a *confessional* history (as a struggle between different Christian parties and theologies), an attempt has been made to define them in terms of their cultural and societal setting.

The methodological components of the social-scientific cypher key in themselves suggest (in contrast to the history-of-ideas approach and mirror reading in opponent hypotheses) an interpretive approach to the letter and all its components. As against the notion that the viewpoint of the text should be accepted at face value, the challenge of interpretive methodology is to interpret the text within a particular first-century Mediterranean communicative context. That is to say, the letter can no longer provide its own key or be taken at face value to set the interpretive agenda. Even the so-called theological sections of the letter need to be interpreted within the overall socio-cultural setting. In this regard it is worth listening to Marshall when he says, referring to the variety of social problems in Corinth that

[i]t should warn us that a theological response need not necessarily point to an opposing theology or philosophy. Common social practice or conventions can equally evoke such a response ... The relationship between social act and theology in Paul is complex.

(1987b:361)

Thus, instead of considering the letter to the Galatians (like Paul's other letters) to be a documentation of intra-Christian struggle about conflicting theological or doctrinal convictions, it was suggested that it is the product of Paul's missionary endeavour within the household setting, the subculture of Diaspora Judaism and the confines of orality and religion in the first-century world. That is to say, the letter is seen as the product (and simultaneously as part and parcel) of a first-century Mediterranean communicative context. The possibility should be explored that Paul was using every means at his disposal to defend and re-establish his authority – also with regard to the academic matters of belief and doctrine in the letter to the Galatians. The implication of the position argued here is that Paul fought a battle at the primary level of social relations and social interaction, but he fought it with the weapons of the secondary level: claims on traditions, symbols and identity markers which all contributed to one's authority and honour. He focused on those aspects which, in the eyes of the Galatians, provided power and secured authority.

As an alternative cypher key, this communicative context at least provides the opportunity for a rereading of the letter to the Galatians – a rereading in which the whole letter as well as its smaller components can be analysed as part and parcel of Paul's persuasive strategy to re-establish his authority in the Galatian household communities. If the communicative context of the letter, as suggested in this study,

really was a socio-religious conflict over Paul's authority, then much more attention should be paid to the variety of historical components constituting the communicative context of such a conflict.²⁸

²⁸ At least one important aspect still needs to be taken into account (which will further complicate attempts to determine an appropriate setting for Paul's communication with the Galatians). That is the issue of social stratification – both Paul's and that of a typical Pauline community.

WORKS CONSULTED

(Bibliographic abbreviations are from Schwertner, S 1974. *Internationales Abkürzungsverzeichnis für Theologie und Grenzgebiete*. Berlin: De Gruyter.)

- Abrams, M H 1977. The limits of pluralism II: The deconstructive angel. *Critical Inquiry* 3, 425-438.
- Abrams, M H 1979. How to do things with texts. *Partisan Review* 46, 566-588.
- Abrams, P 1982. *Historical sociology*. Summerset: Open Books.
- Achtemeier, P J 1990. *Omne verbum sonat*: The New Testament and the oral environment of late western antiquity. *JBL* 109(1), 3-27.
- Applebaum, S 1974. The organization of the Jewish communities in the Diaspora, in Safrai & Stern 1974: 464-503.
- Armstrong, A H 1986^a. The ancient and continuing pieties of the Greek world, in Armstrong 1986^b: 66-101.
- Armstrong, A H 1986^c. Introduction, in Armstrong 1986^b: xiii-xxi.
- Armstrong, A H (ed) 1986^b. *Classical Mediterranean spirituality: Egyptian, Greek, Roman*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Asad, T 1982. Anthropological conceptions of religion: Reflections on Geertz. *Man* 18, 237-259.
- Aune, D E 1976. Orthodoxy in first century Judaism: A response to NJ McEleney. *JSJ* 7(1), 1-10.
- Aune, D E 1980. Magic in Early Christianity. *ANRW* 2.23.2, 1507-1557.
- Banks, R 1980. *Paul's idea of community: The early house churches in their historical setting*. Exeter: Paternoster.
- Barclay, J M G 1987. Mirror-reading a polemical letter: Galatians as a test case. *JSNT* 31, 73-93.
- Barclay, J M G 1988. *Obedying the truth: A study of Paul's ethics in Galatians*. Edinburgh: Clark.
- Barnhart, J E 1975. Is one's definition of 'religion' always circular? *International Yearbook for the Sociology of Knowledge and Religion* 9, 122-135.
- Barnhart, J E 1980. Every context has a context. *SJTh* 33, 501-513.
- Barton, J 1984. Classifying Biblical criticism. *JSOT* 29, 19-35.
- Barton, J 1987. Reading the Bible as literature: Two questions for Biblical critics. *Journal of Literature and Theology* 1(2), 135-153.
- Beavis, M A 1987. The trial before the Sanhedrin (Mark 14:53-65): Reader response and Greco-Roman readers. *CBQ* 49, 581-596.
- Beker, J C 1980. *Paul the apostle: The triumph of God in life and thought*. Edinburgh: Clark.
- Benko, S & O'Rourke, J J (eds) 1971. *The catacombs and the colosseum: The Roman Empire as the setting of primitive Christianity*. Valley Forge: Judson.
- Berger, K 1980. Die impliziten Gegner: Zur Methode des Erschließens von 'Gegnern' in neutestamentlichen Texten, in Lührmann, D & Strecker, G (Hrsg), *Kirche*, Fs G Bornkamm, 373-400. Tübingen: Mohr.
- Berger, P L 1974. Some second thoughts on substantive versus functional definitions of religion. *JSSR* 13, 125-133.
- Bernstein, R J 1983. *Beyond objectivism and relativism: Science, hermeneutics, and praxis*. Oxford: Blackwell.

- Best, E 1986. Paul's apostolic authority-? *JSNT* 27, 3-25.
- Best, T F 1983. The sociological study of the New Testament: Promise and peril of a new discipline. *SJTh* 36(2), 181-194.
- Betz, H D 1973. 2 Cor 6:14-7:1: An anti-Pauline fragment? *JBL* 92, 88-108.
- Betz, H D 1976. In defense of the Spirit: Paul's letter to the Galatians as a document of early Christian apologetics, in Fiorenza 1976^a: 99-114.
- Betz, H D 1979. *Galatians: A commentary on Paul's letter to the churches in Galatia*. Philadelphia: Fortress. (Hermeneia.)
- Bhaskar, R 1978. On the possibility of social scientific knowledge and the limits of naturalism. *Journal for the Study of Social Behaviour* 8, 1-28.
- Bleicher, J 1980. *Contemporary hermeneutics: Hermeneutics as method, philosophy and critique*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Boissevain, J 1974. *Friends of friends: Networks, manipulators and coalitions*. Oxford: Blackwell. (Pavilion series.)
- Borgen, P 1980. Observations on the theme 'Paul and Philo': Paul's preaching of circumcision in Galatia (Gal 5:11) and debates on circumcision in Philo, in Pederesen 1980: 85-102.
- Borgen, P 1983. The early church and the Hellenistic synagogue, in Borgen, P (ed), *Paul preaches circumcision and pleases men and other essays on Christian origins*, 55-75. Trondheim: Tapir.
- Borgen, P 1985. The cross-national church for Jews and Greeks: Observations on Paul's letter to the Galatians, in Borgen, P (ed), *The many and the one: Essays on religion in the Graeco-Roman world*, 225-248. Trondheim: Tapir.
- Bosman, D M 1987. Authority and tradition in first century Judaism and Christianity. *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 17(1), 3-9.
- Botha, P J J 1989. *Die dissipels in die Markusevangelie*. DD proefskrif, Universiteit van Pretoria, Pretoria.
- Botha, P J J 1990^a. Mute manuscripts: Analysing a neglected aspect of ancient communication. *ThEv* 23(3), 35-47.
- Botha, P J J 1990^b. The task of understanding the Gospel traditions: Werner Kelber's contribution to New Testament research. *HTS* 46(1&2), 47-70.
- Botha, P J J 1991^a. Framing the text: 'Background studies' and New Testament interpretation. Paper presented at a NTSSA mini congress, Pretoria.
- Botha, P J J 1991^b. Orality, literacy and worldview: Exploring the interaction. *Communicatio* 17(2), 2-15.
- Botha, P J J [1992^a]. Greco-Roman literacy as setting for New Testament writings. *Neotestamentica* 26(1), 1-19. (Forthcoming).
- Botha, P J J [1992^b]. Paul's letter to the Galatians within the context of ancient communication. *Scriptura*, 1-19. (Forthcoming).
- Branick, V P 1985. Apocalyptic Paul? *CBQ* 47(4), 664-675.
- Brett, M G 1990. Four or five things to do with texts: A taxonomy of interpretive interests, in Clines, D J A, Fowl, S E & Porter, S E (eds), *The Bible in three dimensions: Essays in celebration of forty years of Biblical Studies in the University of Sheffield*, 357-377. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press.
- Brinsmead, B H 1982. *Galatians: Dialogical response to opponents*. Chico: Scholars Press.

