

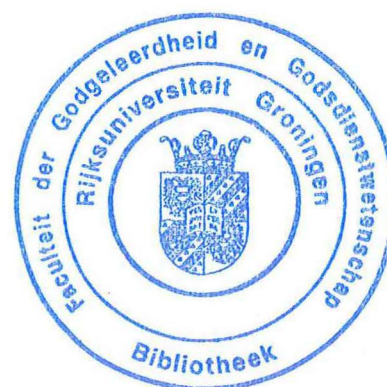
Erik Drenth

Ten Thousand Words:  
Ecstatic Speech in the Corinthian *Ekklesia*,  
An Exegesis of 1 Corinthians 14:19

Ten thousand words : Ecstatic speech  
in the Corinthian *Ekklesia*, an  
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### **1 Corinthians 14:19**

ἀλλὰ ἐν ἐκκλησίᾳ θέλω πέντε λόγους τῷ νοῦ μου λαλῆσαι, ἵνα  
καὶ ἄλλους κατηχήσω, ἢ μυρίους λόγους ἐν γλώσση.

Nevertheless, in church I would rather speak five words with my  
mind, in order to instruct others also, than ten thousand words in  
a tongue. [NRSV]

# 1 Introduction

Much is unknown about the first decades of Christianity. Few sources are available that tell about the emerge of a new religion that would be the largest religion two millennia later. One of the sources that can be used for the study of the earliest Christians is the work of Paul. The information that he gives about the daily problems of early Christianity are priceless for the research of early Christianity. I have chosen a single verse from the work of Paul as the subject of this thesis, in which many parts of Pauline theology come together. To provide a good exegesis of 1 Corinthians 14:19, the verse that I choose, it will be necessary to study the way Paul looked at the human being (anthropology), the Divine Spirit (pneumatology), the Christian congregation (ecclesiology) and to study how Paul incorporates Greek and Jewish elements in all these aspects. I will study the writings of Paul with an eye in the works of his contemporaries to find the parallels that lead to an insight in the roots of Pauline thought.

In 1 Cor. 14:19, Paul gives his thoughts about *glossolalia* ("speaking in tongues"). *Glossolalia* was an issue in early Christian Corinth, as it still is so today in Pentecostal and evangelical churches. In will only focus on the way Paul handles *glossolalia* in one of his churches, and will not discuss practices of Pentecostal churches the twenty-first century. However, the issues of our day will be lingering when I will argue that recommendations and instructions given to the church in Corinth were not just a temporary solution to a specific problem, as can often be heart in Pentecostal and evangelical circles, but that Paul's recommendations fit in his vision of the church and theology.

This thesis will focus on four subjects that are important for the exegesis of 1 Cor 14:19. Firstly, I will give an overview of the direct context of this verse, that is the first letter to the Corinthians, to make clear how the verse is embedded in Paul's addressing of the issues in Corinth. Secondly, I will give an overview of Pauline anthropology, to give insight in the way Paul's concepts spirit and mind, both used in the 1 Cor. 14:19, should be understood. Thirdly, I will discuss divine inspired ecstatic speech in Corinth in comparison to ecstatic speech in Greek religion, and the last part will discuss the place in society Paul gives to the church in a study of the usage of the word *ekklesia*, the name that Paul uses for the church in 1 Cor. 14:19, but also throughout the first letter to the Corinthians and other parts of his work.

## 2 An overview of Paul's first letter to the Corinthians

In current and past research, the author of the first letter to the Corinthians is believed to be Paul, as the letter itself claims.<sup>1</sup> The letter has been written to the congregation in Corinth, that was established Paul. He addresses a number of problems that have arisen in the congregation. Ehrman does not question the unity of the latter and also Fee, at this point echoing the current state of scholarship, reads the first letter to the Corinthians as a unity.<sup>2</sup> The consensus about authorship and unity allow me to focus on the understanding of the text itself within its context, and to continue with an overview of the letter to the Corinthians.

The verse that is the subject of this thesis is part of the first known letter Paul sent to the early Christian congregation in Corinth. He sent this letter to correct the way the Corinthians behaved towards their fellow Christians and to put their misunderstanding of the early Christian faith to a halt. A main focus is laid on the issue of *glossolalia*, on which 1 Cor 14:19 seems to be very clear:

ἀλλὰ ἐν ἐκκλησίᾳ θέλω πέντε λόγους τῷ νοῦ μου λαλῆσαι, ἵνα καὶ ἄλλους κατηχήσω, ἢ μυρίους λόγους ἐν γλώσσῃ. (1 Cor 14:19)

(nevertheless, in church I would rather speak five words with my mind, in order to instruct others also, than ten thousand words in a tongue. [NRSV])

For a better understanding, it is necessary to know the direct context of this verse. In this case, the contexts are primarily the chapters 12-14 and secondarily the complete first letter to the Corinthians. I will shortly recall the structure of Paul's first letter to the Corinthians to lay a firm foundation for this thesis. I will roughly follow the way Fee structured 1 Corinthians, but will refine the four parts that he recognizes in this letter.<sup>3</sup>

Immediately after the salutation and the thanksgiving to the *ekklesia* in Corinth, Paul addresses problems between different factions in the congregation. Paul received information from some peers in Corinth concerning the quarrels that had risen in the local congregation, and wants to unite the members of the Corinthian *ekklesia* by pointing them at their Lord, Jesus Christ, who is undivided. To sustain his argument of the undivided Christ, Paul gives a short theology of the spirit and salvation in the chapters 2-4. In the chapters 3 and 4, Paul writes the Corinthians about their spiritual immaturity. The Corinthians are, according to Paul, attached to the world, and are not ready for spiritual solid food (1 Cor 3:2). The arrogant behaviour of some of the Corinthians is reason for Paul to admonish them. He puts his own humbleness as an example for the Corinthians who consider themselves better than others, and asks all Corinthians to take him as their spiritual father and to follow him (1 Cor 4:16)

In the chapters 5 and 6 Paul mentions some incidents of immorality in Corinth. Sexual immorality occurred in one case where someone lived with the wife of his father (5:1), but there are other kinds of immorality in the congregation, which are summed up in 5:11. Paul calls for a moral purity of the body, which, although it is not eternal, is not made to fornicate,

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<sup>1</sup> B.D. Ehrman, *The New Testament, A Historical Introduction to the Early Christian Writing* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2004) 311-326.

<sup>2</sup> G.D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing 1987) 10.

<sup>3</sup> Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 15.

but for the Lord (6:13). In grouping chapters 5 and 6 together I follow Fee, while Dunn separates chapters 5 and 6 and discusses them as belonging to different parts of the letter, although both chapters are about incidents of immorality in the Corinthian congregation.<sup>4</sup>

The next part of the letter begins with chapter 7. This part of the letter is about all kinds of other difficulties in Corinth. In this part Paul starts with response to questions he received from some Corinthians concerning practical problems in the *ekklesia*, first about marriage (chapter 7), then about the concern of food sacrificed to idols (chapter 8). In chapter 9 Paul issues the uncertainty concerning his independence. In reaction to accusations of dependence on others he states that, although he had the right to live of the money given to him by fellow Christians, he always refused to do so and took care of his own living. Other apostles have the freedom to live of the money given to them. The role of the Old Testament is cleared up in chapter 10, where Paul parallels the Jewish history to life of Christ. The exaggerated interpretation of Paul's theology, unjustly stating that the Jewish law has been fulfilled and therefore should no longer be kept, is corrected in 10:29, where Paul affirms the Corinthian statement that all is allowed, but adds that not all is just.

More instructions for the Corinthians are given in chapter 11, where Paul disapproves of the way the Corinthians celebrate the Lords Supper. The Eucharist in Corinth was characterized by the selfishness of the rich, who ate all the food they brought in themselves, and left the poor with nothing. After the problems concerning marriage, the freedom of the apostles, the Jewish law and the Eucharist, Paul takes all the space he needs to address one last problem. In the chapters 12-14 Paul teaches the Corinthians about the gifts of the spirit.

Like in the case of the Eucharist, the selfishness of some Corinthians again disturbs the peace in the congregation. The gift of speaking in tongues is given spiritual prominence in Corinth, but Paul argues against its higher position among other gifts. Paul lays an emphasis on the importance of all gifts (chapter 12), and gives prominence to love towards others. According to Paul, the gift of prophecy has as special place among other spiritual gifts, while *glossolalia*, at least in the *ekklesia* is given less importance.

Chapter 15 handles the resurrection of the dead. Paul hints towards his participation theology, that presents the death and resurrection of Christ as events Christians can participate in for their salvation. The principle can be found in many of Paul's other letters. The letter concludes in chapter 16 with some remarks about Pauls future travelling and greetings from other Pauline churches. The last words of Paul, which are specifically mentioned as handwritten by himself clear up that the rest of the letter has been written by a scribe.

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<sup>4</sup> J.D.G. Dunn, *1 Corinthians* (London: Continuum International Publishing Group 2004).

### 3 Paul's anthropology

The concepts of *pneuma* and *nous*, that Paul uses in 1 Corinthians 14 should be extensively discussed in a study of 1 Cor 14:19. These concepts function in an anthropological system that will be addressed in this section. Although Dunn notes an overlap of the words *pneuma* and *nous* in the works of Paul,<sup>5</sup> and Kittel recognizes that *pneuma* and *nous* belong to the same semantic field, from which the *nous* moved to the theoretic side, and the *pneuma* to the sensitive side<sup>6</sup>, Paul sharply separates these concepts in 1 Cor 14:14.

ἐάν [γὰρ] προσεύχωμαι γλώσση, τὸ πνεῦμά μου προσεύχεται, ὁ δὲ νοῦς μου ἄκαρπός ἐστιν.

(For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays but my mind is unproductive. [NRSV])

This text forces interpreters to come to a thorough investigation of the dynamic environment in which Paul uses both words. How should *pneuma* and *nous* be understood? The study of *pneuma* and *nous* in Paul and other writers from his socio-religious environment will be a main topic in this part of my thesis. Paul's preference for speaking with the *nous* in the *ekklesia* will prove to be strongly connected with Paul's vision of the *ekklesia*, a main topic of this thesis. Paul uses both *pneuma* and *nous* to describe the part of man that rises above the other parts. To gain clarity about the relation between both words we should first investigate the anthropological system that can be found in all letters of Paul. Therefore, in this chapter, the dynamics of Paul's anthropology will become clear, to provide a framework for a better understating of the system of which the *pneuma* and *nous* that occur in 1 Cor 14:19 are part.

Both *pneuma* and *nous* are functioning in a vision of man that can be found in all known letters of Paul. When describing the essence of human being, Paul uses different words to denote the three parts he distinguishes, namely *pneuma*, *psyche* and *soma*. A study of these words gives us a better understanding of Paul's conception of man. I will therefore start to give and insight in this perception, and will thereby use some well known text from the Pauline letters. To clarify and contextualize these texts I will compare them to works of Philo and Plutarch, both contemporaries of Paul.

Many different visions about Paul's anthropology exist. To begin with, we have the monistic interpretation by Betz, who interprets Paul's concept of the *eso anthropos* ("the inner human being") as a part of a monistic vision of man, in which all parts are ultimately one, although he recognizes multiple parts.<sup>7</sup> However, the most prevalent approach is that of Dunn, who discovers a dichotomous scheme and finds in Paul numerous conceptual pairs, such as *soma-sarx*, *nous-kardia* and *psyche-soma*.<sup>8</sup> Those visions are a helpful key for the understanding of the letters of Paul. The visions of both Dunn and Betz, the most eminent and much quoted scholars in current research, help to understand the inner conflicts of man that are the base of many Pauline passages, with Rom 7 and 8 as the most famous amongst them. In this thesis I intend to defend an anthropology that differs from the vision of both Dunn and Betz. But before I introduce my arguments, it is important to understand that even if the positions of either Betz or Dunn are taken for granted, the main parts of this thesis still stands.

<sup>5</sup> J.D.G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing 2004) 77.

<sup>6</sup> Johannes Behm, 'nous', *Theologisches Wörterbuch*, IV, Ed G. Kittel (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer 1942) 952.

<sup>7</sup> H.D. Betz, 'The Concept of the 'Inner Human Being' (ὁ ἔσω ἄνθρωπος) in the Anthropology of Paul', *New Testament Studies* 46 (2000), 328.

<sup>8</sup> Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle*, 75-81.



Both Betz and Dunn recognize that a certain anthropological division is the source of the inner conflict of the human being in the letters of Paul. *Pneuma* and *nous* are on the same side in this conflict in the letters of Paul, and both Betz and Dunn see the connection of *pneuma* and *nous* in the highest part of man, that sides up against his flesh (*sarx*). The connection will prove to be an important factor for the understanding of 1 Cor 14:19.

Against these views, the strength of a trichotomous Pauline anthropology, that I will defend below, is that it offers an insight in the Greek roots of Pauline anthropology. Texts in which Paul uses three parts can easily be found, and have their parallels in Greek writings of Pauls contemporaries. In their trichotomous anthropologies, Paul in his contemporaries followed a vision that can also be found in the works of Plato, most clearly in *Politeia* 439.<sup>9</sup> The parallels in the thought of Paul and his Greek contemporaries will be an important theme in this thesis. The trichotomous anthropology will be the first subject that fits in this theme, and therefore provides elements for my exegesis of 1 Cor 14:19.

Many texts can be found that will provide arguments for a Pauline tripartite anthropology, but 1 Thessalonians 5:23, where all three parts can be found in one verse, demonstrates that *pneuma*, *psyche* and *soma* are different parts of man in a trichotomous anthropology:

(...) καὶ ὀλόκληρον ὑμῶν τὸ πνεῦμα καὶ ἡ ψυχὴ καὶ τὸ σῶμα ἀμέμπτως ἐν τῇ παρουσίᾳ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τηρηθεῖη.

(And may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.[NRSV])

Despite the clarity with which Paul's trichotomous anthropology appears in this text, far more than few scholars do not recognize Paul's tripartite vision of man. It will become clear in this chapter that the three parts that are mentioned in 1 Thessalonians 5:23 can be traced in all works of Paul. Those who manage to distinguish them can gain a better understanding of the way the parts of man function in the spiritual gifts which Paul mentions in his letters. The following overview will therefore be auxiliary for the interpretation of 1 Cor 14:19. This overview will start with the lowest part of man, working up to the higher parts.

The body is the lowest element in the hierarchy of Paul's anthropological view of man. Paul uses the word *soma* to describe the human body in neutral context, like he does in 1 Cor 5:3, where he writes the Corinthians that he is present in his spirit, despite his bodily absence.

ἐγὼ μὲν γάρ, ἀπὸν τῷ σώματι παρὼν δὲ τῷ πνεύματι, ἤδη κέκρικα ὡς παρὼν τὸν οὕτως τοῦτο κατεργασάμενον·

(For though absent in body, I am present in spirit; and as if present I have already pronounced judgment [NRSV])

Romans 7 discusses Paul's struggle with Gods law. Paul situates the inner tension against Gods law in his body. This is reason for him to use a more negative word to describe his body in other texts, namely flesh (*sarx*). The words *sarx* and *soma* are both used as words for the material part of man. It depends on the context whether Paul uses *soma* or *sarx*. In neutral context the word *soma* will be used, in pejorative context the word *sarx* fits better, although Paul can expand the negative connotation of the *sarx* to the *soma*, and use *soma* in a quite

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<sup>9</sup> T.A. Szlezák, *Platon und die Schriftlichkeit der Philosophie* (Berlin: De Gruyter 1985), 45.

negative fashion as well when he writes about the *soma tes hamartias* (the body of sins, Romans 6:6).

Moving up from the lowest part of man to the highest part of man we find the *psyche* ("soul") in 1 Thes 5:23, which, even if non-material, does not represent the highest aspect of the human composite. This part should be distinguished from the body because of its clear non-material nature, but also from the *pneuma* and the *nous*, the inseparable highest parts of Pauline anthropology. In hierarchy of the parts of man, the *psyche*, although higher than the body, stands lower than the *nous*. In 1 Cor 2:14, Paul himself is very clear about the place the *psyche* in his vision of man:

ψυχικὸς δὲ ἄνθρωπος οὐ δέχεται τὰ τοῦ πνεύματος τοῦ θεοῦ· μωρία γὰρ αὐτῷ ἐστὶν καὶ οὐ δύναται γινῶναι, ὅτι πνευματικῶς ἀνακρίνεται.

(Those who are unspiritual do not receive the gifts of God's Spirit, for they are foolishness to them, and they are unable to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. [NRSV])

Paul is not very positive about the *psychikoi*, the people that lack spiritual gifts, because they live according to their *psyche*. The *psyche* may thus be a higher part of man than the flesh of Romans 7, but is not the highest one. Paul connects the *psyche* of man to his mortal nature, as in 1 Cor 15:45a, where Paul quotes the LXX version Gen. 2:7:

οὕτως καὶ γέγραπται· ἐγένετο ὁ πρῶτος ἄνθρωπος Ἀδὰμ εἰς ψυχὴν ζῶσαν,

(Thus it is written, "The first man, Adam, became a living soul" [my correction of NRSV])

When God created man, Adam's soul was brought to life, and thus became a living *psyche*. In the same verse, Paul says that Jesus was the last Adam. In Jesus' case, it was not the soul that was brought to life, but the spirit, making him a living *pneuma*, being able to pass life through, so he is described as a life-giving spirit:

(ἐγένετο) ὁ ἔσχατος Ἀδὰμ εἰς πνεῦμα ζωοποιοῦν.

