Ekklēsia as a Jewish Synagogue Term: Some Implications for Paul's Socio-Religious Location

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Introduction

In late antiquity, the political mission of Christ-followers reached its zenith when, in 380 C.E., Theodosius I issued an edict that all subjects of the Roman Empire should worship the Christian God.[1] Some, such as Daniel Boyarin, claim that this represents the birth of "religion" as a separate social category,[2] a

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[1] Throughout this essay I will replace the problematic term "Christian" with "Christ-follower." I use the term "Christ-follower" rather than "Christ-believer" since this term represents not just beliefs, but also practice. See Paul Trebilco, *Self-designations and Group Identity in the New Testament* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 3; Steve Mason, "Jews, Judaeans, Judaizing, Judaism: Problems of Categorization in Ancient History," *JSJ* 38 (2007): 457–512, esp. 482–88.

[2] Bruce Malina, among others, claims that ancient Mediterranean societies knew nothing of "religion" as an autonomous socio-religious entity disconnected from ethno-cultural identities ("Social-Scientific Approaches and the Gospel of Matthew," in *Methods for Matthew* [MBI; ed. Mark Allan Powell; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009], 154–93, esp. 170). Steve Mason identifies six culturally integrated aspects of "religion" which were expressed in the warp and woof of everyday life in early antiquity: *ethnos*, cult, philosophy, kinship traditions/domestic worship, astrology/magic, and voluntary association (*collegia/thiasoi*) ("Jews, Judaeans, Judaizing, Judaism," 482–88). See also Brent Nongbri who, following on from T. Asad, argues that the absence of the "secular" in pre-modern, non-Western contexts makes "religion" a uniquely modern, Western concept (*Before Religion: A History of a Modern Concept* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013]; see T. Asad, *Genealogies of Religion: Disciplines and Reasons for Power in Christianity and Islam* [Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993]). For a critique of Mason's view of "religion," see Daniel R. Schwartz, *Judeans and Jews: Four Faces of Dichotomy in Ancient Jewish History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014). Schwartz offers 14 examples from Josephus where the Greek word *threskia* is best translated as "religion" rather than as a religious activity such as "worship," "cult," or "ceremony" (ibid., 91–99). For a judicious critique of Nongbri's conceptual paradigm, see

"religion" now known as "Christianity."[3] This "religion" was institutionally represented in "the Catholic Church"[4] (*katholikē ekklēsia*),[5] whose almost exclusively Gentile congregants gathered in purpose-built structures called "churches." This fourth century conception of *ekklēsia* as a religious organization and as religious buildings ("church"), however, was worlds apart from how the concept of *ekklēsia* ("assembly") was understood from its inception in the late sixth century B.C.E. up to, and including, the first century C.E.[6]

Jack C. Laughlin and Kornel Zathureczky, "An Anatomy of the Canonization of Asadian Genealogy: A Case Study," *SR* 44/2 (June 2015): 233–52. Laughlin and Zathureczky contend that "a context-specific historical hermeneutic, with the potential to generate multiple conceptions of religion (as such), not only evades tendencies to reify 'religion' through its use as a universally applicable category (religion as a *sui generic* category) but also resists what Strausberg (2010) calls a 'reverse-*sui-generis*-rhetoric' which treats religion as a uniquely anomalous category" (ibid., 235–36).

[3] Daniel Boyarin, "Semantic Differences; or, 'Judaism'/'Christianity,'" in *The Ways that Never Parted: Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, ed. A. Becker and A. Reed (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 65–85, esp. 77. Boyarin's argument for the birth of "religion" as a social category is not a social-scientific argument based on the differentiation of proscribed descriptive and prescribed redescriptive discourse (e.g., Asad, Nongbri). Rather, he bases it upon the historically specific context of the fourth century C.E. In not dissimilar fashion, Daniel Schwartz uses historiographical evidence to claim that already in the first century C.E. Josephus, at the very least, conceived of a Jewish religion (*Judeans and Jews*, 91–99).

[4] Inscriptional occurrences of *katholikē ekklēsia* include references to a building (*Pan du désert* 27; 340/1 C.E.: ὁ κατασκευάσας ἐνταῦθα καθολικὴν ἐκκλησίαν); to an institutionalized organization (*IGLSyr* 5 2126; n.d.; ὁ θεοτίμητος Γρηγόρι]ος ἡμῶν πατριά[ρχης], [κατὰ τοὺς ἱεροὺς κανόνας(?) τῆς καθολικῆς ἐκκ]λησίας·); and in the non-universal sense to a regional community of Christ-followers (*RIChrM* 235; Makedonia [Edonis], Philippoi; fourth cent. C.E.: τῆς καθολικῆς καὶ ἀποστολικῆς ἁγίας ἐκκλησίας Φιλιππησίων).

[5] During the earlier patristic era, however, the term *katholikē ekklēsia* referred simply to the "worldwide church" ("universal/catholic church") (cf. Polycarp, Introduction: "The *ekklēsia* of God which dwells in Smyrna to the *ekklēsia* of God which dwells in Philomelium and to all the sojournings of the holy *catholic ekklēsia* in every place." In that same vein, see also *Smyrn*. 8:1a, 2; 16:2; 19:2.

[6] I will avoid using the problematic translation "church" for *ekklēsia*, not least since *ekklēsia* never refers to the building or structure in which the *ekklēsia* gathers.

Beginning with Cleisthenes's democratic reforms in Athens (508/7–501 B.C.E.),[7] and continuing throughout the Imperial period (27 B.C.E.–284 C.E.),[8] the term *ekklēsia* was used for the civic assembly of male citizens (*dēmos*)[9] in a Greek *polis* ("city-state")[10] or as a temporary group designation for the *dēmos* while gathered in assembly (*en ekklēsia*).[11] *Ekklēsia* was not used as a permanent group designation in Greco-Roman circles.[12]

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[7] For a detailed discussion of the dating of Cleisthenes's reforms in light of the discovery of the *Athenaion Politeia*, see E. Badian, "Back to Kleisthenic Chronology," in *Polis and Politics: Studies in Ancient Greek History*, ed. Pernille Flensted-Jensen, Thomas Heine Nielsen, and Lene Rubinstein (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 2000), 447–64. The earliest inscriptional mention of a civic *ekklēsia* is found in *Tit. Calymnii* 70 (late fifth/early fourth cent. B.C.E.; Kalymna—Fanum Apollinis, Cos and Calyma, Aegean Islands). It is fragmentary and consists of seven identifiable words ([ἔ]δο[ξε τᾶι ἐκκλησίαι τᾶι Καλυμνίων, μηνὸς — — — —]).

[8] In historiography, the Imperial period is conventionally dated from the start of Caesar Augustus's reign in 27 B.C.E. and concludes with the beginning of Diocletian's reign (284–305 C.E.).

[9] Civic decision-making in the *polis* of Athens was enacted through the regular assembly (*ekklēsia*) of the full citizenry (*dēmos*) under the leadership of the 500-person council (*boulē*) (see further, Mogens Herman Hansen, *The Athenian Assembly in the Age of Demosthenes* [Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987], 25–28). The principal *ekklēsia* (*ekklēsia kyria*) during each *prytaneiai* had an all-embracing program which included votes of confidence with respect to the magistrates (*archontes*); discussion of military preparedness and issues related to food security; consideration of accusations of high treason (*eisangelia*); reports of confiscated property; and determinations made with respect to disputed inheritance claims (Gustave Glotz, *The Greek City and Its Institutions* [New York: Barnes and Noble, 1929/1969], 85; cf. *AP* 43.4–6). The Athenian *ekklēsia* became the governance model for *ekklēsiai* within *poleis* across the Greek East.

[10] Mogens Hermann Hansen notes that scholarly consensus defines a Greek *polis* as "a community of citizens rather than a territory ruled by a government" ("City-Ethnics as Evidence for *Polis* Identity," in *More Studies in the Ancient Greek Polis* [HE 108; ed. M. H. Hansen and K. Raaflaub; Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1996], 169–96, esp. 169 and 192).

[11] Greek epigraphic sources use the word *ekklēsia* in reference to a temporary group designation even into the first century C.E. In a letter from Artaban III, king of Parthia, to Seleucia approving the election of a city treasurer, the word *ekklēsia* is used in lieu of the word *dēmos* (*SEG* 7:2; 21 C.E./Parthian year 268, Audnaeus 17). It reads, βασιλευόν[τος Σελευκου, ἔτους] ϛλʹ καὶ ρʹ, μη[νὸς- - -], ἐν Σελευκ[είαι δὲ τῆι πρὸς τῶι] Εὐλαίωι Λ[ώου- - -, ἐπὶ] Ἀμμωνί[ου. ἔδοξε τῆι ἐκκλησίαι· ["resolved by the *ekklēsia*"].

[12] My examination of Greek literary (1036 *ekklēsia* occurrences), papyrological, and inscriptional sources (approx. 2100 occurrences of the *ekklēsia* related lexemes ἐκκλησία, ἐκλησία, ἐκκλησίη, ἐκκλεσία, and ἐγκλησία) did not find evidence of a non-civic group,

The New Testament, however, does use the word *ekklēsia* as a permanent group designation. Not all of the early Christ-follower writings, though, employ *ekklēsia* terminology (e.g., 1 Peter). If New Testament usage indicates socio-religious reality, then the only Christ-follower communities to self-designate as *ekklēsiai* are those whose primary allegiance lay either with Paul, the "elder" John, the "prophet" John, or Matthew. Some Christ-followers, such as James's addressees (Jas 1:2)[13] and the later Nazarenes of Transjordan,[14] appear to have met in (or as) a *synagōgē*. As the second century dawned, it was *ekklēsia* which came to predominate as Christ-followers' group designation of choice.

