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Post-Pauline Christianity and Pagan Society

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Preliminary remarks. What does "post-Pauline Christianity" mean? Was Gentile Christianity generally "post-Pauline" in the second generation? Or does only a certain part of the church deserve this title, namely, the churches founded by Paul mainly in the Aegean area? We could take the geographical horizon of the pastoral letters, for example, which spans from Rome in the far west to the center of Asia Minor (2 Tim. 3:11: Iconium, Lystra) but not to Galatia and Syria, and from Crete in the south to Nicopolis in Epirus but not to Palestine, for example. Or is even that too extensive? From the central Pauline church area, from Asia Minor, one could hear toward the end of the first century the harsh message of the apocalyptist John, who rejected the eating of meat sacrificed to idols as a practice of false prophets (Rev. 2:20) and who found no room on the foundations of the heavenly Jerusalem for the name of the apostle Paul (Rev. 22:14). There are no indications denying that the churches to which Paul addressed his letters were ones he had directly or indirectly founded. Revelation may be interpreted as an indication that presumably even the dead Paul could not make the churches of his area exclusively "Pauline" in an objective sense. The argument concerning Paul continued after his death. Apart from Paul, there were other influences, for example, Jewish-Christian, anti-Pauline and non-Pauline, "Synoptic," and somewhat later Gnostic. In addition, most witnesses of this time period can be neither localized nor dated with certainty. The so-called post-Pauline time is less known to us than the Pauline, though the former has left us many more literary testimonies. We have many documents and "impressionistic pictures," but we cannot place them in a historical order.

It is quite natural that any historian has to work in such a case with a hypothetical model of a general overview. Also our study cannot do without premises and definitions that are hypothetical. They cannot be discussed here in detail, but they should be mentioned:

(1) By "post-Pauline churches" we mean the Pauline mission area between Rome and Asia Minor during the second half of the first century.

(2) The churches of this area were never exclusively influenced by Paul during post-Pauline times. Instead, the post-Pauline period saw repeated what was already apparent during Pauline times. Just as the (in our view, Jewish-Christian) "false brothers" entered the Pauline churches because these were churches of Jesus Christ and needed "correction," so also after Paul's death Jewish-Christian prophets who had been expelled from Palestine, for example, the apocalyptist John and his circle, entered quite naturally the Gentile-Christian churches in Asia Minor, not *because* they were Pauline churches, but in spite of it. Hence, in these churches there was variety and, at times, dissension.

(3) Also the argument concerning the apostle Paul continued after his death. That is seen by later Jewish-Christian writings, especially the Pseudoclementines. One of the most important defenders of Paul, in our opinion, was Luke. Only if we read the Acts of the Apostles as the acts of Paul with a detailed introduction can one understand Acts. One of the most important purposes, in our view, was to defend Paul as a member of the church at large. In addition, the Lukan scripture shows how a few decades after Paul's death the Synoptic Jesus tradition was known or being made known in Paul's church area as a part of catechetical instruction (Luke 1:4!).

The post-Pauline congregations were thus theologically a little homogeneous, primarily Gentile-Christian church area, in which Paul was one of the determining factors with respect to his letters and his legacy.

The following study will also consider Acts and the deutero-Pauline letters Colossians, Ephesians, 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, and 1 and 2 Peter. Tangentially we will consider James, *1 Clement*, and Hebrews. Revelation will be discussed separately in this volume, even though it actually belongs to the post-Pauline churches. Excluded will be Ignatius, Polycarp, and the early Gnostics in Asia Minor. The chronological emphasis, hence, is on the first, not the second century.

The places of origin of most of these writings are completely uncertain. The origin in the "Pauline" area of Greece, the Aegeis, and Asia Minor is possible for all writings and for some even very likely. However, one also has to consider Rome as the place of origin for the pastoral letters and the

Lukan body of scripture, and Syria for the First Letter of Peter and certainly the Letter of James. Hence, our study cannot differentiate on the basis of location. In regard to chronology, a distinction between the New Testament times and the period after the New Testament is not meaningful. Most of the phenomena observed here could also be found in the Apostolic Fathers and, *mutatis mutandis,* also in the apologists and/or the martyr traditions. Only the Christian Gnosis, which can be observed around the turn of the century, opens up new questions.

a) The Composition of the Churches

(*1*) *Social strata.* How can the sources be evaluated? We do not always find direct social-historical references, for example, notes about the existence of Christian *home owners* (Col. 4:15; 2 Tim. 1:16; 4:19; cf. 1 Tim. 3:4–5, 12; 5:4, 8). Many things have to be concluded indirectly. It is a prior methodological decision to evaluate even paraeneses carefully. If, for example, in 1 Tim. 2:9 (cf. 1 Peter 3:3), the women are admonished not to adorn themselves with pearls and gold, then in our view this appeal makes sense only if among the addressees there were women who could afford jewelry with gold and pearls. Nothing in this situation-specific evaluation is negated by the fact that the paraenesis is a traditional topos: one must explain why post-Pauline authors used certain traditional themes in their letters to congregations.

(*a*) *Social variety.* The post-Pauline Christian congregations accepted representatives from the most diverse social positions. When looking at a congregational meeting, which has assembled in the private home of a well-to-do member, we discover *poor widows* (1 Tim. 5:3–16) and *slaves* (1 Tim. 6:1–2; Eph. 6:5–8; Col. 3:11, 22–25; 1 Peter 2:18–23). There sits one of these *women* in expensive clothes, adorned with pearls and gold, her hair artfully braided (1 Tim. 2:9; 1 Peter 3:3). She probably belongs to the class of the *decuriones,* since women below the upper class usually wear only agate jewelry, the wife of a craftsman only corals (cf. Thraede, p. 223). The *decuriones* are members of the city council, form the upper class in the provincial cities, and have wealth—usually more than 100,000 sesterces. That some of them were baptized is reported by the legate Pliny concerning Asia Minor during the year 112 (*Ep.* 10.96: "omnis ordinis"). Also Luke indicates indirectly that the *more prominent women* were part of the life of his community: he points out that "not a few of the leading women" had shown an interest in Christianity already during the apostles' days

(Acts 17:4, 12). The more well-to-do women like Lydia, the dealer in purple cloth, had been supposedly influential in the life of the community (16:14; cf. 12:12ff.). In the Rome of the nineties, not only various wealthy people are members of the congregation (*1 Clem.* 38.2) but also the wife of a consul, Flavia Domitilla (Dio Cassius 67.14.1–2; Euseb. *Hist. Eccl.* 3.18.4). Over there someone enters the assembly room who has brought along his *slave* (cf. 1 Tim. 6:2; Eph. 6:5–9). The slave converses with the *master* in a casual manner, calling him "brother"; but when he even slaps the master crudely on the back, the author of 1 Timothy frowns: slaves "who have believing masters must not be disrespectful of them on the ground that they are members of the church; rather they must serve them all the more" (6:2). Another slave has watched the scene longingly, for he lives in the house of a pagan (6:1). Although the Christian congregation has accepted him in a brotherly way, it decided after a few discussions not to buy his freedom (cf. Ign. *Pol.* 4.3). Also with envy a third slave looks on; he is often unjustly reprimanded and threatened by his master, although the latter is a Christian (Eph. 6:9; Col. 4:1). In the very back sits someone who has not been at the congregational meetings for a long time. His *business* seems more important to him, and some brothers worry about his faith (cf. 1 Tim. 6:9–10). They also worry about some of the *wealthier ones.* Many Christians—sometimes involved in *trade* (cf. Rev. 13:17; James 4:13)—lust for property (1 Tim. 6:6–10; cf. 3:3, 8; Titus 1:7; 2 Tim. 3:2; James 4:13). Their goods make them arrogant (1 Tim. 6:17; cf. Rev. 3:17–18; James 4:16). They should, instead, dive into their pockets a little deeper (1 Tim. 6:18–19; Acts 20:35) to help the numerous *poor* in the congregation (Eph. 4:28; Titus 3:14; 1 Tim. 5:3–16; James 2:15–16; 1:9, 27)!

We find different social positions—and at the same time different degrees of Christian zeal. Those who have arrived socially show a tendency to "become worldly," not to be as serious about their membership in the Christian church as their poorer fellow brothers. A few decades later, *Hermas* will clothe this experience in the image of the vine and the elm tree. The poor man with his strong faith prays for the rich man in the congregation; while he is a juicy vine, the rich man is an unfertile elm tree. In order to bear fruit the vine climbs up the elm tree, and the tree supports the vine. In similar fashion the rich man is supposed to help the poor man with the necessities of life. Both the rich and the poor are thus dependent on each other (*Sim.* 2).

(*b*) *More women than men.* When looking around, we discover more women's faces than men's: that female Christians are married to nonbelievers is more frequently the case than vice versa (1 Peter 3:1–2; 2 Tim. 1:5). Whether the quantitative preponderance of the female element corresponds to the influence of women in the life of the community will have to be examined.

(c) *Different levels of education?* The elements of education in the post-Pauline writings, which we will examine later in detail, show—as must be anticipated—no more than a high-school education on the part of their authors. That one or the other author attended grammar school up to age seventeen sufficiently explains the existing elements. Grammar school followed elementary school and preceded a possible college education with lecturers or philosophers. It could be best compared to the modern preparatory school. Beside subjects like geometry, arithmetics, music, and astronomy, one read classics, above all Homer. It is not necessary to postulate a higher degree of education for our post-Pauline authors.

Things are different with the readers. Since one or the other post-Pauline author at least *claimed,* as we will see later, to write a somewhat elevated "literature," one can assume a corresponding attitude of expectation on the readers' part. However, we do not know whether the author with his grammar-school education could indeed meet the expectations of every one of his readers.

(d) *A city-country gap?* Pauline Christianity was an urban religion. The same is in large part true also in post-Pauline times. The pastoral letters have cities in mind. Still, at least since the beginning of the second century in Asia Minor, one finds also indications of a tentative foothold of Christianity among the rural population: In Asia Minor, the Bithynian governor Pliny (*Ep.* 10.96) encounters Christians also in the country. The First Letter of Peter considers itself a circular letter to entire regions: "Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, Bithynia"; at least Pontus and Bithynia belong to the province governed by Pliny.

(2) *Balance between various social levels? Integration?* How can people of different backgrounds be "integrated" into relatively stable and robust congregations? One way of objectively overcoming the social imbalance is that some members of the congregation leave their original status behind and adapt to another. The Letter of James seems to make such a demand of the rich. The poor are chosen; the Christian is to remain "unstained" by the world; wealth would wither in the end like the flower in the field (cf. 1:9–11, 27; 2:5; 4:4, 13–14; 5:1ff.).

