REDESCRIBING PAUL
AND THE CORINTHIANS

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REDESCRIBING PAUL AND THE CORINTHIANS

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Dedicated to

Yaffa Frenkel Miller
(August 9, 1946–September 1, 2010)

In loving memory

Contents

Abbreviations

Primary Sources

Apost. Const.	*Apostolic Constitutions*
Appian	
Hist. rom.	*Historia romana / Roman History*
Aristotle	
Eth. nic.	*Ethica nichomachea / Nicomachean Ethics*
CIG	*Corpus inscriptionum graecarum.* Edited by A. Boeckh et al. 4 vols. Berlin: Ex Officina Academica, 1828–77.
CIJ	*Corpus inscriptionum judaicarum.* Edited by Jean Baptiste Frey. Vatican City: Pontificio istituto di archeologia Cristiana, 1936–.
CIL	*Corpus inscriptionum latinarum.* Berlin: Reimer, 1862–.
1 Clem.	*1 Clement*
Did.	*Didache*
Did. Apost.	*Didascalia apostolorum*
Epictetus	
Diatr.	*Diatribae* (*Dissertationes*)
Epiphanius	
Pan.	*Panarion* (*Adversus haereses*) / *Refutation of All Heresies*
Eusebius	
Hist. eccl.	*Historia ecclesiastica / Ecclesiastical History*
Herodotus	
Hist.	*Historiae / Histories*
Hippocrates	
Morb. sacr.	*De morbo sacro / The Sacred Disease*
IG	*Inscriptiones graecae.* Berlin: Reimer, 1873–; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1895–.
ILS	*Inscriptiones latinae selectae.* Edited by Hermann Dessau. Berlin: Weidmann, 1892–1916.
Josephus	
Ag. Ap.	*Contra Apionem / Against Apion*
Ant.	*Antiquitates judaicae / Jewish Antiquities*
War	*Bellum judaicum / Jewish War*

Justin
   1 Apol.   *First Apology*
KJV   King James Version
Lucian
   Peregr.   *De morte Peregrini / The Passing of Peregrinus*
LXX   Septuagint
MAMA   *Monumenta Asiae Minoris antique.* Manchester: Manchester University Press; London: Longmans, Green, 1928–93.
NRSV   New Revised Standard Version
Origen
   Cels.   *Contra Celsum / Against Celsus*
Pausanias
   Descr.   *Graeciae descriptio / Description of Greece*
Petronius
   Satyr.   *Satyricon*
Philo
   Gig.   *De gigantibus / On Giants*
   Hypoth.   *Hypothetica / Hypothetica*
   Legat.   *Legatio ad Gaium / On the Embassy to Gaius*
   Mos.   *De vita Mosis / On the Life of Moses*
   Prob.   *Quod omnis probus liber sit / That Every Good Person Is Free*
   Sacr.   *De sacrificiis Abelis et Caini / On the Sacrifices of Cain and Abel*
   Virt.   *De virtutibus / On the Virtues*
Pindar
   Nem.   *Nemeonikai / Nemean Odes*
Plato
   Pol.   *Politicus / Statesman*
Pliny the Elder
   Nat.   *Naturalis historia / Natural History*
Pliny the Younger
   Ep.   *Epistulae*
Plutarch
   Def. orac.   *De defectu oraculorum*
   Stoic. abs. *Stoicos absurdiora poetis dicere*
RSV   Revised Standard Version
SEG   *Supplementum epigraphicum graecum.* Amsterdam: Gieben, 1923–.
Seneca
   Ep.   *Epistulae morales*
   Herc. fur.   *Hercules furens*
   Prov.   *De providentia*
SIG   *Sylloge inscriptionum graecarum.* Edited by Wilhelm Dittenberger. 3rd ed. 4 vols. Leipzig: Hirzel, 1915–24.

Strabo
   Geogr.   *Geographica / Geography*
Tertullian
   Apol.   *Apologeticus / Apology*
Theophrastus
   Caus. plant.   *De causis plantarum*
   Hist. plant.   *Historia plantarum*

Secondary Sources

AB	Anchor Bible
ABD	*Anchor Bible Dictionary*. Edited by David Noel Freedman. 6 vols. New York: Doubleday, 1992.
AGJU	Arbeiten zur Geschichte des antiken Judentums und des Urchristentums
AJA	*American Journal of Archaeology*
AJP	*American Journal of Philology*
ANRW	*Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt: Geschichte und Kultur Roms im Spiegel der neueren Forschung.* Edited by H. Temporini and W. Haase. Berlin: de Gruyter, 1972–.
ASOR	American Schools of Oriental Research
BCH	*Bulletin de correspondance hellénique*
BCSSR	*Bulletin: Council of Societies for the Study of Religion*
BibInt	Biblical Interpretation
BJS	Brown Judaic Studies
BTB	*Biblical Theology Bulletin*
ByzF	*Byzantinische Forschungen*
BZNW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft
CahRB	Cahiers de la Revue biblique
CBET	Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology
CBQ	*Catholic Biblical Quarterly*
CP	*Classical Philology*
CSHJ	Chicago Studies in the History of Judaism
EPRO	Etudes préliminaires aux religions orientales dans l'empire romain
ER	*The Encyclopedia of Religion*. Edited by Mircea Eliade. 16 vols. New York: Macmillan, 1987.
FF	Foundations and Facets
FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments
GCS	Die griechische christliche Schriftsteller der ersten [drei] Jahrhunderte
GNS	Good News Studies

GR	*Greece and Rome*
HDR	Harvard Dissertations in Religion
HNT	Handbuch zum Neuen Testament
HNTC	Harper's New Testament Commentaries
HO	Handbuch der Orientalistik
HR	*History of Religions*
HSM	Harvard Semitic Monographs
HTR	*Harvard Theological Review*
HTS	Harvard Theological Studies
HUT	Hermeneutische Untersuchungen zur Theologie
JAC	Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*
JECS	*Journal of Early Christian Studies*
JJS	*Journal of Jewish Studies*
JR	*Journal of Religion*
JRH	*Journal of Religious History*
JRS	*Journal of Roman Studies*
JSJ	*Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman Periods*
JSNT	*Journal for the Study of the New Testament*
JSNTSup	Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series
JTSA	*Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*
KEK	Kritisch-exegetischer Kommentar über das Neue Testament (Meyer-Kommentar)
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
LSJ	Liddell, H. G., R. Scott, H. S. Jones. *A Greek-English Lexicon*. 9th ed. with revised supplement. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996.
MTSR	*Method and Theory in the Study of Religion*
NewDocs	*New Documents Illustrating Early Christianity*. Edited by G. H. R. Horsley and S. Llewelyn. North Ryde, N.S.W.: Ancient History Documentary Research Center, Macquarie University, 1981–.
NIGTC	New International Greek Testament Commentary
NovT	*Novum Testamentum*
NovTSup	Novum Testamentum Supplements
NPNF	*Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*
NTAbh	Neutestamentliche Abhandlungen
NTOA	Novum Testamentum et Orbis Antiquus
NTS	*New Testament Studies*
OCD	*Oxford Classical Dictionary*. Edited by S. Hornblower and A. Spawforth. 3rd ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996.

