On this rock I will build my *ekklesia*:
Counter-cultic springs of multiculturalism?

Edwin Judge

Abstract: What we now mean by 'religion' embraces both worship ('cult') and an alternative life-style ('community'). But the two pull in opposite directions. Worship is typically conservative, securing the established order, while an alternative life-style is potentially innovative, challenging it. The *ekklesia* Jesus was to build expressed this challenge by rejecting formal worship. They used it only as a metaphor for the new life-style. But once that came to dominate the Roman empire, the metaphor was taken literally, with worship ('cult') now securing the newly established order. Was there any precedent for this? Only very rarely, and never for long, did ancient cults threaten to produce a new community life. Philosophical schools, like the *ekklesiai*, often criticised cultic worship, but never produced an ongoing community. The Christian innovation lies behind the cultural dynamism of the West. Multiculturalism stretches this paradox by respecting any traditional worship even though the implied life-style may seem to challenge public values.

The term 'multiculturalism' is first cited by the *Oxford English Dictionary* from a Royal Commission of 1965 on what was also called 'the Canadian mosaic'. It had arisen as a way of referring to the co-existence in one national state of three cultures (Inuit, French and English) marked off by language, ethnicity and territory. In Australia any distinctives of language and territory are breaking down, yet ethnic tradition is being entrenched. So we may not mock each other's inherited beliefs or life-style any more, only our own. We are however allowed to switch over to someone else's lot, with reactions ranging from strained endorsement to resentment or even vengeance. This is not quite how the Romans did it. They mocked other people's cults, while taking care formally to respect them, as well as sometimes making it unlawful for their own people to join in with aliens.

The term 'counter-cultic' is devised by me to refer to cults in this sense. 'Cult' is the cultivation of an inherited tradition, always focussed on the correct way of worshipping the deity, the necessary safeguard of the existing order of things. Cult is thus conservative, and nothing should change. But Australian culture derives momentum from the assumption that difference is good and change may be better. So we are in a bind. Multiculturalism is supposed to create opportunity while entrenching tradition. The purpose of what follows is to explore the archaeology of this paradox. A condensed version of this paper is scheduled to appear at the end of 2006 in the *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum* s.v. 'Kultgemeinde'.

The saying of Jesus (Matt. 16:18) in the title confronts us with three novelties. The 'rock' of course is Peter, under the nickname Jesus gave Simon son of John (John 1:42) when he was the first to salute Jesus as the Messiah. The novelty however lies not only in the name (Peter being the

only uniquely Christian name to last the distance), but in the (unprecedented?) adoption of a theological confession as the basis for a new movement. The second innovation is to conceive of that movement as a building. Such a metaphor also seems unprecedented, in contrast, for example, with that of the body, which is freely used as a figure of the social order. The most intriguing novelty however is the unexplained appearance of the prosaic term *ekklesia*. It occurs in the Acts of the Apostles when things were already well on the way, but without comment. It is the ordinary word for a meeting. In spite of the huge weight of meaning built upon the community it came to denote, neither its members nor their critics seem to have thought the term called for any discussion.

It is tempting to project the NT concept of community on to the many Greek and Roman associations linked with the cult of a god. But since in classical culture any public or private activity, whatever its concern, had to be placed under divine auspices, the analogy with NT communities has little point where the effective (as distinct from formal) purpose is not centred in the cult. Offering sacrifice on the altar, in sight of the image or emblem of the god, was simply the guarantee of security. Thus we should not seek a parallel in those based on family, class or civil commitments, or serving mainly occupational, convivial or funerary ends. In addition, to count as members of a community rather than a routine cult-group we should expect people to have joined it voluntarily, with a personal interest in the cult, and above all to be forming a new and shared pattern of life around that. It may not be easy to find parallels to the distinctively Pauline ethos of social reconstruction.

If the term community may seem implausible when applied to the classical cults, so should the term cult when applied to the NT communities. As with the synagogues, the

ekklesiai were primarily engaged with fostering the correct understanding of a learned tradition, and with moral behaviour. Theology and ethics belonged to philosophy, not to cult, which was preoccupied with correct ritual procedure and with ceremonial purity. The *ekklesiai* painstakingly distanced themselves from the cultic practice both of ancient Israel and of the Greeks, and denounced the latter as demonic. From the classical side equally the 'meetings' were seen as foreign to proper cult, and indeed as atheist. It was only slowly, across the first four centuries, and not decisively until after Constantine, that the Christians began to accept some analogy with cultic attitudes (for example, over the securing of the established order), and to adopt some of the relevant practices and terminology. But in doing so they were creating a combination of forces alien both to classical and (to some extent) to biblical culture, enshrining an openly radical and didactic approach to social relations within the conventional security of cultic practice. From this hitherto unparalleled (and inherently ambiguous and unstable) compromise arose what came belatedly (in the seventeenth century) to be classified as a series of 'religions', that is alternative commitments of belief and life potentially critical of the civil community. What we choose to call 'religions' in antiquity are profoundly different in each of these respects. They made no great demand on belief or life, and were pursued primarily to safeguard the established order of things, not to question it.

Greek cult-groups

Private initiative in establishing cultic rites (ὄργια) at Athens seems to be implied when Suidas (s.v.) defines ὀργεῶνες as οἱ τοῖς ἰδίᾳ ἀφιδρυμένοις θεοῖς ὀργιάζοντες. Ziebarth (*RE*, s.v.) held that they were groups of citizens whose descent excluded them from the phratries that managed the cultic life of the civil community at the local level. But they were clearly linked in some way with the public system (Parker 1996:109-11). A law of Solon (*Digest* 47.22.4) alludes to them amongst the partnerships, including business ones, whose agreements are valid unless contrary to law. Athenaeus 186a itemises their dinners separately from those of both phratries and θίασοι. Ferguson shows from the inscriptions that they were at first devoted to the cult of heroes. From the inscriptions also we know that the introduction of the Thracian cult of Bendis (with which Plato opens his *Republic*) was entrusted to ὀργεῶνες, applied now for the first time to foreigners. There are a few other such cases, the goddess Belela being supported by ὀργεῶνες as late as the early third century AD (*SIG*[3] 1111). But Aristotle makes no mention of them when classifying the several forms of κοινωνία (community) that are sub-sets of the πόλις (*Eth. Nic.* 1160a). They may already have been subsumed under the θίασοι and ἔρανοι, which arise 'for the sake of pleasure' in the form of sacrificial 'gatherings' (σύνοδοι) combined with 'companionship' (συνουσία) (Arnaoutoglou 1993).

These three sorts of group were identified by Foucart as the main prototypes of the Greek cult-group. The comprehensive term was κοινόν. Members used scores of other collective terms for themselves (Poland 1909:5-172). Although θίασος is supposed etymologically to allude to the god and ἔρανος to the companionship, Aristotle seems to be treating the combination as applying indifferently to either. This is certainly the conclusion one is driven to by any attempt to distinguish them historically (Parker 1996). Could the same group (as implied in Athenaeus 8.64, 362e) be referred to as an ἔρανος in relation to their club-like functions (membership, shared funding, entertainment) and as a θίασος in relation to the cult (cf. Poland 1909:30f)? It is certainly not easy to envisage an ἔρανος without the patronage of a god. *Thiasos* became the customary term for the associations of foreigners that became more frequent at Athens in the third century BC, some largely composed of slaves. Mikalson (1998) lists 24 such cults. By the second century groups with mixed citizenship became common. The term θίασος goes out of currency at Athens by the first century. A common way of referring to the members of an assocation however was by the name derived from their patronal god. Already by 1908 Poland (1909:57-62) had registered over 50 such names, the most frequently attested being Ἑρμαϊσταί, Ἀφροδισιασταί, Διονυσιασταί, Ἀσκληπιασταί, and Παναθηναϊσταί. Athens, Delos and Rhodes are the places where such groups are most often found. They seem all to be strictly localised, mostly with small memberships, say 30 on average. (Poland 1909:287).

From across the 600 years of the Macedonian and Roman imperial hegemony we possess the commemorative inscriptions of many hundreds of such cult-groups. The uncertainty over what they were mainly doing persists (Freyburger-Galland 1986; Price 1999). A stele of AD 250 from Pydna in Macedonia records 'the assembled worshippers (θρησκευταί) of the god Zeus Hypsistos' (*NDIEC* 1,1981:26f). Five office-bearers are named *logistes*, *archon*, *archisynagogos*, *prostates*, *grammateus*, with twenty-nine others. There are 20 Aurelii, 3 Aelii, 2 Claudii and 7 more with Roman citizenship in different families. Most have Greek *cognomina*; three are women and two will have been in slavery. They have Greek names only, their occupations being *oikonomos* and *oiketes*. The cult of Zeus Hypsistos can hardly have required such elaborate administration. Common funds and detailed records are implied. They want and can afford a standing monument. This is not a men's drinking club, nor is it tied to any family or occupation. The recording of the names implies that one paid to belong, and that there were benefits. But there is no hint of any broader interests such as might have justified our calling this group a community.

Of the 400 epigraphic (and often fragmentary) cult-rules assembled in the three volumes of Sokolowski hardly more than 20 preserve evidence of an accompanying association (5 called ὀργεῶνες, 7 θίασος, 2 ἔρανος; other terms, partly overlapping, include 6 κοινόν, 6 σύνοδος). This need not imply that there was no such group in most cases, but it does imply that a club was not essential to the

cult. What had to be prescribed in the cult-rule were such necessities as the selection and qualification of priests, the calendar of sacrifices, the ritual cleanliness of those who offered them, and the division of the meat amongst those with a claim to it. The cult-group, if any, is not primarily responsible for these vital matters. In two cases of the fourth century BC from Piraeus and Axos (Crete) restrictions are placed on meetings of any θίασος (Sokolowski 1969:36, 145).

Certain ὀργεῶνες, however, of Bendis in fourth-century Piraeus were allowed to sacrifice without charge, while they ruled that private individuals doing so must assign part of the meat to the priestess or priest. All ὀργεῶνες had to contribute by a fixed date to the monthly gathering (ἀγορά). Anyone was invited to enrol (Sokolowski 1969:45). Thracians were at first the only ethnic group permitted to own land and set up a sanctuary at Piraeus. A third-century decree of their ὀργεῶνες granted privileges to the Athenian ones in return for a share in their procession (Sokolowski 1969:46). One group let out their hero's sanctuary, with related buildings and grounds, for ten years (Sokolowski 1969:47). The common funds provided loans, and family members were allocated shares in the sacrificial meat (Sokolowski 1962:20). Second-century orgeonic decrees from Piraeus provided benefits to the priestesses of the Great Mother of Phrygia (Cybele) (Sokolowski 1969:48).

Third-century BC θίασοι are mentioned in cult-rules from Chalcedon, Miletus and Halicarnassus (Sokolowski 1955:2, 48, 72). A third or second-century θίασος from Piraeus imposed on its members an elementary form of the *Kanon der zwei Tugenden,* the two virtues being piety and philanthropy (Dihle 1968). The interests of relatives as well as members are protected, along with those of 'all our friends, so that everyone may know that we show piety both to the gods and to them'. Nothing is to take priority over this law. Anyone acting or speaking against it may be prosecuted by any member and subjected to a fine (Sokolowski 1962:126). A Dionysiac θίασος of the second century AD from Physcus in West Locris was, like any ordinary association, concerned to stop its maenads and *boukoloi* from provoking or abusing each other (Sokolowski 1969:181), a far cry from the libertarian ecstasies of the literary sources.

In second-century AD Attica, the Lycian slave of a Roman citizen, Xanthus, who worked in the mines at Sunium, founded a cult of Men Tyrannus. His national god had chosen him for this, and he was to name his own successor. The cult-rule specified conventional tests of ritual purity. The usual sharing out of the meat is prescribed. No one is to sacrifice unless Xanthus is present as it would not be accepted by the god. But Men is easily propitiated by those who cultivate him in 'singleness of soul'. It was open to those who so wished to form an ἔρανος, on the usual condition of providing the god's share when they dined (Sokolowski 1969:55). It has been said this may have been an emancipation society, but nothing is recorded about the financing of that. Another second-century Attic ἔρανος, however, publicly sought benefactions. It was formed by a group of 'friends', under the patronage of the trustee of a man's tomb (the opening section of the inscription is lost). No one was to attend their σύνοδος without being examined and found honest (ἁγνός, sc. financially clean?), pious (εὐσεβής) and respectable (ἀγαθός). For fighting and uproar a fine was prescribed, or a double flogging, probably for servile members. This was presumably a burial society (Sokolowski 1969:53).

The moral tone of these rules need not imply that the members constitute a community. They are not seeking to reconstruct their lives and have no mission to the wider society. Their ethical stance is strictly conservative, protecting a carefully regulated island of convivial goodwill for limited purposes. But one may argue for a more critical and active ethos in the case of the late second or early first-century cult inscription from Philadelphia in Lydia (Sokolowski 1955:20). The usual purity rules are perhaps implied in τὰ πάτρια covering the need for a lapse of time between certain activities and the offering of sacrifice, no doubt.