(the last Adam became a life-giving spirit [NRSV])

1 Cor 15:45 makes clear that Paul distinguishes two different non-bodily parts of man. The lower part is the *psyche*, connected to Adam, the man that, as his name tells, came forth from the earth. The higher non-bodily part is the *pneuma*, connected to the second and last Adam, Jesus Christ, who did not come from the earth, but from heaven. In fact, we already encountered this separation of the non-material parts of man in 1 Thes. 5:23. An important feature of Pauline theology can be deduced from 1 Cor. 15:15: Man is by nature, in his lineage from Adam, not *pneumatikos*, but can only become so by retrieving the *pneuma* from God through Christ. The connection of the human with the divine spirit can, among other texts, be found in Romans 8:16:

αὐτὸ τὸ πνεῦμα συμμαρτυρεῖ τῷ πνεύματι ἡμῶν ὅτι ἐσμὲν τέκνα θεοῦ.

(it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God. [NRSV])

In the Romans 7, preceding the verse quoted above, Paul describes his struggle with God's law. He uses the word *nous* to denote the highest part of man. In Romans 7 it is the *nous* that is willing to conform himself to the law of God:

Ἄρα οὖν αὐτὸς ἐγὼ τῷ μὲν νοῖ δουλεύω νόμῳ θεοῦ τῇ δὲ σαρκὶ νόμῳ ἁμαρτίας.

(Rom 7:25)

(So then, with my mind I am a slave to the law of God, but with my flesh I am a slave to the law of sin. [NRSV])

For Paul, the *pneuma* is connected to the *nous*. The connection is clearly demonstrated in 1 Cor 5:15,16, where Paul writes that the *pneumatikoi* have the *nous* of Christ.

ὁ δὲ πνευματικὸς ἀνακρίνει [τὰ] πάντα, αὐτὸς δὲ ὑπ' οὐδενὸς ἀνακρίνεται. τίς γὰρ ἔγνω νοῦν κυρίου, ὃς συμβιβάσει αὐτόν; ἡμεῖς δὲ νοῦν Χριστοῦ ἔχομεν.

(Those who are spiritual discern all things, and they are themselves subject to no one else's scrutiny. "For who has known the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?" But we have the mind of Christ.[NRSV])

The connection of *pneuma* and *nous* in the work of Paul will prove to be the foundation of Paul's thought of spiritual gifts, to be discussed in the next section of my thesis. I will first demonstrate that the trichotomous anthropology of Paul has its parallels in the works of other contemporary writers. I will give an overview of the works of Philo and Plutarch. Both are middle-platonic writers, but have a different religious background: Philo is a Jew, while Plutarch is a Pagan.

### 3.1 Philo's anthropology

An important philosopher to investigate when studying the work of Paul is Philo of Alexandria. He was, as Paul, a Jew, and was familiar with Greek philosophy. Runia adds that "Philo's remarkable knowledge of the Greek tradition of philosophy points to a solid training and contact with the Greek schools of philosophy in Alexandria".<sup>10</sup> Philo's thought was strongly influenced by the Platonism of his time. Living from 20 BC to 50 AD, he was a contemporary of Paul. In his interpretation of the Old Testament Philo shows that he has incorporated Hellenistic concepts in his understanding of the ancient Jewish texts. One of these concepts is a trichotomous anthropology. The same three parts of the human being that Paul uses can be found likewise in the works of Philo. The first distinction I want to mention is the distinction between *psyche* and *soma*, which can be found in the next text passage from *De Gigantibus*:

τὸ μὲν οὖν μὴ ἅπαξ ἀλλὰ δις φάναι „ἄνθρωπος ἄνθρωπος“ σημεῖόν ἐστι τοῦ μὴ τὸν ἐκ σώματος καὶ ψυχῆς ἀλλὰ τὸν ἀρετῇ κεκτημένον δηλοῦσθαι. (*De Gigantibus*, 34).

(For the saying, "Man, man," not once but twice, is a sign that what is here meant is not the man composed of body and soul, but him only who is possessed of virtue. [Yonge])

<sup>10</sup> D.T. Runia, 'Philo', *Der Neue Pauly*. Eds: Hubert Cancik and Helmuth Schneider (Leiden: Brill Online 2008).

In order to properly understand the background of 1 Cor 14:19 we should take this passage of *De Gigantibus* into consideration, which in fact provides an allegorical interpretation of the expression "*anthropos-anthropos*". Philo explains these words in his typical allegorical fashion. Most important is that Philo distinguishes *soma* and *psyche*, making it impossible to defend that Philo made use of a classical Jewish holistic anthropology.

Philo does not only propose a distinction between body and soul, however. He also mentions the *pneuma* and consequently distinguishes two aspects in the non-bodily part of man like Paul does. In *De Vita Mosis I* Philo describes how the prophetic *pneuma* moves into the Moabitic king Balak. The *pneuma* displaces magic from Balak's *psyche*, bringing the gift of prophecy in its place:

ἔξω δὲ προελθὼν ἔνθους αὐτίκα γίνεται, προφητικοῦ πνεύματος ἐπιφοιτήσαντος, ὃ πᾶσαν αὐτοῦ τὴν ἔντεχρον μαντικὴν ὑπερόριον τῆς ψυχῆς ἤλασε· (*De Vita Mosis I*, 277)

(So, having gone forth, immediately he became inspired, the prophetic spirit having entered into him, which drove all his artificial system of divination and cunning out of his soul; [Yonge])

Evidence for a tripartite anthropology can be found in many of the works of Philo. When Philo discusses the humans senses in *De fuga et inventione* he uses the complete trichotomy *pneuma*, *psyche* and *soma*. According to Philo, all parts of man are active the process of sensory perception:

ποτίζεται οὖν ὡσπερ ἀπὸ πηγῆς τοῦ κατὰ ψυχὴν ἡγεμονικοῦ τὸ σῶματος ἡγεμονικὸν πρόσωπον, τὸ μὲν ὄρατικὸν πνεῦμα τείνοντος εἰς ὄμματα τὸ δὲ ἀκουστικὸν εἰς οὖς εἰς δὲ μυκτῆρας τὸ ὀσφρήσεως τὸ δ' αὖ γεύσεως εἰς στόμα καὶ τὸ ἀφῆς εἰς σύμπασαν τὴν ἐπιφάνειαν (*De fuga et inventione*, 182)

(Therefore, the face, which is the dominant portion of the soul; making the spirit, which is calculated for seeing, reach to the eyes, that which has the power of hearing reach the ears, the spirit of smelling reach the nostrils, that of taste the mouth, and causing that of touch to pervade the whole surface of the body. [Yonge])

In other texts, like in *De sobrietate*, Philo, like Paul, uses the word *nous* instead of *pneuma* as the highest part of his anthropology. I have again taken a text in which Plutarch discusses sensory perception, this time to sustain the fact that both Paul and Philo use the concept of *nous* as the highest part of man. Philo refers to the eyes as the lights of the soul in this text, giving a complete trichotomous vision of man with the *nous* as the most eminent part.

ὅσῳ τοίνυν ψυχὴ σῶματος κρείττων, τοσούτῳ καὶ νοῦς ὀφθαλμῶν ἀμείνων· (*De sobrietate* 5)

(In proportion then as the soul is superior to the body, in the same proportion also is the mind better than the eyes [Yonge])

These texts prove that the anthropology at work behind the views of Paul and Philo presents striking similarities. Paul and Philo were both Hellenized Jews, familiar with Jewish history and Greek culture alike. Although both Paul and Philo are Jewish, their anthropologies are clearly Greek, as will become clear after the study of the works of their Greek contemporaries. A good source of comparison are the works of Plutarch, in which an

anthropology can be found that is similar to Paul's and Philo's anthropologies. I will discuss Plutarch's anthropology in the next paragraph.

### 3.2 Plutarch's anthropology

Plutarch was a late contemporary of Paul, living from 46 – 120 AD. He was a historian and philosopher, educated in philosophy by the Egyptian philosopher Ammonius.<sup>11</sup> He wrote in Greek about the great persons in the Roman Empire of his time, and compared their lives to the lives of the great Greeks of the past. He also wrote the *Moralia*, a later collection of separate works, in which Plutarch considers a broad range of more or less philosophical topics. Like Philo Plutarch was a Platonist, and is considered the most eminent representative of Middle Platonism,<sup>12</sup> a movement that follows the philosophy of Plato in the first century BC to the second century AD.<sup>13</sup>

Beside the large amount of material he provides and his lifespan, the texts of Plutarch are also interesting because he was deeply involved in Greek religion. He was a priest at the oracle of Delphi, and thus provides a great opportunity to investigate the Greek religion in the time of Paul, which will provide elements comparable to those in Paul's work. A trichotomous vision of man be found in Plutarch's work:

μόριον γὰρ εἶναι πῶς ψυχῆς οἴονται τὸν νοῦν, οὐδὲν ἤττον ἐκείνων ἀμαρτάνοντες, οἷς ἢ ψυχὴ δοκεῖ μόριον εἶναι τοῦ σώματος. νοῦς γὰρ ψυχῆς, ὅσῳ ψυχὴ σώματος, ἄμεινόν ἐστι καὶ θεϊότερον. (*De facie quae in orbe lunae apparet*, 943A)

(The reason is that they suppose mind to be somehow part of soul, thus erring no less than those who believe soul to be part of body, for in the same degree as soul is superior to body so is mind better and more divine than soul. [Loeb])

Plutarch describes the human being, and clearly divides it in three parts. The highest part is the *nous*, the lowest part is the *soma*, the *psyche* is the part between them. However, in spite of presenting exactly the same tripartite anthropology, there are some discording views in the thought of the three authors. For example, the role and functioning of the *pneuma*. In the following section I shall attempt to clear up the nature of *pneuma* in Pagan religion, Judaism and Christianity, by pointing to the intrinsic relationship between the tripartite anthropology and the idea of the transcendent.

### 3.3 Anthropology and the transcendent

God's *pneuma* has a prominent role in the work of Paul. In the early Christian congregations, it was quite common to view God as a being that has a *pneuma*, primarily in reference to the Old Testament Spirit that swept over the face of water at the creation. This early Christian vision of the divine spirit has survived through the ages, and can be found in the modern church as the Holy Spirit, a part of the Divine trinity.

In the previous section of my thesis I discussed Paul's anthropology. In Romans 8:16, quoted in that section, it became clear that the human *pneuma* is led by the divine *pneuma*.

Philo's vision appears to be similar in *Legum allegoriarum*:

<sup>11</sup> C.B.R. Pelling, "Plutarchus." *Der neue Pauly*.

<sup>12</sup> M. Baltes, "Plutarchus", *Der neue Pauly*.

<sup>13</sup> M. Baltes, "Middle Platonism" *Der neue Pauly*.

τὸ μὲν οὖν ἐμπνέον ἐστὶν ὁ θεός, τὸ δὲ δεχόμενον ὁ νοῦς, τὸ δὲ ἐμπνεόμενον τὸ πνεῦμα. (*Legum allegoriarum* 1, 37)

(Now that which breathes in is God, that which receives what is breathed in is the mind, and that which is breathed in is the spirit. [Yonge])

On this account of the divine inspiration of man, Philo's connection of the human mind and spirit with the divine spirit becomes clear, using the word *nous* for the autonomous human part that is capable of receiving the divine spirit. We will see that Philo puts *pneuma* and *nous* on the same level, being partners as the most eminent parts of his trichotomous vision of man. The *nous* as the highest part of the *psyche* is its leader (*De Opificio Mundi*, 69), and stands on par with the *pneuma*.

The strong emphasis on the *pneuma* in the works of Paul and Philo can be led back to the LXX, which uses the word *pneuma* in the first sentences of Genesis to name the spirit of God. Philo alludes to this text passage in *De Gigantibus* 22:

λέγεται δὲ θεοῦ πνεῦμα καθ' ἓνα μὲν τρόπον ὁ ῥέων ἀπὸ γῆς, (...) (*De Gigantibus* 22)

(But the spirit of God is spoken of in one manner as being air flowing upon the earth [Yonge])

In contrast to the judaeo-christian use, many Greek sources rather use *nous* and not *pneuma* to describe the divine power that created the world. The highest part of man in Greek religious philosophy is usually the *nous*, and the divine power in the universe was known by the same name. The neo-platonic philosopher Plotinus (third century AD) offers a good example of the way the divine power at the source of the universe was described:

Ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ τῷ νοητῷ ἡ ἀληθινὴ οὐσία· νοῦς τὸ ἄριστον αὐτοῦ· (Enneades, 4.1.1)

(In the Intellectual Kosmos dwells Authentic Essence, with the Intellectual-Principle [Divine Mind] as the noblest of its content [Yonge])

In this text, Plotinus adds a divine equivalent to the human *nous* that we found in other texts above. The way the *nous* is perceived is very similar to the way Philo and Paul use the human and the divine *pneuma*.

The basic framework of thought has thus been set; in Greek philosophy, the most used word for the highest part of the man and God is *nous*, while the Hellenized Jews Paul and Philo use *pneuma* in most cases. However, this basic framework only applies in neutral cases. Nuances can be uttered by shifting from *pneuma* to *nous* in different cases. This is the case in this part from *Quis rerum divinarum heres sit*, where Philo describes the God of the Old Testament as a νοῦς ὑπὲρ ἡμᾶς:

ὥστε εἰκότως καὶ τὰ ὁμοιωθέντα, νοῦς τε ὁ ἐν ἡμῖν καὶ ὁ ὑπὲρ ἡμᾶς, (*Quis rerum divinarum heres sit*, 236 )

(the two things which thus resemble each other, both the mind which is in us and that which is above us [Yonge])

For Philo the *nous* is not only the part of man that is able to receive the spirit, but can also be the divine *nous*, similar to the *pneuma* of God, that breathes in the spirit into the human mind.

Philo's usage of the *nous* in *Legum Allegoriarum* 1, 37 and *Quis rerum* 236 has similarities to some texts of Paul. According to Philo, the *nous* is the part of man that receives the *pneuma* from a divine inspirator. The way Paul uses *pneuma* and *nous* in Romans 7 and 8 shows that Paul's perception of both words was the same as Philo's, because the *nous* wants the good, but needs the divine *pneuma* to inspire it. For example, in Rom. 7:6-25, that describes Paul's struggle with the law of God and sin, Paul writes in verse 23:

βλέπω δὲ ἕτερον νόμον ἐν τοῖς μέλεσίν μου ἀντιστρατευόμενον τῷ νόμῳ τοῦ νοός μου καὶ αἰχμαλωτίζοντά με ἐν τῷ νόμῳ τῆς ἀμαρτίας τῷ ὄντι ἐν τοῖς μέλεσίν μου.  
(but I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind, making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. [NRSV])

Paul's *nous* wants the good, but keeps fighting with other parts of his being. The struggle of mind and body is still existing, keeping Paul captive to the law of sin. Paul's *nous* is his mind, his intellect, an autonomous human power, being able to reach out to heaven, willingly to adhere to God's will. In Romans 7:6-25, Paul only uses the word *nous*, not the word *pneuma*. That this use is intentional can be seen in the next chapter, where the *pneuma* of God comes to stage. The *pneuma* of God is introduced in the first verses of chapter 8, and in verse 16, the *pneuma* of God solves the struggle of chapter 7. According to Romans 7:25 human *nous* can serve the law of God autonomously, without divine inspiration, but only the divine *pneuma* ends the human struggle, by enriching the human being with a *pneuma*. Paul's *pneuma* and *nous* thus are comparable to Philo's *pneuma* and *nous*. In the works of Philo, the human *nous* receives the *pneuma* from the divine *pneuma*, making both *pneuma* and *nous* excelling above the *psyche* and the *pneuma* as highest parts of a trichotomous anthropology.

The divine source and inspirator is known to both Paul and Philo as the *pneuma*, placing them apart from contemporary Greek writers, to whom the divine power in the universe was known as the divine *nous*, the divine equivalent to the human *nous*.

The knowledge of the distinction and the similarity of *pneuma* and *nous* in Greek philosophy, works of Philo and all letters of Paul should be kept in mind for the later interpretation and understanding of 1 Cor. 14:14, where *pneuma* and *nous* seem to be opposites.

