Romans 12-15, Social Identity, and the Purpose of Romans: An Association-Epistolary Approach

Aaron Gaius Ricker

School of Religious Studies McGill University, Montreal

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Table of Contents:

Abstract/Résumé..... iv

Acknowledgements..... v

Introduction..... 1
1. The Perceived Problem of the Purpose of Romans..... 1
2. A New Way Forward..... 8
3. Social Identity Construction and the Purpose of Romans..... 11
4. Association Network Letters and the Purpose of Romans..... 35
5. Romans and the Evolutionary Interpretive Lens..... 40
6. Romans and the Comparative Interpretive Lens..... 50

Chapter 1: Community Identity Definition in Greco-Roman Association Letters..... 54
1.1. Greco-Roman Association Networks and New Testament Studies..... 55
1.2. Greco-Roman Association Letters and New Testament Studies..... 75
1.3. The "Real" *Letter of Ammonius to Apollonius*..... 90
1.4. The "Ideal" Cynic Epistle of *Aristippus to Arete*..... 105
1.5. Chapter 1 Conclusion..... 135

Chapter 2: Community Identity Definition in Ancient Jewish Letters..... 138
2.1. Ancient Jewish Networks and New Testament Studies..... 140
2.2. Ancient Jewish Letters and New Testament Studies..... 146
2.3. The "Real" Letters of *Abaskantos to Judas* and the *Passover Papyrus*.... 148
2.4. The "Ideal" Letters of Jeremiah 29, the *Epistle of Jeremiah*, and 2 Maccabees..... 158
2.5. Chapter 2 Conclusion..... 172

Chapter 3: Romans 12-15 and First-Century Association Network Letter Culture..... 174
3.1. Rom 12-15 as Association-Epistolary Paraenesis, the Construction of Social Identity, and the Purpose of Romans..... 178
3.2. Greco-Roman Association Network Definition in Rom 12-15..... 192
3.3. Jewish Association Network Definition in Rom 12-15..... 304
3.4. Pauline Association Network Definition in Rom 12-15..... 348
3.5. Chapter 3 Conclusion..... 390

Conclusion..... 392

Bibliography..... 406

Abstract

The question of the purpose of Romans is a longstanding scholarly problem. Usually scholars try to clarify the purpose of the letter by guessing at Paul's authorial intentions, and this approach has not led to any real consensus. My study instead locates the purpose of Romans in its function as a tool of community identity definition. My comparative analysis reviews the ways in which the social function of community identity definition is performed by Greco-Roman and Jewish association letters, and then by Romans. The community advice found in Rom 12-15 shows how in the letter to the Romans, an inscribed addressee community is invited to see and comport itself as a "proper" ancient association community. It is defined as properly unified and orderly. It is defined as properly accomodating to – and properly distinct from – cultures "outside." It is defined as properly linked to a global association network with proper leadership (i.e., the inscribed Paul of the letter and his network). Paul's letter to the Romans is in many ways a baffling and extraordinary document. In terms of its function of defining community identity, though, it is an understandable ancient association letter, and its purpose as such is quite clear.

Résumé

Cerner l'objectif de la lettre aux Romains est un problème exégétique débattu depuis longtemps. Habituellement, les chercheurs essaient de le faire en devinant les intentions de Paul. Cette approche n'a pas dégagé de consensus réel. Mon analyse comparative comprend plutôt la fonction de la lettre aux Romains comme un outil de définition de l'identité communautaire. Les conseils communautaires de Rm 12-15 montrent qu'une communauté de destinataires est inscrite dans cette lettre. Celle-ci est invitée à se voir et à se comporter de façon «appropriée» comme une communauté d'association. Elle est définie comme correctement unifiée et ordonnée. Cette communauté est déterminée comme étant adaptée aux cultures «de l'extérieur» et, en même temps, proprement distincte de celles-ci. Elle est définie comme liée à un réseau d'association global avec un leadership approprié (c'est-à-dire le leadership de Paul et son réseau inscrit par la lettre). La lettre de Paul aux Romains est à bien des égards un document déconcertant et extraordinaire. En termes de définition de l'identité de la communauté, elle peut être comprise comme une lettre d'association ancienne, et son but en tant que tel est clair.

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Introduction Part 1: The Perceived Problem of the Purpose of Romans

> Romans occupies a unique position in Pauline studies. Its Pauline authorship is beyond dispute and the ideas it expresses are considered quintessentially Pauline. Yet the purpose(s) for which Paul wrote his letter are significantly more obscure than for any of his other communications. At the end of the last century F. J. A. Hort commented: 'That the problem [of the purpose of Romans] is not very simple may be reasonably inferred from the extraordinary variety of opinion which has prevailed and still prevails about it.' And Hort's comment remains valid today. But so also does his encouraging challenge that the problem of the purpose of Romans 'is worthy of any pains that can be taken for its solution.'[1]

As L. Ann Jervis indicates in her assessment (echoing in 1991 F. J. A. Hort's 1895 assessment),[2] the question of "the purpose of Romans" is a stubborn academic "problem." I argue in this study that the purpose of Paul's letter is best understood in terms of its function as an ancient association insider-to-insider letter – i.e., its social function as a tool of community identity definition. I argue that the ancient forms and functions of Romans thus understood can be helpfully clarified by means of comparison with other ancient association network letters. To that end, this section introduces and weighs in on the question of the "problem" as traditionally understood. In his introduction to *The Romans Debate*, Karl Donfried traces the emergence of the perceived problem of the purpose of the letter to the scholarly

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[1] L. Ann Jervis, *The Purpose of Romans. A Comparative Letter Structure Investigation* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991), 11. See also A. Reichert, *Der Römerbrief als Gratwanderung: Eine Untersuchung zur Abfassungsproblematik* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2001), 22-59; A. Das, *Solving the Romans Debate* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2007), 1-51. Note to the reader: Unless otherwise noted, I will follow here *The SBL Handbook of Style: For Biblical Studies and Related Disciplines* (2nd ed.; Billie Jean Collins et al., eds.; Atlanta, GA: SBL Press, 2014).

[2] F. J. A. Hort, *Prolegomena to St. Paul's Epistles to the Romans and the Ephesians* (London: MacMillan, 1895).

challenges articulated by F. C. Baur in the mid-19th century, when the popularization of the historical-critical method in biblical criticism foregrounded "the insight that all New Testament documents were written by the early church for its own needs," and "the recognition that parallel materials within the same cultural milieu often can be helpful for the understanding of biblical texts."[3] As Donfried points out, this historicizing interpretive sea change forced many biblical critics to abandon Melanchthon's influential and comparatively ahistorical assessment of Romans as a "compendium of Christian doctrine" (more akin to a general theological treatise than an occasional letter embedded in a particular communicative situation), and ask more questions about the "situational" character of the letter.[4] Baur's quasi-evolutionary stress on the development of biblical texts in the context of evolving real-world needs attributed to "the early church," and his stress on the use of "parallel materials" as keys to interpretation, are of central importance in understanding the perceived "problem" necessitating studies like mine, and the "solution" I propose.

The historical "science" (*Wissenschaft*) of Baur's model of biblical studies approached Christian culture as a complex synthesis that developed (i.e., evolved) for real-world reasons of theological conflict, and treated biblical texts as witnesses to the processes involved[5] (i.e., as opportunities for a comparative analysis of the

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[3] Karl P. Donfried, "Introduction 1977: The Nature and Scope of the Romans Debate," in *The Romans* Debate (rev. ed.; K. P. Donfried, ed.; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991), xli-xlii.

[4] Donfried, "Introduction 1977," xli-xlii. See also P. F. Esler, *Conflict and Identity in Romans. The Social Setting of Paul's Letter* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), 8-9.

[5] See, for example, F. C. Baur, "Die Einleitung in das Neue Testament als theologische Wissenschaft," *Theologische Jahrbucher* 10 (1851).

contributing "thesis" of Pauline Christianity versus the contributing "antithesis" of Petrine Christianity). As Frederik Wisse has pointed out, Baur's speculative Hegelian perspective on the story of the production of the New Testament died out quite quickly, but his "scientific" interpretive stress on evolutionary and comparative perspectives did not.[6] These perspectives had a lasting impact, as can be seen for example in Adolf Harnack's influential late-19th-century argument that Christian (theological) culture developed over time (i.e., evolved) as it did in order to survive in the Hellenistic world, and that this process can be traced by understanding the ways and the reasons early Christians "borrowed" culture from that outside world[7] (i.e., by means of a comparative analysis of "inside" and "outside" cultural materials).

The "problem" of "the purpose of Romans" can be said to have emerged in the academy as a result of the 19th-century mainstreaming of these historical-critical emphases on evolutionary and comparative perspectives. An evolutionary analysis of the kind just described is frustrated by the fact that the historically-situated specific "needs" of sender(s) and addressees are, relatively speaking, very unclear. As noted by Todd Penner and Davina Lopez, the reconstruction of a Pauline letter's "rhetorical situation" is "mostly guesswork and often circular: we use Paul's rhetoric

[6] Wisse, "The Origin of the Christian Species: Lessons from the Study of Natural History for the Reconstruction of the History of Earliest Christianity," *CSBS Bull*etin 63 (2003-2004): 11-12.

[7] Here Wisse cites A. Harnack, *Outlines of the History of Dogma* (E. K. Mitchell, trans.; Boston: Beacon, 1957).

to reconstruct the rhetorical situation to which he then responds,"[8] and in the case of the letter to the Romans this "mirror reading" method appears to many scholars to be a "dead end."[9] "The expectation evoked by the other letters," writes Harry Gamble Jr., for example, "that we will be able to discern something of the readers' situation from the letter and so be able to perceive why Paul says what he says, seems to be flatly disappointed by Romans."[10] Romans simply does not reveal much about its intended audience(s), and the long and ongoing scholarly quest for the "intended audience" of Romans is further frustrated by fact that the archaeological evidence for the earliest Roman Christian populations is sparse and controversial. Scholars are not in agreement at all about just how integrated or precarious or "Jewish" or "Gentile" the earliest Roman assemblies were, or how (or even if) such assemblies may have related to each other.[11] The resulting "difficulty of specifying with confidence its occasion and purpose" is, as Gamble says a "long-standing crux

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[8] Todd Penner and Davina Lopez, "Rhetorical Approaches. Introducing the Art of Persuasion in Paul and Pauline Studies," in *Studying Paul's Letters: Contemporary Perspectives and Methods.* (J. A. Marchal, ed.; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2012), 40.

[9] Longenecker, *Introducing Romans. Critical Issues in Paul's Most Famous Letter* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 55; See also David E. Aune, *The New Testament in Its Literary Environment* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1987), 219.

[10] Harry Gamble Jr., *The Textual History of the Letter to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 133.

[11] See, for example, W. Wiefel, "The Jewish Community in Ancient Rome and the Origins of Roman Christianity," in Donfried, *The Romans Debate*, 85-101; R. Brändle and E. Stegemann, "The Formation of the First 'Christian Congregations' in Rome in the Context of the Jewish Congregations," in *Judaism and Christianity in First-Century Rome* (K. P. Donfried and P. Richardson, eds.; Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1998); P. Oakes, *Reading Romans in Pompeii. Paul's Letter at Ground Level* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009); W. Lane, "Social Perspectives on Roman Christianity during the Formative Years from Nero to Nerva: Romans, Hebrews, 1 Clement," in *Judaism and Christianity in First-Century Rome* (K. P. Donfried and P. Richardson, eds.; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998).

in the interpretation of Romans."[12] Scholars continue to try to identify a "concrete situation in Rome,"[13] but the length of the debate and its failure to deliver any useful consensus have led to a situation of "impasse."[14]

Even if one could reconstruct the situation of the addressees of Romans, it is not clear that the "problem" and the "impasse" concerning the letter's "purpose" would cease to be. A. Andrew Das may assert, for example, that identifying the "encoded audience" of the letter as mostly Gentile converts (building on the similar proposals of Neil Elliott and Stanley Stowers)[15] amounts to "solving the Romans debate,"[16] but as L. Ann Jervis suggests by the wording of her publishing blurb for *Solving the Romans Debate*, the contribution Das offers is better characterized as a "contribution to the ongoing Romans debate," even if his characterization of the letter's original addressees turns out to be successful in gaining widespread acceptance. Questions about what the letter was meant to do for those addressees – and for its sender(s) – would still need to be asked and answered before one could say its "purpose" had been identified.

In introducing the way Romans frustrates the standard kind of evolutionary analysis sketched above, I referred to the historically-situated specific "needs" of the

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[12] Gamble, *The Textual History of the Letter to the Romans*, 132.

[13] K. P. Donfried, "False Presuppositions," 103-104; Cf. Stuhlmacher, "The Purpose of Romans," in Donfried, *The Romans Debate*, 235; Das, *Solving the Romans Debate*, 9-52, etc.

[14] Wuellner, "Paul's Rhetoric of Argumentation," 130. See also the references to "impasse" in Robert J. Karris, "Romans 14:1-14:13 and the Occasion of Romans," in Donfried, *The Romans Debate*, 65-66; Donfried, "Introduction 1991: The Romans Debate Since 1977," in Donfried, *The Romans Debate*, lxxii, etc.

[15] Das, *Solving the Romans Debate*, 2-8.