OTP	*Old Testament Pseudepigrapha.* Edited by James H. Charlesworth. 2 vols. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1983.
PW	Pauly, A. F. *Paulys Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft.* Edited by G. Wissowa. 49 vols. Munich: A. Druckenmüller, 1980.
RB	*Revue biblique*
RGG	*Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*
SBL	Society of Biblical Literature
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SBLSP	Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers
SBLSymS	Society of Biblical Literature Symposium Series
SBS	Stuttgarter Bibelstudien
SemeiaSt	Semeia Studies
SJLA	Studies in Judaism in Late Antiquity
SNTSMS	Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series
SP	Sacra pagina
StPB	Studia post-biblica
TSAJ	Texte und Studien zum antiken Judentum
TU	Texte und Untersuchungen
TynBul	*Tyndale Bulletin*
USQR	*Union Seminary Quarterly Review*
UUA	Uppsala Universitetsårskrift
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
ZNW	*Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche*
ZPE	*Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik*
ZWT	*Zeitschrift für wissenschaftliche Theologie*

Introducing Paul and the Corinthians

Ron Cameron and Merrill P. Miller

This is the second of a proposed three-volume set of studies by members of the Society of Biblical Literature's Seminar on Ancient Myths and Modern Theories of Christian Origins, concerned with redescribing the beginnings of Christianity as religion.[1] *Redescription* is a form of explanation that privileges difference and involves comparison and translation, category formation and rectification, definition and theory. The writers of the papers in this volume have proposed explanations of the following issues central to Paul and the Corinthians: (1) the relationship between Paul and the recipients of 1 Corinthians; (2) the place of Paul's Christ myth for his gospel; (3) the reasons for a disinterest in and the rejection of Paul's gospel, and/or for the reception and attraction of his gospel; and (4) the disjunction between Paul's collective representation of the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians and the Corinthians' own engagement with Paul in mythmaking and social formation, including differentiated responses to his gospel and mutual (mis)translation and (mis)appropriation of the other's discourse and practices. Some explanations of these matters stand in tension, though they do not have to be seen as mutually exclusive proposals. They converge in a set of working assumptions adopted by the seminar.[2]

Redescription

We need to specify how the work of the seminar and the papers in this volume relate to the history of scholarship on Paul and the Corinthians and constitute a set

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1. The generative problem for a project of redescription, its objectives, rationale, theoretical foundations, primary strategies, working procedures, principal findings, and achievements are discussed in detail in our first volume, as part of a redescription of (1) the Jesus schools of the Sayings Gospel Q and the *Gospel of Thomas*, (2) a possible Jesus school in Jerusalem, and (3) a pre-Pauline *christos* association (Ron Cameron and Merrill P. Miller, eds., *Redescribing Christian Origins* [SBLSymS 28; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature; Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2004]).

2. See below, 4–5.

for the redescription of the site. The relationship between Paul and the Corinthians was already seen in antiquity as one characterized by disjunction (*1 Clem.* 47). This perception has also set the agenda of modern scholarship on Paul's Corinthian correspondence. The different reasons for the disjunction that have been proposed constitute the history of scholarship since Ferdinand Christian Baur.[3] The proposals include the competing missions of Peter and Paul, the influence of mystery religions and an overrealized eschatology, pneumatic enthusiasm especially associated with Gnosticism, social stratification, political rivalries, philosophical influences and rhetorical sophistication, conventions of friendship, and factionalism associated with patronage.[4] While the reasons given for the disjunction have changed, the picture has largely remained the same:

> The shift in focus from religious or theological ideas to social and political ones nonetheless results in a picture with a familiar structure: rather than focus on Gnostic tendencies or realised eschatology as the Corinthian error that Paul strives to correct, now it is the secular practices of the wealthy or the prevalent imperial ideology that represent[s] the Corinthian failings and the target of Paul's critique. In either case, Paul is the guardian of theological, social, or political correctness in face of the Corinthians' obduracy and error.[5]

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3. For the most recent critical discussion and exemplification of the history of scholarship with an emphasis on recovering the situation and ethos of the church of Corinth, see Edward Adams and David G. Horrell, eds., *Christianity at Corinth: The Quest for the Pauline Church* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2004). The volume includes a critical survey of scholarship by the editors, followed by eighteen extracts from the history of modern scholarship, beginning with Ferdinand Christian Baur, and concluding with four methodological reflections.

4. See the overview of the different phases, changing trends, and bibliography in David G. Horrell and Edward Adams, "The Scholarly Quest for Paul's Church at Corinth: A Critical Survey," in Adams and Horrell, *Christianity at Corinth*, 13–40. Sociohistorical and social-scientific perspectives have tended to dominate the scholarly agenda on Paul and the Corinthians since the early 1970s (26–34). Among the key issues and debates on the current scholarly scene, Horrell and Adams name in particular (1) the relative weight given to different sources and the particular use of these sources, archaeological and literary, elite and popular; (2) questions of theory and method, sociohistorical approaches versus the more model-oriented approaches of social anthropology, and the necessity of grappling with the social ontology governing different theoretical frameworks; (3) reflexivity concerning the subject position, interests, and ideologies influencing historical reconstruction; and (4) the awareness of multiple contexts impinging on any historical situation and recognition of the entailments and partiality of any reconstruction of an ancient context (40–43; see also the four concluding essays of methodological reflections).

5. Ibid., 33, adding: "In . . . feminist approaches to the Corinthian correspondence, however, we meet a strand of modern scholarship in which the tendency to favour Paul and to criticise the Corinthians has been questioned and, sometimes, firmly reversed" (33–34). See, among others, Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, "Rhetorical Situation and Historical Reconstruction in 1 Corinthians," *NTS* 33 (1987): 386–403; Antoinette Clark Wire, *The Corinthian Women Prophets: A Reconstruction through Paul's Rhetoric* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990); Elizabeth A. Castelli, *Imitating Paul: A Discourse of Power* (Literary Currents in Biblical Interpretation; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1991).