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such as a voluntary association, self-designating as an *ekklēsia*. Inscriptional decrees do indicate, though, that were upwards of three non-civic groups which named their semi-public meeting an *ekklēsia*: the Tyrian Herakleistai of Delos (*IDelos* 1519), the *aleiphomenoi* of Samos (*Samos* 119), and the *syngeneia* of Pelekōs (*Sinuri* 73). See my extensive interaction with previous studies on these three inscriptions as well as on *OGIS* 488/*TAM* V,1 222, *IGLAM* 1381 and 1382 (e.g., John Kloppenborg, Richard Ascough, Philip Harland), in Ralph J. Korner, "Before 'Church': Political, Ethno-Religious, and Theological Implications of the Collective Designation of Pauline Christ-Followers as *Ekklēsiai*" (PhD diss., McMaster University, Jan. 16, 2014), 57–85 (see also Korner, *Before 'Church': Political, Ethno-Religious, and Theological Implications of the Collective Designation of Pauline Christ-followers as* Ekklēsiai, forthcoming). Any statistics I cite relative to the number of *ekklēsia* occurrences in the inscriptional record reflect the number of times the word *ekklēsia* occurs in the database of Packard Humanities Institute (PHI) and other sources not incorporated by PHI. Thus, the statement "2100 occurrences of the *ekklēsia* related lexemes" indicates merely the number of times *ekklēsia* occurs within the database of PHI. Some of those *ekklēsia* occurrences are found within different epigraphic titles of the same inscription.

[13] Some scholars suggest that the Epistle of James uses the word "synagogue" of a building within which early Christ-followers met *en ekklēsia* (Jas 2:2; 5:14). If so, James's halakic observant Christ-followers differentiated their "members only" meeting from other synagogue gatherings by naming their meeting *ekklēsia*. There are two other possible interpretations of the word *synagōgē*: (1) a ritual assembly of Jewish Christ-followers (Richard Bauckham, "James and the Jerusalem Community," in *Jewish Believers in Jesus: The Early Centuries*, ed. O. Skarsaune and R. Hvalvik [Peabody, MS: Hendrickson, 2007], 55–95, esp. 58); or (2) a building owned by Christ-followers and dedicated for their ritual worship assemblies (Scot McKnight, *The Letter of James* [NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011], 183). These two interpretations of the word *synagōgē*, however, are anomalous with respect to other New Testament writings.

[14] The Nazarenes of Transjordan explicitly self-identified collectively as *synagōgē* (Bastiaan van Elderen, "Early Christianity in Transjordan," *TynBul* 45.1 [1994]: 97–117; Wolfram Kinzig, "The Nazoreans," in *Jewish Believers in Jesus*, 463–87).

For the purposes of this paper, however, I will focus upon the apostle Paul and his use of *ekklēsia* as a group designation. I will limit my focus to his undisputed writings.[15] One question in particular informs my study: "Is *ekklēsia* a term used for Jewish synagogue gatherings, and if so, what are some implications for the socio-religious location of Paul's *ekklēsiai*, whether composed of Jews and/or non-Jews?"[16]

Along with the synagogue,[17] scholars—following on from Wayne Meeks[18]—have assessed the organization of Paul's *ekklēsiai* along the lines of three other ancient non-civic models: the household,[19] philosophical schools,[20]

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[15] The seven undisputed or acknowledged letters of Paul, as listed in canonical order, are Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, 1 Thessalonians, and Philemon.

[16] I use the term "Jewish" congruent with Mark Nanos, who suggests that "the adjective 'Jewish' is used both to refer to those who are Jews ethnically and to the behavior generally associated with the way that Jews live, albeit variously defined, such as by different interpretations of Scripture and related traditions, different views of who represents legitimate authority, and different conclusions about what is appropriate for any specified time and place. The behavior can be referred to by the adverb 'jewishly,' and as the expression of 'jewishness.' In colloquial terms, one who practices a Jewish way of life according to the ancestral customs of the Jews, which is also referred to as practicing 'Judaism,' might be called a 'good' Jew" ("Paul's Non-Jews Do Not Become Jews, But Do They Become 'Jewish'?: Reading Romans 2:25–29 Within Judaism, Alongside Josephus," *JJMJS* 1 [2014]: 26–53, esp. 27–28).

[17] Some ways in which Christ-follower *ekklēsiai* are said to demonstrate affinity with synagogal gatherings include worship gathering functions such as the reading and interpretation of Scripture, communal prayer, and commensality (1 Cor 11:17–34; 14:26), and the settling of legal affairs within the community (1 Cor 6:1–7) (Wayne A. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul* [London/New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983], 80–81; James Tunstead Burtchaell, *From Synagogue to Church* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992], 284–88). Some of these *praxeis* within Jewish synagogues, however, are also mirrored in Greek and Egyptian voluntary associations. Hugo Mantel lists twelve similarities between diasporic Jewish synagogue communities and Greek and Egyptian voluntary associations ("The Men of the Great Synagogue," *HTR* 60/1 [1967]: 69–91, esp. 82–91). Examples include correlations in titles for association officials (e.g., *archisynagōgēs*, *presbyteros*, *grammateus*), judicial independence, regulatory *nomoi*, and penalties for disregarding *nomoi*.

[18] Meeks, *The First Urban Christians*.

[19] See Ok-pil Kim, "Paul and Politics: *Ekklesia*, Household, and Empire in 1 Corinthians 1–7," (PhD diss., Drew University, April, 2010).

[20] Edward Adams provides a concise survey of those scholars who suggest that Greek philosophical schools are a good paradigm for understanding how Paul organized his *ekklēsiai* ("First-Century Models for Paul's Churches: Selected Scholarly Developments

and the voluntary association.[21] Richard Ascough originally supported Meeks's four-fold sociological model[22] with some modifications.[23] However, he now challenges any heuristic category that creates a sharp dichotomy between "associations" and "synagogues." Rather, he contends, in line with Harland,[24]

since Meeks," in *After the First Urban Christians: The Social-Scientific Study of Pauline Christianity Twenty-five Years Later*, ed. T. D. Still and D. G. Horrell [London/New York: T&T Clark International, 2009], 60–78, esp. 73–74).

[21] See, for example, John Kloppenborg, "Edwin Hatch, Churches, and Collegia," in *Origins and Method: Towards a New Understanding of Judaism and Christianity*, ed. B. H. Maclean (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), 212–38, esp. 231; Richard Ascough, *Paul's Macedonian Associations: The Social Context of Philippians and 1 Thessalonians* (WUNT 161; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003); Wayne O. McCready, "*Ekklēsia* and Voluntary Associations," in *Voluntary Associations in the Graeco-Roman World*, ed. J. S. Kloppenborg and S. G. Wilson (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), 59–73; Philip Harland, *Associations, Synagogues, and Congregations: Claiming a Place in Ancient Mediterranean Society* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), esp. 106 and 182; and idem, *Dynamics of Identity in the World of the Early Christians: Associations, Judeans, and Cultural Minorities* (New York/London: T&T Clark, 2009), esp. 44–45.

[22] For updated perspectives on Meeks's proposals, see Edward Adams, "First-Century Models," 60–78, and John S. Kloppenborg, "Greco-Roman *Thiasoi*, the *Ekklesia* at Corinth, and Conflict Management," 191–205, both in *Redescribing Paul and the Corinthians* (ECIL 5; ed. R. Cameron and M. P. Miller; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011). For a judicious critique of four of Meeks's apparent operating assumptions, see Stanley Kent Stowers, "The Social Sciences and the Study of Early Christianity," in *Approaches to Ancient Judaism*, vol. 5, ed. W. Green (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1985), 149–81, esp. 172. Meeks's application of modern sociological models (i.e., Bryan Wilson's "small groups" sect theory) to ancient groups appears to assume that commensurability is valid across vast reaches of time (first vs. twentieth centuries), geography (Mediterranean vs. North America) and culture (dyadic/collectivistic vs. individualistic cultures).

[23] Richard Ascough, *What Are They Saying About the Formation of Pauline Churches?* (New York and Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1998). While Meeks viewed "synagogue" and "association" as being distinct and separate categories, with "synagogue" best representing Christ-follower groups, Ascough originally argued in the other direction, that "association" was a better category than "synagogue."

[24] Philip Harland identifies at least five types of non-civic associations based upon their principal social networks: (1) household connections; (2) ethnic or geographic connections; (3) neighborhood connections; (4) occupational connections; and (5) cult or temple connections (*Associations*, 29; see also David Instone-Brewer and Philip A. Harland, "Jewish Associations in Roman Palestine: Evidence from the Mishnah," *JGRJCh* 5 [2008]: 200–21, esp. 202, 203).

that "association" is a meta-category within which various taxonomical sub-sets are included based on factors such as kinship, neighborhood, ethnicity, occupation, or cultic expressions.[25] Thus, under the *taxon* "association" are subsumed particular types of associations such as Jewish groups (e.g., the Covenanters, the Theraputae),[26] Greco-Roman voluntary groups (e.g., *thiasoi*, *collegia*, *synodos*, *koina*), and Christ-follower groups (e.g., *ekklēsiai*).