[16] Das, *Solving the Romans Debate*, 261-264.

sender(s) and addressees of Romans as being, relatively speaking, very unclear to the letter's academic interpreters at present. The qualifier "relatively" in the phrase "relatively unclear" points to the way Romans frustrates the standard kind of comparative perspective sketched above as well. I note that the "problem" of the "purpose of Romans" arose in the first place partly out of a scholarly sense of dissatisfaction created by comparison with Paul's other letters. "The question of the purpose of Romans was articulated for the modern study of Paul by F. C. Baur, who assumed that, since the other 'authentic' Pauline letters were written from the 'imperious pressure of circumstances,' Romans must have originated in a similar way," notes Jervis: "This conviction that Romans must be understood from a historical, as opposed to a dogmatic, point of view bequeathed to students of Romans a challenging problem."[17]

The "problem" of Romans not looking helpfully comparable to Paul's other letters (in terms of language and emphases reflecting a discernible specific situation) has led, I note, to subsequent comparative analyses taking other types of ancient letters into account, and the "problem" of "the purpose of Romans" has only been underlined by the continued frustration of this standard kind of comparative method. Scholars have attempted over the years to clarify "the purpose of Romans" by treating it first-and-foremost as a "circular letter,"[18] a "letter of self-

[17] Jervis, *The Purpose of Romans*, 11-12.

[18] Ernest Renan, *Saint Paul* (I. Lockwood, trans.; New York: Carleton, 1869), 481; J. B. Lightfoot, *Biblical Essays* (London: Macmillan, 1893), 352, 374; R. Jewett, *Paul's Anthropological* Terms (Leiden: Brill, 1971), 48.

introduction,"[19] an "ambassadorial letter,"[20] a "letter of self-defence,"[21] a "letter-essay,"[22] etc., but none of these proposals has yet succeeded in creating any significant scholarly consensus on a satisfactory solution to the perceived problem.

It seems clear, then, that wide acceptance of the quasi-evolutionary and comparative perspectives associated with the historical-critical method helped create the perceived scholarly problem of "the purpose of Romans." As the next section explains, though, my study shows that these methodological perspectives can also help "solve" the problem by framing the question more clearly and usefully, and clearing the way for questions and answers about the forms and functions of Romans less haunted and frustrated by the traditional scholarly "impasse."

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[19] R. A. Lipsius, *Briefe an die Galater, Römer, Philliper* (Freiburg: Mohr, 1891), 75; B. Weiss, *A Commentary on the New Testament III* (G. H. Schodde and E. Wilson, trans.; New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1906), 1-2; Aune, *The New Testament in Its Literary Environment*, 219; B. N. Kaye, "'To the Romans and Others' Revisited," *Novum Testamentum* 18 (1976): 37, 42; Stanley K. Stowers, *The Diatribe and Paul's Letter to the Romans* (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1981), 182.

[20] R. Jewett, "Romans as an Ambassadorial Letter," *Interpretation* 36 (1982): 5-20.

[21] F. Godet, *Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans* (A. Cusin, trans.; New York: Funk & Wagnall, 1883), 53; J. W. Drane, "Why Did Paul Write Romans?" in *Pauline Studies: Essays Presented to F. F. Bruce on His 70th Birthday* (D. A. Hagner and M. J. Harris, eds.; Exeter: Paternoster, 1980), 223-224.

[22] Stirewalt, "The Form and Function of the Greek Letter-Essay," 147-171.

Introduction Part 2: A New Way Forward

L. Ann Jervis's treatment of *The Purpose of Romans* outlines a proposal to understand the form and function of Romans in terms of the letter's specifically epistolary character, with the help of comparative reference to other ancient letters. Jervis concludes that scholars ought to locate the purpose of Romans in "Paul's intention" to draw "the Roman church" into "Paul's apostolic orbit."[23] From the methodological point of view I am introducing here, Jervis's book provides a good indication of the way forward: I perceive both a chance to move "forward" past the traditional "impasse" because her methods and conclusions seem so solid and promising, and a need to move "forward" past her book's methods and conclusions because so much more clarification seems to be necessary.

The first problem with Jervis's excellent epistolary-comparative proposal is that (as noted above) the method of comparing Romans with other ancient letters has not yet worked to discover a "solution" inspiring widespread consensus. Jervis's own attempt did not "solve" the debate over the purpose of Romans either, as was just seen above in her publishing blurb for the book A. Andrew Das contributed decades later toward "Solving the Romans Debate." The second problem with Jervis's proposal is the fact that Paul's conscious authorial desire, the church at Rome, and Paul's apostolic orbit are all assumed as real, singular givens at the time Romans was written down and sent to Rome. Their existence as real, singular givens is never demonstrated. Their existence and the characteristics attributed to them by Jervis may for all we know be imaginary, or simply impossible to prove with the

[23] Jervis, *The Purpose of Romans*, 164.

ancient evidence available. As I will show in the chapters below, Paul's coherent authorial desire, his global apostolic orbit, and his singular addressee community at Rome are in fact most discernible and interpretively useful not as givens expressed and addressed by the letter, but rather as rhetorical constructs of the letter. They are ancient association-epistolary tools appropriate to the letter's construction of ideal social identity. In Paul's letter to the Romans, an inscribed addressee community is invited to see and comport itself as a "proper" ancient association community. It is defined as properly unified and orderly. It is defined as properly accomodating to (and properly distinct from) "outsiders." It is defined as properly linked to a global association network with proper leadership (i.e., the inscribed Paul of the letter and his network). In terms of this function of defining community identity, Romans is readily understandable as an ancient association insider-to-insider letter, and its "purpose" as such is quite clear.

The evolutionary lens of Jervis's study (i.e., its focus on the historically-situated needs of senders and addressees, and on historically-situated epistolary forms and functions), and its comparative lens (i.e., its focus on comparable letters and comparable epistolary forms and functions) make good sense in the context of *wissenschaftlich* biblical criticism as imagined and promoted by Baur and his heirs in the academy. If a specific rhetorical situation still cannot be identified, though, for Romans, and if further comparison with letters risks simply adding more logs to the logjam of the "impasse" described above, a new approach is needed. The new focus offered by my study builds on and extends the methods outlined above (including Jervis's "comparative letter structure investigation") theoretically, by refining the

evolutionary and comparative lenses applied to the reading of Romans, and practically, by narrowing the field of the epistolary-comparative frame to letters that are, like Romans, ancient insider-to-insider association network letters. To help clarify and justify this new approach (which brings together, it will be shown, new investigative methods recommended as promising for the study of Romans by leading scholars but never yet tried), the following sections define "social identity construction" and "ancient association network letters" for the purposes at hand, and apply them to the project of refining the evolutionary and comparative lenses used to investigate "the purpose of Romans" since the time of Baur.

Introduction Part 3: Social Identity Construction and the Purpose of Romans

The construction of group identity around shared discourses, ideas, norms, and collective self-conceptions is a normal function of life in community. Participating in the construction and regulation of in-group identities allows "insiders" to see and comport themselves as belonging to something. "People construct community symbolically" through shared discursive and behavioral norms, "making it a resource," writes sociologist Anthony Cohen, "of meaning, and a referent of their identity."[24] As the word "construction" suggests, the expressions of social identity thus produced are never simply assertions of stable pre-existing given group identities, or one-time announcements defining group identities once and for all. As Bengt Holmberg pointed out in introducing a recent collection of essays bringing "Social Identity Theory" to bear on NT studies, group "insider" identity is better understood in terms of socially and historically situated forms of consensus, constructed in the context of complex and evolving processes of discursive negotiation:

> In historical work, identity cannot be grasped by definition in the ontological arena of what things, persons, movements "really are," somewhere deep inside. The "identity" of a group or movement is better approached and provisionally described as a social reality, i.e. as a recognizable social profile that is summarized in people's thoughts (usually in narrative form) about who "we" or "they" are, and how we and they typically behave. The developments and fluctuations of a group are reflected in the identity formation process as well. Both insiders and outsiders think about identity and discuss it, and therefore identity is constantly "negotiated."[25]

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[24] Anthony P. Cohen, *The Symbolic Construction of Community* (New York: Routledge, 1985), 118.

[25] Bengt Holmberg, "Understanding the First Hundred Years of Christian Identity," in *Exploring Early Christian Identity* (Bengt Holmberg, ed.; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 28-29.

Holmberg's *Exploring Early Christian Identity* volume is just one of many recent witnesses to a trend of scholarly interest in the construction of "early Christian identity" discernible in Paul's letters and other NT writings, through which the kinds of socially-situated discursive processes just mentioned defined various local and trans-local Christian group identities, and eventually one relatively stable, dominant global "Christian identity."[26] In asserting the function of community identity definition as central to the "purpose of Romans," my study engages this trend, and refines and applies its investigative methods to the perceived problem defined above. Although it will become clear that my approach differs from Holmberg's, my study picks up and pursues two investigative assumptions of "Social Identity Theory" just described above in the citation of Holmberg as central. The first fundamental point is that the social identity of a group is constructed by means of formulating and policing forms of consensus about insiders versus outsiders;

[26] See, for example, R. A. Markus, "The Problem of Self-Definition: From Sect to Church," in *Jewish and Christian Self-Definition. Vol. 1: The Shaping of Christianity in the Second and Third Centuries* (E. P. Sanders, ed.; Philadelphia, 1980); A. Feldtkeller, *Identitätssuche des syrischen Urchristentums: Mission, Inkulturation, und Pluralität im ältesten Heidenschristentum* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1993); T. Vogt, *Angst und Identität in Markusevangelium: Ein textpsychologischer und socialgeschichlicher Beitrag* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1993); M. Wolter, "Ethos und Identität in paulinischen Gemeinden," *NTS* 43 (1997): 430-444; M. Wolter, "Die ethische Identität christlicher Gemeinden in neutestamentlicher Zeit," *Marburger Jahrbuch Theologie* 13 (2001): 61-90; R. Börschel, *Die Konstruktion einer christlichen Identität: Paulus und die Gemeinde von Thessalonich in ihrer hellenistisch-römischen Umwelt* (Berlin: Philo, 2001); S. von Dobbeler, "Auf der Grenze: Ethos und Identität der Matthäischen Gemeinde nach Mt 15, 1-20," *Biblische Zeitschrift* 45 (2001): 55-78; Judith Lieu, *Neither Jew Nor Greek? Constructing Early Christianity* (New York: T & T Clark, 2002); Philip F. Esler, *Conflict and Identity in Romans. The Social Setting of Paul's Letter* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003); Judith Lieu, *Christian Identity in the Jewish and Graeco-Roman World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); David Brakke, "Self-Differentiation among Christian Groups: The Gnostics and their Opponents," in *The Cambridge History of Christianity, Vol. 1: Origins to Constantine* (M. W. Mitchell and F. M. Young, eds.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); A. J. Droge, "Self-Definition vis-à-vis the Graeco-Roman World," in *The Cambridge History of Christianity, Vol. 1: Origins to Constantine* (M. W. Mitchell and F. M. Young, eds.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Bengt Holmberg and Mikael Winnige, eds., *Identity Formation in the New Testament* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008); Philip Harland, *Dynamics of Identity in the World of the Early Christians: Associations, Judeans, and Cultural Minorities* (New York: T&T Clark, 2009); Mikael Tellbe, *Christ-Believers in Ephesus: A Textual Analysis of Early Christian Identity Formation in a Local Perspective* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009).

"about who 'we' or 'they' are, and how we and they typically behave," as Holmberg puts it in the passage cited. The second point fundamental to my study is that due to its dependence on such an "insider-outsider" dialectic between ideas of "special" subcultural norms and identities imagined as typical and normative "inside" the group, on the one hand, and on the other hand wider cultural norms and identities imagined as typical and normative "outside" the group, the process of defining any given group's social identity necessitates what Holmberg's summary calls "negotiation."

The point that a group's "us inside" is always defined partly by defining "them outside" is central to Social Identity Theory as pioneered by Henri Tajfel,[27] and pursued by Margaret Wetherell,[28] Michael Hogg and Dominic Abrams,[29] and others. Groups draw upon complex repertoires of identity, belonging, and loyalty in defining "in-groups" over against people and groups defined as properly belonging outside the group in question.[30] "Social identity theory suggests that [ideas of fellow "insiders"] may be driven by an in-group/out-group bias," Francis J. Flynn and

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[27] H. Tajfel, "La catégorisation sociale," in *Introduction à la psychologie sociale*, Vol. 1 (S. Moscovici, ed.; Paris: Larousse, 1972), 293-294; H. Tajfel, "The Achievement of Group Differentiation," in *Differentiation Between Social Groups: Studies in the Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations* (H. Tajfel, ed.; London: Academic Press, 1978), 97-98;

[28] M. Wetherell, "Social Identity and Group Polarization," in *Rediscovering the Social Group: A Self-Categorization Theory* (J. C. Turner et al., eds.; Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987), 170.

[29] M. A. Hogg and D. Abrams, *Social Identifications: A Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations and Group Processes* (New York: Routledge, 1988), 51-53.

[30] P. L. Berger, "Identity as a Problem in the Sociology of K*now*ledge," *European Journal of Sociology* 7 (1966): 106; J.-C. Deschamps and W. Doise, "Crossed Category Memberships in Intergroup Relations," in *Differentiation Between Social Groups: Studies in the Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations* (H. Tajfel, ed.; London: Academic Press, 1978), 141-158; J. Turner, "Social Comparison, Similarity and Ingroup Favouritism," in Tajfel, ed., *Differentiation Between Social Groups*, 265-266; G. Lemaine, J. Kastersztein and B. Personnaz, "Social Differentiation," in Tajfel, ed., *Differentiation Between Social Groups*, 286-294.