- Brown, R E 1983. Not Jewish Christianity and Gentile Christianity but types of Jewish/Gentile Christianity. *CBQ* 45, 74-79.
- Bruce, F F 1970. Galatian problems 2: North or south Galatians? *BJRL* 52, 243-266.
- Bultmann, R 1980. *Theologie des Neuen Testaments*. Tübingen: Mohr. (Uni-Taschenbücher 630.)
- Burke, P 1980. *Sociology and history*. London: Allen & Unwin.
- Carney, T F 1975. *The shape of the past: Models and antiquity*. Lawrence: Coronado Press.
- Caws, P 1974. Operational, representational, and explanatory models. *AmA* 76, 1-10.
- Caws, P 1976. The ontology of social structure: A reply to Hanson. *AmAn* 78, 325-327.
- Charlesworth, J H 1990. Exploring opportunities for rethinking relations among Jews and Christians, in Charlesworth, J H (ed), *Jews and Christians: Exploring the past, present, and future*, 35-59. New York: Crossroad.
- Cohen, S J D 1986. The political and social history of the Jews in Greco-Roman antiquity: The state of the question, in Kraft & Nickelsburg 1986: 33-56.
- Cohen, S J D 1987^a. *From the Maccabees to the Mishnah*. Philadelphia: Westminster.
- Cohen, S J D 1987^b. Pagan and Christian evidence on the ancient synagogue, in Levine 1987: 159-181.
- Cohen, S J D 1989. Crossing the boundary and becoming a Jew. *HThR* 82(1), 13-33.
- Cohn, B S 1980. History and anthropology: The state of play. *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 22, 198-221.
- Collins, J 1973. Interpretation: The interweave of problems. *New Literary History* 4, 389-403.
- Collins, J J 1985. A symbol of otherness: Circumcision and salvation in the first century, in Neusner & Frerichs 1985^b: 163-186.
- Conzelmann, H 1973. *History of primitive Christianity*. Nashville: Abingdon Press.
- Conzelmann, H & Lindemann, A 1980. *Arbeitsbuch zum Neuen Testament*. Tübingen: Mohr. (Uni-Taschenbücher 52.)
- Cosgrove, C H 1988. *The cross and the spirit: A study in the argument and theology of Galatians*. Mercer: Mercer University Press.
- Craffert, P F 1989. Paul's Damascus experience as reflected in Galatians 1: Call or conversion? *Scriptura* 29, 36-47.
- Craffert, P F 1991. Towards an interdisciplinary definition of the social-scientific interpretation of the New Testament. *Neotestamentica* 25(1), 123-144.
- Craffert, P F [1992]. More on models and muddles in the social-scientific interpretation of the New Testament: The *sociological fallacy* reconsidered. *Neotestamentica* 26(1), 1-23. (Forthcoming.)
- Culler, J 1982. *On deconstruction: Theory and criticism after structuralism*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Dallmayr, F R & McCarthy, T A (eds) 1977. *Understanding and social inquiry*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press.
- Danneberg, L & Müller, H-H 1984. On justifying the choices of interpretive theories: A critical examination of ED Hirsch's arguments in favor of an intentionalist theory of interpretation. *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 43, 7-16.

- Davies, W D 1955. *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism: Some Rabbinic elements in Pauline theology*. London: SPCK.
- Davies, W D 1978. Paul and the people of Israel. *NTS* 24, 4-39.
- Davies, W D 1981. Review of Betz, H D, Galatians: A commentary on Paul's letter to the churches in Galatia. *Religious Studies Review* 7(4), 310-318.
- De Beaugrande, R 1983. Surprised by syncretism: Cognition and literary criticism exemplified by ED Hirsch, Stanley Fish, and J Hillis Miller. *Poetics* 12, 83-137.
- De Ste. Croix, G E M 1972. The religion of the Roman world. *Didaskalos* 4, 61-74.
- Dean, W 1986. The challenge of the new historicism. *JR* 66, 261-281.
- Derrida, J 1977. Signature event context. *Glyph* 1, 172-197.
- Du Toit, A B 1984^a. *Oriënterende opmerkings oor die Pauliniese briefliteratuur*, in Du Toit 1984^b: 1-22.
- Du Toit, A B (red) 1984^b. *Die Pauliniese briewe: Inleiding en teologie*. Pretoria: NG Kerkboekhandel. (Handleiding by die Nuwe Testament, band V.)
- Du Toit, A B 1988. Gesetzesgerechtigkeit und Glaubensgerechtigkeit in Rom 4:13-25: In Gespräch mit EP Sanders. *HTS* 44(1), 71-80.
- Du Toit, A B 1990. Analise van die opbou, argumentasiegang en pragmatiek van die Galatebrief: 'n Eerste oriëntering. *Skrif en Kerk* 11(2), 155-165.
- Du Toit, A B 1992. Alienation and re-association as pragmatic strategies in Galatians. Paper presented at NTSSA meeting, Bloemfontein.
- Dunn, J D G 1983^a. The incident at Antioch (Gal 2:11-18). *JSNT* 18, 3-57.
- Dunn, J D G 1983^b. The new perspective on Paul. *BJRL* 65(2), 95-122.
- Dunn, J D G 1988^a. *Romans 1-8*. Dallas: Word Books. (Word Biblical Commentary 38A.)
- Dunn, J D G 1988^b. The theology of Galatians, in Lull, D J (ed), *Society of Biblical Literature 1988 seminar papers*, 1-16. Atlanta: Scholars Press.
- Eckert, J 1971. *Die urchristliche Verkündigung im Streit zwischen Paulus und seinen Gegnern nach dem Galaterbrief*. Regensburg: Pustet.
- Eisenstadt, S N & Roniger, L 1980. Patron-client relations as a model of structuring social exchange. *CSSH* 22, 42-77.
- Elliott, J H 1981. *A home for the homeless*. London: SCM.
- Elliott, J H 1986. Social-scientific criticism of the New Testament: More on methods and models. *Semeia* 35, 1-33.
- Elliott, J H 1987. Patronage and clientism in early Christian society: A short reading guide. *Foundations & Facets Forum* 3(4), 39-48.
- Elliott, J H 1988. The fear of the lear: The evil eye from the Bible to Li'l Abner. *Foundations & Facets Forum* 4(4), 42-71.
- Elliott, J H 1990^a. Paul, Galatians, and the evil eye. *Currents in Theology and Mission* 17(4), 262-273.
- Elliott, J H 1990^b. Social-scientific study of the Bible and the Biblical world. Unpublished paper presented at the University of Pretoria.
- Ellis, E E 1975. Paul and his opponents: Trends in the research, in Neusner, J (ed), *Christianity, Judaism and other Greco-Roman cults: Studies for Morton Smith at sixty*. Part 1, *New Testament*, 264-298. Leiden: Brill. (Studies in Judaism and late antiquity 12.1.)

