

AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL APPROACH TO THE NEW TESTAMENT? A
CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF MARY DOUGLAS'S "GRID/GROUP" MODEL
WITH RESPECT TO UNDERSTANDING THE DYNAMICS OF THE
EARLY CORINTHIAN CHURCH, AS ALLUDED TO IN 1
CORINTHIANS, AND PARTICULARLY 14:33B-36 & 11:17-34.

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ABSTRACT

The last three decades has seen a significant shift in the discipline of New Testament studies. In particular we have observed the rise of the social sciences and with them, new methodologies which have eclipsed the more traditional "criticisms" such as form criticism and source criticism. New Testament scholars have realised that we can no longer afford to ignore these advances, and have produced a prolific amount of work which draws upon sociology in particular, and also social anthropology and psychology.

Despite the consensus that the social sciences are able to provide invaluable tools for the study of the New Testament, the research that has drawn on these tools has not been without critique. A common thread to these evaluations is that the focus is so exclusively social scientific that the text often becomes lost in the endeavour. When the text is referred to, it is used not unlike a proof text - to prove the suspicions one has already formed.

Similarly, we have noticed that those literary studies which relate more to the structure, plot and themes of a text may become so focused on specific words, tenses and so on, that the actual people and context of the text become lost in the exercise. Therefore our challenge is to develop an approach that takes both the social sciences and the text into equal account.

This thesis is then an experiment in method. In the quest for an inclusive and holistic approach to the New Testament, we propose to combine Mary Douglas's anthropological "grid/group" model with a series of questions developed by Howard Kee which are aimed at "Interrogating the text". Having discussed a number of methodological considerations we suggest a four step approach which we believe will enable us to analyze the New Testament from a comprehensively anthropological perspective, while at the same time considering the text responsibly and fully.

As a test of our methodology we first analyze the complete text of Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, and then compare our approach with a similarly anthropological method adopted by Stephen Barton in his 1986 article entitled, Paul's sense of place: an anthropological approach to community formation in Corinth¹ which discusses the specific texts of 1 Cor. 11:17-34 and 14:33b-36.

The results of this test were mixed. On the one hand our methodology provided a detailed examination of the views held by both the Corinthians and Paul which we were able to contrast. Our use of Douglas's "grid/group" model also allowed a certain amount of prediction as to how these players would likely have responded to events. However, we discovered that the questions used to "Interrogate the text" are somewhat tedious and repetitive. Therefore, some modification and refinement of these questions would be advocated.

¹ New Testament Studies, vol. 32, pp. 225-246.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1. INTRODUCTION

In the last three decades there has been a significant shift in the discipline of New Testament studies. It has seen the rise of the social sciences and with them, new methodologies which have eclipsed the more traditional "criticisms" such as form criticism and source criticism. No longer can New Testament studies and theology in general exist in isolation from the milieu of social scientific discovery. As a result of this realisation, the world of theology has embraced the new methodologies and models of the social sciences, and has produced a prolific amount of work which draws upon sociology in particular, and also social anthropology and psychology.

Much of this research has radically changed the way that we approach the New Testament. One only needs to think of scholars such as John Dominic Crossan and Richard Horsley¹, who have both contributed to the social reconstruction of the world of Jesus and the Jesus movement, to realise how the discipline has changed. The scope for investigation has become much broader as we have realised the relationship between the social context of the New Testament authors and their communities, and the issues expressed in the text. We have begun to think in terms of socio-political and contextual categories, and the vocabulary used in research has not only shifted focus, but has also increased notably. Not only do we talk of the *Sitz-im-Leben* of an author and his community, but also of issues such as "world view", "social world", "cosmology" and "social boundaries".

Despite the consensus that the social sciences can provide invaluable tools for the study of the New Testament, such research has not been without critique. One critique that I feel strongly is that many of the studies being produced today which take a social scientific perspective, tend to view the text as an afterthought - something which is tacked onto the end of the argument, in a manner not unlike a proof text, which is used merely to give legitimacy to one's opinion. The text becomes secondary to the reconstruction of the context. Similarly, those studies which focus more on the structure, plot and development of the text often do not take into account those discoveries made by the social sciences. This leads to the question: "Is it

¹ Horsley, R. A. (1993) Jesus and the spiral of violence: popular Jewish resistance in Roman Palestine. Minneapolis: Fortress.

Crossan, J. D. (1992) The historical Jesus: the life of a Mediterranean Jewish peasant. New York: Harper Collins.

possible to develop a methodology which remains true to social scientific study and its models, yet which emphasises equally the text in a holistic and responsible manner?" The development of such an approach is our primary aim in this study. Hence, we will embark on an experiment in method. Our aim is to attempt to build a methodology which is anthropological in orientation, taking as its starting point the "grid/group" model of Mary Douglas; but also a method which has as its focus the text, and which looks at the text holistically, responsibly and insightfully. A method which is interested in the whole text, not merely those aspects which may give up sociological or anthropological information.

The text we have chosen to discuss as a test of our method is 1 Corinthians. Initially, we will discuss the entire letter as a whole, in line with our holistic approach. Our aim here is to put our methodology into practice and assess whether or not it will prove a useful tool in the discipline of New Testament studies. However, we will then test our method further by contrasting our own discoveries with those of Stephen Barton who uses a similarly anthropological approach to discuss aspects of 1 Cor. 14:33b-36 and 11:17-34.

As this is to be an experiment in method, we need to be as precise and careful as possible in every step of this research, so that we do not compromise our results. In this chapter our task is to explore more fully what we mean by a social scientific approach, and what such an approach entails. Secondly, as our focus is going to be on the Corinthian church and the first letter to the Corinthians, it is also important to look at some of the social scientific research that has already been done in this area. These two sections will help put us in the picture concerning the state of current debate, and will also allow us to place this present study into context. These sections will also help us to give more form to our aims and hypotheses, which will then be outlined. We will then outline the structure that the thesis will take.

1.2. THE SOCIAL SCIENCES AND THE NEW TESTAMENT

As already mentioned, the last three decades have seen a rise in the use of social scientific methods in New Testament study. Of this, the most widely used discipline employed has been sociology. Hence, it is not surprising that most of the literature looking at the usefulness of the social sciences for New Testament study have focused primarily on sociology. While the discipline of social anthropology, which we are most interested in, does vary from sociology in the types of investigation embarked on, there are considerable similarities in approach and method. Therefore, I believe that most, if not all of the points made in regard to the relationship between sociology and the New Testament, are also relevant to the relationship between social anthropology and the New Testament. However, we will also include a more

detailed discussion on the particular issues surrounding an anthropological approach to the New Testament in the next chapter.

1.2.1. Sociology and the traditional methods

Holmberg (1990:4) notes that sociology is not a newcomer to New Testament research. It was a crucial component of the form critical method, which placed great importance on discovering and describing the *Sitz-im-Leben* of the author. However, only recently has sociology taken on a major role in its own right, not as a subsidiary tool of another approach.

With form criticism as the starting point of the cooperation between sociology and the New Testament, it can be seen as somewhat ironic that sociology is the main reason for the "demise" of form criticism. Sociology showed the limitations in scope of the more traditional methods. Best, (1983:182) puts it succinctly as follows:

But it cannot be denied that even form criticism, with all its talk of the *Sitz-im-Leben* (life setting) of the text, was a literary and theological discipline which produced hardly any concrete historical, social, or economic information about the traditions which it studied. And even Paul, who springs virtually to life in his letters, was reduced inexorably to a propagator of ideas by the tendency to "reconstruct the conflict between Paul and the church in Corinth as being an almost purely theological conflict between different Christologies and other theoretical conceptions" (Citing Holmberg, Paul and power [Lund, 1978], pp. 206)

So, then, the consensus seems to be that sociology can add to the interpretive insights of New testament studies by emphasising the social, political and contextual aspects of the early Christian communities. This leads us to the inevitable question of how a sociological approach can achieve this. What is it that sets it apart from the other approaches?

1.2.2. What is a sociological approach?

There has been considerable debate over the last decade as to what exactly a sociological or social scientific approach entails. There have been several attempts to define the scope of such research, and there are certain glaring differences. We will discuss each in turn.

One of the earliest attempts to describe the scope of sociological approaches was undertaken by Jonathan Z Smith who delivered a key paper in Chicago in 1973, which was published in 1975². He spelled out four different areas that research had taken or could take:

1. The description of social realia found in early Christian writings and contemporary materials.
2. A genuine social history of early Christianity.
3. Investigations in the social organisation of early Christianity:
 - a) looking at the social forces in society which led to the rise of Christianity.
 - b) analysing the social institutions of early Christianity.
4. Understanding early Christianity with the help of the sociology of knowledge (Berger & Luckmann) and its emphasis on the creation of a world of meaning which provides a plausibility structure for its believers. (Holmberg, 1990:4)

Critiquing Smith's views, Holmberg argues that only the last option requires the use of sociological theory. The other points do not really rely on anything uniquely sociological (1990:4).

Noting that there is a huge range of "sociological" work being done, Best (1983:185) attempts to define what a sociological study of the texts involves. He suggests that there are two levels of application of social categories to the New Testament.

1. The first is DESCRIPTION. In reaction to theological approaches, which imposed upon the text external theological categories more at ease in the discipline of Systematic Theology, this method describes and emphasises the historical, social and economic factors. Although this is essential for a sociological approach, it is not really sociological by itself.

2. A truly sociological approach must move to the level of EXPLANATION. Here specifically sociological tools are employed, such as interpretative models, and comparison. e.g. No longer do we ask what Paul says about leadership, but we ask how our sociological insights about leadership influences the way we can interpret Paul's leadership style and assess his interaction with the communities he founded (Best, 1983:185).

At this point, a distinction becomes clear that was not really evident in the work of Smith, although it was alluded to by Holmberg. There is a difference between, on the one hand, an approach that is truly sociological, and makes

² See, Smith, J. Z. (1975) The social description of early Christianity. in, Religious studies review. vol. 1, pp. 19-25.

use of sociological models in order to interpret and try and make sense of some social reality; and on the other hand, an approach that merely describes the social factors of life.

In a 1984 article, Richter looks at this distinction in more detail, using different terminology. He argues that it is important to distinguish between what he calls sociological, and proto-sociological approaches. He explains the difference in the following paragraph:

A sociological approach to early Christianity will make use of the explanatory theories and hypotheses of the academic discipline of sociology and will be interested in explaining as well as describing the relevant data. Where material does not fall into this category it is legitimate to use the term "proto-sociological". Any fully fledged sociological approach presupposes work at the proto-sociological level (Richter, 1984:78).

Richter fleshes out the differences further, by describing the types of study that he would call "proto-sociological". The first is the "social description of realia contained in early Christian materials" (Richter, 1984:78). For Richter, the defining factor that sets this apart from real sociological investigation is that it is description only. At this point he overlaps neatly with the work of Best, however he also goes on to define studies that focus on a social history as proto-sociological. His reasoning is that most of these studies do not attempt to evaluate the significance of the social data that they describe. Richter would therefore argue that Malherbe and Theissen³ would fall into this category, because their focus is still primarily descriptive.

Finally, Richter suggests that the use of a sociological concept analytically, does not necessarily mean that the method is sociological. He asserts that:

Sometimes the use of sociological concepts such as "class", "status", "power distribution", or "sect" ...- whilst not in itself constituting fully fledged sociological analysis, can function as an heuristic pointer to further research possibilities and the likelihood of finding particular correlations" (Richter, 1984:80).

It is here that some of the so-called sociological approaches to the New Testament have stumbled, as they use sociological terms at face value and without definition. One might go so far as to argue that using social

³ See, i) A.J. Malherbe (1983) Social aspects of early Christianity. Philadelphia: Fortress.
ii) G. Theissen (1982) The social setting of Pauline Christianity: essays on Corinth. Philadelphia: Fortress.

scientific methods are only useful in so far as the researcher thinks and interprets first like a sociologist or anthropologist, and second like a New Testament scholar.

At this point, one may be asking what kind of research this thesis is going to be. Is it going to be descriptive or explanatory? a social history, or an interpretive study that makes use of verifiable models and theories? I would like to argue that it should be both; for a truly interpretive approach will rely on the data provided by the descriptive and social history elements of New Testament historical research. A model is useless without data.

If, then, we are to embark on what Richter calls a sociological approach, and we are going to use interpretive models, we must ask several questions: What exactly is a sociological approach? Why is the use of a model so important? and, What are the theoretical perspectives out of which sociological models arise?

1.2.3. The use of models and theories

Within New Testament scholarship the term "model" is often used rather loosely as a synonym for words such as "metaphor", "analogy", "image" or "paradigm" (Elliott, 1986:3). We need therefore to define what exactly we mean when we talk of a sociological, or even an anthropological model.

Elliott (1986:5) argues that models are conceptual tools for understanding, testing and applying theories in the analysis of and interpretation of specific social data.

The difference between a model and an analogy or metaphor lies in the fact that the model is *consciously structured* and *systematically arranged* in order to serve as a *speculative instrument* for the purpose of organizing, profiling and interpreting a complex welter of detail (Elliott, 1986:5).

There are two basic classifications of models in academic use. Isomorphic models are used in disciplines such as geography and are intended to replicate as closely as possible the features of the original it represents. A globe of the world is such a model. Other models which are termed abstractly, and which only seek to represent selected features of the original, are called homomorphic models. Sociological and anthropological models would fall into the latter category, as they are abstractions designed to select and apply certain theories in the analysis and investigation of social phenomena (Elliott, 1986:5/6).

This leads us to our second question: "Why are models so important?" The answer is relatively simple. Models allow researchers to compare factors more easily and they stimulate the imagination so that an understanding of the particular issues under investigation is more easily arrived at. Models are tools that facilitate understanding. In social scientific research, models are heuristic tools which investigate, organise and explain social data and its meaning. Hence, models can explore social phenomena in a way that gives us more information regarding the social system under investigation, and they can test certain hypotheses which social theory has led us to expect. Richter answers our question succinctly in the following extract:

The usefulness of sociological theories and models lies in their ability, for instance, to explain a particular problem, or suggest links between apparently unrelated data in the same or different sources (1984:81)

At this point it might be useful to take a step back and look at models from a wider perspective. This is necessary if we are to answer the third question we asked ourselves: "What are the theoretical perspectives out of which models arise?" As this question implies, models do not exist in a vacuum. They arise and are formed out of a particular theoretical position which shapes their direction and often also the objectives of the research. In the social sciences there are a number of theoretical perspectives that are, or have been instrumental in shaping the direction and kinds of research undertaken. These include:

Structural functionalism,
Conflict theory,
Exchange theory,
Symbolic interactionism and
Phenomenology.

The two most influential theoretical positions are the structural-functionalism and the conflict theories.

1.2.3.1. Structural functionalism

This theoretical position presupposes that every society is a relatively stable and persistent structure. Permanence and stability are the optimum conditions for any society. Therefore, this theoretical position is likely to view the resolution of discrepancies, inconsistencies or conflicts in any sphere of society as desirable and vital. The explanatory power of such theories is usually based on the perceived need among individuals to resolve or reduce the stress that is a result from incompatible belief systems or actions.

Structural functionalism, then, is likely to ask questions like: "what is the pattern of social relations?" How is this pattern maintained?" and "What are the rules of behaviour in such cases?" (Malina, 1986:43). This theoretical position is also likely to describe life in terms of norms, morally sanctioned interactions, and rights and obligations. Structural functionalism studies human beings as members of groups which exert pressure on them to behave in prescribed ways.

1.2.3.2. Conflict theory

An alternative approach to structural functionalism is that of the conflict theorists. As the name suggests, conflict theorists emphasize the explanatory value and constructive uses of conflict. They see conflict as the driving force behind change. They would argue that social systems are composed of individuals and groups which have differing goals and interests. There is conflict between these individuals and groups who compete to realize their own goals. This theoretical position sees individuals and groups as being able to make choices, rather than merely being bound by norms and expectations. Conflict theorists are therefore likely to ask questions such as: "How do patterns of social relations emerge?" "How do such patterns clash and change?" and, "What is a person getting out of it?" (Malina, 1986:43).

For our purposes, these two theoretical perspectives are important as they both shape the direction of the methodology which we will outline in the next chapter. At this stage though, we might ask, "What view of society will our approach take?"

In many ways we will view society as a synthesis of these two theories. We are interested in both the social norms and the forces of boundary maintenance of a social group, for example, which are characteristic of structural functionalism. However, we are also interested in the process of change occurring in the society and how conflict drives this change. It is important to note though, that we do not view individual behaviour or cultural concerns as directly linked to the context of the society as structural functionalism tends to do. Rather we view behaviour and culture as shaped by a number of factors in a rather more dynamic fashion - not all linked to the social group.

1.3. CRITIQUES OF SOCIAL SCIENTIFIC APPROACHES TO THE NEW TESTAMENT.

There are several different types of critique of the use of the social sciences in New Testament analysis. Some of these are rather obvious and self explanatory, while others require some discussion. All need to be taken seriously. Taking our cue from the work of Tidball (1983:15-21), we will first discuss the theological problems with social scientific approaches, and then the social scientific problems with the New Testament.

1.3.1. Theological problems with the social sciences.

One of the central problems with a social scientific approach is the presupposition that every behaviour and event has a social purpose, and can be explained in terms of human interaction. Sociologists tend to reject the notion of the divine. This opinion can be traced back to the founding fathers of the discipline of sociology. Tidball (1983:15) argues that these founding scholars viewed religion and religious behaviour as something out of which humanity would grow. Even Durkheim, who came closest to acknowledging the reality of the divine by suggesting that religion is the worship of something real, saw no room for a personal and transcendent God. He still defined worship in terms of a purely human experience and interaction - it is the process of recreating the soul of the worshipper's society.

It is upon these basic presuppositions that modern sociology and the social sciences in general, have been built. As such, the social sciences and Christianity are destined to contradict each other. Both claim to hold an authoritative view of reality. Noting this, Tidball puts forward two arguments:

Firstly, the aim of the sociologist is to attempt to understand man's (sic.) behaviour. He cannot do this by standing at a distance with his presuppositions already formed and by making superficial pronouncements on a given piece of behaviour. To be sure he has to aim for objectivity. But if he is to *understand* social behaviour he also has to try to put himself in the place of the person who is engaged in it. Really to understand religious behaviour therefore he must approach it "as if" it were true. Only so will he learn what it means to be a believer.

Secondly it is important to remember that it is not the concern of sociology to judge whether any particular belief or behaviour is 'right or wrong; valid or invalid, truth or falsehood. He can describe social origin and social effect. He can say whether, according to his own declared standards, such belief or behaviour is beneficial or not for other men. But such value judgements are not within the scope of his discipline (Tidball, 1983:16).

While Tidball's arguments do ring true, I still believe that if we engage in sociological and anthropological research, then we must learn to think like an anthropologist or a sociologist. We must not run the risk of subconsciously editing out links that offend our belief system. Rather we should follow through with the research and then stand back and critique the results from the standpoint of our own discipline, if necessary.

1.3.2. Sociological problems with the social sciences.

One of the more obvious problems that face New Testament scholars is the nature of the evidence. The New Testament is a collection of faith documents collected by various Christian groups in different geographical places and times. As such, the material that we have to work with is by definition subjective and unreliable for accurate social scientific research. Hence, New Testament scholars who use the social sciences have tended to be criticised for eliciting sociological information from the New Testament without regard to the intended purpose⁴ of, or the nature of the texts used.

A similar issue is that the social sciences require a large set of data because they deal in terms of generalities and groups. The following quote from Holmberg illustrates the above points very clearly:

The New Testament as a collection of evidence for the social history of the first Christians is a very small data set. Most of the texts do not treat social phenomena at all, and can only be made to yield information about such matters through various processes of inferential reading and interpretation (Holmberg, 1990:9-10).

The second main critique is that the theories and models that New Testament scholars have been using, are models and theories that have been derived from evidence in a particular type of society. Transferring these models and theories to a very different and historically removed society, raises all sorts of methodological problems.

There is a world of difference between sociology applied to contemporary society, where the researcher can test his theories against evidence which he collects, and historical sociology where he has only fossilized evidence that has been preserved by chance or for purposes very different from that of the sociologist. It is a cardinal error to move promiscuously between the two. Indeed, the weaknesses of sociological studies of historical movements from Max Weber onwards suggests that historical sociology is impossible. (Rodd, quoted in Holmberg, 1990:8)

In this passage, Holmberg introduces us to one of the more hotly debated concerns that has been raised concerning the New Testament and the social sciences. That is; is a social scientific approach to an historical context

⁴ We are aware that the intended purpose of the texts is a matter of speculation. However, it seems fair to presuppose that they were meant for purposes different to the type of analysis associated with the social sciences.

really possible? Clearly Holmberg (Rodd) thinks that it is, but that a method needs to be specifically developed for that purpose. One of the tasks of this thesis is to look at this question in some detail. No longer can we continue using models that were developed with detailed first-hand accounts gained through participant observation in mind.

Finally, a further difficulty is the problem of parallelomania. First described by Howard Kee, it involves the following:

The danger arises when a superficial analysis of two institutions in two different cultures suggests that they resemble each other. It is an easy step from that to the conclusion that they are parallel phenomena. In fact their function may be very different in their differing contexts. Sweeping comparisons between the Graeco-Roman world and the home of the Gospels are not what is needed. What is needed is careful study of the New Testament itself before cautious conclusions are drawn (Tidball, 1983:21).

Now that we have discussed some of the more important sociological and social scientific problems that face the study of the New Testament, it is important that we briefly focus our attention on the research that has already been done on the New Testament, which has a sociological or social scientific methodology. It is our hope that we will be able to learn from the advances of these studies, as well as heed the warnings in terms of methodology and implementation that they may have for us.

1.4. SOCIAL SCIENTIFIC STUDIES OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

This section does not seek to give an exhaustive list of all the social scientific studies that have been done in New Testament studies over the last four decades, but rather to mention those that will no doubt have bearing on the direction that this thesis takes. As the focus of this thesis is the first letter to the Corinthians, it seems fitting that we limit our sample of social scientific research to those that have focused on this epistle. Following Chow's (1992:14-21) example, we will divide this section into those significant studies before 1960, and those significant studies since 1960.

1.4.1. Significant studies before 1960

Some of the earliest scholars who focused their attention on Corinth were Marxists, who used the sketchy information of the first letter to the Corinthian church as proof that this particular church was made up of the poorest strata of Corinthian society, and similar to the working-class movement of their own day. F. Engels is a good example of such an opinion.

The history of early Christianity has notable points of resemblance with the modern working class movement. Like the latter, Christianity was originally a movement of oppressed people, it first appeared as the religion of slaves and emancipated slaves, of poor people deprived of all rights, of people subjugated or dispersed by Rome (Engels quoted in Tidball, 1983:91).

This opinion was also taken up by other prominent Marxists such as Karl Kautsky. He developed Engels' view and referred to texts such as 1 Cor. 1:26 to support his opinion. At the same time, scholars such as Ernst Troeltsch, who were not necessarily Marxists, were also suggesting the same opinion - that the church was made up of the poor. As a result, it became the consensus view among New Testament scholars of the time.

This rather broad view of the Corinthian church was first challenged by E. von Dobschutz, who suggested that the Corinthian church had also included some of the elite class who were rich and cultured - looked up to by society as bearers of status (Chow, 1992:13). In arguing his case, von Dobschutz represents somewhat of a paradigm shift in the thinking of the scholarly world. He aimed to free the academic study of the early church from dogmatic or other influences by "focusing on the *historical reality* of the communities" (Chow, 1992:14). He suggested that taking this approach would reveal the real nature of the early church.

The methodology that von Dobschutz suggested consisted of two main ideas that are still relevant today. The first is the crucial concept of historical context. He argued that it is imperative to understand the environment in which the Corinthian community lived and worked.

Von Dobschutz's second point focuses the attention of the researcher more on the author and founder of the Corinthian correspondence and community.

It is important to understand the contribution of the founder of a community in the building of its morals, since 'historical progress cannot be explained by forces originating in a collective way, but by eminent leaders or "heroes"' (Chow, 1992:14).

Yet another influential scholar who highlights the situation at Corinth is Floyd Filson. His attention was concentrated more on the structure of association in the Corinthian church, and how that affected the dynamics of the group, given the particular context of Corinthian society. Accordingly, he argued that it is vital to view the house-church as the context for the early church. Filson also argued that the early church was probably made up of a broader constituency than was usually suggested by his contemporaries.

1.4.2. Significant studies since 1960.

As with most other scholars, Chow regards 1960 as a turning point in socio-historical research, as it marks the advent of the use of sociological categories with regards to the study of the early church communities. E. A. Judge can be seen as one of the trendsetters in this regard. In his first book The social pattern of Christian groups in the first century., published in 1960, Judge sets out to determine whether or not the early Christian movement was made up of the lower classes. As with von Dobschutz, Judge places great emphasis on the context of the first century world in order to understand the social milieu in which the early church existed. However, he differs with von Dobschutz in that he advocates a "comparative study of the early Christian communities with contemporary 'social institutions' or groupings" (Chow, 1992:18). At this point, Tidball and Kee might accuse Judge of parallelomania.

Perhaps the most well known recent scholar to have worked on the socio-historical study of early Christian communities is Gerd Theissen. His interest in the Corinthian church was focused on the apparent tensions and conflict within the community. He interpreted this conflict in terms of "internal stratification" - that is, the contradiction between the rich and the poor who made up the community (Chow, 1992:21). Within this broad framework, Theissen describes Paul as a kind of "community organiser" who sought to win the approval of both the rich and the poor.

So far, the research outlined, although using social scientific categories, is still not really social scientific, as it focuses on description. In more recent studies, however, scholars have relied more on the explicit use of models to aid in the interpretation of events and interaction of the early church. For example, P. Marshall has investigated the causes of the hostility in Corinth in the light of Marcell Mauss' model of friendship and gift exchange. Similarly, Chow illustrates the social networks in Corinth by focusing on the system of patronage and power relations.

The kinds of models that have been used have not, however, been limited to the discipline of sociology. Recently, for example, Neyrey has focused on Paul's cosmology using Mary Douglas's work on "dirt" "taboo" and the relationship between the physical and social body. He argues convincingly that much of 1 Corinthians can be interpreted in this light. Similarly, Neyrey and Richard Atkins have separately used Douglas's "grid/group" model to interpret Paul's communities.

1.5. AIMS

As we have already mentioned, this thesis is an experiment in method. Therefore, the main aim revolves around method. Is it possible to build up a methodology which takes the entire text seriously, and which is still an authentically anthropological approach? Our opinion is that not only is it possible, but it is important that we do strive in this direction. Our attempt at this combines Mary Douglas's "grid/group" model with a series of questions developed by Howard Kee, which "interrogate the text". Focusing on 1 Corinthians, we hope to test our method by using it to analyze this letter, and then compare it with a similarly anthropological approach outlined by Stephen Barton.

Allied to this central aim are several other aims and hopes. Through our discussion of 1 Corinthians as a whole, it is hoped that we can build up a profile not only of Paul's social world and universe, but also of the Corinthians themselves. Can they be classified in different ways on the "grid/group" map? If this is the case, then our methodology has gone some way in proving its usefulness, as we can then use these differing profiles to add to our interpretation of the specific passages within the whole which interest us particularly. Assuming that our methodology "works" in that it helps us build up a overview of the situation at Corinth, and the processes at work, our next question deals with the specifics. How useful is our method at providing insight into the specific texts, which are problematic or difficult to understand?

Finally, taking into account our practical use of the approach with 1 Corinthians, our aim is to assess our method, critique it, and suggest ways in which it might be improved, changed, or adapted if necessary. We also aim to suggest several ways in which our method may help in communicating the world of the New Testament to the lay person. It is our conviction that a method which does not at some point lead back enriching our own communities, is a method that is lacking in scope - being somewhat selfish in its insights.

1.6. THE WAY FORWARD.

It is our task here to outline the way forward for this research. Chapter two will focus on methodology, explaining not only Douglas's "grid/group" model of understanding a social group, but also some of the ways the model has evolved over the years in Douglas's thought. We will also discuss the questions suggested by Howard Kee which allow us to "interrogate the text". This chapter will then suggest a synthesis of the two elements, and a four step methodology will be outlined.

Chapter three focuses on the socio-historical context of Corinth, emphasising the cultural norms and way of life in a Roman city. This will help us put the text of 1 Corinthians in a social setting. This is essential for any anthropological study. One of our key assumptions is that if we are to understand the world of the early Christian churches, we need to try and understand as clearly as possible their way of life, the culture and norms of their society. In short, if we are studying the early Corinthian church, we need to try and think like a first century Corinthian Christian.

Chapter four focuses on the text of the letter. We "interrogate the text", thereby building up a profile of the community and Paul. This interrogation involves a detailed analysis of a wide range of areas within the text. The result is that a detailed profile of the principle players within the text becomes possible to construct. We will use this information to analyze both Paul and the Corinthians with reference to Douglas's "grid/group" map.