The present set of papers takes its place within the recent shift in this history, but with an important difference concerning the picture that emerges. We suggest that there is a still more fundamental assumption underlying this pattern of relationship, the assumption that the Corinthians to whom Paul addresses his letters constitute collectively an *ekklēsia* of Christ, at least since the time that Paul first preached to them "Christ crucified," as he says, and won converts to his gospel (1 Cor 2:2; cf. 1:17, 23).[6] This collective identity is a given; it does not have to be argued and defended.[7] How else, it is assumed, can one explain that, despite what

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6. See Stanley K. Stowers, "Kinds of Myth, Meals, and Power: Paul and the Corinthians," 108 (in this volume): "The idea of a community is the idea of a highly integrated social group based on a common ethos, practices, and beliefs. Paul preached the gospel, people converted, and Paul welded them into a community. With this assumption, Paul's words in 1 Cor 1:10 become the basis for asking the question, How did the Corinthian community become divided? What false doctrine from inside the community, or infiltrating from the outside, corrupted the community or seduced a portion of it?"

7. We have tried to formulate this unexamined assumption carefully. The emphasis falls both on Paul's role in establishing group formation by preaching "Christ crucified" and on the whole idea of the existence of a Corinthian collective that can be identified without question as an *ekklēsia* of Christ before Paul left Corinth. In this formulation, we are taking into account the position of those who have questioned Paul's self-representation of his authority as sole founder ("father," 1 Cor 4:15) of the *ekklēsia* of Corinth, as well as the more common avoidance today of projecting a later established Christian church on the Corinthian situation: "One must not assume that the Corinthians conceived of themselves as 'Christians' in the way that later believers did, given a period of institutional and doctrinal development" (Horrell and Adams, "Scholarly Quest for Paul's Church at Corinth," 1 n. 1). As Margaret Y. MacDonald notes, "It is interesting to examine to what extent the Corinthian church has sometimes been seen as a reflection of 'Christianity' with a separate and distinct identity that can be permeated by influences from the outside. There is great variation with respect to whether the Corinthian correspondence is seen largely as a reflection of life in the *ekklesia* or whether it is located much more broadly within the social-religious-political framework of the Roman world" ("The Shifting Centre: Ideology and the Interpretation of 1 Corinthians," in Adams and Horrell, *Christianity at Corinth*, 276). Similarly, there is today an increased sensitivity to plural identities and affiliations, membership in the *ekklēsia* of Christ being only one—and, perhaps for most who participate, not the most important one. Thus, C. K. Robertson, developing a thesis of overlapping networks, acknowledges that the church was hardly the only group with which the Corinthians could, and wanted to, identify: "Many members remained firmly entrenched in the relational networks in which they previously existed." Paul's departure was the catalyst for giving priority to the claims and roles of their other, preexisting networks rather than to those of the Christian *ekklēsia* (*Conflict in Corinth: Redefining the System* [Studies in Biblical Literature 42; New York: Lang, 2001], 97). And in an influential essay comparing the different relationships of Thessalonian Christians and Corinthian Christians to their respective city environments, John M. G. Barclay writes concerning the Corinthians: "The church [of Corinth] is not a cohesive community but a club, whose meetings provide important moments of spiritual insight and exaltation, but do not have global implications of moral or social change. The Corinthians could gladly participate in this church as one segment of their lives. But the segment, however important, is not the whole and not the centre. . . . Once again, then, we have an example of the mutual reinforcement of social experience and theological perspective, which this time involves a major realignment of Paul's apocalyptic symbols. When the first Corinthians became Christians, they did not experience hostility, nor was their apostle hounded out of town. And the more firmly the church got established in conditions of social harmony, the more implausible the apocalyptic content of Paul's message became, with its strong implications of social dislocation" ("Thessalonica and Corinth: Social Contrasts in Pauline Christianity," *JSNT* 47

Paul describes as quarrels and factions, he never questions the identity of those he addresses as people who are in Christ, nor distinguishes among the Corinthians in this regard (1 Cor 1:4–7; 11:2; 12:12–13, 27; 15:22–23)? How else can one explain what appear to be Paul's claims and exercise of authority among the Corinthians (1 Cor 3:10–11; 4:15, 18–21; 5:3–5; 11:16; 12:28; 14:37–38; 15:1–2; 16:1–4; and the many instructions he gives throughout the letters)? How else can one account for a long and rather extensive set of exchanges between Paul and the Corinthians (1 Cor 1:11; 2:2; 3:1; 5:9; 7:1; 11:18; 16:5–7, 10–11; 2 Cor 1:15–16, 23; 2:1; 7:6–8; 8:6, 16; 12:14; 13:1–3)? It is this last question, in particular, that elicited sustained debate among members of the seminar. The papers by William E. Arnal and Stanley K. Stowers ("Kinds of Myth, Meals, and Power: Paul and the Corinthians") are extensively rewritten versions of the papers presented at our consultation and seminar and are intended, in part, as critical responses to the papers of Jonathan Z. Smith and Burton L. Mack.

The working assumptions of the seminar on this site require emphasis, since they depart significantly from the usual scholarly assumptions. (1) The collective identity of those to whom Paul writes was never assumed merely on the basis of Paul's representation of the Corinthians or of his own practices. Whether some Corinthians could be characterized as Pauline "Christians" was a matter of debate and, as one can see from the papers in this volume, a question of definition and nuance, requiring the adoption of positions that had to be argued and defended.[8] (2) Corinthian attraction to Paul's gospel was not taken as self-evident. Indeed, it was viewed as a problem that might be amenable to different solutions.[9] (3) What, in fact, was Paul's gospel? The papers in this volume that address the issue have concluded that it cannot be the death and resurrection of Christ, certainly not in any exclusive way that would not require taking account of other Pauline myths.[10]

[1992]: 71). While we do not wish to dismiss or ignore these more plausible perspectives, they continue to presuppose without debate Corinthian social formation as an *ekklēsia* of Christ and assume Paul's gospel as the catalyst (or, at least, the primary catalyst) in this social formation.

8. E.g., Stowers states, "In my view, two things are very clear from the evidence of the Corinthian letters: first, Paul very much wanted the people to whom he wrote to be a community, and he held a theory saying that God had miraculously made them into a community 'in Christ'; second, the Corinthians never did sociologically form a community and only partly and differentially shared Paul's interests and formation" ("Kinds of Myth," 109).