- Ermarth, M 1981. The transformation of hermeneutics: 19th century ancients and 20th century moderns. *The Monist* 64, 175-194.
- Feldman, C F 1977. Two functions of language. *Harvard Educational Review* 47(3), 282-293.
- Feleppa, R 1986. Emics, etics, and social objectivity. *CA* 27(3), 243-255.
- Fiorenza, E S 1976^b. Miracles, mission, and apologetics: An introduction, in Fiorenza 1976^a: 1-25.
- Fiorenza, E S (ed) 1976^a. *Aspects of religious propaganda in Judaism and early Christianity*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press.
- Fletcher, D K 1982. *The singular argument of Paul's letter to the Galatians*. Ann Arbor: UMI dissertation series.
- Fowler, R 1986. *Linguistic criticism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Frend, W H C 1979. The church in town and countryside, in Baker, D (ed), *Town and countryside in early Christianity*, 25-42. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Freyne, S 1980. *The world of the New Testament*. Wilmington: Michael Glazier.
- Furnish, V P 1964/5. The Jesus-Paul debate: From Baur to Bultmann. *BJRL* 47, 342-381.
- Gadamer, H-G 1960. *Wahrheit und Methode*. Tübingen: JCB Mohr (Paul Siebeck).
- Gadamer, H-G 1979^a. The problem of historical consciousness, in Rabinow & Sullivan 1979^a: 103-160.
- Gadamer, H-G 1979^b. *Truth and method*. London: Sheed & Ward.
- Gager, J G 1986. Jews, gentiles, and synagogues in the book of Acts. *HThR* 79(1-3), 91-99.
- Gallagher, E V 1984. The social world of Saint Paul. *Religion* 14, 91-99.
- Gasché, R 1979. Deconstruction as criticism. *Glyph* 6, 177-216.
- Gaston, L 1984. Paul and Jerusalem, in Richardson & Hurd 1984: 61-72.
- Gaventa, B R 1986. Galatians 1 and 2: Autobiography as paradigm. *NT* 28(4), 309-326.
- Geertz, C 1973. Thick description: Toward and interpretive theory of culture, in Geertz, C (ed), *The interpretation of cultures: Selected essays*, 3-30. London: Hutchinson.
- Geertz, C 1979^a. Deep play: Notes on the Balinese cockfight, in Rabinow & Sullivan 1979^a: 181-223.
- Geertz, C 1979^b. From the native's point of view: On the nature of anthropological understanding, in Rabinow & Sullivan 1979^a: 225-241.
- Geertz, H 1975. An anthropology of religion and magic, I. *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 6(1), 71-89.
- Georgi, D 1971. Forms of religious propaganda, in Schultz, H J (ed), *Jesus in his time*, 124-131. Philadelphia: Fortress.
- Gilbert, G 1991. The making of a Jew: 'God-fearer or convert in the story of Izates. *USQR* 44, 299-313.
- Gilmore, D D 1982. Anthropology of the Mediterranean area. *Annual Review for Anthropology* 11, 175-205.
- Goody, J 1961. Religion and ritual: The definitional problem. *BJS* 12, 142-164.
- Goppelt, L 1970. *Apostolic and post-apostolic times*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House.

- Gordon, T D 1987. The problem at Galatia. *Interp* 41(1), 32-43.
- Grabbe, L L 1977. Orthodoxy in first century Judaism: What are the issues? *JSJ* 8(2), 149-153.
- Green, W S (ed) 1985. *Approaches to ancient Judaism: Studies in Judaism and its Greco-Roman context*, vol 5. Atlanta: Scholars Press. (Brown Judaic Studies 32.)
- Guenther, M G 1979. Bushman religion and the (Non)sense of anthropological theory of religion. *Sociologus* 29, 102-132.
- Gunther, J J 1975. *St Paul's opponents and their background*. Leiden: Brill.
- Gutmann, J 1975^a. Prolegomenon, in Gutmann 1975^b: ix-xxxi.
- Gutmann, J 1975^b. *The synagogue: Studies in origins, archaeology and architecture*. New York: KTAV Publishing House.
- Gutmann, J 1981^b. Synagogue origins: Theories and facts, in Gutmann 1981^a: 1-6.
- Gutmann, J (ed) 1981^a. *Ancient synagogues: The state of research*. Chico: Scholars Press. (Brown Judaic Studies 22.)
- Halliday, M A K & Hasan, R 1985. *Language, context, and text: Aspects of language in a social-semiotic perspective*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hansen, G W 1989. *Abraham in Galatians: Epistolary and rhetorical contexts*. Sheffield: JSOT Press.
- Hanson, F A 1976. Models and social reality: An alternative to Caws. *AmA* 78, 323-325.
- Hanson, F A & Martin, R 1973. The problem of other cultures. *Philosophy of the Social Sciences* 3, 191-208.
- Haralambos, M 1980. *Sociology: Themes and perspectives*. Slough: University Tutorial Press.
- Harris, M 1976. History and significance of the emic/etic distinction. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 5, 329-350.
- Harrison, B 1979. *An introduction to the philosophy of language*. London: Macmillan.
- Hartin, P J 1991. Jewish Christianity: Focus on Antioch in the first century. *Scriptura* 36, 38-50.
- Hartman, L 1986. On reading others' letters, in Nickelsburg, G W E & MacRae, G W (eds), *Christians among Jews and Gentiles*, 137-146. Philadelphia: Fortress.
- Harty, E R 1985. Text, context, intertext. *Journal of Literary Studies* 1(2), 1-13.
- Harvey, A E 1968. *The opposition to Paul*, in Cross, F L (ed), *Studia Evangelica IV: Papers presented to the third International congress on NT studies held at Christ Church, Oxford*, 319-332. Berlin: Akademie Verlag.
- Harvey, A E 1985. Forty strokes save one: Social aspects of Judaizing and apostasy, in Harvey, A E (ed), *Alternative approaches to New Testament study*, 79-96. London: SPCK.
- Hawkins, J G 1971. *The opponents of Paul in Galatia*. Ann Arbor: UMI dissertation series.
- Hawthorn, J (ed) 1984. *Criticism and critical theory*. London: Edward Arnold.
- Hawthorne G F (ed) 1975. *Current issues in biblical and patristic interpretation: Studies on honor of Merrill C Tenney presented by his former students*. Grand Rapids: W B Eerdmans.
- Heitmüller, D 1912. Zum Problem Paulus und Jesus. *ZNW* 13, 320-337.