Of course, the Letter of James is an exception. The other writings presuppose that the differences, objectively speaking, will remain; a rich person may remain rich, a master remain a master, and a slave a slave. Especially the "household rules" (to be discussed shortly) presuppose boundaries between classes and do not question them. How, then, does integration take place? The question cannot be completely answered here. From a sociology-of-religion viewpoint, we could point in general to the fact that groups become united by common symbols, convictions, or theological concepts. Instead, however, we would like to focus on three particular points that emerge directly from the post-Pauline sources. (a) One's awareness of being equal in Christ, though not socially, has an integrating effect. The question is how far this early Christian awareness still remains alive. (b) Hierarchical structures also have an integrating effect, if the power of the strong is limited within the hierarchy in a meaningful way, for example, through the duty of justice and love ("patriarchalism of love"). (c) Social welfare needs to be discussed as a particular aspect of an at least partial balancing between rich and poor.

(*a*) *Awareness of equality in Christ?* James 2:2–4 cautions not to give a better seat at the congregational meeting to someone with a golden ring and fine attire than to the poor person in worn clothes. In similar fashion, Col. 3:11 says in a more programmatic way: "There is no longer Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and free, but Christ is all and in all." The same was proclaimed already by Paul in Gal. 3:28; the Letter to the Colossians is, indeed, the most similar; it was written by a direct disciple of Paul's and perhaps even during the apostle's lifetime by a secretary. Like Paul, the writer realizes that the teaching about Christ, which talks about a reality among believers that has been established in Christ (Col. 3:1ff., 9ff.), is filled with a socially integrating force. The existing differences within the congregation have to be dealt with "as if they were not." For "you have stripped off the old self . . . and clothed yourselves with the new self" (3:9–10). The slaves in particular must like this sort of teaching (cf. above, 1 Tim. 6:2).

The question is how far such an awareness of equality is still seriously cultivated by the majority of post-Pauline Christians. A lot speaks against drawing a too favorable picture of the congregations. James 2:2–4 presents a warning that is apparently necessary because some Christians are still paying attention to the worldly differences of rank within the life of the community and are still giving the elegantly dressed a better seat than the poorly dressed. Also Col. 3:11 stands in a paraenetic context (different than Gal. 3:28!) and shows that the christologically derived program of the author and congregational reality do not always coincide. As a third point, we notice that (apart from James) after the Letter to the Colossians, the statements concerning equality in the post-Pauline writings disappear, as if this topos of early Christianity had already become outdated in the second generation. Much more important to the second and third generations is the concept of a "patriarchalism of love," as can be found especially in the "household rules" of post-Pauline writings.

(*b*) *Patriarchalism of love.* The so-called household rules (*Haustafeln*) of the New Testament emerge for the first time in the post-Pauline letters. At the same time it is noteworthy that they appear in the post-Pauline writings especially often and are rather rare elsewhere. The most important texts are Col. 3:18–4:1; Eph. 5:22–6:9; 1 Peter 2:18–3:7; 1 Tim. 2:8–15; Titus 2:1–10; Pol. *Phil.* 4.2–6.3 (Polycarp is strongly influenced by Paul). *Did.* 4:9–11; *Barn.* 19:5–7, and *1 Clem.* 21:6–9 correspond to the household rules in only a limited way.

The texts place the paterfamilias at the center, regard him as the husband, father, and master, and demand the submission to his power from the "weaker" ones, the wife, the children, and the slaves. It is a matter of a clear superiority or inferiority, yet in such a way that the power of the paterfamilias is limited by the fact that he is asked in daily life to practice not only justice but also love (e.g., Eph. 5:25).

"Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything." "Masters, treat your slaves justly and fairly." That is what Col. 3:22 and 4:1 demand only a few verses after the programmatic sentence that "there is no longer . . . slave nor free" (3:11); in the contexts of other household rules, this sentence is significantly missing. Whether equality in Christ is emphasized or not, the social roles of slave and master are, at any rate, maintained. The patriarchal structure remains in force but in such a way that both sides are exhorted to mutual love and respect: the slave to respectful obedience, the master to responsible care. This principle of a "patriarchalism of love" has, without doubt, socially integrating effects on the post-Pauline churches.

The "patriarchalism of love" applies in large part also to the relationship between husband and wife. The Christian wife is supposed to be subject to her husband, not to speak during the congregational meeting, and to busy herself with home and family. That resounds in large parts of the post-Pauline writings, not only in the household rules (Eph. 5:22, 33; Col. 3:18; 1 Tim. 2:11–15; 5:14, 10; Titus 2:4–5; 1 Peter 3:1, 4–6; *1 Clem.* 21.7; cf. 1 Cor. 14:34–35). Women active in the life of the church, as Pauline Christianity knows them in, say, a Prisca or a Phoebe, are found less often.

A bit of "emancipation," as Pauline Christianity seems to have practiced it, is taken back. The Pauline sentence that in Christ there is "no longer male and female" is significantly missing when Gal. 3:28 is adopted by Col. 3:11. Post-Pauline Christianity develops into a religious group that is directed by men and especially influenced by the presbyter-bishop, who is active in doctrine. It is interesting that the decline in women's influence and the greater prominence of offices, now more firmly defined, go hand and hand.

Still, we should not draw a too uniform picture of "post-Pauline Christianity." The passages cited above are paraeneses and may, for that reason, presuppose the opposite cases in reality. Accordingly, 2 Tim. 3:7 attests that among "false teachers" *there are* well-educated women "who are always being instructed and can never arrive at a knowledge of the truth." We have to expect that at least in fringe groups of post-Pauline Christianity, women still play an eminent role. These are primarily fringe groups in which emphasis is placed less on structured offices than on prophetic charisma; Rev. 2:20 complains about the prophetess Jezebel in Thyatira in Asia Minor. Likewise in Asia Minor, in Hierapolis, the four prophetically gifted daughters of the evangelist Philip are teaching (Euseb. *Hist. Eccl.* 3.39.9; 3.31.3–5; cf. Acts 21:8–9). And a few decades later, Asia Minor will see the rise of the Montanist movement, in which again prophetic women play a role, above all a prophetess Maximilla (Euseb. *Hist. Eccl.* 5.16.9, 12ff. etc.). Also in the Marcionite church, as well as in the Gnostic groups of the second century, women are able to take on more active roles than in the church at large.

Why was the position of the woman weakened in the post-Pauline church at large? Were the prohibition to teach and the command to be subject part of a protest against the emancipation that had partially increased during imperial times and could be seen as the demise of tradition and morality? How much "emancipation" was possible in the surrounding world?

First, the negative side should be noted. Concerning public affairs, women are allowed neither to vote nor to hold a public office. In civil law suits they cannot be jury members; they cannot testify in court. They cannot be legal guardians of their own children. In legal matters, the woman is a dependent. If she has married according to the old traditional Roman marriage ceremony, which is rare, she is dependent on her husband *in manu* and is without personal property. If she has married according to the common, free-marriage procedure, the woman retains her personal property yet remains under the *patria potestas* of her father or the guardianship of a *tutor,* who can be, for example, a close relative; the husband has no right of guardianship! In spite of these dependencies, more "emancipation" is possible than appears. In practice these tutors take their duty rather lightly; it is a formality on paper. If a tutor becomes troublesome to the woman, she can go to the administrator and have the tutor replaced by another, more conducive one. She herself decides whom she marries—and when she divorces. She is entitled to inheritance. And according to Augustan law, she receives not only practical but also legal independence and full business sovereignty once she has delivered three to five children (it varies from region to region) or has received the honorary title of a prolific mother. She then controls her own property in total independence. We find many women during imperial times who deal in business affairs; they are often widows who continue to conduct independently the affairs of their husbands. While the Christian woman is to be silent in the congregation and busy herself with house and family, many of her pagan sisters hold their own in the professional world. Naturally, they do not form the majority, who continue to be content with a life at home, but in the cities they grow to a respectable number that is composed not solely of members from the upper classes (for easily accessible evidence, see Thraede, pp. 239–40, 199, 204, 220–24). Here a woman from Ostia is selling game in her own business; there a woman goldsmith opens her store. A beautician and a seamstress hurry to their clientele; a woman doctor is called to a childbirth; a landlady summons the administrator, who takes care of her dockyard, estate, and brickyard. Regardless of class, many women leave their four walls not only to go shopping or to bathe, but also to attend a banquet, a temple, the latest theater performance, or the wagon races—which are perhaps performed by professional women athletes! In summer women drive off in their carriages, without husband or anyone else, to the spa in Bajae, to a reception, to a conference with their lawyer. Women form organized interest groups in order to devote themselves to singing in the choir or to religious practices. Many educated women can keep up with men in challenging discussions on literature. In a Dionysos mystery cult in Tusculum, Pompeia Agrippinilla presides as head priestess over men; they set up a statue for her. Of course, not everybody in society welcomes these developments. Moralists such as Plutarch (*Praec. Coni.* 31–33) or Valerius Maximus (3.8.6) do not appreciate the emancipation of imperial times. Like our post-Pauline writers, they are oriented toward the old subordination tradition and regret the loosening of morals. According to Plutarch, the man has to rule over the woman, of course, not like a despot over possessions but like a soul over the body (33). Plutarch interprets the shell—Aphrodite's symbol!—as the quiet life at home (32). Whoever sees it this way is not pleased with a dressed-up woman (29). Plutarch and the post-Pauline writers see eye to eye on this point (cf. 1 Tim. 2:9). Did the post-Paulines protest then to a certain degree for traditional values against an emancipation that was in part practiced in the world around them? Do they fear the demise of morality? Rev. 2:20 accuses the prophetess Jezebel, who in Thyatira in Asia Minor led a Christian group, of immorality and libertinism. Was that what people were afraid of?

Or did the church at large curtail the women's influence also because it wanted to distinguish itself more from Christian fringe groups? Was the loss of women's influence the price one paid to the polemics against "false teachers"?

Certainly, these answers are only some possibilities among others. Perhaps, we will have more success if we place the decrease of women's emancipation in a larger context. It is interesting to observe how other developments in the church at large ran parallel to the weakened role of the woman, without our having to make immediate causal connections.

Prophecy, the charismatic-ecstatic expressions of faith, an eschatology geared at a near expectation of the end time—these legacies inherited from the first Christian generation were put aside as remnants to be cared for by special groups. Interestingly enough, however, these very legacies were connected with an advanced emancipation of women.