9. Thus, Stowers's "solution" ("Kinds of Myth") is related differentially to a recognition of Paul as a producer and distributor of specialized knowledge. In contrast, William E. Arnal's "solution" ("Bringing Paul and the Corinthians Together? A Rejoinder and Some Proposals on Redescription and Theory") is related, also differentially, to a multiethnic mix and conditions of dislocation from homelands with their attendant processes of deracination.

10. The papers in this volume by Arnal, Burton L. Mack ("Rereading the Christ Myth: Paul's Gospel and the Christ Cult Question"), and Stowers ("Kinds of Myth") highlight the importance of Paul's Abraham myth and his Spirit myth. All of these papers, along with Jonathan Z. Smith's ("Re: Corinthians"), agree that discourse associated with spirits/Spirit was likely to have been a source of mutual interest, a contributing factor to sustaining communication between Paul and the Corinthians.

(4) Instead of focusing on what pertained or happened after Paul left Corinth, we thought that the problems and issues identified in Paul's letters were just as likely to tell us something about who the Corinthians were before Paul got to Corinth and, therefore, how we might imagine their initial response to Paul.[11] In sum, these working assumptions, which have elicited argument and debate in the course of the seminar's work, have contributed to the conclusions attested in the papers as a set, that Paul as founder and community builder, the Corinthians as converts to the Christ myth and ritual, and the *ekklēsia* of Corinth as a singular, bounded, collective identity must all be questioned; and though not necessarily dismissed, they must be explained and appropriately qualified, if they are to hold any conviction.[12]

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11. We have already referred to an increased appreciation among scholars concerning the effect of continuing outside influences on relations within the *ekklēsia* of Corinth, though there is a wide range of views about the nature of these influences. In general, they are understood as bundles of practices, associations, networks, and interactions constitutive of affiliations and identity formations continuing after the Corinthians formed an *ekklēsia* of Christ in response to Paul's activity (and, perhaps, to the activity of other apostles and teachers as well). But this recognition never seems to call for questioning whether these prior affiliations and identity formations may have occasioned, in the first place, resistance to the formation of Christ-identified groups. One need not conclude from such questioning that Paul's activity would have met with no interest by Corinthian groups already in existence, nor that Paul could not have had extensive contact with individuals and households affiliated with such groups. None of the papers in this volume actually argues that Paul's teaching would have met with no interest or positive response from any Corinthians. On the other hand, the place where efforts in the interest of boundary formation for an *ekklēsia* of Christ can be found in abundance is in the letters of Paul.

12. On Paul's intrusion in Thessalonica on a previously existing professional association, see Richard S. Ascough, "The Thessalonian Christian Community as a Professional Voluntary Association," *JBL* 119 (2000): 311–28. Ascough proposes that Paul's preaching led the association to exchange its patron deity. Arnal has developed Ascough's proposal but modified some of the dynamics, suggesting that Paul's intervention led initially to the formation of a subgroup. He applies a model to Corinth drawn from a contemporary film, *The Fight Club,* arguing that it is a more plausible way to understand the dynamics of Paul's intrusion on an existing group in Corinth and, at the same time, to account for the data of the Corinthian correspondence ("Paul and the Corinthians," 83–89 [in this volume]). Arnal's striking observation about Romans should also be noted: "If we wish to test the hypothesis that Paul (habitually?) addresses himself to already constituted non-'Christian' groups, Romans would probably be the best place to start" (94 n. 44). John S. Kloppenborg's statement regarding responsibility for the formation and organization of associations is also pertinent, though he is not necessarily questioning the identity of these associations as groups devoted to Christ: "Much of the conceptual apparatus employed in the description of Pauline communities derives either from Acts, according to which Pauline groups are offshoots of synagogues, or from Paul's own rhetoric, according to which Paul 'founded' churches and claimed responsibility for their organization and orientation. This is to confuse rhetorical statement and its persuasive goals with a description of Pauline communities" ("Critical Histories and Theories of Religion: A Response to Burton Mack and Ron Cameron," *MTSR* 8 [1996]: 282–83, cited more fully in Richard S. Ascough, "Paul's 'Apocalypticism' and the Jesus Associations at Thessalonica and Corinth," 173 [in this volume]). On the relation of Paul's Christ myth to Corinthian social formation, Smith has concluded: "This experiment in redescription suggests that a Christ myth, as represented by Paul in the course of his intrusion on the Corinthians, would have been uninteresting to some Corinthians; and that a spirit myth, as they appear to have understood it, might have been interesting to some Corinthians in that it was 'good to

DOUBLE DISJUNCTION

Following the sessions of the second year of the seminar, the steering committee decided to turn to Paul and the Corinthians as the next site for redescription. It was already clear at the time of the decision that the seminar would be engaged with a "double disjunction": Paul and the Corinthians, on the one hand, and Paul and the Jesus-*christos* associations, our hypothetical site in the work just completed, on the other.[13] With respect to the latter disjunction, the still influential Germanic tradition of a pre-Pauline Hellenistic Christ cult had already been called into question as the site of the introduction and usage of the term *christos*:

> In our redescriptions of a possible Jesus school in Jerusalem and of the Jesus-*christos* association, both "Jerusalem" and "Christ" turn out to be pre-Pauline, diaspora issues and constructions, not what has been imagined as either "the kerygma of the earliest Church" or "the Hellenistic Church aside from Paul." All this is the consequence of our having begun to extend the reconstructed Jesus movements into the pre-Pauline sphere.[14]

But crucial matters pertaining to this disjunction remained unexplored. The social context and significance of the Christ myth and ritual, as they appear in Paul's explicit references to "traditions" in 1 Cor 11 and 15, had not been located. While the paper by Mack in this volume treats issues bearing on the Paul–Corinthian disjunction, the primary assignment and goal of his paper were to locate the form, social context, and logic of the "traditions" that Paul cites in 1 Corinthians.