Chapter five involves an assessment of our overview, and also asks whether our method is capable of the more focused and directed analysis of selected passages within the letter. Here, we compare our approach with that of Stephen Barton in his 1986 article, Paul's sense of place: an anthropological approach to community formation in Corinth⁵. Finally, we will conclude by summing up our main arguments and findings. We will also discuss ways in which our approach may be used or modified to build up our own community.

⁵ New Testament Studies, vol. 32, pp. 225-246.

CHAPTER TWO

METHODOLOGY

2.1. INTRODUCTION

So far in New Testament scholarship, researchers have tended to either focus on a social scientific or a literary approach. Those approaches that have emphasised the social sciences have made use of descriptive works to try and understand the social conventions, institutions and culture of the societies in which the early Christian groups lived, the assumption being that understanding the context of the group will allow insight into the group itself. There is nothing wrong with this approach, as is witnessed by the many articles and books that have been written in this manner. It seems, however, that the New Testament itself is being relegated to a secondary position - tagged on at the end of the research almost as an afterthought.

Similarly, literary studies often relate more to structure, plot, the particular use of certain words, tenses and so on with the result that the actual people of the text are lost in the endeavour. In this case, the social context of the text is sometimes relegated to a secondary position. Therefore, the challenge is to develop an approach that takes both the social-scientific analysis and the text into equal account.

In the discussion that follows, we hope to lay the foundation for such an inclusive methodology, suggesting a scenario for how it might look. As we have mentioned before, we regard this methodology as an experiment. However, before we outline our approach, we need to lay some methodological foundations and ask questions such as, "Why anthropology?" Here we will discuss whether historical anthropology is possible, and then outline those areas of interest that cultural anthropology and New Testament exegesis have in common. We will then turn our attention to the work of the renowned British anthropologist Mary Douglas. We will trace her work from her emphasis on purity, taboos and the body, through to her "group/grid" model.

We will then examine Howard Kee's work on "interrogating the text", again offering a critique. Lastly, we will outline the approach to be taken in this research, which is a synthesis of Howard Kee's work on "interrogating the text" with Mary Douglas's on the "grid/group" model.

2.2. WHY CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY?

There has been much debate regarding a workable definition of cultural anthropology. Our task here is not to enter into that debate, but rather to explain the scope of the discipline and then show its significance for the study of the New Testament world.

We will divide our discussion into four areas. The first will ask whether
① historical anthropology is possible - an important question for an anthropological approach to the New Testament. The second will ask how the
② discipline of New Testament studies might look to a cultural anthropologist, while the third will ask which anthropological insights are useful to New
③ Testament research. The fourth section will look more closely at the requirements of an ethnographic approach to the New Testament. These
④ requirements will form the basis by which we will test our own methodology.

2.2.1. Is historical anthropology possible?

Despite the many different definitions of anthropology that have been devised, Feeley-Harnik simply sees it as the following: "Anthropology is the comparative study of human behavior" (1982:95). We will use this simple definition because it focuses in on the most important aspect of cultural anthropology - human behaviour, and it hints at the kinds of methodology associated with the discipline.

During the first half of this century, many anthropologists argued to the contrary of the above definition. They said that if anthropology aspired to be a science, it could have nothing to do with history, which a comparative approach implies. This trend was particularly strong among British social anthropologists working in remote parts of Africa (Feeley-Harnik, 1982:96).

Therefore, it is perhaps fitting that it was the prominent British social anthropologist E.E. Evans-Pritchard who in 1950 argued that "anthropology was closer to certain kinds of history than to the natural sciences, and it was in fact 'a kind of historiography'" (Ibid:96). In effect, Evans-Pritchard reversed the famous dictum that anthropology must choose between being history and being nothing. Rather, he argued that "'history must choose between being social anthropology or being nothing'" (Feeley-Harnik 1982:96/7).

Following Evans-Pritchard, anthropologists in the 1960's and 1970's began focusing again on the relationships between oral history, genealogy, myth etc.

The question, then, is not whether anthropological methods and theories can be applied to historical societies for which we have no face-to-face evidence. Obviously they can, within the constraints of the comparative method, in virtually any context. It would be a positivistic conceit to assert otherwise... A more useful question, at the moment anyway, is whether anthropological methods and theories can contribute to our understanding of historical development and change. The structure is only half the answer. We have to know how it was used, manipulated, interpreted, and reinterpreted, not only by different persons or groups in relation to one another but also by the same persons or groups in relation to one another but also by the same persons and groups in different times and places. Indeed, we are compelled to recognise that there is no one structure to the social life of any people but rather as many structures as there are groups and individuals to construct them, differing according to their changing perspectives in patterned, planned, unexpected, and frequently contradictory ways (Ibid:98).

In this form of study, argues Feeley-Harnik, the focus is not on "society" but on a "social field" over time.

The problem then is not to understand how a system works but rather how it is worked by the individuals and groups involved in such a way as to achieve their goals, which may or may not be in harmony with the goals of those around them. This is the crux of the matter for biblical scholars concerned with developing a truly substantive understanding of the *Sitz im Leben* of religious belief. There simply is not the evidence to achieve that kind of detailed picture of historical times (1982:98-99).

How then do we answer the critiques of scholars who say that the historical reconstruction of the biblical world is impossible due to lack of reliable evidence - those who say that participant observation and hands-on ethnography is the only way to get such detailed data.

Feeley-Harnik suggests two answers:

1. Firstly, she asserts that the physical presence of the researcher does not guarantee that the ethnography will have an appreciation for the subtlety of the situation.
2. Secondly, she believes there is never enough data, because the questions always change, provoking a search for more information. In this regard, historians seem to have the advantage of hindsight. "Knowing how events ended, they are in a better position to interpret how they began and developed" (1982:99).

2.2.2. How New Testament Studies looks to an anthropologist

Charles Kraft (1985:390-400), writing from a theological point of view raises a number of points that are also relevant in this discussion. Firstly, anthropologists analyze human behaviour with a particular focus on the cultural influences and cultural results of that behaviour. Seen from this perspective, cultural anthropology highlights the culture-boundness of theology in general, including New Testament theology, as it has been developed and taught. We need to become aware of the assumptions and bias of our discipline, which has primarily been produced within "Western" cultures and for "Western" audiences. It is almost impossible to understand a foreign culture if we insist on using our own categories and terms to describe the behaviour of that culture's people. Rather, we need to learn the indigenous categories and terms used by the people of that culture themselves. When embarking on historical research regarding the social world of the New Testament, Kraft suggests that perhaps we could learn much through comparative study of the New Testament world with contemporary cultures that are more similar to that under investigation than the "Western" culture and worldview. In this way, perhaps we could help suggest some possible alternatives where the information we have is too sketchy (Kraft, 1985:391). Also, since we are doing this research in Africa, perhaps we need to pursue Kraft's suggestion and explore the possible insights that our own context can bring to the New Testament.

② The second point suggests that cultural anthropology appreciates the difference between what Kraft calls an "academic" theology and a "folk" theology. He contends that it is "folk" theologies that people actually live by, not the official "academic" theologies. He writes that these folk theologies are;

more influential than academic theologies, tend to relate more obviously to "life issues", and proliferate most when Christian faith is most vigorous. They often tend to be more lived than analyzed (in contrast, often, to academic theologies) (1985:392).

While New Testament scholars do not often use the same terminology as Kraft, the essence of the argument remains valid. Cultural anthropology can help us flesh out the differences between the official "great tradition" and the "little tradition". In Pauline research, perhaps a task could be to rediscover what "folk theology" or "little tradition" is in operation in communities such as Corinth, with which Paul, who may represent the emerging "official" or "great tradition", is in conflict.

3. Thirdly, cultural anthropology also recognises the possibility of several equally valid interpretations of the same event or behaviour - with each interpretation probably also being partly invalid. The challenge is for scholars of the New Testament to steer away from attempting to discover the central core or truth of the New Testament, or even of a specific problem. There are many truths that are equally valid (Kraft, 1985:392).

4. Finally, cultural anthropologists do not view culture as something static. One cannot take a still photograph of a culture and expect to be able to interpret that culture from the information gleaned from the photograph. The same is true for New Testament research. The sources that we have are very limited, much like a still photograph, therefore we cannot expect to be able to interpret the early Christian communities, their motivations, beliefs and so on, simply by the texts that they left behind. Just as much of the meaning of culture is expressed in the process of life, so is it true for the New Testament communities.

2.2.3. Anthropological insights useful to New Testament research.

The first and perhaps most obvious point to be made here, is that if we are to try and understand the New Testament communities, we need the "sharpest insights possible into the nature and workings of that within which humans 'live and move and have their being' - culture" (Kraft, 1985:394). In an influential book (foreworded by Mary Douglas), Robert A. Atkins (1991:23ff) discusses this problem of culture and exegesis further. He introduces the problem by referring to this quote from Robert Ulin:

Both the textual scholar and the anthropologist are confronted with the difficult task of appropriating that which is alien or not one's own ... the [anthropological] process that characterizes the comprehension of human actions and cultural products is not essentially different from the interpretation of a text as a life expression. (1991:23-24)

The central question then, that both the anthropologist and the exegete ask is: "How is it possible to understand - from my cultural perspective - culturally embedded phenomena from another time or another place" (1991:24). In answering this question, anthropologist Clifford Geertz proposed the concept of a "thick description" which is an attempt to put a cultural event into sociological categories by describing it fully, with extensive detail, so that it is understandable for the culture of the ethnographer. Hence, "interpretation" is not a depiction of "real world reality", but an attempt to make that culturally specific phenomenon understandable to a specific audience. To try and attain a "real world" description is impossible.

This idea of a "thick description" has been taken up by several New Testament scholars. All have faced the same problem - there is simply not enough information to constitute anything detailed enough to be a "thick description" of the New Testament world. Therefore we are forced back to our original question. However, in his work on cross-cultural interpretation, Geertz has also outlined an allied problem. In any attempt at cross-cultural interpretation of cultural phenomena, there is bound to be a "vulnerability to ethnocentric misinterpretation" (Atkins, 1991:25). The tendency is to interpret the "weaker" culture which is being observed, in terms of the ethnographer's own "stronger" culture. Atkins' argument is that this problem which faces all cultural anthropologists, also faces the literary exegete who is attempting to interpret cross-cultural meaning.

A further confusing factor for the researcher regards the use of language - especially as it relates to culture. It is widely acknowledged that language is not objective. It encodes the ideology of the dominant culture in hidden and subversive ways. The implication is that cross cultural interpretation is suspect because the process of interpretation puts the meaning of the interpreted phenomenon into the encoded ideology of the interpreter (Atkins, 1991:35). Therefore, what happens is that:

... all interpretation becomes misinterpretation, or, alternatively, each and every interpretation is correct. Relativism replaces fixed meanings; subjectivity replaces rationality. (1991:35)

Hence, we must abandon any lingering thoughts that any one approach will capture the whole truth of the situation being discussed. We must be content with many interpretations which are all valid to some extent. A further complication which makes interpretation more difficult, and necessitates a more nuanced approach, is that language deals not so much with the ideology embedded within it, but in communicating meaning and emotion.

Language is made up of thoughts, not merely words and syntax. And thoughts are cultural things. Meanings are felt, not simply reasoned. And feelings are both culturally conditioned and seldom derivable with any degree of accuracy from written records. Experience with contemporary cultures and languages more similar than those of Europe to biblical cultures and languages can provide clearer windows into many scriptural meanings than most learned theologians can provide - as many missionaries who have worked in such languages and cultures frequently attest (Kraft, 1985:395).

As a result of the above, Kraft suggests that we need to encourage a move away from the following commonly held beliefs:

(a) biblical languages are qualitatively different from other languages; (b) biblical texts should be analyzed as if they were written as technical, scientific treatises; (c) words are the focal points of language; (d) we cannot interpret scriptural language the way we interpret ordinary language; (e) the meanings of biblical words are accurately discovered by tracing their etymologies; and (f) literal translations more faithfully convey the original meanings than other types of translations (1985:395-6).

How then do we use anthropology and exegesis in New Testament studies? Referring to Pauline studies, for example, Atkins suggests that, "the goal is not to describe the historic Paul, but to come into dialogue with him, reflexively aware of his critique of our own culture" (1991:35-36).

To achieve this kind of dialogue, we need to know the limitations of the models we use. We cannot simply transfer an anthropological model as it outlined for anthropological field study, into another area of investigation such as New Testament studies, although there are similarities in the approach of the disciplines.

...interpreting a text is not the same as interpreting culture. The text may be "mined" or scanned for bits of ethnographic information. It may be subjected to literary analysis to determine the author's point of view and narrative function. But the text alone cannot provide the feedback necessary for the communication model to operate. (Atkins, 1991:36).

Therefore, precisely because we are involved in reconstructing history in New Testament studies, we need to go further than previous studies have done in developing methods to redescribe literary texts in sociological terms.

Interpretive ethnographers in the field have the luxury of repeated exposure to ritual patterns and behavior. They can ask about the manifest meaning of patterned behavior and cultural artifacts. The literary critic cannot. When we ask interpretive questions of ancient texts, our modern assumptions concerning human culture reign unchecked. Our focus on the world of the native is not enough. We do not have enough ethnographic information; only selected portions of elite and privileged ancient society are represented in the corpus of literary data. (Atkins, 1991:38)

In sum, we hold that anthropological insights can and should impact in four vital areas of the New Testament endeavour:

- (a) By enabling New Testament scholars to more readily understand the cultural context of and its influence on the early Christian communities.
- (b) By enabling these researchers to better communicate the New Testament world to contemporary audiences - by painting a picture of the people, message and vitality of the text in a way that is easily accessible for the ordinary reader.
- (c) By enabling New Testament scholars to "understand and compensate for the kinds of influence that their own culture has on their perceptual and interpretational efforts" (Kraft, 1985:394).
- (d) By stimulating the development of "homegrown", interdisciplinary, and focused models that are specifically designed for the historical reconstruction of the New Testament world.

2.2.4. Ethnography and biblical exegesis.

In view of the difficulties facing an ethnographic approach to the New Testament, Atkins suggests that there are other ways to get the sort of ethnographic data we need. The crux of his argument rests on his view that ethnography and exegesis are comparable and similar. Therefore, by identifying some of the characteristics of ethnography, Atkins hopes to make them applicable to exegesis as well (1991:39-40).

The following points are the requirements of a theory of ethnography or cultural anthropology. In this section, Atkins draws upon the work of Merton, who offered a "Paradigm for functional analysis in sociology". It is helpful to discuss these requirements in some detail, as they may then form the basis of a "check" for our own methodology.

- ① Firstly, the selection of data to be analyzed determines the results of the study. As ethnography is interested in the functions of behaviour, we need to focus on understanding the ways in which observable behaviour functions in a society. Therefore;

The data in which we are interested are evidences of repetitive or patterned behavior. As Merton lists them, these include "social roles, institutional patterns, social processes, cultural pattern, culturally patterned emotions, social norms, group organization, social structure, devices for social control, etc" (Atkins, 1991:41).

In addition, the description of patterned behaviour should include five categories of observation:

- (1) the location of participants in the pattern within the social structure - differential participation;
- (2) consideration of alternative modes of behavior excluded by emphasis on the observed pattern (i.e., attention not only to what occurred but also to what is neglected by virtue of the existing pattern);
- (3) the emotive and cognitive meanings attached by participants to the pattern;
- (4) a distinction between the motivations for participating in the pattern and the objective behavior involved in the pattern;
- (5) regularities of behavior not recognized by participants but that are nonetheless associated with the central pattern of behavior (Ibid:41-42).

How is this applicable to the Pauline church? Atkins suggests that the first category would describe the participants, their social status and their group affiliation. The second category, which looks at excluded behaviours, is relevant to the discussion of the group boundaries of the Pauline church in its urban setting. The third, which examines the meanings attributed to the behaviours by the participants, is given by Paul himself in his letters. The fourth category, which examines motivation is perhaps the most "slippery" for a discussion of the Pauline church. For this we have to look at any clues we may find in the text of Paul's letters. The fifth category - patterns of behaviour not recognised by the participants - has been invaluable to New Testament study, however, "we do not have available to us independent observation of the earliest phenomena. We have only the observations of the participants themselves" (Ibid:42). Therefore, this category, although extensively drawn upon, is also a "slippery" category for use in New Testament study, as it relies on data inferred from the form of the letters themselves.

Secondly, one needs to keep the observation of the motivations of participants separate from the objective consequences of attitude, belief and behaviour. i.e. "Paul's description in Romans 6 may not correlate with the way the ritual actually functioned in the Pauline church" (Ibid:43). Similarly, in one's observation, there needs to be a clear distinction between conscious motivations for social behaviour and its objective consequences. i.e. "Merton cautions us to be careful to include in our observations behaviors that are both functional and dysfunctional for the social system. There may be more than one consequence of an identifiable repetitive behaviour" (Ibid:43).

Thirdly, the requirements (needs, prerequisites) of a group under study, determine the relationships and consequences of behaviour. Therefore, the descriptive task of the New Testament scholar is to attempt to,

... discern the "functional requirements" of the subgroup, "the Pauline Church", in order to understand the ways in which various behaviors and ideologies functioned or dysfunctioned (Ibid:46).

How do we then deal with the problem of establishing validity? Clearly there is no easy validation process. The responsibility lies with the reader to either decide that the argument is clear and logical, or fanciful. However, there are several pointers that can be used by the reader to focus his or her attention on this problem. Does the argument make sense from the reader's cultural perspective? Does it seem to make sense from the reconstructed perspective of the original author? Do other methods of investigation concur with or contradict the results of the study?

Fourthly, Merton argues that a concrete and detailed description of the social mechanisms of the group is necessary. For the Pauline church, this is impossible, given the nature of the evidence. We can only guess, and our guesswork cannot be nearly detailed enough. Therefore, Atkins suggests that an examination of the "functional alternatives" for particular social structures, may be able to substitute for participant observation. Essentially, this refers to the process whereby, if a social mechanism is no longer available to the group, what other social mechanisms fill the void? What are the trajectories of thought in the Pauline church? (Ibid:47).

Fifthly, we need also to take into account the changes in context or environment, and how that might affect the group. For example, it might be useful to ask how the delay in the Parousia affected the social mechanisms of the Pauline church? (Ibid:48). Did it lead to modifications and changes, which can be interpreted as a symptom of anxiety and stress in the group? According to Merton's method, "Change occurs when stress on one part of the body - the dynamic system, the tensile structure - causes other parts to shift or compensate for that stress" (Atkins, 1991:48). Therefore, we must be aware that change in ideology reflects changes in the social system. Groups do not remain static.

Lastly, one of the central problems of this approach to the study of the early church is that the evidence is inferential. Therefore it is very difficult to validate. Other tools and methods are required. Atkins suggests that Douglas's "grid/group" approach is such a method (1991:50).

2.3. MARY DOUGLAS

Mary Douglas, the British anthropologist is well known to New Testament scholars primarily for her work in the area of pollution and taboo, and her "grid/group" methodology. Although our focus is predominately on the "grid/group" model, it is important also to examine Douglas's earlier work on

pollution, taboo and the interplay of the physical and social bodies, as this forms the backdrop against which the "grid/group" model was derived. Just as it is important to discover the social context of the New Testament authors in any discussion of their work; it is important to trace the development of Douglas's ideas, if we are to understand the "grid/group" model clearly.

2.3.1. Purity

Much of Mary Douglas's earlier work which we have so far referred to using terms such as pollution and taboo, can be collectively discussed under the title, "purity", which is more inclusive. Douglas's interest in purity revolves mainly around the various "purity rules" that are part of every culture. How do we make sense of these rules? Why are they important? What do they say about the culture of the society that hold them? What is their social function? What are the consequences of breaking the purity rules?

Douglas understands purity rules to be in operation at several different levels. At the personal level the rules regulate what one is allowed to eat, whom one is allowed to touch and how one is to deal with bodily waste. At the social level, purity rules govern whom one is allowed to marry, and under what conditions interaction with others and participation in events are allowed or not. At the cultic level they limit who can enter the sacred space and officiate at sacred gatherings. Finally, Douglas also recognises that purity rules sometimes operate at a cosmic level. For example, for Daniel in the Old Testament, the defilement of the sanctuary meant that the cosmos as a whole had also become defiled (Isenberg and Owen, 1977:2). A motivating factor in Douglas's interest in these levels of purity rules, is the assumption: "To understand the system of purity rules, their logic and function, is to understand much about a society" (Ibid:2). In other words, getting to know the purity rules of a society is Douglas's entry point in getting to interpret the society in general. This assumption is possible because Douglas perceives the purity rules of a society to be part of the system of that society.

The system of purity rules, then, implies a classification system which correlates with the patterns of all other classification systems in a given society (Ibid:2-3).

Douglas argues here that purity rules, just like the other social rules are socialized into a person's perception of the world by his or her society. They are taught and become accepted as normative. This process is particularly visible and observable with respect to the purity rules regulating the body. This is because the body can be viewed as a microcosm where physiological pollutions become important symbolic representations of other undesirable contacts and events in the social or cosmological sphere. Therefore, the crux of Douglas's argument goes as follows:

So if we can learn how a person understands the workings of that complex system called the body, its organisation, its spatial arrangement, and its priorities of needs, then we can guess much about the total pattern of self-understanding of the society, such as its perception of its own workings, its organisation, its power structure, and its cosmology. The human body, then, is a universal symbol system: every society attempts in some way to socialize its members, to educate its bodies (Isenberg and Owen, 1977:3).

How then does this understanding of the body help us? Douglas suggests that certain understandings of the body held in the group, correspond to certain social structures. Therefore, if the social structure of the group changes, for any reason; the understanding of the body will also change in a corresponding manner. Further, the cosmology which legitimates the particular understanding of the body and the social structure will of necessity also change in an analogous way.

The implication in Douglas's argument at this point, then, is as follows: Strong social controls in the society will in turn mean a demand for strong bodily controls. Here Douglas recognises a direct relationship between social control and bodily control. Hence, Douglas's emphasis on purity and its rules are put in perspective, since the argument is that measuring the concern for purity becomes one way of categorizing different social structures (Isenberg and Owen, 1977:3).

A question that now needs to be asked regarding Douglas's work on purity is, "How do we put it into practice? What do we look for?, and how do we recognise it?" In other words, we now need to flesh out the model in order to make it more practically applicable in the field.

We have followed Douglas's argument for understanding the physical body as a symbol of the social body. In Purity and danger, Douglas suggests that in the same way that society can be studied by focusing on its boundaries, margins and internal structures; so can the physical body be studied using the same categories, because of the relationship between the two bodies. At this point, Douglas begins to refine her basic model and begins to explain the elements of a more comprehensive theory. She focuses on two areas that we have already mentioned:

1. The symbolic correspondence between the physical and social body. This remains the crux of the argument.
2. The analysis of structure, boundaries and margins, exploring the relationship of the two bodies.

The social body constrains the way the physical body is perceived. The physical experience of the body, always modified by the social categories through which it is known, sustains a particular view of society. There is a continual exchange of meanings between the two kinds of bodily experience so that each reinforces the categories of the other (Douglas, 1973:93).

Douglas then suggests in her discussion of structure, boundaries and margins that these aspects of the social and physical bodies correspond as macrocosm to microcosm. Hence the structure of society is replicated in the structure of the body, where structure is understood to refer to the relationship of the respective bodily parts. Similarly, boundaries refer to the respective defenses erected around the two bodies, and margins refers to entrances, exits and their exuviae (Neyrey, 1990:106).

As this is a particularly important aspect of Douglas's thinking, perhaps it would be useful to reflect more on these three aspects, and how Douglas refers to them. Neyrey (1990:110) outlines the three aspects as follows:

1. Internal structure focuses on how the hierarchy of social roles is mirrored in a hierarchy of bodily parts. Therefore eyes are more important than ears, and the head is more important than the feet, and so on. This hierarchy may be investigated in physical behaviour as well as in language. For example we may note that in our own culture we often talk of the head of the family, the head of an organisation and so on.
2. Similarly, boundaries can be described as the external perimeter that defines or guards something, or they can be understood as the "series of internal lines that map out proper identity and place" (1990:110). Hence, boundaries may be (external) skin, clothing, hair, or (internal) for example, cultural definitions of male and female roles. Often, however, it is the margins and orifices that are most easily observable to the investigator.

Because they are gates to the interior, the bodily orifices must screen out what does not belong and guard against an enemy or a pollution entering. The guarding orifices are the eyes, ears, mouth, and genitals (Neyrey, 1990:111).

Douglas also devises several terms to make the discussion of these factors more precise and more easily verifiable. She distinguishes between:

- 1. formal/informal
- 2. smooth/shaggy
- 3. structured/unstructured
- 4. ritualism/effervescence.

Formal/informal: Here Douglas contends that a controlled physical body may be described as formal. That is if it characterised by, "social distance, well-defined, public and insulated roles" (Douglas cited in Neyrey, 1990:106). On the other hand, an uncontrolled physical body is informal and is characterised by role confusion, familiarity and intimacy.

Smooth/shaggy: Douglas uses the term "smooth" to refer to clear group ideals where roles are defined and a hierarchy of authority is in place. "Shaggy" on the other hand, refers to individualism, criticism of the system, and less commitment to roles or structure. These terms express much the same as formal/informal. Both look at the connection between the body and social roles.

Structured/unstructured: These terms refer to the kinds of values and responses that are held in esteem by a group. A "structured" situation is where there is a minimum of possible responses allowed in a particular situation. There are a number of prescribed responses that the individual is required to abide by. "Unstructured" refers to a situation where informality is valued, there is a tendency to abandon reason and there is license for abandonment and more bodily expression (Neyrey, 1990:106).

Ritualism/effervescence: Once again these words are used by Douglas to describe the tension between control and uncontrol. Hence, ritualism refers to a controlled situation, while effervescence refers to an uncontrolled situation.

Douglas fleshes out these distinctions by defining the conditions for ritualism and effervescence respectively. In Natural symbols (1973:103-104) she shows these conditions in terms of the social dimension and the symbolic order.

Conditions for ritualism:

SOCIAL DIMENSION	SYMBOLIC ORDER
1. High classification, strong control.	Condensed symbolic system; ritual differentiation of roles and situations. Magical efficacy attributed to symbolic acts.
2. Assumption that interpersonal relations must be subordinate to public patterns of roles.	Symbolic distinctions between inside and outside.
3. Society differentiated and exalted above self.	Symbols express high values set on control of consciousness.

(Mary Douglas, 1973:103)

Conditions for effervescence:

SOCIAL DIMENSION	SYMBOLIC ORDER
1. Weak control	Diffuse symbols; preference for spontaneous expression, no interest in ritual differentiation; no magicality.
2. Little distinction recognised between interpersonal and public patterns of relations.	No interest in symbolic expressions of inside/outside.
3. Society not differentiated from itself.	Control of consciousness not exalted.

(Mary Douglas, 1973:104)

Neyrey (1990:107) neatly sums these tables up as follows:

Ritualism is symbolized in differentiation of roles, sacramental attitudes to rites, distinctions between inside and outside, and a high value placed on control of consciousness. *Effervescence* is expressed in diffused symbols, preference for spontaneity, absence of interest in magic or sacraments, and the absence of control over consciousness.

Douglas advocates that these terms will help focus the researcher on aspects of behaviour that highlight the relationship between the physical and social bodies. She also argues that they will help outline the cosmology of the group

under investigation. Douglas demonstrates this by outlining the typical attitudes (cosmology) of both strong and weak controlled groups.

2.3.1.1. Cosmology of a controlled body:

Purity: here there is a correspondingly strong concern for purity in both the physical and social body. There is a strong aversion to "pollution", which is defined by the group and would typically include spittle, faeces and menses. Margins are tightly controlled. Control of the physical body is a way of controlling one's interaction with people and things that do not fit the group's ideals - for example the taboos attached to lepers, who are inevitably outsiders (Neyrey, 1990:108).

Ritual: Here, one can expect to find fixed rituals for determining and controlling boundaries - who can belong and who is an outsider. Outsiders are barred, and therefore are not schooled in the traditions of the community. Within these rituals, one would expect to find a clear hierarchy where roles and status are clearly defined.

Personal identity: Here the focus is expected to be group oriented. The individual finds personal identity in terms of his or her participation in the group. Awareness of one's identity is learned, or socialized and is nonindividualistic.

Body: The body is strongly controlled, and there is concern for pollutants and dirt.

Sin: One would expect in a highly controlled society that sin is socially defined as the violation of the group's rules and norms. Therefore, much energy would be directed towards protection against pollution and threats.

2.3.1.2. Cosmology of an uncontrolled body:

Purity: Here one would expect the opposite of a controlling cosmology. Hence, there is a weak concern for purity where there is tolerance for diversity. Holding an opinion contrary to the norm does not spell out expulsion as it would in a controlled society.

Ritual: The rejection of strong entrance rituals and of clear group boundaries are typical of this type of community. There would probably be poor role differentiation and consequently fluid social status. Effervescence and spontaneity are probably highly valued.

Personal identity: in contrast to a controlled society, individualism is pronounced and valued. Personal identity is not defined in terms of the group as society is seen as oppressive. Assigned roles are therefore, probably rejected.