But the added *parangelmata* given by Zeus to Dionysius in his sleep impose a strict and wide-ranging commitment to good behaviour in the future. Moreover, those seeking access (to the monthly sacrifices?) must inform on any delinquents. The main constraints relate to drugs and promiscuity. There is a visible signal of one's having met the standard. On entering the οἶκος one must touch the inscription itself. Barton & Horsley (1981:11) class this 'as moral propaganda on the one hand, and as private discipline on the other'. They cite the authority of L. Robert as well as of Sokolowski for their argument that the inscription documents a cult-group, and that the term οἶκος can imply that. But Stowers (1998) argues that the apparent universalism embracing slaves and women simply reinforces the traditional household order. Dionysius is extending the hospitality of 'his own' οἶκος but within its familiar norms. Whether so serious a disciplinarian would have allowed his guests to form a dining club may be doubted. None of the usual marks of a cult-group is indicated. He has however looked beyond such narrow horizons. In binding everyone to show their hand at the door he is not only relying on their watching each other. The goddess Agdistis also guards the house. For each of them she will 'supply the good intentions' needed if they are to 'have confidence in themselves'. This sounds more like the ideals of a philosophical community, presented as it is in a 'carefully written, educated Koine', or of a mystery cult. In two passages stating its intentions, editors have restored the term μυστήρια to the inscription (ll. 13, 41).

Mystery cults

From the social point of view one may adapt the threefold categorisation of Greek μυστήρια proposed by Bianchi (xv) in the following way: those tied to a given site, those practised wherever the cult was celebrated, and those whose practice centred on a written philosophical tradition. The

primary focus of all μυστήρια is individual: the μύστης is to be personally initiated, and to keep the details to himself. In spite of the huge variety and interest in mystery practice in antiquity, the secrets have been well kept. The Eleusinian mysteries, celebrated at Athens for 1200 years, are the prototype. Honouring Demeter and Kore (Persephone), goddesses of harvest and spring, they formed part of the annual calendar of public festivals. Most Athenians probably took initiation. Greeks also came from all over the world for it. Yet we do not know exactly what they saw or heard at the ritual climax. This secretiveness, however, did not give rise to any Eleusinian group or community. The benefit was presumably existential. There was no change of life (Mylonas 1961:280). If Dionysius of Philadelphia had indeed included μυστήρια in his οἶκος-cult, that would not of itself have constituted it as a cult-group. But, as noted in Plato's *Seventh Epistle* (333e), μύησις and ἐποπτεία help to forge the bonds of ἐταιρεία that tie political action groups. He proposed to ban sanctuaries in private houses (*Laws* 10.909d-910c).

Second only to the Eleusinian mysteries in sanctity, according to Pausanias (4.33.5), were those of the Great Goddesses (Demeter and Kore?) of Andania, in Messenia. In 92/91 BC a revised set of rules was published (Sokolowski 1969:65, Eng. tr. Meyer, M.W. 1987:52-9). The festival is now under public control through the συναγωγῆι τῶν συνέδρων, l.49. Elaborate procedures are laid down for its administration, including the appointment, dress and behaviour of the various officials. The details of the actual rites are of course not given. There is no allusion to any association or other social bond that might be formed amongst the participants. In the sanctuary of Demeter and Kore at Corinth, however, fifty-two small dining rooms have been excavated. Exactly how these were linked with the cult has not been determined (Bookidis 1990:86-94).

The most famous mystery site after Eleusis was the sanctuary of the Great Gods at Samothrace, with whom Demeter also came to be associated. Across 1000 years it attracted many foreigners. Unlike those initiated at Eleusis, they appear sometimes to have kept their link by making dedications elsewhere to the 'Samothracian gods' or Kabeiroi (Cole 1984:78). Eleven groups (koina) of *Samothrakiastai* are attested amongst over fifty such inscriptions. (These are published by Cole (1984:83, 139-68).) Inscription No. 48, from second-century BC Teos, bears fourteen titles set in wreaths, each apparently recording a group. Some of these are identified by their patron's name; one lot is called *orgeones*, one *mystai*, and one *Samothrakiastai*, in each case under the same patron. A *thiasos* is registered under a different patron. No. 42, another second-century BC inscription, from Karpathos, listed the names of up to 39 priests of the Samothracian gods. It is not to be assumed, however, that the mysteries were celebrated outside Samothrace. Commemorations extend from the Black Sea to the Nile. The gods were valued in particular by those in peril on the sea (no. 57, Koptos). Later a third of the μύσται were Romans, and Samothrace even went bilingual (Cole 1989:1564-98).

The fact that μυστήριον was rendered in Latin by *initium* is taken by Turcan (*RAC* s.v. Initiation, 90) to imply that the rite sanctioned reception into a particular group. The privilege of group membership is rated first in his list of the benefits of initiation. While this may not be easily demonstrated for mysteries established at a national site, it is more plausible for those that multiplied themselves abroad (see in general Burkert 1987).

Dionysus / Bacchus

On one version the son of Kore (Persephone), later identified at Rome with Liber Pater, himself linked cultically with Ceres, the Latin counterpart of Demeter, Dionysus occupied a conspicuous and ancient place in Athenian public ritual, with seven annual festivals. Wine, ecstasy, drama and the after-life were his four main provinces (Henrichs, *OCD*[3] [1996] s.v.). They mark him as the god who takes people beyond normal limits. But the *thiasoi* of frantic maenads who took to the hills and ate flesh raw existed primarily in the literary imagination. The risk of life imitating art, however, haunted the imagination of observers when a cult-group was formed with initiatory rites inspired no doubt by the concern of Dionysus with the after-life. Plato dismissed the dancing of Bacchus (the cult-name of Dionysus) as not civil (*Laws* 7.815c). Demosthenes ridiculed Aeschines for having helped his mother at night with her initiations, and with the day-time processions of her *thiasos* (18.259/60). He led the chorus, crying ἔφυγον κακὸν, εὗρον ἄμεινον ('I fled from evil and discovered good'). This profession of a converted life was demeaning. But the vitality of the cult produced very diverse manifestations, reviewed at the 'round table' introduced by De Cazanove (1986).

In 186 BC the Roman senate gave the consuls authority to suppress an alleged Bacchanalian conspiracy. Livy (39.8-19) says 5,000 people were involved. The key complaint was that young men were being enticed by women into obscene rites practised after dark. Instead of the three annual festivals observed when the women had kept it to themselves, there were now clandestine sessions at weekly intervals. The long bronze inscription of the ager Teuranus in southern Italy (*ILLRP* 511), the oldest extant record of senatorial policy-making and oldest lengthy display of legal Latin, confirms the fact that the crisis was pursued throughout the peninsula (Pailler 1988). The senate had perhaps seized on the scandal to entrench its collective ascendancy nationally (Gruen 1990:34-78). The cult was plainly well established. The senate respected the *sacra*, but ordered demolition of the *bacchanalia,* presumably conventicles, within ten days. Women who were cultically dedicated to the priesthood might be permitted to continue their rites, but no man could be a priest, and no more than two men and three women could be present and then only with explicit permission of a quorate senate. There were to be no oaths, no elections and no common fund. The point of this precisely calculated ruling is clear. No association could be added to the cult because it had turned into something that challenged the community as a

whole – the first recorded cult-community. The consular rhetoric reflected in Livy's speech dramatises the threat. The public assembly (*contio*) of the Roman people will face a rival assembly (39.16).

In 176/5 the Dionysiasts of Piraeus met to appoint a new priest (Sokolowski 1969:49). The previous one had provided the *orgeones* with premises for their monthly celebration, and with their statue of Dionysus. They now resolve to appoint his son, also for his lifetime. Such an effortless succession in the patronal family ensures regular fellowship within safe conventions. Even the second-century AD rule from Physcus (Sokolowski 1955:181) solemnly maintaining night-time rites in the hills, found it necessary to impose fines on those who failed to attend.

A very different kind of *koinonia* is seen in *IGUR* 1.160 from Torre Nova near Rome (Vogliano & Cumont 1933:215-63; McLean 1993). On three sides of a statue base were recorded the names of 411 μύσται honouring Agrippinilla as priestess. They are grouped under 22 different titles, in descending (processional?) order of cultic rank, some attested in Bacchic circles elsewhere. Just over a quarter of the initiates are women. Agrippinilla has been identified as a descendant of Theophanes of Mytilene, married to Gallicanus the consul of AD 150 and proconsul of Asia in 165. He, their daughter, his father, and Agrippinilla's brother and nephew all appear, the first five names on the list. Four-fifths of the others bear Greek names. Everyone has only the single name, except for two women with Roman *gens*-names as well. It is likely that many will have been of freedman or servile rank, for this must surely be a domestic cult practised amongst the staff of a large suburban estate. Nothing suggests that they had constituted themselves as a cult association, and if the cult is being applied to reinforce the household structure it can hardly be called a cult-community either. The Villa dei Misteri at Pompeii offers vivid murals that show how such an οἶκος might literally envelop itself in scenes of Dionysiac initiation (Nappo 1998:152-7).

At much the same time as Agrippinilla was honoured, the ancient βακχεῖον of Athens published the minutes of its meeting at which new rules had been adopted to revive the association (Sokolowski 1969:51, Eng. tr Meyer. M.W. 1987:96-9). The new priest is Claudius Herodes, the great patron and sophist, consul in AD 143, who was to die in 179 (Ameling 1983). The collective name for the association is *Iobacchoi*. A dozen titles of office occur in the rules, none exactly matching the name of any of Agrippinilla's grades. There is to be a monthly meeting (*agora*), and others on festival days. Very detailed regulations are laid down with penalties against disorder on such occasions. But anyone who sues a member for assault in the public courts is also to be fined by the *Iobacchoi* (ll. 91-5), while those who absent themselves from the *agora* called to deal with internal conflict are subjected to double the fine, and excluded until it is paid. The priest is to perform the customary *litourgiai*, including the libation for the bringing back of Bacchus. On that occasion, following the public-spirited

innovation of his predecessor, he is to offer a eulogy of the god (*theologia*, l. 115). Members are to mark events in their family and civil lives by libations. The treasurer is to be chosen for two years by secret ballot (l. 147), as with the election of new members (l. 35). Those who attend each other's funerals receive one jar of wine (l. 162). All this represents a determined effort, presumably amongst people already prominent, to create a self-regulating club, set apart a little from the civil community, and ostentatious in its display of cult-loyalty, promising members the privileges of a convivial social routine and a demise with honour. Pseudo-bucolic indulgence amongst the privileged is characteristic of the cult as practised in later Roman times according to Merkelbach (1988).

The artists (τεχνῖται) of Dionysus formed themselves into a series of cult-groups across the Hellenistic world. They provided Athenian-style dramatic performances for many cities under royal patronage. From the time of Claudius Caesar they were organised through the 'inter-city, ecumenical' synod with a central board in Rome that certified victors in the sacred contests for membership in their home σύνοδος. This honour won them tax-privileges. By the third century membership could also be gained by undertaking a costly magistracy (Frisch 1986). Diocletian tightened the rules, which applied also to the parallel organisation of athletic victors (*Cod. Iust*. 10.54.1). The ecumenical synods acted as sovereign states, sending their own embassies to the cities. They were easily the most successful of the innumerable trade and professional associations that functioned under a patron deity, and unique in their international network, anticipating that of the *ekklesiai*. Over 3000 members are known by name, across 1000 years (Stephanis 1988; Poland 1934; Roueché 1993:49-60, 223-37). But with their exclusive membership, imperial sponsorship and strictly professional purpose they can hardly be classed as a cultic community.

Sarapis and Isis

Like Dionysus, Sarapis was in origin a god of the underworld, his name a merger of Osiris and Apis at Memphis in Egypt. Promoted by the Ptolemies at Alexandria, he became the pathfinder for Isis through the Greek world. She even takes Sarapis as her consort (Grandjean 1975:17, l. 17), becoming the dominant figure in Roman times, though Latin Serapis remains prominent in African provinces. The mortuary figure of jackal-headed Anubis was linked with the cult and also attracted particular attention in the Latin West. In their Hellenistic forms both Sarapis and Isis were celebrated as universal gods, accumulating functions that had been under other auspices.[1] The whole natural and social order is sustained by Isis, who actively promotes the best interests of all against both fate and fortune (so Apuleius, *Met*. 11.25). Plutarch, *De Iside et Osiride* 3.352c, saw her cult as leading to philosophic enquiry. Her rites contained ἠθικὰς ... αἰτίας, nothing irrational, mythical or superstitious (8.353e). There was no risk of innovation, for Isis blocked the evil Typhon from this (13.356b).

Through λόγος Isis assumes all forms and ideas, being of ten thousand names (53.372e).[2]

From the second century there are literary tributes to Sarapis by Aelius Aristides (8.47-56 Dindorf) and to Isis by Apuleius (*Metamorphoses* 11). The romance of Habrocomes and Antheia by Xenophon of Ephesus refers to the cult of Isis and has been construed as figuring their initiation into it (Merkelbach 1995), although O'Sullivan (1995) has a contrary view. In spite of the brilliant public ceremonial, its community structure remains unclarified. The *reformatio* of Lucius in Apuleius (11.27) is of course a literal reversion to his human form, but it leads to his initiation and total personal commitment to 'this holy campaign' (*militia*, 11.15), including a public baptism surrounded by an 'escort' (*cohors*, 11.23) of devotees. Yet no cause is being fought. Although Lucius was not rich, he had enough to pay the costs of admission. He planned to resume his profitable legal career, and on the strength of that was admitted at Rome to the ancient *collegium* of *pastophori* founded under Sulla, and to its quinquennial decurionate (11.30).