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think'" ("Re: Corinthians," 34 [in this volume], quoting Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Totemism* [trans. Rodney Needham; Boston: Beacon, 1963], 89). On the assumed singularity and centrality of the Christ myth for Paul's gospel, Mack has stated: "It might be good to question the single myth, single *kērygma* assumption," and continues, following Stowers, "Paul did not get the idea of a mission to the Gentiles from the Christ myth" ("Rereading the Christ Myth," 59; cf. 38 [in this volume], citing Stanley K. Stowers, *A Rereading of Romans: Justice, Jews, and Gentiles* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994], 71, 307; cf. 167, 171, 225, 229). And Stowers has questioned the contemporary Christian imagination of Pauline communities because it is grounded in conditions that could not have obtained in Paul's time: "In fact, it takes a massive cultural-institutional structure, say with something like bishops, textually oriented religious education, the massive production and religious use of texts, and so on, in order to reproduce religions that focus on intellectual practices and doctrines of need and salvation. Greek and Roman religion and the religion of the Judean temple were not such religions. It is unlikely that Paul's formation and interests substantially overlapped with those of most of the Corinthians" ("Kinds of Myth," 108–9).

13. See Ron Cameron, "Agenda for the Annual Meeting, Discussion, and Reflections," in Cameron and Miller, *Redescribing Christian Origins*, 419: "The notion of a *christos* association belongs to a redefinition of 'pre-Pauline' as something that looks like, and has links with, the Jesus movements, which is not the conventional scholarly understanding of 'pre-Pauline Hellenistic Christianity.'"

14. Ibid., citing Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament* (trans. Kendrick Grobel; 2 vols.; London: SCM, 1952–55), 1:33, 63.

Mack's thesis, "that both the 'Christ myth' and the 'ritual meal' text can be traced to mythmaking within the Jesus schools at some point where the thought of Jesus as a martyr for their cause was entertained,"[15] draws on earlier work of the seminar.[16] The thesis entails a significant revision of his chapter on the "Congregations of the Christ" in *A Myth of Innocence*, where Mack had located the Christ myth and ritual traditions of 1 Cor 11 and 15 in the Hellenistic Christ cult.[17] Moreover, by arguing that the social logic of the martyr myth as an enhancement of the status of Jesus and as a myth of origins is entirely plausible in the context of Jesus schools and Jesus-*christos* associations, Mack has made a signal contribution to the larger project of the seminar to redraw the map of Christian beginnings. But we would like to point out, especially, the way in which his study addresses several significant issues that were on the table and debated, but hardly resolved, in *Redescribing Christian Origins*.[18]

Mack's paper is the only one in this volume that treats the second disjunction to which we have been referring. This fact relates to a concern among some members of the seminar that we should not return to the construction of hypothetical sites to "risk crash-landing our conceptual craft on hardly visible . . . runways," as Willi Braun put it,[19] runways that are constructed largely on the basis of deducing social locations, situations, and interests from the social logic of mythic texts. The issue was not whether our work had made a major contribution to the problematization of the dominant paradigm of Christian origins. On that project goal, there was general agreement about the work of the seminar.[20] Nor was it primarily a question of whether such reconstructions were possible and could be made more plausible than attempts to reduce myths to their supposedly historical core of unique events and numinous experiences. Rather, there were three more fundamental concerns that surfaced. First, that sites should be selected on the basis of the prospects for sharpening our conceptual instruments and testing our categories of mythmaking and social formation. Second, that we should resist giving

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15. Mack, "Rereading the Christ Myth," 37.

16. Mack has indicated this in the introduction to his paper (ibid., 35–38). See Merrill P. Miller, "The Problem of the Origins of a Messianic Conception of Jesus," in Cameron and Miller, *Redescribing Christian Origins*, 301–35; and, in the same volume, Miller, "The Anointed Jesus," 375–415; Burton L. Mack, "Why *Christos*? The Social Reasons," 365–74; and Christopher R. Matthews, "From Messiahs to Christ: The Pre-Pauline Christ Cult in Scholarship," 349–63.

17. Burton L. Mack, *A Myth of Innocence: Mark and Christian Origins* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988; repr., Minneapolis: Fortress, 2006), 98–123.

18. In what follows, see in particular Burton L. Mack, "Backbay Jazz and Blues," in Cameron and Miller, *Redescribing Christian Origins*, 421–31; and, in the same volume, Willi Braun, "Smoke Signals from the North: A Reply to Burton Mack's 'Backbay Jazz and Blues,'" 433–42; and William E. Arnal and Willi Braun, "Social Formation and Mythmaking: Theses on Key Terms," 459–67.

19. Braun, "Smoke Signals from the North," 436.

20. See Ron Cameron and Merrill P. Miller, "Conclusion: Redescribing Christian Origins," in Cameron and Miller, *Redescribing Christian Origins*, 505–6.

even the suspicion that we were engaged in the construction of an alternative narrative paradigm that required the same sequencing of sites found in the canonical narrative. Third, that we should give analytical priority to social contexts over discursive formations, including mythmaking, because the focus on mythmaking has the consequence, even if unintended, of making a linear sequence of ideas the primary cause in accounting for Christian beginnings.[21]

These concerns are largely responsible for the focus of this volume on Paul and the Corinthians, not on pre-Pauline "traditions." Here, at last, was a site not only of Paul's Christ-*kyrios* myth but also one where we could draw on more detailed social data than we had encountered before. Nevertheless, it still seemed crucial to include in the work of the seminar on this site a redescription of the texts Paul presents as traditions. As was argued at the time, we should not leave unexplained, in our terms, the very texts that have served as the primary evidence of the historical foundations of the Christian religion, in the view of most New Testament scholars.[22] Mack's paper also underlines the importance of the concerns that made the Corinthian site attractive in the first place and has put to rest, we think, any suspicion about "connecting all the dots on the 'Christian' map"[23] by establishing a linear sequence of myths as a generative cause. On the contrary. Not only has Mack shown that an earlier martyr myth cannot account for Paul's Christ myth; he also argues that Paul's gospel does not account for Corinthian social formation or contribute much to it. While the latter is a point of dispute among the authors in this volume, it does instantiate what we had concluded in *Redescribing Christian Origins*: there is no simple nexus or mechanism that links mythmaking and social formation.[24] If turning to a site that was "visible" has tested our categories, it has confirmed that their relationship is messier than we had initially imagined. Precisely where more social data are available and analytical priority is given to reconstructing a social situation, we see what appear to be the gaps between the agents' discourses and practices in a given setting, the mutual but also conflicting interests, and the fluidity of social formations.

Among the matters taken into account are not only different kinds of social formations but how we imagine social formation taking place, whether we are

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21. Braun, "Smoke Signals from the North," 435–42; Arnal and Braun, "Social Formation and Mythmaking," 462–67.