Body: The body is not viewed here as a bounded system. How the body is perceived is not determined by social rules. Spontaneity and bodily abandonment are valued as indicators of a more spiritual existence.

Sin: In this context, sin would probably be defined in terms of personal ethical decisions, and not defined by the community. Sin is not a violation of societal norms.

The value of these descriptions is that they point out the relationship between how the body is perceived and the cosmology that legitimates and governs the values of the community. It is helpful in that it makes clear how beginning with purity and the body, one can infer much about the values, hierarchy and social system of a community. One can begin to see how Douglas began with a rather simple idea, but it has developed into a particularly insightful and useful tool in the analysis of societies.

Now that we have discussed the basis of Douglas's work, it will become increasingly clear, how she made the transition to her "grid/group" model, which we will now turn to.

2.3.2. Douglas's "grid/group" model

At the outset it is vital to note that the "grid/group" model is a theory of culture. It makes the connection between the ethnography of a culture, and its interpreted meaning, by focusing on the common denominator of the individual. The "grid/group" model does not therefore attempt to reconstruct the actual reality of a culture, but a "constructed reality". It is one of many possible interpretations of the actual culture. Hence, although the model seeks to be as inclusive and holistic as possible, it does have limitations. It cannot answer all of the questions put to it.

Relying heavily on the research of psycho-linguist Basil Bernstein, Douglas argues that there are two elements or variables of social and cultural organisation that need to be taken into account. She terms these elements or variables, "group" and "grid"⁶. They can be defined as follows:

Group designates social pressure and is intended to indicate the extent to which an individual finds himself [sic] constrained and controlled by others. "Strong group" indicates a social situation in which the

⁶ To prevent confusion, the words "group" and "grid" when referring to the elements of the model will be in inverted commas. When the word, "group" appears in normal lettering understand it to refer to a social group or community.

individual is tightly controlled by social pressure; "weak group" indicates the reverse (Isenberg and Owen, 1977:6).

Correspondingly Douglas describes "grid" as, "a system of shared classifications or symbols by which one brings order and intelligibility to one's experience" (Ibid:6).

In this case strong "grid" entails a classification system which is coherent, consistent, and broad in scope, while weak "grid" is the reverse - the classification system is narrow in scope, it is lacking in coherence and encounters difficulties in ordering the broader dimensions of reality. Weak "grid" is also applicable where there are competing classification systems.

In these definitions, particularly of the "group" variable, one can recognise Douglas's concern and interest in social control. This is a strong link with her previous work on purity. Hence, one could even say that the "group" variable is simply another term for the degree of social control, because strong social pressure is experienced as a demand for conformity to social norms. This is substantiated by a more detailed description of the "group" and "grid" variables by Isenberg and Owen (1977:7):

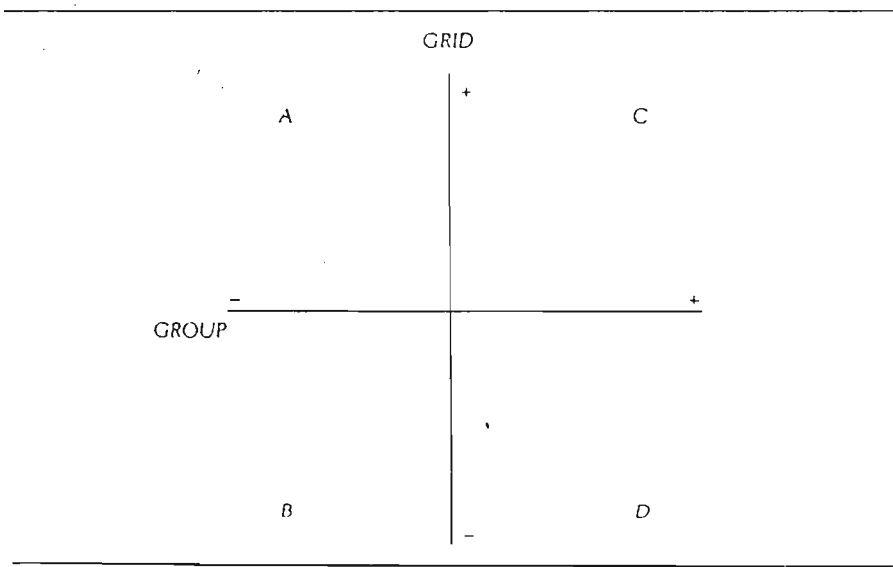
Strong group will indicate the following: high pressure to conform to social norms, a strong sense of group identity including clear distinctions between inside and outside and a clear set of boundaries separating the two, and a restricted set of condensed symbols expressing and reinforcing group identity. Weak group will indicate little pressure, porous boundaries, few and fuzzy symbols. Strong grid will usually entail the existence of a classification system in the sense of elaborated code, but in some instances may indicate primarily restricted code. In weak grid we should expect the elaborated code to be absent. The restricted code will be present, but is likely to be rather narrow and easily threatened by social conflict.

In this quote, the authors draw upon the work done by Basil Bernstein on restricted and elaborated code, where restricted code is a symbol system which expresses and supports the social structure. Douglas uses the term to refer to the symbolic expression of group identity and pressure. Elaborated code on the other hand is less contextually dependent. "It will attempt to make verbally explicit those meanings which restricted code leaves implicit. Here speech and thought tend toward independence from group identity and pressure (Ibid:6).

At this point we can ask how these elements or variables can help our interpretation of a particular culture. This brings us to the crux of the model. Douglas argues that after an ethnographic analysis of the culture according to the two variables, the results can then be represented graphically in a two dimensional map. This map gives the researcher the freedom to predict the kinds of social forces and typical responses of the societies under investigation. It is therefore particularly useful for the study of historically remote societies.

Hence, the map can be described in the following manner: The horizontal line represents the "group" variable and measures the individual's investment in the social life of the community. The vertical line represents the "grid" variable where higher scores indicate greater differentiation of roles in the group.

FIGURE 1
THE GRID/GROUP DIAGRAM ACCORDING TO
NATURAL SYMBOLS, 1970 EDITION



Hence, the map differentiates between four quadrants. Douglas labels these quadrants from A to D in the following fashion⁷:

1. Quadrant A: high grid; low group,
2. Quadrant B: low grid; low group,
3. Quadrant C: high grid; high group,
4. Quadrant D: low grid; high group,

The interesting part of the model now becomes apparent. Douglas argues that each quadrant represents a typical social type, where the cosmology, degree of control, and structure can to a certain extent be predicted. This is easiest to demonstrate by describing the four typical cosmologies of the four quadrants in broad terms and using similar headings that we used in the discussion of the two bodies. We will outline each quadrant in turn.

Quadrant A: high grid; low group.

Purity: Here there is a pragmatic attitude to purity. Pollution is not automatic as pollution is usually socially defined - In other words typical of high group.

Ritual: Ritual is important for personal, private reasons, if present, not socially defined reasons.

Magic: As above, it is private and personal.

Personal identity: Self defined, pragmatic and adaptable.

Body: Self-controlled, pragmatic attitude.

Trance: Not threatening

Sin: Defined in terms of failure in one's role, status or position. It is loss of face, the result of stupidity.

Cosmology: Cosmos is benignly amoral; individual success and initiative valued concepts.

Suffering and misfortune: The result of stupidity. Intelligent people ought to be able to avoid misfortune.

In sum, this is an insulated group where social, economic and class classifications are rigid. It is an unstable environment where exploitation from outside is probable and control is arbitrary - for example a slave culture.

⁷ our use of the terms, "weak" and "low", and "strong" and "high" are interchangeable and reflect the ambiguous usage in the literature. They are not meant to confuse.

Quadrant B: low grid; low group.

Purity: There is no emphasis on purity. Group control and pressure is absent.

Ritual: Effervescence and spontaneity are valued. Ritual is rejected as controlling.

Magic: No magic. Independence is valued.

Personal identity: No antagonism between self and society, but roles and control rejected.

Body: Irrelevant. Spiritual is more important than physical. Therefore either ascetic or effervescent attitude may prevail.

Trance: May be welcomed. No fear of loss of self-control.

Sin: A matter of own personal choices, not defined by group.

Cosmology: Likely to have an impersonal view of the cosmos.

Suffering and misfortune: Love conquers all (Isenberg and Owen, 1977:8).

In short, the social environment of this type of group is one that is competitive and impersonal. Competition is between individuals who contract with each other freely, and there is mobility up and down the social scale. Each person is responsible for him or herself, there is little interdependence. It is a stable environment of competition and achievement (Atkins, 1991:70).

Quadrant C: high grid; high group.

Purity: Strong concern for purity; well defined rules and rituals which define the boundaries of the social structure.

Ritual: Ritual is very important as it expresses the internal classification lines of the community.

Magic: There is generally a belief in the power of symbolic behaviour.

Personal identity: Strongly linked to socialization, which involves the internalization of clearly defined social roles.

Body: Tightly controlled. May be a symbol of life.

Trance: Loss of self-control seen as deviance, therefore trance is dangerous and limited.

Sin: Understood as the violation of the society's rules. Defined as wrong behaviour, not as an internal state of being. Ritual is important in dealing with sin.

Suffering and misfortune: The punishment for sin (Isenberg and Owen, 1977:7).

In brief, this type of group is characteristically large and organised. It is complex in structure and is a well-known and stable organisation. Specific tasks are reserved for particular classes of people. Roles and status are not achieved, but are ascribed. Individual stability is achieved through learning one's place in the system (Atkins, 1991:70).

Quadrant D: low grid; high group.

Purity: Strong concern for purity. Both the physical body and the social body are under attack from outside forces.

Ritual: Ritualistic attitude. Ritual focused on maintaining and strengthening group boundaries and expelling pollutants (witches) from the social body.

Magic: A source of danger and pollution.

Personal identity: Located in group membership, not in the internalization of roles. Roles are confused.

Body: Social and physical bodies tightly controlled as they are under attack.

Trance: Dangerous, may be identified as demonic possession, or evil.

Sin: Sin is understood as pollution. It is the evil stuck in society and the body. Internal state of being is important, as is the obedience of social rules.

Cosmology: Dualistic understanding of warring forces of good and evil.

Suffering and misfortune: Attributed to malevolent forces. Therefore it is unjust. Not necessarily seen as punishment.

This type of society, Douglas calls a "witch believing society" because of the superstition regarding the infiltration of evil forces into the group. It is dominated by the small group. There is a clear distinction between insiders and outsiders, and group boundaries are clearly defined. Leadership tends to be charismatic, with no plans for succession. Distinctions between members of the small group are fuzzy and unclear, and leadership and authority status is achieved, not ascribed.

This concludes the outline of the "grid/group" model. It seems clear that it presents a powerful approach which holds possibilities in the analysis of most groups and societies. However, before we jump to conclusions we need to take a more careful analysis of the usefulness and shortcomings of the model.

2.4. A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF DOUGLAS'S "GRID/GROUP" MODEL

If there are any scholars who attempt to discredit this model, or believe that it is not an extremely useful way of describing the culture of one society to another, I am not aware of their existence. On the contrary, the consensus is uniform in its praise of the model, and it has been widely used in the field of anthropology. If the model does become at all tricky for us as New Testament scholars, it is in how we transfer it from the field of anthropology, to that of New Testament Studies. I would argue that such an attempt is not necessary. Rather, we should recognise that the scope of the model is anthropological, and deals with culture. This is where it is beneficial to us. To try and transform it into a model of textual analysis is unhelpful. Therefore, it is our argument here that the "grid/group" model ought to be used in conjunction with other textual approaches which serve to

help the researcher build a profile of the community and author under investigation. We will discuss this further at the end of this chapter.

If we are agreed, then, that the model is useful to us, and provides a powerful interpretive tool, there are several precautionary notes that need to be made. The main point is that we need to be as careful as we possibly can to be consistent in the way we define the "grid" and "group" dimensions, and also in the way we use these scales in the practical interpretation of the texts. If we are careless in this regard, we run the risk of falling into the trap of what Catherine Bell calls "interpretive slippage" (1992:46). This is where the analyst's argument becomes circular and the interpretive tool may even become part of the data he/she is trying to interpret. The danger is that imprecise definition of terms and a careless use of the model might lead to this "interpretive slippage", thereby putting the entire study into doubt.

In order to ensure that we are consistent in our own use of the terminology, it might be helpful to illustrate the way in which Douglas's own understanding of the model and the terms associated with it have changed over the years. One cannot assume that her description of the model in 1970 will be the same as she would describe it today. Luckily, James Spickard (1989) has already written an article outlining these differences⁸. We will summarise his argument below:

2.4.1. The three versions of Douglas's "grid/group" model.

Spickard notes that Douglas's work has been widely used by New Testament scholars in recent times. Spickard argues that some of these scholars have misunderstood Douglas's work, and have failed to realise that at least three different versions of her "grid/group" analysis appear in her writings. Hence, Spickard suggests that Malina (1986) misunderstands the "grid" dimension of the model and White (1985) applies it backwards.

This article aims to show the differences in the three versions of the model, so that researchers can be more precise in understanding which variation of the model they are using.

Of course the version that scholars use need not be Douglas's most recent, since there is no reason why an earlier version might not find some empirical support. Nor should scholars shy away from modifying her formulations as they see fit. (see Malina, 1986:iii-iv). But whatever variation is used, it at least should be conceptually consistent,

⁸ A guide to Mary Douglas's three versions of grid/group theory, in Sociological Analysis vol. 52, no. 2, pp:151-170.

rather than wrongly pieced together from Douglas's conflicting writings (1989:153).

2.4.1.1. The first version: Natural symbols 1

This version of the "grid/group" model is that outlined by Douglas in her first edition of Natural symbols (1970) in which she focuses on the dimensions of social structure. In this version, Douglas describes "group" as expressing the strength of group ties - from the lowest possible range of associations, to tightly knit closed groups.

Any form of structuring that is dependent on group organisation is included in this measure. The duration of group life, the degree of a sense of "them" versus "us", the number of activities taken in common rather than all individually combine here (Spickard, 1989:156).

The second dimension - "grid" is described as being,

made up of the individually-oriented aspects of social structure, specifically the phenomenon described by anthropologists as "networks". Networks are connections between particular individuals that do not carry with them group-centered consequences (Spickard, 1989:156-7)

In other words, the "grid" dimension focuses on an individual's obligations to others - "the degree of social control that society exerts, leaving out the control accompanying his or her group membership. "Grid" measures the degree to which "a man is constrained not by group loyalties but by a set of rules which engage him in reciprocal transactions" (1970b:ix)" (1989:157).

In this version, Douglas's key thesis is that a group's cosmology will structurally mirror social relations. Hence her belief that bodily control is an expression of social control.

Some of the important aspects of this version are:

1. Douglas's description of society is grounded in the individual experience of social control.
2. The experience of society is prior to and generative of beliefs. People experience social control, and then find explanations based on that experience. In this version, then, one will first analyse social relations and predict cosmologies.

2.4.1.2. The second version: Natural Symbols 2

This version of the "grid/group" model is based on the modifications Douglas made for her 1973 version of Natural symbols. Perhaps the most striking shift is that Douglas tends to drop talking of social control. She now describes the two dimensions as follows: "One is order, classification, the symbolic system.

The other is pressure, the experience of having no option but to consent to the overwhelming demands of the other people" (Douglas, 1973:81, cited in Spickard, 1989:160).

Hence, in this version, Douglas describes "grid" as the dimension which shows the opposites from incoherence:

a symbolic system may be either public or private, and more or less coherent in its classifications. On her new diagram, absolute incoherence is in the middle, public coherence is up, and private coherence is down (Ibid:160).

Douglas recasts "group" similarly. To the right, the group dominates the individual, while to the left, the individual dominates the group. At the centre of the vertical line there is no pressure being exerted or felt. Soickard argues that this shift represents Douglas's claim that cosmologies are directly functional to the social system in that they serve to validate the social system (Ibid:161).

Hence, Douglas has shifted from saying that cosmology replicated the social system, to saying that cosmology validates the social system.

2.4.1.3. The third version: Cultural Bias

In Cultural bias (1978), Douglas describes "group" as a dimension of social incorporation. It is "defined in terms of the claims it makes over its constituent members, the boundary it draws around them, the rights it confers on them to use its name and other protections, and the levies and constraints it applies" (Quoted in Spickard, 1989:163).

Here, Douglas has to a degree collapsed her original "grid" and "group" dimensions into opposite ends of the same "group" line. At the one end a person finds him or herself at the centre of a self-made network which has no recognisable boundaries. At the other end a society "incorporates a person with the rest by implicating them together in common residence, shared work, shared resources and recreation, and by exerting control over marriage and kinship" (Ibid: 163). Likewise, "grid" has also changed. Douglas describes it as the degree to which a social environment classifies the individual, leaving minimum scope for individual choice. "Grid" is now measured by looking at four components:

... "insulation", the degree of social separation between classes of people; "autonomy", independence in individual decision making; "control", the degree of control over other people; and "competition", the amount of negotiation over rules between equal-status individuals. If autonomy, control, and competition all are strong while insulation

is weak, then the situation is low-grid. If insulation is strong while the others are weak, then high-grid prevails (Spickard, 1989:164).

In this version of the model, Douglas still expects a certain amount of consistency between cosmology and context, but the way she describes cosmology has changed. She is no longer interested in the entirety of people's beliefs, but in explaining the ultimate justifications people use to bring one another to account.

The concept of social accountability... is now central to her notion of cosmology. Gone is the question of which religions are ritualized and which are not. Gone are considerations of bodily symbolism that were appropriated in differing forms by differing types of societies. Instead, she sees cosmologies as "ultimate justifying ideas which tend to be invoked as if part of the natural order and yet which ... are evidently not at all natural but strictly the product of social interaction" (Douglas, 1982b:5 cited in Spickard, 1989:165).

2.4.2. Own remarks

It seems clear that in Douglas's mind, the "grid/group" model is a model in a state of constant development. For us who use the model, we must follow the advice of Spickard and be certain that we are consistent in our use of the model, and in our understanding of "grid" and "group". The way we choose to understand the two dimensions will determine the kinds of results that we achieve. For my own research, I suspect that the first and third versions are likely to be most helpful, but I am leaning towards the first as it emphasises the individual's obligations to others and the cohesiveness of social groups.

2.5. HOWARD KEE'S "INTERROGATING THE TEXT"

In his book, Knowing the truth: a sociological approach to New Testament interpretation, published in 1989, Howard Kee sets out to provide a detailed sociological approach relevant for the study of the New Testament. Central to his argument is the chapter entitled, "Interrogating the text: a sociological proposal for historical interpretation". Here Kee argues that:

To undertake the twin tasks of interpretation of ancient texts, including the New Testament and early Christian literature, and of historical reconstruction of the setting from which the material came, responses to the following kinds of questions are essential (1989:65).

Kee then lists a number of questions under seven headings:

1. Boundary questions
2. Authority questions
3. Status and role questions
4. Ritual questions
5. Literary questions with social implications
6. Questions about group functions
7. Questions concerning the symbolic universe and the social construction of reality.

The core of Kee's argument is the view that the outcome of any enquiry depends on the kinds of questions that are raised as the investigation is undertaken. The questions that Kee asks, then, are questions that arise out of significant insights in the general field of the social sciences. Asking this broad array of questions, it is argued, provides the way forward for a sociological investigation of the New Testament because they cover all of the bases of interest to the social sciences, and yet they focus one's attention specifically on the text.

This last point is what piqued the investigator's interest in Kee's proposal. One of the criticisms of Douglas's "grid/group" model as it applies to the New Testament is that we do not have the luxury of a detailed ethnography of the cultures of the New Testament. Therefore it has been up to the individual scholar to find his or her entry point into the world of the text and find material relevant to the problem under investigation. Inevitably what this entails is a process of picking out aspects of the text that appear useful, while ignoring those that are troublesome. It is our task here to investigate the possibility of using Kee's questions as an inclusive entry point into the text, whereby we will be able to gather a wide range of information applicable for the employment of Douglas's "grid/group" model. In order to do this, we first need to list and discuss the individual questions. They are listed here as they appear in Kee's work (1989:65-67).

2.5.1. The questions

1. Boundary questions:

- By what authority are the boundaries drawn which define the group?
- What are the threats to the maintenance of these boundaries?
- Who are the insiders? The outsiders? Can an insider become an outsider?
- Does the threat to the boundaries arise within the group or from without?
- What bounds of time and space does the group occupy?
- Which is the more important factor: group identity, or the criteria for belonging?

2. Authority questions:

- What are the roles of power within the group and the means of attaining them?
- What are the structures of power within the group, including rank?
- How do the titles of leadership function in terms of authority and status?
- How is the leader chosen? Who is in charge?
- Can authority be transmitted to successive generations? If so, by what means?

3. Status and role questions:

- Are age groups or sex roles defined?
- Are there identifiable classes or ranks within groups?
- What are the attitudes expressed regarding wealth, buildings, clothing, or ritual equipment?
- If there is conflict within the group, what are the issues?
- Who has special privilege, and on what basis?
- Who performs rituals?

4. Ritual questions:

- What are the key formative experiences of the group, including initiation, celebration, stages of transition?
- Who performs these rites, and what are the purposes of them?
- How are the rites transmitted to the successors?
- Is there evidence of changing attitudes toward the ritual in successive generations? In what direction is the change?
- To what extent and why has the group altered the ritual?
- What language is used in the ritual?

5. Literary questions with social implications:

- What genre does the group employ for communication within the group? With those outside the group, if any? What does the choice of genre imply?
- Does the author's choice of a specific genre influence the message he/she wants to communicate? In what way?
- What are the themes in the text (text?) of the communication? What is its argumentative strategy? Who is supported? Who is combatted?
- Has the genre been modified to serve the specific aims of the group? In what way and for what ends?
- Is there a canon operative within the community? How is it defined?
- How does the literary organization of the communication serve to promote conceptual and social order for the community?

6. Questions about group functions:

- What are the dynamics of the community? What are its goals?
- What helps or hinders the achievement of the group's aims?
- What are the tensions within the group? What are the tensions with the surrounding culture? Who are the chief enemies?
- Does the group use body language? If so, in what way? What does it imply?
- Is there a problem of cognitive dissonance within the texts produced by the group, or between its texts and its experience? - How are these problems handled?
- What are the ritual means of establishing and reinforcing the group identity?

7. Questions concerning the symbolic universe and the social construction of reality:

- What are the shared values, aspirations, anxieties, and ethical norms of the group?
- What is disclosed about the symbolic universe of the group by its shared understandings of supernatural beings (good and evil), of miracles and portents, of magic and healing techniques?
- How does the group understand history and its own place within history?
- What is its view of time?
- How does it perceive God in his essential being, and in the divine actions, both within the cosmic structure and among human beings?
- Are there dualistic elements in the group's perception of reality? Do these good/evil factors assume political, moral, social, or cultural forms?
- What are the dominant symbols for the group and its place in the universe? In what distinctive ways does this group employ symbols that it shares with other groups?
- What are the distinctive symbolic features of the group under scrutiny?
- What are the marginal factors in the community's life which are importance for the maintenance of identity?

Once one has read through the above list, it becomes abundantly clear that Kee is covering many bases. Each question appears to be important, and one would hesitate to leave any out. Reading from the perspective of the "grid/group" model, one will also recognise questions that will highlight the degree of control, group cohesiveness, and differentiation of roles. Therefore, there is no doubt that answering these questions will help the interpreter to confidently describe the community under investigation along the lines of "group" and "grid". They will focus the attention of the interpreter on aspects such as cosmology, ritual and the body. However there are also other questions that although relevant, do not directly apply to "grid" and "group" classification. This makes difficult the author's original intention of reorganizing the questions into two broad categories - "group" questions, and "grid" questions.

Upon reflection, it now seems more suitable to leave the questions as they are presently categorized because they will help the researcher profile the social context of the group under discussion. Further, it seems as though a reorganization of the questions would serve no real purpose. Originally it was hoped that one would be able to structure the questions like a questionnaire, where the researcher would give a numerical value to the degree to which the point applied to the group under investigation. This would have allowed a more precise plotting of the degree to which a group was high or low "grid" and "group". While the idea remains attractive on a superficial level, it suffers from a "so what" response when it comes down to the nitty-gritty. This kind of analysis would not necessarily have given the researcher any more insight, as insight comes from filling in the details of the questions, not from a particular plotting of the group on a "group/grid" axis; although it would have made the graphical representation of the group much more interesting.

This does not, however, mean that Kee's system of "interrogating the text" is above criticism. In fact, his work in this regard has been severely criticised. In the next section, we will outline some of these criticisms and also argue that the questions are nevertheless helpful.

2.6. A CRITIQUE OF KEE'S "INTERROGATING THE TEXT"

As the title of his chapter suggests, Howard Kee argues that the questions listed above represent a sociological proposal for historical interpretation. It is the word "historical" that has landed Kee in trouble according to criticism levelled by John H Elliott and the South African scholars, G. F. Wessels and D. J. Smit.

The main criticism goes as follows: Kee has assumed that answering the array of questions will provide the interpreter with adequate historical knowledge about the context of the group being examined in order to gain legitimate results. In effect, Kee is ignoring the wealth of historical reconstructive work done of the New Testament context. Merely answering the questions alone is ignoring a large "chunk" of evidence available to the interpreter.

Hence, John H. Elliott emphasises that,

we do have "a mass of information" available on conditions in the first century, so that it is possible to follow an almost reverse procedure [to Kee] in social-scientific interpretation, namely to reconstruct the historical setting by means of available knowledge, and then to read the text more adequately with the help of such reconstructions (Wessels and Smit, 1991:402).

This highlights a valid deficiency in Kee's approach, and one that we who seek to embark on a similar approach must be wary of. Despite this rather obvious shortcoming, we need to ask if there are any other critiques, and are there also positive appraisals?

While Wessels and Smit endorse the view of Elliott, they have however, conducted a test of Kee's approach using a twentieth century South African text as a test case. After examining the text according to the questions, they concluded that:

Kee's approach proved to be useful, but mainly as a method of rhetorical analysis. For example, it pointed out the incongruities of argumentation within the document itself. In that way it helped us to understand the text and its persuasive function better. However, Kee's proposals failed to supply a satisfactory explanation of the historical setting of the document - for example as to who wrote the document, when and why, etcetera.

On the other hand, enthusiasm for the reverse theory by Elliott and others, that it is possible to understand the document and its place in the discourse of its time via a reconstruction of the historical setting, should also be guarded. Even with the knowledge of some facts regarding the historical setting of the document ... it was quite possible to misinterpret the document, its possible influence, etcetera (1991:426)

Hence, it seems that a responsible approach would first investigate the historical context of the community to be investigated, and then use this information as further evidence to inform the answers of the questions that Kee asks. It is this kind of approach that we would propose. NSB

2.7. OUR OWN APPROACH: A SYNTHESIS OF DOUGLAS'S "GROUP/GRID" MODEL WITH KEE'S "INTERROGATING THE TEXT"

The task of this section is simply to outline the steps of our proposed methodology. It is not our responsibility here to go into too much detail, as the methodology will either stand or fall in the next chapter which will put it into practice. Simply put, our approach is as follows:

Step 1:

A description of the socio-cultural and historical setting of the community - in this case the Christian community at Corinth. The types of questions that we would ask here include: "What were the social and cultural norms of the society in which the community lived?" "How important was Corinth in the Roman Empire?" "What was the social make-up of the city?" "How tolerant were they of divergent beliefs and systems of organisation?" "How would the inhabitants

of the city have understood the Christian movement?" Answering questions such as these allow us to understand the context in which the first Corinthian Christians lived. This first step is at the level of description. It does not necessarily have to graduate to an explanation or interpretation of the data. The aim of this step is simply to set the scene for further analysis. We need to try and become as familiar as possible with the circumstances and context that the group under investigation would have lived in.

Step 2:

Attempt to "interrogate the text", using Howard Kee's array of questions, always keeping in mind the categories of "group" and "grid" as defined for our particular study. Having arrived at as detailed an understanding of the context as possible, we can now embark on interpretation and an explanation of the events described in the text. The questions proposed by Kee are used as a guideline to help focus our attention on a range of areas pertinent to an anthropological study of the text, while at the same time treating the text as a connected whole.

Step 3:

Having "interrogated the text" we can now analyze the wealth of information at our disposal in order to compile a profile of the community being analyzed. We may also wish to differentiate between the positions of the principle players in the text. We can then use this profile to plot the community's position according to the "group" and "grid" variables. At this stage the predictive power of the "grid/group" model may also come into play as the interrelationship of events and behaviours are examined.

Step 4:

Finally, as the "grid/group" model is a theory of culture, it remains our task to communicate what we have learnt to our own culture, so that we may enter into a "dialogue" with the past. This final step is important, as simply amassing information is irrelevant unless we learn from what it teaches us.

2.8. CONCLUSION

Hopefully, this approach will fulfill our ambition of finding an anthropological approach which is holistic and broad in its scope, but which also takes the text seriously, and which does not pick and choose texts out of context. Our next chapter undertakes the task put forward in step one - describing the socio-cultural and historical setting of the first century Corinthian church. This is at the level of description, but it is necessary if we are to move to the level of meaningful interpretation at a later stage.