- Hengel, M 1983. Christology and New Testament chronology: A problem of the history of earliest Christianity, in Hengel, M (ed), *Between Jesus and Paul: Studies in the earliest history of Christianity* 30-47, 156-166. London: SCM.
- Hernadi, P 1988. Doing, making, meaning: Toward a theory of verbal practice. *PMLA* 103(5), 749-758.
- Herzog, W R 1983. Interpretation as discovery and creation: Sociological dimensions of Biblical hermeneutics. *American Baptist Quarterly* 2, 105-118.
- Hester, J D 1991. Placing the blame: The presence of epideictic in Galatians 1 and 2, in Watson, D F (ed), *Persuasive artistry: Studies in New Testament rhetoric in honor of George A Kennedy*, 281-307. Sheffield: JSOT Press. (Journal for the study of the New Testament series 50.)
- Hickling, C J A 1975. Is the second epistle to the Corinthians a source for early church history? *ZNW* 66, 284-287.
- Hirsch, E D (Jr) 1960. Objective interpretation. *PMLA* 75, 463-479.
- Hirsch, E D (Jr) 1967. *Validity in interpretation*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Hirsch, E D (Jr) 1969. The norms of interpretation: A brief response. *Genre* 2, 57-62.
- Hirsch, E D (Jr) 1975. Current issues in theory of interpretation. *JR* 55, 298-312.
- Hirsch, E D (Jr) 1976. *The aims of interpretation*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Hirsch, E D (Jr) 1982. The politics of theories of interpretation. *Critical Inquiry* 9, 235-247.
- Hirsch, E D (Jr) 1983. Against theory? *Critical Inquiry* 9, 743-747.
- Hirsch, E D (Jr) 1984^a. Criticism and countertheses: On justifying interpretive norms. *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 43, 89-91.
- Hirsch, E D (Jr) 1984^b. Meaning and significance reinterpreted. *Critical Inquiry* 11, 202-225.
- Hirsch, E D (Jr) 1985^a. Back to history, in Graff G & Gibbons R (eds), *Criticism in the university*, 189-197. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.
- Hirsch, E D (Jr) 1985^b. Counterfactuals in interpretation, in *L'hermeneutique texte, lecture réception*, 15-28. Toronto: Texte Trinity College. (Texte: Revue de critique et du Theorie Litteraire nr 3.)
- Hock, R F 1978. Paul's tentmaking and the problem of his social class. *JBL* 97(4), 555-564.
- Hock, R F 1980. *The social context of Paul's ministry: Tentmaking and apostleship*. Philadelphia: Fortress.
- Hoening, S B 1975. The suppositious temple-synagogue, in Gutmann 1975^b: 55-71.
- Holmberg, B 1978. *Paul and power: The structure of authority in the primitive church as reflected in the Pauline epistles*. Philadelphia: Fortress.
- Holmberg, B 1990. *Sociology and the New Testament: An appraisal*. Minneapolis: Fortress.
- Holub, R C 1984. *Reception theory: A critical introduction*. London: Methuen.
- Howard, G E 1979. *Paul: Crisis in Galatia: A study of early Christian theology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Humphreys, R S 1980. The historian, his documents, and the elementary modes of historical thought. *HTh* 19, 1-20.

- Isenberg, S R 1974. Millenarism in Greco-Roman Palestine. *Religion* 4, 26-46.
- Isenberg, S R 1975. Power through temple and Torah in Greco-Roman Palestine, in Neusner 1975: 24-52.
- Janssen, P L 1985. Political thought as traditionary action: The critical response to Skinner and Pocock. *HTh* 24, 115-146.
- Jarvie, I C 1977. Understanding and explanation in sociology and social anthropology, in Dallmayr & McCarthy 1977: 189-206.
- Jervell, J 1984^a. The history of early Christianity and the Acts of the apostles, in Jervell 1984^e: 13-25, 158-162.
- Jervell, J 1984^b. The mighty minority, in Jervell 1984^e: 26-51, 162-164.
- Jervell, J 1984^c. Paul in the Acts of the apostles: Tradition, history, theology, in Jervell 1984^e: 68-76, 167-169.
- Jervell, J 1984^d. The unknown Paul, in Jervell 1984^e: 52-67, 164-167.
- Jervell, J 1984^e. *The unknown Paul: Essays on Luke-Acts and early Christian history*. Minneapolis: Augsburg.
- Jewett, R 1970/1. The agitators and the Galatian congregation. *NTS* 17, 198-212.
- Johnson, L T 1989. The New Testament's anti-Jewish slander and the conventions of ancient polemic. *JBL* 108(3), 419-441.
- Johnson, S E 1975. Asia Minor and early Christianity, in Neusner 1975: 77-145.
- Josephus. *Jewish Antiquities XIV*. Translated by Marcus, R 1943. London: Heinemann. (LCL.)
- Judge, E A 1960^a. The early Christians as a scholastic community (Part 1). *JRH* 1(1), 4-15.
- Judge, E A 1960^b. *The social pattern of the Christian groups in the first century: Some prolegomena to the study of New Testament ideas of social obligation*. London: Tyndale.
- Judge, E A 1961. The early Christians as a scholastic community (Part 2). *JRH* 2, 125-137.
- Judge, E A 1972. St Paul and classical society. *JAC* 15, 19-36.
- Judge, E A 1974. St Paul as a radical critic of society. *Interchange* 16, 191-203.
- Judge, E A 1980. The social identity of the first Christians: A question of method in religious history. *JRH* 11, 201-217.
- Judge, E A 1982. *Rank and status in the world of the Ceasars and St Paul*. Canterbury: University of Canterbury Press.
- Juhl, P D 1980. *Interpretation: An essay in the philosophy of literary criticism*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Juhl, P D 1984. Playing with texts: Can deconstruction account for critical practice?, in Hawthorn 1984: 59-71.
- Keck, L E 1979. *Paul and his letters*. Philadelphia: Fortress.
- Kee, H C 1990. The transformation of the synagogue after 70 CE: Its import for early Christianity. *NTS* 36(1), 1-24.
- King, D H 1983. Paul and the Tannaim: A study in Galatians. *WThJ* 45, 340-370.
- Klein, C 1978. *Anti-Judaism in Christian theology*. London: SPCK.
- Klijn, A F J 1974. The study of Jewish Christianity. *NTS* 20, 419-431.
- Knapp, S & Michaels, W B 1982. Against theory. *Critical Inquiry* 8, 723-742.

- Knapp, S & Michaels, W B 1987. Against theory 2: Hermeneutics and deconstruction. *Critical Inquiry* 14, 49-68.
- Koepping, K-P 1977. Ideologies and new religious movements: The case of Shinreikyo and its doctrines in comparative perspective. *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 4(2-3), 103-149.
- Koester, H 1982. *Introduction to the New Testament*. Vol 2, *History and literature of early Christianity*. Philadelphia: Fortress.
- Koptak, P E 1990. Rhetorical identification in Paul's autobiographical narrative: Galatians 1:13-2:14. *JSNT* 40, 97-115.
- Kraabel, A T 1979. The Diaspora synagogue: Archaeological and epigraphic evidence since Sukenik. *ANRW* 2.19.1, 477-510.
- Kraabel, A T 1981^a. The disappearance of the 'God-fearers'. *Numen* 28(2), 113-126.
- Kraabel, A T 1981^b. Social systems of six diaspora synagogues, in Gutmann 1981^a: 79-91.
- Kraabel, A T 1982. The Roman Diaspora: Six questionable assumptions. *JJS* 33, 445-464.
- Kraabel, A T 1985. Synagogue Caeca: Systematic distortion in Gentile interpretations of evidence for Judaism in the early Christian period, in Neusner & Frerichs 1985^b: 219-246.
- Kraabel, A T 1986. Greeks, Jews, and Lutherans in the middle half of Acts. *HThR* 79(1-3), 147-157.
- Kraabel, A T 1987. Unity and diversity among Diaspora synagogues, in Levine 1987: 79-91.
- Kraemer, R S 1989. On the meaning of the term 'Jew' in Greco-Roman inscriptions. *HThR* 82(1), 35-53.
- Kraft, R A 1972. In search of 'Jewish Christianity' and its 'theology': Problems of definition and methodology. *RSR* 60, 81-92.
- Kraft, R A 1975^a. The development of the concept of 'orthodoxy' in early Christianity, in Hawthorne 1975: 47-59.
- Kraft, R A 1975^b. The multiform Jewish heritage of early Christianity, in Neusner J (ed), *Christianity, Judaism and other Greco-Roman cults: Studies for Morton Smith at sixty*. Part 3, *Judaism before 70*, 174-199. Leiden: Brill. (Studies in Judaism and late antiquity 12.3.)
- Kraft, R A & Nickelsburg, G W E (eds) 1986. *Early Judaism and its modern interpreters*. Atlanta: Scholars Press.
- Krentz, E 1975. *The historical-critical method*. Philadelphia: Fortress.
- Kuenzli, R E 1980. The intersubjective structure of the reading process: A communication-oriented theory of literature. *Diacritics* 10, 47-56.
- Kümmel, W G 1970. *Das Neue Testament im 20 Jahrhundert: Ein Forschungsbericht*. Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk.
- Kümmel, W G 1972. *The New Testament: The history of the investigation of its problems*. London: SCM.
- Kümmel, W G 1975. *Introduction to the New Testament*. Rev ed. London: SCM.
- LaCapra, D 1983. Rethinking intellectual history and reading texts, in LaCapra, D (ed), *Rethinking intellectual history: Texts, contexts, language*, 23-71. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