22. Mack, "Backbay Jazz and Blues," 428; idem, "Rereading the Christ Myth," 35–36. See Ron Cameron and Merrill P. Miller, "Issues and Commentary," in Cameron and Miller, *Redescribing Christian Origins*, 448; and, in the same volume, Cameron and Miller, "Conclusion," 500–501, 515–16.

23. Braun, "Smoke Signals from the North," 440.

24. Cameron and Miller, "Conclusion," 513–15. On the issue of the analytical priority of material conditions and social situations to discursive formations, or of deducing social interests and situations from mythmaking, Jonathan Z. Smith advised that "the challenge, here, will be to avoid formulations which see the one as the dependent variable of the other, or which see the one as congruent to the other," adding: "Such formulations introduce insufficient difference" ("*Dayyeinu*," in Cameron and Miller, *Redescribing Christian Origins*, 486).

thinking of Jesus schools, Jesus-*christos* associations, or Pauline churches. If people are always already socially constituted by family, status, gender, city and region, ethnicity, a wide range of networks and associations, and the like, it is more plausible to imagine social formation in the name of Jesus or Christ as various kinds of interventions in other already existing groups, than to imagine these formations as arising *de novo* as a secure set of boundary markers, or as responses to a cultural deposit cultivated in earlier Jesus groups. The principal contribution of Mack's paper to our double disjunction site is to have thoroughly problematized the notion of a pre-Pauline Christ cult and the historical work generated by that notion. In the Bultmannian tradition, it has served as a bridge between Jesus and Paul, making it possible to ring the changes without giving up the primitive Christian church as a historical datum, the unique "eschatological community" at the foundations of the Christian religion.[25] At the same time, Mack's paper reflects a different and more provocative use of the temporal expression "pre-Pauline," referring to already existing group formations among the Corinthians prior to Paul's initial contact and preaching. This notion of "pre-Pauline" is a matter that all the papers in this volume have taken into account as a necessary consideration in constructing a social situation, albeit with different emphases and without unanimity as to whether, or in what way, it is appropriate to think of the Corinthians to whom Paul writes as a Pauline *ekklēsia*.

Another commonality to be found in the papers of this volume is the attention given to procedures of comparison. All of the papers have a comparative focus and have taken account of, and explicitly referred to, the theoretical program of analogical comparison in the work of Smith in order to establish aspectual features of similarity and difference with various kinds of associations and schools, situating the Corinthians to whom Paul writes in the environment of Roman Corinth and in the wider eastern Mediterranean world of the early Roman Principate. In our earlier volume, Smith had referred to the seminar's successful defamiliarization of the gospel paradigm by means of a "radical alteration of the habitual terms of description."[26] He called this procedure a "first sense" of redescription. And he pointed to a "second sense" of redescription that depended on stronger comparative investigations, and noted a certain wariness in the seminar to take up the task of rectifying middle-range conceptualizations and categories in light of a comparative study of the data.[27]

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25. See Cameron and Miller, "Issues and Commentary," 445–46.

26. Smith, "*Dayyeinu*," 484; see Cameron and Miller, "Conclusion," 497–516.

27. Smith, "*Dayyeinu*," 484–85 with n. 4, adding: "I have in mind here our discussions of categories such as 'schools' or 'associations' in which, at times, the overarching question appeared to be that of the degree of fit/no fit between the model and the early Christian data, rather than the possibility of rectifying the model in the light of the data. . . . I should note that so limiting the question has, in the past, served as a stratagem for maintaining Christian uniqueness" (485 n. 5). Replacing the dominant theological vocabulary with terms more appropriate for a social and anthropological description of Christian

In his paper in this volume, Smith has not attempted to rectify the categories that have become habitual in the history of reception of Paul's letters to the Corinthians.[28] However, by adopting a strategy of comparing exempla from radically different times and places, Smith not only avoids the interference of genealogical comparisons; he is also required to cross a far greater range of difference, allowing him to take cognitive advantage of the mutual distortion to propose more "surprising" similarities, which have more striking consequences for a redescription of the data.[29] The other papers in this volume, for the most part, draw analogical comparisons from the practices and discourses of different peoples and of different types of associations and schools documented in the world of Paul and the Corinthians.[30] These comparisons, while perhaps less capable of surprising perspectives on the data, certainly have a bearing on judgments of difference in the drawing of comparisons from more distant exempla. Smith's contemporary exemplum is situated in a colonial world featuring Christian missions among its colonial enterprises and registering a high volume of intercultural exchange. That the world of Paul and the Corinthians is also colonial and featured intercultural exchange is obvious. But that does not settle the issue of situating Paul in relation to the Corinthians, or in relation to Roman colonial enterprises, even though the papers are in agreement—and the agreement is significant—that Paul's presence

beginnings in their Greco-Roman context, as we did in our earlier volume, does not by itself yield an explanation of the phenomena under consideration, if the meanings of the terms are not examined but taken as self-evident. For an expanded generalization of the term "association" achieved by comparing it with other loci of religious practices and institutions in antiquity, see Jonathan Z. Smith, "Here, There, and Anywhere," in *Prayer, Magic, and the Stars in the Ancient and Late Antique World* (ed. Scott Noegel et al.; Magic in History Series; University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003), 21–36; repr. in idem, *Relating Religion: Essays in the Study of Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 323–39. Associations flourished in the Greco-Roman world by reproducing and transforming features of domestic religious practices ("here") and religious practices of temple and state ("there") in locations "anywhere" in response to changes in social and cultural conditions in the Greco-Roman world.

28. Smith, "Re: Corinthians," 34 n. 50.

29. Compare Jonathan Z. Smith's statement regarding the requirement of difference in the relationship of models and data: "Indeed, the cognitive power of any translation, model, map, or redescription . . . is . . . a result of its difference from the phenomena in question and not its congruence" ("Bible and Religion," *BCSSR* 29/4 [2000]: 91; repr. in *Relating Religion*, 208, cited more fully in idem, "*Dayyeinu*," 484 n. 3). As Smith has persistently argued, "Both explanations and interpretations are occasioned by surprise. It is the particular subject matter that provides the scholar with an occasion for surprise. Surprise, whether in the natural or the human sciences, is always reduced by bringing the unknown into relations to the known. The process by which this is accomplished, in both the natural and the human sciences, is translation: the proposal that the second-order conceptual language appropriate to one domain (the known/the familiar) may translate the second-order conceptual language appropriate to another domain (the unknown/the unfamiliar)" ("A Twice-told Tale: The History of the History of Religions' History," *Numen* 48 [2001]: 143–44; repr. in *Relating Religion*, 370–71).