Nowhere in the epigraphic record is there decisive evidence for the development of Isiac cult-groups that go beyond the service of the cult itself.[3] In the early second-century 'litany of Oxyrhynchus' (P.Oxy. 11.1380) all the sites at which Isis was worshipped are listed (fifty-five survive beyond Egypt itself), each with its distinctive titles of honour for her. Amongst her many general titles, presumably applicable anywhere, she is called 'the one who supplies pleasures in the σύνοδοι' (l. 132). This should be taken to refer to the cult ceremonies at which a congregation was present. Apuleius provides vivid evidence of the joy on such occasions, solemn yet exhilarating. A fresco at Herculaneum shows some forty people aligned in two choirs as the priests perform the ritual (Figure 1; Merkelbach 1995: Abb.72). Outside Delos there is not much evidence for the use of σύνοδος for an association of priests. The Athenian Sarapiasts in 215/14 BC decree honours for various office-holders, including a προερανίστρια (Vidman 1969:no.2). She is complimented for performing the sacrifices at the set times. The participation of women in the cult of Isis seems to vary greatly with time and place, never rising above 50%.[4] One may ask whether the ἔρανος at Athens is not conceived as a primarily cultic body. Similarly with the κοινόν of Ἰσιασταὶ ἐρανισταί who confer honours in first-century Rhodes (Vidman 1969:no.177). The κλισία referred to by the Sarapiasts of second-century Thasus in their decree is to be taken as a cultic meal (Vidman 1969: no.265, cf. 275, 291, 720 and 120). Invitations to the κλίνη of Sarapis are found amongst the papyri, in one case being issued in the name of Sarapis himself (Horsley 1981:1).

At Tenus in the first century AD a dedication was made by a συμβίωσις φιλία. It consists of five office-bearers headed by an Isiac ναύαρχος along with five 'friends' (Vidman 1969:no.154). This seems like a classic association primarily concerned with its club-life. The same goes for the *sodalicium vernarum colentes* (sic) *Isidem* (Vidman

Figure 1: *The worship of Isis scene found at Herculaneum. (Museo Nazionale Naples)*

1969:no.762) of Valencia in the same period. Slaves could hardly afford the expenses of full initiation and priesthood. On the other hand, the *Isiaci universi* who canvassed for votes on the wall opposite the temple of Isis at Pompeii (Vidman 1969:nos 487-9) will probably have been those in priestly grades. There is no reason to think that uninitiated followers would use this name, or carry any weight in the election. In the third century at Ostia the worshippers of Serapis funded a *schola* (Vidman 1969:no.557, cf 527 from Praeneste in AD 157), while the *Isiaci* restored at their own cost a *margar(um)* (i.e. *megaron*?) (Vidman 1969:no.560). These buildings imply community activities beyond those of the temple proper. Yet we have no direct evidence of ethical or theological training being attempted under the auspices of Isis. In spite of the intense emotional bonding created internationally by public rituals and private experience of the cult, the focus seems to be entirely on the ceremonial life, leaving little room for what we understand by a cultic community. Isis was for life at its best, but not for changing it.

Mithras

Several cults brought to the West from Asia may have taken on Greek-type mystery practice. Most conspicuous was that of Cybele, the Mother of the gods (Magna Mater from Phrygia) (Roller 1999). Her cult is the most frequently attested epigraphically amongst the 52 recorded at the Piraeus from the fifth to the first centuries BC (Garland 1987:228-41). Only a fifth of these can be seen to have had an associated cult-group, this being most common with her *orgeones* or *thiasotai*. These groups come mostly

from 222-174 BC, the same period which saw Magna Mater publicly introduced to Rome (204 BC). But only a single cult-group (*CIL* 6.494 col(*legii*) culto(*rum*)) stands out as no. 303 amongst the 449 artefacts and documents from Rome and Ostia recorded by Vermaseren (1977). Official celebrants of the cult are of course not uncommon, e.g. Vermaseren (1978:no.2) (*CIL* 10.3699) recording 87 *dendrophori* appointed at Cumae in AD 251. One may suppose that a cult attractive of associations in its heyday in cosmopolitan Piraeus was confined at Rome largely to public ceremonial. With Mithras the position is very different in several ways.

At Arsameia on the Nymphaios in Commagene Mithras was featured in an enormous ritual system in honour of Mithradates I (ob. *c*. 70 BC). Twice a month in perpetuity the public feasting was to be open to all who met the challenging test of personal integrity (Waldmann 1973). Plutarch, *Pomp*. 24.5, says the rites of Mithras were first celebrated by the pirates (resettled by Pompeius in Cilicia after 67 BC?). But the extraordinary uniformity of the monuments from the Roman empire, their dating and distribution, all imply the creation of an independent cult at Rome itself late in the first century AD (Merkelbach 1984; Jacobs 1999). There must have been official goodwill, but there was no public or open ceremonial at all, and it attracted little attention at the literary level (αἵρεσις ἀσημοτάτη: Origen, *Contra Celsum* 6.22).

The typical Mithraeum, conceived as a cavern, was concealed from view, and furnished as a small dining-room. Its vaulted ceiling and the relief of Mithras slaying the bull represented an astrology of the descent and ascent of the soul. Only about twenty people could be present in it at the one time. It could hardly have been the scene of any full-blown sacrifice or festivities.[5] The period of greatest concentration is AD 150-250. Men from the army and public service are the typical initiates. There are seven grades of membership, none sacerdotal. *CIL* 14.286 from Portus is an album *sacrato*[*rum*] listing 27 names. *CIL* 11.5737 from Sentinum lists 37 *cultores*. The occasional references to a *collegium* or *sodalicium* need not refer to a Mithraic cult-group. The general assumption is that we are dealing with a series of tight-knit semi-professional fraternities that promoted imperial loyalty, neither cult nor community being their main concern (Beck 1992; 1996; Mitthof 1992; Clauss 2000).[6]

Known only from monuments and documents of the second and third centuries AD, and sometimes coupled with that of Mithras, was the worship of Jupiter of Doliche in Commagene (Merlat 1960). It seems to have been unofficially fostered within the Roman army, yet extending into the frontier communities of the Rhine-Danube provinces, since women were included (Speidel 1978). The distinction between *colitores*, *candidati*, *sacerdotes* and *fratres* (Hörig & Schwertheim 1987:no.381) (*CIL* 6.406/30758), along with the small dining-rooms and the term *schola* (Hörig & Schwertheim 1987:no.409), suggest limited groups under instruction, but the lack of any surviving literary treatment leaves unclear whether they might be classified as cultic communities.

Philosophical movements

It was in the philosophical schools of classical antiquity that one might have expected to meet one of the two main requirements for a cultic community. They offered a critique of the established patterns of life and thought, including theology, and thus opened the way to an alternative community (Mason 1996). But their students were mostly not bound into a collective effort to attain that, using their privileged philosophical training rather as an individual higher education that might enlarge their awareness of the world before inheriting their assured position in society (Dorandi 1999). Moreover, while like any ancient institution they sought divine patronage, the cult was not their driving force.

For cosmic and cultic wisdom alike, Greeks looked back especially to Orpheus. Orphic hymns and ritual texts were taken up by travelling diviners. There was a βίος Ὀρφικός, where one renounced animal sacrifice and the eating of meat (Pl., *Leg*. 6, 782e) (Guthrie 1935:205, 254, 261). The Derveni papyrus reveals a pre-Socratic Orphic practice of argumentative interpretation (Laks & Most 1997). Initiation was central (Graf 1993). By late antiquity the Neoplatonists counted Orphism as a primary source for theosophy. But there is no decisive evidence that the Orphic movement ever produced a cultic community.

Yet under Orphic influence the Pythagoreans set the pace (Zhmud 1997). Migrating from Samos to Croton, Pythagoras is credited with founding a socially active community there after 530 BC (Burkert 1982). Nicomachus of Gerasa (*c*. AD 100) held that this very public movement went underground *c*. 450 BC after the political revolt against it (Iambl., *VP* 35, 252/3). Our understanding of it is conditioned by the introduction of Iamblichus (*c*. AD 300) to the βίος Πυθαγορικός. The Pythagoreans of Croton were κοινόβιοι, practising ὁμοδημία (VP 6, 29.32). These terms are not found earlier and may arise from a reaction to and retrojection across 800 years of the new ideals of Christian monasticism. The letters of the prominent Pythagorean women uphold a patriarchal order. The discovery (from the imperial period) of a *koine* paraphrase (P.Haun. 2, 13) from the Doric however confirms the continuing or revived appeal of Pythagorean ethics (Judge, 1992). But it need not then have been much more than an intellectual fashion (Sen., *Ep*. 108, 17/22).

The students of Plato or Aristotle met in the gymnasium of the Academy or Lyceum, open parks just outside Athens. Wilamowitz (1881) conjectured that they were constituted as *thiasoi* of the Muses, which he thought also to apply to the students of Epicurus in his Garden though not to those of Zeno in the public Stoa. There is however no adequate evidence that their schools needed to have any formal structure (Lynch 1972: 108-127). The four historic schools were granted salaried posts at Athens by Marcus Aurelius,

but institutional continuity is not to be concluded from that (Lynch 1972: 163-207): *tot familiae philosophorum sine successore deficiunt* (Sen. *NQ* 7, 32, 2). St Paul was interviewed only by Epicureans and Stoics (Acts 17:18). The Cynic origins of Stoicism no doubt worked against any formally structured community. A many-sided public intellectual program developed by Roman times without systematic organisation.

But with the Epicureans there was from the beginning (Diog. Laert. 10, 9) a collective commitment to a withdrawn and consciously alternative life (Schmid, *RAC* s.v. Epicurus 746/55). Devotees sacrificed on the birthday of their god-like founder, carried around his image with them and displayed it in their bedrooms (Plin. *NH* 35, 5). By his will there was a monthly *synodos* on the twentieth day (Diog. Laert. 10, 18). The εἰκάδες may be compared with the Christian ἀγάπη. Both movements developed their quasi-cult while repudiating en bloc the cultic ritual of the broader society. In both cases their moderate asceticism was mocked as a cloak for indulgent vice. At Herculaneum details have been found of the Epicurean organisation and fees (P.Herc. 1418e, 310) (Militello 1997). While public life was rejected, the Epicurean communities were open to all, including women (Frischer 1982). The vast inscription of Diogenes of Oenoanda (ed. M.F. Smith, 1993) put Epicurean doctrines on permanent display.

The school of Plotinus in the mid-third century AD also came close to constituting a philosophical community (Goulet-Cazé 1982:231-57). It did not moreover concentrate upon the training of students, but was open to all, while attracting both ζηλωταί and ἀκροαταί from Rome's élite (Porph., *Plot.* 2). Plotinus himself resided in the house of the noble Gemina, where he offered solutions to other people's disputes, and accepted trusteeship of their children and estates on their death (9). The plan to revive (or create?) a city of philosophers (Platonopolis) in Campania under the patronage of Gallienus was blocked by political opponents (12). Plotinus sacrificed and entertained on the birthdays of Plato and Socrates (2), but rated his own συνουσίαι (1.5.14) of more value than cultic ritual (10). But there is no evidence that the Neoplatonic school was institutionalised after his death.

There is only an indirect impression of any community structure for the Gnostic movement (Rudolph 1987), criticised tenaciously by Plotinus (Porph. *Plot.* 16) and the orthodox Fathers alike, or for Hermetism (Fowden 1986). Hermetic communities were proposed by Reitzenstein (1904:248), but rejected by Festugière (1944:82ff). In spite of their intellectual drive, no philosophical movement matched the dynamic bonding of cult to community which was to become historically formative with the Christians (Dihle, *RAC* s.v. Ethik 680).

Roman collegia

The twelve tables granted to the *sodales* in a *collegium* (*hetairia*) the power to settle their own terms of agreement, just as Solon had allowed (*Digest* 27, 22, 4), provided no public law was broken. By a lex Julia and senatus consultum this was later limited to associations meeting only once a month to collect fees towards the burial of the subscribers. Such an association was created by the patron of the municipality of Lanuvium in AD 136, who published its rules in the temple of Antinous (*CIL* 14, 2112). Burial was guaranteed to anyone who kept up the monthly payments. Non-servile subscribers took turns at funding six dinners in the year, on four anniversaries of the patronal family and those of Antinous and Diana. At these everyone had to stay in his prescribed place to avoid *seditio*. The magistrate (*quinquennalis*) offered incense and wine, receiving a double share of the distribution. If he acted without corruption (*integre*) he would thereafter receive one and a half shares. To keep the peace, business questions could only be raised at the regular monthly meetings.