Jennifer A. Chatman write: "Thus, in-group members are more likely to enhance their impressions of, and cooperate with, one another while forming negative impressions of, and distinguishing themselves from, out-group members."[31] Margaret R. Somers and Gloria D. Gibson similarly point out in their work on group identity formation that groups define insider identity by identifying real and ideal "constellations of relationships"[32] capable of binding and defining group members over against putative outsiders with whom they do not share such relationships: "Every knowledge discipline needs an 'epistemological other' to consolidate a cohesive self-identity and collective project," they conclude.[33] In short, it seems clear that in any given in-group, evolving collections of shared discursive strategies used by insiders to define and express themselves function as "badges" of insider identity,[34] establishing insiders as different from (and usually superior to) other groups[35] and the rest of the world outside.[36]

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[31] Francis J. Flynn and Jennifer A. Chatman, "'What's the Norm Here?' Social Categorization as a Basis for Group Norm Development," *Identity Issues in Groups* (J. T. Polzer, ed.; Oxford: JAI Press, 2003), 142.

[32] Margaret R. Somers and Gloria D. Gibson, "Reclaiming the Epistemological 'Other': Narrative and the Social Construction of Identity," in *Social Theory and the Politics of Identity* (C. Calhoun, ed.; Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), 59.

[33] Somers and Gibson, "Reclaiming the Epistemological 'Other,'" 38.

[34] See M. Montgomery *An Introduction to Language and Society* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 104, 198; M. Saville-Troike, *The Ethnography of Communication: An Introduction* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2002), 97, 199.

[35] See T. Murphy, *Nietzsche, Metaphor, Religion* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2001), 35, 61, 65. See also T. Murphy, *Representing Religion: Essays in History, Theory, and Crisis* (Oakville, CT: Equinox, 2007), 116, 120-121, 137, 141, 147.

[36] See N. Kamwangamalu, "African American Vernacular English, Religion, and Ethnicity," in *The Sociology of Language and Religion: Change, Conflict, and Accommodation* (T. Omoniyi, ed.; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 191; Montgomery, *An Introduction to Language and Society*, 202, 205.

The insider/outsider dynamic described by Social Identity theorists is important for the purpose of my study of Romans because it is readily discernible in ancient texts testifying to the community definition projects of early Christian groups. Rikard Roitto and Mikael Telbe have traced, for example, the ways in which ideas of how a given Christian group's proper "prototypical" insiders see and comport themselves can contribute to defining what makes the group special from an insider point of view, what makes for proper behaviour and proper authority in the group, and what the proper ways are for members of the group to relate to the world "outside."[37] My study traces the forms and functions of this dynamic in the epistolary character of Romans and the paraenetic character of Rom 12-15. Since, as Judith Lieu points out, emerging early Christian community identities were always defined in terms of complex negotiation with Greco-Roman and Jewish identities defined as being "outside,"[38] my analysis of the specific construction of in-group social identity found in Romans necessarily focuses on the ways in which the "Pauline Christian" community insider identity constructed in the letter relates to non-Pauline-Christian "Greco-Roman" and non-Pauline-Christian "Jewish" forms of identity simultaneously constructed as belonging in some sense "outside."

For the sake of clarification, I want to comment briefly on the use in this study of the labels "Christian" and "Jewish" before saying more about "Christian identity" and "Jewish identity." As Bengt Holmberg points out in the course of his

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[37] See Rikard Roitto, "Behaving like a Christ-Believer: A Cognitive Perspective on Identity and Behavior Norms in the Early Christ-Movement," in Holmberg, *Exploring Early Christian Identity*, 93-114; Mikael Telbe, "The Prototypical Christ-believer: Early Christian Identity Formation in Ephesus," in Holmberg, *Exploring Early Christian Identity*, 115-138.

[38] See Lieu, *Christian Identity in the Jewish and Graeco-Roman World*, 98-146, 269-297.

discussion of early Christian social identity, it is important to avoid falling into unconscious anachronism when using labels like "Christian" and "Jewish" in investigations of first-century cultures and materials, but it is also true that avoiding these labels or substituting others fails to improve the situation much. As Holmberg points out, there is in the end not much discernible substantive difference between the late label "Christians" and Paul's first-century phrase "those in Christ."[39] I take his point, and add that we have no evidence that the first readers and hearers of Romans would have thought of themselves as "people in Christ" or described themselves in that way before Paul's letter gave them that label. I note furthermore that when modern scholars substitute for the retrospective label "Christian" neologisms like "Christ-followers" or "Christ-movement members" or "Jesus-cult-devotees" in order to avoid anachronism, they forget that words and concepts like "followers" and "movements" and "devotion" can be just as dangerously misleading in discussing the first century. Ancient people's interest in Jesus and/or Christ may in many cases have been quite unconnected to the phenomena of followers, movements or devotion as normally conceived by modern observers.

In the same introductory discussion just cited, Holmberg defends the use of "Jewish" for first-century culture(s) by pointing out the continuities found between ancient and subsequent expressions of "Jewish" culture, and the acceptance of the usage by Jewish scholars. Since the differences between ancient and later forms of "Jewish" culture and identity may at times be very great and very important, though, and since the decision of modern Jewish scholars to identify ancient culture as

[39] Holmberg, "Understanding the First Hundred Years of Christian Identity," 3-5.

"Jewish" may serve modern ideological goals as easily as historical descriptive goals, these reasons do not look convincing to me. I would, however, point out that the continued use of the label "Jewish" looks better to me than using alternatives like the increasingly-popular label "Judean"[40] when they do not necessarily make things clearer. Would the "Judea" in "Judean" mean the Roman province of Judea, or the geographical area known as Judea within that wider area? When might Samaria and Samaritan traditions properly be called "Judean"? Should "Judean" refer somehow to the kingdom of Judah that gave its name to both place names just mentioned? If so, within the borders of which year, and representing which groups within that kingdom? I note, finally, the fact that it is highly unlikely that everyone living in any of these Judahs or Judeas would recognize himself/herself as rightly associated with every tradition called "Judean" by ancient or modern writers, and the fact that the "Jewish" traditions addressed in my study take on the forms they do – and the particular significance they do – in the first century and in Romans precisely because it was found that they could be embraced, practiced, and valued in places other than Judea, by people who were in no way people of Judea. For these reasons, I have decided here to maintain the use of the label "Jewish," providing and respecting the frame of a working definition appropriate to the investigation at hand (See Section 3.3), rather than use a different label like "Judean."

The second investigative principle derived from Social Identity Theory picked up and pursued in my study as fundamental has to do with the common

[40] See Steve N. Mason, "Jews, Judaeans, Judaizing, Judaism: Problems of Categorization in Ancient History," *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 38.4 (2007): 457-512.

strategy of group identity construction referred to above in Holmberg's introductory account as "negotiation." Because early Christian community cultures were minoritarian and thereby always somehow "subcultural" in nature, my approach to the cultural traditions found and engaged in Romans in this study uses a qualified borrowing of the critical perspective found in Vernon K. Robbins's "socio-rhetorical" book *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse: Rhetoric, Society and Ideology*.[41] In this work, Robbins used the sociological models of Bryan R. Wilson[42] and Keith J. Roberts[43] to put together a picture of "subculture" useful to the study of ancient texts like those found in the New Testament. Robbins suggested that subcultures can be usefully categorized as either network-based, conceptual, or ethnic in nature:

> Subcultures differ from one another according to the prominence of one of three characteristics: (a) a network of communication and loyalty; (b) a conceptual system; and (c) ethnic heritage and identity. In a *network subculture*, a chain of communication and loyalty among certain individuals, families and institutions is the most prominent feature. In certain circumstances, it is difficult to decide if a network is simply part of the dominant culture or is a subculture within the dominant structure. In a *conceptual subculture*, a system of basic presuppositions about life, the world and nature is the most prominent feature. An *ethnic subculture* has origins in a language different from the languages in the dominant culture, and it attempts to perpetuate an 'old system' in a dominant culture system in which it now exists.[44]

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[41] Vernon K. Robbins, *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse. Rhetoric, Society and Ideology* (New York: Routledge, 1996).

[42] Bryan R. Wilson, "A Typology of Sects," in *Sociology of Religion* (R. Robertson, ed.; Baltimore: Penguin, 1969), 361-383.

[43] Keith A. Roberts, "Toward a Generic Concept of Counter-Culture," *Sociological Focus* 11 (1978): 111-126.

[44] Robbins, *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse*, 168.

The approach described by Robbins follows Roberts[45] in further distinguishing between different stances on the part of subcultures vis-à-vis their wider host cultures: a subculture *tout court* "parallels the larger society in that it provides for a network of groups and institutions,"[46] but a given subculture may be called a "counterculture" if it defines itself over against – and as superior to – certain important aspects of its host culture,[47] and it may be called a "contraculture" if it amounts to nothing but a (necessarily short-lived) thoroughgoing negation of its host culture.[48] Robbins's study does not mention developing first-century "Pauline Christian" culture in this discussion of sub-, counter-, and/or contra-cultures, but it seems clear from comments found elsewhere in the book that Robbins would categorize it as a "network subculture," and see the making and use of letters as an essential element in its construction:

> The third decade (50-60 CE) represents a time when a significant 'Pauline faction' emerged, supported by a significant Pauline 'network' that supported Pauline 'cliques' in local settings. The emergence of a series of Epistles attributed to Paul, the self-proclaimed Pharisaic adherent to 'the crucified and resurrected Christ,' played a formative role in this decade and the succeeding ones.[49]

I apply in this study Robbins's model of "subculture" as an investigative category appropriate to the study of Pauline letters, with three qualifications: 1) Critical working room must be maintained for the potential overlap in "types" of

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[45] Roberts, "Toward a Generic Concept of Counter-Culture," 111-126.

[46] Robbins, *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse*, 168.

[47] Robbins, *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse*, 169-170.

[48] Robbins, *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse*, 170.

[49] Robbins, *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse*, 241-242.

subculture. 2) Critical attention must be paid to the negotiated and mutually-defining nature of the categories of "inside" and "outside" operative in any given subculture's project of self-definition vis-à-vis its host culture(s). 3) The communal social identity of any given subcultural group is not built through free, explicit, and deliberate processes of self-definition alone. The construction of the social identity of a group involves subtle forms of cooperation and interaction with identities suggested/imposed by perceived leaders, outsiders, etc.

On the first point of qualification, I note that the subcultural categories of networked, conceptual, and ethnic may overlap significantly (as implicitly acknowledged by Robbins in his reference to the question as a matter of relative "prominence"). In Chapter 3, for example, I argue that the insider community identity constructed by Romans has important conceptual and ethnic dimensions, which support the articulation of the ideal network subculture it describes.

On the second point of qualification, I note that Robbins's reference in the passage cited above to potential confusion in distinguishing a network in a culture from a network subculture points to an important sociological principle involved in understanding community identity definition: While it is clearly true "in-groups" are usually defined by insiders in contradistinction with "out-groups," the identification of "inside" versus "outside" is always a matter of representation and interpretation. Even a diametrically oppositional subculture like the "contraculture" evoked by Robbins would need, after all, significant points of contact with its host culture in order to be recognizable, intelligible, and meaningful to either its own "insiders" or the "outsiders" toward whom it presents such thoroughgoing opposition (including,

for example shared languages with which to compose and express "inside" inversions of "outside" values, shared knowledge of "dominant" cultural assumptions and norms that can then be defied and subverted in meaningful ways). This principle of negotiation is particularly evident in a hegemonic and colonial context like the Roman empire, since, as postcolonial theorists point out, dominant cultures and subordinate cultures in such contexts define identity in terms of us/them borders articulated through complex, negotiated cultural projects of imitation and representation.[50]

Because social constructions of "inside" and "outside" are mutually defining and mutually dependent, a model of subculture based on the subcultural categories of Bryan Wilson like Robbins's is incomplete without Wilson's complementary sociological observation from a decade earlier that even the most insular subcultures (or "sects") need to exhibit some minimal level of accommodation and even positive engagement vis-à-vis the world "outside."[51] Such a subculture, Wilson specifies, "if it is to persist," must build and maintain a "degree of separateness from the world"[52] that strikes a balance "between genuine separateness from the world and the desire for social respectability."[53]

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[50] See H. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 1-18. See also the discussions of the relevance of postcolonial theory in Chapters 1 and 2 below.

[51] Bryan R. Wilson, "An Analysis of Sect Development," *American Sociological Review* 24.1 (1959): 12-13.

[52] Wilson, "An Analysis of Sect Development," 10, italics mine.

[53] Wilson, "An Analysis of Sect Development," 13.