### 3.3.1 *Nous* versus *pneuma*: intellect and inspiration

Plutarch considers the *nous* to be the most eminent part of a human being, But in *de defectu*, Plutarch describes what happens to the *nous* when divine inspiration takes possession of a human being:

οὐ γάρ, ὡς ὁ Εὐριπίδης φησί, μάντις ἄριστος ὅστις εἰκάζει καλῶς, ἀλλ' οὗτος ἔμφρων μὲν ἀνὴρ καὶ τῷ νοῦν ἔχοντι τῆς ψυχῆς καὶ μετ' εἰκότος ἡγουμένῳ καθ' ὁδὸν ἐπόμενος, τὸ δὲ μαντικὸν ὡσπερ γραμματεῖον ἄγραφον καὶ ἄλογον καὶ ἀόριστον ἐξ αὐτοῦ, δεκτικὸν δὲ φαντασιῶν πάθεισι καὶ προαισθήσεων, ἀσυλλογίστως ἄπτεται τοῦ μέλλοντος, ὅταν ἐκστῆ μάλιστα τοῦ παρόντος. ἐξίσταται δὲ κράσει καὶ διαθέσει τοῦ σώματος ἐν μεταβολῇ γιγνόμενον, ὃν ἐνθουσιασμὸν καλοῦμεν. (*de defectu oraculorum*, 432D)

(It is not true, as Euripides says, that "The best of seers is he that guesses well". No, the best of seers is the intelligent man, following the guidance of that in his soul which possesses sense and which, with the help of reasonable probability, leads him on his way. But that which foretells the future, like a tablet without writing, is both irrational

and indeterminate in itself, but receptive of impressions and presentiments through what may be done to it, and inconsequently grasps at the future when it is farthest withdrawn from the present. Its withdrawal is brought about by a temperament and disposition of the body as it is subjected to a change which we call inspiration. [Loeb])

Here Plutarch renders the man who follows his *nous* as the opposite of the inspired man, and calls the inspired foretelling of the future *alogos*, the negative form of *logos*, thereby giving insight in his conceptual distinction of *pneuma* and *nous*. The *nous* has a clearly intellectual dimension, illustrated by the fact that the man who follows his *nous* is opposed to the foreteller of the future, who does not follow his *nous* and thus is *alogos*. The intellectual dimension of the *nous* is illustrated by its connection to the *logos* in Greek literature. *Logos* is one of the most important concepts of ancient Greek philosophy, dating back to the Pre-Socratics, Socrates, Aristoteles and Plato, but is also used by Philo in his allegorical interpretation of the Jewish Old Testament. The connection of *nous* and *logos* is broadly recognized among scholars of Greek literature, and to show that Plutarch connects both as well, I will again quote *de defectu*, in which Plutarch, writing about Zeus, says:

θεὸν ἔχοντα καὶ νοῦν καὶ λόγον (*de defectu oraculorum*, 426A)  
(a God possessing sense and reason [Loeb])

To Plutarch, like to Paul, the *nous* is connected to the human intellect, the ability to discern and to judge. The Pauline *nous* is heavily influenced by Greek thought when it is seen as the highest part of man, able to receive the *pneuma*, which is being blown in by the divine *pneuma*. The *nous* in the Pauline and Philonic texts can be translated as ‘mind’, as I have done in the previous part of this thesis, carrying with it the connotation of the autonomous human intellect.

Commentaries of the New Testament give the same kind of explanation of the word *nous*. The German commentator Schrage describes the *nous* as ‘Urteilsfähigkeit’ and ‘Denkvermögen’.<sup>14</sup> His countryman Wolff catches another aspect of *nous* when he describes it as ‘Normen bewußtsein’.<sup>15</sup> Defining the intellectual connotation of *nous*, the description of *nous* in both commentaries leads me to a correct understanding of *nous* in the work of Paul. Kittel supports this vision of the *nous*, as the part of man that performs thinking and recognizing of causes.<sup>16</sup> Therefore, intellect would be a translation that fits Paul’s use of *nous* quite well, like in Romans 12:2, where the application of the *nous* not only entails divine inspiration, but also human intellectual performance.

καὶ μὴ συσχηματίζεσθε τῷ αἰῶνι τούτῳ, ἀλλὰ μεταμορφοῦσθε τῇ ἀνακαινώσει τοῦ νοῦς εἰς τὸ δοκιμάζειν ὑμᾶς τί τὸ θέλημα τοῦ θεοῦ, τὸ ἀγαθὸν καὶ εὐάρεστον καὶ τέλειον.

(Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God-- what is good and acceptable and perfect. [NRSV])

<sup>14</sup>W. Schrage, *Der erste Brief an die Korinther III*, Evangelisch-katholischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament (7/3) (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag 1999) 398.

<sup>15</sup>C. Wolff, *Der erste Brief des Paulus an die Korinther*, Theologischer Handkommentar zum Neuen Testament (7) (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt 1996) 332.

<sup>16</sup>Behm, ‘*nous*’, *Theologisches Wörterbuch*.



The metamorphosis of the Christian *nous* does not lead to the end of his intellect, it does not replace his mind, but renews it. A Christian should not believe everything that is said to be divine, but should discern himself what is right and what is wrong, and most important recognize the will of God. In Greek, Paul uses the word *dokimazein* to emphasize this intellectual connotation. Paul's approach to the *nous* in this case is very similar to the approach of Greek writers.

Paul masters all nuances of *pneuma* and *nous*, and is able to switch between the words to fit the context in which he uses them. Paul never switches without intention. Both *pneuma* and *nous* are on top of a trichotomous anthropology, and can therefore be subject of exchange in intellectual or inspired context.

In 1 Cor 14:14, where Paul states that if he prays in a tongue, his spirit prays but his mind is unproductive, Paul separates the *pneuma* and the *nous*, and connects the *pneuma* to the inspired act of speaking in tongues. The key to the explanation of the separation of *pneuma* and *nous* in 1 Cor. 14 is to recognize how Paul uses *pneuma* and *nous*. *Pneuma* and *nous* seem to be opposites in this verse, but that is certainly not Paul's opinion, as became clear in the previous parts of my thesis. The separation of *pneuma* and *nous* in 1 Corinthians 14 is used by Paul for the sake of the argument, to clarify why he is so negative about speaking in tongues in the *ekklesia*, because *pneuma* and *nous* are inseparable, but speaking in tongues tears them apart. *Glossolalia*, ecstatic words spoken through the *pneuma* leaves the *nous* obsolete. Paul acknowledges that *glossolalia* is divine inspired, but in the *ekklesia*, he wants the members to speak inspired and intelligible.

Someone who speaks in tongues in most cases does not understand what he is saying, as is illustrated by the fact that a tongue-speaker should pray the Lord for the gift of interpretation of his own *glossolalia* (1 Cor 14:14). The Spirit makes that tongue speakers are speaking mysteries. Those mysteries remain as long as other Christians with the gift of interpretation of tongues are absent.

οὐδεὶς γὰρ ἀκούει, πνεύματι δὲ λαλεῖ μυστήρια· (1 Cor 14:2)

(nobody understands them, since they are speaking mysteries in the Spirit. [NRSV])

That is why Paul discerns *pneuma* and *nous* so strong in 1 Cor 14:14. If the *pneuma* is understood as the divinely inspired part of man, and the *nous* as the human intellect, then we can say with Paul that, when speaking in tongues, the mind is unfruitful. *Glossolalia* is a *pneumatic* gift, although it is not understandable for all *pneumatic* people. That is why the *nous* is unfruitful when someone speaks in tongues. Paul emphasizes mutual understandability. His recommendations are in that way the same as his recommendation for *agape* in 1 Cor 13, where he lays emphasis on his vision of the *ekklesia* as a community of believers, where everybody is equal, cares for each other and understands each other. Unintelligible *glossolalia* is unfavourable in such an *ekklesia*, and the Corinthians did no good job as a community of believers, because the members of the *ekklesia* were not equal, did not care for each other as at the Lord's Supper, and moreover, they favoured the gift of speaking in tongues, which was unintelligible for all members that were present.

### 3.3.2 Conclusion

*Pneuma* and *nous* are concepts which are prevalent in Greek and Hellenized Jewish thought of the first century AD. *Nous* is favoured as a name for the highest part of man and as a cosmic power in Greek philosophy, while *pneuma* plays a key role in the creation story and many other stories of the LXX. *Pneuma* and *nous* can be found in Greek writings, but also in

the works of Paul and Philo. In the anthropologies of both Paul and Philo, *pneuma* and *nous* take their place in an anthropological system with Greek roots. Paul's anthropology and theology borrows concepts from Greek philosophy and scriptures of Judaism, while his concept of *pneuma* is a synthesis of both. The idea of a trichotomy as well as the words to describe the three parts can be traced back to Greek philosophy. The connection of the highest part of man to a divine equivalent with the same name can also be found in Pagan religion. Paul uses the word *pneuma* for the divine power that inspires man. Paul's use of word *pneuma* cannot solely be connected to Judaism. Admittedly, the issue played a central role both in the philosophy of Aristotle and in the Stoa. However, the main focus of the approach of this thesis is to show to what extent Paul's use of the term reveals his attempts to merge the philosophical background of the notion with the religious dimension it had in Jewish thought. In this sense, it offers a good opportunity to attach Jewish to Greek thought in a universal synthesis with Jewish roots.

## 4 Divine madness

In the previous chapter we have seen that for Paul the *pneuma* is the highest constitutive element of human being and that it is precisely this part that is activated when *glossolalia* is performed. I have also demonstrated that the *pneuma* has a role in Greek religion as well. As Kittel writes, the *pneuma* is the source and the cause of ecstatic speech in Greek religion.<sup>17</sup>

Ecstatic speech was part of a long tradition of divine inspired madness in Greek religion. In the fifth century BC, the tragedian Euripides wrote in his tragedy of the Greek God of the wine Dionysus:

βακχεΐαι δ' ἅμα συντόνωι / κέρασαν ἠδυβόαι Φρυγίων / αὐλῶν πνεύματι ματρός τε  
Ῥέας ἐς / χέρα θῆκαν, κτύπον εὐάσμασι βακχᾶν· / παρὰ δὲ μαινόμενοι Σάτυροι /  
ματέρος ἐξανύσαντο θεᾶς, / ἐς δὲ χορεύματα / συνῆψαν τριετηρίδων, / αἷς χαίρει  
Διόνυσος. (Bacchae, 125-135)

(and in their intense ecstatic dance / the mingled it with the sweet hallooing breath / of  
Phrygian pipes and put it into the hand of Mother Rhea / to mark the measure for the  
ecstatic dance / and the maddened statyrs obtained it / from the Goddess Mother / and  
added it to the dances / of the second-year festivals / in which Dionysus delights.  
[Loeb])

In this text, *mainomai* entails divine inspiration that leads to ecstasy and madness. This visible impact of divine inspiration had a role in Greek religion in the time of Euripides, but also later, in the time of Plutarch, inspired madness played its role in Greek religion.

As a priest at the oracle of Delphi, Plutarch was familiar with ecstatic divine inspiration like no other. He demonstrates his knowledge of inspired madness in the *Amatorius*, where he uses the words *mania* and *enthousiasmos*.

μανία γὰρ ἢ μὲν ἀπὸ σώματος ἐπὶ ψυχὴν ἀνεσταλμένη δυσκρασίαις τισὶν ἢ συμμίξεσιν  
πνεύματος βλαβεροῦ περιφερομένου τραχεῖα καὶ χαλεπὴ καὶ νοσώδης· ἑτέρα δ' ἐστὶν  
οὐκ ἀθείαστος οὐδ' οἰκογενής, ἀλλ' ἔπηλυσ ἐπίπνοια καὶ παρατροπὴ τοῦ λογιζομένου  
καὶ φρονούντος ἀρχὴν κρείττονος δυνάμεως ἀρχὴν ἔχουσα καὶ κίνησιν, ἧς τὸ μὲν  
κοινὸν ἐνθουσιαστικὸν καλεῖται πάθος· ὡς γὰρ ἔμπνουν τὸ πνεύματος πληρωθὲν  
ἔμφρον δὲ τὸ φρονήσεως, οὕτως ὁ τοιοῦτος σάλος ψυχῆς ἐνθουσιασμὸς ὠνόμασται  
μετοχῇ καὶ κοινωνίᾳ θειοτέρας δυνάμεως· (Amatorius, 758DE)

(There is one form of madness that rises from the body to the soul: when a noxious  
exhalation is put into circulation as a result of distempers or commixtures of a certain  
sort, a madness ensues that is savage, harsh and diseased. There is a second kind,  
however, which does not exist without divine inspiration. It is not intrinsically  
generated but is, rather, an extrinsic afflatus that displaces the faculty of rational  
inference; it is created and in motion by higher power. This sort of madness bears the  
general name 'enthousiasm'. [Loeb])

<sup>17</sup> H. Kleinknecht, 'pneuma', *Theologisches Wörterbuch*, VI, Ed G. Kittel (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer 1959) 332-359.

In fact, both *mania* and *enthousiasmos* have been recognized as effects of the *pneuma* by Plato, who differs four different types of mania.<sup>18</sup> It is clear that Plutarch follows the line of Plato in giving *mania* a religious function.

If return to the writings of Paul, 1 Cor 14:23 catches the eye, because in this verse Christian ecstatic speech, *glossolalia*, is connected to madness like it is in Greek religion.

Ἐὰν οὖν συνέλθῃ ἡ ἐκκλησία ὅλη ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτὸ καὶ πάντες λαλῶσιν γλώσσαις,  
εἰσέλθωσιν δὲ ἰδιῶται ἢ ἄπιστοι, οὐκ ἐροῦσιν ὅτι μαίνεσθε;

(If, therefore, the whole church comes together and all speak in tongues, and outsiders or unbelievers enter, will they not say that you are out of your mind? [NRSV])

Paul uses a word of the same root (*mania*) as Plutarch does. According to Chester, it may thus be concluded that the verb *mainomai* must be understood against the background of its meaning in Greek religion.<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, Chester cites the dictionary of Liddel and Scott. They do not only translate *mainomai* as 'to be driven mad' but they also add that *mainomai* *upo tou theou* means 'to be inspired by God'. The Corinthian concept of madness must have been the same as the concept of madness that can be found in Pagan Greek religion. Outsiders who entered the congregation must have recognized *glossolalia* as divine inspired ecstasy, an event they probably have seen frequently Greek religion. Furthermore, by using the word *mainomai*, Paul explains *glossolalia* with the concept of Greek religion.

The striking similarities in ways Paul and Plutarch address divine inspired ecstatic frenzy are reason for a further investigation of ecstatic religious acts in this part of my thesis. I will first shortly discuss the way Plutarch saw ecstatic speech. Thereafter I will discuss *glossolalia* in the work of Paul, firstly the way he perceived the act of *glossolalia*, and secondly the origins of the term *glossolalia*. In the last section of this part of my thesis I will discuss the alternative Paul offered for divine inspired madness. However, the discussion should not be obstructed by the fact that Paul and Plutarch both use the word 'prophecy' in a different manner. I will therefore first give a short overview of prophecy in the works of Paul and Plutarch.

#### 4.1 Understanding the term Prophecy

In the Greek world, prophecy was performed in the context of divine inspired frenzy at the oracle. In Delphi, the ecstatic speech of the *Pythia*, the prophetess, was given by the *pneuma*, that, according to Kittel, was considered a voice (*omphè*) that raised up from the earth. The Greek prophet was in function at the Oracle to give the message of the Oracle, that was received through the *pneuma*.

In Pauline theology, there is a sharp distinction of prophecy and ecstatic speech that is absent in the works of Plutarch. Pauline prophecy is understandable, spoken in intelligible words. To the contrary, prophecy and ecstatic speech are strongly connected in the work of Plutarch. Paul's prophecy can therefore not be compared to Plutarch's prophecy. Greek prophecy should be compared to Pauline *glossolalia*. The connection of Greek prophecy and Pauline *glossolalia* is confirmed by Kittel, who states that "(...) *pneumagewirkten glossolalein* (...) *in Korinth Reflex Pythischer Weissagung ist* (...)".<sup>20</sup>

<sup>18</sup> TH.SCH. "Enthousiasmos" *Der neue Pauly*

<sup>19</sup> S. J. Chester, 'Divine Madness? Speaking in Tongues in 1 Corinthians 14:23', *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* (4, 2005) 417-446

<sup>20</sup> Kleinknecht, 'pneuma', *Theologisches Wörterbuch*, 353.

Closest to Paul's vision of prophecy is not the prophecy at the oracle, but the concept of prophecy in Hellenized Judaism. A *Profetes* occurs frequently in the Greek translation of the Old Testament, the LXX. In the Old Testament, and therefore in the LXX as well, prophecy lacked any ecstatic utterance, but was used to warn Gods people in understandable language.

A little more complexity is added by the fact that the English language translate different Greek words as 'prophet'. When an English translation gives 'prophet', the Greek word may be *profetes* or *mantis*. This ambiguity does not occur in the work of Paul, as he does not use the term *mantis*. In Pagan Greek texts, the person in function at the oracle is a *profetes*. The clairvoyant foreteller of the future was named a *mantis*, although Bremmer notes some overlap in the function of the prophet and the (*pro*)*mantis*.<sup>21</sup>

## 4.2 Ecstatic speech in the work of Plutarch

In the above sections, we have seen that, in Greek religion, the *pneuma* does its work in the domain of ecstatic speech and divine inspired madness. It is a domain where the intellectual dimension of the *nous* is absent.

Indeed, to Plutarch, prophetic or mantic sessions can only take place when the human being puts himself, including his *nous*, in the hands of the oracle like an instrument. By doing so he can grasp at the future 'when it is farthest withdrawn from the present', as Plutarch writes in *de defectu oraculorum*, 432D, quoted on page 15.

For the oracle to work, the *nous* must remain unused, while the *pneuma* takes over the soul of the *Pythia*. Outside the oracle, where the *pneuma* is not active, the *nous* is the highest part of man, and should therefore be honoured and followed. It is the oracle that Plutarch discusses in the passages of *de defectu* that I quoted. His account of ecstatic inspiration and the role of the *pneuma* as inspirator of mantic sessions applies there.

*De Facie quae in orbe lunae apparet*, 943A, quoted on page 13, demonstrates that the *nous* is highest element of Plutarch's trichotomous anthropology. We can thus concluded that there is a sharp distinction between the domain of the oracle and domain outside the oracle, illustrated by the important role the *nous* has outside the domain of the oracle, and its absence within that domain.

## 4.3 Ecstatic speech in the work of Paul

Pauls view of ecstatic speech is similar to Plutarch's view. To sustain this claim, I will recall 1 Cor. 14:14 where Paul states that

ἐάν [γὰρ] προσεύχωμαι γλώσση, τὸ πνεῦμά μου προσεύχεται, ὁ δὲ νοῦς μου ἄκαρπός ἐστιν.