Such rules reflect a fear of political manipulation and embezzlement going back to the street fighting of Cicero's time. Trajan likewise banned the city of Nicomedia from creating a *collegium fabrum* for firefighting (Plin., *Ep.* 10, 34). The weekly meeting of the Christians was abandoned lest it also be construed as a political faction (*hetairia*: 10, 96). Even *eranoi* designed for self-help by the poor (*tenuiores*) were banned (10, 93). Under Severus *religio* was allowed as a valid basis for meetings (*Digest* 27, 22, 1). The Christians apparently did not see themselves covered by that. All *collegia* will have offered sacrifice to a divine patron. Amongst the 300 cases noted by Waltzing where the cult is identified, over 40 different deities are found, the commonest (in order of frequency) being Hercules, Jupiter, Lares, Liber, Silvanus, Mithras, Mars, Isis, Diana and Ceres. Most *collegia* were no doubt based on occupational or family bonds, and can hardly have sought to create any new community. The tightly structured rules and frequent commemorations (*ILS* 7211-7365) show them to have been closely correlated with the ethos of public life. Mommsen considered that their planned conviviality would have led to group support for other social needs. He was followed in this by Liebenam (1890) and Kornemann (1900:402f) but Waltzing used his massive study to oppose it (*Diz. Ep.* 356. 365; *DACL* 2122/3). He noted that Trajan's acceptance of the special case made by Amisus in Bithynia shows that a particular Greek proposal ought not to be used to interpret the way Roman *collegia* functioned. De Robertis (1971,2:21-3) agreed that there was no evidence that they were social welfare institutions but took it as obvious that this must have been the case. Kornemann's analogy from the more elaborate practice of military *collegia* was explored by Schulz-Falkenthal (1971). But the *collegia* were far too precisely structured to have developed a fuller community life of their own.

Ancient Near East: Egypt

The possibility that a cult-group might take on a social welfare function does arise in Egypt. From the third-millennium national community that must have built the

pyramid of fourth-dynasty Cheops to Pachomian monasticism's subjection of the individual to the whole there is a collectivist continuity, according to Lüddeckens (1968). Muszynski (1977) could identify no evidence prior to the twenty-sixth (Saite) dynasty of the sixth century BC, but did consider that there was a distinctively Egyptian type of *confrérie*, anticipating the *philoponoi* of Byzantine times. Préaux (1948) had also considered these bodies peculiar to Egypt, though using Greek terminology, in their contractual structure.

The indigenous texts are reviewed by De Cenival (1972:3-10). P.dém.Lille 29 is the annually renewable contract for the collective supply of sacrificial goods, with sanctions against default or misbehaviour. Disputes are to be settled within the cult-group. Support is guaranteed for members unjustly imprisoned but not for outsiders. P.Mich. 5, 243, 6-9 specifies a fine for members of the group who do not come to the aid (συνεπισχύειν) of someone seen to be in distress (ἀηδία) and join (συλλύειν) in its relief. The degree to which an *eranos* might function as a credit union (as the use of the Greek word implies) was considered by San Nicolò (1972). This possibility was not taken up by Brashear (1993). It finds a parallel in the practice of *isophorion* identified by Rathbone (1991:121-3, 133f, 405f), whereby the estate met the unpredictable liturgical burden of employees, recovering the cost from them on a more systematic basis. This practice was no doubt superseded by the collective responsibility imposed upon occupational corporations when made hereditary after the reforms of Diocletian. The entrenched priestly structure of Egyptian temples probably also limited the development of any voluntary cultic community (Evans 1961; Whitehorne, 1995).

Mesopotamia and Israel

Archaeological and onomastic evidence for craftsmen occupying dedicated quarters since the third dynasty of Ur (mid third-millennium) was assessed by Mendelsohn (1940a; 1940b). In Palestine the evidence begins as early as the Hyksos period (mid second-millennium). Particular crafts (e.g. iron-working), along with ethnic or family ties, may have shaped the distinctive social practice of the Kenites, Rechabites and, less likely, Nazirites. A cult-group of high-status drinkers, enjoying public recognition, is attested from late-third millennium Ebla and late-second millennium Ugarit. According to McLaughlin (2001), it is referred to in Amos 6:7 and Jeremiah 16:5, and may well identify also the revellers denounced in some other passages in the prophets.

Uffenheimer (1999:271-5, 473-9) argues against Hölscher (1914) that the prophetic tradition itself has ancient roots in the Hebrew phenomenon of collective ecstasy (Numbers 11:25). The 'school of the prophets' (I Samuel 19:18/24) was fostered to broaden the popular basis for the initiatives of Samuel. Ahab was confronted by 400 prophets under Zedekiah (I Kings 22: 1/36). In Elisha's time the 'sons of the prophets' formed a community that shared meals

(II Kings 4: 38/41) and even lived together (6:1). The rebuilding of Jerusalem under foreign protection created a new kind of cultic community, expressed in a limited assembly which committed itself to a stricter revival of the law (Nehemiah 8:2), mixed marriages again being banned (13:25). This no doubt set the pattern for the sectarian zeal that was to seek the renewal of the Davidic kingdom by isolating the faithful remnant (foreshadowed in Ezekiel 11:13/25) (Vogt 1966:157-60; Williamson 1977:132-40; Hogland 1992:241-7).

Jewish sects and Qumran

The Maccabean revolt against Hellenisation attracted the support of a συναγωγή apparently calling themselves Hasidim ('saints', the Ἀσιδαίοι of 1 Macc. 2:42. 7:13. 2 Macc. 14:6). Their name perhaps echoed Psalm 149:1. They may have been forerunners of the Pharisees and Essenes, whom Josephus identifies 'at this time' as *haireseis* within Judaism (*Ant.* 13, 171/2) along with the Sadducees (the latter may have derived their name from the 'sons of Zadok' of Ezekiel 48:11). The dating of such distinctions to such an early period has been confirmed by the recovery of the halakhic manifesto (unique at Qumran) (Qimron & Strugnell 1994:4Q394/9). The editors claim that three 'groups' are distinguished in the letter: 'we', 'you', and 'they', identified as those who were to become known respectively as Essenes, Sadducees and Pharisees by Deines (2001; Baumgarten 1997; Stemberger 1995).

Josephus distinguishes the three sects in terms of their views on philosophical questions. At the age of 16 (*c.* AD 54) he had undertaken the training provided by each of the three, and found it a burdensome experience (*Vita* 10/11). He calls the Essenes a *genos* practising the same discipline as the Pythagoreans (*Bell.* 2, 113; *Ant.* 15,371). Pliny calls them a *gens*, and assumes they have lived on the western shore of the Dead Sea for 'thousands of ages' (*NH* 5, 15, 73). Philo, however, though he spoke of them as tens of thousands in number living in many towns, villages and large crowded throngs (ὄμιλοι), says they cannot be called a *genos* since they are volunteers (*Hyp.* ap. Eus. *Praep. ev.* 8, 1, 2). They arrange celebrations (ἑταιρίαι) and shared meals (συσσίτια) on the basis of θίασοι (*ibid.* 5), which are also open houses (*Q.o.p.* 85). But they offer no animal sacrifices (*Q.o.p.* 75), concentrating upon ethical training through study of their inspired ancestral laws. This is done especially on the seventh day, which is ἱερά, in ἱεροὶ τόποι called συναγωγαί (*Q.o.p.* 80/81). Josephus notes the same feature. They approach their dining room καθάπερ εἰς ἅγιόν τι τέμενος (*Bell.* 2, 119). Although they send offerings to the Temple in Jerusalem they are excluded from it, and sacrifice separately (*Ant.* 18, 19/20), which apparently refers to the sanctified dining. Josephus mentions a second order (τάγμα) of Essenes who even sanctify marriage (*Bell.* 2, 160) which the main body had merely shunned. There is clearly here a conscious transfer of cult to life, creating what may plausibly be called a cultic community. Koffmahn (1963) sees it as a 'kleine

Stadtordnung', but based on pre-exilic patterns and not on any Greek model. Baumgarten(1998) stresses the full-time commitment of the Essenes, who transferred to daily life ideals such as Greeks and Romans would have kept for Utopia while celebrating their dedicated fellowship only on a periodic basis (e.g. monthly).

In spite of their later *haburoth* ('associations'), however, it is not clear that one should apply the term cult-group to first-century Pharisees, let alone the Sadducees (Saldarini 1988), or to the 'fourth philosophy' noted by Josephus (*Ant*. 18, 23), the Zealots or Galileans. But Hengel (1989) stressed that all four combined political with religious interests. This no doubt applies also to the Boethusians (Herodians?). Hegesippus, ap. Eus. *HE* 4, 22, 7, lists three other *haereseis*, the Hemerobaptists, Masbotheans (also baptist? Thomas, *RAC* s.v. Baptistes 1171), and Samaritans, while a Jewish monastic sect across Lake Mareotis from Alexandria, the Therapeutae, somewhat resembling the Essenes, is described by (pseudo–?) Philo, *Vita contempl*. 11/40, 63/90. The presence there of female *therapeutrides* (88) led Richardson and Heuchan (1996) to propose that the Jewish temple at Leontopolis in the Delta (*c*. 160 BC-AD 73) was also the site of a distinctive community.

The 'Qumran community' was alienated from the Temple in Jerusalem. Instead they reached back to the ancient covenant, seeking its present renewal in the rituals of their common life, where abstinence for example symbolised sacrifice, and which in turn looked forward to the restoration of the Temple after the ultimate victory of the righteous. The community is formed to anticipate the cult (Klinzing 1971; Ego 1999). The covenant is not 'new', but it is now 'eternal', and entered not by descent but by commitment. In this radical change it challenges the contemporary national cult with an alternative ideal, surely at the heart of what we must understand by cultic community (Christiansen 1998).

In its 200-year history the community collected in the Dead Sea Scrolls a variety of treatments of these themes which need not all be part of a unified system, or have come from the same source. 'The Damascus Document' (CD, the 'Zadokite fragments') is important for its historical retrospect, the 'Rule of the Community'(1QS 'The Manual of Discipline') for contemporary arrangements at Qumran, and the 'Rule of the Congregation' (1QSa) for the ideal to come at the end, on which see Schiffman (1989). These and related texts (incl. 1QM the 'War Scroll' and 11QT, the 'Temple Scroll') disclose an elaborately organised commune, enclosed and full-time, but not permanent, which cannot easily be identified from the literary sources, though an Essene link is often proposed. Talmon (1966) notes as unique, amongst other features, the identification of the ψα αδ with the Bible as a 'living' authority as distinct from the closed rabbinic canon, still not textually crystallised and open to imitation. A solar, as distinct from lunar, calendar also marks Qumran off. The common usage of the times, however, is assumed as the source of many disciplinary and other routines of life by Weinfeld (1986).

Yet the sacrifices, burial rules and membership dues regular elsewhere are all absent, while Qumran offers uniquely the covenant blessings, moral and emotional pressure and hymns of the biblical tradition. But because of its separation from wider society and focus on the *eschaton*, this cultic community lacks any concern (e.g.) for the poor (Walker-Ramisch 1996).

Synagogues

As the name implies, synagogues must have begun as assemblies. Open-air meetings were held at the town gates (Deut. 21:9. 1 Kings 22:10. Prov. 31:23). Ezra's reading of the law took place in the square before the Water Gate (Neh. 8:2). Since various kinds of business were handled this way and thus open to all, such an assembly can hardly constitute a cultic community, and especially since the sacrificial cult itself was confined to the Temple in Jerusalem. The public reading of the law in other communities was held to go back to ancient times (Acts 15:21), perhaps to Josiah's purge of local cults after his reinstatement of it (2 Kings 23:24). Alternatively it could have arisen in the Babylonian captivity or after Ezra's restoration. But a common assumption now makes the synagogue a Pharisaic reaction to the Hellenisation of the Temple cult in the Maccabean era (Binder 1999:155-226; Levine 2000:42-73). Lack of access to the Temple may also explain why the earliest synagogues seem to have been formed abroad (esp. in Egypt where the inscriptions document eight Ptolemaic *proseuchai*) or in Galilee. The first referred to in Jerusalem is the synagogue of the Freedmen (Acts 6:9), apparently formed amongst Hellenistic immigrants. This may also explain the synagogue built by Theodotus (*CIJ* 2, 1404, often assumed to predate the fall of Jerusalem) 'for reading law and teaching commandments'. It contained 'guest-rooms and water-supply to meet the needs of those from foreign parts' (Riesner 1995).

The first buildings explicitly referred to as synagogues are at Capernaum (Luke 7:5), endowed by a God-fearing centurion and Corinth (Acts 18:7), next door to the house of Titius Justus, Paul's God-fearing host. Roman observers seem to have viewed the synagogues as cult centres. An epitome of Valerius Maximus 1, 3, 3, based ultimately on a lost book of Livy, even speaks of the praetor of 139 BC destroying the 'private altars' put up by Jews in public places in Rome (Stern 1974:no.147). Seneca and Juvenal also use sacral terminology of the Jewish community, although more concerned with its intellectual persuasiveness (Stern 1974:186, 189, 301). The Jews are aware of the origin and meaning of their rite (*causas ritus sui*), says Seneca. Josephus on occasion uses *hieron* of synagogues, presumably accepting the Greek view of them as sanctuaries, and the Ptolemaic Jewish inscriptions sometimes refer to a *hagios topos* (Lifshitz 1967: nos 88-90).