In 2008, Anders Runesson, Donald Binder, and Birger Olsson produced a synagogue sourcebook wherein they include the word *ekklēsia* as one among upwards of 22 terms used within Jewish sources for synagogue assemblies.[27] Examples of synagogue terms include those which refer to communal

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[25] Ascough first moved towards comparing early Christ-follower groups in relation to Greco-Roman "elective social formations," that is, comparing all associational groups with respect to one variable, such as meal practices, leadership dynamics, and so forth ("'Map-maker, Map-maker, Make me a Map': Re-describing Greco-Roman 'Elective Social Formations,'" in *Introducing Religion: Festschrift for Jonathan Z. Smith*, ed. Willi Braun and Russell T. McCutcheon [London: Equinox, 2008], 68–84). Most recently, however, Ascough has argued that single variable approaches are too reductionistic ("Apples-to-Apples; Reframing the Question of Models for Pauline Christ-Groups" [paper presented at the annual meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature, San Diego, CA, Nov. 25, 2014, p. 17; Ed. note: This paper has been adapted into the article "Paul, Synagogues, and Associations: Reframing the Question of Models for Pauline Christ Groups" in this issue of *JJMJS*, pp. 27–52]; see also Ascough's forthcoming article in *Currents in Biblical Research* ["What Are They Now Saying About Christ Groups and Associations?" 2015]).

[26] Some scholars affirm that Jewish groups should be categorized under the umbrella term "association" not least because of their organizational patterns, and particularly because of how they are dealt with in legal contexts. One example is Roman legislation under Julius Caesar and Augustus which explicitly saw the need to exempt Jewish synagogues from restrictive guidelines directed against *collegia*. For example, see Mikael Tellbe, *Paul Between Synagogue and State: Christians, Jews and Civic Authorities in 1 Thessalonians, Romans, and Philippians* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 2001), 24–63; and Martin Ebner, *Die Stadt als Lebensraum der ersten Christen. Das Urchristentum in seiner Umwelt I* (Grundrisse zum Neuen Testament I,I; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2012), 227–28.

[27] Runesson, Binder, and Olsson note that "what in English is translated 'synagogue' went under several different names in antiquity," that is, 17 Greek terms, 5 Hebrew terms, and 3 Latin terms, some of which overlap (*The Ancient Synagogue from its Origins to 200 C.E.: A Source Book* [AJEC 72; Leiden: Brill, 2008], esp. 159–63, 328, esp. 10, n. 21). For extensive descriptions of each term as used by Jewish communities, see Donald Binder, *Into the Temple Courts: The Place of the Synagogues in the Second Temple Period* (Atlanta: SBL, 1999), 91–151.

gatherings, such as *syllogos* ("meeting")[28] or *synagōgē* ("a gathering"), and those which refer to architectural spaces within which Jewish communities met, such as *proseuchē* ("house of prayer"),[29] *bet ha-midrash* ("house of study"),[30] and *synagōgē* ("synagogue").[31]

It becomes readily apparent that the Greek term *synagōgē* can be used to describe a physical location as well as a public or semi-public gathering of a community within that location. In this paper, however, whenever I use the English term "synagogue," I intend thereby not simply a specific reference to the Greek term *synagōgē* but rather a global reference to all terms used by Jews when describing their meetings, their communities, or their meeting places (e.g., *syllogos, synagōgē, ekklēsia, proseuchē*). Not only are there a number of Greek

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[28] *Syllogos* is not specific to, nor identifying of, any particular socio-religious group. Rather, *syllogos* is strictly a sociological term that means "a meeting for a specific purpose, whether for deliberations, consultations, etc. There is some kind of mutual activity." (Runesson, Binder, and Olsson, *The Ancient Synagogue*, 201). Regarding the Therapeutae, Philo mentions that they met for a *syllogos* ("general assembly") every seventh day (*Contemp.* 30–33; 30–45 C.E.).

[29] Runesson, Binder, and Olsson observe that Philo's use of *proseuchē* for the meeting places of Alexandrian Jews appears to be a regional synonym in Egypt for *synagōgē* (*The Ancient Synagogue*, 188). A *proseuchē* is some sort of physical structure in which Jews assemble for prayer (Philo, *Legat.* 132) and/or for public decision making (Josephus). Josephus mentions *proseuchai* both in Alexandria (*C. Ap.* 2.10) and in Galilee (*Vita* 276–81, 294–95). In *Vita*, Josephus's *proseuchai* are purpose built structures for public communal gatherings, and not just for association-specific gatherings. This is clear from his comment that the *proseuchē* is large enough to contain the entire *boulē* ("council") of Tiberias, which numbered approximately 600 persons (*ASSB*, no. 22). On *proseuchai* in Egypt, see Martin Hengel, "Proseuche und Synagoge: Jüdische Gemeinde, Gotteshaus und Gottesdienst in der Diaspora und in Palästina," in *The Synagogue: Studies in Origins, Archaeology and Architecture*, ed. J. Gutmann (New York: Ktav, 1975), 27–54.

[30] In *m. Ter.* 11:10 the *bet hamidrash* is a building: "They may kindle oil of priest's due, that must be burnt, in the synagogues (*bate knesiot*) and in houses of study (*bate midrashot*) and in dark alleys and for sick people by permission of a priest" (cf. Runesson, Binder, and Olsson, *The Ancient Synagogue*, 105; cf. also Anders Runesson, *The Origins of the Synagogue: A Socio-Historical Study* [ConBNT 37; Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 2001], 223–34).

[31] E. P. Sanders notes, "Jews assembled in buildings called 'houses of prayer' [*proseuchē*] principally, but also known by such other terms as 'schools,' [*didaskaleion*] 'temples,' [*hiera*] *sabbateioi*, and synagogues" ("Common Judaism and the Synagogue in the First Century," in *Jews, Christians, and Polytheists in the Ancient Synagogue: Cultural Interaction during the Greco-Roman Period*, ed. Stephen Fine [London/New York: Routledge, 1999], 1–17, esp. 6).

terms to which the English word "synagogue" refers but, as Anders Runesson has highlighted, there are also two types of synagogue institutions: public and semi-public.[32] Jewish public/civic synagogue gatherings addressed a broad range of issues relevant to all members of a regional rural community,[33] while semi-public synagogue gatherings were "members-only" meetings of a voluntary association usually within an urban setting.[34] In his Christian origins work, Runesson examines Christ-follower *ekklēsiai* through the lens of semi-public association synagogues.[35]

Prior to Runesson's study, Mark Nanos and Donald Binder explored some implications of identifying Paul's *ekklēsiai* as synagogue sub-groups.[36]

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[32] Runesson, *The Origins of the Synagogue*.

[33] In his survey of 1st century C.E. sources, Lee Levine notes that the public *synagōgē* building was used for "the entire gamut of [public] activities connected with any Jewish community . . . [such] as a courtroom, school, hostel, a place for political meetings, social gatherings, housing charity funds, a setting for manumissions, meals (sacred or otherwise), and, of course, a number of religious-liturgical functions [such as public Torah reading, rituals, festival observance]" (*The Ancient Synagogue: The First Thousand Years* [2nd ed.; New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005], 29).

[34] Semi-public Jewish associations reserved participation for members and sympathizers only. Anders Runesson helpfully clarifies the three social levels on which "religion" "played out" in antiquity: "a. Public level (civic/state/empire concerns); b. Semi-Public level/Association level (voluntary groups/cults and their concerns); c. Private level (domestic, familial concerns)" ("Was there a Christian Mission before the 4th Century? Problematizing Common Ideas about Early Christianity and the Beginnings of Modern Mission," in *The Making of Christianity: Conflicts, Contacts, and Constructions* [ConBNT 47; ed. M. Zetterholm and S. Byrskog; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2012], 205–47, esp. 213).

[35] Runesson, *Origins of the Synagogue*, 171–72, 356–57; idem, "The Question of Terminology: The Architecture of Contemporary Discussions on Paul," in *Paul Within Judaism: Restoring the First-Century Context to the Apostle* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2015), 53–78, esp. 68–76. Two examples of association synagogues in the land of Israel are Philo's reference to the Essenes (*Prob.* 80–83), and the community associated with the 1st century C.E. synagogue in Jerusalem mentioned in the Theodotus inscription (*CIJ* II 1404; see John S. Kloppenborg, "Dating Theodotus (*CIJ* II 1404)," *JJS* [51.2]: 243–80). An example of a semi-public Jewish association from the Diaspora is Acts' mention of the "synagogue of the Freedmen" (Acts 6:9). See further in Anders Runesson, "Rethinking Early Jewish–Christian Relations: Matthean Community History as Pharisaic Intragroup Conflict," *JBL* 127/1 (2008): 95–132, esp. 112.

[36] For example, Nanos writes, "Paul appears to use *ekklēsia* not, as often claimed, to distinguish his groups from *synagōgē*, but rather to signify their identity as subgroups 'meeting' specifically within the larger Jewish communities. The point was not to indicate

Nanos focused in upon the Christ-follower *ekklēsiai* in Galatia[37] and ostensibly in Rome.[38] Binder looked beyond New Testament writings to Jewish Second Temple texts in situating Christ-follower *ekklēsiai* within his discussion of "what we might imprecisely label 'sectarian synagogues,' those synagogues belonging to the Essenes, the Theraputae, and the Samaritans."[39]

At least two issues arise. First, it is doubtful that the entire Roman community self-designated collectively as an *ekklēsia*. Paul only identifies one Christ-follower sub-group in Rome as being an *ekklēsia*—the Christ-followers who met in the home of Aquila and Priscilla (Rom 16:3–5a), his ostensible ministry partners (Acts 18:1–3).[40] Robert Jewett suggests that Paul addresses the rest of the Roman community as *hoi hagioi* (*klētois hagiois*, "to the called holy ones"; Rom 1:7).[41] Thus, even if one concurs with Nanos's claim that Paul's Roman addressees operated as a synagogue subset,[42] such a categorization need

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a rival movement" ("To the Churches Within the Synagogues of Rome," in *Reading Paul's Letter to the Romans*, ed. J. L. Sumney [Atlanta: SBL Press, 2012], 15). For other expansions upon Nanos's original view, see idem, "The Jewish Context of the Gentile Audience Addressed in Paul's Letter to the Romans," *CBQ* 61 (1999): 283–304; idem, "To the Churches Within the Synagogues of Rome," 12–16; idem, "Paul's Non-Jews Do Not Become 'Jews,'" 26–53, esp. 32, 39, 40.