That the legacy of the imminent eschatological expectation had moved in the background makes one wonder. Obviously, a lively end-time expectation has socially integrating power. People anticipating the end view their present social relationships as less relevant and dividing differences as less important. What, however, happens when the expectation fades, as happened in post-Pauline Christianity? Then new, socially integrating concepts have to be introduced. One of these, in our view, was the concept of a "patriarchalism of love," which favored a more fixed, hierarchical ordering yet did not allow it to become completely overbearing, because it appealed to those involved, especially those hierarchically superior, to exercise love. Apart from the slave-master relationship and the role of women, we would like to address a third aspect of the "patriarchalism of love": the increasing formation of hierarchical offices on the congregational level.

A hierarchical ordering of the congregation with firmly instituted offices begins to emerge. We will only indicate the complexity of the problems.

The churches of the pastoral letters have a fixed structure with a collegium of presbyters-bishops at the top. One can apply for the office of a presbyter-bishop; one is paid in this office: from the congregation's treasury, which—in contrast to 1 Cor. 16:2—has become a standing institution. The task of the members of the collegium is primarily teaching but also the supervision of the financial means of the congregation, and for that reason the holders of this office are not supposed to be money-hungry. Subordinated to the presbyters-bishops are the deacons. They distribute welfare from the congregation's funds to the widows and the poor. Applicants for the office of deacon first have to "be tested" before they are admitted to office; someone seeking shameful gain is inappropriate. The members of the congregation show respect to those holding office (cf. 1 Tim. 3:1, 3; 5:16–18; 3:8–13; Acts 6; etc.).

One can regard this fixation of hierarchical structure as a variant of the "patriarchalism of love." Without doubt the fixation exercised a socially integrating function in the post-Pauline congregations. Although the bureaucracy emerging here did not function exclusively, it at least functioned as one instrument among several others that the congregations employed in meeting social-welfare needs. With the growth of the congregations, the demands of welfare for the poor increased. Fixed offices meant an effective response to these demands. They contributed to a balancing—even if a modest one—between poor and rich within the congregations.

(c) *Social welfare in the congregations.* The following scene allows a glimpse of the social-welfare system within the churches:

> Proteus was arrested and thrown into prison. . . . When he was in prison, the Christians considered that an ill fate and tried everything to get him out. Since that was not possible, he was zealously provided for. . . . Early in the morning, one could see old women waiting by the prison, some widows and orphans; their officeholders even slept inside with the inmate, since they had bribed the guards. Then they carried many foods into prison and read aloud the Holy Scripture. . . . Yes, many came even from some cities in Asia Minor, sent by the Christian churches to help defend his case and comfort the man. They show an incredible swiftness when something of that nature hit the congregation. In short, they know no holding back.

That is indeed a fortunate turn of events: from the perspective of a pagan, we observe how Christians take care of an imprisoned brother. We have here before us the earliest pagan testimony of its kind (Lucianus *Peregr.* 11–13). The pagan world catches a glimpse here of the "social net," which the Christian congregations have spread for their members. When someone is imprisoned, the congregation takes care of that person. Even bribe money represents no obstacle if such "filthy lucre" can make friends.

The Christians gathered by the prison bars function in a society where social welfare is primarily a matter of private initiative. The imperial central government does not have a systematic welfare policy. In individual cases, the emperor may do his patron-related duties concerning the residents of the empire, but only when the needy make a plea to him or to his administrative agencies. On its own accord, the imperial hand intervenes only during catastrophes such as earthquakes, famine, and epidemics; Emperor Antonius Pius, for example, works hard rebuilding Asia Minor after it is destroyed by an earthquake. As far as imperial institutionalized benefit programs exist, they apply only to limited groups of people. A pension fund provides for the army veterans. Discounted or free food supplies, such as grain or cooking oil, are distributed by the emperor for the most part only to the population of the capital city. Only children born free can enjoy imperial welfare (*alimentatio*), if they are needy, and for the most part only if living in Italy. Nerva (A.D. 96–98) and Trajan (98–117) established funds for needy girls and boys (e.g., Dio Cassius 68.5.4). All that, however, does not create a "welfare state." Overall, the imperial administration takes little care of the poor. The contemporary may be able to see "Father State" in prison, but not in a public hospital or nursing home.

Private or organizational services on the "grassroots" level are in high demand. Members of the urban lower classes form *collegia tenuiorum*, self-help groups that finance at times better meals and an orderly burial for their members from membership fees and gifts from rich citizens. Abandoned babies are adopted by private citizens and raised in their homes as *alumni*. The elderly, weak and impoverished, give up hope for themselves—unless they receive an inheritance from relatives The sick are provided for by their families; larger private homes employ their own doctors and install their own hospital rooms (*valetudinaria*). As patrons of a clientele, well-to-do private citizens are asked to protect their clients and help them in need; they have gifts sent to them or even provide a daily *sportula*, a kind of private unemployment benefit by which the client can at least purchase everyday meals. The altruism of well-situated private citizens plays an important role. We read frequently about food and money gifts in the inscriptions. In Veii, for example, a woman provides all the women of her hometown with a meal; in Ancyra a citizen gives out oil all day long to anyone coming to him; in Urvinum Mataurense, a senator sponsors an annual banquet for his fellow citizens (*CIL* 11.3811; *IGRR* 3.173; *CIL* 11.6054; etc.). Not the initiative of the state but of private individuals is in high demand. It bestows honor on them and becomes immortalized in inscriptions.

The post-Pauline Christians—in distinction to the Pauline churches (1 Cor. 16:1ff.)—set up fixed treasuries; from them deacons give especially to the widowed (1 Tim. 5:16; cf. Acts 6; 4:34–35). But that does not relieve the Christian families of their responsibilities. On the contrary, individual families are encouraged to provide for their own, especially for their widowed elderly relatives (1 Tim. 5:4), and not to burden the congregation's funds (v. 16). Whoever shirks this responsibility does less than a pagan family (v. 8).

The insistent appeal apparently reflects conditions in which individual responsibilities were preferably transferred to the treasury of the congregation. The paraenesis tries to delimit the circle of those receiving financial support from the congregation: only the widows left without relatives, having behaved in proper fashion and being at least sixty years old, may be supported by the congregation; those under sixty should remarry (1 Tim. 5:4–16)! In addition, 2 Thess. 3:6–12 challenges people not to linger and eat the free food of the congregation, but to be gainfully employed and earn one's own living.

From these admonitions we can see that apparently a good many live off the means of the congregation—by the way, not just the poor but also church functionaries, who are paid (1 Tim. 5:17–18). For that reason, the fund does not always seem sufficient for all (cf. 1 Tim. 5:16; Acts 6), and our sources call for testing the "deserving nature" of one receiving support.

The financial means of the congregation flow from gifts of individuals. These funds are not "membership fees" like those of the pagan *collegia*—there is nothing like this among Christians—but voluntary gifts, which are given according to each person's discretion. Luke assigns the commandment of almsgiving a central place in his ethics. Especially for the rich among his readers, he draws a golden picture of the past apostolic era by generalizing, based on two individual cases reported to him (Acts 4:36–37; 5:1–11). Whenever members of the congregation suffered need during the apostolic era, well-to-do brothers sold part of their property in order to help out (Acts 2:42–47; 4:32–35). This idealized picture of history is intended to prompt Luke's readers to action! And in order for them to become enchanted with the exemplary behavior of the earliest Christians, Luke adds to his picture of the early church a few dots of color from his pot of Greek learning: "All things in common" (2:44) is a slogan of Greek-Hellenistic social utopias and has characterized since Aristotle the meaning of friendship. "No one claimed private ownership of any possessions" (4:32) is reminiscent of formulations by Musonius and Euripides. For Luke the concept of communal property became reality among the earliest Christians in the way Greek literature had dreamed of. But it is not only Greek reminiscences that underline the paraenesis about almsgiving. In 4:34 Luke has the Old Testament injunction resound that no one was to be in need (Deut. 15:4). In his Gospel, finally, Luke emphasizes more than any other evangelist Jesus' command to relinquish one's property (Luke 5:11, 28; 12:33; 14:33; 18:22). For Luke that does not mean everything in each individual case, but at least as much as possible and as much as necessary: The chief tax collector Zaccheus, described to the readers as a role model, gives away half of his property, not all of it (Luke 19:8); John the Baptist calls for sharing (3:11); the women serve Jesus "out of their resources" (8:3). Luke 14:12–14 challenges readers to call those to the table who cannot return such an invitation. Luke recommends keeping a distance from one's own property (12:13ff.). Luke has the departing Paul formulate in his will: "In all this I have given you an example that by such work we must support the weak, remembering the words of the Lord Jesus, for he himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive' " (Acts 20:35). The latter part of the quote reminds Luke's educated readers of a Greek adage (e.g., Thucydides 2.97.4). In a hardly more impressive manner could well-educated and well-to-do readers be stimulated to altruistic behavior than by this configuration of Paul, Jesus, and Greek aphorism.

Other authors besides Luke join in admonition to altruism, service, and hospitality toward fellow Christians (Eph. 4:28; 1 Peter 4:9–10; James 1:27; 2:15–16; Titus 1:8; 3:14; 1 Tim. 6:17–19; 5:10; 3:2; Matt. 6:19–34). Apparently, this kind of paraenesis was repeatedly necessary. But it was also heard, as even the pagan world observed.

b) Society's Animosity

(*1*) *Trials of Christians, persecutions by the state.* In A.D. 112 an anonymous complaint is submitted to the imperial legate Pliny of Bithynia. No one knows where it came from. Many names are listed on it, names of old and young people, of men and women, names of Roman citizens and people of all classes (*omnis ordinis*). The anonymous informer accuses them all of being Christians. The legate is somewhat at a loss. Is the name Christian in itself (*nomen ipsum*) a crime? (*Ep.* 10.96).

Pliny calls the people on the list to a hearing. Some deny outright having had any dealings with the Christian faith, and they make a sacrifice before the picture of the emperor and the gods. They are released.

Others confess to being Christians. The legate offers them an opportunity for "repentance." Under the threat of capital punishment (*supplicium*), they are told to recant their confession. If they continue to insist even during the second and third hearings, they are arrested; obstinate behavior in itself must be punished. Confessors with Roman citizenship are referred to the imperial court in Rome.

Others, finally, who admitted to being Christians, recant and insist that they have relinquished this superstition—some presumably already years ago. They sacrifice to the gods and the emperor, and they curse Christ. The legate is puzzled as to what to do with these "repenters" who are charged with no other crime.