(For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays but my mind is unproductive [NRSV])

Like at the oracle in the work of Plutarch, the *nous* was not used when ecstatic speech was performed in the Corinthian *ekklesia*. Paul and Plutarch thus agree upon the absence of the *nous* in divine inspired frenzy. However, their approach is different. Plutarch describes the absence of the *nous* at the oracle as a prerequisite for its functioning. In contrast to this vision, Paul is quite negative about the absence of the *nous* in the act of *glossolalia*, as becomes clear

<sup>21</sup> J. N. Bremmer, "Prophet." *Der Neue Pauly*.

in the verse that is the subject of this thesis, where Paul states that he would rather speak five words with his *nous* than ten thousand words in tongues. Paul thus fully places the practice of *glossolalia* in a Greek context, and bases his critique on the fact that the *nous* is not used.

When Paul clearly asserts he prefers to speak five words with the mind than ten thousand in tongues, he is negative about *glossolalia* not because it is uninspired, but because it is unintelligible.

If we understand that Greek divine madness is the religious and historical background of *glossolalia* it becomes clear why Paul writes that tongues are 'a sign, not for believers but for the non-believers' (1 Cor 14:22). Pagans in the first century AD were familiar with the meaning of inspired madness in Greek religion, and would immediately understand that the madness they saw in the *ekklesia* was divine inspired. *Mania* was part of Greek religion for five centuries, and that is why *glossolalia* was a sign for the unbelievers.

#### 4.4 Why did Paul use the term *glossa*?

While Paul's account of the practice of *glossolalia* in the Corinthian congregation has its parallels in Greek religion, the term *glossolalia* has not yet been discussed in this thesis. Why did Paul use the word *glossolalia* to describe the state of ecstatic inspiration, while Plutarch clearly did not?

Paul does not define what he means when writing about *glossolalia*, making it probable that the word must have been commonly understood in Corinth. To the Corinthians, the ecstatic *glossa* had an obvious meaning, making it unnecessary for Paul to give further explanation of the word. Given the fact that the first letter to the Corinthians was written only two decades after the death of Christ and the emergence of the first Christian congregations, speaking in a *glossa* must have been a practice that was known to the first generations of Christians.

The only instance where Plutarch uses the word *glossa* in *de defectu* is 421B, but the word is not used in ecstatic context, which becomes clear when the Doric dialect is described as one of the many *glossais* that a certain Greek man spoke. It seems that the practice of *glossolalia* and the term *glossolalia* have different sources.

A single example of the word *glossa* in Greek religious traditions is given by Forbes, who cites Behm, who found a single Greek parallel in which the word *glossa* was used. In the enthusiastic cult of the Thracian Dionysos, a *glotta bakchei* can be found.<sup>22</sup> Christian churches were indeed in aspects similar to Pagan religious voluntary associations like Thracian Dionysos.<sup>23</sup> However, this is only a singular case of a possible parallel to the term *glossolalia* that Paul uses. In fact, Paul himself offers another parallel to the term *glossa*. He gives a glimpse of a possible explanation for the source of the word *glossa* when he links it to Old Testament prophecy in 1 Corinthians 14:20:

ἐν τῷ νόμῳ γέγραπται ὅτι ἐν ἑτερογλώσσοις καὶ ἐν χείλεσιν ἑτέρων λαλήσω τῷ  
λαῶ τούτῳ καὶ οὐδ' οὕτως εἰσακούσονται μου, λέγει κύριος.

(In the Law it is written, "By men of strange tongues and by the lips of strangers I will speak to this people, and even so they will not listen to Me," says the Lord. [NRSV])

<sup>22</sup> C. Forbes, *Prophecy and Inspired Speech in Early Christianity and its Hellenistic Environment*, *Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament* 2/75 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 1995) 30.

<sup>23</sup> Ascough gives a good overview of comparability of early Christianity and Dionysos cults in: R. S. Ascough, *Paul's Macedonian Associations: The Social Context of Philippians and 1 Thessalonians* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2003).

The part of scripture that Paul quotes here can be found in Isaiah 28:11. This text is not about ecstatic tongues, but about drunken priests and prophets, but it seems to be evident to Paul that the prophecy of Isaiah can be applied to the practice of speaking in tongues.

Behm reckons that Hellenistic parallels are the most important for the understanding of early Christian practice of *glossolalia*, which I have shown to be true above. However, the problem of the name-giving of the gift of speaking in tongues is not solved by Behm, who leaves all possible parallels in Judaism out of consideration. Inspired by Paul's suggestion of a Jewish background for the term *glossolalia*, I will discuss the Jewish background of the word *glossa* below, because a study of possible Greek sources of the terminology leads to a dead end, while Paul himself provides the arguments for a Jewish background when quoting Isaiah,

As an introduction to my arguments for a Jewish background of the word *glossa*, I will give a short survey of the importance of language in Judaism in the next paragraph.

#### **4.5 Language as a marker of ethnicity in Judaism**

Unity of language and language as a marker of ethnicity are important themes in Old Testamental Judaism. The unity of language may be the reason why the confusion of tongues in Gen 11:27 is an important theme in Jewish religion. The theme is so important to Philo, that he writes a book about the subject of the confusion of tongues. Philo applied his allegorical interpretation to Genesis 11 in *De Confusione Linguarum*. Different tongues existed to keep man from sin, as Philo says using the Attic cognate of *glossa*, *glotta*:

ἔστι δέ, ὡς γέ φασι, καὶ τοῦτο μυθῶδες. καὶ μὴν τὴν γε φωνῆς εἰς μυρίας διαλέκτων  
ἰδέας τομὴν, ἣν καλεῖ γλώττης σύγχυσις, ἐπὶ θεραπείᾳ λέγουσιν ἁμαρτημάτων  
συμβῆναι, ὡς μηκέτ' ἀλλήλων ἀκροώμενοι κοινῇ συναδικῶσιν, ἀλλὰ τρόπον τινὰ  
ἀλλήλοις κεκωφωμένοι (*De Confusione Linguarum*, 9)

(And indeed they affirm, that the separation of language into an infinite variety of dialects, which Moses calls the confusion of tongues, was effected as a remedy for sins, in order that men might not be able to cooperate in common for deeds of wickedness through understanding one another [Yonge])

Philo does not link this Jewish text to a Greek practice of divine inspired frenzy, but demonstrates that the confusion of tongues was an important theme in the Jewish Religion in the first century AD, by dedicating a complete treatise to this subject. Language functions as ethnicity marker, and adherence to that language emphasizes the ethnic dimension of Judaism. This is the reason why adherence to the Hebrew language was one of the features of the Essenes, who drew back into desert and lived in their own society which was modelled in the shape of the Jewish ideal of a heavenly people.<sup>24</sup>

#### **4.6 Glossolalia in Acts 2**

The confusion of tongues returns in the narrative of Acts. Acts 2 describes the Pentecost, where tongues of fire come over the apostles, inspiring the apostles to speak in tongues they do not understand. Luke wrote this description of the events at the Pentecost some decades

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<sup>24</sup>J. J. Collins and R.A. Kugler, *Religion in the Dead Sea Scrolls*, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing 2000) 68.

after the events took place, and there are no other sources that offer an trustworthy account of the Pentecost.

However, the way that Luke incorporates the Pentecostal events in Jerusalem in his story of the Acts of the apostles tells us that there was more than one reason than only showing that the apostles were inspired by God. Luke's account of speaking in tongues at the Pentecost must be seen in the light of the Old Testamental background of the confusion of tongues. The confusion of tongues is solved when the spirit comes down, fulfilling the Old Testament. Toker gives a short overview of theological thought about the coherence of Acts 2 with the story of the tower of Babylon.<sup>25</sup> There are some differences in the opinion of exegetes, but all acknowledge that in Acts should be read as the reversal of the confusion of tongues.

My argument here is not that speaking in tongues in Acts 2 and 1 Corinthians are effects of the same phenomenon. A lot of hermeneutical problems arise when such a comparison is made. What I want to clarify is that, like Paul clearly does, Luke links speaking in a *glossa* to a theme of Judaism. The fact that both Paul and Luke tell a story of speaking in tongues, and both link it to Jewish scripture, makes it more likely that the term *glossa* actually had a Jewish background. The differences that can be found between the descriptions of Paul and Luke even strengthen this argument, because the differences make it likely that both accounts do not directly depend on each other, but can be traced back to the same early Christian practise out of which both have evolved. The small amount of reliable historical material that is available makes it difficult or impossible to define exactly what this practise must have been like, but we can at least say that such a practice has existed.

We have seen that Paul himself links the term *glossolalia* to the Old Testament, and so does Acts 2. The obvious way in which Paul uses the term *glossolalia* and the absence of a common meaning of *glossa* in Greek religion makes it probable that the usage of the word *glossa* to name ecstatic speech is an early Christian invention, arising from a Jewish background.

#### **4.7 Paul's alternative for ecstatic speech: Prophecy**

I have addressed the problem of a correct understanding of the word prophecy in a previous section of my thesis. While prophecy in the work of Plutarch stand in relation to divine madness and unintelligible inspired speech, the word has another meaning in the works of Paul. In the works of Paul, prophecy is a spiritual gift, but is not equal to ecstatic speech. To Paul, prophetic words are intelligible for all members of the Christian congregation. Pauline usage of prophecy seems to have been derived from Judaism. Jewish prophecy in the Old Testament only consists of intelligible language, words from God spoken through a human messenger, similar to the way Paul describes this gift, while Greek prophecy is different from this vision of prophecy.

In the words of Paul, prophecy is a sign for believers. Those who already believe will be judged and convinced when they hear prophetic words, because prophetic words are intelligible without a specific spiritual gift to understand them, as the gift of understanding tongues is not given to every Christian.

When Paul writes that prophecy is a sign for believers, he adds no further explanation, but Paul describes the impact of prophetic words on the mind of the believer. This impact can

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<sup>25</sup> K. O. Toker, 'Prophecy and Tongues: St Paul, Interpreting and Building the House', *Translation and religion: holy untranslatable?*, ed. Lynne Long (Clevedon: Multilingual Matters 2005), 33-41.



Καὶ οὗς μὲν ἔθετο ὁ θεὸς ἐν τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ πρῶτον ἀποστόλους, δεύτερον προφήτας, τρίτον διδασκάλους, ἔπειτα δυνάμεις, ἔπειτα χαρίσματα ἰαμάτων, ἀντιλήψεις, κυβερνήσεις, γένη γλωσσῶν.

(And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers; then deeds of power, then gifts of healing, forms of assistance, forms of leadership, various kinds of tongues. [NRSV])

The gift of speaking in tongues is mentioned as last in a list that seems to be ordered hierarchically. An argument for the fact that Paul indeed uses a hierarchy of spiritual gifts can be found in verse 31:

ζηλοῦτε δὲ τὰ χαρίσματα τὰ μείζονα. Καὶ ἔτι καθ' ὑπερβολὴν ὁδὸν ὑμῖν δείκνυμι.  
(But strive for the greater gifts. And I will show you a still more excellent way.  
[NRSV])

The hierarchy that can be found in 1 Cor. 12:28 can be meant by Paul only to correct the Corinthian vision of spiritual gifts, that placed the gift of speaking in tongues ahead of other gifts. In Paul's view, *glossolalia* has a lesser value in the context of *ekklesia*, because the human mind is unfruitful or obsolete when words are spoken in tongues, and this seem to break the inseparable connection of *pneuma* and *nous* in Pauline anthropology.

The hierarchy of tasks and gifts in 1 Cor 12:28 is compatible with the verse that is the subject of this paper, 1 Cor 14:19. By promoting speech with the *nous*, Paul shows that he favors the gift of prophecy above other gifts, and gives *glossolalia* a lower position.

Paul's emphasis on the function of the *nous*, and his favoring of certain gifts should be seen in the light of his vision of the ideal *ekklesia*, of which the community was the core. The Corinthian *ekklesia* had consciously or unconsciously had moved away from this ideal Christian *ekklesia* that Paul had in mind.

## 4.9 Conclusion

In this first part of my study of 1 Corinthians 14:19, I have investigated the gift of speaking in tongues and the gift of prophecy in the Pauline *ekklesia*. It became clear that Paul's theological, linguistic and anthropologic concepts must be seen as a synthesis of Greek and Jewish thought. In the *ekklesia*, *pneuma* and *nous* are inseparable for Paul. The fact that *glossolalia* leaves the *nous* unfruitful is reason for Paul to be quite negative about this practice. Paul's statement that the *nous* is not used in the case of ecstatic speech has its parallels in Pagan religion, the source of many elements of Christian *glossolalia*, although Pagan religion does not provide the terminology, which appeared to have been borrowed from Judaism.

It is not difficult to understand how Pagan converts to Christianity could perceive a hypothetical early Christian practise of *glossolalia* as being the similar to ecstatic speak in the Pagan religion, but the case of the letter to the Corinthians extends even further, because *glossolalia* was not only perceived as being similar to Greek ecstatic speech, but is also presented as such by Paul. Paul thus combines concepts of Greek and Jewish religion when writing about *glossolalia*, again showing that Christianity emerged as a universal religion on Jewish substrate in a Hellenized time. Greek converts and Greek language lead to the adoption of many habits of the practitioners of Pagan religion into Christianity, while the

implementation of concepts that can be traced back to the Old Testament led to a synthesis that made a universal religion with Jewish roots viable.

A thorough investigation of Paul's letter to the Corinthians shows that he is not inconsistent in his writings, and that Paul bears with him both traditions, Jewish and Greek, in which he grew up and was educated. Paul's background enables him to build a synthesis that is endearing for the Greek with interest in Eastern religion and the Jew that has universal aspirations.

According to Paul, *glossolalia* is given too much importance in the Corinthian congregation. The Corinthians saw *glossolalia* as a marker of spiritual status, and all wanted to speak more in tongues than others. This fact illustrates the importance of social status in Corinth.<sup>26</sup> Social issues in Corinth will also be discussed in the next chapter about the *ekklesia*, where I will argue that the same social issue that is illustrated by the strife for the gift of *glossolalia* is also at the source of the inequality in the *ekklesia*'s communal meal.

When reflecting back to the anthropological terms used, it is clear that Paul uses the word *pneuma* as the most eminent part of this trichotomy unless he wants to discuss the human ability to judge and discern. Plutarch uses the word *nous* in most cases, but if the story shifts to the ecstatic *enthousiasmos*, the *pneuma* is used to describe the power that brings madness through body and soul, and the *nous* is suddenly absent. The dynamics of *pneuma* and *nous* in the works of Paul and Plutarch can thus be compared. Both words are used by Paul for the highest part of trichotomous man, with the *nous* at the intellectual side of the semantic spectrum, and the *pneuma* at the ecstatic side. Plutarch applies the word *nous* when he is concerned with the intellect; when ecstasy is at stake, the *nous* disappears or is displaced and the *pneuma* is added to the story, as a force that works in man.

In the space between the intellectual and the ecstatic, the choices of Paul and Plutarch differ, but this difference does not lead to fundamental difference of connotation of the *nous*. The *pneuma* in the works of Paul and Plutarch is more difficult to compare. The least that can be said is that in the works of both, the *pneuma* is connected to divine inspiration, that leads to ecstatic speech at the oracle in the case of Plutarch, and may lead to ecstatic speech in the *ekklesia* that is not favoured by Paul, who rather sees that *pneuma* and *nous* are used to speak words that are both intelligible and inspired.

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<sup>26</sup> D.B. Martin, 'Tongues of Angels and Other Status indicators', *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, vol 59, no 3 (1991), 558.

## 5 The *ekklesia*

The previous chapter of my thesis provided a study of the dynamics of spiritual gifts in the Pauline letters, which is an important topic for a good understanding of the concept of *glossolalia*. In 1 Cor 14:19, Paul takes a negative position towards *glossolalia*, and prefers speaking with the *nous*. It should be noticed that he does so in the context of the *ekklesia*. The question arises why such a position is taken by Paul. Why does Paul prefer the *nous* in the context of the *ekklesia*? To answer this question, a thorough study of the *ekklesia* is needed. The concept of *ekklesia* might proceed either from Greek or from Jewish culture, or is a synthesis of both, because the term appears in both traditions.

The Christian *ekklesia* should be closely investigated. A study of modern literature about the early Christian churches shows that there are three possible approaches.

The first, supported by many scholars, tends to establish a relationship between the earliest churches in the first and second century AD and voluntary associations. This point is at the center of Smith's *From Symposium to Eucharist*, that focuses on the communal meal as a similarity of voluntary associations and the earliest churches.<sup>27</sup> With this vision, Smith embeds early Christianity in its surrounding society and gives a model that tells us how the Christian *ekklesia* may have been perceived by its members and outsiders. R. Ascough, another supporter of the connection between the earliest churches and voluntary associations, considers that the Pauline church of Thessalonica was a professional association.<sup>28</sup> He argues that when early churches emerged, they took the form of voluntary associations. It is true that many similarities arise when one compares the early churches with the voluntary association. However, a serious problem in this approach concerns terminology. Whereas Greek voluntary associations receive many different names, the term *ekklesia* is exclusively used to define the assembly of people of a certain administrative unit and never describes a voluntary association.