[37] Nanos argues that those in Galatia who opposed Paul were not Christ-followers but emissaries of Jewish communities ("the influencers") who mandated full proselyte conversion for Gentile Christ-followers who wished to integrate into the broader Jewish community (*The Irony of Galatians: Paul's Letter in First-Century Context* [Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2002], 143).

[38] Mark Nanos, *The Mystery of Romans: The Jewish Context of Paul's Letter* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996).

[39] Binder, *Into the Temple Courts*, 24.

[40] Although Nanos acknowledges this fact, he nonetheless presumes that "almost certainly there were other [*ekklēsia*] gatherings in other locations" ("To the Churches Within the Synagogues of Rome," 11–28, esp. 15).

[41] Robert Jewett claims that "when the term 'saints' [*hagioi*; Rom 1:7] is used as a description of specific Christian groups in contrast to all Christians, it refers to Jewish Christians, loyal to or associated with Jerusalem" (*Romans: A Commentary* [Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Augsburg/Fortress, 2007], 114). Jewett cites other examples in Rom 15:25, 26, 31; 1 Cor 16:1 (ibid., 114; see also Horst Balz, "ἁγίοις κτλ.," *EDNT* 1.17).

[42] Nanos appears to presume, though, that social interaction between Christ-followers and Jews in Rome is indicated in the social identification of the Christ-followers' "righteous Gentiles" with Jewish *praxeis*, such as textual interpretive techniques and worship practices. Nanos identifies examples of social identification as being "archeological evidence, shared literature such as hymnals and prayer books, the

not necessarily apply to the Pauline *ekklēsia*. Second, Richard Ascough makes clear that when it comes to Pauline *ekklēsiai*, one cannot simply categorize his communities within the taxonomical sub-set of ethnicity (i.e., Jewish). He notes that Paul's Thessalonian *ekklēsia* was an occupational group, and one composed primarily of non-Judeans.[43]

The Second Temple context of *ekklēsia* usage by *intra muros* groups within pluriform Judaism(s)[44] does, however, help Paul to address an ethno-religious conundrum—he required a distinctive group identity for his ethnically diverse Christ-followers.[45] He did not require it for the purpose of distinguishing his Christ-followers from pluriform Judaism(s).[46] Rather, Paul needed a group identity with both Greco-Roman and Jewish roots which could place Gentiles qua Gentiles into theological continuity with Torah observant Jews qua Jews.[47]

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maintenance and even appropriation of nonrabbinic and apocryphal texts in Christian literature, shared language and idioms, Sabbath observance and food regulations, even the same form of meeting and administrative responsibilities" (*The Mystery of Romans*, 69–71).

[43] Ascough, *Paul's Macedonian Associations*, 191–212.

[44] When I speak of "Judaism," I follow the definition of "common Judaism" offered by E. P. Sanders. Sanders defines "*common* Judaism [as being] that of the ordinary priest and the ordinary people. . . . *Common* is defined as what is agreed among the parties, and agreed among the populace as a whole" (*Judaism: Practice and Belief—Early Roman Period (63 BCE to 66 CE)* [Philadelphia: TPI, 1992], 11–12). More specifically, "common Judaism" is the convergence of four beliefs among 1st century C.E. Jews: "belief that their God was the only true God, that he had chosen them and had given them his law, and that they were required to obey it" and that "the temple was the visible, functioning symbol of God's presence with his people and it was also the basic rallying point of Jewish loyalties" (ibid., 241).

[45] Regarding the focus of ancient Mediterranean cultures on the collective rather than on individuals, see Bruce Malina, *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 62; and Mikael Tellbe, "The Prototypical Christ-Believer: Early Christian Identity Formation in Ephesus," in *Exploring Early Christian Identity* (WUNT 226; ed. B. Holmberg; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 115–38, esp. 120.

[46] Philip Esler is one example of a Pauline scholar who contends that the term *ekklēsia* was chosen expressly to distinguish Christ-followers from their Jewish roots, that is, from "the Synagogue" (*Conflict and Identity in Romans: The Social Setting of Paul's Letter* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003]).

[47] By "Gentiles qua Gentiles" I mean that Gentiles could become fully constituted followers of the Jewish *Christos* without being required to become Jewish proselytes and/or or take up any one, or all, of the Jewish covenantal identity markers such as circumcision, dietary restrictions, and festival observances.

Ekklēsia, with its linguistic roots both in Greek civic politics and in Jewish public and semi-public synagogue assemblies, would have served Paul's ideological need well.

Jewish Synagogal Entities named *Ekklēsia*?

At least three ancient Jewish writers bear witness to *ekklēsia* being used of Jewish synagogue entities:[48] (1) Ben Sira and Josephus each appear to describe public/civic assemblies in Judea which were called *ekklēsiai*; and (2) Philo twice mentions a non-civic *ekklēsia* associated with Jews in Egypt. One of Philo's references speaks of a publicly accessible assembly that was sponsored by a "members-only" association of Jews and the other of a "members-only" association which may have collectively self-designated as an *ekklēsia*.

Judean Public Assemblies Named Ekklēsia? *(Sirach, Josephus)*

The Judea of Ben Sira's timeframe appears to have contained public assemblies of Jews which were called *ekklēsiai*. Sirach uses *ekklēsia* to translate Ben Sira's *qhl* in reference to publicly accessible assemblies of regional communities[49] wherein juridical, political, and religious issues are addressed.[50] This places Sirach's Judean *ekklēsiai* in continuity with Lee Levine's definition of a public synagogue assembly and/or building,[51] a point which synagogue scholars, including Levine, have yet to make.[52]

The question, of course, is whether Ben Sira's *qhl* was actually known as an *ekklēsia* by early second century B.C.E. Hellenistic Judeans, or was his grandson, who translates Ben Sira into Greek, viewing the early second century

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[48] See the extensive discussion in Korner, *Before 'Church,'* (§4.0. *Ekklēsia* and Non-Civic Jewish Institutions).

[49] Sirach writes of public *ekklēsiai* in Judea nine times (15:5; 21:17; 23:24; 24:2; 34[31]:11; 33:19; 38:33; 39:10; 44:15) (24:2 may only refer to a heavenly *ekklēsia*).

[50] Sirach's Judean *ekklēsiai* are functionally similar to 1st century C.E. rural Judean synagogues, that is, public synagogues. For example, politically, Sirach's *ekklēsiai* are civic venues where the views of respected community members are voiced (15:15; 21:17; 38:33) and where honor and praise are bestowed upon the blameless (34:11). Judicially, an adulterous woman can be judged εἰς ἐκκλησίαν (23:22–24). Athenians considered adultery as *eisangelia* (treason), and until 335 B.C.E. publicly tried the offender before the *ekklēsia* (Hansen, *The Athenian Assembly*, 212).

[51] See n. 33.

[52] Even Levine's *opus magnum* on ancient synagogues does not appear to include a discussion of *ekklēsia* as a synagogal entity (*The Ancient Synagogue*, esp. 763–96 [Subject Index]).

Judean *qhl* in light of a contemporaneous institution in his own day (*c.* 132 B.C.E.). In other words, does Sirach view Ben Sira's Judean *qhl* through the second century B.C.E. lens of a civic *ekklēsia* in the Greek East, a Jewish *ekklēsia* in Egypt, or a Jewish *ekklēsia* in Judea? While each option is possible, one seems preferable—*ekklēsia* as a public synagogue institution in Judea around 132 B.C.E. A reference in 1 Maccabees reinforces that possibility.[53] The *ekklēsia* which was convened in Jerusalem for the purpose of allowing the Spartans to present condolences to Simon Maccabeus on the passing of his brother Jonathan (*c.* 141 B.C.E.) is a public/civic assembly.[54] When Ben Sira's grandson emigrates from Judea to Alexandria only nine years later and there translates *qhl* with the word *ekklēsia* he may have done so because the institution of the public *ekklēsia* still existed in Judea, specifically in Jerusalem.

Josephus uses the word *ekklēsia* 48 times,[55] 9 of which are for a public assembly in the Second Temple period.[56] While Josephus may be using *ekklēsia* provincially for the sake of his Roman reading audience, his usage does not differ substantially from the public *ekklēsiai* described in Sirach and 1 Maccabees.[57] This fact is not unsurprising given the increased Hellenization of Judean society associated with Herod's reign. Josephus's writings, then, could be

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[53] 1 Maccabees mentions two public *ekklēsiai* in Judea. One is a more *ad hoc* gathering (1 Macc 5:16) while the other appears to be a permanent civic institution (1 Macc 14:19).

[54] 1 Macc 14:19.