In very general terms, a "balanced," negotiated construction of the self-conception and self-representation of a given group in terms of "inside" and "outside" is necessarily always at work in in-group definition, like a conceptual-discursive-performative membrane: conceptual in that it is understood in the intellectually conceived and perceived categories of "inside" and "outside," discursive in that shared discourses articulate it, and performative in that lived social practices of communicating and acting enact and regulate it. The image of "insider/outsider" community identity definition operating like a membrane is in fact picked up by David Sloan Wilson, in trying to apply the sociological work of Rodney Stark[54] toward better understandings of the emergence of early global Christian culture: "The analogy to a biological cell is instructive. Cell membranes allow wonderfully complicated self-sustaining processes to take place inside the cell amidst a larger outside world."[55] Sloane Wilson understands the developing ability of emerging global Christian culture to define and attend to insiders as a sociological expression of this function of a healthy membrane.

The point of my bringing Wilson's "Analysis of Sect Development" to bear on Wilson's "Typology of Sects" here in refining Robbins's model can also be clarified with reference to the image of a living cell. It is a truism that a functional cell membrane defines and sustains a healthy "inside" precisely because it is *both permeable enough and impermeable enough* to allow the cell to define its place and

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[54] Rodney Stark, *The Rise of Christianity: A Sociologist Reconsiders History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996).

[55] David Sloan Wilson, *Darwin's Cathedral. Evolution, Religion, and the Nature of Society* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2002), 151.

make its way in the world "outside." A membrane that refused to allow any absorption and/or excretion and/or communication at all would, after all, destroy the very cell that produced it. In an analogous way, I note here that a functional, well-adapted subculture will exhibit a qualified positive kind of engagement with the "outside" world(s) upon which its projects of self-definition depend.

The principle of qualified positive engagement identified here is, I note, implicit in the understandings of social identity construction and subculture definition outlined above. Somers and Gibson describe for example, the mechanism of insider-group definition as a "selective appropriation" of stories and interpretations already available in wider "outside" cultural environments – stories reframed and retold by the in-group as "our story."[56] The process Somers and Gibson identify of in-groups defining themselves in contradistinction to "outside" cultures therefore necessarily relies to some degree upon qualified positive engagement with the very cultures thus identified as belonging "outside." Baur's idea of developing Christian cultures taking shape and surviving by achieving the *right type and the right amount* of "borrowing" from wider cultural environments similarly implies the importance of a distinct yet negotiated "inside" culture characterized by a degree of positive engagement with wider cultural worlds "outside." The twin facts noted by Robbins – that subcultures need internally-shared characteristics distinct enough to be distinguished from their host cultures but may court suicidal social dysfunction if they are uniformly oppositional vis-à-vis those

[56] See Somers and Gibson, "Reclaiming the Epistemological 'Other,'" 59-60.

host cultures – similarly point to the need for a "balanced," negotiated border-asserting stance on the part of a functional in-group.

In my study, the need for qualified positive engagement in processes of subcultural identity definition will be addressed explicitly, and treated as a kind of "Law of the Membrane" dictating that a well-adapted subculture must appear both "normal" enough and "distinct" enough to appear intelligible, attractive, useful, and functional. I have chosen the metaphor of the membrane to talk about this ideal subcultural border between "inside" and "outside" because an exterior cell membrane is not merely a barrier. Its function depends upon being dependably, selectively permeable. The ideal membranes defining subcultural communities (real and ideal) are similarly functional precisely because they conveniently permeable: to accomplish the self-definitional and self-representational balancing act I have just described, a subculture must define and present itself as both accommodating enough and self-asserting enough. It must be represented by insiders as both engaging enough and insular enough to find a place and make its way in the "outside" world(s) upon which its projects of self-definition partly depend. In the chapters below, I show that ancient association network letters (including "real" and "ideal" letters, and including Paul's insider-to-insider letter to the Romans) dependably represent their inscribed ideal insider communities in exactly this way.

The implications of the reference here to "inscribed" communities that "are represented" in such letters bring me to my final qualification of the subcultural model I have adopted and adapted from the socio-rhetorical work of Robbins. Although reference is made here and there by the Social Identity theorists

cited above to the "self-definition" of community identities, it is important to notice here that the community ideals represented in ancient letters do not preserve free, explicit projects of self-definition on the part of everyone in any given sender community and/or addressee community. The community ideals articulated and promoted in such letters represent the particular ideals of particular insiders claiming some degree of prototypicality and authority. The pictures of insider communities represented are therefore understandably often more prescriptive than descriptive, making their relationship to the self-understandings and behaviours of "real insiders on the ground" somewhat uncertain.

I have already stressed in introducing this section that from the perspective of Social Identity Theory, social identity is not a stable given, but is rather an instance of consensus requiring discursive construction. As Jean-François Bayart puts it, "there is no such thing as identity, only operational acts of identification. The identities we talk about… as if they existed independently of those who express them, are made (and unmade) only through the mediation of such identificatory acts, in short, by their enunciation."[57] In their elaboration of "positioning theory," sociologists B. Davies and Rom Harré argue in a similar vein that the identities of speakers, hearers, writers, readers, and interlocutors are not simply givens expressed and addressed in human discursive interactions, but are in fact constructed and negotiated in discourse itself.[58] The "identificatory acts"

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[57] Jean-François Bayart, *The Illusion of Cultural Identity* (S. Rendall et al., trans.; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 92.

[58] B. Davies and Rom Harré, "Positioning and Personhood," in *Positioning Theory: Moral Contexts of Intentional Action* (R. Harré and L. van Langenhove, eds.; Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), 34.

constituting such discourses involve, moreover, as stressed recently by Russell McCutcheon in his collection *Fabricating Identities*, socially-situated reactions to identities enunciated by others, not just self-defining utterances freely expressed. For this reason, McCutcheon's investigation of the intersection of cultural expressions deemed "religious" and processes of identity construction aims (following Louis Althusser) at understanding "the process by which one's subjectivity is formed in a collaborative public setting, in which one is addressed or treated in this or that way and which then leads to one taking on this or that identity, and thus place, within a diverse (and usually hierarchical) system."[59] For most people, the construction and negotiation of social identity very often begins, in other words, with the identities that are assigned to them or assumed for them when they are addressed by others – especially when they are addressed by perceived authorities. This principle of group "self-definition" being a process significantly shaped by the definitions assigned by perceived authorities will be treated as fundamental here, as a natural consequence of the fact that in-groups often depend upon special insiders perceived as exemplary and/or authoritative to model the proper insider ways of talking and behaving,[60] including proper insider ways to experience and interact with the realities of the "outside" world.[61]

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[59] Russell McCutcheon, "Introduction," in *Fabricating Identities* (R. McCutcheon, ed.; Bristol, CT: Equinox, 2017), 3.

[60] See J. Blommaert, *Discourse: Key Topics in Sociolinguistics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 72; N. Fairclough, *Discourse and Social Change* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992), 80-81; J. E. Richardson, *Analysing Newspapers: An Approach from Critical Discourse Analysis* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007), 23, 28.

[61] See Saville-Troike, *The Ethnography of Communication: An Introduction*, 124.

Of course, rhetorical constructions of proper insider identity do not merely assert and implement a pre-existing stable group-defining power on the part of the authority figure(s) addressing the in-group thus constructed. When the sender(s) of a letter can be presented as speaking with a voice of group insider authority, for example, this representation constructs the sender(s) as well as the addressee(s). The examinations of ancient letters offered in the chapters below will therefore pay close attention to the ways in which the place and voice assumed by their inscribed senders can construct those senders as proper insider authority figures. It is important to note, furthermore, in a study focused on epistolary operations of the Law of the Membrane, that the representation of proper insider authority and the representation of insider community as a distinct and special reality are also connected (from the point of view of Social Identity Theory) by the fact that the perceived ability to define an identifiable, special in-group is essential to a claim to leadership in that group:

> Alexander Haslam follows Michael Hogg in observing that "as individuals identify more strongly with a group they increasingly confer leadership on those who are perceived to be prototypical of the ingroup's position." [T]his means that within a social identity perspective the preference of group members for leaders is not a function of those leaders' qualities in the abstract, but of their capacity positively to differentiate between ingroup and outgroup and to make their group "special."[62]

This principle of authority-led and authority-defining group (self-)definition means that letters are discursive social tools. They offer inscribed ideal addressees an opportunity to see and comport themselves as insiders belonging to communities

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[62] Esler, *Conflict and Identity in Romans*, 38.

wherein proper structures of identity and authority are made possible by means of proper, ennobling inside/outside membranes. In cases like Romans, where virtually nothing other than the letter itself remains to witness to the details of this process in action, the communities involved appear to the modern investigator first and foremost as textual phenomena. This fact raises special problems for interpreters interested in the ways that such texts may have constructed social identity for the communities that produced and preserved them. These problems will be outlined and addressed here with reference to the NT-critical work of Judith Lieu.

When Judith Lieu adopts Brian Stock's investigative method of describing early Christian communities as "textual communities"[63] – i.e., communities organized around texts and their interpreters – she also treats the ideal communities discernible in such texts as "textual" in the sense of being "inscribed" communities with uncertain connections to "real" identifiable, particular ancient communities. "'Christian identity' is not something which appears clearly as such at a given moment," Lieu writes; it is rather in every case of ancient Christian writing a matter of consensus sought through ideals "inscribed" in negotiation with environments "outside" according to what I have identified here as the Law of the Membrane.[64] "How did early Christian writers," Lieu therefore urges scholars to ask, "find ways of inscribing their sense of who they were as part of and yet also as separate within the complexities of the Graeco-Roman world?"[65] Because such ancient writers were

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[63] Lieu, *Christian Identity in the Jewish and Greco-Roman World*, 28.

[64] Lieu, *Neither Jew nor Greek*?, 6

[65] Lieu, *Neither Jew nor Greek?*, 6. Cf. Lieu, *Christian Identity in the Jewish and Graeco-Roman World*, 1-26.

more concerned with inscribing particular ideals about Christian identity than with recording disinterested historical accounts of the character of real local communities on the ground, Lieu points out, the relationship of their prescriptive visions to their historical value as descriptive witnesses is often uncertain: "[W]hen we attend to the voice of the text, often that of a particular author, we may not always be confident with how far it is articulating an existing consensus, or how far it is engaged in construction," Lieu concludes. "[W]e can catch partial, but only partial, glimpses of a wider range of social experience than [the ideal experiences and perspectives] directly represented by the texts."[66]

According to Lieu, then, the kind of early Christian identity discernible in NT texts is by definition always necessarily a "inscribed" identity marked by "uncertain" and "partial" relationships to the self-understandings of real ancient communities in the first-century world. As the study of Holmberg cited above shows in its review of this problem, though, scholars interested in the construction of social identity in NT texts offer a range of opinions on exactly how "uncertain" and "partial" the "glimpses" of real communities to be found in such texts are. Holmberg describes on the one hand a growing NT-critical assumption that any given early Christian identity is fundamentally a "textual reality" and a "rhetorical construction with uncertain relation to actual social life,"[67] citing Lieu as exemplifying such a minimalist stance.[68] Holmberg does not name any maximalist extremists occupying

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[66] Lieu, *Christian Identity in the Jewish and Graeco-Roman World*, 9.

[67] Holmberg, "Understanding the First Hundred Years of Christian Identity," 5.

[68] Holmberg, "Understanding the First Hundred Years of Christian Identity," 6-8.

the opposite end of the spectrum of (un)certainty thus evoked, but he does identify more "optimistic" proponents of Social Identity Theory in NT studies, who recognize written expressions of early Christian identity as instances of "rhetorical construction" but who nevertheless insist that such ancient literary constructions can function as sign-posts pointing modern investigators toward real concrete examples of consensus on Christian identity "accepted and acted upon by groups within the movement."[69] Holmberg cites here Philip F. Esler and David G. Horrell as examples,[70] and he makes it clear that his own investigative assumptions and sympathies place him on this end of the spectrum:

> [I]f the material is approached from the direction of rhetorical analysis (as Lieu and others do), identity appears to be, at least in extreme cases, something floating in the air at a distance from the earth. It is so hard to know whether it floats above the earth, like a balloon that is anchored to the earthly terrain, or like a cloud that is not, it is tempting to leave it floating up there in the thin air of ideas.[71]

Holmberg is clearly right to insist that written witnesses to early Christian projects of constructing social identity must be connected in history to real social groups and processes somehow.[72] In the specific case of Romans, there is to begin with, as Chapter 3 shows, an overwhelming consensus (based on careful examinations of its "Pauline" vocabulary, style, and ideas, its early and confident frequent citation, etc.) that the text as we have it represents a real letter sent to

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[69] Holmberg, "Understanding the First Hundred Years of Christian Identity," 5.

[70] Holmberg, "Understanding the First Hundred Years of Christian Identity," 16-20.

[71] Holmberg, "Understanding the First Hundred Years of Christian Identity," 29.

[72] See Holmberg, "Understanding the First Hundred Years of Christian Identity," 9-10, 29.

Rome by Paul near the middle of the first century.[73] There is no voice in "the Romans debate" suggesting that the letter is a work from a different century, and/or a work of pure pious imagination sent nowhere by nobody. Because, as Chapter 1 below shows, ancient letters were produced, carried, used in community network situations (with no post office taking letters from just anyone and sending mail carriers to drop them off anonymously in boxes determined by impersonal numbers and street addresses), real people and networks of some kind were clearly already in place having some use for a letter from Paul about the right way to be "in Christ." At some point, somebody in Rome clearly knew and cared to some degree about Paul and/or Jesus and/or Christ, or at least knew and cared about some ancient letter carriers/readers/hearers who did.[74]

On the other hand, Holmberg's account of what investigators like Lieu deny and his account of what investigators like Esler can positively affirm about the first people involved in sharing and preserving Paul's letters both look exaggerated. It is hard to see Lieu's conclusion (cited above) that scholars "may not always be confident" about the self-understandings and concrete situations of ancient addressee communities, and must make do somehow with the "partial glimpses" of such ancient realities on the ground offered in NT texts as a radical, untethered denial of the knowability and relevance of the real world in NT studies, and Holmberg fails to name anyone who does take such an "extreme" stance. When

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[73] On this now unanimous opinion, see Cranfield, *Romans*, 1-2.