Emperor Trajan (*Ep.* 10.97) decides that they are to be released. Moreover, no anonymous denunciations were to be accepted in the future, and the Christians are not to be spied on. If, however, someone were to be indicted as a Christian by a named accuser and the accused were to confess to it, he or she is to punish even without evidence of any other crime.

These are the major characteristics of a trial of Christians from the viewpoint of the officiating legate. Pliny's puzzled question to the emperor as to what law was to prevail concerning Christians reveals a legal situation that is still completely unresolved in 112.

Factually, Rome is tolerant toward foreign religions, even if they do not have a secured position—like Judaism, for example—as the faith practice of a united people. For particular reasons, one occasionally prohibits a cult that is perceived as especially obscure, for example, in 186 B.C. the Bacchanalian mystery rites, about which horrible rumors circulated. Basically, however, there was tolerance. The subdued peoples retain their religions; Rome respects them.

The first persecution of Christians is local. It occurs under Nero in the year 64 in Rome. It is not directly related to Christianity. Christians are executed on the pretext that they were arsonists; they must play the role of scapegoats. Since the rumors that Nero himself initiated the fire in 64 in Rome do not subside, Nero searches for a group to which he can successfully attribute the "role of arsonist" (Tacitus *Ann.* 15.44). The event presupposes that already a large number of Christians exist, that they are known to the public, and that they have left there an overall negative impression. Only in this way does it become clear why they seem ideal scapegoats to the public in urban Rome. Tacitus, who is convinced of the Christians' innocence in Rome's fire, still does not hesitate to suspect them of all kinds of evil deeds and atrocities; the accusations reach their climax in the famous *Odium humani generis.* Even though this persecution takes place only in the capital and is not directly related to the Christian faith as such, it still has negative consequences. It increases the negative reputation of Christians and marks them as outsiders of society in such a way that their unstable position increases. From now on they are considered potentially dangerous; similar incidents can be repeated at any time.

The state persecutions coming next are unanimously reported to us from the time of Domitian (Revelation; *1 Clem.* 1.1; Melito in Euseb. *Hist. Eccl.* 4.26.9; 3.18.4; Dio Cassius 67.14). The events taking place under Domitian are hard to evaluate. Similar to Caligula and Nero earlier, Domitian increased the Hellenistic tendencies to worship the emperor; politically, his preference of the emperor cult was probably directed against the senate. Suetonius reports that he liked to have people call him "our lord and god" (*Domitian* 13). It is reasonable to assume that under him the emperor cult was generally required, especially in the East where it was tradition. It is also understandable that Christians could not participate in the emperor cult. Revelation allows glances into the conflict resulting from that: whoever refuses to revere the emperor's picture is killed (13:11–18). No one can go freely to market to buy and sell there without giving religious veneration to the emperor's picture (13:17; 19:20). For Christians it gives the signal for a battle they have lost from the very start (13:7). Many of them are arrested and beheaded (20:4; 2:10, 13; 6:9–11; 17:6). The emperor and his officials are perceived by Christians as horrible beasts (12:18–13:18). The Christians see themselves surrounded by "dangers and hardships that have befallen [them] in a sudden and quick succession" (*1 Clem.* 1.1). Still, one should not speak here of organized Christian persecution staged by Domitian; rather, Christians have become the accidental victims of a political program. Everybody, whether Christian or not, who hesitates to worship the emperor's pictures is arrested. Also many pagans fall victim to Domitian's obsession that he is surrounded by disloyalty and offenses against his majesty (e.g., Suetonius *Domitian* 11–12). One should not interpret what was initiated by Domitian as aimed especially at Christians.

The state persecutions coming after that are again local. Only five years at most prior to Pliny's trial in Bithynia (A.D. 112), Christians were persecuted in Syrian Antioch; their bishop, Ignatius, is condemned together with other Christians (Pol. *Phil.* 1.1; 9.1; 13.2) to fighting with wild beasts during the Roman circus games. But as soon as this shipment of death candidates arrives in Troas, everything in Antioch has quieted down (cf. Ign. *Phld.* 10.1; *Smyrn.* 11.1; *Pol.* 7.1). Locally and chronologically delimited, the conflict flares up—and dies down again.

Unfortunately, the "fire" underlying 1 Peter cannot be chronologically determined. Where does it originate? The retouched Petrine version of 1 Peter could point to Syria as its place of origin, where perhaps even Matthew knew of the letter. On the other hand, 1 Peter sees itself as addressing Asia Minor (1:1) and is also first cited by people from Asia Minor (Polycarp, Papias, Irenaeus; in Rome the letter is unknown even around A.D. 200). Pseudonymous writings of the New Testament often originate where they appear for the first time or in the place to which they are addressed. For that reason one may look for the author of 1 Peter in Asia Minor. More precisely, 1 Peter sees itself as a circular letter to the Christians in "Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia" (1:1). The geographical sequence becomes understandable in an actual circular letter. In the most literal sense of the word, the letter can "circulate": first to Pontus, then south through Galatia to Cappadocia; from there to Asia in the West and back northeast to Bithynia. The start and final destination of the tour are in the province governed by Pliny! For after 64 B.C. Pontus belonged to the Roman province of Bithynia.

The passage 3:14–17 seems to presuppose legal accusations. "Always be ready to make your *apologia* to anyone who demands from you an accounting for the hope that is in you. . . . Keep your conscience clear." "Do not fear" (4:12–19; cf. 1:6; 2:20; 5:8–10). "Rejoice insofar as you are sharing Christ's sufferings." "Let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, a criminal. . . . Yet if any of you suffers as a Christian, do not consider it a disgrace, but glorify God because you bear his name" (4:15–16). Presupposed are trial situations where Christians, though not accused as murderers or thieves, are accused for their Christian name—as under Pliny.

In the geographical sense, these "sufferings" refer to Pontus/Bithynia, Galatia, Cappadocia, and Asia (1:1). Verse 5:9 even suggests that Christians were hard pressed throughout the empire, so that the sufferings in 1 Peter have often been identified as those under Domitian. Yet such an equation is not without problems. (a) Concerning the situation in Revelation, what sense would the directive in 1 Peter make to submit to the emperor and governors in order to silence possible informers? Are the Christians to submit to the forced emperor cult of Domitian? The situation of an obligatory cult is more or less excluded by 1 Peter 2:13–14. (b) According to Revelation, *government institutions* inflict pain by offensively promoting emperor worship as obligatory and by making sure that everybody worships. In 1 Peter, on the other hand, *private informers* are the tormentors (see below); the government institutions are brought in only in second place, namely, when indictments in court take place. The situation resembles much more the one reported under Pliny, although once again the two are not identical: according to 1 Peter 1:1, not only is the area Pontus/Bithynia affected by the "suffering," as under Pliny, but also other areas in Asia Minor: Galatia, Cappadocia, and Asia.

How then is 1 Peter 5:9 to be interpreted? "You know that your brothers and sisters in all the world are undergoing the same kinds of suffering." The only extensive persecution of Christians of which we know during this time period is that of Domitian, but that is hardly meant here. The indication that in the whole Empire Christians are defamed and have to respond in court for their being Christians is intended by 1 Peter as a comfort to those in Asia Minor who find themselves acutely in this situation. The verse does not necessarily mean that throughout the whole empire and at the same time, this suffering is now experienced. Instead, it potentially exists everywhere and is repeatedly rekindled in individual areas that are locally different (Rome, Antioch, Asia Minor) and chronologically different (in Pontus/Bithynia both in 1 Peter and Pliny), and on the whole, suffering is a permanent state throughout the empire.

We encounter another hot spot with "persecutions" and "afflictions" (in Macedonia?) in 2 Thess. 1:4–7. The senders insist here that the situation has not been only pseudepigraphically feigned—in dependence on 1 Thess. 3:3. Among the members of this congregation, several kindle a burning eschatological expectation, which 2 Thessalonians seeks to dampen (2:1–12). Since suffering and an expectation of the imminent end go hand in hand in other passages (Revelation; 1 Peter 4:7, 17; 5:10; James 5:8–11), the situation in 2 Thess. 1:4–5 might not have been completely invented.

Overall, one notices the lack of a concept. The state does not persecute systematically. Instead, the government is repeatedly nudged "by coincidence" to confront the problem of the Christians, be it by private informers on the grassroots level (Pliny) or by special situations (Nero, Domitian).

Also Trajan does not make matters clear. His reply to Pliny lacks conviction. On the one hand, he does not want the government to actively persecute the Christians; also, he is not pleased with the style of anonymous denunciations, since they are not compatible with the spirit of the time. On the other hand, not even he can bring himself to admit that only crimes committed on the basis of one's faith conviction, but not faith in itself, are punishable. Although trials of Christians are to be conducted at low key, the Christian name as such remains legally punishable, so that in the later martyr trials, almost always the confession of Christ will become the sole reason for conviction. Therefore, the practice of the Roman state in dealing with Christianity is different from the way it deals with other religions, but then the relationship of Christianity to other religions also differs (see section 3 below).

(2) *Animosity from society.* One notices in 1 Peter that the biggest problem is not persecution by government officials but the animosity on the part of contemporaries who encounter Christians in everyday life (1 Peter 2:12, 15–16; 3:16; 4:4, 14–15). There are people who denounce Christians as criminals. Also during Pliny's court hearings, such accusations are brought up (*Ep.* 10.96.7): the Christians emphasize that they neither conspire to commit crimes nor commit theft; that they neither commit adultery nor break their word; also, that they do not withhold money they have been entrusted with and are now asked to return. The passage in 1 Peter 4:15 mentions at least two of the same accusations: theft and mismanagement beside murder and misdeed. In desirable concreteness it becomes clear what was imputed by ill-meaning contemporaries.

A further imputation is mentioned in 1 Peter 2:13–15: "Accept the authority of every human institution, whether of the emperor as supreme or of governors, as sent by him. . . . For it is God's will that by doing right you should silence the ignorance of the foolish." The Christians are accused of lacking loyalty. The same suspicion prompts Pliny to place next to the statues of gods, before which Christians are to sacrifice, also a picture of the emperor (*Ep.* 10.96.5–6). The parallels between 1 Peter and Pliny (*Ep.* 10.96) show how persistently almost identical imputations prevail in the same geographical area, here in Pontus/Bithynia. Repeatedly, fellow citizens are prepared to suspect Christians, to circulate rumors about them, and eventually to denounce them in court.