The synagogue came into its own as a result of the destruction of Jewish national aspirations in three Roman wars (AD 70-135). The Temple levy that had once been sent to Jerusalem was applied by the Romans to the restoration

of the temple of Jupiter Capitolinus. It presumably fell to the synagogue authorities to identify those liable to pay this tax (*CPJ* 2, 160/229). In return Jews were exempted from liturgies and military service, which would have compromised their ban on idolatry. Philo had already distinguished the Jewish communities from Hellenic associations (Seland 1996). All Jews could by right of birth enjoy the privileges of their local synagogue. They had secured in defeat a subordinate form of national identity that was unparalleled and cannot readily be classified as a cultic community given its public status. Gentiles were free to attend (Schiffman 1985).

Romans already believed prior to AD 70 that they were being taken over by the Jews. Like them, laughs Horace, we poets will compel you to 'join our crowd' (*Sat*. 1, 4, 143 *in hanc concedere turbam*). The 'life-style' (*consuetudo*) of this 'vicious race' (*gens sceleratissima*) has become so 'influential' (*convaluit*) that it is accepted worldwide. *Victi victoribus leges dederunt* (Seneca on superstition, cited by Augustine, *CD* 6,11). The Acts of the Apostles features Gentiles who attached themselves to the synagogues, 'fearing God' yet often stopping short of circumcision (Acts 17:4.12). It has been thought a tendentious fiction, designed to legitimise the breakaway churches they then formed. Levinskaya (1996) has however comprehensively demonstrated its plausibility. She also confirms the close links with Judaism of those whose cult honoured Θεὸς Ὕψιστος (Acts 16:17).

The capacity of the synagogue to generate a body that can more obviously be treated as a cultic community is seen in the recently discovered inscription from Aphrodisias (Judge 2002). A *dekania* (decury?) was formed, originally of ten men, five with Hebrew names, two more called as well 'proselyte', two with Greek names identified as *theosebes* ('God-fearer'), and one as *palatinos* ('official') and thus not likely to have been a Jew. They can hardly have been the statutory synagogue quorum, since the God-fearers are presumably not Jews either. Rather, it appears to be an assocation formed equally of those born to Judaism and those who have acquired an interest in it. The dean is a proselyte. Their objective is to 'love learning' (as in Sirach, Prologue) to be 'constant in blessing' and to 'prevent grief'. This inscription appears to have been added later to a much longer second-century list of what must be donors, divided into two groups (arranged in order of wealth?), one with 55 overwhelmingly Jewish names, the other with 52 Greek names headed by nine (city) councillors. The latter group are explicitly classified as 'God-fearers'. The easiest interpretation is that there is a joint synagogue-city foundation for poor-relief from which a select cult-group of dedicated believers has arisen.

The followers of Jesus

The immediate followers of Jesus might have been taken for the school of a prophet or the disciples of a rabbi (Mt. 9:14). But they were called at once to let go of the old order completely, tasting already that 'beginning again'

(*palingenesia*, Mt. 19:28) in 'the kingdom of the heavens', where even foreigners would sit at table with Abraham (Mt. 8:11). Following Jesus had to be literal and total (Mt. 19:27). He had no regular home-base, and was not the head of a household. But he indiscriminately accepted the hospitality of others, defending himself for eating and drinking when John (who baptised him) had fasted (Mt. 11:19). Crowds of other people flocked to him, and there were secret disciples who could not face the cost of actually following (Jn 19:38). There was no security because there was no recognised model for such a movement, political yet pacifist, fundamentally challenging yet unstructured (Mt. 23:8-12). The twelve may have symbolised the tribal structure of Israel (Mt. 19:28), yet they were not chosen according to tribe. The seventy (Lk. 10:1) hardly match either the seventy elders of Moses (Num. 11:16) or the seventy-member Sanhedrin. Since it looked to a momentous change (Dahl 1941:161) there was not even an appeal to the traditional motif of the remnant (Rom. 9:27). Jesus interacted closely with synagogues, Pharisees, Zealots, and the disciples of John, but conspicuously set aside the main preoccupations of each of them. Even the open practice of personal piety was to be avoided (Mt. 6:1-6) (Hengel 1981; Theissen 1978; Bolyki 1998).

Where possible ('always', Jn 18:20) Jesus taught in the Temple as well as in synagogues, and the former was the focal point. The claim that he could pull down the Temple of God (Mt. 26:61) and in three days build another (Mk 14:58) was turned into a threat to change the customs which Moses had delivered (Acts 6:14). Rebuilding the Temple became a key figure for Peter (1 Pet. 2:5), Paul (1 Cor. 3:9.16/17; Eph. 2:21) and others (Heb. 3:6), transposed, like the image of the body, to the believing community. So vital was the idea that the routine verbal noun for the construction of a building was now (e.g. 1 Cor. 14:12) also pressed into metaphorical service (Vielhauer 1940). Yet the community being built was not called a temple, but *ekklesia* (Mt. 16:18). The adoption of this inadequate name (an assembly has no ongoing existence such as the building metaphor implies) was not explained. One must question the general assumption that it echoes the *'ekklesia in the wilderness'* (Acts 7:38) under Moses, which also had no ongoing life. Moreover, the concept of a new *laos* of God (Rom. 9:25; 1 Pt. 2:10) is most elaborately developed without any use at all of the term *ekklesia*. A more plausible trigger is the use of the word in the Psalms and Sirach, where it often seems to refer to those assembled to praise God in the Temple (Ps. 68:24-6, Sir. 50:1-21).

To Greeks it may have seemed to echo the regular political *ekklesia* of the Hellenistic citizen body (Acts 19:39-41) which had long been promoted as a sounding board of the royal or imperial will (cf. 'my' *ekklesia*, Mt. 16:18). Paul's early identification of the *ekklesia* as being 'of God' (e.g. Gal. 1:13) may then have been needed to guard the term against this ubiquitous ambiguity. Yet he is apparently already using *ekklesia* for the community that persists beyond its periodic meeting. Such a meaning may

explain the somewhat belated appearance of the term in Acts, in connection with the pooling of property amongst the community (5:11, cf. 8:3, 9:31). The dispersal of this community in turn perhaps gives rise to the plural use of *ekklesiai* by Paul for its geographically parallel replication (e.g. 1 Thess. 2:14). The plurals in Psalms and Sirach by contrast represented the repetition of the same assembly in a chronological series. The remarkable NT expansion in the meaning of the word matches the implicit force of the dictum 'I will build my *ekklesia*' (Mt. 16:18; cf. 18:17), looking no doubt also to the *panegyris/ekklesia* of the 'heavenly Jerusalem' (Heb. 12:22/3) (Dahl 1941; Campbell 1948; McKelvey 1969; Berger 1976).

Pauline and other communities

After Pentecost the twelve apostles (led by Peter and John) baptised a rapidly growing *plethos* of believers. Many priests joined them (Acts 6:7). In the Temple they praised God daily (cf. Luke 1:10), at home they shared their meals and goods, and in both places taught and preached Christ (Acts 2:42/7; 5:42), surely the very prototype of a cultic community. But the criticism of the Temple cult by Stephen (Acts 7:48), a representative of the Greek-speaking diaspora believers, provoked a violent reaction. The latter were driven out, scattering across Judaea, Samaria and Galilee, and through the coastal cities to Phoenicia, Cyprus and the metropolis of Antioch. Here many Gentiles were won over, and dubbed *Christianoi* (Acts 11:26). The Latin suffix construes them as social activists. Famine relief was sent back to the *presbyteroi* in Jerusalem for distribution to the *adelphoi*. This international development was hardly expected, yet not wholly without precedent. Those who preached the baptism of John had also gone abroad (Acts 18:25; 19:3). There were Pharisaic missions (Mt. 23:15). In AD 19 a noble Roman convert had been defrauded on the pretext of sending her donations back to Jerusalem (Jos. *Ant*. 18, 81/4).

In AD 44 John's brother James (the apostle) was executed and Peter arrested. Well before this, James the brother of Jesus was seen by Paul as counting with the apostles (Gal. 1:19). From now (Acts 12:17) until his own execution in AD 62 the *haeresis* of the Nazarenes (Acts 24:5) under James maintained its standing in the Temple with some support from the Pharisees (Acts 5:34; 15:5; 23:9). James however overturned the Pharisaic demand for the circumcision of Gentile believers (Acts 15:5.19). His judgement was sent to the converts in Syria and Cilicia under the authority of the apostles and elders and with the consent of the whole *ekklesia* (Acts 15:22). Another letter from (presumably the same) James went to 'the twelve tribes in the dispersion'. It says nothing of any cultic or ritual obligation, being focussed on the 'complete law of liberty' (James 1:25). Pure θρησκεία consists in providing for the needs of orphans and widows (v.27). The letter envisages a synagogue building (2:2) with proper seating for an equestrian patron, as well as an *ekklesia* whose elders pray for the sick (5:14). The two institutions may

have functioned in tandem: they need not be conflated. In Jerusalem James conscientiously guarded the Temple bond (Acts 21:20-4). Hegesippus pictures him as a figure of high-priestly sanctity who could command the support of 'all the tribes and the Gentiles as well' (ap. Eus. *HE* 2, 23, 4/18). His execution (at Sadducean initiative?) outraged many scrupulous admirers (the Pharisees? Jos. *Ant*. 20, 200-11). His brother Jude looked back to the apostles (v.17), attacking intellectual parasites who exploited the free meals (v.12). Descendants of the brothers of Jesus outlived the destruction of the Temple (Bauckham 1990; Painter 1997).

The letter 'to the Hebrews' was apparently written while the Temple ritual was still in use (Heb. 10:2.11), but its main concern is to ensure that those who had abandoned the cult do not revert under pressure (10:32-9). They are to hold to the new covenant of Jeremiah, where the law is internalised (8:8-13). They have been enrolled in the *ekklesia* of the heavenly Jerusalem (12:22f), where they worship in the way that pleases God (v.28). They have an 'altar' from which those who worship in the (Mosaic) tent have 'no right to eat' (13:10). Their sacrifice consists in praise to God, and the sharing of one's goods (v.15f). Any conventional cult is thereby excluded (De Silva 2000). The Gospel of Matthew was also written for a Jewish community alienated from its national tradition, and condemned for fraternising with Gentile believers. The kingdom of God will be taken away from Jerusalem, says Jesus (Mt. 21:43), and given to an *ethnos* producing the fruits of it. The *ekklesia* he will build (Mt. 16:18) need not be large: two or three will suffice, but its authority is binding (Mt. 18:15-20). The scribes and Pharisees are blind guides, who do not practise what they preach. They refuse to enter the kingdom of the heavens and lock others out, because they only care about appearances (Mt. 23:1-39). Better to pray in secret, and fast in secret (Mt. 6:1-13), 'Something greater than the Temple is here' (Mt. 12:6). The new *ekklesia* will practise no public cult (Stanton 1992).

There were soon networks of *ekklesiai* also in the old-established Greek cities of Asia Minor, linked with Peter, whose first letter is addressed to the 'migrants' in the North-western provinces, or with John, whose revelation is sent to the seven *ekklesiai* of the province of Asia. Both take cultic worship as a metaphor for the inward transformation of life. They are built into a spiritual house, a holy priesthood to offer spiritual sacrifices (1 Pet. 2:5). Worship will no longer be centred on a sacred place, but must be offered 'in spirit and in truth' (John 4:21-4). With the Pauline network we come close to the very process by which such communities were built up.

Paul's two earliest letters, Galatians and 1 Thessalonians, reveal the disputes through which the new communities were marked off from their Jewish and Greek forerunners respectively. In Galatians the dispute is over the obligations to Judaism of Gentile believers. Paul passionately blames those spying on them (2:4), and the hypocrisy of Peter (2:13). They do not have to submit to the servile

yoke of Sinai (4:25), but are called to freedom (5:1), a new foundation (6:15). Later Paul was to assert the advantage of Jews (Rom. 3:1) over Gentile believers, who were only grafted onto the old stock (Rom. 11:17). There is no indication that a breach with the synagogues had yet occurred in Rome. Paul had not yet been there, and his letter is not sent to an *ekklesia*. In 1 Thessalonians the dispute relates to social dependency (4:12). Some of the believers were giving up their trades (v.11), presumably to be supported by the generosity of others. Paul himself could have enjoyed this, given the status his enterprise entitled him to, but he insisted on supporting himself (2:5-9). He had at first been protected by the hospitality of Jason, and other prominent people (Acts 17:4f). Paul was writing from Corinth, where the social aspirations of his converts inspired serious animosity over his refusal, unlike the false apostles (2 Cor. 11:13), to accept the patronage offered, or to present himself in the style befitting an acknowledged authority. A different kind of community life was being promoted by Paul. These principled reversals of convention make it difficult to classify his *ekklesiai* as Greek assocations, which were meant to undergird the established order.