CHAPTER THREE

SETTING THE SCENE: SOCIO-HISTORICAL CONTEXT

3.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter sets in motion the testing of our experimental method. As we have explained elsewhere, the "grid/group" model, and Howard Kee's probing questions both presuppose some knowledge of the historical background and context of the group to be studied. This is vital because a description of the context makes interpretation and explanation at a later stage more complete and informed. Our aim is to try and understand the complex network of forces and aspects of life that would have impacted on the new Christian community in Corinth during the first century. Hence, this chapter should be seen as step one of our methodology.

More specifically, our focus in this chapter will be on two interconnected aspects of the "context" of the first letter to the Corinthians. Firstly, we need to come to terms with Corinth as a city. What was Corinth's place within the wider setting of the Roman Empire? How large was Corinth? What kinds of people lived there and what kinds of work did they engage in? Was Corinth a wealthy city? How was it organised? Were divergent religious and political values tolerated? These kinds of questions will help us grasp the likely make-up of the Corinthian church, the kinds of work they may have been involved in and whether or not they would have been accepted in the life of the city and so on.

→ The second aspect of "context" we refer to as the "social world" of first-century Christianity. Under the heading of "social world", we are interested in the values, social norms and belief systems current at that time and place. What were these norms, values and ways of life? Having asked questions such as these, we will have set the scene for an assessment as to what extent the norms and values of the wider society were carried through to the new Christian community - an issue which we will debate in the following chapter? At this stage we are not so interested in getting to grips with the textual issues, but rather taking a step back to attempt to understand the larger picture of life in a first century Greco-Roman city.

3.2. CORINTH AS CITY AND PART OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE

Corinth was a major city in the Peloponnesian peninsula and was the capital of the Roman province of Achaia. One of the main reasons for this was its geographical location along main sea and land trade routes. It had a long history as a centre of trade, going back at least seven centuries before the

Romans conquered it in 146 B.C.E.. A testament to its strategic importance is that Julius Caesar had it rebuilt in 44 B.C.E., so by the time of Paul it was once again a bustling centre of commerce with a population estimated to include as many as 250 000 free persons and up to 400 000 slaves. In terms of size, Corinth was twice the size of Athens, which was the more famous cultural and religious centre. This was particularly due to the growing political, economic and intellectual power that went with its status as the Roman capital of Achaia (Tambasco, 1991:62).

The importance of Corinth's geographical location needs more explanation because it is somewhat unique. It was situated along the major north-south land trade route, and its position on the narrow isthmus between the Aegean and Adriatic seas meant that Corinth was a natural place for ships travelling the east-west route to stop. Instead of travelling the further and more treacherous sea route around Greece, small ships would be dragged across the isthmus from one port to another, or the cargo would be transferred from one ship to another on the other side - thereby reducing costs and time, not to mention avoiding the dangerous seas. Hence our picture of Corinth should be centred around the two ports Cenchreae and Lechaenum which facilitated this travel across the three and a half mile wide isthmus.

Although Corinth had a long history as a commercial centre, we must not forget that it was a relatively new city in that it had only recently been rebuilt after being destroyed by the Romans. As a Roman city, we would therefore expect the architecture, layout and organisation of the city to be distinctly Roman. There was a theatre, baths, and numerous temples and shrines.

A similarly typically Roman feature that was central to the growth of Christianity is the idea of mobility. With the Roman Empire came roads and systems of communication. Hence, it is logical that the cities Paul targeted were established centres along major trade routes. It follows then that earliest Christianity was an urban phenomenon "with all the problems, tensions, and possibilities which that implied, for in the cities, there was greater openness and a willingness to give a hearing to preachers of new religions" (Malherbe, 1983:63).

As can be expected, the cosmopolitan nature of Corinth had certain advantages and disadvantages. Being on the trade routes, Corinth was subject to people from different places and carrying different ideas. Religious pluralism, and a wide range of philosophical viewpoints were the norm. As such, it is not surprising that Christianity was allowed to gain a foothold in this city. However, it was not without competition. An important religious cult in Corinth - centred around one of the largest temples in the city - was dedicated to the worship of Aphrodite, the goddess of love. At the height of its popularity, this cult had at least a thousand slaves who were prostitutes

in the cult. Corinth was also a city well known for its lack of morality. This is reflected in how Greek and Roman writers depicted Corinth and its inhabitants. To speak of a "Corinthian woman" was to refer to a prostitute, while to "act as a Corinthian" meant to practice fornication (Tambasco:1991:65).

Interestingly, Corinth also was the home for a strong Jewish community. Some have speculated that the Jewish community swelled at the time of Paul because the Roman emperor, Claudius had banished all Jews from Rome. It seems likely that many, like Priscilla and Aquila would have fled to Corinth, which was a more tolerant city. This strong Jewish presence helps provide the context against which we should interpret the conversion of Corinthians such as Crispus, the synagogue ruler.

3.2.1. Urban life

Paul was a city person. His correspondence is full of examples and illustrations that city people would recognise. Therefore, a brief overview of life in a pre-industrial city such as Corinth would be useful.

The cities that form the backdrop to Paul's letters were at the leading edge of the great political and social changes of the period. Cities were the places of change, of progress and wealth. This progress was not haphazard, but rather was towards the direction of a common Greco-Roman culture. This was most noticeable in several areas, of which the most clear was language. In the eastern Roman provinces the universal urban language was Greek. Yet, not much distance from the cities, in the surrounding villages, Greek would seldom, if ever be heard. The villages were outposts of tradition and conservatism - holding on to the local languages and customs (Meeks, 1983:15).

In terms of organisation, the cities were also generally based on Greco-Roman models. Although the emperor was revered, the administration of the cities such as Corinth was by and large left to the city council. There may be a significant Roman presence in terms of the army and other officials, but the local notables and powerful families of the city were also often in control of important posts, and would serve on the council. This aspect of city life does not feature very highly in Paul's letters, but the institutions such as the family and guilds\clubs would have been part of the everyday existence for most city dwellers. Therefore, our sketch of the context of the city would be incomplete without discussing these in some detail.

3.2.2. Roman social institutions

3.2.2.1. The city community

Roman cities were governed by certain idealistic principles. One of the strongest was the idea that public service in the democratically elected

council and city administration was one of the highest honours, and one of the best forms of association between men. Hence, Roman cities held to the ideal that democratic participation of its citizens in the affairs of the city should be regular - achieved through popular assembly. Similarly, there was a sense of competition and pride associated with public service, which was donated voluntarily and enthusiastically (Tidball, 1983:76).

This was the ideal only. In reality, there were a number of social and legal limits concentrating power in the hands of a few select and powerful families. Only citizens were allowed to participate in the city's affairs. However, citizenship was not automatic or easy to come by. There were certain prerequisites that excluded most people; such as owning property, and not being a woman, a slave a freedman or a foreigner.

In addition, the cities of the Roman empire, although given a certain measure of independence, were constantly under the rule of Rome. Rome was seen as a protector, and this protection was bought at the price of subordination to her authority. Hence, the cities in Roman provinces had a finely balanced relationship with Rome. A city might,

keep her own local rulers; issue her own coins; perpetuate her own local customs and above all practice her own particular religion ... [but] On the other hand the nation states enjoyed freedom only so long as they did not incur the displeasure of Rome. So their autonomy was, in fact, seriously compromised (Tidball, 1983:77).

Chow (1992:63) even suggests that among the aristocracy of Roman cities in the provinces, serving in public office was not enough to get ahead. One also needed to have contacts with Roman administrators or army officials.

3.2.2.2. The household community

Although the household had always been an important institution in Greek society, it was under the Romans that it became the primary structure of the Empire. The entire Empire was based somewhat on the household, and existed as a "complex network of households which all loyally interlocked into one grand system under the authority of the Emperor" (Tidball, 1983:79). Central to this system of organisation was the "household of Caesar" or *familia caesaris*. In the same way that wealthy urban businessmen turned over much of their business responsibilities to their slaves and freedmen, so Augustus and successive Caesars turned over the business of the Empire to their *familiae* (Meeks, 1983:21). Hence, freedmen and slaves in the service of Caesar were in many respects the civil service of the day. As a result of this responsibility, some individual freedmen were able to accumulate much power and wealth. Therefore the organisational structure of the household was one that an urban dweller would have encountered in most official dealings.

What then was a Roman household like? Tidball argues that it was a large inclusive and socially cohesive unit. It was a community. It was composed of several families, and sometimes, individuals, who were bound together under the authority of the senior patriarch of the principle family. There was no limit to the size of the household as long as the householder was able to support its members.

A Roman household had several features. One of the clearest is an explicitly delineated hierarchy. What this amounted to was the absolute power of the householder. Authority was based on seniority and gender, and everyone in the community would have known his or her place within the family structure. Besides family members, the household could also consist of friends and clients. These people's place in the community was not a matter of passing goodwill on the part of the householder, but was based on a particular patron-client relationship where the householder was the patron who offered financial help or security in return for services and the honour that the friends and clients would bestow on him. Completing the household would be a number of freedmen and slaves⁹.

There are some interesting features regarding this household structure. The most striking is that it puts a number of people of clearly different class and status within the same community. How would a community that at the surface seems so diverse succeed in staying together? One answer is that households were often centred around a common economic interest. Another binding force is that of religion.

The solidarity of the household was expressed in the adoption of a common religion, chosen by the head of the house, which would serve not only to integrate them but to mark off their boundaries from others who worshipped different gods. Religion then served them in a classic Durkheimian way in that it provided the means by which the collective soul of the family re-created itself and bound itself together (Tidball, 1983:81).

This leads us to an interesting area regarding the development of the early Church. Malherbe (1983:60) argues the accepted view that the early church had the household as its setting for worship, prayer and so on. He argues that this arrangement tells us much about the nature of the community. Malherbe describes the process of the formation of a house church as one where new converts would attach themselves to the household of a prominent Christian and

⁹ We will discuss the dynamics of these relationships in more detail below, in section 3.3.2., which deals with patron-client ties.

that the household character of the group would be retained although it became a community with a larger and broader constituency than it originally had (1983:69). In return for becoming members of the household, the new converts had certain demands placed upon them - which served to heighten the exclusivity of the community.

Floyd Filson has, according to Malherbe, pointed out five ways that a study of the house church furthers our understanding of the apostolic church and the social factors that were involved:

1. Although Christian worship "borrowed" from Jewish practice, the house churches allowed a "distinctly Christian worship and fellowship from the very first days of the apostolic age" (Filson cited in Malherbe, 1983:61).
2. The house churches give a credible context from which to interpret Paul's writings regarding family life.
3. The "existence of several house churches in one city goes far to explain the tendency to party strife in the apostolic age" (Filson cited in Malherbe, 1983:61).
4. The study of house churches also reveals much of the social status of the early Christian communities - revealing them to be a cross-section of society.
5. Church leadership can also only be understood with the view that the house church was a training ground for discipleship and new leaders. Filson's argument at this point can be critiqued somewhat. As we shall see, church structure was organised mainly along the lines of patronage. This was a rather exclusive system of leadership, which would have in all likelihood attempted to keep power concentrated in the hands of a few wealthy and powerful people. The notion that the house church was a training ground for new leaders seems more appropriate for the modern church than it does for the first century Corinthian church.

In addition to these points, Tidball (1983:84-5) adds several observations of his own. He begins by noting that conversion in the New Testament was not always an exclusively individual act. If the householder were to convert, it follows that the rest of the household would follow suit out of solidarity and loyalty. Therefore, converting the householder of a wealthy local family can be seen as part of Paul's strategy in beginning new churches. By doing this, Paul established a base for the future meetings of the church, and also ensured a core group of Christians who were already bound together in a community.

3.2.2.3. Voluntary associations - clubs and guilds

In the Roman cities such as Corinth, clubs and guilds were a part of everyday life. Most of these were exclusive in nature, organised around a specific cult, or arranged to regulate a particular trade. These were usually small associations with a wide variety of names. Often they were made up friends and

relatives and were held in the households of patrons. A distinctive feature of all these associations is that they had officers with official sounding titles and a clear hierarchy.

Trade associations or guilds were particularly common in the cities, where trade was brisk. These were likely to be social associations where people of the same trade met together and provided moral and other support for each other. It is not clear to what extent these associations actually regulated the trade and brokered deals at the time of Paul. This aspect of the guilds seems to have been emphasised more from the second century onwards (Meeks, 1983:32).

Similarly, in the second century the opponents of Christianity such as the Roman officials, and literary opponents sometimes described the church as a voluntary association. The church did also differ somewhat from the typical voluntary association. They had entrance requirements unlike any other club, and the Church consisted of individuals of varying status and wealth- who were seen as equal. Therefore, voluntary associations were part of the social context in Corinth, but it is difficult to say whether the Corinthian Christians would have seen themselves in this way or not. However, it remains a possibility that we need to consider.

3.3. RECONSTRUCTING THE SOCIAL WORLD OF FIRST-CENTURY CHRISTIANITY

The social values and norms of the first-century world are often regarded as rather difficult to reconstruct and understand. However, the work of Bruce Malina in his 1981 book; The New Testament world: insights from cultural anthropology is invaluable in this regard. It provides a clear and insightful description of the social forces at work in the first-century Mediterranean world. Each chapter describes a different aspect of the make-up of that world¹⁰.

3.3.1. Honour and shame

Malina describes honour and shame as the pivotal values of the first-century world. He defines honour as

¹⁰ There is some debate as to whether one can refer to a "pan-Mediterranean" world in the way that Malina does. Was the Mediterranean world really so culturally united? Although we follow Malina's argument and use his generalised terminology, we should be aware of this critique.

the value of a person in his or her own eyes (that is, one's claim to worth) plus that person's value in the eyes of his or her social group. Honour is a claim to worth along with the social acknowledgement of worth (1981:64).

In this world view there are three boundary markers which mark off the system based on honour. These are power (the ability to exercise control over others), sexual status (the oughts and shoulds associates with being male or female), and religion (the attitudes and behaviours one is expected to follow in the religious and ritual life of the society). From this it is already noticeable that a system based on honour will be one dominated by social rules regarding acceptable and unacceptable behaviour, and rules that differentiate people from one another along the lines of status.

Malina (1981:30) argues that honour can be gained in one of two ways. It can either be ascribed or acquired. Ascribed honour is gained simply by being who you are. It is inherited. One can be born into an honourable family. Lineage is important. However, honour can also be ascribed by someone who has the power to force others to acknowledge one's status. For example, honour can be ascribed to an individual by God, a king or even by powerful members of society.

Acquired honour, on the other hand, is gained by excelling in social interaction. This interaction can be described as "challenge and response" and it underlies all interaction between individuals who are not kin. Interaction is therefore of a fundamentally competitive nature. Esler (1994:27-8) describes the four stages of this process.

1. The first step is the challenge, which is a claim to enter the social space of another individual. That claim may be positive - enhancing the honour of the other person, mutually beneficial; or negative, to remove the other from his or her social space.
2. The second stage refers to how the challenge is perceived. The recipient of the challenge must judge whether or not it represents a potential harm to his or her honour.
3. Stage three refers to the response of the recipient. There are three possibilities.
 - i. A positive refusal to act - by scorn or disdain - especially if the challenge comes from someone of much lower rank.
 - ii. counter challenge
 - iii. negative refusal to act - which implies a loss of honour.
4. The last stage is the public verdict. This judgement determines who gains and who loses honour in the exchange. This is a vital part of the process. Honour is only gained or lost if it is ratified in public. A person's social status, and self-image is socially defined (Esler, 1994:28).

Adding to the social nature of interaction in the Mediterranean world is the concept that a physical affront or challenge to one individual can also be interpreted as a challenge or affront to the social group or family which that person represents. In order to maintain the group's honour and boundaries, the individual is duty bound to respond to the challenge. To do nothing means a loss of honour.

As honour is both a personal and communal reality in this kind of society, one would expect there to be several ways in which honour is symbolised. One of the more important is the idea that honour is symbolised by blood. This is symbolic of family or kin ties. In societies based on honour codes, there is usually a suspicion of everyone who is not a blood relative. This is explained by Malina in the following extract:

A person can always trust his blood relatives. Outside that circle, all people are presumed to be dishonourable, guilty, if you will, unless proven otherwise. It is with all these others that one must play the game, engage in the contest, put one's own honor and one's family honor on the line (1981:33).

Similarly, just as one is duty bound to protect the honour symbolised by blood, there is a similar feeling with the general community. Members of a community are duty bound to protect the honour of the community from outside challenges, which may affront the name of the community. Hence, honour is often symbolized by blood and by a name.

Interestingly, gaining money and possessions, and gaining honour are not necessarily achieved in the same process.

Prestige derives from domination of persons rather than things. Hence, any concern people show for the acquisition of goods derives from the purpose of gaining honor through generously disposing of what one has acquired among equals or socially useful lower-class clients. In other words, honor is acquired through beneficence, not through the fact of possession and/or the keeping of what one has acquired. Thus money, goods, and any sort of wealth are really a means to honor, and any other use of wealth is considered foolish (Malina, 1981:34).

In sum then, honour can be seen as a social mechanism which places every individual in a certain rank in the society. This rank entitles a person to interact in certain ways with his or her equals, and prescribes specific behavioral cues for dealing with one's superiors and subordinates, based on one's power, sexual status and religious standing.

3.3.2. Patron-client ties

An understanding of patron-client relationships is very closely linked to the concept of honour as it refers to a type of interaction between people of different status. In a 1992 study, John Chow emphasised the patron-client ties in Corinth at the time of Paul's correspondence to that city. He argues that an understanding of these relationships give another perspective from which to interpret the events of 1 Corinthians. Chow (1992:31-2) describes several characteristics of patron-client relationships.

1. A patron-client relation is an exchange relation. In other words the patron gives the client what he needs, and in turn gets from the client what he wants. Through this system, various kinds of resources can be exchanged. Patrons usually exchange tangible goods like farming land, economic aid, protection or so on. Clients usually provide more intangible goods - e.g. publicise the good name of the patron, support the patron in a political process, inform for the patron... (1992:31).

2. A patron-client relation is an asymmetrical relation. This distinguishes patronage from friendship. The patron and client are not equal in terms of power. The patron is a person who holds a key position over the access to resources needed by the client. (1992:31-32).

3. A patron-client relation is usually a particularistic and informal relation. Resources are channelled to specific people, and are not universally available to all who approach the patron. A major motivator for the patron is the accumulation of honour, that helping the less fortunate person will bring. If, however, the potential client is in no position to enhance the patron's honour in any way, it is unlikely that the patron will help the client.

4. A patron-client relation is usually a supra-legal relation. It is a relation based on mutual understanding, seen as binding, but may be opposed to the official law (1992:32). Again honour is involved here. The relationship would probably be sealed with a word of honour - perhaps appealing to one's family name.

5. A patron-client relation is often a binding and long-range relation. There is a strong sense of personal obligation. If a client fails to honour his obligation, the patron might censure the client in some way.

6. A patron-client relation is a voluntary relation. In theory these relations are voluntary, but often the client is in a position where he has no alternative (1992:32).

7. A patron-client relation is a vertical relation. It cements the status quo and discourages horizontal group solidarity among clients.

Chow explains that there are two paradoxes that seem to be associated with the patron-client relationship. The first is the combination of inequality and seemingly mutual solidarity between the patron and the client. This sounds a lot like the church at Corinth where there are clearly people of varying class, yet they are all members of the new community. Does this therefore provide an alternative model from which to interpret the circumstances and problems of that Christian community? The second paradox is the combination of potential coercion and mutual obligation. It appears that the patron has all the power in the relationship - this is true to an extent - he can coerce the client in any number of ways, but he is also obligated once the deal has been struck. To renege on such an agreement would mean a loss of honour (1992:33).

What then are the conclusions reached by Chow? To what extent did patron-client relationships form the backdrop against which the church developed? Chow addresses this question in a chapter entitled, *Patronage in Roman Corinth*, in which he divides his attention into two areas: patronage and society, and, patronage and institutions.

3.3.2.1. Patronage and society

Chow understands patronage to be in operation at all levels of society. Naturally, the emperor was the patron of the whole Empire, including Corinth. The emperor as patron, was honoured in several ways - coins bore his image, statues were erected in his honour and, in Corinth there was a temple for the cult of the imperial family. Festivals too, were another way in which the emperor was honoured.

In Corinth, Roman officials would also have been regarded as patrons - they represented the emperor, had access to him if necessary, and held positions of power at the local level. Such officials operated as middlemen between the emperor and the local people. They themselves had a patron-client relationship with the emperor, and with the local people.

At the next level down the hierarchy, were the local notables. They were often regarded as patrons on account of their wealth and status locally. These are people who were part of aristocratic families and who had probably served on the local council or some other prestigious position.

However, in first-century Corinth, especially in the first half of the century, there were apparently many rich people in the colony. It is thus possible to postulate that there would be competition among them.

And if one wanted to get ahead of other competitors, something more than wealth perhaps was needed (Chow, 1992:63).

What Chow leads up to is that to be a respected patron required more than wealth. A good family background and a connection with Rome or Roman leaders were advantages.

3.3.2.2. Patronage and institutions

If patronage was such a pervasive phenomenon in Corinth one naturally would wonder how far such relationships might have been established within the society as a whole. Would there be some influence on the structuring of relationships in contemporary institutions, like association and household? (Chow, 1992:64).

Associations and clubs (both legal and illegal) were a common factor of Corinthian life. Many were trade organisations (guilds) made up of tradespeople of a particular trade, which organised and regulated that sphere of trade in the city. There were also, however, many associations in honour of one or more deities. These associations can be seen to work along the lines of patronage. They looked after the interests of their members in return for honour. If one became the leader of such an association, this was a position of power and status - placing that person in a position conducive to patronage relationships (Chow, 1992:64-5).

Chow argues that a similar system of organisation can be identified in the Roman household. Talking about associations and the household, Chow notes; "Interestingly enough, the two institutions sometimes overlapped with one another when a society was formed in a large household with the head of the household as its patron (1992:68).

As the head of a household, one was already a patron figure. The householder would sometimes act as a priest to the whole house - interceding to the deities on the household's behalf. As such he was clearly a patron. However, patronage relationships also existed at other levels within the household. The freedmen of the household, the householder's literary friends, and those who sought the help of the householder, would all have been in a patron-client relationship with the head of the household.

Although slaves could be made freedmen by their masters, they were never completely free. They would forever be in debt to the patron who gave them their freedom and his family. He owed the patron honour - a response sanctioned by law (Chow, 1992:70). Similarly, philosophers or religious people would cluster around a rich patron. These people relied on the patron for material benefits such as food and financial support. In return, these "clients" would enhance the patron's reputation as a cultured man - a man of

benevolence and virtues. There would also have been a number of people who sought help (material or otherwise) from the patron. By giving help, the patron again enhanced his own reputation.

Summing up, Chow also points us forward to how the Church may have been affected by patronage associations and relationships:

If patronage formed such an important part of life in Roman Corinth, it would be most unrealistic to expect the Christians there to be wholly untouched by its influence and to behave in a completely new way immediately after their conversion. On the contrary, it is most likely that patronage would become the background for understanding the relational ties in the church and some of the problems Paul discussed in 1 Corinthians (1992:82).

Finally, before we discuss the social norms and values of Roman society that we would expect to find at Corinth, we need to be aware that there is evidence pertaining to the identity and status of some of the Corinthian Christians that is not apparent from 1 Corinthians. Paul refers to the Corinthians in some of his other letters. As such, this must also be included in our discussion of context.

3.3.2.3. Who are the Corinthians?

According to Paul, the first-fruits at Corinth were Stephanus and his household (1 Cor. 16:15). They were baptized personally by Paul (1 Cor. 1:16). In this light, Stephanus cannot be seen as one of Paul's opponents. Rather, as a householder apparently of independent means (but unlikely rich), he was in a position to render services to the church (1 Cor. 15:15).

Crispus was also one of Paul's early converts. He too was baptized by Paul - therefore unlikely to be an opponent. If this is the same Crispus mentioned in Acts 18:8, then it is possible that he used to serve in the capacity of synagogue ruler. As a householder and a person with experience of leading a religious group, it is likely that he became one of the leaders of the Corinthian church. As a synagogue ruler he was probably also wealthier than most and respected among his own people. This is offset, however, by the indication in Acts:18:8 that a synagogue ruler could be beaten up by the colonists in the city. One is also not certain to what extent the Jews would have continued to respect Crispus after his conversion. Therefore his position in the Corinthian church appears rather ambiguous (Chow, 1992:89).

Gaius is another person baptized by Paul and mentioned by name (1 Cor. 1:14). He served as Paul's host when Paul later visited Corinth (Rom 16:23), therefore he is likely to be an ally of Paul. As a man who could host the

entire church, Chow understands Gaius to be a patron of the early Corinthian church.

Fortunatus and Achaicus are also mentioned as envoys to Paul from the Corinthian church (1 Cor. 16:17). Nothing much is known about their background, but Chow notes that their names are of servile origin (1992:90). However, whether they are rich freedmen, or dependents of a rich patron is not known.

In 1 Cor. 1:11, Paul refers to Chloe's people in the context of the apparent conflict in Corinth. They are said to have brought this situation to Paul's notice. Beyond this, little is known.

Discussing the people we have looked at so far, Chow writes;

There are a few persons of independent means and one who could have served formerly in a significant position as a synagogue ruler. Presumably these people could be regarded as belonging to the patronal class. But it does not appear that they were rich enough or prestigious enough to be considered as socially outstanding (1992:92).

However, one person who deserves further attention is Erastus. In Romans 16:23 he is mentioned as a city treasurer. Many scholars, according to Chow, are persuaded that Erastus was a rich and significant person in Corinth. By virtue of his wealth and his links with the secular authorities he must be ranked among the powerful few in the Church (1 Cor. 1:26) (Chow, 1992:93). However, Erastus is only mentioned in later Pauline correspondence to the Romans (written from Corinth), so we do not know if he played a part in the Corinthian church at the time of 1 Corinthians.

On this note, we would be lacking were we not to mention Gerd Theissen's important work concerning the social status of the early Christians. We shall not spend much time on this but to mention the core of Theissen's argument. Theissen believes that the leading figures of the Christian groups in Corinth belonged to a relatively high economic and social level. They were most likely householders of local families, and patrons to the local church. However, Theissen suggests that the rest of the community was as varied as society itself. The interesting point that Theissen raises, however, is not that the Christian communities consisted of people from different social strata, but the possibility that these differences in class or status could be the backdrop against which to interpret the conflicts within the Corinthian church. This is a point raised by Meeks in a discussion of Theissen's work:

The conflicts in the congregation are in large part conflicts between people of different strata and, within individuals, between the expectations of a hierarchical society and those of an egalitarian community (Meeks, 1983:53).

3.3.3. The first-century personality: the individual and the group

In order to understand the personality of the early Christians, it is important to view them as part of the social world where honour and shame are the pivotal social values. Hence, the virtuous man is the one who is able to maintain or even increase his honour rating along with that of his group. Similarly, it makes sense to suggest that;

such a person would always see himself or herself through the eyes of others. After all, honor requires a grant of reputation by others. So what others tend to see is all important... In this sense, a meaningful human existence depends on the individual's full awareness of what others think and feel about him, along with his living up to that awareness (Malina, 1981:51).

In this society, then, it makes sense that individual uniqueness is of little or no cultural importance. It is probably kept hidden, as it would be taken as a sign of weakness. Of much more cultural consequence is that one fits into the cultural profile of who and what you should be (Ibid:52).

3.3.3.1. Dyadic personality

If the first-century Mediterranean person does not share our (Western, individualist) outlook, then what kind of cultural system did they have? Malina suggests the following:

Instead of individualism, what we find in the first-century Mediterranean world is what might be called "dyadism" (from the Greek word meaning a pair, a twosome). A dyadic personality is one who simply needs another continually in order to know who he or she really is... The dyadic personality is an individual who perceives himself and forms his self-image in terms of what others perceive and feed back to him. He feels a need of others for his very psychological existence, since the image he has of himself must agree with the image formulated and presented by significant others, by members of significant and person-sustaining groups like family, village, even city and nation (1981:54-55).

This understanding of personality opens up a whole new way of understanding the scriptures, and the circumstances that precipitated the writing of the New Testament. For example, the responsibility for morality and deviance does not lie with the individual alone, but with the social body, the group within which the individual is embedded. Is it therefore logical to argue that we are likely to find a substantial amount of time dedicated to boundary maintenance and the setting out of rules and regulations, since it is the group's responsibility to keep its members in line with the group mentality? Similarly, deviance can be seen as a symptom of a group that is not functioning properly - where perhaps the dyadic personality system is breaking down. Malina seems to support this opinion when he writes:

In Christian communities, the main problem was to keep the Christian group, the individual church, in harmony and unity, in sound state (e.g., 1 Cor. 12; Rom. 12:3-21)... Further, the soundness of the group, like the behavior of the dyadic personality individually, is heavily determined by its impact on surrounding groups and by the expectations of outsiders... Christians have to be at least as good as the outsiders are, and in this sense outsiders set the norm for the group (1981:58).