Less acute and probably devoid of court trials and punishment is the situation around A.D. 100 in Luke's community. Yet even Luke senses the hatred that Christians encounter. In Luke 6:22–23, for example, he elaborates on a written text he has before him. His model reflects the experience that at one time the Jews hated the Christians and excluded them from the synagogue. What does Luke do? He adds the generalizing word *people*: "Blessed are you when people hate you." According to Acts 14:22 and Luke 9:23 (cf. 2 Tim. 3:12), a good deal of persecution and taking up one's cross are part of being a Christian from the very start. That can hardly be formulated in such general terms unless it is also confirmed by personal experience. We will see how familiar Luke is with the accusation of lacking loyalty and how well he defends himself against it.

Overall, society tends to despise the Christian faith as a harmful superstition (Suetonius *Nero* 16.2; *Claudius* 25.3; Pliny *Ep.* 10.96; Tacitus *Ann.* 15.44).

(3) *Reasons for the animosity.* The first reason is *the claim to absoluteness and exclusivity of Christianity*: one God and no other; one faith and no cult in addition. A pagan fellow citizen who is used to practicing several cults at the same time and to being initiated into various mystery religions (e.g., Apuleius *Met.* 3.15.2) can only shake his head when there are people who claim to represent the "only true" faith, which cannot be made to agree with other religious practices. The pagan Celsus compares Christians to "frogs sitting around a pond and holding a meeting . . . insisting: 'We are the ones to whom God revealed everything first. . . . There is one God, and after him come we' " (*Fr.* 4.23)! Christianity's claim to exclusivity and absoluteness has a definite social consequence: isolation. And that, in turn, breeds distrust and suspicions.

Isolation. In 1 Peter 4:3–4 it is formulated clearly: "You have already spent enough time in doing what the Gentiles like to do, living in licentiousness . . . and lawless idolatry. They are surprised that you no longer join them in the same excesses of dissipation, and so they blaspheme." Christians move away from their pagan environment and isolate themselves, thus becoming the target of suspicions. Pliny (*Ep.* 10.96.7) mentions that the Christians have gathered on a Sunday before dawn. Something like that breeds fears: whoever meets at night could conspire to commit crimes! And what do the Christians eat when meeting on Sundays for a second time? Who knows! Some contemporaries think human flesh (cf. Tertullian *Apol.* 7.5). Perhaps, the Christians' behavior is a cover-up for even worse crimes (cf. 1 Peter 2:16)! Withdrawal from society breeds the suspicion of criminal activity.

Another aspect emerges: among pagan contemporaries, the self-isolation evokes the response, "The Christians do not like us." *Odium* *humani generis,* hatred for human beings—that is how the pagans interpret the isolation (Tacitus *Ann.* 15.44.4).

And in truth, what is found in Christian writings about pagan life? "Unrestrained," "in lust," "with envy and malice," "given to drunkenness," in "despicable idolatry," "ignorant," "in error," "in the world of evil deeds" . . . (e.g., Titus 3:3; 2:12; Eph. 4:17–19, 22; 2:1–3; 2 Thess. 3:2; 1 Peter 4:3–4; 1:14, 18; 2:1, 11; 2 Peter 1:4; 2:18, 20). In addition there is a strong emphasis that a Christian has to live more properly than the rest of society (Eph. 4:17, 22, 25; 5:11; Col. 3:5, 7–9; 1:21; Titus 3:3–4; 2:12, 14; 1 Peter 1:14–15, 18; 2:1, 11; 2 Peter 1:4–5; 2:20). Who then is surprised that the pagans feel "hated" once they find out about such attitudes? But the Christians do not want to offend with these remarks but simply to tell by means of a photo negative, so to speak, something of their own new reality, which they have received in baptism. The change from the old Adam to the new reality of Christ (Eph. 2; 4:22; Col. 21:21–22; cf. the baptismal context in the corresponding passages of 1 Peter) is at the center of such statements, not a tirade against contemporaries.

Misunderstanding predominates. The Christians' distance from their pagan environment, a sphere from which they have escaped by baptism, is interpreted on the part of the "sphere" as a malicious act. The result is a grotesque situation in which both sides bestow on each other the same attributes: the others are full of "hatred" (Titus 3:3—Tacitus *Ann.* 15.44.4) and "godless" besides (Titus 2:12—Dio Cassius 67.14.1–2; Crescens in Justin *Apol.* 2.3[8].2).

Economic reasons may also fuel the hatred for the Christians. Pliny (*Ep.* 10.96.10) shows that the missionary success of Christians in Bithynia empties the temples; sacrificial animals are no longer needed; the profit of the cattle dealers and butchers is reduced. Luke (Acts 19) reports how the mission of Paul in Ephesus affected the sale of devotional emblems around the temple of Diana, so that the jewelers crafting little Diana temples of silver staged an uproar against the Christians. Acts 19 illustrates how entire trades are dependent on the pagan cult; the Christian mission attacks the economic basis of these trades. Also the accusation, encountered twice (Pliny, *Ep.* 10.96.7; 1 Peter 4:15), that Christians do not repay what has been entrusted to them when asked to return it (*depositum appellati agnegare*), points to the assumption that the informers have economic motives. Do some, perhaps, hope for a "profit" when they send Christians to trial and at the same time demand that presumed outstanding debts be paid back?

c) Christian Reactions to Society's Animosity

(*1*) *Civilized behavior—apologetics through action.* In order to counteract accusations, Christian sources recommend that Christians display a morally impeccable life-style, that they shine by their civilized and proper behavior (1 Peter 2:12, 15–16; 3:13; 1 Tim. 2:2–4; cf. 1 Peter 3:16–17). Every Christian is to have a regular occupation and under no circumstances become known as lazy (Eph. 4:28; 2 Thess. 3:10–12, 6). Young widows had better marry and pursue an orderly life-style, "so as to give the adversary no occasion to revile us" (1 Tim. 5:14). Anyone who plans to give up regular work because of an imminent eschatological expectation is completely mistaken (2 Thess. 2:2–3; 3:10–12). Especially a Christian holding a church office is the congregation's billboard to the outside and is exhorted to a morally impeccable life: "He must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace" (1 Tim. 3:7; Titus 2:8).

Christians are advised to be friendly and respectful to everyone (1 Peter 2:17; Titus 3:2, 8); that sounds as if one wants to extinguish the suspicion that the Christians hate people. Above all, members of the congregation are to submit to the governmental institutions and thus show their loyalty (1 Peter 2:13–14, 17; Titus 3:1; cf. 1 Tim. 2:1–2).

The apologetic goal of these paraeneses pressing for "civilized behavior" has often been misinterpreted. Not only the delay of the Parousia makes it necessary to "make oneself at home" in the world. Passages such as 1 Peter 2:12–15; 3:13, 16; 1 Tim. 3:7; 5:14; 6:1; and Titus 2:8 show how much apologetics involved when a Christian is supposed to act properly and loyally in the world. Areas vulnerable to attack are to be kept to a minimum. We could call this apologetics through action.

(2) *Literary apologetics.* Counteracting slander by exemplary *behavior* is one way. Another is to draw a better picture of Christians through *word and deed.* Luke is the first to attempt to "polish the image" in literary form; in the second century the so-called apologists will follow.

(*a*) Luke presents Christianity as *politically loyal.* Acts portrays the relationship between Christians and the state in friendly colors: the first Gentile to be converted was a Roman centurion (Acts 10–11). Paul had his first missionary success with a Roman proconsul (13:4–12). In Athens an Areopagite joined the converted (17:34), and in Ephesus the Asiarchs became friends with Paul (19:31). The "first" among the residents of the island of Malta offered him friendly hospitality (28:7–10). During trials of Christians, officials acted usually correct and even kind (18:12–17; 22:25–

29; 23:10, 16–22; 24:24–26; 26:30–32). The trial against Paul revealed that Christianity did not endanger the state and even interested the rulers (24:24; 25:18–19, 25; 26:30–32; 28:18). Even during Jesus' trial Luke emphasizes more clearly than his tradition the difference between Jesus and disruptive elements (Luke 23:25). More than his sources Luke stresses that the Roman Pilate declared Jesus politically innocent and in fact tried (though not very courageously) to prevent his crucifixion (23:4, 14–15, 22). Christians are loyal citizens! "Without hindrance"—thus the last word in Acts—the gospel message takes its course (28:31). For the Roman authorities are, as Luke has them say, not qualified in religious matters (Acts 18:14–15; 23:29).

It is clear that Luke draws here a basically idealized picture. The mutual understanding between Christians and state *could* indeed appear so untroubled if the authorities only wanted it and emulated the "exemplary" officials Festus and Gallio. That is what *could* be: it is not the fault of Christians or their loyalty that it is not. That reality was much rougher in Luke's time has already been seen. Besides, the Lukan redaction cannot completely conceal the fact that even in the "golden" past high officials and procurators acted toward Christians in an unfriendly manner and that those unqualified authorities interfered in the religious squabble between Jews and Christians and even sided with the Jews (16:22; 24:27; 25:9). We sense the tension between the historical material and the Lukan concept. Still, it is impressive how Luke smoothes over the contrast with his literary artistry. In 25:13–26:32 he is quick to insert two extra scenes that soften the ugly sounds. The procurator Festus, who in 25:9 (cf. v. 20) still wanted to surrender Paul to his archenemies in Jerusalem, assumes a friendly expression; Festus himself admits that he is unqualified as a judge because he does not know anything about the religious arguments that Paul's trial involves (25:20; cf. 25:25–26; 26:24). He declines a transfer to Jerusalem. He is basically convinced of Paul's innocence (25:18–19, 25; 28:18); the scene concludes with a quasi-acquittal (26:30–32). The entire text translates Luke's juridical thesis of the incompetence of government authorities into narrated episodes; Luke uses this episode style skillfully also in other places. He "dramatizes" what he has in mind. He "narrates" a thesis instead of presenting it in abstract form.

Whom does he want to convince by this artistic literary style? One could think of three groups of readers, depending on what purpose we attribute to the texts: apologetic, missionary, or paracletic. They are not mutually exclusive.

The texts possibly appeal *apologetically* directly to those supposed to "keep out of matters" according to the Lukan understanding: pagans entrusted with government power, but also contemporaries possibly tempted to denounce Christians before government authorities. Government courts were not qualified, Christianity was no crime, and Christians were loyal.

Of course, the thesis that Luke addressed his writings directly to Gentiles has inherent problems. The addressee to whom both books are directed, Theophilus, has had Christian instruction (Luke 1:4). The discussion of Judaism, the connecting of the church's history to the Old Testament, and the development of Paul's story show that Luke was primarily interested in the internal affairs of the church; much in Acts would be unintelligible to complete outsiders. Besides, the history of influence of Jewish authors shows in the case of Philo or Josephus, for example, how small the chances were that one's literature would be noticed by Gentiles if one was a Jew—or a Christian. Still, it could be possible, of course, that Luke hopes for Gentile readers who chance upon his books in some way. Yet here one has to place first the missionary, not the directly apologetic function.