- LaFargue, M 1988^a. Are texts determinate? Derrida, Barth, and the role of the Biblical scholar. *HThR* 81(3), 341-357.
- LaFargue, M 1988^b. Sociohistorical research and the contextualization of Biblical theology, in Neusner, Frerichs, Borgen & Horsley 1988: 3-16.
- Lakoff, R 1972. Language in context. *Language* 48(4), 907-927.
- Lategan, B C 1984^a. Current issues in the hermeneutical debate. *Neotestamentica* 18, 1-17.
- Lategan, B C 1984^b. *Galasiërs*, in Du Toit 1984^b: 95-113.
- Lategan, B C 1987. Reader clues in the text of Galatians. *Journal of Literary Studies* 3(1), 47-59.
- Lategan, B C 1988^a. Is Paul defending his apostleship in Galatians? The function of Galatians 1. 11-12 and 2. 19-20 in the development of Paul's argument. *NTS* 34(3), 411-430.
- Lategan, B C 1988^b. Why so few converts to new paradigms in theology? in Mouton, Van Aarde & Vorster 1988: 65-78.
- Lategan, B C 1989. The argumentative situation of Galatians. Paper presented at a NTSSA mini congress, Pretoria.
- Leech, G 1983. *Principles of pragmatics*. London: Longman.
- Leitch, V B 1983. *Deconstructive criticism: An advanced introduction*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Levine, L I (ed) 1987. *The synagogue in late antiquity*. Philadelphia: American School of Oriental Research.
- Levinskaya, I A 1990. The inscription from Aphrodisias and the problem of God-fearers. *TynB* 41(2), 312-318.
- Linge, D E 1976. Editor's introduction, in Gadamer, H-G, *Philosophical hermeneutics*, xi-lviii. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Lohse, E 1976. *The New Testament environment*. London: SCM.
- Longenecker, R N 1970. *The christology of early Jewish Christianity*. London: SCM.
- Longenecker, R N 1990. *Galatians*. Dallas: Word Books. (Word Biblical Commentary 41.)
- Lowe, M 1976. Who were the 'Ιουδαῖοι? *NT* 18(2), 101-130.
- Luckmann, T 1981. Hermeneutics as a paradigm for social science, in Brenner, M (ed), *Social method and social life*, 219-230. London: Academic Press.
- Lüdemann, G 1983. *Paulus, der Heidenapostel*. Band 2, *Antipaulinismus im frühen Christentum*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.
- Lüdemann, G 1984. *Paul, apostle to the Gentiles: Studies in chronology*. London: SCM.
- Lyons, G 1985. *Pauline autobiography: Towards a new understanding*. Atlanta: Scholars Press.
- Lyons, J 1981. *Language, meaning and context*. Suffolk: Fontana Paperback.
- Mabry, H P 1984. Sociology and theological research: Some assumptions and issues. *Bangalore Theological Forum* 16(3), 143-168.
- MacDonald, M Y 1988. *The Pauline churches: A socio-historical study of institutionalization in the Pauline and Deutero-Pauline writings*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- MacIntyre, A 1971. The idea of a social science, in MacIntyre, A (ed), *Against the self-images of the age: Essays on ideology and philosophy*, 211-229. London: Duckworth.
- MacMullen, R 1981. *Paganism in the Roman Empire*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- MacMullen, R 1984. *Christianizing the Roman Empire A.D. 100-400*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- MacMullen, R 1985/6. Conversion: A historian's view. *Second Century* 5(2), 67-87.
- Maddox, R L 1983. Hermeneutic circle: Viscious or victorious. *Philosophy Today* 27, 66-76.
- Malherbe, A J 1983. *Social aspects of early Christianity*. 2nd ed. Philadelphia: Fortress.
- Malherbe, A J 1989. Paul: Hellenistic philosopher or Christian pastor? in Malherbe, A J (ed), *Paul and the popular philosophers*, 67-77. Minneapolis: Fortress.
- Malina, B J 1976. Jewish Christianity or Christian Judaism: Toward a hypothetical definition. *JSJ* 7(1), 46-57.
- Malina, B J 1981. *The New Testament world: Insights from cultural anthropology*. London: SCM.
- Malina, B J 1983. Why interpret the Bible with the social sciences. *American Baptist Quarterly* 2, 119-133.
- Malina, B J 1986^a. *Christian origins and cultural anthropology: Practical models for Biblical interpretation*. Atlanta: Knox.
- Malina, B J 1986^b. Interpreting the Bible with anthropology: The case of the poor and the rich. *Listening* 21, 148-159.
- Malina, B J 1986^c. The received view and what it cannot do: III John and hospitality. *Semeia* 35, 171-194.
- Malina, B J 1986^d. 'Religion' in the world of Paul. *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 16(3), 92-102.
- Malina, B J 1987. Wealth and poverty in the New Testament and its world. *Interp* 41, 354-367.
- Malina, B J 1988^a. A conflict approach to Mark 7. *Foundations & Facets Forum* 4(3), 3-30.
- Malina, B J 1988^b. Patron and client: The analogy behind the synoptic tradition. *Foundations & Facets Forum* 4(1), 2-32.
- Malina, B J 1989. Dealing with Biblical (Mediterranean) characters: A guide for US consumers. *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 19, 127-141.
- Marcus, G E & Fischer, M M J 1986. *Anthropology as cultural critique: An experimental moment in the human sciences*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Marcus, J 1988. Paul at the Areopagus: Window on the Hellenistic world. *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 18(4), 143-148.
- Marsh, R 1967. Historical interpretation and the history of criticism, in Damon, P (ed), *Literary interpretation and historical understanding*, 1-24. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Marshall, I H 1972/3. Palestinian and Hellenistic Christianity: Some critical comments. *NTS* 19, 271-287.