How does this help us to understand the context of the Corinthian church? The main point to be grasped is that we cannot expect the Corinthians to think like us, or to share our culturally conditioned concept of the world and how it works. Rather, we need to understand that their view of the world and their place in it was shaped in response to the everyday experiences of their time. The shape that this took is likely to be very community oriented - where one views oneself, and one's identity in terms of the wider society or group that one is a part of. All motivations, motives, and attitudes are derived from culturally shared stereotypes. As such, it is not surprising that early Christianity was to take on a sectarian, bounded identity.

3.3.4. The perception of limited good

In the first century Mediterranean world where life was a constant battle against hunger for most people, there was a widespread belief that all goods are limited, whether material or non-material. "All goods, from land and food on the one hand to honour on the other, were regarded as finite in quantity and always in short supply..." (Esler, 1994:35).

With this basic assumption, which was at the heart of what first-century Mediterranean cultures believed, there are certain tangible consequences in how people behave, interact and so on. One of the more important consequences is the belief that an individual or family cannot increase his/ her or their social position without depriving someone else of theirs. As a result, upward social mobility was viewed as a threat to the community. The valued social

behaviour was aimed at maintaining one's social position and honor, and that of one's family.

Hence, much effort was aimed at maintaining one's social status. Malina identifies two strategies that an honourable person could employ to achieve this - a defensive strategy, and by striking up strategic alliances (Malina, 1981:76).

3.3.4.1. The honourable person's defensive strategy

Status in the first-century Mediterranean world is inherited, and is perceived in terms of honour and prestige. As part of a village community, or a similar urban group, the individual learns his or her position through interaction with others. The way in which an honourable person defends his or her status is simply to live out a predictable, transparent, socially open existence. "... he does not seem to be outstanding, but he knows how to protect his rights to his inherited status" (Malina, 1981:77).

3.3.4.2. The honourable person's dyadic alliances

In this particular perception of the world, the first century person found that hard work, skill and thrift were essential abilities for maintaining one's position in society, but were not enough to get ahead. In this system, where technology is developed very slowly, wealth was also accumulated too slowly to really make a difference. Therefore people had to develop different strategies to help them get ahead. The main tactic was to develop a "dyadic contract" which was based on reciprocity. i.e. These were in the form of favours done for each other and consisted of obligations between persons of equal status, and between people of different statuses (patron-client contracts).

Malina suggests that there were probably such dyadic contracts in Corinth that may have been at the heart of the conflict among the Christian groups in that city.

Finally, the factions in the church of Corinth seem to have derived from dyadic relationships to individual apostles (1 Cor. 1:12). I might point out here, incidentally, that Paul's solution to the problem posed by such dyadism, much like the solution envisioned in Matt. 23:8-10, is to point out that obligations owed to Jesus have to be paid back not to Jesus, but to others in dyadic relation with Jesus, that is one's fellow Christians. The result is a kind of polyadic relationship ("poly-" means many): a number of people in equivalent statuses organised around a single interest and mutually obligated in terms of this single interest, much like a guild or Roman burial association (Malina, 1981:82).

3.3.4.3. Limited good and the accumulation of wealth

Despite what Malina argues above, he still maintains that the cultural system of that time was such that the goal in life was to maintain one's status, not to accumulate wealth. Hence, "the honorable person would certainly strive to avoid and prevent the accumulation of capital, since he would see in it a threat to the community and community balance, rather than a precondition to economic and social improvement" (Malina, 1981:83).

Only those who used money and extortion, or the power to exploit others, had the resources to accumulate wealth, but they did so at the cost of honour. Traders, tax collectors and money lenders would have fallen into this category. Hence, by modern standards, most people in the first-century Mediterranean world would have been very poor. However, Malina suggests that there could have been different criteria for understanding what "poor" means in this type of society.

In the passages of the Bible that deal with the poor, it is difficult to ascertain what exactly the author means by the term - in many cases we must simply guess - but in others, the context gives us some idea. Luke 6:20-21 ranks the poor with those who hunger, thirst and mourn, while Matt. 11:4-5 lists the blind, lame, lepers, deaf, and the dead with the poor. What can we learn from this? Malina suggests the following:

it would seem that being classified as poor was the result of unfortunate personal history or circumstances. A poor person seems to be one who cannot maintain his inherited status due to circumstances that befall him and his family, like debt, being in a foreign land, sickness, death (widow), or some personal physical accident (Ibid:85).

In the perception of people in limited-good society, the majority of people are neither rich nor poor, just equal in that each has a status to maintain in some honorable way. Personal assessment is not economic, but a matter of lineage. Thus in this context, rich and poor characterize two poles of society, two minority poles - the one based on the ability to maintain elite status, the other based on the inability to maintain one's inherited status of any rank (Ibid:85).

3.3.5. Clean and unclean: understanding rules of purity.

Here, once again, we follow the lead of Bruce Malina who asks questions such as - What are purity rules? Why are they so important in first-century Judaism? What impact did they have on early Christian groups? To begin with, Malina explains some of the dynamics concerning sacred and profane aspects of life.

3.3.5.1. Sacred and profane

Malina defines the sacred as "that which is set apart to or for some person. It includes persons, places, things, and times that are symbolized or filled with some sort of set-apartness which we and others recognise" (Malina, 1981:124).

The opposite of the sacred is the profane, the unholy, the non-sacred. The profane is that which is not set apart to or for some person in any exclusive way, that which might be everybody's and nobody's in particular to varying degrees. Thus the words "sacred" and "profane" describe a human relationship of varying degrees of exclusivity relative to some person or thing (and I include time and space under "thing") (Ibid:124).

There are different lines that can be drawn between the sacred and the profane. For example, between mine and yours, ours and theirs, and human and non-human. Each society or culture has their own set of lines that are drawn between the sacred and the profane, and which help to make sense of the world around them. Referring to such lines, Malina remarks:

Human beings the world over are born into systems of lines that mark off, delimit, and define nearly all significant human experiences. Not only do people define and delimit, but they also invest the marked off areas (persons, things, places, events) with feeling and value. Line-drawing of this sort enables us to define our various experiences so as to situate ourselves and others and everything and everyone that we might come into contact with, as well as to evaluate and feel about those experiences on the basis of where they are located within the lines. Thus the set of social lines we learn through enculturation provides all of us with a sort of socially shared map that helps and compels us to situate persons, things, places, and events. Line-making normally results in a special social emphasis on boundaries, since clear boundaries mean clear definition, meaning, and feeling, while blurred boundaries lead to ambiguous perceptions and reactions (Ibid:125).

3.3.5.2. Purity: clean and unclean

The point that Malina wants to make is that this system of drawing social lines, is essential for us to perceive set-apartness. It will also help us to explain the differences between what is called clean, and the unclean - as every society draws a line between these two. Malina shows the link between purity and the line between clean and unclean in the following extract:

Now *purity* is specifically about the general cultural map of social time and space, about arrangements within the space thus defined, and especially about the boundaries separating the inside from the outside. The unclean or impure is something that does not fit the space in which it is found, that belongs elsewhere, that causes confusion in the arrangement of the generally accepted social map because it overruns boundaries, and the like (Ibid:125).

How then, does this help us understand the New Testament world and the early Christian communities? If we take the view that cultures are selective, and develop cues for certain circumstances, we can assume that sooner or later, that culture will have to face a set of circumstances which do not fit its preconceived ideas of how things work. "These experiences that do not fit socially shared patterns or norms are called anomalies (the word literally means something irregular). If we are enculturated to react with strong negative feelings toward certain anomalies, to view them as triggers of disgust or hate, we would call this class of anomalies abominations" (Ibid:127). This is how purity rules develop. They are a response to experiences that do not easily fit into that culture's understanding of the cosmos. Malina lists five ways that a culture may deal with anomalies and abominations.

1. The culture can settle on one way of interpreting what happens in life. This reduces ambiguity, and anything that does not fit that particular framework can be classified as superstition, error, and the like. Early Christianity achieved this by approving a set range of beliefs - the canon - and rejecting all others as inauthentic.
2. An anomaly might be controlled physically, e.g. banishing lepers to the outskirts of town.
3. A society might spell out certain rules for avoiding anomalous people, things and situations. "Such rules affirm and strengthen what is socially unacceptable and indirectly underscore what is acceptable" (Ibid:128).
4. The anomalous person, thing, or event can be labelled as a social hazard. This encourages conformity, and puts the issue beyond discussion.
5. Anomalies can be used in ritual to enrich meaning and to call attention to other levels of existence (Ibid:129).

Malina sums up his argument so far as follows:

In the limited-good perspective of our first-century foreigners, the main task in life was not symbolized by achievement in terms of money, but rather by the maintenance of one's inherited position in society. This brought prosperity and insured the most harmonious relationship possible in terms of time, place, interpersonal relationships with one's fellows, and relationships with God. This kind of prosperity was

the task of the dyadic personality as well as of his society as a whole. The purity rules of the society were intended to foster prosperity by maintaining fitting, harmonious relationships (Ibid:131).

3.4. THE CHURCHES AS "SECTS"

To end off this chapter, and to introduce the following one on "Interrogating the text", it seems appropriate to sketch something of the likely response that the early Corinthian church might have taken to the social and cultural forces at work in first century Corinth. It is our view that understanding the sectarian nature of small religious groupings such as the Christian communities is invaluable, and will help us in our quest to understand the text as fully as possible.

The argument here is that the Pauline churches are involved in a process of self-definition. The Pauline correspondence is the main defining force. There are patterns for entry, prescriptions for lifestyle and criteria for expulsion. The result is that Paul positions the church in a place of being a "third group" - an alternative to Jews and Greeks (1 Cor. 10:32). This is true on a practical level, although Paul would likely have been aghast at the distinction.

Gentile converts could not participate in the life of the church as if it was one of many religions (1 Cor. 10:21). Moreover, although it is conceivable that some members have attended both church and synagogue, it seems that they were distinct social realities (cf. 1 Cor. 5:1-5; 6:1-11; 11:17-22; 14:23-36) [Macdonald, 1988:33].

The overall outcome is that the church developed its own distinct identity over against the society of which it was a part and the religious traditions of that society. This was reinforced by its own entrance requirements - faith in Jesus and baptism. The identity of the church was also backed up by an "ideology" that was also developing. Central to this ideology was the church's attitude to the "world". Here the sociological notion of a "sect" becomes useful. The work of Bryan Wilson is of particular importance. He defines a "Sect" as:

a clearly defined community; it is of a size which permits only a minimal range of diversity of conduct; it seeks itself to rigidify a pattern of behaviour and to make coherent its structure of values; it contends actively against every other social context possible for its adherents, offering itself as an all-embracing, divinely prescribed society. The sect is not only an ideological unit, it is, to greater or lesser degree, a social unit, seeking to enforce behaviour on those who accept belief, and seeking every occasion to draw the faithful apart

from the rest of society and into the company of each other ... the sect, as a protest group, has always developed its own distinctive ethic, belief and practices, against the background of the wider society; its own protest is conditioned by the economic, social, ideological and religious circumstances prevailing at the time of its emergence and development (Wilson cited in Macdonald, 1988:34).

Therefore, we can view the Pauline churches as developing "sects" - over against the greco-Roman society in which they found themselves - who shared certain beliefs, ideology and attitudes. The Pauline correspondence is the ideological glue that binds the community together.

3.4.1. Sectarian tension

Although there is a dichotomy of being set apart from the world, yet part of the world (1 Cor. 5:10), Paul's communities do not appear to resemble the "introversionist" type of sect (often associated with the Qumran community). These sects are characterised by an exclusivity and almost total withdrawal from any contact with the "world". The Pauline communities though, have a strong trend towards evangelization - typical of Paul (cf. 1 Cor. 9:19-23).

Macdonald suggests that this dichotomy may be best understood in relation to the "real conflicts encountered by community members as they strove to maintain their identity amidst the complexities of the Greco-Roman world" (1988:39). Hence, she identifies the Pauline communities as "conversionist" or "proselytising" sects. As such, Paul was faced with certain problems. Where would the church meet? How do members of different social status interact? These concerns can be seen in much of Paul's writing. Theissen picks up on this and argues that such practical concerns are the reasons why it appears that the leaders of the communities were of higher social status than the average member.

Faced with practical problems, such as finding a large house to hold gatherings, it would be reasonable for Paul actively to seek the conversion of a relatively well-to-do householder. Yet, implicit in this campaign lies the danger of compromising sectarian values (Macdonald, 1988:40).

3.4.2. Patterns for life: love patriarchalism

Here, Macdonald again returns to the work of Theissen, who defines the concept of love patriarchalism.

This love patriarchalism takes social differences for granted but ameliorates them through an obligation imposed upon those who are socially stronger. From the weaker are required subordination, fidelity and esteem. Whatever the intellectual sources feeding into this ethos, with it the great part of Hellenistic primitive Christianity mastered the task of shaping social relations within a community. Which, on the one hand, demanded of its members a high degree of solidarity and brotherliness and, on the other, encompassed various social strata (Macdonald, 1988:43).

Hence, Theissen argues that "love patriarchalism" which allows social differences to continue but demands that all relationships be marked with a spirit of concern and respect, played a major role in the development of early Christianity. In essence, then we come full circle back to the dichotomy between the sect and the world. As a conversionist sect, the community hopes to effect the salvation of all, therefore an ethos is required that allows for the accommodation of all.

3.5. CONCLUSION

The above descriptions of the context of Corinthian Christianity are by no means exhaustive. There is much more that can, and perhaps should, be said. However, we must now turn our attention to the text itself. What secrets are hidden in the first letter to the Corinthians? What can we learn about the community and its apparent conflicts? It is our belief that these questions may more readily be answered now that we have outlined the socio-historical context of Corinth in the first century C.E. (11)

CHAPTER FOUR

"INTERROGATING THE TEXT"

4.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter takes up steps two and three of our outlined methodology. This is where we begin the process of interpretation as opposed to description. Firstly, we will use Kee's questions to "interrogate the text". Our belief is that in doing so, we will be able to focus on the text in a holistic fashion, while still keeping our focus anthropological. In this process we will draw as much as possible on what we have learnt about the context of the first church in Corinth. In this way we will be able to build up a profile of the Corinthian church, and the issues that Paul deems important for that community. The results from this interrogation will then allow us to analyze the Corinthian community and Paul along the lines of "group" and "grid". We will be able to plot the Corinthian church's position on the "group/grid" map with confidence, and with as broad and holistic an understanding of the community as possible.

In this chapter, we are somewhat bound by the fact that this is a Master's thesis and not an exhaustive study. Therefore, in answering the questions put to us, we will aim to pick out the most pertinent observations, and to get a overall sense of the letter. We will not be able to discuss every reference and detail, as this would be too large a task. However, in another context, this would be the more favourable approach.

4.2. BOUNDARY QUESTIONS:

"By what authority are the boundaries drawn which define the group?"

There are several sets of boundaries that appear in Paul's dealings with the Corinthians. There are those boundaries that the Corinthians themselves have drawn, distinguishing between the different factions within the community; and those boundaries emphasised by Paul, which draw the focus back to unity in mind and thought (1 Cor. 1:10), and unity in Christ. Paul draws these boundaries by appealing to his status as an apostle who has been specially called by Christ. Alluded to as well is Paul's special relationship to the Corinthian church as the founder of the community. Paul sees himself as the highest earthly authority over the Corinthians.

On another level, we ought also to ask whether any of the group's boundaries have been drawn by outsiders, or through interaction with outsiders. In the previous chapter we discussed several institutions (household, voluntary associations) which may have provided a frame of reference within which the

society would have understood the church. We have also discussed how the church adopted the patron-client mode of organisation of their communities. Therefore, one could argue that in the process of adopting some of the society's norms and ways means of organisation, the church allowed itself to some extent to be shaped by the society at large. Beyond this general influence of society and context on the new churches, there is evidence in 1 Corinthians that the church turned to outsiders in more concrete matters, which one could argue helped shape the boundaries of the community. The prime example here is 1 Cor. 6:1-11, where Paul complains that members of the community have taken others to the "pagan" court to settle disputes. This would suggest that the Corinthians recognised outside authority. Paul would rather see the Corinthians settling their own disputes, and he chides them for their actions and lack of maturity and wisdom.

"What are the threats to the maintenance of these boundaries?"

The threats to the community are clear in the first chapter. As far as Paul is concerned, the threats are the internal divisions and quarrelling between the factions of the Corinthian church. The source of the divisions appears to be differences over loyalty and allegiance to the various evangelists or travelling preachers that had visited the community. Hence, some follow Apollos, some follow Cephas and so on (1 Cor. 1:11-12). There are also the quarrels over the Lord's supper, which as Theissen has shown can be seen as a quarrel between the wealthy and the poor within the community. In some cases the divisions within the community are so pronounced that members of the community have taken each other to court (1 Cor. 6:1-11). This disunity serves to make the community weak and vulnerable. Therefore, the worry is that the church will become so divided that it will cease to be the church at all. Paul is also worried that some members of the community are being ignored and left out.

"Who are the insiders? The outsiders? Can an insider become an outsider?"

Does the threat to the boundaries arise within the group or from without?"

There are several factors that all point towards boundary maintenance on the part of Paul. One of the strongest is the way in which Paul describes the church. It is not necessarily specific commands alone that lead to boundary maintenance, but particular ideas expressed in language. For example, the letters of Paul are rich in words and phrases that speak of the Christians as a very special group. The relations between members are also described with emotion. This serves as boundary maintenance as it encourages group cohesiveness and unity.

In 1 Corinthians, the letter is addressed to the "saints" (1 Cor. 1:2). This immediately sets apart the believers as "insiders" from the unbelievers who are the "outsiders". Similarly, the term "elect" as used in 16:1 and the emphasis on being "called" that is pervasive in the letter, have the same

function. The notion of being loved and "known" by God also serves the same purpose. Hence, at first glance, 1 Corinthians seems to be preoccupied with boundary maintenance.

Further evidence are the terms that Paul uses for the church and the outside. For example, he uses the imagery of a body when he refers to the community as the "body of Christ", which is contrasted against the "world". Again this serves to highlight the differences between the two groups, to cement togetherness in the church, and reinforce its status as a separate entity. A further interesting use of language in 1 Corinthians, is the use of terms which describe the church as a family. Set against the background of great tension and competition between anyone who is not kin, this is a particularly powerful and emotive use of language. It implies that the challenge and response type of relationship which one would expect to see in operation between people has been suspended. Indeed, not only has it been suspended, but abolished, and replaced by something far more intimate and trusting. It implies that one's honour is bound together in the community of the church, as it is in a family. Hence, the common use of the words "brother" or "sister" implies much more than it would for us today.

Equally as powerful in demarcating the boundaries between insiders and outsiders is what Meeks (1983:94) calls the language of separation. Just as Paul has special terms for those who belong, he has terms for those who do not. For example, 1 Cor. 5:12 sees the term "outsiders" used to denote those outside the community's boundaries. However, Paul is equally fond of wider expressions such as "the world", "unbelievers" and "the unrighteous" (1 Cor. 6:1,9). Similarly, although Paul goes to great lengths to show that there is no difference between Jew and Gentile, one cannot help feeling that he sometimes uses the word "gentiles" as an expression for "outsiders" (cf 1 Cor. 5:1).

Moving away from the language of boundary maintenance to more concrete matters, the discussion regarding whether one is allowed to eat meat offered to idols (1 Cor. 8:1ff) is particularly enlightening. Not only does this passage reveal something of Paul's thinking, but it also shows something of the situation at Corinth. Paul distinguishes between the "strong" and the "weak". The "strong" do not need boundaries imposed by Paul because of their knowledge. They apparently know that the idols pose no threat to them. However, the "weak" were accustomed to eating "idol meat" and participating in the cultic activities before their conversion, therefore, they need strong boundaries - so that they do not fall back into their previous lifestyle. The result in the letter, is a rather pragmatic rule where the Christian may eat anything as long as it is not part of a cultic ritual (10:27ff). However, the "strong" believer must be prepared to forego this freedom if it becomes problematic for the "weak".

Again, on another level, boundaries are maintained and imposed by ritual. There are rituals of initiation and rituals of excommunication, and rituals that emphasise group coherence and unity. The baptism ritual is clearly one that denotes the difference between a believer and a nonbeliever. One cannot become a member of the community without undergoing baptism. Hence, it is most often described as an initiation ritual. The language and symbolic actions involved in the ritual all emphasise the difference between the past life, and the new life being entered into. As such it is a vital part of the community's boundary maintenance strategy.

The Lord's supper is another ritual which was central to the life of the community. Interestingly, it too can be interpreted in terms of boundary maintenance. So strong is this aspect of the ritual, that one could argue quite convincingly that this has become the primary function of the ritual, although it perhaps would not be articulated as such. Above anything else, this ritual is one of unity. It expresses the brotherhood of the community, that there are no differences between members, and that all are "in Christ". That it apparently had broken down in Corinth, and no longer worked in this way is clear. It had become a ritual that highlighted the social differences between members. However, it is the unity of the church that Paul emphasises in the letter. He points the Corinthians back to the unifying power of the ritual. In order to illustrate more clearly the boundaries associated with the Lord's supper, it might be useful to ask more specific questions such as: "Who is admitted to the meal?" "Who is excluded?"

Paul's description of the way in which the Corinthian community celebrates the Lord's supper in 1 Cor. 11:17-34 is a description of a divided community. He reprimands the Corinthians in the following way:

When you come together, it is not the Lord's Supper you eat, for as you eat, each of you goes ahead without waiting for anybody else. One remains hungry, another gets drunk. Don't you have homes to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you for this? Certainly not! (1 Cor. 11:20-22).

This text suggests that in Paul's mind all members of the Christian community should be equally welcome at this celebration which is so important to the identity of the community. This is the most important rite of the community, therefore all should be present and the celebration should be conducted in a manner fitting the occasion. This would serve to reinforce the communal spirit within the group, and also emphasise the boundaries between insiders and outsiders. It seems fair to assume that only those who had been baptised and formally accepted into the community would have been welcomed at the Lord's supper.

Having said this, there is also evidence that the Lord's supper was the setting in which those members who had fallen out of favour may have been excluded from fellowship in the community. Discussing discipline for those members of the community who had violated the group's moral norms, Paul argues that the rest of the community are "not even to eat with such a one" (1 Cor. 5:11). This instruction may include other meals besides the Lord's supper, however, exclusion from this ritual would have been a particularly effective form of discipline. Not only would it be a public rejection of the individual, but it would also serve to reinforce the boundaries of the community by making an example of the immoral person. The group's boundaries and the consequences of contravening them would become plain for all to see.

1 Corinthians contains several other texts which suggest censure of those who violate the community's moral codes. For example, 1 Cor. 10:15-22 suggests that one cannot share in the Lord's supper as well as participate in any recognizably cultic meal in a pagan setting. Noting links with the Didache, Meeks (1983:103) suggests that the curse of 1 Cor. 16:22, "If anyone does not love the Lord, let him be banned. Marana tha" may similarly have been employed within the setting of the Lord's supper. If this is the case, then it seems that the Lord's supper is without a doubt the primary means of boundary maintenance in Pauline communities. It also reinforces the belief that those who violate the moral codes of the community have no place in the celebration of the meal.

So, in terms of group boundaries, what kind of community are we dealing with when we read 1 Corinthians? It was a community that was clearly set apart from the "world" and the "unrighteous", but it also was a part of that world. 1 Cor. 5:9-13 addresses this distinction and lists those groups of people who should be excluded from participation in the community. Paul writes:

I have written you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people - not at all meaning the people of this world who are immoral, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters. In that case you would have to leave this world. But now I am writing you that you must not associate with anyone who calls himself a brother but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or a slanderer, a drunkard or a swindler. With such a man do not even eat. What business is it of mine to judge those outside the church? Are you not to judge those inside? God will judge those outside. "Expel the wicked man from among you".

It is interesting to note at this point that Paul's boundary maintenance in this passage is particularly focused on bodily orifices and what enters and exits the body. Those who are sexually immoral, those who are greedy, along with idolaters, slanderers, drunkards and swindlers do not have control over their bodily orifices. Remembering Mary Douglas's schema of the relationship

between bodily and social control, one can recognise Paul's leaning towards tight control of the social body through tight control of the physical body.

The result is that Paul emphasises strong boundaries between the "inside" and "outside" at Corinth. However, the threat to the group is not from the "outside", but from the divisions, the unrighteousness and selfishness within the community. By labelling this activity as typical of "outsiders" rather than "insiders", Paul creates a system of social pressure to conform. All of this, it seems is aimed at combatting the lack of group cohesiveness and unity. It appears that the Corinthians themselves have developed their own internal set of boundary lines - distinguishing between members according to allegiance to leaders, according to wealth and social status and perhaps between those who ate idol meat versus those who did not. Against this backdrop, Paul emphasises a common purpose, a common calling, unity and group cohesiveness.

"What bounds of time and space does the group occupy?"

It is difficult to determine from the letter if the members of the Christian community in Corinth have any bounds on their time. However, it makes sense that the community would meet regularly. On the other hand, Paul has urged in other letters that Christians follow his example in working for a living and not removing themselves from the "world". Therefore, we may assume that the Christians in early communities such as that at Corinth would have spent much of their time plying a trade so that they were not solely dependent on other Christians or patrons for their provision.

Regarding the factor of "Space", it appears that the early Christian community in Corinth was based in households. Paul makes mention of several households in his letter, such as that of Gaius, Stephanus and Priscilla and Aquila. As in other cities, it is our belief that the Christian community in Corinth was composed of several household fellowships which may not have had regular interaction - although we know that the house of Gaius, for example, was large enough to accommodate the entire Christian assembly. These bounds of space suggest to the cynical observer, a predisposition to the development of factions and competition between rival households. It is not unlikely that the factions mentioned in chapter one were based in the different house churches.

The fact that the church was based in households is also significant in that the church developed in contrast to other established religions in the Roman world which were based in large and elaborate temples. The small and secretive impression we get of the Corinthian church suggests something akin to the voluntary association, and also of a sectarian outlook to life.

"Which is the more important factor: group identity or the criteria for belonging?"

On the question of group identity and the criteria for belonging, there appears to again be a clear difference between Paul and the community members. Paul sees unity in Christ and unity in mind and thought as the most important factors for the community, while the Corinthians seem to put more emphasis on the criteria of belonging to the various factions - that is loyalty to a particular evangelist or travelling preacher. It also appears that certain individuals within the community have put themselves and their own interests above those of the group. Hence the quarrelling over the Lord's supper, and the indications that individuals had taken other community members to court.

4.3. AUTHORITY QUESTIONS

"What are the roles of power within the group and the means of attaining them?"

The most clear statement regarding the roles of power in the Corinthian church is that in 1 Cor. 12:28. Here, Paul writes, "God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, then healers, helpers, administrators, speakers in various kinds of tongues".

From a careful reading of this passage and the letter as a whole at least three rather informal categories of leaders can be distinguished. First there are the apostles and their co-workers who are not necessarily members of the local community, yet have authority over it. Secondly, there are those who have authority on the basis of the gifts they possess - such as prophecy, teaching, healing and so on. Thirdly, there are those who have authority because of their wealth and position in society. We will outline each in turn.

Apostles and their co-workers

Obviously, this is not a function centred in a local church. However, apostles and their co-workers and messengers, would visit local churches and would have direct influence over the workings of local congregations. They would also correspond with local churches giving instructions and encouragement. The role of the apostle is supervisory in nature, and therefore was theoretically at the top of the heap in terms of influence and power. It was also exclusive in that it was limited to those who had been individually chosen by Christ. This implies that apostles were filled with the Spirit, and should be respected as specially chosen. On a more practical level, Paul may have found himself in a position of powerlessness. When he visited the local churches such as Corinth, he was a guest in the homes of patrons. It is likely that they would have viewed him as one of their clients. Therefore, the real power in the local churches was probably in the hands of the patrons, and a struggle for power may have been a legitimate concern and a real problem for Paul. This issue is compounded as we do not know if the Patrons recognised Paul's

authority as an apostle. This would make clearer, Paul's constant attempts to legitimize his own influence over the Corinthian church.

The authority of the Spirit-possessed in Corinth Prophets

In 1 Cor. 12:28, 14:1-5 and 14:27-33, Paul presupposes the existence of prophets in Corinth. There is no indication that they would be wandering prophets in the same mould as apostles, therefore it looks like they had a permanent and important function in the worship of the local church (Holmberg, 1980:96). It is also significant that Paul places this role next in importance to the apostles. This suggests that Paul viewed prophets as the most important leaders in the local church. This opinion implies that there was a closed group of prophets within the community who were involved in exhorting and building up the community. However, the existence of a permanent group of prophets is put in doubt by Paul's exhortation in 1 Cor. 14:1 to, "Follow the way of love and eagerly desire spiritual gifts, especially the gift of prophecy".