A second approach is supported by Dunn. Even if he does not provide a terminological analysis of the term *ekklesia*, his interpretation is in fact closer to the original meaning *ekklesia*, since he interprets it as an assembly.<sup>29</sup> A more radical version of this approach can be found in the works of Horsley, who not only saw the Christian *ekklesia* as an assembly, but also states that the Christian assembly is an assembly in juxtaposition and competition with the official city assembly.<sup>30</sup> Horsley's vision is that Paul and his *ekklesia* had political aspirations, and therefore took the same name as the secular assembly.

A third approach can be found in the lemma '*ekklesia*' by Gerber in *Der Neue Pauly*, who states that the name *ekklesia* has been derived from Judaism.<sup>31</sup> He sees Judaism as the main source of concepts for early Christianity, and does not name any connection to the

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<sup>27</sup> D. E. Smith, *From Symposium to Eucharist: The Banquet in the Early Christian World* (Minneapolis : Fortress 2003).

<sup>28</sup> R. S. Ascough, The Thessalonian Christian Community as a Professional Voluntary Association, *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Vol. 119, No. 2 (Summer, 2000), 311-328

<sup>29</sup> Dunn, *The Theology of Paul The Apostle*, 542.

<sup>30</sup> R. A. Horsley, *Paul and Empire: Religion and Power in Roman Imperial Society* (London: Continuum International Publishing Group 1997) 209.

<sup>31</sup> S. Gerber, "Ekklesia", *Der neue Pauly*.

Greek *ekklesia*. The same approach can be seen in Kittel for whom the Old Testament *ekklesia* is the main source for comparison for the Christian *ekklesia*.<sup>32</sup>

In connection with these approaches, I will study in this part of my thesis how the word *ekklesia* was used in the time of the emerging of the first churches. To do so, I will further clarify the meaning of Paul's *ekklesia*, the name that he uses for the early churches.

Within this purpose, I shall focus on the dynamics of the *ekklesia* in the times of Paul. Like in the case of *glossolalia*, the study of the surrounding Greek society and the Jewish roots of Christianity will help us to understand the meaning and use of *ekklesia* in the early Christian context. I will first focus on Paul's account of *ekklesia* in the context of the New Testament, then analyze the issue in Greek and Jewish worlds. As to the former, I will firstly consider the use of the term in Greek state administration and the role of the sophists and philosophers in the *ekklesia*. Secondly, I will study the role of voluntary associations in Greek society, with a main focus on Greek religious associations.

As to the latter, I will analyze the use of *ekklesia* in Jewish context, where it designates the people of Israel, according to the LXX translation.

## 5.1 The Christian *ekklesia*

Throughout the New Testament, the word *ekklesia* is used to describe the Christian church of its time. This section will explore the way the word is used in the books of the New Testament, with a main focus on the letters of Paul, which are the closest source of information for the meaning of the word *ekklesia* in 1 Cor 14:19. I will provide some examples from NT in which the term *ekklesia* does not refer to the Christian church, but to the *ekklesia* as the assembly of the people of a certain administrative union. However, it is always clear whether the word is used in a Christian or ancient Greek context.

When compared to the commandments for the Jewish *ekklesia* of the Old Testament, it is noticeable yet not surprising that the universalist Paul never limits the access to the *ekklesia* to people of certain descent. He neither directly links the Christian *ekklesia* to the *ekklesia* of the LXX. The Pauline *ekklesia* is universal in providing access to anyone, but has some requirements of spiritual purity that will be discussed later.

The way Paul implements the *ekklesia* in his letters raises questions about the roots of the word *ekklesia*. Should it be sought in LXX or in Greek culture? 1 Cor. 14:19, the subject of this thesis, gives an example of Paul's concept of the *ekklesia*, when he emphasizes the role of the *nous* in the *ekklesia*. Mutual understandability, achieved by the usage of the *nous*, was a very important feature of the Pauline Christian *ekklesia*, but I will now use another example that shows Paul's emphasis on the community, a concept that is strongly connected to Paul's favouring of mutual understanding. The community forms the very essence of the *ekklesia*. The case that I will be using is the opening of Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians. The text of the opening is:

Παῦλος καὶ Σιλουανὸς καὶ Τιμόθεος τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ Θεσσαλονικέων ἐν θεῷ πατρὶ καὶ κυρίῳ Ἰησοῦ Χριστῷ, χάρις ὑμῖν καὶ εἰρήνη. (1 Thess 1:1)

(Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace. [NRSV])

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<sup>32</sup> K. L. Schmidt, 'ekklesia', Theologisches Wörterbuch, III, Ed G. Kittel (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer 1938) 487-536

1 Thessalonians is, according to scholarly consensus, the earliest letter of Paul that has survived to our time.<sup>33</sup> There is some discussion about the unity of the letter, but Paul is seen as the author of the letter by most scholars. He opens the letter with a benediction to the *ekklesia* of the Thessalonians. Important here is that Paul uses the adjective form of the name of the city. He does not write to the *ekklesia* in Thessalonica, but writes to the *ekklesia* of the Thessalonians. This way of addressing has its parallels in Greek literature, like in Plutarch's *Nicias*, where Plutarch writes about the *ekklesia* of all people of Syracuse (Ἐκκλησία (..)πανδήμου Συρακουσίων).<sup>34</sup> This way of addressing *ekklesia* was common throughout the history of Greek literature. Thucydides, Aristophanes and Xenophon, among others, address the *ekklesia* the same way.<sup>35</sup> The way Paul addresses his *ekklesia* is thus the same way as Greek authors address an *ekklesia*, but Paul adds a feature: The Christian *ekklesia* is, according to Paul in 1 Thes 1:2, an *ekklesia* in God, and can by that criterion be distinguished from the *ekklesia* in the Greek/Roman system of government.

The first verses of the first letter to the Thessalonians thus give a first clue for the understanding of the *ekklesia* in Pauline literature. Paul's usage of the adjective form of the city name shows that, in Paul's vision, the *ekklesia* is formed by its members. The *ekklesia* is a community, not an institute. It is a community that is built up by the love of believers for their fellow Christians, and is not an institute that has intrinsic rights. The community is the *ekklesia*. Paul's vision of the *ekklesia* as a community becomes clear in many places in his letters. One of these texts is the final sentence of the first letter to the Thessalonians, where Paul urges the recipient of the letter to read his letter in the *ekklesia*, enabling everybody to hear Paul's words first hand, not allowing any mediation between his words and the members of the Thessalonian *ekklesia*.

### 5.1.1 The *ekklesia* in the New Testament

When compared to the other books of the New Testament, we will see that the meaning of *ekklesia* in many texts is exactly similar to the way Paul uses the word, but another way of using the word *ekklesia* can be found in other books of the New Testament that cannot be found in the letters that are, according to scholarly consensus, written by Paul. Where *ekklesia* has only a local connotation in the works of Paul, Luke shows another concept of *ekklesia* in Acts:

Ἡ μὲν οὖν ἐκκλησία καθ' ὅλης τῆς Ἰουδαίας καὶ Γαλιλαίας καὶ Σαμαρείας εἶχεν εἰρήνην οἰκοδομουμένη (Acts 9:13)  
(Meanwhile the church throughout Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace [NRSV])

There is a unified *ekklesia* in this text, that is absent in the letters of Paul. If Luke saw the *ekklesia* solely as a local community, he would have used a plural form here. The fact that he uses a singular form demonstrates that Luke knew another concept of *ekklesia* that unites all Christians in one *ekklesia*. The translocal *ekklesia* of Acts is unique in its kind. There is only one, in contrast to the local *ekklesia*, of which there are many.

<sup>33</sup> Ascough, *Paul's Macedonian Associations*, 163.

<sup>34</sup> See Plutarch, *Nicias*, 28.1.

<sup>35</sup> See Thucydides, *Historiae*, book 5, chapter 77, section 1, Aristophanes, *Acharnenses*, line 169 and Xenophon, *Hellenica*, book 1, chapter 6, section 8.

Paul never depicts the *ekklesia* as a translocal institution. In all the letters that can be attributed to Paul with certainty, the *ekklesia* is only used as a word for the local *ekklesia*.

### 5.1.2 The Pauline *ekklesia*

Focusing on the local *ekklesia* in the letters of Paul, the first fact that catches the reader's attention is Paul's emphasis on the community, as became clear in my account of the benediction in the first letter to the Thessalonians, quoted above. Paul wants all members to be able to participate in the meetings of the *ekklesia* (1 Cor 14:26), but the Corinthian meeting appears to have been the opposite. An ecclesiastical strife arose over the gift of tongues. The members of the Corinthian *ekklesia* tried to excel above each other in their demonstration of spiritual gifts. As I have discussed above, the gift of *glossolalia* was the most favoured, and all members were eager to be able to speak in tongues. The result was that the meetings became very unorganized. Paul solves this problem by allowing only three persons to perform *glossolalia* at each meeting and requiring the explanation of the word that are spoken in tongues (1 Cor 14:27-28).

Paul shows his ideal *ekklesia* to the Corinthians, where the *nous*, the faculty of man that allows mutual understanding, reigns. Paul's remarks on the Eucharist should be interpreted in the same light as his remarks on *glossolalia*, and his requirement of unity of *pneuma* and *nous*. The Eucharist should sustain and build the community, as prophecy builds the community, while *glossolalia* doesn't. The Corinthian Eucharist, where the rich brought food for themselves but failed to supply the poor, lost its communal function. Paul corrects the way the Corinthians celebrate the Eucharist, and instructs the Corinthians to share what they brought in, because sharing gives the community a central place, above the individual. Paul further illustrates the core function of the community in the *ekklesia* in chapter 13 of the first letter to the Corinthians, where Paul calls the Corinthians to, above all other things, love each other.

The Eucharist thus has a double function in the First letter to the Corinthians, the first function is the community with other Christians. Christians are called to love each other, and bring bread for those who cannot afford to bring their own. The second focus is on the community with Christ when the wine and the bread are interpreted as symbolic representations of the blood and body of Christ. Both functions accumulate in the vision of the Christian congregation as the body of Christ, of which the individual members are the parts. Participating in the body of Christ at the Eucharist does not only mean the participation in the body of Christ that had died and was resurrected, but also participation in his allegorical body, the Christian *ekklesia*. The importance of the community in the letters of Paul thus is illustrated by the fact that the community itself is the body of Christ.

Due to the vision of the *ekklesia* as the body of Christ, purity of its members is required. Paul therefore puts an emphasis on the purity of the members of the church, in a manner that has similarities to Philo's interpretation of the purity of the Jewish *ekklesia*, that will be discussed later in this part of my thesis, when I will give an overview of the *ekklesia* in Judaism. When Paul addresses some incidents of adultery in the Corinthian congregation, he points at the purity of the *ekklesia*, that should not be fornicated on a bodily level. Through the Spirit of God, the purity of the *ekklesia* should be reached on a spiritual level.

οὐκ οἶδατε ὅτι ὁ κολλώμενος τῇ πόρνῃ ἐν σῶμά ἐστιν; ἔσονται γάρ, φησὶν, οἱ δύο εἰς σάρκα μίαν. ὁ δὲ κολλώμενος τῷ κυρίῳ ἐν πνεύμα ἐστιν. (1 Cor 6:16,17)

(Do you not know that whoever is united to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For it is said, "The two shall be one flesh." But anyone united to the Lord becomes one spirit with him. [NRSV])

In Paul's vision, the purity of the *ekklesia* depended on the purity of its members, because they all are part of the body of Christ. The verse quoted above again shows the importance of a good understanding of Pauline anthropology, for Paul freely plays with the opposite tensions of the human body and the divine inspired spirit in this verse.

It is the impurity of some members that leads to the rise of divisions in the Corinthian *ekklesia* when they do not share food that should be used for communal meals. (1 Cor 3:3)

By emphasizing the importance of purity and propagating abstinence from the material world, Paul clarifies that he wants the members of his churches to live a spiritual life. In another way to emphasize spiritual life, Paul uses political language, but applies it to a non-material context. The word *ekklesia* has a clear political connotation in the Greek language. Paul adopts this political connotation in his works, and uses more words with the same connotation. In Phillipians 3:20, it becomes clear what Paul's sense of political language in a Christian context is:

ἡμῶν γὰρ τὸ πολίτευμα ἐν οὐρανοῖς ὑπάρχει  
(But our citizenship is in heaven [NRSV])

The heavenly sense of Paul's political language is further demonstrated by the fact that the word *ekklesia* is followed by the words *tou theou* on many occasions. The political language that Horsley notes should certainly be understood with a heavenly connotation, and not, as Horsley does, as utterance of political aspiration in the Greek society.<sup>36</sup> Paul does not name the meetings of early Christians an *ekklesia* in competition with secular society, as Horsley argues, but adopts the name *ekklesia* to teach his people how the Kingdom of God works: as a community of believers. The Kingdom of God (*basileia tou theou*), a concept at the core of Pauline theology, is an example of another Pauline concepts that borrows political language that is used in an educational manner: The Christian church is an assembly of believers in a kingdom in which God is the King. The Pauline *ekklesia* may thus well be seen as the assembly of the people of the kingdom of God. Therefore the political connotation of the *ekklesia* is not accidental, but has an important function in the structure of the Pauline theology of the Christian congregation, but it should not be understood as utterance of earthly political aspirations.

The Christian *ekklesia* offers an alternative for society. It functions in the domain between private and public life and offers an alternative for these domains, emphasizing that reward should not be sought on earth, but in heaven.

### 5.1.3 Initiation in the Christian *ekklesia*

From the very beginnings of Christian churches initiation of new members has been a central issue. Baptism has a key role theology of Paul.<sup>37</sup> In the early Church, initiation was performed through full immersion of the new member in water and, in this sense, becoming christian was not only a spiritual experience, but had also a public dimension that found expression by means of a public ritual in the *ekklesia*.<sup>38</sup> In Pauline participation theology, baptism was the

<sup>36</sup> Horsley, *Paul and Empire: Religion and Power in Roman Imperial Society*, 209.

<sup>37</sup> Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle*, 444.

<sup>38</sup> Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle*, 447.

imitation of the death and resurrection of Christ. The immersion in water symbolized participation in the death of Christ, while rising up from the water symbolized the participation in his resurrection. The new member could thus participate in the eternity of Christ (Rom 6:3-5). The immersion in water further symbolized the purity of the new member by its similarity to a bath, and can be understood as a washing of sins.

#### 5.1.4 The meeting of the *ekklesia*

The most important features of the *ekklesia* have been discussed so far. The communal meal and the performing of spiritual gifts were elements that returned in every meeting of the community. There is some evidence that hymns were sung during the meetings, although the base of evidence is small. The texts that serve as a basis, Col 3:16 and Eph. 5:19, seem to handle daily devotion rather than the meetings of the *ekklesia*. It may be that this form of daily devotion was taken to the *ekklesia*, because daily devotion and spirituality in the community may probably have been strongly connected.

The number of participants in a typical Christian *ekklesia* would have been limited by the space in which the meeting took place. Most early Christian churches gathered in the house of one of its members. In a later stadium, special houses were used only for the case of the meeting of the Christian *ekklesia*. Unfortunately, none of these houses in which the earliest Christian churches gathered have been preserved or are recognizable as such, because the house-church did not differ from normal houses, and therefore could not be distinguished by archeologists. The earliest known Christian house-church that has survived can be found in Dura-Europos, Syria. This house was built in 231 AD, and is recognizable as a church by its iconography.<sup>39</sup> Some parts from the letters of Paul prove that ordinary houses were used by the *ekklesia*, like 1 Cor 16:19:

ἀσπάζεται ὑμᾶς ἐν κυρίῳ πολλὰ Ἀκύλας καὶ Πρίσκα σὺν τῇ κατ' οἶκον αὐτῶν ἐκκλησίᾳ.

(Aquila and Prisca, together with the church in their house, greet you warmly in the Lord. [NRSV])

The discovery of the church in Dura-Europos proves that Christians still gathered in houses a few centuries thereafter. It is therefore very probable that Christians came together in ordinary houses until Christianity went mainstream during the reign of Constantine.

The number of participants in a meeting of the *ekklesia* would have been the number that maximally could gather in a house, about 20 to 40 persons. This relatively small number of participants is a reason for many scholars to defend that the Christian church was in fact a voluntary association, because that number is similar to the number of attendants of an average voluntary association. These voluntary associations are the first source of comparison to the Christian *ekklesia* that will be discussed in the next section of my thesis.

#### 5.1.5 The ideal Pauline *ekklesia*: key elements

The overview of the Christian *ekklesia* in its Pauline and non-Pauline variation above clarified the key elements of the Christian *ekklesia*. These elements should be kept in mind in the next part of my thesis, when the early Christian *ekklesia* will be compared to voluntary

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<sup>39</sup> G. F. Snyder, *Ante Pacem: Archaeological Evidence of Church Life Before Constantine* (Macon: Mercer University Press 2003) 128.



associations, the Greek *ekklesia* and the *ekklesia* in Judaism. The first element is the core of the *ekklesia*: the community. The core function of the community leads to several other key elements: the communal meal and the call for mutual understandability. Further key elements are the purity of the *ekklesia* as the body of Christ, description in political language to mark the offering of an alternative for material society, and the small scale due to the limited space in the houses where the meetings of the *ekklesia* took place and also due to the limited number of maximal participants of the communal meal. The initiation of new members by full immersion in water and the gifts of the spirit further completes the key elements of the Christian *ekklesia* that I have found.