Heinrici argued that for similar reasons the *ekklesia* could not have derived its form from the synagogue, but that the initial Roman tolerance of it implied a structural basis in the type of association derived by Foucart from the inscriptions, even though the Corinthian letters were preoccupied with the inner turmoil of their *ekklesia* (1876:475-77, 479, 521). Hatch argued more extensively 'that not only some but *all* the elements of the organization can be traced to external sources' (1882:26-39, 214)[7]. Although the common meals and close bonding may well have suggested or even reflected the practice of the clubs, the distinctiveness of the *ekklesiai* is in various ways more conspicuous. Their purpose was fundamentally different: they were calling upon believers to build an altogether new community in anticipation of the coming kingdom. Their methods were didactic and argumentative, a kind of alternative education in the meaning and conduct of life. Their structure was not at first determined by any formal constitution, arising instead from the combination of charismatic initiative with authority delegated by the apostles. Their members were drawn from a wider social range than could easily be held in such close relations, linked together by the novel conception of various individual gifts contributed in mutual service to the common good. Finally, the *ekklesiai*, though each complete in itself, formed an imitative network that provided hospitality and financial support for members travelling across the empire and beyond (Judge 1984; 2004).

The *ekklesiai* at first often gathered in private houses. Here they enjoyed social protection, and in return endorsed the household order. But they were not controlled by domestic authority, and their teaching sought to transform the spirit of domestic relationships from within. A similar ambivalence applied in their attitude to the public order. An essentially different manner of life was being created,

that was to provide an alternative structure and a potential conflict of obligation in each dimension of the social order, whether *oikonomia*, *koinonia* or *politeia*.[8]

The Pauline communities are also difficult to correlate with classical cult-groups. In Jerusalem Paul practised the Jewish cult (Acts 24:14), but in his mission he transposed worship into a figure for the preaching of the gospel (Rom. 1:9; 1 Cor. 9:13/14). Believers were to practise a rational alternative to worship through self-sacrifice, that is by the transformation of their life-style and thinking. Thompson (1997) and Peterson (1998) argue against those who hold that the meetings of the *ekklesiai* could not have been construed as acts of worship. But charismatic spontaneity and volubility must have shattered the procedural solemnity necessary to classical worship. The only explicit case of such a formal act of worship in a Pauline assembly is the *proskynesis* of the hypothetical unbeliever of 1 Cor. 14:25. As an *idiotes* nothing had indicated to him the presence of God until his conscience was convicted by the prophesying. There was no cult. It is only from the perspective of the fourth century, when the churches began to take up the sacral terms of the classical cults, that it is historically realistic to look back to the first for the development of Christian worship. Likewise, one must guard against linking sacramental and other procedures too soon to possible classical models (Wagner 1967; Klauck 1982; Gebauer 1989; Forbes 1995; Arnold 1995; Horbury 1998:112-19).

A similar circularity of argument is involved in the attempt to justify the application of the category 'religion' to the New Testament churches. It presupposes the later transposition of the Latin term *religio,* that is scrupulosity, or 'superstition' as the modern world sees it, making it in retrospect the honorific name for the whole complex of reconstructed belief and life that we now call 'religion', but which first-century Romans called *superstitio*. This conceptual problem besets such notable projects as those of Smith (1990), Betz (1994) and of Theissen (2000).[9] This is why it would be confusing to classify the Pauline *ekklesiai* as cultic communities (Judge 2003).

Second-century community and cult

All three Roman writers of the early second century who comment on the Christians classify them as a *genus hominum* (Suet. *Nero* 16, 2) alienated from the rest (*odio humani generis*, Tac. *Ann*. 15, 44, 4) by social malpractice (*flagitia*, Tac. 2; Plin. *Ep*. 10, 96, 2). The cause of this is a *superstitio* which is both novel and destructive (*nova et malefica*, Suet.), of unrestrained depravity (*prava et immodica*, Plin. 8) and terminal (*exitiabilis*, Tac. 3). Pliny discovered from those who recanted that all they had done was to meet before dawn, sing a hymn to Christ as though he were a god, and pledge themselves on oath (*sacramento*) not to commit any crime. Pliny had assumed the opposite since they had disbanded when he banned any *collegia* that might turn into action-groups. Later in the day they had taken a simple meal together. What proved they held to a dangerous *superstitio* however was not any of these

details, but the commitment shown by two deaconesses under torture, presumably an unflinching testimony to their beliefs. Pliny refers to the mindlessness (*amentia*) of inflexible obstinacy (3/4) as itself requiring punishment. The offence was non-conformity. Later in the century Galen considered the indifference to death of some Christians and their lifelong celibacy to be truly philosophical. He did not however approve of the empirical, rather than logical, way of demonstrating truth in the school (*diatribe*) of Moses and Christ (Walzer 1949).

His older contemporary, the philosopher Justin (Martyr), had been converted on this very principle: the prophets did not rely upon *apodeixis*, but were 'witnesses to the truth above all demonstration' (*Dial*. 7). Paul had made the same point, rejecting logical persuasion for 'the *apodeixis* of spiritual power' (1 Cor. 2:4 — the crucified Messiah?). This argument from historical testimony in turn provoked a novel critique of the gospel's historicity in the *alethes logos* of Celsus (Andresen 1955). In Alexandria a philosophical school (*didaskaleion*, Eus. *HE* 5, 10, 1) sought intellectual reconciliation, conspicuously in the writings of Clement, that went beyond the regular *catechesis* required for baptism (Scholten 1995). Tertullian, moreover, rejected any partnership with the Academy (*De praesc. haeret*. 7), since the gospel had made further *curiositas* and *inquisitio* unnecessary. Philosophy only led on to heresy.

The term *secta* (with its politico-philosophical flavour) is however one that Tertullian accepts (*Apol*. 37, 3). Yet Christians are not partisan, and should have been classified *inter licitas factiones* (38, 1) since they are not interested in local politics but only in the universal *res publica* (38, 3). As a *corpus* (39, 1) their activity centres on collective pleas to God, which one may only share in if one passes the *censura* of the *litterae divinae* (39, 2-4). The monthly payment is optional, and used not for feasting but for poor relief (39, 5f). Tertullian understands that it is because of their commitment (*superstitio*) that Christians are mocked as a *tertium genus* (*Ad nat*. 1, 8, 11, with commentary of Schneider (1968:187-90)). But they are co-terminous with all other *gentes*, filling every place and institution except only the temples (*Apol*. 37, 4). That is the reason why, though claiming to be *dei secta* (39, 6), they are not allowed to count as having a *religio* of their own (24, 9). They do not yet qualify as a cultic community.

Abhorrence from idolatry and from the offering of sacrifice persisted, but ambiguity arises.[10] The prophetic denunciation is cited in the letter of Barnabas (2, 4f. 7f), while the καινὸς νόμος requires an offering indeed, but one not made by man: it is the broken heart (9f). Fasting likewise must not go over to the law of 'the others' (3, 6), but the *laos* being prepared by the Lord will fast, as he demanded through Isaiah (58:4-10), in their acts of mercy towards the poor (Barn. 3, 3). The old covenant was lost through idolatry (4, 7f), and now the temple has been destroyed (16, 4). But we are a spiritual temple (16, 10).

The *Didache* soon shows such principles being re-adjusted to allow for formal procedures. The hypocrites fast on the second and fifth days, so we must do it on the third and sixth (8, 1). The Lord's prayer is to be recited thrice daily (8, 3). Prophets are free to pray as they see fit (10, 7), but there is a simple form of the eucharist, already sanctified (9, 5), and without prior confession of sins the 'pure sacrifice' (Malachi 1:11.14, now linked with Mt. 5:23f) will be defiled (*Didache* 14, 2). It is not clear in what respect this already conceives of the eucharistic celebration as a sacrifice (Niederwimmer 1993:196-9). A variety of metaphorical applications of θυσία is listed from second-century Christian authors by Ferguson (1990: 818). Clement's first letter spoke of Jesus Christ as high priest of our προσφοραί (36, 1), while bishops have been 'offering' the gifts in a holy manner (44, 4). Justin (*Dial*. 41, 3) takes the 'pure offering' of the Gentiles (Malachi 1:11) as fulfilled in the eucharistic bread and cup. This is the 'new oblation of the new covenant' according to Irenaeus (*Adv. haer*. 4, 17, 5). The sacrificial implications of it were to be emphatically spelled out in the third century by Cyprian (*Ep*. 63, 14.17; 67, 3).

In a similar way the priestly terminology of the Septuagint was occasionally applied to the ministry in the *ekklesiai*. In the *Didache* visiting prophets are not only given free rein with the eucharistic prayer, but are maintained as well from the first fruits 'for they are your chief priests' (13, 3). Polycrates of Ephesus (ap. Eus. *HE* 5, 24, 3) salutes the memory of the apostle John as the 'priest wearing the ephod' (sc. the high priest, since he lay on the Lord's breast, John 21:20). Tertullian speaks of the irregular ordinations of those who entrust *sacerdotalia munera* to laymen (*De praesc. haeret*. 41), though he is alert to the way custom establishes rules that are not prescribed in Scripture (*De cor*. 3, 4). Nevertheless the biblical terminology for ministers prevailed and it was not until the fourth century that it became common to add hierarchical terms to it (Kötting 1980; Dassmann 1992).

From the classical side, Lucian refers to the Christians as practising a novel mystery cult (τελετή) in which Peregrinus set himself up as προφήτης καὶ θιασάρχης καὶ ξυναγωγεύς through associating with their ἱερεῦσιν καὶ γραμματεῦσιν (*Peregr*. 11). Similarly Celsus speaks of the disciples of Jesus as θιασῶται, a term Origen was to distance himself from (*C. Cels*. 2, 70; 3, 22/3). Yet Clement contrasts the θίασος of the Maenads with the holy χορός of the prophets (*Protr*. 1, 2, 2), and considers it better to become θιασώτης τοῦ παντοκράτορος than to choose demonic darkness (*Strom*. 4, 8, 68, 4). A century later Eusebius was to make free use of the cultic imagery. Christ at the beginning instructs his θιασῶται (*HE* 1, 3, 12.19), while in Constantine's day his *ekklesiai* throughout the world constitute our θίασος. This is best taken as a stylistic device according to Bartelink (1979). Colpe (1992) reviews the historical issue, and the ambiguities surrounding the classification of the unique character of second-century Christianity are treated by Lieu (1998).

Third-century community and cult

Far-reaching clarifications were attempted in the mid-third century, as the Roman state reached both its millennium and its military nadir. Origen belatedly produced a systematic reply to Celsus. The latter had opened his attack by recognising how the Christians were bound together, more powerfully than by any oath, through their so-called ἀγάπη. On this basis they formed compacts (συνθῆκαι) in defiance of 'the common law' (of civilised mankind). Against this Origen asserts 'the law of truth' (*C.Cels*.1, 1). Just as it would be right to plot against a tyrant, so, in the case of the laws on images and godless polytheism, 'it is not unreasonable to form compacts against the law for the sake of truth' (the earliest attested statement of such a principle). The Christians aim to save others by persuading them to break with a diabolical tyranny.

Decius, however, in 249 determined to restore Rome's fortunes through a traditional mass *supplicatio* to the gods. The force of such pledges lay in their spontaneity (Aug. *Res gestae* 9, 2). But now, for the first time, every word and action was to be rigidly prescribed and verified; every man, woman and child must personally have tasted the sacrifice and poured the libation. They must then submit to the special commissioners a written petition (*libellus*) to be countersigned with explicit testimony that they had been seen to do it. All must affirm that they had always sacrificed (an echo of the spontaneity principle?). The Christians construed it as an assault on 'the law of truth'; there was never any question of exemption such as was secured to Jews by the tax system. Apart from the extant *libelli* the outcome is known from their intense reactions (Selinger 2002). While many Christians submitted (*sacrificati*), or stopped short but induced the commissioners to sign anyway (*libellatici*), others publicly refused (*confessores*), in some cases being condemned to death (*martyres*), while many simply absconded, notably Cyprian and Dionysius (Clarke 1998). Both were highly educated, wealthy adult converts, but episcopal leadership was challenged by the moral authority of confessors and martyrs. In Africa these issued thousands of petitions of reconciliation (*libelli pacis*, Cyp. *Ep*. 20, 2, 2) for penitent *libellatici*, provoking a metaphorical civil war over the credentials of two rival systems of sacrifice (Cyp. *De lapsis* 25). The organisational energy and international networks of the bishops match the claim of Origen (*C. Cels*. 1, 7) that 'almost the whole world has come to know the *kerygma* of Christians better than the *placita* of philosophers'. But more than academic truth was now at stake. The cultural solidarity of the empire as a whole was in jeopardy. For the first time the government switched its attention from personal loyalty to the structure of the Christian community in itself.