[55] Josephus uses the word *ekklēsia* with at least three meanings: first, for the physical assembling of all Hebrews/Jews in a particular region (*Ant.* 3:84: "He called the multitude into an assembly [*ekklēsia*]"; also *JW* 7:412); second, to indicate the assembly of a sub-group of a larger group (*Ant.* 6:222: "and after coming to Samuel and finding an assembly [*ekklēsia*] of prophets of God"; also *Ant.* 8:222; 16:393); third, to imply that once an *ekklēsia* is dispersed it no longer exists institutionally (*Ant.* 3:306: "when the assembly [*ekklēsia*] was dispersed, they [the men], their wives, and children continued the lamentation"; also *Ant.* 8:122).

[56] Josephus speaks nine times of public *ekklēsiai*, eight times of one in Jerusalem (*Ant.* 12.164 [Joseph Tobiad]; *Ant.* 13.216 [Simon Maccabeus]; *Ant.* 16.62 [Herod]; *Ant.* 16.135 [Herod]; *Ant.* 16.393 [Herod]; *Ant.* 19.332 [Simon]; *War* 1.550 [Herod]; *War* 1.654 [Herod]) and once of a public *ekklēsia* in Jericho (*War* 1.666 [Salome]).

[57] Donald Binder helpfully differentiates between anachronism, provincialism, and bias (*Into the Temple Courts*, 89). "Anachronism" is the practice of interpreting earlier architectural and literary artifacts from the perspective of later evidence. "Provincialism" involves the attribution to other geographical regions, or social groupings, the socio-cultural realities of one's own geo-political region. "Bias" entails the interpretation or revision of source material for the purpose either of supporting one's pre-existing suppositions or of creating new ideologically motivated conclusions.

read as implying that local Jewish communities in Judea met *en(eis) ekklēsia(n)* within a *proseuchē* or a *synagōgē*,[58] that is, within a communal structure that facilitated Jewish public life. Such *ekklēsia* gatherings would have addressed issues related to local political, administrative, economic, judicial, and religious matters. Philo's writings, on the other hand, focus our gaze away from Judea and its public/civic *ekklēsiai* toward Egypt, where it seems that at least one semi-public Jewish *ekklēsia* community may have pre-existed Christ-follower communities.

Egyptian Semi-Public Assemblies Named Ekklēsia? *(Philo)*
Philo writes between 30 and 45 C.E. He uses the word *ekklēsia* 23 times. At least 2 of his *ekklēsia* references imply an Egyptian institution that is contemporaneous with his day.[59] These two *ekklēsiai* are mentioned in On Virtue (*De virtutibus*) 108 and The Special Laws (*De specialibus legibus*) book 1, sections 324–25.[60] *De Virtutibus* 108, in its entirety, reads:

> If any of them should wish to pass over into the Jewish community [τὴν Ἰουδαίων πολιτείαν], they must not be spurned with an unconditional refusal as children of enemies, but be so favoured that the third generation is invited to the congregation [εἰς ἐκκλησίαν] and made partakers in the divine revelations [λογῶν θειῶν] to which also the native born, whose lineage is beyond reproach, are rightfully admitted.[61]

In *Virt.* 108 Philo refers to Deut 23:8 on how sojourners are to be treated. Therein he enjoins his fellow Jews to focus their *philanthropia* upon one specific subset of Egyptians—new converts (*epēlutai*)—who are to be invited into the congregation (*eis ekklēsian*).[62] But does Philo write *Virt.* 108 as instruction for

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[58] Josephus mentions a purpose built structure for public communal gatherings located in Judea which is designated as a *proseuchē* (*Vita* 276–81, 294–95) (cf. *ASSB*, no. 22).

[59] Runesson, Binder, and Olsson suggest one more instance (*Deus* 111) of Philo using *ekklēsia* in reference to a group in Egypt that was contemporaneous with his day (*ASSB*, no. 203, see esp. the "Comments" section). For an extensive assessment of Philo's *ekklēsia* usage in *Deus* 111, see Korner, *Before 'Church'* (§4.0. *Ekklēsia* and Non-Civic Jewish Institutions).

[60] See *ASSB*, nos. 201–202 (esp. see each of the "Comments" sections).

[61] *ASSB*, no. 203.

[62] For a complete discussion on Philo's use of οἱ ἐπηλύται for proselytes (*Virt.* 102) see Peder Borgen, *Philo of Alexandria: An Exegete for His Time* (NovTSup 86; Leiden: Brill,

his contemporary Alexandrian readership? Both Peder Borgen and Samuel Sandmel think so.[63] Borgen, for example, states that "it is evident that Philo does not only refer to the Laws of Moses as such, but that he also applies Deut 23:8 to the concrete Jewish community in his own time, since he writes 'into the community of Jews (πρὸς τὴν Ἰουδαίων πολιτείαν).'"[64]

If Sandmel and Borgen are correct, then Philo's contemporaneous *ekklēsia* has one key characteristic: it is a forum for religious activity. Runesson, Binder, and Olsson agree. They note that Philo's mention of the practice of "initiating" sojourners into an *ekklēsia* (*Virt.* 108) finds parallels in his description elsewhere of the religious activities in the Egyptian prayer halls (*proseuchai*).[65] In sum, then, Philo can be said not only to acknowledge the

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1997), 256–59. See also Samuel Sandmel, who mentions, without any apparent need for argumentation, that *Virt.* 102–104 "speaks of proselytes" (*Philo of Alexandria: An Introduction* [New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979], 71). Walter T. Wilson states that Philo envisions three components to conversion: "the acceptance of monotheism, moral reform, and a new identity predicated on one's relationship to God" (*Philo of Alexandria: On Virtues* [PACS 3; Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2011], 362–63).

[63] Sandmel notes "two curious factors of omission" in Philo's political discussions: (1) the political affairs in Judea (e.g., Maccabeans, Herod the Great); and (2) David as king. From this fact, Sandmel infers that "Philo is concerned more with the situation of the Jewish community in Alexandria as part of a unique *politeuma* than with the Judean situation and experience" (Sandmel, *Philo of Alexandria*, 103).

[64] Borgen, *Philo of Alexandria*, 249. Klaus Berger similarly affirms a contemporary referent for the phrase πρὸς τὴν Ἰουδαίων πολιτείαν citing the obvious parallelism between πολιτεία and ἐκκλησία, and the fact that this phraseology is not used in LXX Deuteronomy for the Israelites in the desert ("Volksversammlung und Gemeinde Gottes. Zu den Anfängen der christlichen Verwendung von 'ekklesia,'" *ZThK* 73 [1976]: 167–207, esp. 190). Walter Wilson's seminal study of *De virtutibus* translates *Virt.* 108 as an address to Philo's Alexandrian contemporaries, rather than as information about Mosaic era *praxis* (*Philo of Alexandria*, 65). Trebilco disagrees on this point and contends, instead, that *Virt.* 108, which reinterprets Deut 23, uses *ekklēsia* in reference to a localized gathering of Israel in the desert, and not to a contemporary institution ("Why Did the Early Christians Call Themselves ἡ ἐκκλησία?" *NTS* 57 [2011]: 440–60, esp. 448).

[65] Runesson, Binder, and Olsson, *The Ancient Synagogue*, 263. Within *Virt.* 80–108 another contemporary reference is made—the giving of tithes to the temple establishment. Aharon Oppenheimer claims that in *Virt.* 95 Philo is implicitly commenting on Jewish practice current in his day in which the temple tithes were purportedly paid to the priest. Elsewhere, however, Philo identified the Levites as recipients (*Spec.* 1.156) (*The 'Am Ha-Aretz: A Study in the Social History of the Jewish People in the Hellenistic–Roman Period* [trans. I. H. Levine; ALGHJ VIII; Leiden: Brill, 1977], 39–40, nn. 46, 47).

possibility of individual Egyptians converting to the πολιτεία of the Alexandrian Jews, but that along with their new religio-ethnic identity they are also incorporated into a new association, one that either names itself an *ekklēsia* or entitles its regularly convened assembly an *ekklēsia*.

De specialibus legibus 1.324–25
Spec. 1.324–25 is a second place where Runesson, Binder, and Olsson suggest that Philo mentions a potentially contemporaneous local assembly called *ekklēsia. Spec.* 1.324–25 reads:

> Thus, knowing that in assemblies (*en tai ekklēsiai*) there are not a few worthless persons who steal their way in and remain unobserved in the large numbers which surround them, it [the law] guards against this danger by precluding all the unworthy from entering the holy congregation (*hierous syllogou*).[66]

Philo mentions an assembly of Jews (*ekklēsia*) which is attended by "worthless" persons who, conversely, are prevented from entering the holy congregation (*hieros syllogos*). Does Philo here refer to ancient or contemporary practice? Peder Borgen notes that *Spec.* 1.324 begins Philo's discussion of who is to be kept out of communal life. Among others, in *Spec.* 1.325–45 Philo lists sexual deviants (Deut 23:1–2) and polytheists.[67] Borgen points to Philo's concluding comment in *Spec.* 1.345 ("we, the pupils and disciples of Moses") as clearly indicating that "he has his own contemporary situation in mind."[68]

　　If *Spec.* 1.324–25 refers to Philo's contemporary situation then the *ekklēsiai* are publicly accessible meetings of a group which calls itself "the holy congregation" (*hieros syllogos*).[69] While George van Kooten agrees that the *hieros syllogos* is a synagogue entity, he does not also consider the *ekklēsia* as being one. Rather, he claims that the *ekklēsia* is a Greek "counter-example" of a Jewish

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[66] *ASSB*, no. 210.

[67] See Runesson, Binder, and Olsson for a specific list of "the five classes of men symbolized in these laws in Deut 23" (*The Ancient Synagogue*, 260).