- Marshall, I H 1979. Introduction, in Marshall, I H (ed), *New Testament interpretation: Essays on principles and methods*, 11-18. Rev ed. Exeter: Paternoster.
- Marshall, P 1987^a. *Enmity in Corinth: Social conventions in Paul's relations with the Corinthians*. Tübingen: JCB Mohr (Paul Siebeck). (WUNT 223.)
- Marshall, P 1987^b. Invective: Paul and his enemies in Corinth, in Conrad, E W & Newing, E G (eds), *Perspectives on language and text*, 359-373. Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns.
- Martyn, J L 1985. A law-observant mission to Gentiles: The background of Galatians. *SJTh* 38, 307-324.
- McEleney, N J 1973. Orthodoxy in Judaism of the first Christian century. *JSJ* 4(1), 19-42.
- McEleney, N J 1973/4. Conversion, circumcision and the law. *NTS* 20, 319-341.
- McEleney, N J 1978. Orthodoxy in Judaism of the first Christian century: Replies to David E Aune and Lester L Grabbe. *JSJ* 9(1), 83-88.
- Meeks, W A 1983. *The first urban Christians: The social world of the apostle Paul*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Meeks, W A 1985. Breaking away: Three New Testament pictures of Christianity's separation from the Jewish communities, in Neusner & Frerichs 1985^b: 93-115.
- Meeks, W A 1986^a. A hermeneutics of social embodiment. *HThR* 79(1-3), 176-186.
- Meeks, W A 1986^b. *The moral world of the first Christians*. London: SPCK.
- Meeks, W A (ed) 1972. *The writings of St. Paul: Annotated text criticism*. New York: Norton.
- Meyer, P W 1981. Review of Betz, H D, Galatians: A commentary on Paul's letter to the churches in Galatia. *Religious Studies Review* 7(4), 318-323.
- Meyers, E M & Strange, J F 1981. *Archaeology, the Rabbis, and early Christianity: The social and historical setting of Palestinian Judaism and Christianity*. Nashville: Abingdon.
- Momigliano, A 1985. Religion in Athens, Rome and Jerusalem in the first century BC, in Green 1985: 1-18.
- Mommsen, W J 1978. Social conditioning and social relevance of historical judgments. *History and Theory Beihefte* 17, 19-35.
- Morgan, R 1988. *Biblical interpretation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Mott, S C 1975. The power of giving and receiving: Reciprocity in hellenistic benevolence, in Hawthorne 1975: 60-72.
- Mouton, J 1988. The possibility of a realist construal of social theories, in Mouton, J (et al), *Essays in social theorising*, 97-113. Pretoria: Human Sciences Research Council.
- Mouton, J, Van Aarde, A G & Vorster, W S (eds) 1988. *Paradigms and progress in theology*. Pretoria: Human Sciences Research Council.
- Moxnes, H 1988^a. Honor, shame, and the outside world in Paul's letter to the Romans, in Neusner, Frerichs, Borgen & Horsley 1988: 207-218.
- Moxnes, H 1988^b. Honour and righteousness in Romans. *JSNT* 32, 61-78.
- Munck, J 1959. *Paul and the salvation of mankind*. London: SCM.
- Murphy O'Connor, J 1983. *St Paul's Corinth: Texts and archaeology*. Wilmington: Michael Glazier. (Good News Studies vol 6.)

- Murray, R 1982. Jews, Hebrews and Christians: Some needed distinctions. *NT* 24(3), 194-208.
- Murray, R 1985. "Disaffected Judaism" and early Christianity: Some predisposing factors, in Neusner & Frerichs 1985^b: 263-281.
- Mußner, F 1974. *Der Galaterbrief*. Freiburg: Herder. (HThK 9.)
- Neal, R S 1988. *Synagogue and church: The model of the Jewish synagogue in the formation of first-century Christianity*. Ann Arbor: UMI dissertation series.
- Neusner, J 1977. The history of earlier Rabbinic Judaism: Some new approaches. *HR* 16, 216-236.
- Neusner, J 1983. *Formative Judaism: Religious, historical, and literary studies*. Second series. Chico: Scholars Press.
- Neusner, J 1984. *Judaism in the beginning of Christianity*. Philadelphia: Fortress.
- Neusner, J 1987. 'Israel': Judaism and its social metaphors. *JAAR* 55(2), 331-361.
- Neusner, J 1988. *Wrong ways and right ways in the study of formative Judaism: Critical method and literature, history, and the history of religion*. Atlanta: Scholars Press. (Brown Judaic Studies 145.)
- Neusner, J 1989. The absoluteness of Christianity and the uniqueness of Judaism: Why salvation is not of the Jews. *Interp* 43(1), 18-31.
- Neusner, J & Frerichs, E S 1985^a. Preface, in Neusner & Frerichs 1985^b: xi-xvi.
- Neusner, J & Frerichs, E S (eds) 1985^b. *"To see ourselves as others see us": Christians, Jews, "others" in late antiquity*. Chico: Scholars Press.
- Neusner, J (ed) 1975. *Christianity, Judaism and other Greco-Roman cults: Studies for Morton Smith at sixty*. Part 2, *Early Christianity*. Leiden: Brill. (Studies in Judaism and late antiquity 12.2.)
- Neusner, J, Frerichs, E S, Borgen, P & Horsley R (eds) 1988. *The social world of formative Christianity and Judaism*. Philadelphia: Fortress.
- Neyrey, J H 1988. Bewitched in Galatia: Paul and cultural anthropology. *CBQ* 50(1), 72-100.
- Nickelsburg, G W E 1985. Revealed wisdom as a criterion for inclusion and exclusion: From Jewish sectarianism to early Christianity, in Neusner & Frerichs 1985^b: 73-91.
- Nickelsburg, G W E 1986. An 'ektrooma', though appointed from the womb: Paul's apostolic self-description in 1 Corinthians 15 and Galatians 1. *HThR* 79(1-3), 198-205.
- Nickelsburg, G W E & Kraft, R A 1986. Introduction: The modern study of early Judaism, in Kraft & Nickelsburg 1986: 1-30.
- Nipperdey, T 1978. Can history be objective? *Historia* 23, 2-14.
- Noack, B 1980. Teste Paulo: Paul as the principal witness to Jesus and primitive Christianity, in Pedersen 1980: 9-28.
- Nock, A D 1952. *Conversion: The old and the new in religion from Alexander the Great to Augustine of Hippo*. Oxford: Clarendon.
- Novum Testamentum Graece²⁶, 1979. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelstiftung. (= Nestle-Aland²⁶.)
- O'Toole, R 1984. *Religion: Classic sociological approaches*. Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson.

- Ogilvie, R M 1969. *The Romans and their Gods: In the age of Augustus*. London: Chatto & Windus.
- Olson, D R 1977. From utterance to text: The bias of language in speech and writing. *Harvard Educational Review* 47(3), 257-281.
- Palmer, R E 1969. *Hermeneutics: Interpretation theory in Schleiermacher, Dilthey, Heidegger, and Gadamer*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.
- Pauw, J C 1987. Peter Winch: Die idee *geesteswetenskap* en sy verhouding tot die filosofie, in Snyman, J J & Du Plessis, P G W (reds), *Wetenskapsbeelde in die geesteswetenskappe*, 81-89. Pretoria: Raad vir Geesteswetenskaplike Navorsing.
- Pedersen, S (Hrsg) 1980. *Die Paulinische Literatur und Theologie*. Århus: Vorlaget Aros.
- Petersen, N R 1985. *Rediscovering Paul: Philemon and the sociology of Paul's narrative world*. Philadelphia: Fortress.
- Phillips, C R 1984. Did the Romans have a religion? in Richards, K H (ed), *Society of Biblical Literature 1984 seminar papers*, 289-294. Chico: Scholars Press.
- Phillips, C R 1986. The sociology of religious knowledge in the Roman Empire to A.D. 284. *ANRW* 2.16.3, 2677-2773.
- Pike, K L 1966. Etic and emic standpoints for the description of behavior, in Smith, A G (ed), *Communication and culture: Readings in the codes of human interaction*, 152-163. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Pitt-Rivers, J 1977. The law of hospitality, in Pitt-Rivers, J (ed), *The fate of Shechem or the politics of sex: Essays in the anthropology of the Mediterranean*, 94-112, 179-181. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Porter, S E 1990. Why hasn't reader-response criticism caught on in New Testament studies? *Journal of Literature & Theology* 4(3), 278-291.
- Powell, J 1989. Social theory as exegetical tool. *Foundations and Facets Forum* 5(4), 27-40.
- Putnam, H 1984. The craving for objectivity. *New Literary History* 15, 229-239.
- Rabinow, P & Sullivan, W M 1979^a. *Interpretive social science: A reader*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Rabinow, P & Sullivan, W M 1979^b. The interpretive turn: Emergence of an approach, in Rabinow & Sullivan 1979^a: 1-21.
- Rabinowitz, P J 1989. Whirl without end: Audience-oriented criticism, in Atkins, G D & Morrow, L (eds), *Contemporary literary theory*, 81-100. Massachusetts: University of Massachusetts Press.
- Rajak, T 1985. Jews and Christians as groups in a pagan world, in Neusner & Frerichs 1985^b: 247-262.
- Reynolds, J & Tannenbaum, R 1987. *Jews and Godfearers at Aphrodisias*. Cambridge: Cambridge Philological Society.
- Richardson, P & Hurd, J C (eds) 1984. *From Jesus to Paul: Studies in honour of Francis Wright Beare*. Ontario: Wilfred Laurier University Press.
- Ricoeur, P 1977. The model of the text: Meaningful action considered as a text, in Dallmayr & McCarthy 1977: 316-334.
- Riddle, D W 1943. The Jewishness of Paul. *JR* 23, 240-244.
- Riegel, S K 1978. Jewish Christianity: Definitions and terminology. *NTS* 24, 410-415.