As regards the means of attaining the role of prophet, the text is unclear, but it is described as an ascribed gift of the Spirit. Whether or not it was in actuality such an ascribed gift, or was acquired by those with influence is a matter of conjecture, however the text would have us believe that it was a gift from the Spirit.

Teachers

Discussing Paul's use of the term "teachers", Holmberg (1980:98) agrees with the consensus that teachers "formed a close group of recognized and authoritative teachers, neither less well-defined nor less 'charismatic' than the group of prophets". As such, their function is similar to Jewish scribes and rabbis:

they gave instruction and delivered exhortations on seemly conduct, they received, preserved, and transmitted the body of tradition in the church ... and occupied themselves with interpreting the Holy Scriptures (1980:99).

If Holmberg is correct in this regard, one could infer that teachers would be people of some learning. They would be literate and respected individuals.

The authority of the wealthy and privileged Administrators

Further down the list in 1 Cor. 12:28, Paul includes the term "administrators". Again, Holmberg sees this as a closed set of individuals. A central thread to this function is the notion of serving and leading. Could it be that Paul has in mind here the patrons and householders who hosted the church and served it. If so, then passages such as 1 Cor. 16:15ff which talks

about "serving the saints" and "all those who toil" in Stephanus's house become important. This role may have different criteria to the others in that it implies a degree of wealth and ability to serve the church.

The most obvious criterion here is that these functions come through possession by the Holy Spirit. Not everyone prophesies or teaches, but only those who have been given the gift. However, this is not the only differentiating factor. Some functions are based upon human ability or on social and cultural standing in the society. For example, great emphasis was placed upon the host of the Christian community. Filson argues that:

The host of such a group was almost inevitably a man of some education, with a fairly broad background and at least some administrative ability. Moreover, many of these hosts in the earliest years of the Gentile church came from the "god-fearers", who had shown independence enough to leave their ancestral or native faith and establish contact with the synagogues. They had thus shown themselves to be men of initiative and decision. In a mission movement which required resourcefulness and courage, they were likely candidates for leadership (cited in Holmberg, 1980:105).

Theissen also makes mention of leadership structures based on wealth and position. He argues that there are four criteria that characterise a leader in Corinth:

1. To be active in a civil or religious office in Corinth
2. To possess a house
3. To have served Paul or the church, or both, and
4. To be able to make a journey (cited in Macdonald, 1988:58).

These criteria would certainly make more sense when we take into account the people who are mentioned by name in the letter to the Corinthians. We do not hear of Stephanus the prophet or teacher, but rather, Stephanus the head of a household, and Erastus, the city treasurer. Therefore, it is my opinion that the list in 1 Cor. 12:28 may refer to the leadership of the meetings held by the church. However, there is a whole range of community activity that falls under the authority of the patrons who are the leaders and administrators of the church. I believe that these patrons had a disproportionately large share of the power in the Corinthian community, so the list of 12:28, may also be seen as a measure to counter this concentration of power.

"What are the structures of power within the group, including rank?

How do the titles of leadership function in terms of authority and status?"

Although the ranking of roles in 1 Cor. 12:28 points to a process of formalization in leadership structures in Corinth, this does not necessarily

mean that the Corinthian church operated in that way. The fact that Paul saw it necessary to elaborate these roles may even be taken as evidence that the Corinthian leadership structures were "open", "unclear" and "informal".

Although Paul does list the roles and ranks of "offices" in the church, he is rather ambiguous in the way he describes them. As we have seen, 1 Cor. 12:28 gives much authority to the apostles and teachers, but in 1 Cor. 3:5 he reacts strongly against authority being concentrated in individuals. He argues that congregations are not to be subject to apostles and teachers, but only to Christ. In addition, Paul allows the Corinthians much freedom in making their own decisions. He does not say that the prophets or teachers should do this or that, but implies that the group should use common sense (1 Cor. 4:14, 5:1-5, 9:12). Hence, although Paul makes mention of roles and structures, it is not clear that they are in operation, and what the scope of their influence is.

Having said all this, we must be careful not to emphasise the few mentions of leadership roles too much. The overriding picture of the Corinthian community is still one where leadership is not emphasised much. Local leaders are seldom mentioned and their tasks are not very demanding. They are even sometimes to be appointed in a rather ad-hoc manner. For example, 1 Cor. 6:1-8 makes mention of Christians taking other Christians to court in the pagan courts. To Paul, this is unacceptable. Therefore he advocates the appointment of judges, even "men of little account in the church" (1 Cor. 6:5). He says this to shame the Corinthians, but the idea is clear. If a problem arises, use initiative to solve it internally. Illustrating this "low" and undemanding view of leadership in Pauline communities, Holmberg writes:

(a) They do not represent the church to outside authorities. (b) They are not responsible for any central church fund (cf. 1 Cor. 16:2 par' eautw). (c) They are not in charge of church discipline (1 Cor. 5) nor do they act as arbitrators between Christian brothers (1 Cor. 6). (d) They do not lead worship or keep order during it. (e) When serious conflicts arise within the church Paul does not ask the local leaders to settle them nor does he give them any responsibility at all (Holmberg, 1980:112).

On the Corinthian church, Holmberg goes further:

Still, the situation in Corinth was apparently so fluid that Greeven is correct in saying that *nobody* exercised the functions of leadership that Paul had expected the church to cope with. Thus it can rightly be said to lack stability and independence, as it lacks an integrated body of leaders, acknowledged by all its members. And it is this immaturity that forces Paul to intervene with rebukes, orders, admonitions,

explanations and detailed rules to an extent that is unique in his letters (1980:114).

Regarding the question of rank, we have covered the main points already, but a summary would be as follows. From 1 Cor. 12-14, one can argue that Paul does differentiate according to rank. Obviously an "apostle" is top in terms of importance and power, second is prophecy, and third come the teachers. This can be ascertained by Paul's treatment of these three functions. The criterion for the rank of gift or function is the degree to which it builds up the community. There is however, a practical authority given to the patrons of the church who host the community.

"How is the leader chosen? Who is in charge?"

Throughout the Corinthian correspondence, we get the impression that Paul is defending his authority over the Corinthians. He clearly sees himself in charge, although physically removed. He needs to assert his authority so that he can correct the Corinthian community, and draw their attention back to unity in Christ. As an apostle, Paul sees himself as chosen by God, by Christ and the Spirit. This is evident in Paul's self understanding. He regularly reminds his readers that he is an apostle, and he believes that the words he preaches are not his own, but those of God (1 Cor. 14:37). Paul's status as an apostle and spiritual father of the Corinthians is supported by the power that accompanies his preaching. He has the gift of tongues (1 Cor. 14:18), the gift of prophecy (1 Cor. 15:51), and other spiritual gifts that come from the Spirit.

However, on a local level, it appears that there are several leaders. We do not know how these leaders came to be chosen as such other than what we can guess. For example, Paul mentions that Stephanus and his household were the first to be converted in Corinth, that they devoted themselves to the service of the saints and therefore those such as these who join in the work and labour at it, should be submitted to (1 Cor. 16:15-16). This suggests two possibilities. The first being that the oldest converts become the leaders of the community. The second that those who join in the work and prove themselves in the labour of the gospel earn their leadership status. How these leadership positions are ratified and legitimised is a question not easy to answer. However, in the letter, it seems that at a local level, there is no one person in particular who is in charge of the community. Holmberg even goes so far as to say that in Corinth, "nobody exercised the functions of leadership" (1980:116). If this is the case, then it must be the primary reason for the unruly nature of the community. In addition, there seem to be allusions to several ways that leadership can be attained, but no mention of how these leadership positions are legitimised, or how the different leadership positions relate to each other. This also leads one to suspect an ethos of

competition for leadership and power in the community, as the leadership roles are not clearly defined.

"Can authority be transmitted to successive generations? If so, by what means?"

Paul's leadership of the communities that he has founded has often been described as "charismatic leadership" in the mould as described by Max Weber. Following Weber's thinking, this would certainly pose a problem for the church when Paul died, or when he was no longer available to them either by writing, messengers or in person. However, this is a problem that is rather low on Paul's agenda in the letter. His main aim is to impose his own authority on the community once more through reasoned argument. This may entail a restructuring and encouragement of responsible local leadership as well, but Paul is not worried at this stage about the succession of leadership. There are much more important issues to address.

4.4. STATUS AND ROLE QUESTIONS

"Are age groups or sex roles defined?"

There is very little said in the text that defines roles according to age. When Paul refers to baptising and converting whole households, the assumption is that this includes children, but there is no specific mention of the role and level of participation of children in the church. Similarly, although no specific mention is made of the aged, it is assumed that they participate fully in the life of the community - and may have been looked up to as people of wisdom. This would concur with the cultural setting of the Roman Empire, where the oldest members of the family were respected, and generally had more authority.

On the other hand, Paul is quite specific regarding the respective roles of men and women in the life of the church. 1 Cor. 7 addresses the virtues of the married life versus the celibate way held by Paul. Although Paul sees celibacy as the better way, he argues that marriage is also good, especially if physical urges are strong and are distracting people from the work of the church. In this regard, Paul implies that women are the weaker sex. They distract the men from focusing on the task at hand.

A more enlightening passage regarding the role of women is that of 11:1-16. Verse 3 clearly shows Paul's idea of the hierarchy between men and women. The man is the head of the woman, as Christ is the head of the man. This implies that access to Christ is mediated through men, and that women have a secondary position in public. However, this does not mean that women have no place in public leadership or worship. Verse 5 says that women can pray and prophecy in public just like the men, but they must keep their heads covered as a matter of respect. Women are the glory of men just as men are the glory of

God. Woman (Eve) came from man(Adam), not the other way around! hence, for this reason, and "because of the angels" (11:10) the woman must cover her head as a sign of the authority she is under. Although women can participate in worship, they must do so with a head covering which symbolises their position under the authority of men.

On the other hand, though, this picture becomes somewhat ambiguous when we take a close look at 14:33b-35:

As in all the congregations of the saints, women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the Law says. If they want to enquire about something, they should ask their own husbands at home; for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church.

This reinforces the view of women as under the authority of men, but makes confusing whether women participated in the church or not. Could it be that women did play a significant part in the Corinthian worship and contributed to the unruly nature of the worship there, hence Paul's strong statements. Even if this is the case, we cannot ignore Paul's view that women should take a back seat "as in all the congregations of the saints". Another confusing aspect may be raised here. Previously we have argued that worship in the early Christian communities took place in peoples' houses. If this is the case, how does the instruction to "ask their own husbands at home" relate to the setting of the worship. One possible understanding of this is that the majority of the congregation did not live in the house being used for worship, but elsewhere with their own family. Only the household of the patron would live in the same house in which the congregation would meet. Therefore, we would expect the instruction to make sense for most of the congregation, but we can expect some confusion for those who lived and worshipped in the same house.

In sum, men hold the positions of power in the community. Women are allowed freedom in that they may pray and prophesy in public under certain circumstances, but in general, they are to keep quiet in church.

"Are there identifiable classes and ranks within groups?"

The issue of the status of the Corinthian Christians is one that has been much debated. 1 Cor. 1:26-27 is usually used as the starting point for such discussions. It says,

Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly

things of this world and the despised things - and the things that are not - to nullify the things that are...

This declares that most of the Corinthian congregation was made up of poor folk, but it also assumes that some were not. In other words, it implies that the Corinthian congregation was a fairly similar make-up to the society that they found themselves in. The majority of the community were poor - slaves, artisans, freedmen, and so on - but there were a few that were rich and of some consequence. There is some evidence in the letter to back up this opinion. The people Paul mentions by name in the letter are more wealthy than the average person in that they are householders, in Gaius's case wealthy enough to host the whole church. Similarly, Erastus is a respected citizen of Corinth - having been the city treasurer. Following this train of thought, we would expect these wealthy members of the community to view themselves in the role of patron, and the rest of the community as their "clients".

There is a fairly strong argument, then, that the most prominent and active members - and those close to Paul - are of a generally higher social status than the rest of the church. However, the church consists of people from a cross-section of life, and is therefore representative of the Corinthian society. This does not sound particularly remarkable to us with our modern worldviews, but in a system dominated by the challenge-response mechanism of social interaction, being in such a mixed community would have been rather conspicuous.

"What are the attitudes expressed regarding wealth, buildings, clothing, or ritual equipment?"

"Who has special privilege? On what basis?"

The clearest rule here is that regarding the head covering of women during worship. To avoid repetition, we will not repeat what we have said above. Of the other areas, perhaps the most relevant to the Corinthian context is "wealth". However, there is little direct evidence regarding the attitudes expressed here, other than what one can infer.

For example, in the debate over the Lord's supper (1 Cor. 11:17-34), Paul addresses the rich and condemns their selfish behaviour. From this passage, we can reason that the rich believed that they had special privileges - being able to have the best food, the best position at the table, and more of it - even to the extent of getting drunk (11:21). Paul's response is to appeal to unity and common sense. If one is hungry they should eat first at home, and the ritual should take place in a proper manner, lest one places oneself under judgement by being disrespectful.

Therefore, it appears that Paul is admonishing the wealthy and more powerful members of the community, who facilitate the ritual, and who keep the best for themselves. This is significant, as Paul asserts his own authority over the community, and shows that even the rich are not above reproach.

"If there is conflict within the group, what are the issues?"

There are a number of issues alluded to in the letter which suggest conflict and division within the group. We will outline the main conflict scenarios in turn.

1. Factionalism

In the first chapter, Paul complains about the disunity among the Corinthians, where different factions have appeared - each following a different authority figure. One of the most powerful ways in which Paul counters this disunity is by using the metaphor of the church as a body (1 Cor. 10:16-17, 12:12, 12:27). In these verses, Paul uses the metaphor with the aim of unifying a church on the verge of dividing. Paul argues that personal differences should not hinder unity. Rather communal participation in an ordered and properly functioning church will enhance unity.

2. Church discipline (1 Cor. 5:1-13)

Paul's concern in this passage is to counter the immorality in the church by emphasising the nature of the community under God. This is a conflict in that Paul is at odds with the Corinthians who have refused to expel an immoral Christian.

It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that does not even occur among the pagans: A man has his father's wife. And you are proud! Shouldn't you rather have been filled with grief and have put out of your fellowship the man who did this (1 Cor. 5:1-2).

3. Lawsuits among Christians (1 Cor. 6:1-6)

Here, Paul addresses the issue that Christians have taken their disputes to the pagan courts for arbitration. To Paul, this is unacceptable as it reveals to all the disunity in the church. He chides the Corinthians for not being able to find a wise man from among them to solve such differences. Paul is so angry with the Corinthians that he suggests that even men of little account in the church should be appointed to judge such cases. Paul makes it clear that he says this to shame the Corinthians!

4. Eating meat offered to idols (1 Cor. 8:7-13)

The conflict here appears to be between two groups which Paul labels "strong" and "weak". Paul suggests that the "strong", who are those who eat food offered to idols without concern, should accommodate the "weak" whose

"conscience might be offended by their behaviour (1 Cor. 8:9) (Chow, 1992:182). The reason Paul gives for this rule is very interesting. He says that by becoming a stumbling block to the "weak", the "strong" are sinning against Christ who died for the "weak".

When you sin against your brothers in this way and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ. Therefore, if what I eat causes my brother to fall into sin, I will never eat meat again, so that I will not cause him to fall (1 Cor. 8:12-13).

5. The Lord's supper (1 Cor. 11:17-34)

In the Corinthian community, the Lord's supper became an occasion where the poor within the community were humiliated by the rich. Paul reprimands the Corinthians for their disrespectful attitude to the poor. He encourages them to wait for everyone to arrive, and to avoid greed and drunken behaviour, as their actions are disrespectful to Christ.

6. The order and form of worship meetings (1 Cor. 14:1-33)

Although not clearly a matter of internal conflict between the Corinthians themselves, the unruly nature of the worship of the community is a major concern for Paul. However, if the disorderly nature of the worship did not cause conflict, there was apparently a controversy over which spiritual gift was more important - the Corinthians evidently having elevated glossolalia over the other gifts.

Paul reasserts the importance of an orderly service in which everyone was included, and which would build up the community, not divide it. Hence, Paul emphasises the priority of prophecy and other gifts that edify, encourage and console. These are more important than speaking in tongues and even teaching, which should be suppressed if it does not build up the church.

"Who performs rituals?"

It would appear that the patron of the community also performed the role of the ritual elder. This would make sense of Paul's criticism of the way in which the Corinthians celebrated the Lord's supper. Surely the way in which the meal was administered was sanctioned by the patron. Paul too has performed the role of ritual elder in the past, but he seems reluctant to continue in this position. This is highlighted by his statements in 1:14-16 "I am thankful that I did not baptise any of you other than Crispus and Gaius...". The criteria for becoming a ritual elder is not explained in the letter. Therefore, we again have to read between the lines and assume that the position was filled by the patrons of the community.

4.5. RITUAL QUESTIONS

"What are the key formative experiences of the group, including initiation, celebration, stages of transition?"

Paul's letter to the Corinthians is full of allusions to ritual practice, such as baptism, and is particularly explicit in describing the ritual of the Lord's supper. However, besides these two clear rituals, there are suggestions that other rituals may have existed. We shall begin by describing these, and then discuss the rituals of initiation (baptism), and boundary maintenance and unity (The Lord's Supper).

Coming together

In this letter to the Corinthians, Paul regularly refers to the community "coming together". In 1 Cor. 11:17, 18, 20, 33, 34, this gathering of the believers is precisely for the purposes of the Lord's Supper. However, 1 Cor. 14:23 and 26 suggest another context for the church coming together. At this meeting of the church, Paul alludes to other kinds of worship. Verse 23 addresses the merits of everybody speaking in tongues versus the upbuilding gift of prophecy. This is emphasised in verse 26:

What then shall we say, brothers? When you come together, everyone has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. All of these must be done for the strengthening of the church.

Although this type of worship could have been part of the Lord's supper, it is not alluded to in Paul's lengthy discussion of that ritual (11:17-34). Therefore, it seems that the singing of hymns, instruction, and so on, may have also occurred at a separate ritual of "coming together" to build up the church. Paul mentions all this because the Corinthian meetings had been to unruly. They were no longer encouraging solidarity and unity (Meeks, 1983:142-143)

Exclusion

1 Corinthians 5 is a particularly interesting passage in that it alludes to another possible ritual. One where the immoral Christian is excluded from participation in the community. When Paul hears of such an immoral Christian ("a man has his father's wife"), he is clear regarding the action to be taken. His description of how the exclusion of the immoral brother is to take place appears to be formalised and clear. Although not present in person, Paul also sets himself up as the ritual elder who oversees the process. He writes:

Even though I am not physically present, I am with you in Spirit. And I have already passed judgement on the one who did this, just as if I were present. When you are assembled in the name of our Lord Jesus and I am with you in spirit, and the power of our Lord Jesus is present, hand this man over to Satan, so that the sinful nature may be destroyed and his spirit saved on the day of the Lord.

Here the ritual elements are the fact that they are to be assembled, "in the name of our Lord Jesus". The power of the Lord Jesus is to be present, and judgement is to be passed publicly and officially. It almost seems as though Paul wants to make this immoral believer an example to the rest of the community, showing the consequences of sexual immorality. Therefore, the ritual itself could be one of boundary maintenance. By expelling the immoral believer, the community knows clearly where the boundaries are, and they are placed under strong group pressure not to do the same - lest they too be expelled. This pressure is increased by the ideological belief system which hands the sinner over to Satan, no less. Also, a precedent has been set. If a similar situation were to arise, the Corinthians would then have a ritual context within which to make the exclusion of the believer formal.

The initiation ritual: Baptism

There are several different ways in which this ritual could be interpreted. It could be a ritual of purity - a cleansing rite. It could be symbolic of withdrawing from the world - being set apart. Or it could be a ritual of socialisation - learning one's place in the social order and the behaviour one is expected to show. I think that all of these aspects are present in the ritual, and are interwoven to an extent that they cannot really be separated. However, having said this, the dominant theme in the ritual is one of a new beginning. It is an initiation ritual.

The references to baptism in first Corinthians are generally brief - short on the practical details and theology of the event. The key reference to the form and meaning of the ritual in the letter is to be found in 1 Cor. 6:11. Here Paul writes, "But you were washed you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God". This clearly puts baptism on the level of being washed and cleansed. Therefore, the symbolism of the water includes this. An anthropological means of analysing rituals such as this has been proposed by Victor Turner who distinguished between the sensory and ideological poles¹¹. The sensory pole refers to the outward appearance and experience of the ritual. In this case water is commonly used to physically cleanse away dirt. On an ideological level, this

¹¹ Turner's use of the sensory and ideological poles is explained further in his 1977 book entitled, The forest of symbols: aspects of Ndembu ritual. N.Y. Cornell University Press.

everyday experience is given other meanings whereby water becomes symbolic of purity, and dirt symbolic of sin. Paul makes this clear by his use of the words, "sanctified" and "justified".

As a ritual of initiation, this kind of language associated with the action of being immersed or washed with water draws a line between the past and the present experience. One has been sanctified and justified through the action of the Spirit of God and in the name of Jesus. The new believer now becomes part of a group which sees itself as "clean" and justified. This ritual implies a new status of equality with the other members of the community. 1 Cor. 12:13 makes this clear: "For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body - whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free - and we were all given the one Spirit to drink". Again, this sets the community apart from the rest of society and strengthens the boundaries between the two.

The Lord's supper

I Corinthians contains a detailed passage (11:17-34), discussing the Lord's supper. This is interesting, as Paul includes in his discussion what appears to be a sacred formula used in the celebration of the meal. We are familiar with this formula as it has been incorporated into many modern liturgies. We must be careful not to see in our discussion of this ritual, the symbolism that is attached to it in our own experience. Rather, we must attempt to be sympathetic to the concerns of Paul, and the experience of the Corinthian community.

The beginning of the passage sets the scene in that Paul explains his worries about how the Corinthians have been conducting themselves during this ritual. Firstly, there are divisions within the church (11:18). Secondly, there is selfishness where some go ahead without waiting for everyone. So some get drunk while some go hungry. Elsewhere, we have described this as a conflict between the rich and the poor. This view is enhanced by verse 22. Paul says, "Don't you have homes to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing". Paul makes it clear that when the Corinthians gather to celebrate the Lord's supper, this is not what they are doing. Therefore, he sets out the meaning and context of the celebration by reciting the sacred formula (11:23b-26) mentioned above.

This formula makes obvious that the ritual of the Lord's supper is one of remembering Jesus and the new covenant which he established. The formula, "do this in remembrance of me" is repeated, and therefore central to the ritual. On another level, the celebration of the Lord's supper is one of imitating the meal of Jesus. In a way this allows the believers to be present with Jesus at the last supper, just as the apostles were with him.

In addition, the ritual is one not only of remembering Jesus, but of remembering his death, and acknowledging and accepting the vicarious meaning of his suffering. This aspect can be seen in the phrase, "This is my body, which is for you", as well as the final statement, "For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes".

Paul uses this eucharistic formula to enhance the importance of solidarity and unity in the community. These are aspects that are undoubtedly central to the ritual. It is the very essence of being a Christian. Paul makes similar claims when he asserts the power of the ritual, and the taboo of partaking in it in an unworthy manner. He says this is why "many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep".

In sum, then, the ritual of the Lord's supper is viewed by Paul as a place for the articulation of the community's beliefs. Both 1 Cor. 11:17-34 and 10:14-22 (which contrasts the Lord's supper and pagan sacrifices) are full of language which reinforces the ritual's nature of self-definition. The sacred formula of 11:23-26 is particularly distinct in this regard. As such, the ritual is at the very heart of what it means to be a Christian, and to treat it in an unworthy manner will result in unfortunate consequences. Hence, the ritual is one which encourages unity in the church, but which highlights the disunity in the Corinthian church. Paul surrounds the sacred formula with language which enforces the group's boundaries. For example he explains the taboo and consequences of unworthy behaviour during the celebration of the ritual. Hence, the boundaries are strengthened by a combination of encouraging unity through self-definition, and warning against deviant behaviour.

"Who performs these rites, and what are the purposes of them?"

As we have mentioned elsewhere, it is likely that the patrons filled the position of ritual elders. Paul only reluctantly acted in this way (baptizing Gaius and others) and this was probably as part of his initial missionary activity, before the church was established in Corinth.

As regards, the purposes of these rituals, we have already answered this question above. In brief, the sociological function of the rituals is to bind the community together, to build a common ideology, and to maintain the boundaries between the insiders and the outsiders. Paul expresses these concerns in terms of unity and disunity, and by using the metaphor of the body. The rituals such as baptism also include aspects of purity - being set apart. However, this too can be seen as boundary maintenance.

"How are the rites transmitted to the successors?"

This is a difficult question to pin down, as Paul says nothing in this letter about how the rites are transmitted to the next generations. One can only assume that the status of ritual elder in successive generations would be

conferred on people who had assimilated the community ethos, were respected in the community, and were filled with the Spirit.

"Is there evidence of changing attitudes toward the ritual in successive generations? In what direction is the change?"

Again, this is not a concern in the letter under consideration, as the first generation Christians have not assimilated the correct attitudes (as far as Paul is concerned) to the rituals, and need to be corrected by Paul and his co-workers. The Corinthian Christians are more ecstatic and spontaneous, not to mention divided, than Paul is comfortable with.

"To what extent and why has the group altered the ritual?"

This is a question pertinent to the Corinthian Christians. Although they have not altered the ritual over successive generations, to suit their own purposes and context, the Corinthians have apparently not grasped the nature and meaning of the rituals in the first place. They have also not understood the change in morality and identity that becoming a Christian meant to Paul. Hence, the Corinthian Christians have treated the rituals in much the same way as they would were the church a voluntary association. They have behaved in accordance with the Roman culture, where the more powerful members of the community were put above the others, and were given privileges and honour. This is a likely 'scenario for the Lord's supper in the Corinthian community.

"What language is used in the ritual?"

In the ritual of meeting together, we have noted that there would have been hymns, prophecy, instruction and so on. This implies a combination of the formal and the spontaneous. Beyond this we cannot ascertain much. We do not for example, have an example of a hymn that may have been used in the Corinthian church.

Similarly, in the ritual of baptism, we can only guess as to the kinds of things that would have been said. 1 Cor. 6:11, which we discuss above, is our best guide in this regard. However, in the Lord's supper, we would expect the eucharistic formula of 11:23-26 to have been recited during the ritual. As we have noted, this contains language which is predominantly of a self-definition and unity building nature. It also contains the essence of the Christian experience, and therefore it is appropriate that it be formalised into a recitable format.

4.6. LITERARY QUESTIONS WITH SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS

"What genre does the group employ for communication within the group? With those outside the group, if any? What does the choice of genre imply?"

"Does the author's choice of a specific genre influence the message he/she wants to communicate? In what way?"

What we have in 1 Corinthians is essentially a correspondence between Paul, an apostle who has authority over the group, yet is not part of it in the local sense. Therefore, I am not sure that we can talk of the letter as communication within the group. Yet, on the other hand, Paul is part of the group in that he is the founder of the community. For the purposes of clarity, we will discuss the letter as communication within the group, as communication with those outside the group implies unbelievers.

The genre employed by Paul is that of a letter. However, it is more than a letter as it contains instructions, admonitions and so on. Therefore, it is better described as a circular letter, to be read in public and to be acted upon. Paul writes as an apostle, not merely as a friend. He wants to assert his own opinions over those within the community, and correct the perceived wrong thinking and practices within the community. The implications are also that Paul and his readers are familiar with each other.

There is also evidence within the letter, that the Corinthians have corresponded with Paul. Twice he makes mention of Chloe's people who have brought to his attention the divisions within the church. It is not clear whether Chloe's people are simply messengers, or whether they also carried some kind of written correspondence. The latter seems likely, if one takes the conventions of the society into account.

As for the implications of the choice of genre, it seems to me that Paul didn't have much choice over which genre to use. He needed to address practical issues within the community, and emphasise his authority over them. As with all his other correspondence, the best way of attaining this was a personal letter which shows his understanding of the situation within the community, and his concern for them. A letter such as this also allows Paul to assert his own authority without alienating his readers, which given the factions within Corinth may have been a possibility. Paul's allusions to his relationship with the Corinthians as being one of a father to his children is an example here (1 Cor. 4:15).

"What are the themes in the text (text) of the communication? What is its argumentative strategy? Who is supported? Who is combatted?"

There are a number of themes in the text of 1 Corinthians, however they are for the most part linked in that they are concerned with correcting the divisions and disorders within the Corinthian community. These themes may be broadly listed as follows:

- 1 Cor. 1:1-4:21. Divisions in the Church
- 1 Cor. 5. Church discipline
- 1 Cor. 6. Lawsuits and sexual immorality
- 1 Cor. 7. Instructions on marriage

- 1 Cor. 8:1-11:1. Instructions concerning questionable practices
- 1 Cor. 11:2-14:40. Instructions regarding public worship
- 1 Cor. 15. Instructions regarding the resurrection.

In an above section, we outlined the major issues and points of conflict which Paul addresses in the letter. In each case, Paul's strategy is to appeal to his own superior understanding of the gospel, and his position as an apostle to give weight to his opinions and rules.