30. We note that Arnal has also drawn on contemporary exempla in his references to the myth of Hainuwele and to the contemporary film *The Fight Club* ("Paul and the Corinthians," 100–101, 85; cf. 89).

and preaching are appropriately described as "intrusive" on people of different geographical and ethnic origins who were already "getting together." For example, in relation to the colonial authority and culture, Stowers points out that "Christian missionaries and teachers in New Guinea, even when they were natives bringing domesticated forms of the religion, carried the background authority of an enormously powerful imperial culture from the West that exerted both attraction and repulsion. Paul, the Diaspora Judean, carried no such background authority. The Corinthian reception of Paul [thus] needs explanation."[31] On intercultural exchange, Arnal maintains that cultural differences, and the translations and misunderstandings arising from them, are less significant in determining the relationship between Paul and the Corinthians than are the conditions that pertain across the world of the early Roman Principate, which create a similar situational incongruity for both Paul and the Corinthians.[32] The questions broached by Arnal at the end of his paper could also be construed as a Pauline intrusion on the central institutions of the Roman Empire.[33]

PAUL'S APOCALYPTICISM, CONFLICT MANAGEMENT, AND "MIND GOODS"

Recent scholarship has pointed to significant differences of constituency, group formation and organization, and local circumstances among Pauline churches.[34] Such differences seem especially pronounced in the case of Thessalonica and Corinth.[35] Richard S. Ascough has written elsewhere about the particular constituency and circumstances of group formation of the *ekklēsia* of Thessalonica.[36] In contrast, his paper in this volume finds an underlying concern common to Paul's addressees in both cities. The interest of the seminar in Paul's response to a question about the dead in 1 Thess 4:13–18 initially arose from a suggestion that Paul might be responding to a similar concern among the Corinthians in 1 Cor 15. Taking his bearings from Smith's observation that "Paul's most extensive discussions of the resurrection of the dead—in 1 Thessalonians and 1 Corinthians, the earliest treatments of the topic in Christian literature—are *both* triggered by questions concerning the status of dead members of the community,"[37] and from Mack's

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31. Stowers, "Kinds of Myth," 116.

32. Arnal, "Paul and the Corinthians."

33. Ibid., 103–4.

34. See, e.g., Richard S. Ascough, *What Are They Saying about the Formation of Pauline Churches?* (New York: Paulist, 1998).

35. See especially Barclay, "Thessalonica and Corinth."

36. Ascough, "The Thessalonian Christian Community as a Professional Voluntary Association." In this article, Ascough makes a case for seeing the Thessalonians as an already existing association of handworkers when they turned to "a living and true God" *collectively*, thus accounting for their reputation among other *ekklēsiai* in Macedonia and Achaia (1 Thess 1:8–9).

37. Jonathan Z. Smith, *Drudgery Divine: On the Comparison of Early Christianities and the Reli-*

recognition in 1 Thessalonians that "the question was not really about 'personal salvation' either of the living or of the dead . . . [but] about belonging,"[38] Ascough has undertaken to survey the evidence of burial, memorials, and cults of the dead in the context of kinship and of associations in Greco-Roman cities, in order to show the central role of death rituals for establishing collective identity and group cohesion.[39] With these matters in view, he explores the intelligibility and relevance of Paul's apocalyptic discourse in 1 Thess 4:13–18. Building on his findings, he turns to 1 Corinthians and concludes his study with a proposed trajectory of social formation and mythmaking, starting from a pre-Pauline memorial foundation and hero myth and moving to a specifically Pauline memorial meal and a developing Pauline apocalyptic myth. Both the memorial meal and the mythmaking are viewed as responses to concerns for the status of the dead.[40]

The papers by Stowers ("Does Pauline Christianity Resemble a Hellenistic Philosophy?") and John S. Kloppenborg compare Paul and the Corinthians with

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gions of Late Antiquity (Jordan Lectures in Comparative Religion 14; London: School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 131 n. 33 (emphasis original).

38. Burton L. Mack, *Who Wrote the New Testament? The Making of the Christian Myth* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1995), 110; cf. Ascough, "Paul's 'Apocalypticism,'" 151–52.

39. Ascough, "Paul's 'Apocalypticism,'" 155–72. The paper concentrates on 1 Thessalonians because the inscriptional evidence from Macedonia for associations is more abundant and better preserved than what is available from Corinth (152). Indeed, "there is much literary and documentary evidence for burial practices in the Greco-Roman world, but very little that can be related specifically to Corinth" (Mary E. Hoskins Walbank, "Unquiet Graves: Burial Practices of the Roman Corinthians," in *Urban Religion in Roman Corinth: Interdisciplinary Approaches* [ed. Daniel N. Schowalter and Steven J. Friesen; HTS 53; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Divinity School, 2005], 249). For a systematic account of what has thus far been published in many scattered publications of the funerary remains of the Roman Corinthia, see Joseph Lee Rife, "Death, Ritual, and Memory in Greek Society during the Early and Middle Roman Empire" (2 vols.; Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, 1999), 1:199–332. Regarding the epigraphic evidence, Rife states that the tombs of the Corinthia "were the product of descent groups, with the male head of the family most often, but sometimes a female, clearly identified as the person responsible" (1:257), adding: "The epigraphic and archaeological record of the Roman Corinthia offers no evidence for corporations owning or operating tombs, like the burial clubs . . . of Roman Italy" (1:257 n. 177). On this last point, however, we call attention to the continuing research being conducted by Walbank and Kathleen W. Slane in an area northeast of the ancient city. Walbank reports on skeletal remains in one of the cists of a chamber tomb that show very dissimilar genetic traits in seven individuals buried there. She suggests that these individuals may have belonged to a trade association or burial club. Nearby in the same chamber is a grave in which the dead had similar genetic traits, indicative of family ties (Walbank, "Unquiet Graves," 267–68).