## 5.2 Voluntary associations in the Greco-Roman world

The Romans brought Greek religion to all corners of their empire. While the western part of the empire had a Roman culture under a heavy Greek influence, the culture in the eastern part was Greek, distributed by the Romans to the countries they conquered in the eastern part of the Mediterranean area. During the reign of the Romans, Greek culture was dominant in Syria, Palestine and Egypt. The Roman culture in the west incorporated many Greek elements, and people lived according to similar social concepts throughout the empire. Private and public spheres were strongly separated in daily life. Women and slaves were responsible for the household, while public space was reserved for men. The public life of the men took the opportunities that were given by the state, and was limited by its ruling.

The state offered protection and required submission. No one could isolate himself from the state, while citizens had the right to invoke the emperor when injustice was done to them, like Paul did according to Acts 25 when he believed to be sentenced unjustly.

The need for some kind of social structure between the domains of the state and the family was quite natural in a society like the Greek/Roman. This structure was offered by what is known in modern literature as 'voluntary associations'. Voluntary associations were ubiquitous in the Roman Empire during the start of the Christian era. Voluntary associations offered solutions and opportunities where the state would not, or the family could not contribute, for example in the case of funerals, which were often organized by associations that were established for that reason by its members.<sup>40</sup> Other associations that were not merely established to take care of the funerals and funerary rituals, but also took care of funerals of its members as part of many other social activities.<sup>41</sup>

The system of patronage gave a structure to voluntary associations that was profitable for all parties involved. The rich patron donated some money that enabled the association to function well, while the poorer members of the association offered the patron support when it was needed, for instance in political affairs.<sup>42</sup> This should not lead to the assumption that voluntary associations were made up of members of the same social class. Members of different social classes could be found within the same association.<sup>43</sup> The problems that occurred due social inequality within associations are an important theme in writings about the communal meal, comparable to the lack of sharing of food in the Corinthian *ekklesia*.

Voluntary associations were the cement of ancient Greek civilization. They structured daily life in the Roman Empire. The funerary associations that I named before were not the only type of voluntary associations. Other forms of association in Greek/Roman culture were

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<sup>40</sup>Ascough, *Paul's Macedonian Associations*, 28-42.

<sup>41</sup>Ascough, *Paul's Macedonian Associations*, 21.

<sup>42</sup>Ascough, *Paul's Macedonian Associations*, 62.

<sup>43</sup>Ascough, *Paul's Macedonian Associations*, 59

professional associations, assembling members with the same profession, similar to the guilds of the middle ages. Another type of association that is of particular interest for this thesis are religious associations. The main goal of these associations was not only to unite the members and to embed them in society, but also to worship a certain God, to which the association was dedicated.

The meetings of religious associations were in most cases held in the temple of the God that was worshipped. An offering to the patron God was an important part of the meeting of the association.<sup>44</sup>

Rich patrons could sustain an association dedicated to a patron God, or support a professional association or a funerary association, but it occurred more than incidentally that a rich patron established a voluntary association dedicated to himself. The main goal of these associations was to create a group of supporters for the patron, that he 'bought' by giving money, enjoyment and food to the members. The members took profit of the wealth of the patron when rich meals were held that could not have been held if the members had to pay for it themselves.

The key role of voluntary associations was not in all cases beneficial for the state. As an effect of their important position in society, uproar could be caused by voluntary associations. These uproars were sometimes consciously orchestrated by the leaders of some associations. When Roman society became more instable from time to time, it was therefore inevitable for some emperors to forbid some voluntary associations. The well known *Lex Julia* of Julius Caesar only allowed the most ancient associations to continue their activities.<sup>45</sup> Caesar's opponents disapproved the populism of Caesar. The *Lex Julia* was a way for Caesar to stop the association that was established against him by his opponents. In the age of the emperors, association became an instrument in the hands of the powerful. Emperor Caligula established some associations for his own benefit and in his own honour, but as soon as Caligula was succeeded by Claudius, Claudius disestablished the associations of Caligula.<sup>46</sup>

Religion played an important role not only in those associations that were specifically established to honour a certain God. In point of fact, religion was ubiquitous in Greek/Roman culture, and therefore was present in any kind of association as well. Professional associations were not completely secular, but often had a patron God that was worshipped by all members, although the worshipping of the patron God was not the main reason for the existence of the association, as was the case with religious associations.<sup>47</sup>

While there were some differences in the character of Greek/Roman voluntary associations, the form of the meetings and organization of the associations was similar throughout the empire. An important feature of the meetings of all associations was the communal meal. The meal could last several hours, and the participants were often lying on benches placed against the walls of the room.<sup>48</sup> A symposium was held after the meal. A typical Greek/Roman symposium consisted of a mix of entertainment and philosophical discussion. The topic of the discussion was determined by the *symposiarch*, the leader of the symposium that could be appointed before every meal. Further entertainment was provided by one or more musicians or dancers.

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<sup>44</sup> More about the temple meal: Smith, *From Symposium to Eucharist*, 67-86.

<sup>45</sup> W. Cotter, 'The Collegia and Roman Law', *Voluntary Associations in the Graeco-Roman World*, Eds: Kloppenborg, J.S. and Wilson, S.G. (London: Routledge 1996) 77.

<sup>46</sup> Cotter, 'The Collegia and Roman Law', 80.

<sup>47</sup> I. Dittmann-Schöne, 'Götterverehrung bei den Berufsvereinen in kaiserzeitlichen Kleinasien', *Religiöse Vereine in der Römischen Antike*, Eds: U. Egelhaaf-Gaiser and A. Schäfer (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2002) 81-95.

<sup>48</sup> Smith, *From Symposium to Eucharist*, 20.

Now that the communal meal is brought to attention in my description of voluntary association, I must add some nuances to prevent misunderstanding of the role of the community meal in Greek/Roman culture, because in fact, the communal meal did not only have a key role in voluntary associations, but was an important feature of the society itself. Like in associations, the everyday meal with friends could last for hours.<sup>49</sup> Guests were invited to join the meal by the host who became the *symposiarch* after the meal was finished. The communal meal was much more important and was given much more attention than in our days. This knowledge should be taken into account when I discuss the comparison with Christian meal in light of the question whether or to what extent the Christian *ekklesia* was a voluntary association.

### 5.2.1 Religious associations

The topic of this thesis leaves no space for a further investigation of the different types of associations. I will focus on examples of religious voluntary associations that existed in the same time as the Christian church, namely the cult of Mithras and the cult of Isis and Sarapis. These cults will prove to be a useful source of comparison below. In both cults, foreign Gods were imported to Greece. Mithras was a Persian God, Isis and Sarapis were Egyptian Gods. They were imported in the Greek religion in times of expanding cosmopolitanism. Due to the polytheistic system of the Greek culture, those Gods were more or less incorporated in the Greek religious system. Plutarch, as a Greek priest, can thus devote a complete treatise on the Egyptian Gods Isis and Osiris, in which he gives a first glimpse of the comparability of the religious beliefs in the cults of Isis and Sarapis (a Greek adaptation of Osiris) and Christianity.

τὴν δ' ἐπὶ τοῦ πνεύματος οἱ μὲν Ὅσιριν, οἱ δὲ Σάραπιν (*De Iside et Osiride* 375E)  
(And the power assigned to the wind some call Osiris and others Serapis; [Loeb])

Incidentally, Plutarch's text shows that the notion of *pneuma* was a popular one in the Greek religious belief. This, together with other parallels between Early Christianity and the Cult of Isis and Sarapis that will be discussed in the following section, will show that the early Christian church was not a religious movement on a cultural island, but fitted in the religious system as it functioned in Greece in the first century AD.

Another example of a cult that stood in the cultural and religious environment of early Christianity is the cult of Mithras. Much is unknown about the habits of the Mithraic cults, because it was a mystery religion, that allowed only full knowledge of the meaning of its symbols to insiders, causing that much information about habits, symbols and beliefs of the Mithras cults has passed away with its members. Some information is known through the accounts of outsiders and symbols found by archeologists. It is known that the Mithras cult frequently held communal meals with its members, as we have seen to be usual for a voluntary association. Being a religious association, the meal had not only a function of supplying food to the participants, but also had a religious meaning. The communal meal functions as an imitation of the mythical event of Mithras, who ate with the highest God, the unconquerable sun, Sol Invictus. This mythical meal took place after Mithras killed the bull, and made the earth fruitful by spilling the bull's blood on the surface of the earth.

Another feature of other religious associations that can be found in the cult of Mithras as well was the initiation of new members. Other associations sharing the same practice

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<sup>49</sup> Smith, *From Symposium to Eucharist*, 20.

include the cult of Isis and Sarapis, among others.<sup>50</sup> Because it was a mystery religion, the Mithras cult left few information about the exact procedure of initiation. There are no written sources that offer an account of Mithraic initiation. Paintings in the rooms where the members of the Mithras cults met, the Mithraea, are the only source left, and they offer some material that is of particular interest for later comparison with Christianity. The study of iconography of the Mithraea has suggested seven levels of initiation in the cult of Mithras.<sup>51</sup> Water played an important role in the ritual that marked one of the seven stages of initiation. In this ritual, the wonder of the water, a Mithraic myth, was imitated. I refer to Pearson for more background of Mithraic initiation.<sup>52</sup>

Of main interest for the subject of this thesis is that a ritual involving water was held in the Mithras cult as part of the initiation of new members. Another example of water taking part in a ritual of initiation can be found in the cult of Isis and Sarapis, although this ritual, a bath that prospective members took before the actual initiation began, is part of an ongoing discussion among scholars. The bath was taken in the public baths of the town, in the presence of the other members of the cult. After the bath, all went to the temple of the cult. The subject of discussion is whether the bath was part of the initiation ceremony or not. Several arguments can be found for and against unity of the bath and the rest of the initiation.

According to Pearson, the bath is part of the initiation. She finds her arguments in the literal union of the events in the public bath and in the temple in story of Lucius of Maudaros, who was initiated in the cult.<sup>53</sup> Dunn argues that the place where the events took part set bath and initiation apart.<sup>54</sup> I will not judge here whether Person or Dunn is right. If the bath was no part of actual initiation, it was at least a pre-initiation that had some meaning, because the members of the cult were all present at the bath. A bath, involving water in initiation like in the cult of Mithras, was thus an event that was part of initiation (or preceded it) in the cult of Isis and Sarapis as well.

I now have given two features of religious voluntary associations. The first feature, the meal, is shared by all associations, and played a key role in Greek/Roman society, also outside associations. The second feature, initiation, is not so common in all associations, but is merely a marker of religious associations. The presence of these features shows that voluntary associations shared the same structure; the communal meal was held in all variations of associations, while initiations were a requirement for membership of many religious associations. These structures limited the numbers of members of voluntary associations. An exact maximum of members cannot be found, but the key role of the communal meal made that the number of members was limited to the number that reasonably could partake in a communal meal. There are multiple examples that illustrate this natural maximum of members. Mithras cults used to split up when too many members joined the association. A new Mithraeum of the same size of the old one was built, and the members of the cult divided over the two Mithraea.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> B.W.R Pearson, 'Baptism and Initiation in the Cult of Isis and Sarapis', in 'Baptism, the New Testament and the Church', in eds. S.E. Porter, A.R. Cross (eds.), *Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series*, 171 (1999) 46-51.

<sup>51</sup> H-J. Klauck, B. McNeil, *The Religious Context of Early Christianity: A Guide to Graeco-Roman Religions* (London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2000) 142.

<sup>52</sup> R. Beck, 'Ritual, Doctrin, Myth and Initiation in the Mysteries of Mithras: New Evidence from a Cult Vessel', Beck on Mithraism: Collected Works With New Essays, (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing 2003).62.

<sup>53</sup> Pearson, 'Baptism and Initiation in the Cult of Isis and Sarapis', 49 ev.

<sup>54</sup> Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle*, Grand Rapids, 1998, 446

<sup>55</sup> Beck, 'Ritual, Doctrin, Myth and Initiation in the Mysteries of Mithras', 59.

Mithraea are found throughout the whole Roman empire, all of more or less the same size, showing that Mithras cult favored splitting up over expansion of an association when too many joined the same association. A good example of the division of the cult can be found in the harbor city of Rome, Ostia, where multiple Mithraea can be found next to each other. Many associations had the same maximum size as the Mithras cults.

Ascough gives an overview of the number of members of a voluntary association. He finds few associations larger than 100 members, and also few smaller than 10 members.<sup>56</sup> An example of an association of 1200 members, also found by Ascough, must be seen as an deviation that does not undermine the general conclusion that an association had a very limited number of members, merely due to the communal meal that was held at every meeting of the association.

### 5.2.2 Key elements and comparison with early church

The survey of voluntary associations, with a focus on religious associations, brought several key elements of voluntary associations to attention that are similar to some elements of the early churches. The communal meal, that marked the core function of the community in the Christian *ekklesia*, was held in the early church and in all associations. The communal meal made that the early Christian churches shared some other elements with voluntary associations that are connected to the communal meal. The limited number of participants of a meeting is the first of them, but also the problems that arose are similar.

Paul disapproves the inequality of members during the meal, when the rich had more than the poor, while he propagates sharing of food and equality. The same problems arose in many voluntary associations, as Smith shows.<sup>57</sup> The meal, together with the symposium, allowed an informal meeting that bridged public and private life. However, communal meals were not only held in associations, but were also important in Greek/Roman culture outside associations. It was, for example, common usage of the philosophers to eat together and discuss at the symposium afterwards.<sup>58</sup> The fact that the early church held a communal meal can thus not be used as a convincing argument that early churches were perceived as voluntary association by its members and by outsiders.

Given the important social function of the meal in ancient Greek/Roman society, it would in fact be surprising if a communal meal was not held in the new Christian communities that arose in cities across the eastern part of the Roman Empire. When focusing on religious associations that are closer to early Christianity on the spectrum of voluntary associations, some striking similarities appear, however. In both the Mithras cult and early Christian churches, a meal was held that had a deeper theological meaning, where the bread and the wine that were used symbolized a myth that was part of the sacred stories of the community. Early Christianity shares another important feature with the cult of Mithras. Both Mithras associations and early Christianity initiated new members. In Christianity and in the Mithras associations, as well as in the cults of Isis and Sarapis, the initiation ritual involved using water that was poured over the initiate (Mithras), or in which he was fully immersed (Christianity and Isis and Sarapis). Besides, we should not forget the fact that, according to Plutarch, in the cult of Isis and Osiris, the Gods were connected with the *pneuma*, and that this conception was shared by many. These elements that early Christianity shared with voluntary associations should be taken into account in the conclusions of this thesis. The comparison

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<sup>56</sup> Ascough, *Paul's Macedonian Associations*, 47

<sup>57</sup> Smith, *From Symposium to Eucharist*, 11-13.

<sup>58</sup> Smith, *From Symposium to Eucharist*, 47-65

with voluntary associations does not lead to a complete and satisfying solution that explains the place of Christian churches in Greek/Roman society and the way the members of the first *ekklesiai* perceived the organization of which they were members. To begin with, the term that designates the church, *ekklesia*, is never used in the context of voluntary associations. An investigation of the Greek and Jewish *ekklesia* is therefore necessary. Let us first take a look at the Greek *ekklesia*.

### 5.3 The Greek *ekklesia*

In the previous paragraphs, I found similarities of the earliest churches and the Christian *ekklesia*, but the name of the earliest churches, *ekklesia*, was left out of scope. The name was used for the earliest churches in the New Testament, but was also used as a name for popular assemblies throughout Greek history. I will compare the Christian *ekklesiai* to the Greek assemblies with the same name. It is obvious that concepts that use the same name are not always the same. It is necessary to find valid arguments that Paul did use the name *ekklesia* for his churches in reference to the secular Greek *ekklesia*. It is good to know that the similarity of the secular and the Christian *ekklesia* was noticed already in the third century A.D, less than two hundred years after the Pauline letter were written, by the church father Origen, who leaves no doubt in the way he parallels both *ekklesiai*.

Καὶ ἐὰν εὐγνώμων ᾖ ὁ τοῦτου ἀκούων καὶ φιλαλήθως ἐξετάζη τὰ πράγματα, θαυμάσεται τὸν καὶ βουλευσάμενον καὶ ἀνύσαι δυνηθέντα πανταχοῦ συστήσασθαι ἐκκλησίας τοῦ θεοῦ, παροικούσας ἐκκλησίας τῶν καθ' ἐκάστην πόλιν δήμων. Οὕτω δὲ καὶ βουλήν ἐκκλησίας θεοῦ βουλήν τῇ καθ' ἐκάστην πόλιν συνεξετάζων εὖροις ἄν, <ὅτι> τινὲς μὲν τῆς ἐκκλησίας βουλευταὶ ἄξιοί εἰσιν, εἴ τις ἐστὶν ἐν τῷ παντὶ πόλις τοῦ θεοῦ,

(If the man who hears this has an open mind, and examines the facts with a desire to find out the truth, he will be amazed at the one who both planned and had the power to carry into effect the establishment of the Churches of God in all places, living beside the assemblies of the people of each city. And so also, if you compare the council of the Church of God with the council in each city, you will find that some councilors of the Church are worthy to hold office in a city which is God's (...) (Chadwick))<sup>59</sup>

Origen notes a similarity of the early Christian *ekklesia* and the Greek *ekklesiai*. It is this similarity that will be under closer investigation the following paragraph. To do so, I will first give an overview of the Greek *ekklesia*, in order to provide a source of comparison.