[74] See on this point Ian H. Henderson, "Early Christianity, Textual Representation and Ritual Extension," in *Texte als Medium und Reflexion von Religion im römischen Reich* (Dorothea Elm von der Ostern et al, eds.; Heidelberg: Franz Steiner, 2006), 87.

Holmberg asks, "Is Paul really constructing identity in Romans, or is he merely construing it?"[75] and claims that because Paul's letters seem to appeal to a globally shared Christian experience of being somehow "in Christ" and to validate it as central, "Paul is rather clarifying identity than creating it,"[76] he fails to take into account a crucial point of Social Identity Theory as understood and summarized above. It is entirely possible (as mentioned in the discussion of my study's use of the label "Christian") that nobody in Rome or any other Pauline addressee community had a compelling feeling that they were "in Christ," and that none of Paul's addressees in Rome or elsewhere talked about themselves as being collectively "in Christ" as either a local group or a global "movement" before they were addressed that way by Paul himself, whether in person or by means of a letter or representative claiming his authority. Assuming that "being in Christ" is a pre-existing, central, and proper defining characteristic of first-Century Christian identity is itself therefore (from a point of view consistently informed by Social Identity Theory) an attempt to define insider social identity from above and/or afar.

As Chapter 1 below shows in discussing the habits of Greco-Roman association network letters, and as Chapter 3 below shows in discussing the ideal community traits assumed to be common and normative in Rom 12-15, the articulation and promotion of dimensions of group identity depicted as already shared and normative is itself a function of the authority-led group definition just described. Authorial constructions of what is (or should be) central to group

[75] Holmberg, "Understanding the First Hundred Years of Christian Identity," 18.

[76] Holmberg, "Understanding the First Hundred Years of Christian Identity," 26.

identity for any given letter's insider addressees are always presented as a clarification (or a "reminder") of something essential which is "already there" in the group waiting to be honored and actualized. Holmberg's idea of what Paul "clarified" as already essential to "the movement" (notice the assumption that a global, singular label is appropriate here) therefore begs the question by *accepting* the ideal given global community identity articulated and promoted in Paul's letters as a real given (see, for example, the discussion in Chapter 3 below of the reference to a "reminder" in Rom 15:15). Against this approach, which begs the question posed by Lieu above of "how far [a given text's inscribed ideal of group identity] is articulating an existing consensus, or how far it is engaged in construction," I will in this study follow Lieu[77] in insisting 1) that texts like Romans have a significant, knowable connection to real early Christian groups and Christian identities on the ground and 2) that texts like Romans offer only "partial glimpses" of such real, concrete community identities in articulating and promoting their own ideal community identities. My own minimalist account of the identifiable and important real-world "tether" tying the prescriptive rhetorical constructions of Romans to real-world addressees (about whom very little can be positively affirmed) is outlined below, in my discussion of real, concrete human community needs in the first century and my use of "the Evolutionary Interpretive Lens" (Introduction Part 5 – see also my account in Chapter 3 of the real-world context and utility of the "imagined community" of the ideal global network conjured by the association-epistolary rhetoric of Romans). In

[77] On the relatively "maximalist" reconstructions of the "real" addressees of Romans of Esler and Horrell, and my assertion of a "minimalism" like Lieu's against them, see the discussion below in "Introduction Part 5. Romans and the Evolutionary Interpretive Lens."

order to clarify and justify that global real-world connection, though, it is necessary first to clarify the special relationship between the ancient phenomenon of producing and using real and ideal insider-to-insider letters and the kind of rhetorical construction of ideal community in-group identity just described in terms of Social Identity Theory. This relationship and its relevance to first-century projects in the construction of Christian identity therefore provide the focus of the next section.

Introduction Part 4: Association Network Letters and the Purpose of Romans

Ancient Greco-Roman associations are widely and increasingly recognized by scholars today as helpfully analogous to first-century Christian and/or Jewish assemblies, and of accordingly great importance in comparative terms to NT criticism.[78] "The majority of scholarly works leave little doubt," Richard Ascough writes in his 2015 literature review, "regarding the relevance of associations for understanding the organizational and ideological predilections of the early Christ groups. In their structure and organization Christ groups look and sound like associations."[79] Pauline Studies has taken a particular interest in this emerging interpretive context. In the eyes of many like Edward Adams, "the relevance of the associations to the study of Paul's churches can no longer be in doubt."[80] This surge of interest is evident in the numbers turned up by Ascough's literature review, "What Are They *Now* Saying About Christ Groups and Associations?," published in 2015: "Between 1970 and 1998, there were about a dozen books and articles published on associations and Pauline Christ groups," Ascough reports, but "[s]ince 1998, at least six times that many books and articles have appeared that address

[78] See the literature cited in Section 1.1 below.

[79] Richard S. Ascough, "What Are They *Now* Saying about Christ Groups and Associations?," *Currents in Biblical Research* 13.2 (2015): 207.

[80] Edward A. Adams, "First-Century Models for Paul's Churches: Selected Scholarly Developments since Meeks," in *After the First Urban Christians: The Social-Scientific Study of Pauline Christianity Twenty-Five Years Later* (T. D. Still and D. G. Hornell, eds.; New York: T & T Clark, 2009), 71. Cf. J. Harrison, "Paul's House Churches and the Cultic Associations," *Reformed Theological Review* 58 (1999): 31-47; J. Harrison, *Paul's Language of Grace in its Graeco-Roman Context* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003).

directly, and in some detail, the relationship between associations and early Christ groups."[81]

While noting the need for the awareness that "Greco-Roman association" can be a deceivingly simple retrospective scholarly category and needs case-by-case definition, Ascough concludes his review by joining John Kloppenborg in saying that the time has come for NT critics to stop debating the appropriateness of the approach, and to move ahead with studies applying it with more boldness and thickness of description,[82] effectively treating the development of global "Early Christianity" as one association network among many.[83] Ascough's review notes in particular that "no extensive work has been done in applying the data from associations to understanding the formation and structure of the Christ groups at Rome or the Pauline letter addressed to them."[84] My dissertation addresses this lacuna by applying the new focus on association culture(s) to the letter to the Romans, paying particular attention to first-century association epistolary culture. As Lutz Doering noted in 2012, association-epistolary culture looks "particularly relevant" to the analysis of Paul's letters, and yet this interpretive lead has been

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[81] Ascough, "What Are They *Now* Saying about Christ Groups and Associations?," 208.

[82] Ascough, "What Are They *Now* Saying about Christ Groups and Associations?," 225; See also John S. Kloppenborg, "Membership Practices in Pauline Christ Groups," *Early Christianity* 4 (2013): 187-188; John S. Kloppenborg, "The Moralizing of Discourse in Greco-Roman Associations," in *"The One Who Sows Bountifully." Essays in Honor of Stanley S. Stowers* (Caroline Johnson Hodge et al., eds.; Providence: Brown University Press, 2013), 228.

[83] See Richard Ascough, "Translocal Relationships Among Voluntary Associations and Early Christianity," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 5.2 (1997): 223-241.

[84] Ascough, "What Are They *Now* Saying about Christ Groups and Associations?," 221 (See also 225).

"rarely followed up so far."[85] By analyzing Rom 12-15 in the context of insider-to-insider association letter culture, my study addresses these lacunae pointed out by Ascough and Doering, and contributes to the pursuit of the promising new directions recommended by their analyses.

In order to examine Romans in the context of the forms and functions of insider-to-insider letter culture(s), I need to clarify how an insider-to-insider letter may be defined for my purposes here, and explain what its function may be. The specific problems involved in defining Greco-Roman (and Greco-Roman Jewish) associations networks will be addressed below in the chapters devoted to their discussion. For now, it is enough to specify that letters sent between people understanding themselves to be fellow insiders within such networks commonly served projects of subcultural community definition in the first century, in both Greco-Roman[86] and Greco-Roman Jewish[87] contexts. This social function of letters should come as no surprise. As political scientist and historian Benedict Anderson illustrated in his study of "imagined communities,"[88] disparate individuals and groups are fully capable of perceiving themselves as unified by a common identity, even when they are separated by time and geography to such an extent that they

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[85] See Lutz Doering, *Ancient Jewish Letters and the Beginnings of Christian Epistolography* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012), 390.

[86] See Doering, *Ancient Jewish Letters*, 389-390.

[87] See Miller, *Performances of Ancient Jewish* Letters, 48, 129.

[88] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (2nd ed.; London: Verso, 2006).

will almost certainly never meet,[89] and it is worth noticing for the purposes of this study that as a means of communication specifically designed to connect people separated in such ways by time and space, the ancient letter as we know it is a tool eminently suited to the construction of such imagined communities. As Chapters 1 through 3 of this study show below, letters have the capacity, in the words of Mathilde Cambron-Goulet, to "transform and tighten the community in which they are held, [as] readers, or hearers, are included in the community – or its idealized image."[90] An insider-to-insider letter constructs by definition an inscribed community identity of the kind sketched above with reference to Social Identity Theory and Judith's Lieu "textual communities" – a strategically "special" imagined community, or, as Jason König puts it, as an "idealised community [of the like-minded], often isolated from and resistant to the norms of wider society… within its own safe and clearly bounded epistolary domain."[91] By locating the overall purpose and the specific rhetorical strategies of Romans within this context of the epistolary construction of insider social identity in negotiation with "outside" structures of identity and order, my study follows up on Philip Harland's demonstration that first-century association cultures (including Christian assembly cultures) evolved in

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[89] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 6.

[90] Cambron-Goulet, "Orality in Philosophical Epistles," in *Between Orality and Literacy: Communication and Adaptation in Antiquity* (R. Scodel, ed.; Boston: Brill, 2014), 165.

[91] Jason König, "Alciphron and the Sympotic Letter Tradition," in *Epistolary Narratives in Ancient Greek Literature* (O. Hodkinso et al., eds.; Boston: Brill, 2013), 198. For more on insider-to-insider letters as perfect tools for ideal community identity definition, see Matthew J. Marohl, "Letter Writing and Social Identity," in the *T & T Clark Handbook to Social Identity in the New Testament* (J. B. Tucker and C. A. Baker, eds.; New York: Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2014), 93-104; Lutz Doering, *Ancient Jewish Letters and the Beginnings of Christian Epistolography* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012), 390; Marvin L. Miller, *Performances of Ancient Jewish Letters. From Elephantine to MMT* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2015), 48, 129.

ways carefully balancing attitudes of "tension" and "accommodation,"[92] and confirms using comparative association-epistolary evidence the expectation of Halvor Moxnes that the rhetoric of Romans "served basic needs for communities in the process of forging a distinctive identity, [including] a need for acceptance and integration in society at large as well as for border making."[93]

Given the investigative assumption that insider-to-insider letters were produced and used partly to serve subcultural community definition, a crucial step toward understanding the form(s) and function(s) of Romans can be taken by building an understanding of how well-adapted Romans looks to serving this function. I use the characterization "well-adapted" here as a reminder that early Christian identities and the technologies and social strategies that defined them are phenomena that evolved along with the communities and environments that produced them. This "evolutionary" character of social identities and their textual definition, and its relevance to theorizing the real and ideal sender(s) and addresees of Romans, is the focus of the next section, which addresses the evolutionary metaphor that has proven both inspiring and frustrating to Romans critics since the time of Baur.

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[92] See Harland, *Associations, Synagogues, and Congregations*. *Claiming a Place in Ancient Mediterranean Society* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 137-173.

[93] Halvor Moxnes, "Honor, Shame, and the Outside World in Romans," in *The Social World of Formative Christianity and Judaism* (J. Neusner et al., eds.; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), 216.

Introduction Part 5: Romans and the Evolutionary Interpretive Lens

In his 2003 presidential address to the Canadian Society for Biblical Studies, "The Origin of the Christian Species: Lessons from the Study of Natural History for the Reconstruction of the History of Earliest Christianity," Frederik Wisse proposed an evolutionary model for the scholarly investigation of the development of early Christian culture. In its general outlines, Wisse's proposed investigative project is very compatible with my project as described so far here, and my study can be usefully further defined by reviewing the common methodological ground my approach shares with Wisse's, and by identifying where and why I see a need to add elements to, or subtract elements from, Wisse's evolutionary approach here.

Wisse applies the evolutionary metaphor to the development of global Christan culture by associating its emergence with the "chance happenings" of history, distinguishing a truly historical approach from partisan Christian approaches treating the development of early Christian culture as a foregone conclusion due to divine intervention and/or a perfect posited original Christian cultural essence: "From an historian's viewpoint," he specifies, "the eventual flourishing of the Church did not happen because it was inherently better adapted to its Hellenistic environment than its rivals. Remove any of a number of chance happenings and the outcome would have been quite different."[94] Wisse names "the conversion of Paul and his role as a missionary" and "the conversion of Constantine" as important among the "chance happenings" that shaped the historical development of early global Christian culture.