The Lukan picture of an untroubled relationship between Christianity and government authorities woos, in a *missionary* sense, the one on the fringe of the congregation who hesitates to take the last step and join Christianity. The reasons are apparent. A prominent Gentile may fear that as a Christian he not only has to sever his previous connections in society but also has to operate in the illegal "underground" or at least in a political backwater after his Christian baptism. Wanting to fill a public office as a Christian is indeed a delusion (e.g., Tertullian *Apol.* 21.24). Whoever becomes a Christian can no longer fully participate in pagan society. Doubts are appropriate. Luke tells such doubters that in principle everything is safe. The relationship to the state is ultimately friendly. Many respectable individuals have sympathized with Christianity; some of them have even converted to it. For example, a real king (26:28–29) and a proconsul are interested in Christianity's teachings (13:7; cf., e.g., 28:7ff.). Not only prominent women became believers (17:4, 12, 34; 16:14), but also an Athenian city council member (17:34), prominent Athenian women and men (17:12), an Ethiopian court official (8:27ff.), as well as one who had been brought up with the ruler Herod (13:1). Luke does not tire of mentioning the social "titles" of Christians.

Then we have the *paracletic* function of the Lukan idealized picture. Whoever is already a Christian may have to endure the very *opposite* realities; we saw that "persecutions" are also experienced by the Lukan congregation (cf., e.g., Acts 14:22). Luke's Christian readers gain strength and comfort from his pictures of history. They learn to look at their own past somewhat positively and to gain moments of hope from the positive experiences Acts reports. They also learn which way they themselves will have to steer their lives. For that reason, the Lukan picture of history represents to the congregation a bit of hope-producing direction, and even though it is an idealistic picture, it has the possibility of coming true.

Above all, the last two thrusts of Acts' political apologetics need to be emphasized. Apologetics here has not only one but several functions, depending on the various kinds of potential readers.

(*b*) We now look at a second aspect of Luke's polishing of the Christian "image." The second impression Luke suggests says that Christianity is not at all babble (Acts 17:18) but something educated, even by pagan standards, something "socially acceptable" in the Hellenistic world of culture.

Again, Luke "dramatizes" this thesis with narrated episodes. In *Acts 17* the educated apostle Paul has discussions in the Athens agora with Epicureans and Stoics; on the Areopagus he proclaims to Athenians the gospel as an exposition of what Greek thought always had fathomed *in nuce*. Well-educated, the apostle quotes Aratus; the Athenians and Paul discourse with each other in optatives. At the center of the Greek spirit, Paul offers a cultivated concept of the spirit of Christian thought. Beyond that, indirect reminders of the trial of Socrates move the apostle closer to the great philosophers (v. 18). Even Socrates was accused of bringing up "new concepts about divine matters" (Xenophon *Mem.* 1.1.2). By the motto to obey God more than people (Acts 4:19; 5:29), a second parallel emerges between the apostles at large and Socrates before his judges (Plato *Apol.* 29 D). According to Acts 19:9, Paul teaches in a "lecture hall." Not only the apostle to the Gentiles is educated (22:3; 26:24–25); also the Alexandrian missionary Apollos is an "educated man" (18:24).

The "dramatized" thesis is conveyed by Luke in still another way: by his own artistry as an author. The "episodic style," copied from pagan historiographers, is only one example. Luke is keen on providing his more educated readers with pleasure. He meets the standard literary gusto when transporting the reader in the midst of a tension-filled sea adventure (ch. 27) or into the Ethiopian empire of "the Candace" (8:27). Since Nero's expedition to the Nile source, the literary public craves the Ethiopian "exotic"; authors such as Iambulus and Euhemeros narrate sea adventures. Luke entertains the reader with the proverbial curiosity of the

Athenians (17:21). He quotes Euripides and Thucydides (26:14; 20:35); in several places he crafts an intentionally more advanced Greek (Luke 2:35; Acts 3:20; 24:11; 26:3; etc.). He tries the common method of mimesis when he imitates the style of the Septuagint: the representatives of the earliest congregation in Palestine talk in the solemn style of Bible language (first part of Acts), for in his opinion the beginnings of church history in Palestine deserve a Jewish style. Various patterns of speech are artfully rendered: the Athenians in Acts 17 use the optative, which had become extinct in the vernacular (v. 18; cf. 8:31), but Simon Peter speaks in expressions reminiscent of the Septuagint and in antiquated *theologumena* ("the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our ancestors has glorified his servant . . . the Holy and Righteous One. . . . "; 3:13–15, 26, etc.). Here we find the "patina" of earliest Christian times, there the "glamour" of the Greek agora. Like the Greek historiographers, Luke places at the turning points of his historical presentation certain *speeches*, which influence the further course of events, yet he differs from Greek historians when he presents by means of speeches the central point of the events as God's word. Like pagan historiographers and novelists, Luke interpolates documents and letters that are shaped according to a Greek pattern (15:23ff.; 23:25ff.). Like historiographers, he repeatedly dates his material (Luke 2:1ff.; 1:5; 3:1–2; etc.). Finally, the prologue and preamble at the beginning of Luke's two books betray the literary ambitions of the author.

Of course, the limits of Lukan education also become visible. Quotations from Greek literature are frequent, compared to the rest of the New Testament; compared to the later apologists, however, they are rare (Acts 17:28; 26:14; 20:35). The differentiation of style is not always successful; even in 17:22–31 and 26:2–27, where Paul is supposed to speak in an intentionally eminent manner, uneducated Greek language elements appear (cf. Plümacher, pp. 15, 30, 88). Still Julian ridicules Lukan rhetoric (*Ep.* 42). We would hardly be mistaken in seeing Luke graduate from a grammar school at age seventeen—he is familiar with the authors of the textbooks—yet in granting him beyond that no further literary-philosophical or literary-rhetorical education. Between literary endeavor and literary achievement lies a deep gulf. However, it is the intention that is interesting here, because it tells us about the envisioned circle of readers.

Corresponding with a multifaceted forum of readers, Luke's education can serve various purposes. (1) Luke responds *apologetically* to the accusations that the Christians were uneducated (4:13), talked nonsense (26:25;

17:18), and advocated an erroneous superstition (see above Tacitus and others). No, according to Luke, they represent an element of culture of world-historical significance: the Christ event by no means took place off in a corner (26:26; cf. 17:6; 24:5; Luke 2:1ff.; 3:1–2). (2) It is obvious that such theses, presented in an adequate literary form, promote Christianity in a *missionary* sense. Luke wants to win the Hellenistically educated. (3) And those who have already found their way into Christianity are *affirmed* in their decision by Luke.

Hence, the educated standing within or on the periphery of the congregations are to be addressed; they are people who Luke assumes already have an understanding of the Old Testament and among whom he is not afraid to produce raised eyebrows with his imitations of the Septuagint. Those addressed by Luke are, like Theophilus (Luke 1:3–4), already instructed in Christian teachings or, if they are still pagans, are at least "God-fearers" from around the synagogues, who have not decided yet to be either baptized or circumcised, but who sympathize with Christianity or Judaism.

It is methodologically impossible to determine the upper limit of the educated envisioned by Luke. If he wants to address the highly educated also in literary matters, he misses his goal. If he reaches his goal, then merely the (half-) educated of his own caliber sit in the front rows of his audience. The literary taste which Luke satisfies—with his sea adventure, for example—is marked by the elements of entertainment literature, the novel and the *mimus*. The novel is read even by the lower classes; the *mimus* is known to people from theater. In Pompeian graffiti, we find corresponding literary quotations and allusions. When saying that the Lukan readers are concerned with education, we will have to realize that even the lower classes engaged in a certain degree of literary culture.

(c) Overall, we note the following in Luke's literary "image care" in both the political and the cultural aspects. Although it is directed at newly won Christians like Theophilus and pagan contemporaries from around Christian congregations and synagogues, who have already dealt with the inheritance of the Old Testament and Christian tradition and are now to be strengthened even further, it is not expressly addressed beyond that to the pagan public. That is not attempted until the apologetists of the second century, who, besides, surpass Luke in terms of education. In other words, the necessity of a literary address to the part of society that is inimical to Christianity may be sensed in post-Pauline Christianity, but it cannot actually tackle the task. The radius of apologetics remains restricted to the immediate fringe groups of the churches.

(3) *Assimilation as a solution?* Groups that are hated and at times even persecuted by the world around them can react in two different ways. They can withdraw even more from the world and choose the way of asceticism, of the inner withdrawal from the world. They then exist as a conventicle with its own spirituality and its own ethos, which is inimical to the world and is continually reinforced by the world's animosity. Or they can assimilate to the world to a degree and try to weaken the accusations. On one side stands the extreme of a complete negation of the world and asceticism; on the other, the extreme of complete compliance with the world, with a forsaking of the faith as its ultimate consequence. Prime examples of the first way, each in its own fashion, are Johannine Christianity, the world-negating piety of Revelation, and large parts of Christian Gnosticism. The danger of assimilation clearly emerges in the writings influenced by Paul directly or indirectly; they give in to assimilation at times and to certain degrees, but they always warn of its dangers. Post-Pauline Christianity appears somewhere in the middle between world-negation and dangerous worldliness. In that respect it anticipates a path that the churches of all times will repeatedly attempt to walk, a middle way between a world-negating life in a sect and a forsaking of the faith in favor of a worldly existence. The Pauline heritage—the knowledge that the Christian faith represents a commissioning by God for a life *in* the world and that the future resurrection cannot be spurred on by an exodus from the world—may contribute to the fact that post-Pauline Christianity prepares in distinct fashion the middle road that the church will take later.

We encounter in our sources enough post-Pauline Christians who adapt to pagan ways of life and for that reason have to be corrected by post-Pauline authors. Women Christians have to be warned not to decorate themselves with braided hair, gold jewelry, and expensive clothing (1 Tim. 2:9; 1 Peter 3:3); here we already hear the sounds that the church father Tertullian will make loudly (*De culta feminarum* 2.11). Social differences of rank in pagan society are carried into the life of the community when the rich receive better seats than the poor; James 2:2–6, 9 and 1:10–11 protest against such behavior. Several Christians practice a worldly and libertarian life-style while proclaiming freedom slogans (2 Peter 2:19), which are familiar from the Corinthian church (1 Cor. 6:12); 2 Peter pelts these "false teachers" with insults. Other Christians eat meat sacrificed to idols, which—after the gods have received their share—is eaten during a festive meal at the temple or sold in the markets (Rev. 2:14–15, 20). Also Paul has claimed the freedom to do so (1 Cor. 8:4). When the author of

Revelation opposes such liberty in two circular letters to the congregations in the Pauline church area, some of the tension marking "Paul's" congregations after his death becomes apparent. James has to establish a drastic alternative: friendship with the world is hostility against God (4:4). Is that only a traditional topos or does it also reflect some of the current problems in the congregation?