40. Ascough organizes his study following the operational procedures of Jonathan Z. Smith ("The 'End' of Comparison: Redescription and Rectification," in *A Magic Still Dwells: Comparative Religion in the Postmodern Age* [ed. Kimberley C. Patton and Benjamin C. Ray; Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2000], 239), as summarized by Burton L. Mack ("On Redescribing Christian Origins," *MTSR* 8 [1996]: 256–59; repr. in idem, *The Christian Myth: Origins, Logic, and Legacy* [New York: Continuum, 2001], 70–74), for comparative analysis capable of achieving a redescription of the data and the rectification of categories.

philosophies and associations, respectively. Both papers are exercises in analogical comparison and comment on appropriate procedures and goals for their comparative projects. Both reject any simple identification of Pauline "churches" with particular models that have been suggested—households, associations, mysteries, philosophical schools, synagogues—finding more appropriate and useful the comparison of particular features and associative practices of these group formations.[41] And while focused on the features and practices of different models, both authors acknowledge the value of the particular features being compared in the work of the other.[42]

For Stowers, "Paul's social formations resembled those of Hellenistic philosophers because they were productive of 'mind goods' in a way that subordinated other goods."[43] By contrast,

> the typical sacrificial religion of the Greco-Roman world was closely intertwined with economic production and made no sense apart from that production. This holds true of associations, the Judean temple, and the religious practices of dispersed Judean communities. The ideal economic production in this Mediterranean religion is the fruit of the land, but artisanal, trade, and other sorts of economic production were also included in the structuration effected by the linking of shared practices.[44]

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41. John S. Kloppenborg, "Greco-Roman *Thiasoi*, the *Ekklēsia* at Corinth, and Conflict Management," 189 (in this volume): "Preliminary analysis of the available models makes it unlikely that any one will commend itself fully. . . . Hence, rather than engaging in rhetorical overstatement and claiming, for example, that the Corinthian *ekklēsia was* a *philosophia*, or *was* a cult association, it is far more useful to compare particular aspects of Christian, Jewish, and pagan associative practices" (emphasis original). Compare Stanley K. Stowers, "Does Pauline Christianity Resemble a Hellenistic Philosophy?" 229 (in this volume): "I do not think that Pauline Christianity was a philosophy, and differences are as important as similarities. . . . [T]he similarities with the philosophies are not exclusive of similarities with other social formations." Stowers also makes a point of distinguishing "Pauline Christianity" from the Corinthians themselves: "[I]t is important to remind ourselves that we have only Paul's representation of these groups. I am skeptical about inferring much concerning the Pauline groups themselves and thus will focus on Paul's conceptions in the letters" (221–22). With respect to this latter distinction, we simply note that Stowers's other paper ("Kinds of Myth") in this volume is more directly responsive to the definition of the site for a redescription that clearly includes the Corinthians themselves.

42. Kloppenborg, "Greco-Roman *Thiasoi*," 190 n. 5: "Stowers argues that similarities between Pauline Christianity at Corinth and philosophies are stronger than with Judean communities (synagogues) or voluntary associations. . . . This type of comparison helpfully illumines an important aspect of Pauline Christianity, but obviously does not pretend to provide a comprehensive account of its associative practices." Compare Stowers, "Pauline Christianity," 229 (cf. 219–21 with nn. 3, 7): "I do, in fact, think that it is worth comparing the Christian groups to Judean communities and to so-called voluntary associations. Similarities do exist but . . . overall I judge differences to be greater than the similarities. Comparison is thus a complex, multitaxonomic activity."

43. Stowers, "Pauline Christianity," 241.

44. Ibid., 238.

Regarding the oddity of the Pauline "household," Stowers notes that "the ancient household was the locus for almost all of the economic production in Greco-Roman antiquity. . . . [But] the economic engine is missing from the Pauline household. The only labor and goods that he values are those related to his teaching, assembly building, and leading activities."[45] For Kloppenborg,

> What makes the study of *collegia* particularly interesting is, first, that the available documentation discloses much more about social conflict than what remains of the other types of associations and, second, that various forms of conflict appear to have been endemic in *collegia* and that many *collegia* developed mechanisms by which to manage conflict, both internal and external.[46]

Summarizing his findings from the data of *collegia*, Kloppenborg concludes:

> Thus, associations both cultivated a degree of rivalry and had to devise means by which such rivalry could be limited and contained. Fines for disorderly conduct at meals, injunctions prohibiting members from taking other members to court, and the insistence on settling all disputes among members within the association—all served as means by which an association sought to prevent internal conflict from reaching divisive proportions.[47]

This volume concludes with an essay by the editors, seeking to bring the papers into further conversation. We have engaged the papers in order to present our own explanatory proposals for the redescription of Paul and the Corinthians and to assess the seminar's work on this site as a contribution to the project of redescribing Christian origins. In order to achieve this goal, we have highlighted agreements and important matters of consensus among the papers, while analyzing and evaluating positions where the paper writers have offered different judgments and arguments on related issues, including, in particular, the generative problematic for the redescription of the site, the subject positions of the Corinthians to whom Paul is writing, the place of Paul's Christ myth for his gospel, the significance of Paul's apocalyptic persuasions and discourse, especially in relation to practices of burial, memorial, and cults of the dead, and strategies of comparison in proposing analogues to features of Paul's discourse and practice in 1 Corinthians. And even though the seminar has not focused on issues particular to Paul's correspondence in 2 Corinthians, some of those issues were clearly in view as members of the seminar formulated proposals for a redescription of the site.

The purpose of the Seminar on Ancient Myths and Modern Theories of Christian Origins is to contribute both historiographically to a redescription of

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45. Ibid., 240, 241.

46. Kloppenborg, "Greco-Roman *Thiasoi*," 205.

47. Ibid., 214.

Christian beginnings and imaginatively to the construction of a general theory of religion. As an effort to relate mythmaking and social formation, our work demonstrates that the relationship is complex, first, because mythmaking and social formation are already intertwined from both sides of the encounter between Paul and the Corinthians and, second, because this double set of systems is reproduced and transformed in the course of the encounter. Thus, though mythmaking and social formation are linked, the implication is that the one is not simply a reflection, or the cause, of the other. This means that we cannot always infer social formations from the evidence of mythmaking, as though there were some simple way to specify the nexus that links them. It also means that a site for redescription does not have to constitute a single social formation, as though it consisted in some firmly bounded corporate entity. The larger import for redescribing Christian origins is that the existence of Jesus- or Christ-centered myths and other literary forms does not necessarily presuppose Jesus- or Christ-centered collective identities or bounded groups as their formative social contexts. The picture of the Corinthians as a Christ-identified religious community and of Paul as a founder and builder of religious commmunities is as dependent on Paul's own mythmaking, and on contemporary scholarly desires, as the view of Paul as the innovator of a program of social and political reform. What Paul achieved at Corinth was not the establishment of an alternative community founded on the Christ myth and unified through Paul's moral and ritual instructions, but the attraction of a certain cadre of followers.