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[94] Wisse, "The Origin of the Christian Species," 21.

Wisse pursues this evolutionary metaphor by characterizing early Christian texts as comparable to fossil remains in that they provide snapshots of particular moments in complex historical processes,[95] and comparable to mutations in that although many texts may have been produced, only a few happened to be adaptive enough for their influence and evidence to remain.[96] In terms of the evolutionary environments in which subcultural changes may prove adaptive or maladaptive, Wisse notes that relationships with (including "borrowings" from) cultural environments "outside" are of important interest,[97] but in keeping with the "chance" nature of the environments and events involved in a Darwinian evolutionary process, Wisse describes it as a "Lamarckian" mistake to assume that Christian culture evolved as a deliberate attempt to address and survive the Greco-Roman world outside.[98] Since in his view "a developmental theory analogous to Darwin's theory of evolution appears to be more appropriate for explaining the changes in early Christianity than a Lamarckian type of adaptation to the environment,"[99] Wisse proposes seeing Christian cultural change as something that occurred only rarely and randomly, as either an irrelevant or a destabilizing "blip" in the natural "stasis" of the Christian culture in which it found itself: "The ideal state for both early Christianity and organisms is stasis, and transformation has happened only

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[95] Wisse, "The Origin of the Christian Species," 15.

[96] Wisse, "The Origin of the Christian Species," 20.

[97] Wisse, "The Origin of the Christian Species," 8-9, 11-12.

[98] Wisse, "The Origin of the Christian Species," 16.

[99] Wisse, "The Origin of the Christian Species," 23.

inadvertently, i.e., when a random mutation was favored by natural selection,"[100] Wisse asserts.

In keeping with his conception of texts as analogous to the relatively rare and random phenomenon of genetic mutations, Wisse recommends extreme caution for any project of using early Christian texts to reconstruct early Christian communities. Just as complex biological systems are rare in the context of life on earth, he points out, the production of texts was a rare religious expression compared to others practiced in the ancient world, which implies that "by assuming texts to be characteristic of the whole and representative of mean values, we allow 'the tail to wag the dog.' Just as complex organisms are… unpredictable and marginal to the totality of life… the relatively simple and but most common form of Christians dominated the history of Christianity, and the production of texts was and is a marginal, and largely a random, phenomenon."[101]

On some points, the approach sketched out in my previous section with reference to Lieu is very much in line with Wisse's. His evolutionary investigative assumption that Christian culture "developed" in the context of long real-world social processes (as opposed to "appearing" with Jesus and his followers and then changing only by finding itself "altered" throughout the years)[102] can be seen as aligned with my qualified "socio-rhetorical" approach here, as can his assumption that understanding the way early global Christian culture emerged as a recognizable

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[100] Wisse, "The Origin of the Christian Species," 20.

[101] Wisse, "The Origin of the Christian Species," 22.

[102] Wisse, "The Origin of the Christian Species," 23.

cultural "species" involves understanding the ways in which Christian groups strategically "borrowed" from ("Hellenistic") cultural environments outside.[103] Wisse began his discussion, in fact, by noting as my study did above the influential proposals of Baur that Christian culture evolved for real-world reasons and that cultural products like early Christian texts testify to the cultural processes involved.[104] On some points, however, it seems to me that the metaphor as presented by Wisse needs to be clarified, and the method needs to be refined for the purposes of this study.

Wisse's warning that the "mutations" and/or "fossils" of early Christian texts have the potential to be very misleading when taken as witnesses for the beliefs and practices of specific real-world Christian communities is well taken, and accords with both the general professional cautiousness he recommends concerning speculative reconstructions of specific real-world communities and situations based on complex ancient literary evidence,[105] and the specific professional cautiousness called for by Lieu. It should not be forgotten, though, that it is also far from clear that ancient texts necesarily testify to particular real-world species of Christians or Christianities. As the history of NT texts and canons shows, it was eminently possible for different kinds of Christians to use and reproduce and share and

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[103] Wisse, "The Origin of the Christian Species," 8-9, 11-12.

[104] Here Wisse cites Bauer, "Die Einleitung in das Neue Testament als theologische Wissenschaft."

[105] See Frederik Wisse, "Indirect Textual Evidence for the History of Early Christianity and Gnosticism," in *For the Children, Perfect Instruction: Studies in Honor of Hans-Martin Schenke on the Occasion of the Berliner Arbeitkreis für koptisch-gnostische Schriften's Thirtieth Year* (H, Gebhard et al., eds.; Ledien: Brill, 2002), 215-230.

preserve the same texts and overlapping collections of texts – including texts articulating visions that may look as contradictory to scholars today as Baur's posited "Petrine" and "Pauline" Christianity looked to him. I will therefore not use Romans in this study to reconstruct any specific kind of Christian or Christianity *per se*, any more than I will use it to reconstruct any specific speculative original communities represented by its fossilized forms of discourse. I refer here to "discourse" as the thing fossilized in a text like Romans because Wisse's mixed metaphorical image of text as both mutation and fossil looks confused and confusing to me. It seems to me that texts are like fossils in that they represent snapshots of discursive habits preserved in the archaeological record (and/or in traditions repurposing them) to serve different purposes for different users over time. My study will therefore treat the letter to the Romans and the ancient letters examined alongside it comparatively as witnessing primarily to discursive habits as opposed to specific ancient communities, Christians, Christianities, etc.

Due to my shift of investigative emphasis in this study from speculative reconstructions of first-century people to demonstrable first-century discursive habits, the chapters below offer relatively little in the way of speculation about the putative users and addressees of Romans, and this includes its putative senders, including Paul himself. I referred above to Davies and Harré's point that writers and audiences are not simply givens expressed and addressed in discursive interactions, but are in fact constructed and negotiated by them. Wisse expresses a similar insight when he notes at one point that influential textual producers like Paul may well be

involved in "making theological history rather than simply reflecting it."[106] My study follows up on this insight in cultural as opposed to personal and theological terms, by approaching the discourses articulated and preserved in ancient texts (in this case letters) as tools that helped build in-groups and insider cultures as opposed to merely representing them, by articulating rhetorical constructions of ideal insider community identities. Such community-defining texts promote discursive pictures of insider communities to which people can feel and act as belonging, with or without the precise personal intentions of the authors and/or senders being revealed or realized. This approach is consistent not only with the chastened extension of the approach of Wisse just described, but also with the recent chastened recognition within Pauline studies (noted by Laura Nasrallah and Melanie Johnson-Debaufre) that "we do not have access to a 'real Paul' – only a projected rhetorical persona"[107] – a recognition increasingly seen as pointing scholars to a more critical and consistent focus on Paul's letters as "rhetorical instruments that construct both Paul and his audience."[108] My study is accordingly focused very deliberately on the perceived problem of "the purpose of Romans," and not "the purpose of Paul in writing Romans." I do not expect everyone interested in Romans to conclude based on the advice of scholars like Nasrallah and Johnson-Debaufre that Paul's intentions are unknowable and/or uninteresting, but I do expect it to be

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[106] Wisse, "The Origin of the Christian Species," 15.

[107] Penner and Lopez, "Rhetorical Approaches," 41.

[108] Johnson-DeBaufre and Nasrallah, "Beyond the Heroic Paul," 174; See also Wuellner, "Paul's Rhetoric of Argumentation," 128-146; Dennis L. Stamps, "Rethinking the Rhetorical Situation: The Entextualization of the Situation in New Testament Epistles," in *Rhetoric and the New Testament: Essays from the 1992 Heidelberg Conference* (S. E. Porter and T. H. Olbricht, eds.; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1993), 193-210.

acceptable for the question of the individual authorial intentions of "the real Paul" to be set aside at least provisionally (for the purposes of this particular study and for the reasons just mentioned), to make room for different investigative methods.

A historical-evolutionary perspective on letter culture expressed as a project of comparison may be seen as raising the question of analogy versus genealogy: are the forms of Christian epistolary culture to be understood as merely analogous to those of the epistolary culture of a wider Hellenistic "environment," or are they to be understood as dependent and derivative? This question was, I note, in fact raised at the earliest stages of the scholarly evolutionary-comparative study of ancient letters aimed at understanding New Testament texts, in the pioneering work of Adolf Deissmann.[109] This question of analogy versus genealogy is addressed below in Chapter 1. For now, it is enough to say that no attempt is made in this study to argue that one epistolary culture has necessarily "borrowed" from another, any more than a biologist would argue that the evolution of the vertebrate eye "borrowed" from the evolution of the arthropod eye. Many different types of eyes have apparently evolved independently in the animal world. Any two of them can be examined as comparable without needing to argue that one is genealogically derivative of the other.[110] Similarly, in keeping with the caution of Wisse mentioned above against Lamarckian error, the epistolary forms and functions identified by this study as usefully comparable are not conceived and analyzed here as cases of subcultural

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[109] See A. Deissmann, *Light From the Ancient East* (*The New Testament Illustrated by Recently Discovered Texts of the Graeco-Roman World* (L. R. M. Strachan, trans.; London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1927), 265-266.

[110]See M. F. Land and D. Nilsson, *Animal Eyes* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2002), 10-11.

borrowing aimed at adapting and surviving, but rather as comparable displays of common habits well-adapted to the cultural environment(s) of the first-century Greco-Roman Mediterranean world. When I identify habits common to Greco-Roman association cultures in Cynic epistles in Chapter 1, I do not approach it as a case of Cynic networks "borrowing from Greco-Roman culture." Cynic networks *are Greco-Roman cultures*. They do not "borrow from Greco-Roman culture" any more than animals with eyes "borrow" their retinas from other animals endowed with comparable eyes due to common ancestors and/or parallel evolutionary paths. By the same token, this study does not describe the ideal Pauline network of Rom 12-15 (or any other Christian network) as "borrowing from Greco-Roman association culture" either, when I identify association-epistolary characteristics shared with Cynic networks and other comparable networks. *Christian association networks are Greco-Roman cultural expressions*, and Greco-Roman subcultures instantiate and constitute Greco-Roman culture. They do not borrow from it.

The final refinement this study adds to the evolutionary approach advocated by Wisse addresses the need to connect my investigation of "the purpose of Romans" to the kinds of real-world situations and needs theorized and sought since the time of Baur, after Lieu's caution against the traditional speculative ways of reconstructing specific real-world communities, senders, and addressees has been taken seriously. An evolutionary investigative method like Wisse's needs something like Stark's evolutionary-sociological model (mentioned above) to ground theorized processes of textual and cultural production in real-world processes of social life and in-group survival. According to Stark's model, emerging global Christian culture

survived and thrived by proving to be adaptive in real-world ways (for example by encouraging more stable, reproductive marriages than their Romanized "pagan" neighbours did). One such well-adapted subcultural characteristic of emerging global Christian culture was, Stark suggests, the ability of its in-groups to build networks of mutual care, in a world in which such social "safety nets" were highly advantageous but far from guaranteed.[111] The real-world social survival value of these adaptive characteristics of networked Christian in-groups offer evolutionary models like Wisse's an answer to the question of how emerging global Christian culture established itself enough and survived long enough to benefit from the rare happy accidents he names as helpful to its continued existence and increasing global definition (like the conversion of Constantine). By clarifying the ways in which in-group networks were defined by the use of letters like Romans, my study contributes to answering the question of how the networks of mutual care pointed to by Stark were concretely constructed and maintained.

My reference here to "letters like Romans" points back to Baur's second methodological ideal identified above, and thereby to a final point of agreement between Wisse's method and mine: the need for a comparative focus. Because the individual fossils of ancient texts might well testify in some cases to rare or idiosyncratic forms of culture, Wisse insists that "literary texts can only be dependable witnesses for the historical circumstances in which they were written in

[111] Stark, *The Rise of The Rise of Christianity*, 88-94. See also Sloan Wilson, *Darwin's Cathedral*, 151-157.

the characteristics they share with other texts from the period."[112] The evolutionary investigative method is therefore necessarily a comparative method. It depends, like the analysis of fossils in the investigation of natural history, upon selective, directed treatments of like with like. As Wisse notes, though, processes of retrospective classification are prone to human error and bias on the part of researchers.[113] Decisions about what is comparable with what, and about how to use the resulting category in investigating the evolutionary processes under examination therefore need to be clarified and justified. The following section addresses this methodological need, supplying the final step in introducing the problem and the solution defined by my study by clarifying the ways in which "the purpose of Romans" can be theorized and analyzed with the help of the comparative investigative perspective that has proven to be as motivating and frustrating to Romans critics since the time of Baur as his evolutionary perspective has been.

[112] Wisse, "The Origin of the Christian Species," 15.

[113] Wisse, "The Origin of the Christian Species," 13-15.