Valerian made no attempt to revive the Decian *libelli*. According to Dionysius (ap. Eus. *HE* 7, 10, 3) his *oikos* itself was a veritable *ekklesia* of God, filled with θεοσεβεῖς. In a clear shift towards the Christian sense of *religio* as a life commitment rather than a procedural one, he allowed (in 257) that there were those *qui Romanam religionem non colunt*, but they must perform the procedures all the same (Heberlein 1988). Recalcitrant *episcopi* and *presbyteri* were to be exiled and debarred from holding *conciliabula*, or going into the *coemeteria*. The report of Dionysius (ap. Eus. *HE* 7, 11, 3.10.11) coincides; no *synodoi* or *synagogai*, no going into so-called *koimeteria*. The self-conscious use of the bizarre Christian sense of 'dormitories' reveals the serious attention now being paid to the realities of the problem. Decius had tried to swamp it by reverting to a lost consensus, but Valerian will tackle it from the ground up. Nothing shocked classical ideals more profoundly than the celebration of the physical relics of death. The *ekklesiai* had migrated far beyond the old *collegia funeraticia*. Cyprian (*Ep*. 67, 6, 2) condemns Martialis for using one, *exterarum gentium more*: they belong to foreign nations, while Cyprian stands with the new world-wide people, *cum omnibus omnino episcopis in toto mundo constitutis*. In Egypt, facing the exiled Dionysius, the governor attempted the first ethnic cleansing of Christians (Eus. *HE* 7, 11, 14). It failed. A year later (258) Valerian sharpened his analysis (Cyp. *Ep*. 80, 1, 2): all clergy were to be executed immediately, and all men and women of Roman rank, including imperial freedmen, were to be stripped of their honours and estates. There are two drastic innovations here: the penalties are retrospective, recantation securing only one's basic citizenship; while confiscation strikes down the social welfare system of the *ekklesiai*, maintained even from exile (Schwarte 1989). Such an intensive action against the churches was never attempted again. From 260 Valerian was a prisoner of war in Persia and his son Gallienus cancelled the program by edict.

When Dionysius and other surviving bishops sought its application to Egypt the rescript (translated by Eusebius, *HE* 7, 13) focussed upon the retrieval of τόποι θρησκεύσιμοι. This unparalleled term may well have been retained in the Latin from the original Greek petition of the bishops. It discloses for the first time the existence of buildings dedicated to Christian use, and thus requiring a new categorisation. It also implies that they were not in private ownership, since bishops would not have been required for their retrieval, but that they were held by the bishops on behalf of the *corpus Christianorum*. Cyprian had already indicated how the *ekklesia* gathered around its tribunal, the raised *pulpitum* (*Ep*. 38, 2, 1; 39, 4, 1; 5, 2), from which the words of the gospel are read daily. A platform is needed where one must project one's voice across a throng of people, in a public assembly, the law courts, the theatre, or when lecturing. It is not needed in a temple or for sacrificial cult. But Cyprian can see that analogy. If one gives in to heretics, he imagines, our *sacerdotes* might as well take away the Lord's *altare* and let the others instal their images and idols with their *arae* in the sacred and revered *congestus* ('chancel'?) of our clergy (*Ep*. 59, 18, 1). The very horror of idolatrous cult is set up as a foil to ecclesiastical practice. *Altare* (cf. LXX θυσιαστήριον) keeps its distance from the *arae* (cf. the βωμός of polytheistic sacrifice), which ought

to stay outside anyway if they are for animal offerings (H. Leclercq, s.v. Autel, *DACL*).

The synod that excommunicated Paul of Samosata in 268 complained of his theatrical showmanship on the *bema* at ecclesiastical *synodoi*, enhanced by his use of a high throne and a *secretum*, or private sanctum (ap. Eus. *HE* 7, 30, 9). Paul refused to surrender the ecclesiastical *oikos* until Aurelian (on petition) assigned it to those nominated in writing by the Italian and Roman bishops 'of the dogma' (*HE* 7, 30, 19). The need to determine ownership of the new buildings had led the bishops for the first time to an imperial ruling, which significantly enforced the Roman point of reference in church affairs. The same applied with the ecumenical synod of the Dionysiac artists (Judge 2002:67f). The imperial government itself had long since smoothed away public debate: Aurelian is said to have reproached the senate with spinning out the argument as though they were meeting in a Christian *ekklesia* and not in the temple of all the gods (*SHA* 26, 20, 5). The neo-Platonic critic Porphyry taunted the Christians with building very large *oikoi* so that they could pray together in them even though nothing stopped them praying in their own *oikiai*, since the Lord would hear them anywhere (ap. Macarius Magnes 4.21 = frag. 76 Harnack). Writing of the huge influx of people into the *ekklesiai* by the turn of the century, Eusebius calls their buildings *proseukteria* ('prayer-halls'), and for the first time(?) uses the term *ekklesiai* for the large-scale structures now being created (*HE* 8, 1, 5) (Richardson 1998; White 1997). The decision of Aurelian in 270 had presumably given the churches at last corporate recognition in Roman law. But their self-determined structure and ideology itself challenged the sovereignty of the Roman people (Ehrhardt 1953 & 1954; Saumagne 1960 & 1961; Herrmann 1980; Brent 1999).

Fourth-century community and cult

The destruction of buildings was a distinctive feature of Diocletian's campaign against the Christians, along with the burning of scriptures (Lact. *Mort*. 12, 2; Eus. *HE* 8, 2, 1.4). The term *ekklesia* was presumably used for the buildings in the edict as it was even at village level in 304 (P.Oxy. 33.2673). When Galerius in 311 authorised rebuilding he called them *conventicula* (Lact. *Mort*. 34, 4; τοὺς οἴκους ἐν οἷς συνήγοντο, Eus. *HE* 8, 9). They were not seen as cult-sites, and Galerius allows the (non-cultic) respect (*observare*, προσέχειν) shown to the God of the Christians as distinct from the *cultum et religionem* (θρησκείαν) one owed to the gods. In the edict of Milan Constantine and Licinius were to make the same distinction (Lact. *Mort*. 48, 3; Eus. *HE* 10, 5, 5). Galerius knows to use the (non-cultic) *orare* (ἱκετεύειν) favoured by Christians when he asks them to 'plead' with their God for his safety (*salus*, σωτηρία) and that of the *res publica* and of themselves (Lact. *Mort*. 34, 5; Eus. *HE* 8, 10). He would have known that this is precisely what Christians normally offered in defence when their loyalty was challenged. Their offence is elaborately explained at the beginning of

the edict. It is not classified as the introduction of a *religio nova* (from abroad) based on 'superstitious doctrines' as with the Manichaeans condemned in the edict of 302 (Riccobono1968: 580f). Instead the Christians are said to have abandoned the life-style (*secta*, αἵρεσις) of their ancestors and arbitrarily to have made up laws for themselves to observe. The result was that *per diversa varios populos congregarent*, ἐν διαφόροις διάφορα πλήθη συνάγειν (Lact. *Mort*. 34, 2; Eus. *HE* 8, 10). The Greek suggests that *per diversa* is not necessarily a geographical expression and that *varios* does not mean 'various', in spite of recent translations. The correct sense of Eusebius was given by Valesius, prior to the recovery of Lactantius, in 1659 (*PG* 20): *in diversis sectis atque sententiis diversos cogerent coetus*. Galerius objects to the Christians forming 'divergent communities on deviant lines', splitting with their inherited Roman culture. Deplorable though it was, he has decided to tolerate them on condition that they contribute in their own way to the common good. It is a calculated libertarian policy, to be overridden within a year of his own death. It differs from the biculturalism secured for the Jews by their tax, since the Christians were Romans. Their government has at last conceded Origen's point. One may lawfully pursue a higher truth than law itself.

The restoration of the buildings and return of exiles (many having been condemned to the mines) threatened to disrupt the lives of those who had taken over the properties of Christians. Constantine and Licinius soon guaranteed compensation (Lact. *Mort*. 48, 7/9; Eus. *HE* 10, 5, 9/11). But at Antioch the administrator Theotecnus promoted instead a public petition for their exclusion from the city. Maximinus in 312 endorsed this as a model for other cities. Each received his rescript congratulating it on its pious adherence to the gods (Eus. *HE* 9, 7, 3/14, translated in person from the stele at Tyre). Latin fragments, notably from Colbasa (*AE* 1988, 1046) confirm the translation. The formal *territorium* of each city was included, cutting off any quiet retreat into the local countryside. This apartheid policy was linked with the campaign, already launched by Theotecnus, to win back community support for the gods. *Hypomnemata* of Pilate discrediting Christ were publicly displayed in town and country, and set for memorisation in primary school (Eus. *HE* 9, 5, 1/2), along with a scandalous exposure of what went on in the *kyriaka* ('Kirchen', 'churches').

Maximinus built on this concern over the intellectual and moral drive, with its underlying theme of separate nation-hood, a systematic answer to their organisational network. High-priests were appointed for each city and province, and given powers of arrest and the white uniform of public officials. They were required to offer daily sacrifices to all the gods, to confront Christians with their duty, and to hand over any recalcitrants to the magistrates (for expulsion?) (Lact. *Mort*. 36, 4/5; Eus. *HE* 9, 4, 2). By the following year (313), however, Maximinus denied that he had been responsible for any banishments, citing his refusal of the petitions from Nicomedia and other cities, and in effect

reinstating the position of Galerius (Eus. *HE* 9, 9a, 1/12; 10, 7/11). In the wake of these intractable problems came the decisive clarification of the legal status of the Christian community produced by Constantine in his agreement with Licinius at Milan in 313 (Lact. *Mort.* 48, 7/9; Eus. *HE* 120, 5, 9/11). The Christians collectively constitute a *persona* / πρόσωπον, with corporate existence (*corpus* / σῶμα) in law. Both the concept and term of legal as distinct from natural personhood are entirely absent from the greatest classifier amongst Roman jurists, Gaius, and the notion of a corporation acting in lieu of a person only gained currency in the legal science of the Middle Ages (Schulz 1951:71). The 'edict of Milan' however takes it for granted. But the repeated emphasis upon *corpus Christianorum* in our version, which Licinius issued at Nicomedia, implies that this latter concept was unfamiliar in the Greek East. The explanatory phrase, *id est ecclesiarum*, *non hominum singulorum*, was therefore taken by Ehrhardt as a gloss by Licinius himself. It was moreover further processed by Eusebius in his translation, which fails to pick up *ecclesiarum* though Ehrhardt thought it had only made its unusual appearance in official Latin for the benefit of the Greek provinces already familiar with the term. As for *corpus*, it had been applied to their churches a century earlier by Tertullian in Africa. It need not remain uncertain whether the gloss *id est corpori et conventiculis eorum* conceives *corpus* as a larger entity than *conventicula*, since *corpus* itself had already been defined in the earlier gloss as (plural) *ecclesiae*. Viewed this way one may take the policy of Constantine as an attempt to provide for these within the substructure of the national community, rather than adopting the more drastic final solutions of Galerius or Maximinus which faced up to the *tertium genus* theory as a serious threat to national solidarity.

For Eusebius, however, normalisation fell far short of the truth of this moment. In his *ecclesiastike historia* (1, 4) while admitting that Christians were a *neon ethnos*, he had stressed that their *theosebeia* was the most ancient, having been discovered by Abraham. His purpose then had been to trace the succession to orthodoxy within the principal *ekklesiai*, much as though he was compiling the *philosophos historia* of a regular school. His history barely recognised the question of its bearing on that of the Roman world as a whole. But now he developed a 35-volume response to Porphyry's exposure of the intellectual and social inadequacy of the Christians. The time has come, he says (*Praeparatio evangelica* 1, 5, 10/12), to explain what may properly (κυρίως) be called Christianism (as distinct from Hellenism and Judaism), a new and authentic *theosophia*, accentuating by its name its innovatory character (καινοτομίαν). Origen had already applied the Stoic idea of providence (πρόνοια) to history, and the overwhelming enthusiasm for the blossoming of Constantine's patronage swept Eusebius into a grand vision for the future (Kinzig1994). As a broad movement of life and thought Eusebius has rightly seen that the *ekklesiai* have far outstripped the familiar conventions of local associations. But what can he say about cult?

Those outside our θίασος will still have a part in its benefits (*HE* 10, 1, 8). Our temples (νεώς) are rising again to far greater splendour (2, 1). One hymn of praise comes from all, with consecrated men performing the sacred rites (3, 3). At the opening of the νεώς in Tyre, Eusebius himself delivered the panegyric (*HE* 10, 4, 2/72). The imagery comes from the Temple of Jerusalem, but its meaning is drawn from the New Testament. The priestly stole is the Holy Spirit (4, 2), their praises come from the Psalms. Our kings have spat in the face of dead idols (4, 16), acclaiming Christ as king of all by royal inscriptions in the city that rules the world. He has supplanted the violent customs of barbarous nations with mild and humane laws (4, 18). He has set up throughout the earth a nation unheard of before (4, 19). We are that living ναός (he reverts to the *koine* form of the New Testament) into whose inmost sanctuary, the secrets of the rational soul, only the greatest High Priest of all may see (4, 21/22). The rebuilding of the *basilica* is described, and interpreted in detail (4, 55/69). The θυσιαστήριον is where Jesus as great High Priest receives from all the sweet smell of incense and the bloodless, immaterial sacrifices they offer through prayers.