The Greek *ekklesia* has a rich history, dating back to the seventh century BCE, although it remains unknown to what extent the accounts of the earliest *ekklesiai* are trustworthy or just a later projection of fifth century reality by writers of that time. In this paragraph, I will analyze the Greek *ekklesia*. Some attention will be given to the ancient *ekklesia* of the Greek city state, but for later comparison with the Pauline *ekklesia*, the *ekklesia* of the time when the letter of Paul to the Corinthian was written is of greater importance.

In the time of Jesus and shortly thereafter, the name *ekklesia* was used as a name for the assembly of the people of a certain administrative unity. The assemblies that democratically administered a Greek city were dismantled, and the Greek cities were now part of the Roman empire. The cities were administered from Rome, with regional administrations

<sup>59</sup> H. Chadwick, *Origen: Contra Celsum* (Cambridge:Cambridge University Press 1980). 147-148

between Rome and the administration of the Greek city. However, the *ekklesia* was still called together, and was typical for Greek society. A good Latin translation for the word *ekklesia* could not always be given, witness the Letter to the Emperor Trajan by Pliny the Younger, who uses the Greek terms *bule et ecclesia*, which were both held after some issues in Bythinia.<sup>60</sup>

Etymologically, *ekklesia* can be led back to *kaleo*, meaning 'to call' and *ek*, meaning 'out'.<sup>61</sup> The literal meaning 'calling out' should be interpreted in the light of the structure of Greek society; people were called out of the private hemisphere, to join the public assembly. In the distinction of private and public, the Greek *ekklesia* should be placed entirely on the public side of life.

Many texts can be found in which an account of a Greek *ekklesia* is given, but for a later comparison of the Christian *ekklesia* with the administrative *ekklesia* in the same time, I will refer back to the New Testament itself, where an account is given of a non-Christian *ekklesia* in the city of Ephesus.

### 5.3.1 The Greek *ekklesia* in Acts 19

Acts 19:23-40 describes how uproar arises in Ephesus after Paul wanted to spread Christianity in the city. There are many issues with the trustworthiness of Acts, with which I will not be dealing here. I'm not concerned whether or not the Greek *ekklesia* as described in Acts 19 actually took place or not. Maybe it didn't. That does not make the story useless, as it reflects the way an *ekklesia* was perceived by Luke, whether the actual *ekklesia* described took place or not. In the next sections I will compare Luke's account to that of modern scholars. It will then become clear that although the specific *ekklesia* described might not have taken place, the way that Luke depicts a Greek *ekklesia* is true to the reality of the first century AD. Acts 19 can therefore be used as a story that illustrates the way the *ekklesia* worked in the first century AD, and has no other function than that in this thesis.

The root of the uproar in Ephesus was mainly economical, although many citizens were uncomfortable with the Christian faith. The local silversmith Demetrius feared Paul's aversion against silver sculptures of the Greek Gods. When too many people would convert to Christianity, Demetrius would lose his business. Demetrius therefore called out an spontaneous *ekklesia* in the theatre of the city, and assembled masses that defended the Greek Gods. A city counselor (a *grammateus* in Greek), spoke to the masses and referred them to the structure that the Roman state offered them to utter their objections against Paul. They could present their objections to the leader of the province, the proconsul. A legitimate *ekklesia* could only be called out after the correct procedure was followed, so the *grammateus* dissolved the *ekklesia* thereafter. Note that both the spontaneous illegitimate and organized legitimate gathering of people are named *ekklesia*. The *ekklesia* thus has many forms; different events are both described as an *ekklesia* by Luke. The common feature is that the *ekklesia* was a public event, where people were discussing certain issues. The public element is the core of the large semantic field of the *ekklesia*. This short investigation of the *ekklesia* is sufficient to conclude that the semantic field is large and the core is clear: The Greek *ekklesia* was a public event where political issues were discussed. Both the core and the size of the semantic field will appear to be useful later when I compare the Greek *ekklesia* to the Christian *ekklesia* as described by Paul.

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<sup>60</sup> See C. Plinius Caecilius Secundus, *Epistulae*, 10.111

<sup>61</sup> Pierre Chantraine, 'ekklesia', *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue grecque*, II, (Paris: Klincksieck 1970).

### 5.3.2 The *ekklesia* after Roman conquest

The *ekklesia* as described in Acts 19 represents the role of the *ekklesia* in the first century AD. The ancient *ekklesia*, that administered the city state, changed dramatically, but was far from obsolete. When the Romans conquered Greece in the second and the first century BC, they implemented Greece in the administrative systems of the Roman state. The Romans adopted the dualist administration of Greece that had emerged when Greece was no longer administered by city governments, but by larger administrative unions. The people were allowed some power in the *ekklesia*, but the *ekklesia* functioned next to the government, led by a few powerful men, with strong ties to the army. The *ekklesia* had no power to stop the rulers, but the rulers had little power in the *ekklesia*.

The larger administrative unions emerged during Macedonian rule in the times of Alexander the Great. The dramatic change in the nature and function of the *ekklesia* thus cannot be accredited to the Romans. The process took place before the Romans came, and after the Romans took victory in the fourth Macedonian war, they kept the administrative system intact.

Finley argues that the Romans implemented the *ekklesia* in their administration, and gave the citizens of Greece a voice in the administration of the region of the Roman Empire in which they lived.<sup>62</sup> The conclusions of Dmitriev are comparable. According to Dmitriev, the Romans gave a small amount of power to the assembly of all citizens of a certain administrative area, but only allowed elected representatives of the people to bring new proposals to the *ekklesia*.<sup>63</sup> This structure limited the power of the citizens in the *ekklesia*, but their right to elect those that were allowed to bring new proposals to the *ekklesia* gave them no less power than citizens in many modern democracies.

Some members of the city government had influence in the *ekklesia*, but their number was limited in all cities and provinces where assemblies were held.<sup>64</sup> They had the power to assemble and disassemble the *ekklesia*, but their influence in the actual *ekklesia* was minimal.

Compare Dmitriev's account of the *ekklesia*, as summarized above, to the account Luke offers in Acts 19. The spontaneous *ekklesia* is ended by a member of the city government. He can do so, because only some city leaders, as Dmitriev says, have the right to assemble a legitimate *ekklesia*. The magistrate disassembles the *ekklesia*, and refers to the structure that Roman administration gave for conflicts among the people. The initiators of the uproar have to go to the proconsul first, and only thereafter a legitimate *ekklesia* can be assembled, but only with approval of the city government. It appears thus that Luke's account of the *ekklesia* in Ephesus is true to the way the *ekklesia* functioned in the first century AD, although it remains unknown whether the specific *ekklesia* described by Luke actually took place.

Plutarch shows that, despite the reforms of state that the Romans brought in Greece, the *ekklesia* was perceived as the heir of the ancient Greek *ekklesia*. When he discusses the decline in population in Greece as the reason for the appointment of just one priestess at the oracle of Delphi instead of multiple, he uses the *ekklesia* to show that the decline in population also has consequences there:

ὥσπερ οὖν ἐννέα κήρυξιν ὁ Ἀγαμέμνων ἐχρήτο καὶ μόλις κατεῖχε τὴν ἐκκλησίαν διὰ πλῆθος, ἐνταῦθα δ' ὄψεσθε μεθ' ἡμέρας ὀλίγας ἐν τῷ θεάτρῳ μίαν φωνὴν ἐξικνουμένην εἰς πάντα (*De defectu oraculorum*, 414C)

<sup>62</sup> M.I. Finley, *Studies in Ancient Society* (London: Routledge 1974) 169.

<sup>63</sup> S. Dmitriev, *City Government in Hellenistic and Roman Asia Minor* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2005) 330.

<sup>64</sup> Dmitriev, *City Government in Hellenistic and Roman Asia Minor*, 297.



(Agamemnon, for example, used nine heralds and, even so, had difficulty in keeping the assembly in order because of the vast numbers; but here in Delphi, a few days hence, in the theatre you will see that one voice reaches all. [Loeb])

In *de defectu*, much quoted in the previous part of my thesis, Plutarch puts the epic *ekklesia* in the Illias of Homer at par with the *ekklesia* in Delphi, that was held just a few day before he wrote his words. We can thus see, that all the differences between the *ekklesia* in the fifth century BC and the *ekklesia* in the first century AD that are found by many scholars today, and could not have been ignored by Plutarch and his contemporaries, do not lead Plutarch to a strong separation of the *ekklesia* of different ages. In the Greek mind of the first century AD, the *ekklesia* at the theatre, where some kind of democratic assembly took place, had the same genes as the *ekklesia* of the Greek city states.

The development of the *ekklesia* as the sole entity ruling Greek city to an element of a complex administration in Roman times makes that the word *ekklesia* covers a large semantic field. The text of Plutarch, quoted above, is evidence against those who deny the size and the union of the semantic field. The broad semantic field of *ekklesia* makes that the context of the word is crucial for its meaning, because a Greek *ekklesia* could vary in its appearances.

Both the illegitimate spontaneous *ekklesia* and the legitimate *ekklesia* were limited by the location at which they took place. In the case of Acts 19, the spontaneous *ekklesia* of the citizens is limited by the size of the theatre of the town. Ephesus was a large city in Greek perception, at the size of 180,000 inhabitants.<sup>65</sup> The theatre of a city of that size would have given place to a considerable amount of people, so the Ephesian *ekklesia* could possibly have assembled hundreds or thousands of people. The *ekklesia* could thus vary in size like Plutarch demonstrates when he compares the sizes of the Homeric *ekklesia* with the *ekklesia* in Delphi in his times; despite the difference in size, Plutarch sees both examples as true to the concept of the *ekklesia*.

Given the possible size of an ancient Greek *ekklesia* it will be no surprise that a communal meal was not part of the meeting of the *ekklesia*. The communal meal was a feature of private life and of the meetings of the voluntary associations that filled the gap between private and public, but not of public life of which the *ekklesia* was part. While it was more usual that communal meals were held by voluntary associations, the *ekklesia* was meant for discussion about political issues with the inhabitants of the city or province.

### 5.3.3 Rhetoric in the Greek *ekklesia*

Of the highest importance, before and after the Roman conquest of Greece, was the art of rhetoric. An indication of the importance given to rhetoric in the *ekklesia* can be found in Pseudo-Plutarch's *Vitae decem oratorum*, in which the author discusses the lives of ten professional rhetors. When an older rhetor fails to perform well due to gaps in his memory, it becomes clear how important the gift of speech was. The rhetor falls in a severe state of melancholy after his failure in the *ekklesia*. (*Vitae decem oratorum*, 845A/B). The importance of using the *nous* to perform the art of rhetoric is recognized by Philo, who asserts that it is the *nous* that is active when the art of rhetoric is used and trained:

ῥητορικὴ δὲ καὶ τὸν νοῦν πρὸς θεωρίαν ἀκονησαμένη καὶ πρὸς ἐρμηνείαν γυμνάσασα τὸν λόγον καὶ συγκροτήσασα λογικὸν ὄντως ἀποδείξει τὸν ἄνθρωπον ἐπιμεληθεῖσα

<sup>65</sup> <http://www.christian-thinktank.com/urbxctt.html>, visited on January 10th 2008.

τοῦ ἰδίου καὶ ἐξαιρέτου, ὃ μηδενὶ τῶν ἄλλων ζώων ἢ φύσις δεδώρηται. (*De congressu eruditionis gratia* 17)

(And rhetoric, having sharpened the mind for contemplation in general, and having exercised and trained the faculties of speech in interpretations and explanations, will make man really rational, taking care of that peculiar and especial duty which nature has bestowed upon it, but upon no other animal whatever [Yonge])

The strong connection of the gift of speech, the *nous* and the *ekklesia* brings me to the introduction of the philosophers and sophists in the next paragraph. Those two groups were both interested in rhetoric and active in the *ekklesia*, and consequently deserve further study in this thesis. Philosophers and sophists took key positions in Greek/Roman society. Both groups sought to gain proficiency in the art of rhetoric, but they took a different approach. Philosophers emphasized the content of the conversation or the speech, while sophists emphasized the art of rhetoric itself, and thought the content to be secondary. Ever since the days of Plato, who articulated a severe critique on the sophists, there was a lasting state of tension between sophists and philosophers. The critique of the philosophers on the intensions of the sophists was still heard in the first century AD.

### 5.3.4 The sophists

The sophists, discussing merely for the sake of rhetoric with little interest in the actual topic of the discussion showed how they mastered the laws of rhetoric in discussions with each other. Multiple historians write about the rhetorical competition that emerged out of the desire for discussion of the sophists.<sup>66</sup> Among them is Plutarch, who knew of this kind of discussions in his own environment. It is striking to see that Plutarch connects this kind of discussion to the *ekklesia* in *De tuenda sanitate praecepta*, 131A, as quoted by Van Kooten.<sup>67</sup> Plutarch describes the strife of the sophists as an ‘ecclesiastical strife’ (ἀγῶνας ἐκκλησιαστικοῦς). It is not inconceivable for us how a discussion in the *ekklesia* could turn into a heavy strife. When topics of high interest are at stake, strife becomes heavier from time to time. The sophist however, took these kind of strifes out of the *ekklesia*. The sophists were eager to demonstrate how they excelled above the rhetorical qualities of their opponents, and Plutarch therefore called their strife ecclesiastical, showing to be familiar with the connection of the *ekklesia* and rhetorical excellence. According to Plutarch, the situations surrounding the rhetorical showoffs of the sophists got out of hand occasionally. He suggests the staging of some music to get the attention of the sophist, would cool them down.

Sophism revived in the first century AD. Even more than the sophists of the first wave of sophism in the days of Plato, the new sophists put their full attention on the art of rhetoric. The connection of sophism and rhetoric in the mind of the Greek in the first century AD was so strong that Finley suggests that someone who was named a rhetor was considered to be a sophist as well, and vice versa. Unfortunately, Finley leaves the philosophers out of his account, neglecting that rhetoric was an important part of their qualities as well. I will discuss their relation to rhetoric in the next section of my thesis.

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<sup>66</sup> G.H. van Kooten, ‘Rhetorical Competition at Corinth’, *Cults, Creeds and Contests in the Post-Classical City Workshop* (London: Institute of Classical Studies 2006) 2.

<sup>67</sup> G.H. van Kooten, ‘Rhetorical Competition at Corinth’, 2.

### 5.3.5 The philosophers

Stoics and Epicureans studied rhetoric to be able to spread their views in discussions with other parties. A good example of a philosopher with high rhetorical qualities in the first century is Dio Chrysostomos. His excellence in rhetoric is demonstrated by his name (“Dio with the golden tongue”), and described by Philostratus, who places Dio Chrysostomos in the category of philosophers who seem to be, but were not, sophists.<sup>68</sup> According to Vanderspoel, Dio Chrysostomos is categorized as such due to his rhetorical excellence. Rhetoric thus was not only mastered by sophists, but also philosophers, although their approach was different. The philosophical approach of rhetoric can be illustrated by quoting Strabo, a Stoic of the first century AD. He takes an instrumental approach to rhetoric. He connects rhetoric to “wisdom applied to discourse” in his famous *Geographia*, when he discusses the works of Homer:

Ἡ δὲ ῥητορικὴ φρόνησις ἐστὶ δῆπου περὶ λόγους, ἣν ἐπιδείκνυται παρ’ ὅλην τὴν ποίησιν Ὀδυσσεὺς ἐν τῇ διαπεύρα (*Geographia*, 1.2.5)

(Rhetoric is, to be sure, wisdom applied to discourse; and Odysseus displays this gift throughout the entire Iliad. [Loeb])

Strabo’s view of rhetoric in this text passage is a good example of the way the philosophers saw rhetoric. Rhetoric was not the art that was only about victory in discussion, but should be seen in the context of applied wisdom.

### 5.3.6 Rhetoric excellence of sophists and philosophers

The strife for rhetorical excellence of the sophists was caused by the importance that was given to eloquence in the Greek/Roman culture in the first century AD. The eloquence of the sophists and the philosophers came to its full right in the *ekklesia*, when citizens discussed political matters of common interest. To convince an opponent that was equally eloquent or to be able to verbally handle a mass in state of uproar, it was necessary to master the art of rhetoric. Those who excelled others in the art of rhetoric were more probable to be chosen in a permanent or temporal commission of the *ekklesia* that was established to handle a certain political issue. I have demonstrated above, in a quote of Plutarch’s *Vitae decem oratorum*, that the gift of speech was highly rewarded in the *ekklesia*. The eminence of rhetoric in the *ekklesia* was present in Greece from the times of Plato, who puts the words in the mouth of Gorgias in a dialogue with Socrates to explain why rhetoric was given so much importance:

φημὶ δὲ καὶ εἰς πόλιν ὅπῃ βούλει ἐλθόντα ῥητορικὸν ἄνδρα καὶ ἰατρόν, εἰ δέοι λόγῳ διαγωνίζεσθαι ἐν ἐκκλησίᾳ ἢ ἐν ἄλλῳ τινὶ συλλόγῳ ὀπότερον δεῖ αἰρεθῆναι ἰατρόν, οὐδαμοῦ ἂν φανῆται τὸν ἰατρόν, ἀλλ’ αἰρεθῆναι ἂν τὸν εἰπεῖν δυνατόν, εἰ βούλοιο. καὶ εἰ πρὸς ἄλλον γε δημιουργὸν ὄντινα οὖν ἀγωνίζοιο, πείσειεν ἂν αὐτὸν ἐλέσθαι ὁ ῥητορικὸς μᾶλλον ἢ ἄλλος ὅστισοῦν· οὐ γὰρ ἔστιν περὶ ὅτου οὐκ ἂν πιθανώτερον (*Gorgias*, 546B/C)

(And I say that if a rhetorician and a physician were to go to any city, and had there to argue in the Ecclesia or any other assembly as to which of them should be elected state-physician, the physician would have no chance; but he who could speak would be chosen if he wished; and in a contest with a man of any other profession the rhetorician more than any one would have the power of getting himself chosen, for he

<sup>68</sup> J. Vanderspoel, *Themistius and the Imperial Court: Oratory, Civic Duty, and Paideia from Constantius to Theodosius* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995) 9.

by people who lived shortly after his death, and would only need a few nodes in their social networks to reach someone who knew Paul firsthand.