In the various issues that Paul addresses, he supports and combats different individuals and groups. He combats those who have set up factions and divisions in the community (ch1-4). He combats the moral and ethical disorders in the church - particularly sexual immorality (ch5-6). He combats the unruly behaviour in the worship of the church (11:2-16) and the division and selfishness on the part of the patrons, which has debased the Lord's supper (11:17-34). Of those people that Paul supports, he mentions some by name. He implies that he supports Chloe's people for having brought to his attention the division in the church. He supports the "weak" who may be troubled by others eating meat that was offered to idols (ch8). However, most clearly, he supports Stephanus and other righteous people like him and his household. He writes:

You know that the household of Stephanus were the first converts in Achaia, and they have devoted themselves to the service of the saints. I urge you, brothers, to submit to such as these and to everyone who joins in the work, and labours at it (16:15-16).

"Has the genre been modified to serve the specific aims of the group? In what way and for what means?"

The short answer to this question is yes. The genre of the letter has been modified to include a range of instructions, formulas and so on, that we would not normally expect to find in a letter. In short, the letter genre has been modified by Paul, but the proper beginning and ending conventions have been adhered to. The change has occurred in the content that the letter conveys. It does not really convey much in the way of personal information about Paul and his co-workers, that one would expect in a letter. These modifications suit the purpose of Paul who wants to exert his authority over a distant group, but does not want to be too impersonal and detached.

"Is there a canon operative within the community? How is it defined?"

It does not appear that there is a set canon in operation yet within the Corinthian community, other than the Old Testament, which Paul quotes a number of times. However, Paul's correspondence is seen as authoritative, and to be obeyed. It is apparent that Paul had written to the Corinthians previously

about matters such as associating with sexually immoral people (1 Cor. 5:9). If this is the case, then it may be that the Corinthians used such instruction as a precursor to a canon.

"How does the literary organization of the communication serve to promote conceptual and social order for the community?"

This question presupposes the existence of such a canon or organisation of communication. We cannot assume that the Corinthians were in possession of such a collection as the letter we do have is reasonably early. However, if they did have other letters from Paul, or even other leaders such as Apollos, the organization of such communication would serve to give the community a corporate identity, and would cement the boundaries of the group.

4.7. QUESTIONS ABOUT GROUP FUNCTIONS

"What are the dynamics of the community? What are its goals?"

The text is quite specific about the dynamics of the community. Paul believes that it is in a mess. There are divisions within the community on several levels. There are sexual immorality and conflicts between members of the community. This can only add up to a divided, floundering community with unclear boundaries, ineffective leadership and unruly worship. As the dynamics of the community were so confused and divided, one would expect too that the goals of the community were unclear and unfocused - or even nonexistent. The latter seems to be the case as far as Paul is concerned. Therefore, he imposes his own authority, and gives clear instructions and goals to the Corinthians. They must learn to love each other (ch13), understand that they are a unit, a body, and work together in a ordered and focused manner befitting the gospel.

"What helps or hinders the achievement of the group's aims?"

The group itself does not appear to have explicitly defined and united aims. Therefore, Paul makes his aims, the aims of the group. What hinders Paul's aims for the Corinthians is the continued division, selfishness and lack of integrity within the community. What helps is to take to heart the instructions given by Paul, and to participate in the work of the gospel.

"What are the tensions within the group? What are the tensions with the surrounding culture? Who are the chief enemies?"

There are several areas of tension within the group. We have discussed them all above, so it is not necessary to go into much detail. One of the key problems seems to be concerned with allegiance and loyalty. Paul points to this when he writes, "One of you says, 'I follow Paul', another, 'I follow Apollos', another, 'I follow Cephas', still another, 'I follow Christ'" (1 Cor. 1:12). This suggests that leadership in Corinth was either very fragmented, or nonexistent.

Another key issue is the conflict between the patrons of the church and the poorer Christians. The patrons would keep all the food and the best places for themselves at the Lord's supper, while the poor went hungry. The patrons would probably have seen this as their right, while the poorer members would have felt excluded. Other issues are the controversies over idol meat, which spiritual gift is superior and so on. These are the concerns that would have plagued the Corinthians themselves. In addition, Paul highlights a number of problems centred around morality issues, and the concern for unity.

The more interesting question here, is the possible tensions with the surrounding culture. It certainly seems as though the tension over the Lord's supper may be interpreted in this light. It could be that the patrons had not conformed to the ideology of the new Christian community and saw their role in a similar light to that of patrons in other religious movements and voluntary associations where there is a distinct hierarchy. However, beyond this, there is little direct evidence of tension with the outside world. Paul is certainly concerned with boundaries, and in chapter 8 he discusses the problem of idol meat. We have already suggested that this reveals an internal conflict. This is true, but it is an internal tension that comes about due to outside interaction. The heart of the matter is that the new Christian sect has a different value system to the many cults in operation in Corinth. Therefore the tension that the "weak" Christians had to contend with is one of conflicting value systems to what they were used to. Paul does also mention other practical tensions such as marriage between a believer and a non-believer (7:12ff). These may have been real problems for the Corinthian church, however, the central issue for Paul was not the tension between believers and non-believers, or even the persecution that the Christians may have had to endure. Paul was worried about the internal conflicts.

Hence, for Paul, the enemy to be faced is the division, selfishness, and immorality within the community. The enemy is within, not without.

"Does the group use body language? If so, in what way? What does it imply?"
The answer to this question is an emphatic yes. Neyrey (1990) has embarked on a full study of body language in 1 Corinthians from the perspective of the grid/group model, so we will refer to some of the discoveries he has arrived at.

Neyrey (1990:116) argues that there are two distinct views of the physical and social body at Corinth - the view of Paul, and that of his opponents. He suggests that Paul's view of the physical body is that of a highly controlled body.

It is a bounded system, to be strongly controlled; it is a pure or holy body and so must guard its orifices. Its concern for order and clarity make it fear unconsciousness or loss of control; it takes a negative view of spirit possession. It is a regulated and harmonious body whose parts are clearly differentiated and co-ordinated for the good of the whole body. No individual member is allowed to disrupt the body's disciplined functioning (Neyrey, 1990:116).

In accordance with Douglas's model of the body, Neyrey continues to argue that this view of the physical body corresponds to a view of the social body which is strongly controlled, and which is marked by formality, smoothness, structured features and ritualism¹².

In contrast to Paul's view of the physical and social body, Paul's opponents see the body as an uncontrolled organism.

Fearing no pollutants around the body, they see no need for control of the bodily orifices. Accordingly, the bodily boundaries are porous. Porosity is accompanied by celebration of freedom, of movement and spontaneity. Trances and spirit possession are looked on favorably (Neyrey, 1990:116).

Again, this view of the physical body corresponds to a perception of the social body as marked by weak group pressure, informality, unstructured features and effervescence.

From this overview, we will now take a brief tour of some of the more relevant passages in 1 Corinthians, which deal with the body.

Sexual orifices: 1 Cor. 5-7

In these passages, Paul is concerned with sexual purity. His very controlled view of the body is apparent in the variety of rules that he discusses. For example, 1 Cor. 5:1-8 discusses the issue of an incestuous marriage where a man "has his father's wife". This is a blatant crossing of the line in Paul's mind, and the result is just as glaring - excommunication.

Similarly, in the case of fornication (1 Cor. 6:12-20), Paul asserts that the body is holy. "The body is not meant for immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body" (6:13). Similarly, "Your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you" (6:19). Such sins are understood by Paul to pollute the interior of the body, unlike other sins which are committed "outside" the body. Such an opinion is extreme in its control of the body.

¹² For a definition of the terms "smoothness" "ritualism" and so on, please see chapter two.

The mouth: 1 Cor. 8-11

In 1 Cor. 10:14-22, Paul distinguishes between "holy" food and "demonic" food. He defines the food of the Eucharist as "holy", while foods sacrificed to idols, or which are part of a cultic setting are "demonic". See for example, 10:21 which says, "You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons". In this view, demonic food is taboo, and demands for bodily control are strong.

This opinion is reiterated by Paul in his discussion of the Eucharistic ritual (11:17-34), and the controversy over idol meat (ch.8).

Other passages in which Paul emphasises a controlled physical body, and therefore also a tightly controlled social body are:

- Tongues: 1 Cor. 14
- Prophecy over tongues: 1 Cor. 14
- Control of bodily boundaries and surfaces (hairstyles and head coverings): 1 Cor. 11:2-16
- Relationship of head to body: 1 Cor. 11:2-16, 15:20-28
- Eyes and ears/hands and feet: 1 Cor. 12
- Body of Christ: 1 Cor 12:12-31
- A resurrected body?: 1 Cor. 15

The sum effect of all these passages is an overwhelming concern for bodily control and purity on the part of Paul. This may be a "kneejerk" reaction to the situation in Corinth, but it is a particularly strong thread throughout the letter. According to Douglas's model of the relationship between the physical and social body, this reflects a strong concern for a formal and controlled social body.

"Is there a problem of cognitive dissonance within the texts produced by the group, or between its texts and its experience? - How are these problems solved?"

At this stage, a brief definition of the theory of cognitive dissonance is required. We will use the brief description in Gager's Kingdom and community (1975):

the theory states that under certain conditions a religious community whose fundamental beliefs are disconfirmed by events in the world will not necessarily collapse and disband. Instead it may undertake zealous missionary activity as a response to its sense of cognitive dissonance, i.e., a condition of distress and doubt stemming from the disconfirmation of an important belief. The critical element of the theory is that "the presence of dissonance gives rise to pressures to reduce or eliminate the dissonance. The strength of the pressures to

reduce the dissonance is a function of the magnitude of the dissonance" (Gager, 1975:38).

From a reading of the text, I am not sure that events in the world are the reason for the situation at Corinth. I do not think that any external event has disconfirmed any fundamental belief held by the community. The possible area is that of the delayed parousia, but this is not a concern for Paul in this letter. The problems are much more internal. In addition, according to the theory, we would expect to find an emphasis on missionary work in the letter, if the community was in such a position. Although present, this is by no means the central concern.

Despite this, there is evidence that Paul has written to the Corinthians previously about sexual immorality. Presumably this letter would have been kept as one of its texts. There may also have been other circulars that had become part of its collection of texts. If this is the case, then it appears that the Corinthians were living in a manner which contrasted the views expressed in their texts. This is handled by Paul in the letter we now have by laying down a number of rules, directives and the like. He also emphasises his authority over the Corinthians, and the boundaries of the physical and social body.

"What are the ritual means of establishing and reinforcing the group identity?"

We have already answered this question in a number of our responses to the above questions. The main ritual means of establishing the group identity is the proper celebration of the Lord's supper, the excommunication of the immoral believers, and strong boundary maintenance of the social group.

4.8. QUESTIONS CONCERNING THE SYMBOLIC UNIVERSE AND THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF REALITY

"What are the shared values, aspirations, anxieties, and ethical norms of the group?"

Once again, there appear to be two sets of criteria here. Those of Paul, and those of the Corinthians. Paul values an ordered, tightly knit and bounded group where there is an ethos of brotherly love, equality and common purpose in sharing and living out the gospel. Paul's anxieties are mainly to do with occasions where these values are not lived up to. Hence, his reactions to sexual immorality, divisions and so on. For Paul, ethical norms are strongly associated with the body, which must be controlled - in terms of sex, food, and language and so on.

On the other hand, Paul's opponents at Corinth, seem to value spirit possession and the charismatic loss of bodily control. For them, this implies

a strong connection with the supernatural. Some also appear to share the typical social values of the Roman world, where there is strong social stratification. The rich expect honour from the poor, in return for favours. In general, the Corinthians are pulled in several different directions. They have different factions, conflicts and so on. Therefore, it is difficult to talk of shared values other than a common belief in Jesus Christ. A belief that they should meet together and perform certain rituals is apparent, but these gatherings have broken down into chaos according to Paul. Hence, the anxieties likely to have been shared by the Corinthians would likely have been those of unclear direction, a lack of leadership and confusion over ethical and communal norms.

"What is disclosed about the symbolic universe of the group by its shared understandings of supernatural beings (good and evil), of miracles and portents, of magic and healing techniques?"

"How does it perceive God in his essential being, and in the divine actions, both within the cosmic structure and among human beings?"

1 Corinthians is consistent in its use of terms to describe the areas of good and evil. Paul's main phrase to describe the sphere of all that is good and holy is the "kingdom of God". God is set apart from all that is evil, and human beings can inherit this "kingdom" if they too set themselves apart from sin and evil. 1 Cor. 6:9-10 implies this connection:

Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.

In addition, Paul implies a "cosmic hierarchy" (Neyrey, 1990:33ff). 1 Cor. 11:3 says that just as Christ is the head of every man, the man is the head of the woman and the head of Christ is God. Hence even Christ is in a structured relationship with God. Because of this relationship, Christ is given the power and authority to subject all things under his feet (1 Cor. 15:27). Hence, for Paul, even the supernatural exists in a controlled and ordered manner. One might even argue that he believes the church should be a reflection of this order.

For he "has put everything under his feet". Now when it says "everything" has been put under him, it is clear that this does not include God himself, who put everything under Christ. When he has done this, then the Son himself will be made subject to him who put everything under him, so that God may be in all (1 Cor. 15:27-28).

However, this order is under threat from the forces of evil and wickedness, which threatens to bring chaos and disorder to the cosmos. This dualistic worldview is implied in several passages, where Paul describes the power of God and Christ to dispel these evil forces and maintain an ordered and bounded cosmos. For example, talking about the resurrection from the dead, Paul writes;

But each in his own turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him. Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death. (1 Cor. 15:23-26).

Hence, Paul believes the cosmos in a dualistic way where the forces of good, marshalled by God and Christ are opposed by the dominions, authorities and powers of evil. These evil powers will finally be destroyed by Christ in an apocalyptic scenario.

As far as miracles and magic are concerned, these reflect the dualistic worldview that Paul has. There are forces of good and forces of evil. The Spirit as a force of good may manifest itself in several gifts including those of healing and working of miracles. Paul takes these to be a sign of God's faithfulness and power over evil, but does not rank the gifts of healing and working miracles above other gifts such as prophecy which build up the church (1 Cor. 12:9-10, 14:1ff). In contrast to the work of God, Christ and the Spirit, Paul believes that evil is manifested in sexual immorality, division, loss of bodily control, chaos and disorder.

Hence, Paul sees God as sovereign and enthroned in heaven, from where he will pronounce eschatological judgement on all - meting out punishment to fit the crime (1 Cor. 4:5, 3:17). However, God is not distant to the point of being unreachable. Paul also views God as being intimately involved in the Christian life. He has chosen the believers (1 Cor. 1:27-29), has called them (1 Cor. 1:9), knows them (1 Cor. 8:3) and his Spirit dwells in them (1 Cor. 3:16).

"How does the group understand history and its own place within history?"

In 1 Cor. 10:1-14, Paul gives counsel to the Corinthians to learn the lessons from Israel's history. He exhorts them not to partake in pagan revelry, and suchlike sinful behaviour. By making this link, Paul is associating the Christians with the Israelites. He believes that they are "our forefathers" (10:10). Hence, just as the Israelites were the chosen people, Paul asserts the same for the Christian community. He likens the Corinthians to the Israelites in an explicit manner - using the terminology of baptism, the eucharist, and Christ to describe the Israelites journey in the desert. In

other words, Paul is concerned with establishing a new fictive kin and new ancestors, so that the Corinthian Christians see themselves as a continuation of the history of the chosen people.

They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. They all ate the same spiritual food and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ (10:2-4).

This passage (10:1-14) implies that Paul consciously associates the Christian movement with the history of the Israelites. The new Christian movement continues and develops that history.

"What is its view of time?"

Although Paul is not as explicit in his use of the language of time in 1 Corinthians as he is in his other letters, we can still distinguish certain elements. On a general level, Paul's conception of time is linear. He understands time to have begun with the creation, and will end with the apocalyptic return of Christ, which will usher in a new era.

In the text of his letter, Paul also uses language with implications of time. For example, he may talk of the time before his audience had become Christians, contrasted with "now" that they are believers. He also talks of a process of growing up, where the Corinthian Christians need to become mature and ready for Christ's coming (14:20).

"Are there dualistic elements in the group's perception of reality? Do these good/evil factors assume political, moral, social, or cultural forms?"

Dualism plays a formative role in the community's perception of reality. Paul is preoccupied with maintaining boundaries, and he achieves this by making distinctions between categories of good and evil, and insiders and outsiders. Hence, the dualism is practically on a moral and social level, however the dualism associated with Paul's perception of the cosmos is more a cultural form building on the Jewish worldview. Some of the dualistic categories include:

Saints	vs. nonsaints, those not justified (1 Cor. 6:1,9)
Saints	vs. the world (1 Cor. 1:20-28; 2:12; 3:19 etc.)
Insiders	vs. outsiders (1 Cor. 5:12-13)
Believers	vs. unbelievers (1 Cor. 6:6)
sanctified	vs. unsanctified (1 Cor. 1:2)
Called	vs. not called (1 Cor. 1:2, 24)
Known	vs. not known (1 Cor. 8:3)

(Neyrey, 1990:41-42).

"What are the dominant symbols for the group and its place in the universe? In what distinctive ways does this group use symbols that it shares with other groups?"

"What are the distinctive symbolic features of the group under scrutiny?"

One of the aims of 1 Corinthians is for Paul to correct the symbolic behaviour of the Corinthians, for example in the ritual of the Lord's supper. Hence, the symbols we find in the letter are predominantly those that set the community apart from the surrounding world. They are symbols which emphasise the group's uniqueness, yet also its unity. The symbol of the body is a good example here. The body of Christ implies a uniqueness in that it involves only those who have been called into the holy and set apart Christian community, yet it emphasises the need for unity, and the strength that comes with it. Other symbols include the bread and wine of the eucharist, and the water and symbolic action of baptism.

The symbol of the body is somewhat unique to the Corinthian church, as it is discussed in detail and with reference to the specific context of the Corinthian church, to a degree not found in the other letters. Similarly, the emphasis on the Lord's supper, and the symbolism involved, not to mention the consequences of the unworthy celebration of the ritual is also unique in the detail to which Paul discusses it. Only in the gospels, is the Lord's supper described in as much detail.

4.9. ASSESSING THE CORINTHIAN COMMUNITY ACCORDING TO "GRID" AND "GROUP"

4.9.1. Assessing the "grid" scale

At the outset we need to remember how Douglas defines the "grid" scale. She said that it was the degree to which "a man is constrained not by group loyalties but by a set of rules which engage him in reciprocal transactions" (Natural Symbols, 1970:ix). In other words, it measures the amount of social control that society exerts over the individual, and the individual's obligations to others. Key pointers of high "grid" are a classification system which is coherent, consistent, and broad in scope, while "weak" grid is the reverse. The classification system is narrow in scope, it is lacking in coherence and encounters difficulties in ordering the broader dimension of reality. Competing systems of classification are also said to be a symptom of weak "grid". In addition, the degree to which social roles are defined is also an indication of "grid". Where roles are not defined or are ambiguous, weak "grid" is in place, while clear definitions of social roles points to strong "grid".

How does the Corinthian community fare according to this scale? I think that it is helpful here to distinguish between the view of Paul, and the view of the Corinthians themselves. Based on the evidence we have gathered above,

there is no doubt that the Corinthian church would have scored very poorly on this scale. Their community was one typical of weak "grid". The social roles were so ill-defined that factionalism had become a hallmark of their community. Leadership was non-existent. Their worship was nothing short of chaos, where the more physically spectacular gifts (tongues), which involved a loss of bodily control were held in high esteem. Similarly, their celebration of the Lord's supper was characterised by selfishness and greed. We have noted that perhaps part of the reason for this is the competing classification systems and social norms where the patrons expected the best food and so on. This adds to our view of weak "grid". Hence, it appears that the Corinthians championed the "freedom" that came with being a Christian, and were reluctant to impose regulations which would impede this "freedom". One could even argue that those who expressed their "freedom" most were held in esteem by the group. The case of the incestuous marriage is a case in point here. Hence, it is our opinion that the Corinthian church was without a doubt, a church typical of the very lowest "grid" value.

How does this compare to the views expressed by Paul? The main concerns of Paul in the letter, is the restoration of the unity in the group. A secondary issue is to emphasise his own authority over the group, which he does at every opportunity. Part of this authority is expressed in his outrage at the lack of morality in the Corinthian community. By putting the Corinthians straight on the issues of immorality, and by even going so far as to demand the excommunication of the immoral, Paul is requiring a change to a more structured and coherent system. He is emphasising a stronger "grid" position, because his new morality rules are experienced by the individual as social control.

Elsewhere, we have also noted that Paul emphasises a very controlled opinion of the physical body in the letter. Therefore, we would expect his view of the social body to be very controlled as well. As we have suggested, this adds up to a much stronger or higher "grid" position. Despite this, I am reluctant to classify Paul's position as completely "high" or "strong" "grid". Early on in our investigation, we noted that Paul differentiates between certain church functions or "offices". Although this too suggests a movement towards high "grid", Paul describes the functions or offices in sufficiently little detail to leave questions as to the exact roles of those mentioned. What are the limits of a prophet's authority? What about an administrator? To what extent does someone with the gift of healing have a say in the functioning of the church? This list of offices is by no means as detailed as those in the letters to Timothy and Titus, for example. *maybe a specific situation*

Where does this leave us? I think Paul emphasised control, order and structure in this letter because of the particular situation at Corinth, which necessitated such strong leadership and direction. However, I do not think

Paul was entirely at ease with such strong a "grid" position. This is evidenced by his reluctance to define the church functions or offices clearly. In the text, it is not even clear whether these offices are permanent positions or not. From other passages (ch 14) it appears not. Therefore there is some ambiguity, characteristic of lower "grid". What is the overall impression? I think we should see Paul as showing a slightly ambiguous position where the overall effect is moderate to high "grid".

Hence, as a result of Paul's letter to the Corinthians, we would expect the community to emphasise the "grid" aspect of their communal life much more. We would expect them to move up the "grid" scale from a very weak position, to somewhere closer to the intersection of the "grid" and "group" lines. I would, however not expect the Corinthian community to cross over on the map to the "plus" side of the grid characterised by strong "grid".

4.9.2. Assessing the "group" scale

As with "grid" , we need to refresh our memories concerning the scope of the "group" scale of Douglas's theory. Discussing this aspect of the theory, Spickard (1989:156) writes:

The group dimension (horizontal in her schema) "expresses the possible range from the lowest possible of associations to tightly knit, closed groups The further we travel along the line from left to right, the more permanent, inescapable and clearly bounded the social groups" (1970:57). Any form of structuring that is dependent on group organization is included in this measure. The duration of group life, the degree of a sense of "them" versus "us", the number of activities taken in common rather than individually all combine here (Including a quote from Douglas's Natural Symbols).

Once more, I think we need to distinguish between the reality of the Corinthian situation, and the views expressed by Paul. We will look at the Corinthians first.

My impression of the Corinthian community is that it is a community disintegrating due to a lack of cohesion and unity in the group. The boundaries of the group have not been maintained, there is no longer a clear definition of "us" versus "them". There is much evidence to suggest that the Corinthians score a lower "group" score than Paul expects of them. He chides them for being divided to the extent that factions have developed. There is no unity in purpose at the Lord's supper. Their worship meetings are no longer occasions where the group is built up. There is sexual immorality, which breaks the community down. There is also division between individual church members. All these factors combine to suggest a very low "group" score.

This is offset to some degree though by the fact that the community, although divided, does meet together to celebrate the Lord's supper and to worship together, albeit in a way that does not help their unity. In addition, there is evidence that some members of the community have the wellbeing of the community in mind. We hear of Chloe's people who send word to Paul telling him of the trouble in the community. We also made note of the praise which Paul gives to Stephanus and his household. Therefore, there could be some within the Corinthian community who wish to build up the unity in the community and strengthen its boundaries. In addition, although the group boundaries have not been maintained, they are still there to some extent. We do not hear of outsiders being welcome at the Lord's supper for example. What then is the aggregate score along the "group" scale for the Corinthians. I would argue that they would be somewhere near the division between high and low "group" but probably just on the side of "low".

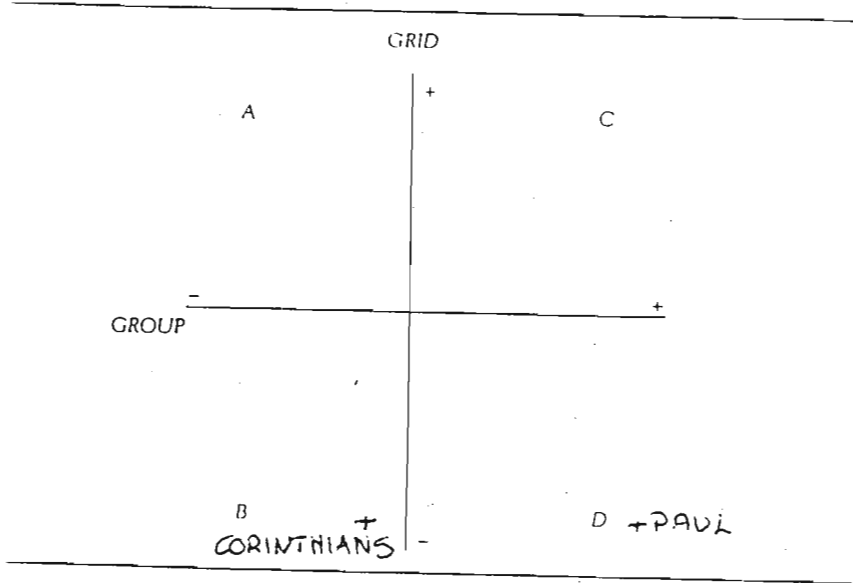
What about Paul? Paul offers a perfect contrast to the Corinthians in this regard. He emphasises at every turn the need for unity, strong boundaries and a common purpose, for the church is the chosen people of God. Hence it is clear beyond any doubt that Paul advocates a high "group" position.

4.9.3. Checking these assessments

In our methodology section, we included a profile of the four quadrants of the "grid/group" map according to the corresponding cosmologies. One way of checking our profile of the Corinthian situation is to check to what extent the cosmologies of the Corinthians and Paul agree with the cosmologies of the quadrants we have classified them under. We have so far classified the Corinthian church and Paul as being in quadrants B and D respectively. This is illustrated below:

FIGURE 1

THE GRID/GROUP DIAGRAM ACCORDING TO
NATURAL SYMBOLS, 1970 EDITION



How do these mappings of the Corinthians measure up to the cosmologies of quadrant D and B groups? The cosmologies of those groups are described as follows:

Quadrant B: low grid; low group.

Purity: There is no emphasis on purity. Group control and pressure is absent.

Ritual: Effervescence and spontaneity are valued. Ritual is rejected as controlling.

Magic: No magic. Independence is valued.

Personal identity: No antagonism between self and society, but roles and control rejected.

Body: Irrelevant. Spiritual is more important than physical. Therefore either ascetic or effervescent attitude may prevail.

Trance: May be welcomed. No fear of loss of self-control.

Sin: A matter of own personal choices, not defined by group.

Cosmology: Likely to have an impersonal view of the cosmos.

Suffering and misfortune: Love conquers all (Isenberg and Owen, 1977:8).

Within this description, there are some points that are strikingly similar to the situation at Corinth. For example, in Corinth, spontaneity and effervescence are valued highly, while Paul is uncomfortable with such freedom. Similarly, the Corinthians appear to have viewed the body in an informal, uncontrolled way. The spiritual was more important for them than the physical. This is clear in the controversy over the gift of tongues. Again, on the issue of trance, it appears that the Corinthians were not afraid of the loss of bodily control. On the matter of sin, it would appear that some of the Corinthians saw sin as a matter of own personal choices. There are the problems of sexual immorality and incest which seem to fit here.

Differences may appear though on the level of the rejection of ritual. Although the Corinthians did not carry out the rituals in a proper manner (according to Paul), they still saw ritual as a part of their faith and regular practice. They did not reject ritual completely. It is also unlikely though, that the community had an impersonal view of the cosmos, unless one subscribes to the view that the Corinthians were influenced by Gnosticism, in which case this may make more sense. I think the evidence in the letter is ambiguous, but the Corinthians' emphasis on speaking in tongues and their apparent ambivalence over bodily control and trance states suggests to me a leaning towards a personal view of the cosmos. Tongues and so on are a way of communing with their personal God. It is my opinion that these differences can be explained by the marginal and ambiguous position of group coherence on the part of the Corinthians. Their "group" scale is too close to the edge of the quadrant to conform to the typical cosmology of quadrant B groups. Some of the ambiguity over the position of the Corinthian group may be due to the possibility that they were experiencing pressure to conform to a position more typical of quadrant D. This pressure was being exerted by Paul, and likely also his messengers and other outsiders with influence over the community.

Quadrant D: low grid; high group.

Purity: Strong concern for purity. Both the physical body and the social body are under attack from outside forces.

Ritual: Ritualistic attitude. Ritual focused on maintaining and strengthening group boundaries and expelling pollutants (witches) from the social body.