Constantine for his part took the shift to inner sanctity quite personally. He confides in Aelafius, imperial vicar of Africa, whom he knows also to be a *cultor* of the supreme God that he fears the Divinity may be moved not only against the human race but against himself (*CSEL* 26, 204/6). He will not be free of anxiety until he knows that everyone reveres the most sacred God with united observance in the due cult of the Catholic *religio,* or the most sacred Catholic law, as he had put it at the beginning. He is enraged (Eus. *HE* 10, 5, 21) that some should split off over the cult (θρησκεία) of the holy and heavenly power and over the Catholic cause (αἵρεσις). The *corpus Christianorum* has quickly emerged, not as a secure component of the civil order, but as a totality whose coherence demands personal commitment from everyone. To the Catholic bishops (*CSEL* 26, 208/10), whom the Lord has judged *dignos cultui suo*, he confides that there had been many things in him lacking in *iustitia*, which he had thought the supernal power could not see. But the Saviour had had mercy on him. Christ's clemency however must have departed deservedly from those who will not obey the most sacred law. He knows this because they demand his judgement, when he awaits the judgement of Christ, while the judgement of the *sacerdotes* should be received as though the Lord himself was sitting with them. But those unspeakable deceivers of *religio* will be sent to his court by the vicar of Africa to contemplate there something worse than death. By such reasoning did the quest for mercy in the inner man convert the state itself into an instrument of cultic terror (Judge 1986).

By the middle of the fourth century Constantine's half-nephew, Julian, had privately turned his mind back to the classical cults. The bishop of Troy, Pegasius, showed him the local temple of Athena, closed now but carefully preserved. The bishop had kept the key (Julian, *Ep.* 79 Bidez, 19 Wright). Coming to power in 361 as the last of

Constantine's line, Julian committed himself to the reconstruction of Hellenism, consciously requiring the Greek cults to convert themselves into an adequate answer to the Galileans. We must add the practices that have done most to increase their atheism, *philanthropia* towards strangers, care for the tombs of the dead, and the contrived seriousness of life (*Ep*. 84 Bidez, 22 Wright). Arsacius, as high-priest of Galatia, must compel his subordinates and their families to be committed (σπουδαίους), they must avoid the theatre and taverns, provide hostels for strangers and food for beggars, teach Hellenists to support public services, and insist on their own precedence over governing officials. In contrast with Maximinus, Julian expects that the Hellenic gods can be supported by activist cult-communities on the Christian model (Nicholson 1994). His own admirers knew how unreal it was, but Julian shares with Celsus and Porphyry an historically alert recognition of the social and intellectual force of the communities that were emptying the old cults of their value to ordinary people.

Ammianus Marcellinus, an admirer of Julian yet sceptical of his practice in such matters, himself failed as an historian to identify clearly the historic phenomenon of Christianisation. It was taken for granted by him that the Christians shared in no way in the distinctives of the classical cults. The word *deus* does not arise in connection with them, and *numen* significantly only when Julian makes a pretence of addressing it at an Epiphany celebration (21, 2, 5). The virgins whom Sapor found *cultui divino sacratas* (18, 10, 4) were probably so described for their protection, *divinitas* (27, 7, 6) being in any case a preferred term amongst Christians. The deposition of Athanasius from his *sedes sacerdotalis* (15, 7, 9) likewise no doubt reflects the phrase used by Constantius. In spite of the favourite metaphors of Eusebius and others, Ammianus allows the Christians no *templum*, *delubrum* or *fanum*, no *sacerdos*, no *sacra*, *caerimoniae*, *hostia* or *ara*. All these belong exclusively to the gods. Similarly *secta*, *doctrina* and *theologus* belong elsewhere. But Ammianus self-consciously uses words that are in regular Christian usage (even apologising, as a Greek himself, for their origin): *ecclesia*, *synodus*, *episcopus*, *presbyter*, *diaconus*, *martyr*, *basilica*. For the phenomenon as a whole he couples the adjective *christianus* with *cultus*, *lex*, *religio* and (a growing preference) with *ritus*. None of these four nouns is coupled in Ammianus with any other such adjective, none of them is used primarily in a cultic connection, and the case usage of the phrases differs strikingly from that of the same nouns in other connections. They indicate his broad sense of a committed practice he cannot define, and for which he has no word (*christianitas* is first attested in *CTh* 14, 3, 11 of 365). Ammianus is in strong reaction to it, however, often expressing that in military metaphors (e.g. 21, 16, 18). He carefully indicates why he dislikes synods and admires martyrs. He favours an uncontentious, ethically quietist, and tolerant Christianity, but cannot understand the turmoil stirred up by it, simply treating that as a vice. He knows how factionalised and brutal the Christians often are, but does not understand the

doctrinal character of the disputes or their popular appeal. He is not aware of biblical authority, though familiar with its equivalent in Classical and Egyptian culture, and only slightly conscious of the ecclesiastical welfare work, of monasticism, and of the influence of women. Thus though familiar with the public impact of Christianity Ammianus makes the typical historian's mistake of trying to explain its problems in terms of the general ones of the time. He would like to assimilate the socially positive aspects of Christianity, but is blind to the dogmatic sources of that. Yet in avoiding any terminological equation with the classical cults, and casting around for a different way of alluding to the phenomenon as a whole, like the good historian he is, he has indirectly registered the historical novelty (which we now call religion) of beliefs about God creating an alternative culture. But he would have been puzzled to hear Eusebius presenting it figuratively as a cultic community (Judge 2004b).

Like Galen two centuries before, Ammianus respected the philosophical commitment that led people to asceticism or to martyrdom. But he would surely have been appalled by the new institutional forms they were developing in his own day. Although the *ekklesia* had been providing social support for female virginity and widowhood since New Testament times, it was not until the early fourth century that continent men first won social recognition, and a name. The word *monachos* is attested in this sense as early as 324: *NDIEC* 1 (1981) 124/6. It soon became a paradox to contemporary observers that the quest for singularity of life produced dramatic new types of collective action, horrific to the unbelieving and often confrontational with the regular *ekklesiai* (Brakke 1995). The combination of intense spiritual discipline with a radically differentiated lifestyle fully justifies bringing the new monasteries under the rubric cultic community. Even those not living coenobitically were preoccupied with human relations (Gould 1993). Driving it all was the Christian substitute for cultic ritual, the desire to practise the moral injunctions of Scripture to the fullest degree (Barton-Christie 1993; Shaw 1998; Clark 1999). There was however no more glorious public testimony to one's faith than to suffer execution for not renouncing it (Bowersock 1995). As Cyprian had found, the readiness to die conferred on the confessor a moral authority which challenged that of his bishop (Dassmann 1973). To the revulsion of outsiders this trust was carried forward to the relics of the martyr, and to the burial site. In a total reversal of the classical instinct to shun a grave as polluting, the promise of life was now tied to the dead (Brown 1981). The relics, moreover, were moveable, and could be used to extend the privileged access to grace through the martyrs permanently into the future (Markus 1994). By such means the *ekklesia* could turn themselves into local sanctuaries with a divinely accredited patron, matching the old cults in community value. MacMullen speaks of a 'seamless join of the old to the new' (1997:125). Certainly the churches came to provide the cultic anchorage that was desired for the daily and seasonal round. But entrenched within it

Figure 2: An ivory plaque depicting the crucifixion. © The British Museum Trustees
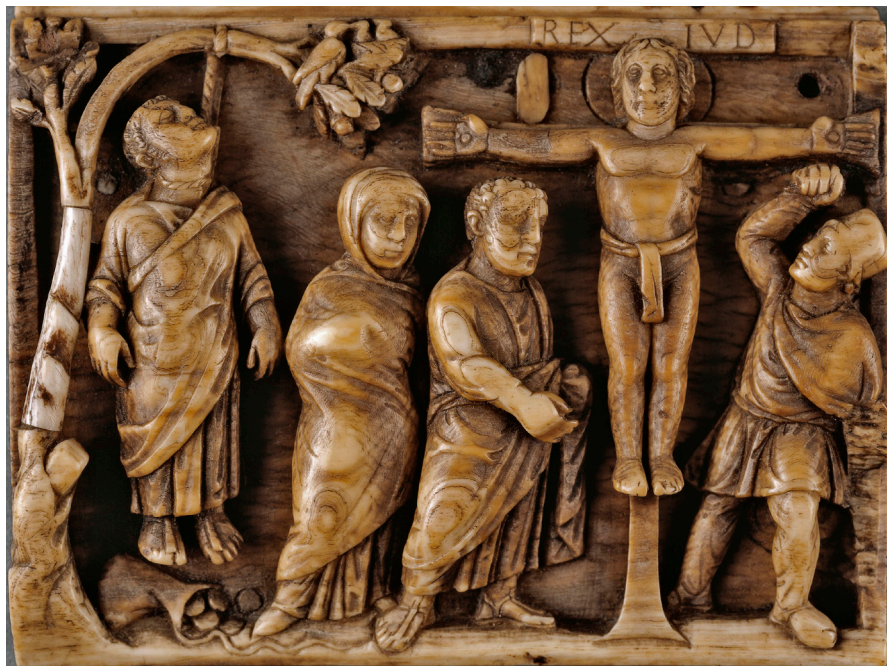
now was the corpus of texts that had driven their radical experiments in community reconstruction (Kaczynski 1974; Stroumsa 1999).

What would it all do for the world?

The ruling fashion amongst Ancient Historians is to say that the conversion of Rome changed little or nothing, at least in the way life was experienced. All Ramsay MacMullen could find that was unique in the daily round was the sign of the cross. But that on its own points to something more profound than ritual. To the ancient critics the cross was a disgusting humiliation, making nonsense of any claim that Christ was divine. But to believers he already triumphed from the cross. See the earliest narrative depiction of it on the British Museum ivory plaque of about AD 420 (Figure 2; McGregor 2000:123). It signalled an altogether different kind of rule, the rock, if you will, on which the new community was being built. It sidestepped all established order for this alternative society. In the meantime the two had to live with each other, everyone having a stake in either. But in the end the new would supplant the old.

In late antiquity, in what seemed its hour of triumph, the social force of this was masked, as the *ekklesiai* were drawn into the reassuring cultic comforts of the past. But at the least an alternative structure of thought was ensured. The perfect, stable and permanent universe of classical thought was confronted by the proposition of a beginning and an end, and the discovery that things must progress. The massive dogmatic drive also kept open the potential for counter-cultic renewal. The doctrine of a truth higher than law had been formulated by Origen, and accepted reluctantly in practice by Galerius. Those who claim they were only acting under orders are no longer excused. The open society places moral responsibility on everyone. The onus of choice has made space for multiculturalism. But

multiculturalism threatens the open society if it only locks us into our cultural past, protected from criticism. Australia does not have the excuse of an inherited ethnic mosaic. It falls to everyone to be open to a better choice, and to win a better understanding of how the world works.

Edwin Judge
Macquarie University

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Endnotes

1   More than a dozen aretalogies and hymns are preserved in literary or documentary form: Grandjean (1975); Engelmann (1964), on the founding of the cult at Delos; Vanderlip (1972); Zabkar (1988:135-60), including Eng. tr. and discussion of the main Greek and Latin texts, for which see also G.H.R. Horsley (1981:10-21).

2   They have been collected by Bricault (1996). This Greek motif, unique to Isis, is confined to the flood of enthusiasm for her that runs from the time of Caligula to that of the Severi, and must have been organised, according to Bricault (1994:67-86).

3   Over 1,000 inscriptions from outside Egypt were treated by Vidman (1969). Some 3,150 epigraphically attested individuals were listed and classified by Mora (1990). The organisation of priestly grades has been studied by Baslez (1975 & 1977), and by Schönborn (1976). Vidman (1970) presents a full analysis of the group terminology, and its dilemmas are treated by Koester (1999).

4   For their distinctive dress, see Eingartner (1991).

5   Clauss (1992), tallied 184 definite Mithraea, 673 Mithras reliefs, and 1003 inscriptions from 480 sites, 19 of them in Rome. Of 997 attested individuals 350 are from Rome and Italy, 102 from Rhine provinces, 423 from Danube provinces, and 122 from elsewhere in the Empire.

6   Progression through the grades is documented by P.Berol. 21196: Brashear (1992). The proposal of Dieterich (1923), to derive *PGM* 4.475/834 from the cult of Mithras has not proved convincing more recently.

7   For analysis of the debate at the time, and of its renewal a century later, see Josaitis (1971); Kötting (1977) Kloppenborg (1993); Schmeller (1995:9-24).

8   Further discussion in Hainz (1972); Kertelge (1972); Klauck (1981); Hainz (1982); Barton (1992); Harrison (1999); Clarke (2000); Horrell (2000).

9   The terminological artifice of Theissen's title is acknowledged: 'Sie erbauten eine semiotische Kathedrale aus narrativen, rituellen und ethischen Materialien, eine Zeichen- *und* Lebenswelt' (385).

10   Il sacrificio nel Giudaismo e nel Cristianesimo: *ASE* 18/1 (2001); I cristiani e il sacrificio pagano e biblico: *ASE* 19/1 (2002).