Luke's account of Paul at the Areopage shows that early Christians were familiar with Paul's affinity with Greek culture and philosophy, but Paul did not only know the views of Greek philosophers, but he also shared some views with a group of philosophers, the Stoics. The size of this thesis requires me to refer to Van Kooten for a further overview of Paul's Stoic thought.<sup>69</sup> Van Kooten shows that Paul's thought was compatible with the thought of many Greek philosophers. In fact, Paul's cosmology did not place him outside Greek/Roman culture and philosophy but places him in the middle of the traditions of Greek/Roman philosophy, as is demonstrated by Van Kooten.<sup>70</sup> In the same way, the early Christian vision of Luke shows glimpses of Paul as a man with Jewish roots, but familiar with Greek rhetoric and philosophy.

### 5.3.8 Key elements and comparison to the Christian *ekklesia*

Rhetoric fits in the context of the *ekklesia* where the primacy of the *nous*, mutual understandability, wisdom, and the ability to judge and discern are of highest importance. We have seen these elements in the Christian *ekklesia* as well. In the first part of this thesis I have shown that Paul emphasized mutual understandability and the use of the *nous*. When the sophists and the philosophers approach to rhetoric are compared, we must conclude that the philosopher's vision of the *ekklesia* and the *nous* is strikingly similar to Paul's vision of the Christian *ekklesia*. Paul thus must be categorized with the philosophers, as was done by Luke in Acts, only a few decades after Paul's death. Further support of this vision can be found in the fact that Paul takes an anti-sophistic position in the first chapters of 1 Corinthians.<sup>71</sup> By opposing sophistry, Paul lines up with the philosophers with whom he has to be categorized according to my survey of rhetoric above and according to Luke in the book of Acts. The survey of *glossolalia* and Paul's opposition to it has demonstrated how *pneuma* and *nous* are interconnected in the thought of Paul. He propagates the usage of both in the Christian *ekklesia*. The Greek *ekklesia* was completely focused on the *nous*, while the *pneuma* did its work in the domain of religion.

I have defined the political function of the Greek *ekklesia* as the core of the broad semantic field of the *ekklesia*. It has indeed been proven that although the many ways in which an *ekklesia* could be held, it always had some kind of political meaning. The Christian one had a political meaning likewise. Christians are described as the citizens of a heavenly Kingdom, and using the *nous* is equally important in the Greek as in the Christian *ekklesia*. Paul transplants the meaning of the earthly Greek *ekklesia* to Christian religion by incorporating so many elements of the Greek *ekklesia*.

As already discussed above, in Greece, although religion was ubiquitous, the domain of the *ekklesia* was reserved for understandable language, while ecstatic frenzy was reached at the oracles, as I have discussed in the first part of the thesis. The Greek *ekklesia* thus is similar to the *ekklesia* in the letter of Paul. Although the Christian *ekklesia* is a religious community, Paul uses political language to intently move the Christian *ekklesia* away from the ecstatic element in Greek religion.

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<sup>69</sup> G.H. van Kooten, *Paulus en de Kosmos* (Zoetermeer: Boekencentrum 2003) 209.

<sup>70</sup> Van Kooten, *Paulus en de Kosmos*, 20-21.

<sup>71</sup> B. W. Winter, *Philo and Paul among the Sophists: Alexandrian and Corinthian Responses to a Julio-Claudian Movement*. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing 2002) 164.

The next section of my thesis will discuss the Jewish *ekklesia*. The Jewish *ekklesia* should be part of this thesis for two reasons. Firstly, it will offer an example of the connection of *pneuma* and *ekklesia*, and secondly, for the mere reason that Christianity is Jewish in its roots, despite all the Greek elements it adopted.

## 5.4 The Jewish *ekklesia*

As I emphasized above, Paul's thought and teaching is compatible with Greek thought of his days. This does not mean that the Jewish roots of Paul, who 'converted' to Christianity in a later stadium of his life according to Luke, can be ignored. Strikingly, the synthesis of Greek and Jewish thought that came to life in the Pauline school is ignored by many scholars, since in their view, the LXX is the only source of comparison when the New Testament is interpreted. The LXX is an important source of comparison indeed. Many New Testament authors use the LXX instead of the Hebrew or Aramaic text when quoting the Old Testament. The LXX is a product of the Hellenizing of Judaism, a process of which Christianity can be seen as a product as well. It was written in the second century BC, when the Hellenized Jews in Alexandria became more familiar with Greek language than with their own language, and therefore wished a Greek translation of their sacred books. Many principles of the Old Testament have been Hellenized in the process of translation. The *ekklesia* is one of the Greek concepts that found its way into the Old Testament in the LXX translation. The usage of the word as such incorporates elements of Greek culture in the Jewish religion. We have seen in the preceding paragraphs that, although the semantic field is wide, the *ekklesia* had a political connotation in Greek history from the fifth century BC to the first century AD. In this section, it will become clear that it is this political connotation of the word *ekklesia* that has led to its incorporation in Hellenized Judaism.

Even if the LXX is erroneously seen as the only background of the Pauline *ekklesia*, an exclusively Jewish background of the *ekklesia* should be rejected, because the LXX itself incorporates a Hellenistic tradition, being a Greek translation of Jewish scripture. In the process of translation, certain Hellenistic concepts found its way in the LXX. A Hellenistic background through the LXX should thus be accepted, but in this thesis I will continue to clarify that the LXX is not the only source of Hellenistic thought in Pauline Christianity.

### 5.4.1 *Ekklesia* in the LXX

The word *ekklesia* occurs more than a hundred times in the Greek translation of the Tanach. The word translates the Hebrew word קָהָל (*qahal*),<sup>72</sup> meaning assembly. In the Tanach, the *ekklesia* is the assembly of all Jewish people, gathered before the Lord, like in Deuteronomy 9, where the assembly at the foot of the mount Sinai is an *ekklesia* in the LXX. It was in this *ekklesia* that the Jewish people received the ten commandments.

It is very probable that the translation of *qahal* with *ekklesia* was chosen because the Greek concept of *ekklesia* and the Jewish concept of *qahal* have many resemblances. Both entailed a public assembly. The Greek *ekklesia* gave the people the opportunity to discuss the future of the administrative union in which they lived. The Jewish *ekklesia* incorporated Jewish religious beliefs. In the books of the Torah, the *ekklesia* is solely an event of interaction between God and his chosen people. The people collectively come before the throne of God. God and his *ekklesia* were committed to each other. In the books that describe

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<sup>72</sup>W.O. McCready, 'Ekklesia and voluntary associations', *Voluntary Associations in the Graeco-Roman World*, 60

later parts of Jewish history, a mediator is added to the interaction of God and the *ekklesia* in the person of the King. In 1 Kings 8:14, it is Salomon who mediates between God and the *ekklesia*. When the new temple of Salomon is inaugurated, he speaks to God in name of the people and to the people in the name of God. Despite God's prominent presence in this text passage, the theocracy of the Torah is clearly replaced by a theocentric monarchy, led by the King who is placed between God and his *ekklesia*.

The theocratic *qahal* of the Old Testament was lived forth in the Qumran community. The community left the Hellenized Jewish society in Palestine to give their lives to the keeping of the laws of God as written in the Torah. The Qumran community saw itself as the true Israel, the righteous, the chosen people, the true *qahal*.<sup>73</sup>

The Jewish *ekklesia* in the LXX can be seen as a projection of the Greek *ekklesia* on the Jewish *qahal*. The Greek *ekklesia* and the Jewish *qahal* share many features, making the translation chosen by the translators that created the LXX defensible, given the fact that the LXX was written for a Hellenized public, to which the Greek *ekklesia* would offer the right framework for the understanding of the Jewish *ekklesia*. Both the Jewish and the Greek *ekklesia* were inclusive. All (pure) members of the Jewish people were allowed or even entitled to be present, as was also the case in Greece. The *ekklesia* in the LXX is thus no strong adaptation of the concept of *ekklesia*, but fits in its the broad semantic field.

The Greek and Jewish *ekklesia* differ in the role that is given to God. While God has an important role in the Torah, making the *ekklesia* in the Torah part of a theocratic system, the Greek *ekklesia* was outside the domain of religion. Another difference is that, in contrast to the Jewish *ekklesia*, the Greek *ekklesia* can be seen in a variety of contexts, whether spontaneous or organized, large or small, at diverse levels of administration. The Jewish *ekklesia* had only one form of appearance as the people of God, gathered before his throne.

Although the *ekklesia* clearly functions in a theocratic system in the Old Testament, Paul's connection of the words *ekklesia* and *theos* in the concept of the *ekklesia tou theou* has no parallel in the LXX. The *ekklesia* of the people of God in the LXX is never named the *ekklesia tou theou*. In the LXX, the *ekklesia* of the people of God is in many occasions named the *ekklesia Israel*, emphasizing the ethnic dimension of the *ekklesia*. The name given to the Jewish *ekklesia* in the LXX as the *ekklesia Israel* demonstrates that the political connotation of the word *ekklesia* must be understood in an earthly manner. The heavenly connotation of the *ekklesia* in the New Testament is less immanent in the LXX.

#### 5.4.2 The *pneuma* in the Jewish *ekklesia*

The emphasis on the gift of speech and the primacy of the *nous* in the *ekklesia*, as was the case in its ancient Greek version, is absent in the *ekklesia* of the LXX. The word *nous* is never used in the context of the *ekklesia* of God and rhetoric is absent. In Greek culture, the *ekklesia* was something entirely different than the oracle, where the divine *pneuma* was active, but the Old Testament (and as its translation the LXX) it has a prominent place, since it is completely focused on the *ruah adonai*, the divine *pneuma* that is an aspect of the Jewish God. In the LXX translation of 2 Chronicles 20:14, the divine *pneuma* comes to the *ekklesia*:

καὶ τῷ Οὐζιηλ τῷ τοῦ Ζαχαρίου τῶν υἱῶν Βαναιου τῶν υἱῶν Ελεηλ τοῦ Μανθανιου τοῦ Λευίτου ἀπὸ τῶν υἱῶν Ασαφ ἐγένετο ἐπ' αὐτὸν πνεῦμα κυρίου ἐν τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ

<sup>73</sup> L. Goppelt, *Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing 1981) 11.

(Then the spirit of the LORD came upon Jahaziel son of Zechariah, son of Benaiah, son of Jeiel, son of Mattaniah, a Levite of the sons of Asaph, in the middle of the assembly (NRSV translation of the Hebrew text))

This text offers a good example of the *pneuma* in Jewish tradition, where it is not the *nous* of the rhetor that reigns in the *ekklesia*, but the *pneuma* of God.

### 5.4.3 Philo's *ekklesia*

The *ekklesia* in the writings of Philo is heavily inspired by the usage of this word in the LXX. Many occurrences of the word *ekklesia* in the works of Philo are direct quotations of Deut 23:1-3 or are alluding to that text, which sets out limitations to the membership of the *ekklesia* of God; emasculated men are not allowed to join, alongside children born out of an illicit union and people of Ammonite or Moabite descent. Philo applies his allegorical interpretation to this text in *De mutatione nominum*.

Μωυση̅ς ἀντικρυς εἰς ἐκκλησίαν φοιτᾶν τοῦ πανηγεμόνος (...) οἱ ἐκ πόρνης γεγονότες, τὸν ἕνα ἄνδρα καὶ πατέρα φιλαρέτου ψυχῆς θεὸν οὐκ εἰδότες, ἄρ' οὐκ εἰκότως ἐλαύνονται τε καὶ φυγα δεύονται. (*De mutatione nominum*. 205)

(whom Moses has expressly forbidden to come into the assembly of the Ruler of the universe (...) being the sons of a harlot, having no knowledge of the one husband and father of the virtue-loving soul, namely, God; and are not all these men very properly driven away and banished [from the assembly of God]? [Yonge])

The purity of the *ekklesia* was an important issue in Judaism. The Law of Moses attempted to keep the *ekklesia* pure by prohibiting access to the *ekklesia* to certain impure groups of people. Impurity was in Deutonomy a circumstance that occurred in the case of deformation of the body, misconduct or bad descent, but Philo takes the Mosaic Law to a spiritual level. He uses the position of God as a father and husband to render those who do not know them as committers of adultery, against whom the text of Deut 23:2 is written. By interpreting Deut. 23 allegorically, Philo shifts the emphasis of purity to spiritual purity. Those who know God as their father are sufficiently pure to be gained access to the *ekklesia* of the Lord. Philo keeps up the unity and singularity of the Jewish *ekklesia*, but, perhaps unintendedly, opens up the Jewish *ekklesia* for some universalism, a key feature of the Christian *ekklesia*.

### 5.4.4 Key elements and comparison to the Christian *ekklesia*

The Jewish *ekklesia* in the LXX can be characterized by its unity and uniqueness, its role as the assembly of the people gathering before God, and through that dependence on Jewish religion, the key role of the divine *pneuma*. The call for purity, only physical in the Old Testament, is taken to a spiritual level by Philo, and thus remains important in the Jewish religion of the Greek/Roman era. The call for purity of the *ekklesia* can also be found in the letters of Paul, who calls for purity because the *ekklesia* is the body of Christ, although Paul calls for spiritual purity, while the Jewish law is focused on the purity of the body and purity of descent. Philo applies his allegorical interpretation to the requirement of purity in the Old Testament, and thus takes it to a more spiritual level that is similar to Paul's spiritual vision of purity.

By choosing the word *ekklesia* as the translation of *qahal*, the political connotation of the word *ekklesia* is imported into Judaism. The *ekklesia Israel* functions in a theocratic system in the Torah, with God on its head, and therefore has some parallels to Paul's *ekklesia tou theou*, although the *ekklesia* of the LXX was earthly, and the *ekklesia* of the Pauline letters is heavenly. The Jewish *ekklesia* can be distinguished by its uniqueness, a feature that it shares with the non-Pauline translocal *ekklesia* of the New Testament, while the Paul only used the term *ekklesia* in a strictly local sense.

### 5.5 The origins of the Christian *ekklesia*

Three sources of comparison to the early Christian *ekklesia* have been discussed. Most Christians must have been familiar on at least some degree with all three of these traditions, and must have noticed the overlapping concepts of those traditions. Some elements of the Christian *ekklesia* were derived from Greek voluntary associations, some from the Greek *ekklesia* and the rhetoric traditions that surrounds it.

The first element that I found above as the core of the *ekklesia* is the community. The core function of the community leads to the several other key elements: the communal meal and the call for mutual understandability. Further key elements were the purity of the *ekklesia* as the body of Christ and the small scale due to the limited space in the houses where the meetings of the *ekklesia* took place and also due to the limited number of participants in the communal meal. The initiation of new members by full immersion in water, and the gifts of the spirit, discussed in the first part of my thesis, further completed the key elements of the Christian *ekklesia* that I have found above.

The community was important in the voluntary associations in the same manner as it was in the early churches. Due to the limited number of participants, the community could function in a way that was only possible in voluntary associations, between the domain of the family and the state. The number of participants of the meeting make that the earliest churches could be seen as a voluntary association, and the Pauline *ekklesia* shared some habits with voluntary associations, like the initiation of new members and the communal meal. The Christian *ekklesia* had a place between the domain of the private and public domain, much like the religious voluntary association. Meanwhile the call for mutual understanding, illustrated by Paul's propagation of the usage of the *nous*, has its parallels in the Greek *ekklesia*. In the Greek *ekklesia*, the usage of the *nous* was propagated by the rhetors. The art of rhetoric performed with the *nous*, and mutual understandability was of the highest importance when political decisions were to be made. A large portion of Paul's thought about his earliest churches was derived from the Greek *ekklesia*. Paul himself was perfectly familiar with Greek thought, so it may be no surprise that the concept of *ekklesia* was influenced by the Greek *ekklesia*.

A third source of comparison is the LXX. The role of the *pneuma* in the LXX also influenced the letters of Paul, because it must not be forgotten that Paul does not only propagate the *nous*, but also propagates its divine inspiration, the *pneuma*. Paul wants those two to be connected in the *ekklesia*, presents them as inseparable, and thereby seems to apply some kind of synthesis of the elements of Greek *ekklesia*, the Jewish *ekklesia* and voluntary associations. And melts certain concepts of these traditions together, like the concept of *pneuma*, that can be found in Jewish and Greek traditions alike. He thereby moves the Christian *ekklesia* away from a typical Greek religious association, and uses Greek political language to do so. Paul turns the Greek *ekklesia* into a theological concept to import its basic concepts to Christianity. The preference of speaking with the *nous*, concepts of citizenship,



and concept of statehood (the kingdom of God) were thus imported into Christianity and can be found in the letters of Paul.

It is most probable that an emergence of a new religion in such an environment as the cosmopolitan Greek/Roman society of the first century AD takes features of different traditions that are brought in by its members. Paul took elements of different traditions when he wrote his letters, and I have shown how the concept of *ekklesia* is built up of elements both Greek and Jewish traditions, while the Greek elements prevail.

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