Magic: A source of danger and pollution.

Personal identity: Located in group membership, not in the internalization of roles. Roles are confused.

Body: Social and physical bodies tightly controlled as they are under attack.

Trance: Dangerous, may be identified as demonic possession, or evil.

Sin: Sin is understood as pollution. It is the evil stuck in society and the body. Internal state of being is important, as is the obedience of social rules.

Cosmology: Dualistic understanding of warring forces of good and evil.

Suffering and misfortune: Attributed to malevolent forces. Therefore it is unjust. Not necessarily seen as punishment.

This description of the cosmology of a typical quadrant D group describes the view of Paul as seen in 1 Corinthians exactly. Each of these points is true of Paul. Therefore, it seems as though there may be some room for error concerning our analysis of the Corinthians, but Paul fits neatly into a quadrant D classification.

4.10. CONCLUSION

Assuming that our analysis of the Corinthian group and Paul are correct, we are now in a position to interpret specific texts within the letter from a more enlightened position. We are able to predict more confidently how we would expect Paul and the Corinthian community to behave. We believe that Paul displays a typical quadrant D perspective, with concerns for tight control over bodily orifices and correspondingly, group boundaries. This is contrasted with the position of the Corinthians themselves who display on the whole a position of low grid and low group - quadrant B. Their world view is characterised by effervescence, spontaneity and Spirit possession, where there is a lack of concern over bodily control and correspondingly group boundaries.

In the following chapter we will assess our methodology by comparing it to that of Stephen Barton, and also ask to what extent it might be helpful in an analysis of specific texts such as those Barton discusses.

CHAPTER FIVE

"COMPARING METHODS: 1 COR. 11:17-34 & 14:33B-36"

5.1. INTRODUCTION

In this chapter we take a close look at Barton's 1986 article entitled, Paul's sense of place: An anthropological approach to community formation in Corinth¹³. We refer to Barton's work not because we think his research is invalid or poor, but because he raises some valid points, and because his methodology is similar to ours. In addition, the issue of community formation and the household is one that particularly interests me - as I belong to a church that has as its focus the small group or "house church".

The aim of this chapter is simple. We have seen that using Howard Kee's questions to "interrogate the text" in conjunction with Mary Douglas's "grid/group" model allows for an anthropological approach to the New Testament which takes both the social sciences and the text seriously. In the previous chapter, we saw this in operation on a general level which gave us an overview of the text, and an idea of the sociological and anthropological issues facing the Corinthian community, although we noted that a more comprehensive interpretation of the text would be more suitable. In this chapter we ask a more specific question: "Does a similar anthropological approach which deals with 1 Corinthians in a more specific manner, reveal any shortcomings in our own methodology"? If so what are they, and how can they be countered?

The way forward then, is first to summarise the main arguments of Barton's article. Secondly, referring to the questions asked by Kee, and the predictive power of the "grid/group" model, we ask whether or not our approach would be effective in a similarly intense study? Does Barton's work reveal any shortcomings in our own methodology? We will avoid embarking on our own analysis of the texts, as this will prove repetitive. Rather, we will focus on how the two approaches could learn from each other - using the texts as a reference point to illustrate our argument.

5.2. SUMMARY OF BARTON'S ARTICLE: "PAUL'S SENSE OF PLACE: ANTHROPOLOGICAL APPROACH TO COMMUNITY FORMATION IN CORINTH"

Discussing the first letter to the Corinthians, Barton focuses on two texts: 11:17-34 and 14:33b-36. He argues that these texts reflect "two critical and tell-tale points where conflict occurs between Paul and the Corinthians over

¹³ New Testament Studies, vol. 32, pp. 225-246.

where the line is to be drawn between church and household" (1986:225). This question of where the line is to be drawn between church and household is the issue that Barton addresses.

Barton begins his argument by noting that in these passages, Paul regards certain kinds of activity as "out of place" as far as his view of the church is concerned, but "in place" as far as his view of the household is concerned. By doing this, Paul is using an exercise in boundary definition in an attempt to separate church space from household space, church time from household time (Ibid:225). Having identified that these texts are primarily concerned with boundary definition, Barton looks to the prominent scholarship in this area. he notes several important factors in this scholarship:

1. Boundary definition is about the ways in which human groups construct their social worlds. Boundaries bring order and meaning to a seemingly disorderly universe.
2. Time and space are prime areas for boundary definition, as they are artificial divisions that bring meaning to human existence. Therefore, time and space preserve a society and its values. Time and space are not "natural boundaries", but artificial ones that bear witness to the socially constructed nature of reality.
3. Divisions of time and space are made at every level of human world-construction - whether practical or highly abstract.
4. Divisions of time and space are sometimes given importance by designating them as sacred or taboo. Hence, rituals are divisions of time and space as they divide time into sacred/holy time and regular time, and space into sacred and ordinary space. There are also a number of other boundaries which define the sacred and profane. For example, order/chaos, dirt/non-dirt, friend/enemy.
5. Boundaries themselves may sometimes take up time and space. For example, a city wall divides civilised from wild, and the sabbath separated the different working periods.
6. It follows then, that due to its separating function, a boundary is a locus of power, "for it is there that most control is required if the social order is to be maintained or, conversely, if it is to be changed" (Ibid:227).
7. Boundary markers are binary in nature - they separate into categories: inner/outer, up/down, present/future, beginning/end.
8. Boundary markers draw attention to differences, not similarities.
9. Boundaries are often represented by a number of symbolic media - for example, body symbolism, baptism (water) (Ibid:226-228).

5.2.1. 1 Cor. 14:33b-36: Speaking in church

In this text, Paul says:

... the women should keep silence in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be subordinate ... If there is anything they desire to know, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church.

Here, Barton shows that Paul is giving a rule which designates the speaking of wives in the churches as "out of place". Using Douglas's definition of dirt as "matter out of place" - it appears that wives speaking "out of place" is dirt (pollution). The force of the rule is made plain in a number of ways. It is repeated three times. The sacred location from which wives are excluded is also mentioned three times, and the content of the rule is more uncompromising than many other rules in the letter.

Hence, in Paul's point of view, the church is distinct from the household and he draws a boundary between the two by placing a rule of silence on wives in church. If the wives want to know anything, they are to ask their husbands at home (14:35a). From the wives perspective, there is not a distinct boundary between church and household, "since they have carried over into the church gatherings the practice and, with that, the authority which was already theirs within the household" (Ibid:230).

For the wives, the gender and sex-role boundary between ekklesia and oikos is not nearly so clear-cut as for Paul. In fact, we have evidence here that they viewed church as an opportunity to extend their authority beyond the household and into the church gathering, doing so by insisting, through verbal action, on the equivalence of church and household boundaries (Ibid:230-1).

From this view of Paul and the wives, Barton continues to make a number of observations:

1. Authority, expressed in terms of gender and sex-roles is one of the issues at stake, and one of the reasons for Paul's boundary definition. Paul is concerned with maintaining patriarchal authority. Women may only speak in church if divinely inspired (11:5, 14:23-24).
2. The authority at issue is also that of Paul himself. Paul reveals this in his emphasis that his view is "of the Lord" (14:37), and in his threat of expulsion for those who do not comply.
3. Paul reinforces his rule by referring to its universal implementation - "as in all the churches of the saints" (14:33b).

4. The rule of silence is also a control mechanism - as Paul believes that women should be subordinate (14:34).

So, where is the boundary between church and household? For Paul it lies in the line marking gender defined speech. In the household, women have authority and may speak, in the church they do not have authority and do not speak. For the women, though, this boundary line would have been confusing as, "the church meetings were in some sense *public gatherings which assembled in private space*" (Ibid:232). The private space in which the church met was the space where women had their authority. This would explain why women had felt free to speak in church, taking into account the patriarchal culture of the Greco-Roman world.

In sum, Paul sees women speaking in church as "pollution" - as something out of place. Therefore he engages in boundary definition to rectify the situation and emphasise the patriarchal hierarchy of the church.

5.2.2. 1 Cor. 11:17-34: Church meals

Barton sees this passage as dealing with the division between church and household as well. Paul opposes the Corinthians, who seem intent on collapsing the spheres of church and household together. In this case, however, Barton argues that the conflict is over "commensality" and the boundary marker is the meal itself. He notes several ways in which the meal can be a boundary line.

1. The meal is the locus for divisions among the community, and the perpetuation of such divisions.
2. It is said that boundaries are surrounded by danger and marked with anxiety, and that this is usually worked out through ritual action. In this case, Paul is anxious due to the manner in which the meal is celebrated. He also believes that there is danger involved with severe consequences for those who are not sincere in the way they partake of the meal (11:29-30,32).
3. The meal conveys social divisions of "clean" or "unclean" in the type of food/drink to be eaten or abstained from.
4. It conveys divisions of time and frequency of eating and fasting.
5. A meal can be marked off as a boundary by the time taken to prepare it. For example, Sabbath meals were prepared beforehand.
6. The quantity of food consumed can distinguish social groups at the meal.
7. Commensality (sharing) or non-commensality (exclusion from a meal) is a strong boundary marker showing guest/stranger, insider/outsider, pure/impure.
8. The spatial organisation of the meal conveys divisions. Who is at the head and the foot of the table?
9. Are meals taken in silence? Is there a commentary which explains the significance of the meal? (Ibid:235-236).

These are some of the boundary lines that can be present in meals. What is happening at Corinth? Paul clearly wants to distinguish between commensality in church and in the household. Twice he contrasts the church meal with eating and drinking at home (11:22a, 11:34a). Apparently, Paul believes that household patterns of commensality are intruding into church patterns in a disruptive manner.

The household pattern which Paul is unhappy with is one that is controlled by the wealthy. They are the ones who eat and drink excessively (11:21). They are able to arrive early (they have more free time). Paul argues that their behaviour, which would have been normal in a typical Greco-Roman household means that they "despise the church and humiliate those who have nothing" (11:22).

Noting that Paul seems to be addressing the wealthy householders, Barton links this with the factionalism mentioned by Paul, and argues that the conflict is between different households - with rich households competing for dominance in the church. Hence, the church meal has become a place for household rivalries. Paul's intervention is intended, therefore,

to provide the setting for a re-ordering of social relations in church by restricting the intrusion of household-based power. In general, Paul valued the household and wished to conserve and perpetuate its authority patterns within its own boundaries... But the ekklesia provided a new sphere for rich household heads to extend their power through patronage, ostentatious consumption and emotional blackmail. Paul views this as illegitimate... (Ibid:239).

Paul's response can be seen in a number of facets:

1. Paul appeals for unity between household factions by representing the church as "one household" with Paul himself as the father (4:14-21).
2. Paul gives prominence to other models and metaphors of association in the letter: building, temple, field, dough.
3. Paul sought to control the meal by making it different - setting it apart from normal meals.

i) It is different in that it occurs when the church is gathered together (11:17, 18, 20, 33,34).

ii) It has a sacred name: "The Lord's supper".

iii) The meal is linked to a holy tradition "received from the Lord" (11:23-25).

iv) The meal at home lacks such a tradition.

v) The use of the traditional words implies a beginning and end of the ritual, and an ethos of togetherness.

vi) The danger of the meal (11:27-32, 34) also shows its sacredness.

Hence, Paul saw the household model as useful as the general sphere of church organisation, but household space and time needed to be carefully separated from church time and space.

5.3. COMPARING THE TWO APPROACHES

5.3.1. Common ground

Both our own methodology, and the approach set out by Barton are anthropological. Therefore, we would expect them to cover many of the same areas, and even come to some of the same conclusions - within reason. It is my belief that this is indeed the case in this regard. Most of the questions asked by Barton are also asked by our own approach. A brief survey of those questions asked by Barton compared with those in our methodology will illustrate this. Some of the questions that Barton asks or implies are listed below:

- Was church distinguished from household?
- If so, how? by whom? and for what reason?
- How does the text reveal Paul's own sense of place?
- How strongly is Paul's position emphasised?
- What are the boundary lines in the texts?
- What does the boundary separate?
- What is Paul's aim in laying down these boundary lines?
- Who are Paul's opponents?
- What is their position?
- What kind of power is at stake?
- What tensions/conflicts are apparent in the community, or with Paul?
- How does a meal constitute a boundary?
- How does Paul use it as a boundary marker?

These questions are mirrored by a number found in our approach. They are:

- By what authority are the boundaries drawn which define the group?
- What are the threats to the maintenance of these boundaries?
- Who are the insiders? The outsiders? Can an insider become an outsider?
- Does the threat arise within the group or from without?
- What bounds of time and space does the group occupy?
- Which is the more important factor: group identity or the criteria for belonging?
- What are the roles of power within the group?
- What are the structures of power within the group?
- Are age groups or sex roles defined?
- Are there identifiable classes or ranks within groups?
- If there is conflict within the group, what are the issues?

- Who has special privilege, on what basis?
- To what extent and why has the group altered the ritual?
- What are the dynamics of the community? What are its goals?
- What is its view of time?

It is my argument, then, that an honest and meticulous answering of those questions that form part of our methodology in relation to the specific texts in question, would no doubt lead to a comprehensive and insightful interpretation of the texts in their own right. In addition, "interrogating the text" would allow the researcher to put the texts into the context of an understanding of Paul and the Corinthian community. Hence, the two approaches have a common theoretical base which results in the asking of similar questions. Since the questions are similar, the extent to which similar results will be achieved is related to the competence and thoroughness with which the questions are answered. Despite the common ground between the methods, there are still several differences. This implies that the two approaches can learn from each other. We will outline first our critiques of Barton's approach, when compared to our own, and then the critiques of our own, on the basis of Barton's work.

5.3.2. A critique of Barton

In his article, Barton emphasises strongly the boundary between church and household in his interpretation of the texts. Admittedly, this is a novel concept, and therefore worthy of the attention, but he does not really take into account the range of other possibilities as well. For example, he does not build up a comprehensive profile of Paul's attitude to women in the church which takes into account the controversy over head coverings, which presumably could be seen as another boundary line ensuring the submission of women in church and a guarantee of patriarchalism. Nor does he go beyond mentioning the fact that Paul allowed women to prophesy in church (1 Cor. 11:5) - a point that may be seen as creating ambiguity in Barton's opinion.

Although Barton's approach is unique in that it focuses on a new interpretation of the text, his method is not comprehensive enough. This can be seen in his interpretation of 1 Cor. 11:17-34. To begin with, Barton draws our attention to the factions that cause chaos in the celebration of the ritual. It seems perplexing that again he does not go beyond mentioning the factions that Paul counters in the first three chapters of the letter. This leads us to ask, are these the same factions? Are the reasons for their existence the same? These are questions that are covered in our approach from several angles - i.e. with an understanding of boundaries, ritual, authority structures and so on. I think it would be helpful to locate the conflicts and factions within the overall context of the Corinthian situation, and then discuss the specific details of the conflicts mentioned in the passage.

This leads us to another critique concerning context. Barton does not relate his argument to either the socio-historical or cultural context of Corinth and the Greco-Roman world. It seems that the same critique that was levelled at Howard Kee by Elliott¹⁴, also applies to Barton. That is, he fails to take significant notice of the historical setting in which the text was written, and in which the original readers lived.

Another critique of Barton's analysis of 1 Cor. 11:17-34 is that although he makes much of the binary nature of boundary definition, he does not make explicitly clear in this case who the insiders and outsiders are. He notes that Paul addresses the wealthy and influential members of the church (the patrons). Are these members viewed as outsiders by Paul? If so, does this mean that Paul views their behaviour as "dirt" and "pollution" in the same way as he does the wives who speak in church? Barton suggests that this is the case - rightly viewing the problem in terms of the intrusion of household-based power - but he tends to ignore the way in which Paul turns the tables on those at Corinth. He affirms those who "have nothing" and who have been treated as outsiders, effectively suggesting that they are the real "insiders" in the community, while those who have seen themselves as "insiders" become the "outsiders".

In addition, one of the apparent strengths of our own approach, is that it allows one to make links in the text at a number of levels not immediately apparent to the casual reader of the letter. For example, using our own approach would also have pointed to areas such as group dynamics and the criteria for belonging. This, then, would lead us to ask about the dynamics of the community. It seems as though, in this instance, wealth and power had become more important criteria for belonging than faith in Christ. As a result, group identity has broken down into factionalism.

Therefore, the core of our argument is this: Barton assumes that a methodology which focuses on social boundaries is an anthropological approach. While this may be partly true, it remains our argument that anthropology is much broader in scope, and has at its core the making of links in seemingly unconnected areas. Hence, we argue that Barton's approach is rather narrow in that it only takes boundary definition into account. However, its strength is that it is very focused, and it includes a brief analysis of the theoretical considerations concerning social boundaries.

¹⁴ See section 2.6.: A critique of Kee's "interrogating the text".

5.3.3. A critique of our own approach

One of the strongest critiques of our own approach that became apparent in our summary of Barton's work is that while our questions point the researcher in a number of interesting directions, they assume that the researcher is familiar with the theoretical considerations from which they arise. This is a strength of Barton's approach, that is lacking in ours, as Barton includes a discussion of this area. For example, in our approach the boundary questions do not make clear that boundaries are intimately connected with power. This is perhaps alluded to in the question: "By what authority are the boundaries drawn which define the group?", but this connection is not explained. Similarly, one of the questions about group functions assumes a background knowledge of the theory of cognitive dissonance. Therefore, the method becomes somewhat specialised. Only researchers who are already familiar with these areas would understand the focus of the question. This reduces the field of people who might find our method useful.

Still on the level of what we can learn from Barton's approach, there were two aspects of Barton's work that clearly differ from our own. The first was that Barton did not confine his study to the text alone. When useful he referred to a number of biblical and other passages ranging from the gospels through to Josephus and the other Pauline letters. This can be seen as a confinement of our approach, but it is one consciously taken, as it heightens our awareness of the specific issues at Corinth, and doesn't confuse with similar concerns that may have been the case elsewhere. Depending on the aims of the individual researcher, he/she may want to include such links in his/her study. Secondly, Barton shows the skill of a literary critic, as he notices aspects such as the number of times an order is issued by Paul. Our approach does not ask this kind of question directly.

There are also several other problems that were encountered in trying to "interrogate the text". One of the more frustrating is the apparent repetition of the questions. For example, the questions: "If there is conflict within the group, what are the issues?" and "What are the tensions within the group?" are asking the same thing unless one sees a subtle difference in a conflict and a tension. Further, some of the questions are poorly phrased - leading to confusion and frustration. The prime example is the following question, which had us baffled: "What are the themes in the text of the communication?" It seems then that the questions for "interrogating the text" could do with some streamlining and editing where necessary, learning from the sharp focus of Barton's work. However, on the whole they provide a powerful interpretive tool.

On a theoretical level, our approach also seems to have a key flaw. As it now stands, we "interrogate the text" in order to build up a profile of the

community on the "grid/group" map, so that we can interpret the text more insightfully. This circular argument is problematic. It also tends to put the most powerful aspect of the method - the "grid/group" model, in a secondary position - exactly the problem we were trying to avoid. Therefore, our four step methodology needs some restructuring so that we do not lose either the thoroughness of our "interrogating the text", nor the predictive power of the "grid/group" model.

5.3.3.1. A modified methodology

As it now stands the problem with our approach is that we have allowed steps two and three to be compressed into one, which is dominated by the questions. As a result, it is the questions which have pointed out links in behaviour and action, not any analysis using the "grid/group" model; although our plotting of Paul and the Corinthians on the "grid/group" map, and our profile of the two positions can be seen as a move in the right direction.

There are several possible solutions to this problem. In each of the solutions, the questions must be either edited and/or restructured completely. One alternative would be to return to the idea of restructuring and rephrasing the questions so that it is immediately clear to the researcher how they would relate to the "grid" and "group" categories. In this scenario, one could continuously be assessing the principal players and their theological positions according to the "grid" and "group" categories as one answers the questions. This could be achieved by adding an element of rating to the questions. For example, at the end of each category of questions it might be useful to add questions such as the following (depending on how the researcher has chosen to define "group" and "grid"):

To what extent do the group's boundaries, authority structures (or whatever the case may be) constrain and control the individual? Do the type and nature of the boundaries, authority structures etc. suggest strong or weak social pressure? In terms of boundaries, etc. where on the "group" line would you plot the principal players of the text?

A similar range of rating questions could be applied for the "grid" scale:

Are the boundaries, authority structures etc. a shared system of classification by all members of the group? Do the boundaries, authority structures etc. bring order and intelligibility to the individual's experience, or disorder and confusion? Where on the "grid" line would you plot the principle players of the text?

It is my belief that a restructuring of step two in this manner would alleviate most of the problems that we have encountered. We would not lose the thoroughness of the questions, and the focus would be primarily on using the

"grid/group" model effectively. It would also allow an interesting and focused comparison of positions. For example, we would be able to trace a group's position and discover whether or not they show a consistent position. It would become interesting if a group had a strong "group" position in terms of boundaries, but a weaker "group" position in terms of authority structures. How would one interpret such inconsistencies, if they do occur? This would result, I believe, in a method that is equally adept at showing the overall picture of how groups and individuals within a text act, but also at pointing out specific discrepancies in theology and behaviour of the principal players within the text.

5.4. CONCLUSION

There are a number of problems with our methodology as we originally set it out. The primary issues were that the questions used to "interrogate the text" were rather long-winded and poorly phrased; and that they dominated the "grid/group" model too much. We have learnt from our comparison with the more specific and focused approach put forward by Barton, and have proposed a restructuring of step two of our approach - so that the questions are more clearly focused on the areas of "grid" and "group". Despite this modification, the general four step outline of our approach stays the same.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

6.1. SUMMING UP

We began this study by discussing the role that the social sciences have played in the discipline of New Testament studies over the past three decades. We argued that much of the work being produced in this line tends to use the Biblical text selectively. We similarly noted that those studies which take a more literary perspective and focus more on the structure, plot and themes of the text sometimes tend to focus so intensely on the particular use of words, tenses and so on, that our view of the people of the text becomes obscured. These studies also tend not to keep up to date with the latest sociological and other social scientific discoveries.

The question we asked ourselves and the resulting task we set, was a consequence of pondering this problem. We asked whether it was possible to propose a holistic, thorough and realistic methodology which on the one hand was completely social scientific, yet on the other undertook to interpret a complete text in a competent manner - avoiding the temptation to lift passages out of their context.

To achieve this goal, we developed a four step methodology which combined Mary Douglas's "grid/group" model with a series of questions developed by Howard Kee for the purposes of "interrogating the text". Our argument was that this experimental methodology has the potential to become a truly anthropological approach to the study of the New Testament. In the process of developing this methodology, we discussed a number of associated issues.

Firstly, we examined more closely the relationship between the social sciences and the New Testament. We outlined the criteria for a social scientific method, highlighting the importance of models and moving beyond mere description to explanation and interpretation. We then discussed some of the critiques that have been directed at previous social scientific studies of the New Testament.

In chapter two, we focused more specifically on cultural anthropology. We noted that this discipline has the potential to provide fresh insights into the people behind the production of the New Testament texts by pointing to questions and issues that have seldom previously been asked and probed. What motivated the early Christians? How did their communities operate? What were the structures of leadership? What were the boundaries between insiders and outsiders? Having recognised the potential of cultural anthropology for New

Testament study, we had to ask whether it was possible for cultural anthropology to make the transition to the analysis of historical groups and societies such as the early Christian communities, which can be studied only in the evidence they and those people they came into contact with, left behind - such as their writings, and perhaps archaeological remains. This was a vital question, as cultural anthropology and its models were designed for the purposes of participant observation, where there is an unlimited amount of data. Although the data available to us in our quest to understand the early Christian communities is very limited, we believe that historical anthropology is not only possible but incredibly useful, as it allows us to predict typical responses to events, unlike other tools.

Having discussed the general usefulness and applicability of cultural anthropology to New Testament studies, we turned our attention to the specific models which would form part of our own experimental methodology. We reviewed the development of Mary Douglas's work in her examination of the links between the physical body and the social body, through to her outline of the "grid/group" model in the 1970 edition of Natural Symbols and the subsequent revisions of the model. Our belief is that the "grid/group" model provides an invaluable means interpreting the New Testament text, however, one needs to be careful to define the "grid" and "group" dimensions of the model with care, and then stick to those definitions. Not doing so may lead to ambiguous and untrustworthy results.

By discussed cultural anthropology in general and more specifically the work of Mary Douglas, we had concluded our analysis of the anthropological element of our methodology. We still needed to balance this out with a healthy respect for the text and the secrets hidden therein. To help us achieve this, we turned to the work of Howard Kee. He had proposed a series of questions which, he suggested, if answered properly would form the basis of a sociological interpretation of the text. What attracted us to these questions was that they were explicitly aimed at the Biblical text, yet remained sociological in orientation, and would therefore help us to gain as much information as possible from the text. Information which was necessary if the "grid/group" model was to be employed reliably.

As we have already mentioned, the result of this analysis was our four step method which we believed would satisfactorily meet the requirements of an approach to the New Testament which is completely anthropological, yet which emphasises the importance of a holistic and responsible attitude to the text. We decided to test this experimental approach by putting it to work in an analysis of the first letter to the Corinthians. We chose this text as we would be able to compare our results with a similarly anthropological method put forward by Stephen Barton, which also discussed 1 Corinthians.

The results of our test were mixed. On the one hand, we were able to develop a detailed picture of the kinds of events and issues which were shaping the Christian community at Corinth. As hoped, we were able to plot both the positions of Paul and the Corinthians on the "grid/group" map. This provided a useful reference point from which to contrast the two, and from which to discuss the conflict between Paul and the Corinthians. However, the questions aimed at "interrogating the text" proved to be rather cumbersome. They were poorly phrased and repetitive. The result was that the "grid/group" model, which formed the key interpretive aspect of the method was overpowered by the questions. In our comparison with Barton's analysis of 1 Cor. 11:17-34 and 14:33b-36, we discovered that our approach could also use a sharper focus, but we believe that it remains a useful analytical tool for both a broad overview of the events and forces facing the characters of the text, and a sharper analysis of specific passages within the whole.

In the light of these shortcomings, we proposed a modification of step two of our original methodology. We proposed these modifications with the conviction that this exercise has been a fruitful one. We must learn from our mistakes and carry on going forward. Essentially the modifications involve two processes. The first means the editing of Kee's questions so that they are not so repetitive and poorly phrased. This will streamline the process and make it more "user-friendly". The second modifying process is the re-orienting of the questions so that they are explicitly aimed at evaluating the dimensions of "grid" and "group". This is achieved through adding standard questions at the end of each category of the "interrogating the text" array of questions. These are designed to facilitate an easy ranking of the principal players of the text on the "grid" and "group" axes of the map. Hence, one is continuously evaluating the characters of the text along the lines of "grid" and "group" - thereby allowing a more focused and specific analysis.

It is our conviction that these relatively minor alterations to our approach will improve the results attainable and effectiveness of the method a great deal. We look forward to testing the new version in the future.

6.2. INTERFACING WITH OUR OWN COMMUNITIES

As was mentioned in chapters one and two, it is my belief that a method that does not in some way impact on our own communities, is a method that is elitist or irrelevant. The process of transferring what we have learnt in an academic setting to that of a contemporary denomination is one that is often neglected. This is the rationale for including this process as step four in our methodology. It is now our final task to discuss several ways in which this approach could be used to impact on our churches and those who work in them.

One of the problems that I have encountered in church work is that there is often a gulf that grows between the preacher/minister of a church, and the congregation, due to different ways of understanding the Bible. This is mainly due to the fact that formal tertiary education in Theology and New Testament studies teaches criticality, while those who are not trained in this way are more likely to read the Bible literally. These differences may lead to suspicion of the minister or preacher by the congregation, and frustration on the part of the minister or preacher at the conservatism of the congregation.

There are a number of approaches that may be taken to reduce this problem. One revolves around accepting the different perspectives as valid, and working within that understanding. Another may also start with this acceptance of the differences, but hopes to challenge and stimulate discussion between those who hold the opposing views. It is my belief that the first approach is an evasion of the issues and hinders personal growth, while the second may be more difficult, but ultimately will bring a closer bond between those involved. How does this relate to our methodology? There are two suggestions that I would like to make here.

① The first is that the questions we outlined for an "interrogation of the text" could relatively easily be moulded into a series of Bible studies which has as its aim the challenge of showing how asking more critical questions not only of the text, but also of our own faith, can lead us into a fuller understanding of the Bible, and ourselves. Similarly, this scenario is comparable to that experienced by first-year students embarking on a theology degree. One typically is faced with a conflicting views of faith and the Bible. As in the previous example, I believe that the questions used in this study could be developed with the purpose of encouraging students to think critically.

② Another way in which our methodology could impact on our own communities is by providing a resource base for ministers and preachers. It might be useful to attempt to develop a profile of the various Christian communities that we come across in the New Testament. This would help those in the ministry to stay in touch with the latest insights into the New Testament, as well as provide a resource which they could use in their preaching. Therefore, I would argue that our experiment in method represents a potential for development of new insights not only in the world of New Testament studies, but also in the wider Christian community.

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