An interesting phenomenon, even if not clearly recognizable, is the so-called *Colossian heresy*. Whatever may be hiding behind the people opposed by Col. 2:8–3:1, the curious formulations concerning "worship of angels" and "dwelling on visions" (2:18) suggest Christians who worship the "elemental spirits of the universe" (2:8, 20) as angelic powers, who are organized like a mystery group, and who understand themselves in analogy to one of antiquity's mystery cults. They assimilate to a degree to the—religious—world, something the author of Colossians opposes. He emphasizes that Christ alone is the image of God, the head of the body, the first to be raised from the dead (1:15–20). The Colossian hymn, which may stem from the worship service of the congregation, becomes an aide here for the congregation's separation from the world. The Christians have managed to escape from the "elemental spirits" (2:20).

One cannot say of *Ephesians*, either, that here the distance to the world is removed, even though this letter incorporates motifs from mystery piety and popular Hellenistic philosophy. Ephesians uses these motifs for a conceptuality that is interested not in closeness to the pagan world but in the church as an autonomous body. The church represents a body that extends in cosmic dimensions to Christ as its heavenly head (1:22–23; 2:19ff.; 4:15–16); it stands on the foundations laid by the apostles and prophets in the past (2:20). The church is the home of God's fellow residents (2:19). These, however, feel out of place in the world (5:16; 6:12; similarly, 1 Peter 1:1, 17; 2:11; 2 Thess. 3:2; James 1:1; 2 Peter 2:18, 20; etc.). The paraenesis, so important in the Letter to the Ephesians, has its starting point in the distinction between the baptized and pagans (4:17–24; cf. 2:1–10).

In Luke's community many Christians live in so worldly a fashion that their faith becomes endangered. They assimilate to society in their outer appearance by striving for "riches and pleasures of life" (Luke 8:14; 21:34–36; 20:33–35; etc.; cf. 16:14–15).

Luke basically accepts the existence the rich in the congregation. However, he propagates modesty (Luke 3:14; 12:15; Acts 20:33–34) and along with it an ethics of almsgiving, which *bursts* the conceptual frame that

Hellenistically minded Christians usually have about altruism. The principle of reciprocity, of *do ut des,* as the pagan knows altruistic dealings with friends, no longer applies; instead, it is a principle of caring behavior toward those who cannot "give in return." In place of an earthly reward—either through a return gift or the benefactor's "honor" eternalized in inscriptions—there is a divine reward in the eschaton: a remarkable social-historical function of eschatology (Luke 6:32–35; 14:12; 16:19). We can see here how Luke tries to fend off the "worldliness" of Christians.

Yet even Luke makes compromises. He allows wealth as such to remain in the congregation. He strives for a peaceful coexistence between church and state. We have seen how he adapts as an intentionally Hellenistic writer to the profane literary taste of his readers; by trying to be a Hellenistic writer, he becomes—in Paul's sense—a Greek to the Greeks. But is his Christianity, therefore, absorbed in the world? We should not forget that Luke also preaches to prominent people the uncomfortable gospel of "justice, self-control, and the coming judgment," so that they are frightened and withdraw (e.g., Acts 24:25). The socially prominent in the congregation are handed ethical norms about which they may shake their heads, because they never heard anything similar in their pagan past. Distance remains even here.

At first sight this distance seems to be smallest in the *pastoral letters.* In form we see here, as in Luke, pagan elements of style, whether in quotes (Titus 1:12, from Epimenides *De oraculis*; 1 Tim. 5:18, of unknown origin), figurative concepts (cf. 1 Tim. 3:34–35, with Sophocles *Antig.* 661–62), terms (e.g., 1 Tim. 6:6, the Stoic "autarky," i.e., self-sufficiency), or advanced formulations; they speak for a more educated author (grammar school?) and for more educated readers in the congregation, who are delighted when the apostle Paul is equipped with "books," "parchments," and the "cloak" of the traveling philosopher (2 Tim. 4:13).

The matter becomes more difficult in terms of content. The Christian faith is "valuable in every way" (1 Tim. 4:8). Coupled with Stoic self-sufficiency (6:6), it leads to a blessed life—first here and then in eternity (4:8). It becomes a useful tool for "great gain" (6:6). Where, then, does the gospel lead the world into crisis? Has the Christian become adapted to the world?

Again, one has to be careful. "Worldly thought patterns" do not mean that the social barriers to pagan neighbor are torn down. For 2 Timothy (1:8, 15–16; 4:10; cf. 2:3, 12), not to be embarrassed over the apostle's chains and suffering along with him are incompatible with loving the world at the same time. Not even a civilized, inconspicuous life-style guarantees (1 Tim. 2:2) that the distance to pagan contemporaries is overcome since, after all, they still walk as "slaves to passions and pleasures . . . malice and envy" (Titus 3:3).

The household rules of the New Testament are often named as chief witnesses when one wants to describe how post-Pauline Christianity adapted to the world in a "civilized" way. They are often considered the prime example of how in post-Pauline times Christian ethics became conformed to the world and conservative and how the original "revolutionary" impetus of Gal. 3:28 ("there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female") was lost. In what way do the household rules represent an assimilation to the world? They do indeed adapt to prevailing pagan structures of the *oikos*. They respect the power or the paterfamilias and demand the submission of wife, children, and slaves to his rule; the call to obedience and the readiness to suffer can even be christologically motivated (1 Peter 2:18–23). On the other hand, the power of the master is limited, since he is urged to show justice and love, again on the basis of Christology (e.g., Eph. 5:25). Pagan authors formulate a similar "patriarchalism of love." Seneca, for example, writes: "I laugh at those who consider it disgraceful to eat with their slave. . . . Live with the lowliest as you want a superior to live with you. . . . Live with the slave in a gentle, friendly way" (*Ep.* 47). The Christian contribution to the patriarchalism of love is to undergird it with Christology. Other than that, the household rules follow the socio-ethical tradition of society; they can be compared to pagan texts that deal with the proper management of the household. Yet it is important to note that in their dependence on this tradition the household rules fall behind what many pagan contemporaries actually practice. We saw that many women can be emancipated in their society and not at all be satisfied with the role of an obedient maid at the stove. In other words, the household rules may follow pagan traditions, but these traditions are often already outdated in everyday life. With their conservative bent, the household rules do not at all intend to adapt Christian life to that of pagans. On the contrary, we have already seen that to a certain degree they protest against the pagan practice of emancipation, together with ancient moralists such as Plutarch.

Also the *structure of offices* that emerges in post-Pauline Christianity has been frequently seen as an "assimilation" to the social forms of the world. The churches of the pastoral letters have developed a firm structure within the congregation with the collegium of presbyters at the top and offices for which one can apply and for which one is paid (1 Tim. 3:1; 5:18). If we compare the structure of the congregation in the pastoral letters with that of the Pauline churches, the similarity of the former to the religious collegium of antiquity and to the religious association with its fixed constitution, fixed offices, orderly meetings, and its own treasury is much greater than in the case of the Pauline churches. But can one call that an assimilation to the world? It is doubtful. By having a treasury, for example, the Christian congregations resemble most other organizations. But by the lack of admission and membership fees, they distinguish themselves from these groups. The fund is indeed there, but during this period its contents are used neither for maintaining buildings nor for the cult nor for buying cemetery lots nor for festive meals, but primarily for supporting the poor. That is something distinctive. It also seems premature here to speak of an assimilation to the world. Although the Christian churches adopt for their organization certain elements of pagan society—for example, the office title *episcopos*, "overseer"—they develop their own characteristic form, which even Tertullian recognizes as autonomous and distinct from the "world" (*Apol.* 39).

Already with Paul the development started that let Christians become a small independent "society" within pagan society. In 1 Cor. 6 Christians are advised not to carry out their legal arguments before pagan judges, but to settle them among themselves. Eph. 2:19 bestows on Christians, terms from the language of politics. They are "citizens"—not in regard to Roman society but in regard to their own small society! Here something develops that does not "adapt" in the least but, the more it consolidates, begins to resemble a "state within a state," causing increased suspicion among the pagans that this "something" is competing with Roman society—a conflict that will not find a solution until Constantine.

In summary, the catchword "assimilation" may only describe in a minor way the changes that can be observed in post-Pauline times in the form of the church and above all within Christian ethics. Also the common slogan that ethics had become "worldly" helps little in our understanding. If we mean by it that the Christian churches began increasingly to settle for a life in the world, building more durable houses and acting in line with ethical principles that in part were also represented in pagan literature, then the ambiguous catchword "worldliness" may remain. But if we mean that Christians increasingly adapted their form to pagan groups and their behavior to their pagan contemporaries, and that they had abandoned the distance to their pagan neighbors, then we ignore the complex reality of the situation.

The increased "worldliness" of Christians, on the one hand, and their continued isolation from pagan society, on the other, stand in a complex relationship with each other. In summary, the following aspects may be important. (1) If isolation breeds wrongful accusations on the part of society, socially proper behavior is supposed to ward off such insinuations; the latter has a somewhat apologetic orientation, even though that is not its only motive. (2) Instead of decreasing isolation, the "worldliness" of the household rules seems to enhance and even strengthen it through their conservative traits, which in many parts of society are already outdated. (3) "Worldliness" in the form of a socially integrating patriarchalism of love stabilizes the life in the Christian congregation, allows for a continuity of tradition ("obedient children"!), and thus strengthens Christianity as an independent social entity: an effect that again does not contribute to decreasing the distance between Christians and their pagan contemporaries.

d) Mission as Basic Behavior Toward the World

(*1*) *The missionary perspective.* The Christian claim of wanting to reach the entire world with the proclamation of the gospel is expressed in Colossians and Ephesians in a mythological picture in which the church stretches as a cosmic "body" from earth into heaven and to its head, Christ, and in the process—and that is the important part here—"grows with a growth that is from God" (Col. 2:19; Eph. 2:20–22; cf. Col. 1:6, 23, 28; 4:3–6). Growth through proclamation takes place even in the heavenly spheres where "the wisdom of God" is made known to the "rulers and authorities" (Eph. 3:10).