[68] Borgen, *Philo of Alexandria*, 256.

[69] Runesson, Binder, and Olsson note that "The Greek words *hieros syllogos* (without definite article) could also be translated as 'a holy congregation.' Philo often returns to this allegorical interpretation of Deut 23 frequently using the word *ekklēsia* and sometimes also *syllogos*." By translating *hieros syllogos* as "a holy congregation," they remove the impression that *hieros syllogos* is a sub-category of *ekklēsia* (*The Ancient Synagogue*, 260).

institution. Such a bifurcation cannot be sustained, however, if Philo's talk about the sacred nature of the "congregation" (*syllogos*) which gathers in *ekklēsia* warrants the conclusion reached by Berger, and affirmed by Runesson, Binder, and Olsson, that "*ekklēsia* and the synonymous *syllogos* . . . [probably] refer to some form of synagogue fellowship," that is, Sabbath assembly.[70]

Paul's *Ekklēsiai* as Jewish Synagogal Entities?

I have brought three key witnesses to the stand who, to varying degrees, can be said to testify to Jewish synagogal entities called *ekklēsia* that existed contemporaneously with early Christ-followers: Sirach, Josephus, and Philo. Their combined witness suggests that the word *ekklēsia* may very well designate publicly accessible gatherings of Jews during the Hellenistic (Judea) and Imperial periods (Judea and Alexandria), and perhaps even the permanent group identity of at least one semi-public Jewish association in Philo's Alexandria (*Virt.* 108). It is to the socio-religious implications of such a fact with respect to Paul's designation of his communities as *ekklēsiai* that I now turn.

Before focusing upon Pauline writings specifically, it is perhaps helpful first to review how the word *ekklēsia* is used throughout the New Testament. First, not all Christ-follower communities across the Diaspora are explicitly identified as *ekklēsiai*. The epistles of James and Hebrews use *ekklēsia* but not necessarily as a permanent group identity. In 1 Peter the word *ekklēsia* is notable by its absence. This is even more striking given the fact that 1 Peter addresses Christ-followers across Asia Minor, which is where Paul established *ekklēsiai* (Galatia, Roman Asia), and where, only a few decades later, the author of Revelation writes to seven *ekklēsiai* (Roman Asia).[71]

Second, not all Christ-followers who live in the same diasporic urban context appear to self-designate as an *ekklēsia*. Paul's epistle to the Romans is a case in point.[72] Paul requests that the addressees of his epistle, whom he does not call an *ekklēsia*, extend greetings to an *ekklēsia* that meets elsewhere, specifically

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[70] Berger, "Volksversammlung," 173–74; and Runesson, Binder, and Olsson, *The Ancient Synagogue*, 260.

[71] 1 Pet 1:1 reads, "To the exiles of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia."

[72] An argument from silence suggests that Paul does not call the entire community of Christ-followers in Rome an *ekklēsia*. Rather, he only explicitly describes one sub-group of Roman Christ-followers as an *ekklēsia*—the Roman Christ-followers who meet in the home of Aquila and Priscilla (16:3–5).

within a house owned by Aquila and Priscilla.[73] Paul's other four *ekklēsia* occurrences in the Roman epistle also do not refer to his Roman addressees but rather only to his diasporic communities.[74] Perhaps the fact that Paul is not the founder of the Roman community helps to explain why he does not address them as an *ekklēsia*.[75]

Third, if the author of Acts uses *ekklēsia* provincially (or anachronistically) when writing about pre-Pauline Christ-follower communities, then Paul's communities are the only sub-group within the pre-70 C.E. Jesus movement which self-designated collectively as *ekklēsiai*.[76] Irrespective of one's stance on this issue, it is abundantly clear that this group designation predominates within writings attributed to or associated with Paul. Of the 114 references to the word *ekklēsia* within the New Testament,[77] Paul's undisputed

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[73] Rom 16:3–5.

[74] Rom 16:1, 4, 16, and 23.

[75] I provide here a brief review of scholarship relative to the potential birth and makeup of the Roman community. Acts 2 claims that Jews from a number of regions throughout the Roman Empire (e.g., Cappadocia, Pontus, Asia) came to faith in Jesus as the *Christos* (2:9, 36–41). These also included Jews and Gentile proselytes from Rome (Acts 2:10; cf. Rom 1:7, *klētoi hagioi*). Philip Esler suggests that the "Rome-born Judeans" and "non-Judean synagogue-attenders and reverers of the Judean God (called 'God-fearers' in the NT) . . . could either have returned to Rome taking the gospel with them or passed it on to Roman visitors to Jerusalem" (*Conflict and Identity in Romans*, 101). See also Richard Longenecker, who reinforces Esler's view with evidence from church fathers such as Eusebius (303 C.E.) and Ambrosiaster (4th century C.E.) (*Introducing Romans: Critical Issues in Paul's Most Famous Letter* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011], 69–73). Longenecker favors the view of Ambrosiaster that it was Jewish Christ-followers, who already lived in Rome, who introduced the gospel there (*Introducing Romans*, 71–73).

[76] Post-70 C.E. writings which seem to use *ekklēsia* of their communities include Matthew, Acts, Ephesians, Colossians, 2 Thessalonians, 1 Timothy, 3 John, Revelation, *1 Clement*, *2 Clement*, *Barnabas*, *Didache*, *The Martyrdom of Polycarp*, and the writings of Ignatius and Justin Martyr. As historiography, the book of Acts may have priorities other than presenting historical fact for its own sake. As such, the description in Acts of pre-Pauline communities in Judea self-designating as *ekklēsiai* need not necessarily be taken as *emic* terminology. The author of Acts may be using the term *ekklēsia* provincially—in other words, using a term that was familiar to his non-Judean reading audience (*ekklēsia*) rather than using the original pluralistic term adopted by the early Jesus movement in Jerusalem, which may have been *hoi hagioi* instead.

[77] The word *ekklēsia* occurs 114 times in the writings of the New Testament (*BDAG*). Occurrences are found in Matthew (3x), Acts (23x), Romans (5x), 1 Corinthians (22x), 2 Corinthians (9x), Galatians (3x), Ephesians (9x), Philippians (2x), Colossians (4x), 1

writings predominate with 44.[78] The deutero-Pauline letters account for another 18[79] and the book of Acts for 23 occurrences.[80] Thus, Paul, together with later writers who claim some affiliation with him, account for 85 out of the 114 *ekklēsia* references.

Paul's adoption of an *ekklēsia* group identity makes even more persuasive William Campbell's argument that Pauline Christ-followers would not have seen themselves as some sort of new, a-cultural, universal association of Jesus worshippers disconnected from their Jewish roots.[81] Rather, in Rom 9–11, which chapters scholarship generally affirm as being central to Paul's argument,[82] Paul theologically unites his Gentile Christ-followers with historic Israel. Therein, he metaphorically depicts Gentiles as being grafted into the "tree" of historic Israel by virtue of their faith in the Jewish *Christos*.[83]

Yet these Gentiles cannot be named "Israel." That name is reserved only for the socio-ethnic descendants of Abraham, including full proselytes to

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Thessalonians (2x), 2 Thessalonians (2x), 1 Timothy (3x), Philemon (1x), Hebrews (2x), James (1x), 3 John (3x), and Revelation (20x).

[78] The 44 Pauline usages of *ekklēsia* are found in: Romans (5x; 16:1, 4, 5, 16, 23); 1 Corinthians (22x; 1:2; 4:17; 6:4; 7:17; 10:32; 11:16, 18, 22; 12:28; 14:4, 5, 12, 19, 23, 28 [vv. 33b, 34, 35; disputed authorship]; 15:9; 16:1, 19 [2x]); 2 Corinthians (9x; 1:1; 8:1, 18, 19, 23, 24; 11:8, 28; 12:13); Galatians (3x; 1:2, 13, 22); Philippians (2x; 3:6; 4:15); 1 Thessalonians (2x; 1:1; 2:14); Philemon (1x; Phlm 2).

[79] *Ekklēsia* occurs in Ephesians (9x; 1:22; 3:10, 21; 5:23, 24, 25, 27, 29, 32), Colossians (4x; 1:18, 24; 4:15, 16), 2 Thessalonians (2x; 1:1, 4), and 1 Timothy (3x; 3:5, 15; 5:16).

[80] Mentions of the word *ekklēsia* occur in Acts 5:11; 7:38; 8:1, 3; 9:31; 11:22, 26; 12:1; 13:1; 14:23, 27; 15:3, 4, 22, 41; 16:5; 18:22; 19:32, 39, 40, 41; 20:17, 28.

[81] William S. Campbell, *Paul and the Creation of Christian Identity* (London: T&T Clark, 2006).

[82] William Campbell comments that "the place of chs. 9–11 as an integral part of the letter has been firmly established" ("The Addressees of Paul's Letter to the Romans: Assemblies of God in House Churches and Synagogues?" in *Between Gospel and Election: Explorations in the Interpretation of Romans 9–11*, ed. Florian Wilk, J. Ross Wagner, and Frank Schleritt [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010], 171–95, esp.171).

[83] Cf. also Rom 4 and Gal 3:6–14. Paul does not appear concerned to locate Gentiles within the Abrahamic covenant, but more so into the faith lineage of Abraham. J. D. G. Dunn suggests that "'covenant' [in general] was not a major theological category for Paul's own theologizing" ("Did Paul Have a Covenant Theology? Reflections on Romans 9:4 and 11:27," in *Celebrating Romans: Template for Pauline Theology*, ed. Sheila E. McGinn [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004], 3–19).