Introduction Part 6: Romans and the Comparative Interpretive Lens

I stressed in introducing the relevance to my study of Social Identity Theory that discursive projects of community definition do not simply express and address self-evident, pre-existing givens. It is important to be clear about the fact that projects of comparison do not deal in self-evident, pre-existing givens either. As Robbins acknowledged in building his model of subcultures relevant to NT study, for example, "every comparison has boundaries,"[114] and as Jonathan Z. Smith pointed out in his *Drudgery Divine: On the Comparison of Early Christianities and the Religions of Late Antiquity*, comparative boundaries need to be clearly understood not only in terms of the limits they impose, but in terms of how and why they are defined by researchers themselves. "A comparison is a disciplined exaggeration in the service of knowledge," Smith writes: "It lifts out and strongly marks certain features within difference as being of possible intellectual significance, expressed in the rhetoric of their being 'like' in some stipulated fashion. Comparison provides the means by which we 're-vision' phenomena as our data in order to solve our theoretical problems."[115]

The "theoretical problem" I have defined here is the perceived scholarly problem of the purpose of Romans. Ancient association cultures (and insider-to-insider association network letters in particular) are the retrospective categories I have defined as relevant in drawing my comparative investigative frame. The

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[114] Robbins, *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse*, 96.

[115] J. Z. Smith, *Drudgery Divine. On the Comparison of Early Christianities and the Religions of Late Antiquity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 52.

"features within difference" I have marked here as important enough to justify the definition of such a comparative corpus are first-century practices of insider community identity definition articulated in contradistinction with – and dependence upon – simultaneously articulated ideal "outside" structures of social order identity, in letters represented as communication between insiders.

The particular choices I have made here in "re-visioning" available ancient evidence as my data give my study a very particular shape and potential. When the "Comparative Letter Structure Investigation" conducted into Romans by Jervis pays brief comparative attention to letter structure in very general terms,[116] followed by extended comparative attention to the typical epistolary structures (openings, thanksgivings, parousias, and conclusions) of a corpus limited to Paul's other undisputed letters,[117] the result is a speculative reconstruction of the "concerns of the letter" imagined in terms of "Paul's overriding concern" about the status of "the Roman believers" in relation to his own "apostolic orbit."[118] This proposed solution to the traditional perceived problem of "The Purpose of Romans" leaves work to be done, it seems to me, in that the identities of sender(s) and addressees involved are allowed to stand more or less as pre-existing givens, and in that Jervis leaves the question of Baur unanswered as to why Romans is *not* "like" the other undisputed Pauline letters she investigates as "like," in terms of the access it seems to provide investigators about the context of a specific occasion and audience situation. By

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[116] Jervis, *The Purpose of Romans*, 29-41.

[117] Jervis, *The Purpose of Romans*, 41-157.

[118] Jervis, *The Purpose of Romans*, 164.

focusing on the "insider/outsider" dynamic of community identity definition found at work in ancient insider-to-insider letters like Romans, my study is, unlike the kind of comparative investigation proposed by Jervis, able to account for the identities of sender(s) and addresses as ideals constructed *by* the letter. By focusing on widely-shared and non-community-specific habits of first-century community definition by letter, and on the place of such "trans-local" projects of community definition within the evolution of the emerging global network of mutual care described by Rodney Stark and David Sloane Wilson, my study is able to account for the uniqueness of Romans perceived by scholars in comparison to Paul's other undisputed letters in terms of its epistolary construction of – and our reconstruction of – its original situation and audience; a uniqueness of the letter seen by scholars (as already noted above) as constitutive of the perceived problem of its purpose since the time of Baur.

Using a comparative epistolary corpus, approached from the qualified "socio-rhetorical" point of view described above, my study argues that any useful idea of the "purpose of Romans" must include the definition of a socially functional ideal insider subcultural community identity, articulated in terms of a qualified positive stance toward ideal "outside" structures of order and identity, and appropriate for an emerging global association network constructed and maintained with the help of letters. Since a careful analysis of the entire letter (in the context of the entire number of ancient texts that could conceivably be categorized as insider-to-insider letters) would obviously be impossible within the practical limits of a PhD dissertation, my study is limited to examining the insider-to-insider paraenesis of

Romans 12-15, within both the internal rhetorical context of the letter's epistolary frame and the external comparative context of the epistolary and paraenetic characteristics of selected ancient insider-to-insider association network letters. By approaching the insider paraenesis of Rom 12-15 in this way, my study builds on Philip L. Tite's theory that ancient paraenetic discourses shared and preserved in insider texts (in his case Valentinian sectarian texts) can at times testify more demonstrably to competitive discursive projects of community definition than shared community projects of moral perfection *per se*,[119] by applying his socio-rhetorical interpretive lens to ancient epistolary evidence more immediately "like" Romans. As each of the chapters of my study explain, the letters selected for this purpose have been chosen to represent a range of Greco-Roman, Jewish, "real" and "ideal" epistolary textual production appropriate to the contextual analysis of a Greco-Roman Jewish letter "like Romans."

[119] Philip L. Tite, *Valentinian Ethics and Paraenetic Discourse. Determining the Social Function of Exhortation in Valentinian Christianity* (Boston: Brill, 2009).

Chapter 1. Community Identity Definition in Greco-Roman Association Letters

I have suggested that approaching Romans and the insider-to-insider advice of Rom 12-15 as epistolary community definition offers firmer investigative ground than the traditional scholarly quests for "what Paul meant." I have proposed this new investigative focus for reasons of theory and evidence: In terms of theory, scholars have a good idea of how associations needed to define themselves: as will be shown below, the scholarly study of ancient associations confirms the social-scientific expectation that such groups needed, in defining themselves, to assert a special insider group identity while also accommodating wider "outsider" cultural values and loyalties in order to survive. In terms of evidence, researchers today have more access than ever before to examples of such community self-definition in action left behind by ancient associations (including epigraphic and epistolary material evidence) for the practical application and evidence-based discipline of their theorizing. This chapter therefore 1) briefly outlines the *status quo* of the study of ancient associations, with a particular focus on social identity, community self-definition, and NT studies, 2) briefly outlines the *status quo* of the study of ancient letters with an eye to the study of ancient associations and the New Testament, and finally 3) examines specific examples of Greco-Roman association letters within the investigative context thus defined. This chapter thereby provides a cumulative academic analysis of the self-defining stance(s) of (real and ideal) association networks vis-à-vis the wider cultural structures of social identity and power in which they were embedded – particularly stances modeled in their letters – in order

to contextualize Chapter 2's account of Greco-Roman Jewish association-epistolary culture and Chapter 3's analysis of Rom 12-15 in association-epistolary terms.

Section 1.1. Greco-Roman Association Networks and New Testament Studies

The sustained academic study of Greco-Roman associations began around the turn of the 20th century,[120] with applications in NT scholarship following slowly at first.[121] In recent years, however, it has become quite common for scholars to treat ancient association culture as very relevant to understanding the nature and development of early Christian communities.[122] There are a number of reasons for

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[120] See here Theodor Mommsen, *De collegis et sodalicis Romanorum* (Kiel, 1843); Renan, *St. Paul*, 257; Georg Heinrici, "Die Christengemeinden Korinths und die religiösen Genossenschaften der Griechen" (*Zeitschrift für wissenschaftliche Theologie* 19 (1876): 465-526; Edwin Hatch, *The Organization of the Early Christian Church* (London: Longman, 1909)

[121] For a historical and bibliographical review, see Harland, *Associations, Synagogues, and Congregations*, 9-12, 283-284; Abraham J. Malherbe, *Social Aspects of Early Christianity* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1977), 87-91; Klauck, *The Religious Context of Early Christianity: A Guide to Graeco-Roman Religions* (B. McNeil, trans.; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), 42-43; Ascough, "Translocal Relationships Among Voluntary Associations and Early Christianity," 224-225.

[122] See Ascough, "What Are They *Now* Saying about Christ Groups and Associations?," 207; R. Ascough et al., eds., *Associations in the Greco-Roman World. A Sourcebook* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2012), 1; Harland, *Associations, Synagogues, and Congregations*, 2-3; W. O. McCready, "Ekklesia and Voluntary Associations," in *Voluntary Associations in the Greco-Roman World* (J. S. Kloppenborg and S. G. Wilson, eds.; New York: Routledge, 1996), 61-62; S. G. Wilson, "Voluntary Associations. An Overview," in Kloppenborg and Wilson, *Voluntary Associations in the Greco-Roman World*, 1; P. Richardson, "Early Synagogues as *Collegia* in the Diaspora and Palestine," in Kloppenborg and Wilson, *Voluntary Associations in the Greco-Roman World*, 90-109; Markus Öhler, "Römisches Vereinsrecht und christliche Gemeinden," in *Zwischen den Reichen: Neues Testament und Römische Herrschaft: Vorträge auf der ersten Konferenz der European Association for Biblical Studies* (M. Labahn and J. Zangenberg, eds.; Tübingen: Francke Verlag, 2002), 51-71; *Religiöse Vereine in der römischen Antike. Untersuchungen zu Organisation, Ritual und Raumordnung* (U. Egelhaaf-Gaiser and A. Schäfer, eds.; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002); Eva Ebel, *Die Attraktivität früher christlicher Gemeinden. Die Gemeinde von Korinth im Spiegel griechisch-römischer Vereine* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004); *Vereine, Synagogen und Gemeinden im kaiserzeitlichen Kleinasien* (A. Gutsfeld and D.-A. Koch, eds.; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006); Eva Ebel, "Regeln von der Gemeinschaft für die Gemeinschaft? Das Aposteldekret und antike Veriensregeln im Vergleich," in *Das Aposteldekret und antike Verienwesen: Gemeinschaft und ihre Ordnung* (M. Öhler, ed.; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 317-339; Richard Last, "The Neighborhood (*vicus*) of the Corinthian Ekklēsia: Beyond Family-Based Descriptions of the First Urban Christ-Believers," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 38 (2016): 399-425; Richard Last, "Communities that Write: Christ-Groups, Associations, and Gospel Communities," *New Testament Studies* 58 (2012): 173-198.

this development. Previously underplayed similarities between ancient Christian *ekklesiai* and ancient associations have been better explored and documented, and previously overplayed differences are increasingly recognized as having been exaggerated by scholars focused on establishing what was "special" about Christian *ekklesiai*.[123] Objections to comparative study (for example scholarly claims that ancient associations were too local and/or non-ethical in their focus to be comparable to *ekklesiai*)[124] have been addressed on the basis of the ancient evidence.[125] A more conscious focus on investigation and analysis through a disciplined self-critical process of comparison and analogy, in the sense famously recommended by Jonathan Z. Smith[126] (i.e., explicitly disavowing any claims of a perfect or reductive equation of *ekklesiai* and associations, as well as any claims of a

[123] John S. Kloppenborg, "Edwin Hatch, Churches and *Collegia*," in *Origins and Method: Towards a New Understanding of Judaism and Christianity. Essays in Honour of John C. Hurd* (B. H. McLean, ed.; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), 212-238; Richard S. Ascough, "Translocal Relationships Among Voluntary Associations and Early Christianity," 223-224; Ascough, "What Are They Now Saying about Christ Groups and Associations?," 210.

[124] See Wayne A. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), 78-80, and Gerhard Uhlhorn, *Christian Charity in the Ancient Church* (S. Taylor, trans.; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1883), 21-28, respectively.

[125] See Ascough, "Translocal Relationships Among Voluntary Associations and Early Christianity," 223-241 and Alicia Batten, "The Moral World of Greco-Roman Associations," *Studies in Religion* 36.1 (2007): 135-148, respectively.

[126] On "comparison" and "analogy" in this context, see Jonathan Z. Smith, *Drudgery Divine: On the Comparison of Early Christianities and the Religions of Late Antiquity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 36-53; David Frankfurter, "Comparison and the Study of Religions of Late Antiquity" (pages 83-98 in *Comparer en histoire des religions antiques. Controverses et propositions* (C. Calame and B. Lincoln, eds.; Liège: Liège University Press, 2012).

direct genealogical relationship between association and *ekklesia*) has helped clarify the project and defuse objections of "parallelomania"[127] and reductionism.[128]

From this more theoretically disciplined and evidentially supported point of view, some scholars have concluded that it is time for NT critics to stop debating the appropriateness of this method of comparison, and to move ahead with studies applying it with more boldness and thickness of description,[129] effectively treating the slow, uncertain development of global "Early Christianity" as one (diverse, divided, and developing) association network among many.[130] Pauline Studies has taken a particular interest in this emerging interpretive context.[131] Richard Ascough recently quantified this explosion of interest by documenting the mushrooming of such studies from about a dozen published between 1970 and 1998 to closer to a hundred in the years since.[132] This emerging critical consensus has, however, faced its share of theoretical growing pains, two of which merit mention here because

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[127] On the charge of over-reaching "extravagance" in the realm of NT-critical ancient world investigative parallels, see Samuel Sandmel, "Parallelomania," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 81.1 (March 1962): 1-13.

[128] See Ascough, "What Are They *Now* Saying about Christ Groups and Associations?," 235; Kloppenborg, "Membership Practices in Pauline Christ Groups," 187-188; Kloppenborg, "The Moralizing of Discourse in Greco-Roman Associations," 228.

[129] Ascough, "What Are They *Now* Saying about Christ Groups and Associations?," 225; Kloppenborg, "Membership Practices in Pauline Christ Groups," 187-188; Kloppenborg, "The Moralizing of Discourse in Greco-Roman Associations," 228.

[130] See Richard S. Ascough, "Translocal Relationships Among Voluntary Associations and Early Christianity," 223-224, 241.

[131] Adams, "First-Century Models for Paul's Churches: Selected Scholarly Developments since Meeks," 71. Cf. Ascough, "What Are They *Now* Saying About Christ Groups and Associations?," 207-208; Harrison, "Paul's House Churches and the Cultic Associations," 31-47; J. Harrison, *Paul's Language of Grace in its Graeco-Roman Context* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003).