Luke formulates it differently, yet with the same universal claim. Only he does not speculate ecclesiologically; rather, he expresses in narrative fashion something about the nature of the early church. He tells how the gospel spread from Jerusalem, the center of Israel, to Rome, the center of the world. The early church was a mission-oriented church; driven by the Spirit of God, the "witnesses" (e.g., Acts 1:21–22) carried the proclamation "to the ends of the earth" (1:8).

It is striking that these witnesses connect mission at first only with apostolic times. In Acts, Luke looks back on the golden time of the first missionary apostles; Ephesians connects the "growing" church with the person of Paul (cf. 2 Thess. 3:1; 1 Tim. 2:6–7; 2 Tim. 4:17); Col. 1:23 presupposes that even in Paul's time, the gospel "*has been* proclaimed to every creature." The world mission was already accomplished by the original apostles! The missionary commission "you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judaea and Samaria, and *to the ends of the earth*" (Acts 1:8; cf. Matt. 28:16–20) was given to the eleven; it was incomprehensible to post-apostolic generations that the eleven original apostles might not have completed their task. The later early church even invents the legend that the apostles had cast lots to distribute the world's circle among themselves and then had gone out, each to his own mission field. If the world was already won by the first apostles—as was the understanding in postapostolic times—the coming generations can only strengthen the network of Christians that already stretches across the world by continually adding new people but no longer by adding new territory. In the missionary self-understanding of postapostolic churches, world-mission programs play no role at all; as world missionaries, the apostles have no successors. Instead, missionary enterprise is directed at nearby individuals and their destinies. Only in this regard is post-Pauline Christianity a mission church. Some examples may illustrate the point.

Concerning Luke one can say that Acts does not simply look back. We sat at two points that Luke himself, at the end of the first century, had a missionary perspective: whenever we see clearly his tendency to present Christianity (1) as politically loyal and educated, and (2) as acceptable even to the prominent in society. Such an apologetic is intended to win converts—especially those of high social status who have still reservations when it comes to deciding for Christianity. Luke even goes so far as to meet these hesitaters at their own doorstep: Christian faith is nothing else but the formulation of what smart Greeks had suspected all along (Acts 17). Christianity is a continuation of Hellenistic *paideia*: concepts of continuity were supposed to make matters easier for the educated.

Concerning the pastoral letters one can say: "For kings and all who are in high positions," the Christians pray during their worship services (1 Tim. 2:2), as the pagans do when they implore the gods in their public prayers to keep the emperor in good health (e.g., Pliny *Ep.* 10.35–36). One finds here the awareness that even as a Christian one is responsible for the pagan society in which one lives. However, we should not misunderstand the matter. The goal of the prayers is not the health of the emperor or the preservation of the Roman state for its own sake. The aim, rather, is that God will direct the powers of the state "so that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life" (v. 2), free of accusations and insinuations, and become liberated for the proclamation of the gospel, for God "desires everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (vs. 3ff.). The prayer for the authorities simply means: May God give us the freedom necessary to spread the gospel.

Also 1 Peter 2:9 offers a missionary perspective: "You are a chosen race . . . in order that you may proclaim the mighty deeds of him who called you."

(2) *Mission methods.* If we perceive in post-Pauline Christianity the desire to carry the gospel beyond church boundaries but not the concept of systematically winning geographical or social groups, we find that this method of spreading the Christian faith corresponds with that of postapostolic times. The church "grows" in an unprogrammatic fashion: more or less "by chance" and through the personal contacts of individuals. Dialogue with the individual is important (Col. 4:6).

(*a*) At first this kind of Christian propaganda is local, in the home and at the work place. Christian women are encouraged to win their pagan husbands (1 Peter 3:1–2). Christian slaves, living and working at a pagan *oikos,* are to serve the gospel there (cf. Titus 2:9–10; 1 Tim. 6:1). "In the women's chambers, in the cobbler's shop, in the mill," the gospel spreads; "we have to see how in private homes, wool workers, cobblers, and millers together with the most uneducated and coarse people . . . bring up the strangest things as soon as they know themselves without witnesses and are alone with the children and some uneducated women." Thus complains the pagan Celsus in the second century (*Fr.* 3.55). In the first postapostolic generation, matters are hardly different. The post-Pauline Christians are not to proclaim by words as much as by a winning life-style, by actions without words (1 Peter 3:1–2; cf. Titus 2:9–10). "Conduct yourselves wisely toward outsiders, making the most of the time. Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer everyone" (Col. 4:5; cf. also Matt. 5:16; 1 Tim. 3:7; Titus 2:9–10; 2 Thess. 1:11–12).

It is hard to say, how many new converts still are recruited from around the synagogue from the circles of the "God-fearers" who felt drawn to a monotheistic Judaism yet did not yet undergo circumcision. When Luke promotes Christianity, we have seen that he presupposes at least some knowledge of the Old Testament. Rev. 2:9 and 3:9 show that by the end of the century congregations in Smyrna and Philadelphia lived in a rather tension-filled relationship with the synagogues: the Jews "defame" the Christians and deny their legitimacy; God does not love the Christians but the Jews (3:9). The texts apparently assume competition in the propaganda practice of both communities of faith.

For a local "growth" of post-Pauline Christianity is also required that parents bring up their children in the faith (Eph. 6:4; 2 Tim. 1:5; cf. Col. 3:20). Thus, a continuity of tradition forms within Christian families. There is special care that Christians with a church office have believing children (Titus 1:6). The woman is "saved through childbearing, provided they continue in faith and love and holiness" (1 Tim. 2:15). Here, in the spread of Christian thought at home, the post-Pauline woman plays all of a sudden an important role. Titus 2:3–4 can even speak of teaching in this connection: "Tell the older women . . . to teach what is good, so that they may encourage the young women to love their husbands, to love their children to be . . . good managers of the household, kind . . . so that the word of God may not be discredited."

(*b*) With the unprogrammatic spread of post-Pauline Christianity also belongs without doubt the travels of Christians. Ephesians, 1 Peter, and the messages of Rev. 2–3 are intended as circular letters; this presupposes corresponding travel activities on the part of Christians, at least within Asia Minor. "The world lives in peace with the Romans, and we fearlessly walk the streets and sail the sea wherever we please" (Irenaeus *Haer.* 4.30.3). Christians mobile in this way—they travel by church commission with letter in hand or on their own as merchants or craftspeople—can possibly win non-Christians through personal contacts during travel stops. The example of Christian merchants on business travel showing great patience during contract closures—even when others try to take advantage of them (Justin *Apol.* 1.16.4)—seems quite convincing. With knowledge of the Greek language, a brother or sister in the faith can manage in any city; that facilitates the growth of the church. Just as helpful is the remarkable infrastructure of the empire—no internal boundaries, a well-constructed network of streets, and assured ship connections.

(c) A special form of Christian propaganda is still alive in post-Pauline times: itinerant Christian preachers travel from place to place, preach in the streets and squares, and are supported by local congregations. Even Origen of the third century still knows them: "Today" as "in the old days, some make it their life's calling to travel not only from city to city but also from village to village and from farm to farm, in order to win also other people for the faith in the Lord. And one cannot say that they do so for a profit, since at times they do not want to take even as much as they need for survival" (Celsus 3.9; cf. *Did.* 11–13; Euseb. *Hist. Eccl.* 3.37.2–3; etc. for the early second century). One cannot determine how much these itinerant preachers contribute to the growth of Christianity in postapostolic times.

Among the Syrian Christians at the beginning of the century, they enjoy a better reputation than local church officials (*Did.* 15.2). At the same time the *Didache* warns of traveling Christian prophets peddling Christ (12.5). Pagans can even accuse traveling Christians as parasitic vagabonds (Lucianus *Peregr.* 16). How great was their missionary success?

The important point about these traveling prophets is that they set out because of their personal "charisma." They do not go forth because churches commission them officially but because they feel individually called. Thus a planned mission "program" cannot be perceived behind their existence.

(3) *Success and failure.* How difficult, even dangerous, it often is to proclaim the gospel—in word and deed—is seen by the obduracy and failures in the mission: "For not all have faith" (2 Thess. 3:2; 1:8; 2:10–12; 1 Peter 2:7–8). Characteristically, the same writings also record some of the accusations coming from society (see above). At times one would prefer ashamedly to conceal one's Christianity (cf. 2 Tim. 1:8). Not only does the mission fail at times, but many Christians forsake their faith (1 Tim. 1:19–20; 5:15; cf. 2 Tim. 1:15; 4:10), which is considered a mortal sin (Heb. 6). To some their economic advancement is more important than their faith: "The love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, and in their eagerness to be rich some have wandered away from the faith" (1 Tim. 6:10). Also, educating one's own children to become good Christians is not always successful in practice. One paraenesis makes this clear (Titus 1:6): The person qualified for an office is "someone . . . whose children are believers not accused of debauchery and not rebellious." There apparently are such "wayward" cases (cf. 1 Tim. 2:15; 3:4; 2 Tim. 3:2).

On the other hand, there are successes. We find in the congregations not only families that have been Christians for two or more generations—at times "inherited" through grandmother and mother (cf. 2 Tim. 1:5; 3:15). We also discover "*newcomers*" (1 Peter 4:31; 2 Peter 2:18, 20). However, one should not immediately confer an office on these recent converts, for they could become "puffed up" (1 Tim. 3:6)!

What is behind the last warning: fear that congregation's "oldtimers" will lose their influence? Are there many "newcomers," who counterbalance the failures? Pliny thinks so: "Not only across the cities but also across villages and the open country, the epidemic of this superstition has spread," so that the temples begin to look empty. The faith reaches "great numbers" (*Ep.* 10.96.9)!

We shall summarize. The church "grows" through the activity of individuals without the congregations having "officially" "planned" and "organized." In contrast to the mission of apostolic times—Paul's planned mission activities, for example, were actively supported by the churches—it is a "qualitative leap." The mission-oriented apostolic church has increasingly become a more defensive church, which grows only "by accident." The clergy are occupied with existing congregations, not with planting new ones. Not active "attack" from outside but consolidation within the church and the solving of problems are emphasized in most writings, especially in the pastoral letters, 2 Thessalonians, *1 Clement,* and the Ignatius letters. Controlling "false teachers" becomes more important than tackling the world.

That Christianity still continues to be propagated is the merit of the brother and sister in the faith working at the grassroots level. They guarantee that Christianity does not simply write off the world. With their proclamation they take on responsibility for the society in which they live. Since Christ is Lord and Savior of the world, the Christian owes the world proclamation.

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