- Roetzel, C J 1982. *The letters of Paul: Conversations in context*. London: SCM.
- Rofé, A 1988. The onset of sects in postexilic Judaism: Neglected evidence from the Septuagint, Trito-Isaiah, Ben Sira, and Malachi, in Neusner, Frerichs, Borgen & Horsley 1988: 39-49.
- Rohrbaugh, R L 1978. *The Biblical interpreter: An agrarian Bible in an industrial age*. Philadelphia: Fortress.
- Rohrbaugh, R L 1983. Methodological considerations in the debate over the social class status of early Christians. *JAAR* 52(3), 519-546.
- Rohrbaugh, R L 1987^a. Models and muddles: Discussion of the social facets seminar. *Foundations and Facets Forum* 3(2), 23-33.
- Rohrbaugh, R L 1987^b. 'Social location of thought' as a heuristic construct in New Testament study. *JSNT* 30, 103-119.
- Rorty, R 1981^a. Method, social science, and social hope. *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 9(4), 569-588.
- Rorty, R 1981^b. Nineteenth-century idealism and twentieth-century textualism. *The Monist* 64(2), 155-174.
- Runciman, W G 1983. *A treatise on social theory*. Vol 1, *The methodology of social theory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ryan, R 1985. Pathologies of epistemology in literary studies. *Journal of Literary Studies* 1(1), 3-42.
- Safrai, S & Stern, M (eds) 1974. *The Jewish people in the first century*. Vol 1, *Historical, geography, political history, social, cultural and religious life and institutions*. Van Gorcum: Assen.
- Saldarini, A J 1988. *Pharisees scribes and Sadducees in Palestinian society*. Edinburgh: Clark.
- Saliba, J A 1977. Religion and the anthropologists 1960-1976 (Part 2). *Anthropologica* 19, 177-208.
- Sampley, J P 1980. *Pauline partnership in Christ: Christian community and commitment in light of Roman law*. Philadelphia: Fortress.
- Sanders, E P 1977. *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A comparison of patterns of religion*. London: SCM.
- Sanders, E P 1983. *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish people*. Philadelphia: Fortress.
- Sanders, E P 1985. Judaism and the grand 'Christian' abstractions: Love, mercy, and grace. *Interp* 39, 357-372.
- Sanders, J T 1966. Paul's 'autobiographical' statements in Galatians 1-2. *JBL* 85, 335-343.
- Sandmel, S 1979. Palestinian and Hellenistic Judaism and Christianity: The question of the comfortable theory. *HUCA* 50, 137-148.
- Schiffman, L H 1981. At the crossroads: Tannaitic perspectives on the Jewish-Christian schism, in Sanders, E P; Baumgarten, A I & Mendelson, A (eds), *Jewish and Christian selfdefinition: Aspects of Judaism in the Greco-Roman period*, vol 2, 115-156, 338-352. London: SCM.
- Schlier, H 1971. *Der Brief an die Galater*. 5. Aufl. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.
- Schmithals, W 1965. *Paul and James*. London: SCM.

- Schmithals, W 1972. The heretics in Galatia, in Schmithals, W (ed), *Paul and the gnostics*, 13-64. New York: Abingdon.
- Schmithals, W 1983. Judaisten in Galatien? *ZNW* 74, 27-58.
- Schneiders, S M 1982. The Paschal imagination: Objectivity and subjectivity in New Testament interpretation. *ThSt* 43, 52-68.
- Schoeps, H J 1961. *Paul: The theology of the apostle in the light of Jewish religious history*. Philadelphia: Westminster.
- Schoeps, H J 1969. *Jewish Christianity: Factional disputes in the early church*. Philadelphia: Fortress.
- Schubert, P 1947. Urgent tasks for New Testament research, in Willoughby, H R (ed), *The study of the Bible today and tomorrow*, 209-228. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Schütz, J H 1975. *Paul and the anatomy of apostolic authority*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Scroggs, R 1975. The earliest Christian communities as sectarian movement, in Neusner 1975: 1-23.
- Scroggs, R 1980. The sociological interpretation of the New Testament: The present state of research. *NTS* 26, 164-179.
- Scroggs, R 1986. Sociology and the New Testament. *Listening* 21(2), 138-147.
- Segal, A F 1986. *Rebecca's children: Judaism and Christianity in the Roman world*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Segal, A F 1990. *Paul the convert: The apostolate and apostasy of Saul the pharisee*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Shankman, P 1984. The thick and the thin: On the interpretive theoretical program of Clifford Geertz. *CA* 25(3), 261-279.
- Shaw, G 1983. *The cost of authority: Manipulation and freedom in the New Testament*. London: SCM.
- Silverman, S 1977. Patronage as myth, in Gellner, E & Waterbury, J (eds), *Patrons and clients in Mediterranean societies*, 7-19. London: Duckworth.
- Skinner, Q 1970. Conventions and the understanding of speech acts. *Philosophical Quarterly* 20, 118-138.
- Skinner, Q 1972. Motives, intentions and the interpretation of texts. *New Literary History* 3, 392-408.
- Skinner, Q 1975. Hermeneutics and the role of history. *New Literary History* 7, 209-232.
- Skinner, Q 1988. A reply to my critics, in Tully, J (ed), *Meaning and context: Quentin Skinner and his critics*, 231-288, 326-341. Oxford: Polity.
- Skocpol, T 1984. Emerging agendas and recurrent strategies in historical sociology, in Skocpol, T (ed), *Vision and method in historical sociology*, 356-391. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Smiles, V M 1989. *The gospel and the law in Galatia: Paul's response to Jewish Christian separatism and the threat of Galatian apostasy*. Ann Arbor: UMI dissertation series.
- Smith, J Z 1975. The social description of early Christianity. *Religious Studies Review* 1(1), 19-25.