"Judaism(s)."[84] Other ethnicities which identify with the faith of Abraham through their faith in the Jewish *Christos* require a different name. Granting both Jewish and Gentile followers of Jesus an *ekklēsia* identity solved well Paul's conundrum. He reinforced their Abrahamic lineage through a linguistic correlation of his *ekklēsia* communities with the *ekklēsia* (Hebrew *qāhāl*) of Israel whose entrance into the promised land (e.g., LXX Josh 9:2) fulfilled God's unconditional promise of land for Abraham's descendants (Gen 15).[85] Contrary to Rost's supersessionist interpretation, Paul Trebilco sees this socio-religious move as implicitly placing Paul's communities into theological continuity with the historic Israel of the first testament.[86] What Trebilco does not note, and Runesson, Binder, and Olsson presage, is that pre-existing Jewish synagogue entities in Judea and Egypt which were called *ekklēsia* would have reinforced Paul's socio-ethnic reformist agenda.

Such an institutional perspective on Paul's *ekklēsia* associations is congruent with scholars who belong to the "Paul within Judaism Perspective,"[87] otherwise variously known as the "Radical New Perspective on Paul"[88] or "Beyond the New Perspective on Paul" (BNP).[89] Scholars of the Paul within

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[84] See my problematization of N. T. Wright's ostensibly "middle view" ("incorporative christology") wherein he posits that, for Paul, Jesus is the continuation of Israel in the latter days, and that all Christ-followers, whether Messianic Jews or Gentiles, together compose latter-day Israel (*Paul and the Faithfulness of God* [2 vols.; Christian Origins and the Question of God, vol. 4; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2013], 2.825–34, 1212) (Korner, *Before 'Church'*; cf. 2.3.5. The *Ekklēsia* of Israel [LXX]). Five passages in particular form the crux of the discussion: Rom 2:17–29; 9:6; 11:26; Gal 6:16; and Phil 3:3.

[85] In LXX Josh 9:2f (HB 8:35), God's covenantal people are still called ἐκκλησία (*qāhāl*) after having entered the land.

[86] Paul Trebilco suggests that through the use of *ekklēsia* "[early Christ-followers] could express their continuity with the OT people of God" ("Early Christians," 446).

[87] See especially Mark Nanos, "Introduction," in *Paul Within Judaism: Restoring the First-Century Context to the Apostle* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2015), 1–29. See also Runesson, "The Question of Terminology," 53–78.

[88] Kathy Ehrensperger, *That We May Be Mutually Encouraged: Feminism and the New Perspective in Pauline Studies* (London: T&T Clark, 2004), 39; Magnus Zetterholm, *Approaches to Paul: A Student's Guide to Recent Scholarship* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2009), 127–63; Pamela Eisenbaum, *Paul Was Not a Christian: The Real Message of a Misunderstood Apostle* (New York: HarperOne, 2009), 216.

[89] For an extensive discussion of the similarities and differences between scholars of the New Perspective and the Beyond the New Perspective (BNP), along with a carefully nuanced comparative analysis of different views within the BNP "camp," see J. Brian

Judaism Perspective do not displace nor replace historical Israel with the "church" in God's salvation history.[90] Rather, as Bill Campbell succinctly states, "The church and Israel [are] related but separate entities which should not be dissolved or merged in such a way that the sub-group identity of the one is lost or unrecognized."[91] One could say that by ascribing a permanent *ekklēsia* identity to his Christ-followers Paul disavowed, not least from an institutional perspective, any perceptions that he was "parting ways"[92] with the *Ioudaioi* (Jews),[93] that is, with Judaism(s), "Jewishness," or Jewish organizational forms.[94] Paul's "*ekklēsia* identity construction project" did as much to identify his *ekklēsiai* in some fashion with the ethno-religious "tree" of Israel (Rom 11:17–

Tucker, *Remain in Your Calling: Paul and the Continuation of Social Identities in 1 Corinthians* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2011), 7–10.

[90] For a comprehensive survey of the various scholarly positions taken with respect to the relationship between the church and Israel, see Christopher Zoccali's dissertation research presented in *Whom God Has Called: The Relationship of Church and Israel in Pauline Interpretation, 1920 to the Present* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2010), esp. 71–89, 116–44.

[91] Campbell, *Paul*, 101.

[92] For suggestions that the ways parted by the end of the 1st century C.E., see the essays in *Jews and Christians: The Parting of the Ways A.D. 70 to 135*, ed. J. D. G. Dunn (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999). For evidence that Christ-followers and Jews continued to exhibit social interaction in their dealings with one another even into the Late Antique period, see the collection of essays in *The Ways that Never Parted: Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, ed. A. Becker and A. Yoshiko Reed (Tübingen/Minneapolis: Mohr Siebeck/Fortress, 2003/2007).

[93] Throughout this paper, I have used the term "Jewish," rather than "Judean," in contradistinction to Steve Mason's approach. Mason asserts that Ιουδαϊκός is better translated as "Judean" rather than the traditional "Jewish" ("Jews, Judeans, Judaizing, Judaism," 457–512). For a judicious critique of Mason's position, particularly as it relates to (1) Mason's "terminological distinction between ancient contexts . . . and the late antique and modern situation," and (2) "the name of the place associated with Jew," see Runesson, "Inventing Christian Identity: Paul, Ignatius, and Theodotius I," in *Exploring Early Christian Identity* (WUNT226; ed. B. Holmberg; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 59–92, esp. 64–70.

[94] Runesson, Binder, and Olsson ask, rhetorically, whether it is "possible to argue that when a group of Christ-believers use *ekklēsia* to designate their institution . . . they are departing from either 'the Jewish community,' from 'Jewishness,' or from Jewish organisational forms, as has so often been assumed" (*The Ancient Synagogue*, 11, n. 21).

24) as it did to present his communities as active pro-*dēmokratia*,[95] yet not counter-imperial,[96] participants in the political culture of the Greek East.[97]

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[95] Epigraphic evidence for civic *ekklēsiai* in the 1st cent. C.E. is limited (15 occurrences; see Korner, *Before 'Church'*; cf. Appendix #2: *Ekklēsia* in First Century C.E. Inscriptions). This dearth of inscriptional evidence belies the fact that the political influence of the *dēmos* continued to be substantial given the exponential growth of euergetism (benefaction) during the early Imperial period in Asia Minor. Thus, one must be careful of falling into any word-concept confusion whereby one is tempted to claim that the lack of 1st century C.E. inscriptional evidence for the word *ekklēsia* indicates general disuse of civic *ekklēsiai* by *dēmoi*. Even if the civic decree of a *dēmos* does not explicitly mention an *ekklēsia* one can presume nonetheless that such a demotic decree was made within an *ekklēsia* (see Korner, *Before 'Church'*; cf. §2. *Ekklēsiai* in the Imperial Period: The Politics of Oligarchy, Hierarchy, and Democracy).

[96] Paul's ascription of his non-civic groups with a political identity (*ekklēsia*) provided them with a political "defense mechanism" that would have countered any outsider perceptions of socio-political subversion among his communities. It would have been difficult for Roman suspicions to have been aroused over a voluntary association in the Greek East, the socio-religious *praxeis* of which portrays it as a paragon of civic order and *dēmokratia*, and the very name of which situates it in the center of political culture in Asia Minor (see further in Korner, "The *Ekklēsia* of Early Christ-Followers in Asia Minor as the Eschatological New Jerusalem: Counter-Imperial Rhetoric?" in *Urban Dreams and Realities in Antiquity: Remains and Representations of the Ancient City* [Mnemosyne Supplements: History and Archaeology of Classical Antiquity 375; ed. Adam Kemezis; Leiden: Brill, 2015]: 455–99; idem, *Before 'Church'* [§2.2. *Ekklēsia* as Political Identity: Counter-Imperial Ideology?]; idem, "Paul's *Ekklēsia* Associations: Counter-Imperial or Pro-*Dēmokratia* Communities?" [paper to be presented at the annual meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature, Atlanta, GA, Nov. 24, 2015]).

[97] Political culture is the social expression of the underlying mentality and practices that inform political practice. It is particularly evident in Imperial period inscriptions from Asia Minor *poleis*. Onno van Nijf identifies three non-institutional aspects of vibrant political culture: festivals, monuments of leadership (e.g., honorific inscriptions), and emotive communities. Seminal discussions of vibrant political culture in Imperial period *poleis* in Asia Minor include: (1) Onno van Nijf, *The Civic World of Professional Associations in the Roman East* (DMAHA XVII; Amsterdam: J. C. Gieben, 1997); idem, "Public Space and the Political Culture of Roman Termessos," in *Political Culture in the Greek City after the Classical Age*, ed. O. van Nijf and R. Alston, with the assistance of C. G. Williamson (Leuven: Peeters, 2011), 215–42; (2) Arjan Zuiderhoek, "On the Political Sociology of the Imperial Greek City," *GRBS* 48 (2008): 417–45; idem, *The Politics of Munificence in the Roman Empire: Citizens, Elites and Benefactors in Asia Minor* (GCRW; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); (3) Stephen Mitchell, "Festivals, Games, and Civic Life in Roman Asia Minor," *JRS* 80 (1990): 183–93; and (4) H. W. Pleket, "Political Culture and Political Practice in the Cities of Asia Minor in the Roman

If I might be allowed an aside, I would suggest that it is best to avoid using the anachronistic term "church" in academic discussions, if by that translation scholars intend a reference to a universal *ekklēsia* comprising all pre-70 Christ-followers. As I have suggested, not all pre-70 Christ-followers appear to have self-designated collectively as *ekklēsiai*. It may be time to find a different English term by which to discuss early Christ-follower communities. Perhaps rendering *ekklēsia* as "assembly" would suffice, especially since that word is ambiguous enough by itself to indicate either a semi-public meeting of Christ-followers or a semi-public association of Christ-followers.