- Smith, J Z 1982. Fences and neighbors: Some contours of early Judaism, in Smith, J Z (ed), *Imagining religion: From Babylon to Jonestown*, 1-18. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Smith, J Z 1985. What a difference a difference makes, in Neusner & Frerichs 1985b: 1-48.
- Smith, M 1956. Palestinian Judaism in the first century, in Davis, M (ed), *Israel: Its role in civilization*, 67-81. New York: Harper & Brothers.
- Smith, M 1957. Pauline problems: Apropos of J. Munck, 'Paulus und die Heilsgeschichte'. *HThR* 50(1), 107-131.
- Smith, M 1961. The Dead Sea sect in relation to ancient Judaism. *NTS* 7, 347-360.
- Smith, M 1963. A comparison of early Christian and early Rabbinic tradition. *JBL* 82, 169-176.
- Smith, M 1977. Early Christianity and Judaism, in Wagner, S M & Breck, A (eds), *Great confrontations in Jewish history*, 41-61. Denver: s n.
- Smith, M 1978^a. *On the history of the 'Divine man'*, in *Paganisme, Judaïsme, Christianisme: Influence et affrontements dans le monde antique: Mélanges offerts à Marcel Simon*, 335-345. Paris: E de Boccard.
- Smith, M 1978^b. *Jesus the magician*. London: Victor Gollancz.
- Smith, M 1980. Pauline worship as seen by pagans. *HThR* 73, 241-249.
- Smith, M 1983. Terminological boobytraps and real problems in second-temple Judaeo-Christian studies, in Slater, P & Wiebe, D (eds), *Traditions in contact and change: Selected proceedings of the XIVth congress of the international association for the history of religions*, 295-306. Ontario: Wilfred Laurier University Press.
- Smith, W C 1962. *The meaning and end of religion: A new approach to the religious traditions of mankind*. New York: Macmillan.
- Spiro, M E 1966. Religion: Problems of definition and explanation, in Banton, M (ed), *Anthropological approaches to the study of religion*, 85-126. Edinburg: Tavistock.
- Stambaugh, J & Balch D 1986. *The social world of the first Christians*. London: SPCK.
- Stanford, M 1986. *The nature of historical knowledge*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Stark, R & Bainbridge, W S 1985. The nature of religion, in Stark, R & Bainbridge, W S (eds), *The future of religion: Secularization, revival and cult formation*, 1-18. Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- Stendahl, K 1976. *Paul among Jews and Gentiles and other essays*. London: SCM.
- Stern, M 1974. The Jewish Diaspora, in Safrai & Stern 1974: 117-157.
- Stout, J 1982. What is the meaning of a text? *New Literary History* 14, 2-12.
- Stowers, S K 1984. Social status, public speaking and private teaching: The circumstances of Paul's preaching activity. *NT* 26(1), 59-82.
- Stowers, S K 1985. The social sciences and the study of early Christianity, in Green 1985: 149-181.
- Stowers, S K 1986. *Letter writing in Greco-Roman antiquity*. Philadelphia: Westminster.
- Stowers, S K 1988. Social typification and the classification of ancient letters, in Neusner, Frerichs, Borgen & Horsley 1988: 78-90.

- Strecker, G 1971. Appendix 1: On the problem of Jewish Christianity, in Bauer, W *Orthodoxy and heresy in earliest Christianity*, ed by Kraft, R A & Krodel, G, 241-285. Philadelphia: Fortress.
- Sumney, J L 1989. The role of historical reconstructions of early Christianity in identifying Paul's opponents. *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 16(1), 45-53.
- Sumney, J L 1990. *Identifying Paul's opponents: The question of method in 2 Corinthians*. Sheffield: JSOT Press. (JSNT supplement series 40.)
- Talbert, C H 1967. Again: Paul's visits to Jerusalem. *NT* 9, 26-40.
- Taylor, C 1977. Interpretation and the sciences of man, in Dallmayr & McCarthy 1977: 101-131.
- Taylor, J E 1990. The phenomenon of early Jewish-Christianity: Reality or scholarly invention? *VigChr* 44(4), 313-334.
- Theißen, G 1978. *The first followers of Jesus: A sociological analysis of the earliest Christianity*. London: SCM.
- Theißen, G 1979. Zur forschungsgeschichtlichen Einordnung der soziologischen Fragestellung, in Theißen, G (Hrsg), *Studien zur Soziologie des Urchristentums*, 3-34. Tübingen: JCB Mohr. (WUNT 19.)
- Theißen, G 1982. *The social setting of Pauline Christianity*. Philadelphia: Fortress.
- Tidball, D 1983. *An introduction to the sociology of the New Testament*. Exeter: Paternoster.
- Tosh, J 1984. *The pursuit of history: Aims, methods and new directions in the study of modern history*. London: Longman.
- Tyson, J B 1968. Paul's opponents in Galatia. *NT* 10, 241-254.
- Van Niekerk, A A 1990. Textuality and the human sciences: An appraisal of Paul Ricoeur. *Scriptura (Supplement)* S5, 1-31.
- Velasco, J M & Sabourin, L 1976. Jewish Christianity of the first centuries. *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 6, 5-26.
- Verner, D C 1983. *The household of God: The social world of the Pastoral epistles*. Chico: Scholars Press.
- Vorster, J N 1991. *The rhetorical situation of the letter to the Romans: An interactional approach*. DD thesis, University of Pretoria, Pretoria.
- Vorster, W S 1977. *'n Ou boek in 'n nuwe wêreld: Gedagtes rondom die interpretasie van die Nuwe Testament*. Pretoria: Unisa.
- Vorster, W S 1984. The historical paradigm: Its possibilities and limitations. *Neotestamentica* 18, 104-123.
- Vorster, W S 1987. Op weg na 'n post-kritiese Nuwe-Testamentiese wetenskap. *HTS* 43(3), 374-394.
- Vorster, W S 1988. Towards a post-critical paradigm: Progress in New Testament scholarship? in Mouton, Van Aarde & Vorster 1988: 31-48.
- Vorster, W S 1991. Through the eyes of a historian, in Hartin, P J & Petzer, J H (eds), *Text and interpretation: New approaches in the criticism of the New Testament*, 15-43. Leiden: Brill.
- Walter, N 1986. Paulus und die Gegner des Christusevangeliums, in VanHoye, A (éd), *L'Apôtre Paul: Personnalité, style et conception du Ministère*, 351-356. Leuven: Leuven University Press.

- Watson, N 1987. Authorial intention: Suspect concept for Biblical scholars? *ABR* 35, 6-13.
- Wax, M L 1984. *Religion* as universal: Tribulations of an anthropological enterprise. *Zygon* 19, 5-20.
- Wedderburn, A J M 1985. Paul and Jesus: The problem of continuity. *SJTh* 38(2), 189-203.
- Wedderburn, A J M 1988. Paul and Jesus: Similarity and continuity. *NTS* 34(2), 161-182.
- Wellek, R & Warren, A 1956. *Theory of literature*. 3rd ed. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World.
- White, L M 1985/6. Adolf Harnack and the 'Expansion' of early Christianity: A Reappraisal of social history. *The Second Century* 5(2), 97-127.
- White, L M 1986. Sociological analysis of early Christian groups: A social historian's response. *Sociological Analysis* 47, 249-266.
- White, L M 1987^a. The Delos synagogue revisited: Recent fieldwork in the Graeco-Roman diaspora. *HThR* 80(2), 133-160.
- White, L M 1987^b. Scaling the strongman's 'court' (Luke 11:21). *Foundations & Facets Forum* 3(3), 3-28.
- White, L M 1987^c. Social authority in the house church setting and Ephesians 4:1-16. *RestQ* 29, 209-228.
- White, L M 1988. Shifting sectarian boundaries in early Christianity. *BJRL* 70(3), 7-24.
- White, L M 1990. *Building God's house in the Roman world: Architectural adaptation among Pagans, Jews, and Christians*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Wilken, R L 1971. Collegia, philosophical schools, and theology, in Benko & O'Rourke 1971: 268-291.
- Wilken, R L 1984. *The Christians as the Romans saw them*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Wilken, R L 1986. Religious pluralism and early Christian theology. *Interp* 40, 379-391.
- Williams, S K 1981. Review of Howard, G E, Paul: Crisis in Galatia: A study in early Christian theology. *JBL* 100(2), 307-308.
- Willis, W 1987. An irenic view of Christian origins: Theological continuity from Jesus to Paul in W R Farmer's writings, in Sanders, E P (ed), *Jesus, the gospels, and the church: Essays in honor of William R Farmer*, 265-286. Macon: Mercer University Press.
- Wilson, S G 1984. From Jesus to Paul: The contours and consequences of a debate, in Richardson & Hurd 1984: 1-21.
- Winch, P 1958. *The idea of a social science and its relation to philosophy*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Winch, P 1977^a. Comment, in Dallmayr & McCarthy 1977: 207-214.
- Winch, P 1977^b. Understanding a primitive society, in Dallmayr & McCarthy 1977: 159-188.

Winslow, D 1971. Religion and the early Roman Empire, in Benko & O'Rourke 1971: 237-254.

Wright, I 1984. History, hermeneutics, deconstruction, in Hawthorn 1984: 83-96.