But I digress. Back now to Paul. While Paul's designation of his communities as *ekklēsiai* may have reinforced their Jewish heritage, one of the unintended consequences at the intramural level may have been a resultant socio-religious differentiation of Paul's communities from their Jewish compatriots in the apostolic community in Jerusalem. This possibility seems likely if, as Paul Trebilco,[98] Robert Jewett[99] and others[100] suggest, the term *hoi hagioi* is, at times, used in technical fashion as a socio-religious group identity for Christ-followers associated with the apostolic community in Jerusalem. In these instances *hoi hagioi* is best translated as "the holy ones," not as "the saints," since "saints" is a theological construct which includes all Christ-followers across the Roman Empire. If some sort of "denominational divide," so to speak, did exist between Jerusalem-loyal *hoi hagioi* and Pauline *ekklēsiai*, then Paul would have required a theological strategy for bridging this socio-religious divide.

That strategy appears to be evident in Paul's use of a theology of Jewish sacred space, one to which both Jerusalem and Pauline loyal Christ-followers could adhere. Only in his epistles to the Romans and Corinthians does he

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Empire," in *Politische Theorie und Praxis im Altertum*, ed. W. Schuller (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1998), 204–16. Mitchell and Pleket both argue that politics permeated cultural forms and religious life.

[98] Trebilco claims that "the use of οἱ ἁγίοι as a self-designation originated with Aramaic-speaking Jewish Christians in Jerusalem at a very early point" (*Self-designations and Group Identity in the New Testament* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012], 134; see the fuller discussion in 104–37).

[99] Jewett, *Romans*, 114.

[100] Commenting on Acts 9:13, Richard I. Pervo implies that the group designation by which (Hebrew) Jewish Christ-followers in Jerusalem self-identify is the term *hoi hagioi* (*Acts: A Commentary* [Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009], 248). Richard Bauckham makes that implication explicit: "there is good reason to suppose that it [*hoi hagioi*] goes back to the early Jerusalem church" ("James and the Jerusalem Community," in *Jewish Believers in Jesus*, 55–95, esp. 57).

metaphorically represent Christ-followers with temple imagery[101] and as the body of the Jewish *Christos*.[102] This provides an implicit basis from which Paul can rhetorically engender cooperation and harmony between his diasporic communities and Jerusalem, not least in Corinth among the differentiated sub-groups of Christ-followers who say "I belong to Paul" or "I belong to Cephas."[103] The purpose of Paul's theological arguments, then, goes beyond the crossing and mending of a Jewish–Gentile ethnic divide; they build a unifying bridge between differentially designated Christ-follower sub-groups in the early Jesus movement.

When it comes to the extramural implications of Paul's collective designation of his Christ-followers as *ekklēsiai*, there are at least two ways in which diasporic non-Messianic Jews may have viewed Paul's *ekklēsia* associations. First, if Philo's mention of Jewish *ekklēsiai* in Egypt is indicative of a broader use of the word *ekklēsia* within the Diaspora for Jewish associations, then Paul's communities could have been perceived as trans-local extensions of a Jewish synagogal entity, that is, of semi-public Jewish associations named *ekklēsia*.

If the lack of literary and epigraphic evidence for Jewish *ekklēsia* associations in the Greek East means that *ekklēsia* largely was "free" as a

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[101] Rom 12:1; 1 Cor 3:16, 17; 2 Cor 6:16; cf. 1 Pet 1:4, 5. Paul is not alone among Jewish Second Temple or New Testament writers in his conception of a people as a temple. For example, in 1QS 8.5–6 the "council of the Community" is called "a holy house for Israel [i.e., temple] and the foundation of the holy of holies of Aaron." Paul is alone, though, in conceiving of a people-group named *ekklēsia* as a metaphorical *naos*. For metaphorical conceptions of people as sacred architecture see, for example, Bertil Gärtner, *The Temple and the Community in Qumran and the New Testament: A Comparative Study in the Temple Symbolism of the Qumran Texts and the New Testament* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965), 57; R. J. McKelvey, *The New Temple: The Church in the New Testament* (OTM; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969); Robert A. Briggs, *Jewish Temple Imagery in the Book of Revelation* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 1999); Beate Ego, Armin Lange, and Peter Pilhofer, eds., *Gemeinde ohne Tempel: Zur Substituierung und Transformation des Jerusalemer Tempels und seines Kults im Alten Testament, antiken Judentum und frühen Christentum* (WUNT 118; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999).

[102] In 1 Cor 12: 27–28, Paul appears to parallel "the body of Christ" with "the *ekklēsia*," and "individual . . . members" with "apostles . . . prophets . . . teachers [etc.]." See also Rom 12:5. For a detailed discussion of Paul's "body" metaphor, see Robert Jewett, *Paul's Anthropological Terms: a Study of Their Use in Conflict Settings* (Leiden: Brill, 1971), 200–304. See also Michelle V. Lee, *Paul, the Stoics, and the Body of Christ* (SNTS 137; Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 8.

[103] 1 Cor 1:12.

diasporic group designation, and if in Judea public *ekklēsiai* were convened, as Josephus claims, then non-Messianic Jews could have perceived Paul's *ekklēsiai* as being extensions of public Jewish society in the Diaspora. This would have presented Paul's *ekklēsiai* as diasporic "satellites" in relation to other Judean public *ekklēsiai*. Paul's *ekklēsiai* would then have been viewed as *loci* for the full expression of all facets of Jewish life, including its ethno-religious, social, political, economic, and judicial dimensions.

Such a self-presentation would have received even greater reinforcement in Paul's claim that his trans-locally connected *ekklēsiai* composed a supra-local, or universal, entity known as *Ekklēsia* (1 Cor 12:28). If such a conception was seen by diasporic Jews to allude to the supra-local *ekklēsia* of Israel from the desert tradition (e.g., Deut 23:4), then Jewish perceptions that Paul's *Ekklēsia/ekklēsiai* of *Christos*-followers laid claim to being the full expression of the ethno-religious, social, political, economic, and judicial dimensions of Judean life would have gained reinforcement.

If Paul's *ekklēsiai* were perceived as public institutions, then Paul's claim to have been flogged five times by Jews gains more clarity (1 Cor 11:23). If Paul's *ekklēsia* associations were seen as being diasporic "satellites" of public Judean *ekklēsiai*, then Paul would have been received by Jews in the Diaspora as acting in some fashion as an ambassadorial *archisynagōgos*. This would have made any disputes which arose between Paul and a synagogue association matters of an *intra-muros* concern, and any religiously oriented issues disputed therein matters of public concern that also involve the realm of Jewish politics and jurisprudence. A judicial response, such as flogging, would not have been outside the realm of due process possibilities. This provides one more factor by which to explain why Jewish communities would have felt justified in flogging Paul, and, on the flip side, why Paul would have acquiesced to such treatment.

Alternatively, Paul's *ekklēsiai* may have been viewed, particularly by non-Jews, as being metaphorical cleruchies (colonies)[104] of the "Jerusalem

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[104] A cleruchy was an ancient Athenian colony in which the cleruchs, or settlers, maintained their political allegiance to Athens and retained their Athenian citizenship. Two Athenian cleruchies (Delos, Samos) are associated with inscriptional evidence of a Greco-Roman association which names its semi-public assembly an *ekklēsia*: (1) *IDelos* 1519 (167/6 B.C.E.) recounts the successful outcome of a decision reached in the *ekklēsia* ("assembly") of the Tyrian association of merchants, shippers, and warehousemen to send an embassy to Athens for permission to construct a sanctuary for Herakles. See discussions of *IDelos* 1519 by Kloppenborg ("Edwin Hatch," 231) and Harland (*Associations*, 44–45, 111); (2) *Samos* 119 (n.d.) is an inscription wherein mention is made of a gymnastic association that gathers (*synagō*) *eis ekklēsian* within the *palaistra* of

above."[105] One could say, in not dissimilar fashion to Philo's use of *ekklēsia* (*Virt.* 108), that Paul encouraged individual Jews and non-Jews to submit to the πολιτεία of "Jerusalem above." In so doing, he envisioned them not only gaining a new religio-ethnic identity, but also being incorporated into a new association, one that both names itself an *ekklēsia* and also names its regularly convened assembly an *ekklēsia*.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I would suggest that irrespective of whether Paul's communities were perceived as "satellites" of Judean *ekklēsiai* or as diasporic Jewish associations, his designation of them as *ekklēsiai* would have served to minimize Jewish perceptions of his communities as being "other" relative to "Judaisms" within the matrix of pluriform Second Temple Judaism (and vice versa). The widespread use of *ekklēsia* terminology within the Greco-Roman and Jewish worlds granted Paul's trans-local associations an increased missional relevance within the Diaspora and in particular would have served, not least at the institutional level, to locate them socially with Jews, Jewishness, and "Judaism."

the *gerousia* in order to enact an honorific decree (*psēphisma*) for a benefactor (*euergētēs*). See earlier publications of *Samos* 119 by Paul Frédéric Girard ("Inscriptions de Samos," *BCH* 5 [1881]: 477–91, esp. 480) and Louis Robert ("Inscriptions de Lesbos et de Samos," *BCH* 59 [1935]: 471–88, esp. 476–77).

[105] Gal 4:26.