[132] See Ascough's relatively recent and detailed review in "What Are They *Now* Saying about Christ Groups and Associations?," 207-244.

they have proven to be especially stubborn, and because they impinge directly upon this study: First, there is the problem defining the category of "ancient associations" as a critical term of NT studies. Second, there is the related problem of precisely defining the relationships of such associations with their ancient host societies.

Section 1.1a. The Problem of Defining "Ancient Associations"

In facing the problem of definition, it must be acknowledged that "the ancient association" is an artificial, retrospective category of scholarly analysis. The term "association" is used by scholars to refer to a wide variety of ancient groups known by a variety of ambiguous and/or overlapping ancient names (*thiasoi*, *koina*, *mystai*, *phratores*, *philosophiai*, *ekklesiai*, *sectae*, *collegia*, etc.)[133] and embedded within a great variety of social relationships and networks, many of which also overlap in ways that confuse strict retrospective definition (household, family, work, neighborhood, cult, ethnicity, etc.).[134] These overlaps and ambiguities suggest a highly complex and flexible social phenomenon. They also serve to highlight, though (albeit in a way frustrating to scholarly desires for strict retrospective definition),

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[133] Harland, *Associations, Synagogues, and Congregations*, 2; Ascough *et al*., *Associations in the Greco-Roman World*, 1; Stephen G. Wilson, "Voluntary Associations: An Overview," in *Voluntary Associations in the Graeco-Roman World* (J. S. Kloppenborg and S. G. Wilson, eds.; New York: Routledge, 1996), 1-2; John S. Kloppenborg, "Collegia and *Thiasoi*: Issues in Function, Taxonomy and Membership," in *Voluntary Associations in the Graeco-Roman World* (J. S. Kloppenborg and S. G. Wilson, eds.; New York: Routledge, 1996), 16-30; Hans-Josef Klauck, *The Religious Context of Early Christianity*, 44-53; MacMullen, *Enemies of the Roman Order*. *Treason, Unrest, and Alienation in the Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1966), 173.

[134] Harland, *Associations, Synagogues, and Congregations*, 30-53; John S. Kloppenborg, "Associations, Voluntary," in *Encyclopedia of the Bible and its Reception*. Vol. 2. (H.-J. Klauck et al., eds.; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2009), 1062-1064; Klauck, *The Religious Context of Early Christianity*, 47; Ascough, "Greco-Roman Philosophic, Religious, and Voluntary Associations," 14-17; Richard Ascough, with John S. Kloppenborg, *Greco-Roman Associations: Texts, Translations, and Commentary* (New York: Walter De Gruyter, 2011), 1-2.

the relevance of the phenomenon to the study of early Christian assemblies, especially since the ancient terminologies of association themselves (*collegium*, *thiasos*, synagogue, *ekklesia*, etc) commingle in ancient sources, being used by both insiders and outsiders to describe both insiders and outsiders.[135] The community of Perinthos can boast, for example, a "synagogue" of barbers,[136] and Tertullian can promote the typical local Christian *ekklesia* as a healthy and socially acceptable "club" (*factio*) or "associated body" (*corpus*).[137]

Because the over-arching category of "ancient association" is synthetic and retrospective, the working definition guiding this study will be quite general, and based more on family resemblances than strict sociological definitions. I begin with Ascough's big-basket definition of ancient associations as simply "deliberately organized" groups,[138] following the wide definition offered by classicist Marcus Tod concerning "associations of persons more or less permanently organized for the pursuit of a common end, and so distinguishable from the State and its component elements [as well as] from temporary unions for transitory purposes."[139] Because

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[135] Harland, *Associations, Synagogues, and Congregations*, 2, 283; Wilson, "Voluntary Associations: An Overview," 4; Wayne O. McCready, "*Ekklēsia* and Voluntary Associations," 69-70; Klauck, *The Religious Context of Early Christianity*, 46.

[136] Ascough and Kloppenborg, *Greco-Roman Associations: Texts, Translations, and Commentary*, 5.

[137] Tertullian, *Apologeticus* 39 (J.-P. Waltzing, ed. and trans.; Paris: Belles Lettres, 1961). A note to the reader: Ways of citing and abbreviating the works of ancient writers vary significantly, and in the age of digital word processing not much time, space, cost, effort, or confusion can be saved by referring to a work like *Contra Apionem* as *Against Apion*, *Ap*., *AgAp*., *Ag. Ap*., or *C. Ap*., etc., and leaving readers to find and navigate if necessary a list of translated titles and abbreviations used. I have therefore elected in my citation here of such ancient works simply to let full traditional (Latin) titles stand.

[138] Richard S. Ascough, "Greco-Roman Philosophic, Religious, and Voluntary Associations," 3.

[139] Marcus N. Tod, "Clubs, Greek," *Oxford Classical Dictionary* (1949): 204, cited by Ascough, "Translocal Relationships," 223.

such groups were in some sense "deliberate" and because they were not determined wholly from outside, their cohesion and function depended on defining their own internal community norms. Functional ancient associations typically had, as Ascough puts it, "established rules of organization and procedure and established patterns of leadership."[140]

The working definition I have offered here needs immediate qualification, however. A "deliberately organized" group does not necessarily require voluntary affiliation, since as Ascough specifies elsewhere, deliberately organized associations in the ancient world did not need to be clearly either "voluntary" or "involuntary" from our modern point of view.[141] As Stephen G. Wilson notes, "the distinction between voluntary and involuntary associations cannot be too rigid, since membership in a synagogue, family cult, or trade guild may have been for different reasons more or less obligatory"[142] as well. Moreover, the "established" patterns of conduct and leadership Ascough refers to must be understood as collective and works in progress, since (as I noted above in introducing the relevance of Social Identity) the structures of communities are not simple, eternal givens, but need to be worked out in the real world and re-articulated and/or re-affirmed over time, often in complex environments of contestation (See, for example, the discussion of "philosophical network" self-definition below). For the sake of maximum clarity, I

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[140] Ascough, "Greco-Roman Philosophic, Religious, and Voluntary Associations," 3. See, for example, the internal association community "*leges sacrae"* collected by Mary Beard, John North and Simon Price, *Religions of Rome. Vol 2* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 292-294; Last, "Communities that Write," 178.

[141] Ascough, "Greco-Roman Philosophic, Religious, and Voluntary Associations," 3.

[142] Wilson, "Voluntary Associations: An Overview," 2.

will limit my comparative focus in this study to ancient groups whose members use the customary language of associations and/or are described by outsiders using such terms. I acknowledge that this decision suggests the spectre of circularity, but it is not simply tautological: Since my definition of "association" serves a project of comparison and analogy in investigating ancient group self-definition, I will limit myself for safety's sake to ancient groups that defined *themselves* in their own words as analogous, using the kinds of related and overlapping ancient "association" terms named above.

It should be clear by now that my primary interest does not involve offering a decision once and for all on how academics should define ancient associations retrospectively, since any such crystal-clear definition would be Procrustean and anachronistic. My primary interest is rather in how groups and networks generally recognizable as associations tended to define themselves vis-à-vis the cultural environments in which they evolved and interacted. This interest leads me to the second problem mentioned in introducing the topic of associations above, requiring further qualification of the definition of ancient associations offered above with reference to Ascough and Tod: understanding how the subcultures of ancient associations related to the wider circles of identity and belonging drawn by the cultural contexts of their host societies.

Section 1.1b. The Problem of Defining the Subcultural Relationships of Ancient Associations to Their Host Societies

In defining the ancient association as an object of study, Tod specifies that it is "distinguishable from the State and its component elements."[143] As Ascough noted in his own definition, though, some associations clearly had "official" and "civic" dimensions. The line between participating in such associations and participating in a political system is far from clear. Even more to the point for the purposes of this study, addressed as it is to understanding the ideal relationship between ideal insiders and outsiders in Rom 12-15, is the fact that the question of how insular or oppositional most "non-civic" associations were vis-à-vis the wider societies outside is itself a point of scholarly contention.

While it may be clear that community definition and cohesion were serious concerns for ancient associations and networked association communities,[144] the question of how associations defined themselves over against the cultural norms of their host societies is complex. Some ancient associations organized their memberships and activities using traditional Greek *polis* structures,[145] for example. It may be asked if this should perhaps be seen as an expression of high praise for the

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[143] Marcus N. Tod, "Clubs, Greek," 204, cited by Ascough, "Translocal Relationships," 223.

[144] See, for example, Philip A. Harland, "Spheres of Contention, Claims of Pre-eminence. Rivalries among Associations in Sardis and Smyrna," in *Religious Rivalries and the Struggle for Success in Sardis and Smyrna* (R. S. Ascough, ed.; Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier Press, 2005), 63; Harland, *Associations, Synagogues, and Congregations*, 25, 265-269.

[145] See Ramsay MacMullen, *Roman Social Relations 50 B.C. to A.D. 284* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974), 76, 178; Wilson, "Voluntary Associations: An Overview," 2; Jean-Pierre Waltzing, *Étude historique sur les corporations professionelles chez les Romains Vol. 1. Depuis les origins jusqu'à la chute de l'Empire d'Occident* (New York: Georg Olms Verlag, 1970), 513-514; Ascough and Kloppenborg, *Greco-Roman Associations: Texts, Translations, and Commentary*, 7-8.

polis system (in willingly replicating its forms), or as a form of criticism (in offering a supplement or even a substitute). Scholars have differed greatly over the years in their answers to such questions, and as will be noted below in discussing the self-defintion and self-assertion of subcultures with reference to postcolonial theory, the relationship between mimicry and mockery can also be ambiguous and complex.

Given these considerations, the question of how "oppositional" (as opposed to "conformist") any given ancient association may be said to have been is a live one, and often a subtle one. John Elliott, for example, used the sociological observations of Bryan R. Wilson on the insularity of sects and sectarianism to argue that ancient associations were by definition insular and oppositional vis-à-vis outside culture and authority, including the Christian sectarian association that produced 1 Peter.[146] Others have stressed, though, that the rhetoric typical of ancient associations and the rhetoric of 1 Peter seem aimed at some kind of positive engagement and accommodation with the external (civic and/or imperial) world.[147] As Philip Harland points out, for example, 1 Peter explicitly advises Christians to honor the emperor and the authorities (2:11-17).[148] Harland's own detailed study of association epigraphy in the imperial province of Asia shows that "associations… including some synagogues and assemblies, could in varying ways participate within

[146] John H. Elliott, *A Home for the Homeless: A Social-Scientific Criticism of 1 Peter, Its Situation and Strategy* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), 75-79.

[147] Bruce W. Winter, 'The Public Honouring of Christian Benefactors—Romans 13:3–4 and 1 Peter 2:14– 15," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 34 (1988): 87–103; idem, "Seeking the Welfare of the City: Social Ethics According to Peter," *Themelios* 13.3 (1980): 91-4; David L. Balch, *Let Wives be Submissive: The Domestic Code in 1 Peter* (Chico: Scholars Press, 1981); David L. Balch, "Hellenisation/Acculturation in 1 Peter," in *Perspectives on First Peter* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1986), 84–5.

[148] Harland, *Associations, Synagogues, and Congregations*, 13.

certain areas of life in the polis under Roman rule, including involvement in imperial honors and connections,"[149] in ways that evidenced more "positive interaction" than adversarial "tension" overall.[150]

The typical ancient association stance that emerges here of qualified positive engagement, marrying varying degrees of insularity and engagement, self-assertion and accommodation, comes as no surprise given the context of the Law of the Membrane outlined in this study's Introduction. As sociologist Bryan Wilson pointed out, the community (self-)definition of a subcultural group requires, "if it is to persist," a certain "*degree* of separateness from the world"[151] that strikes some kind of culturally intellible and pragmatic balance "between genuine separateness from the world and the desire for social respectability."[152] For this reason, ancient associations could be insular and counter-cultural enough to be seen as secretive and seditious by many elite Romans (See, for example, the rationale given for the ban of Trajan discussed below),[153] and the need to be perceived as respectable and orderly resulted in the common practice of hammering out lists of rules for

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[149] Harland, *Associations, Synagogues, and Congregations*, 8.

[150] Harland, *Associations, Synagogues, and Congregations*, 8, 10.

[151] Wilson, "An Analysis of Sect Development," 10, italics mine.

[152] Wilson, "An Analysis of Sect Development," 13.

[153] For ancient accounts of imperial and senatorial decrees aimed at controlling associations, see Beard, North and Price, *Religons of Rome*, Vol. 2, 275-278, 292-293. See too Wendy Cotter, "The Collegia and Roman Law: State Restrictions on Voluntary Associations, 64 BCE – 200 CE," in *Voluntary Associations in the Graeco-Roman World* (J. S. Kloppenborg and S. G. Wilson, eds.; New York: Routledge, 1996), 74-89; MacMullen, *Enemies of the Roman Order*, 175-178; Klauck, *The Religious Context of Early Christianity*, 46; Kloppenborg, "Collegia and Thiasoi," 19-20; Torrey Seland, in *Voluntary Associations in the Graeco-Roman World* (J. S. Kloppenborg and S. G. Wilson, eds.; New York: Routledge, 1996), 110-127; Ascough and Kloppenborg, *Greco-Roman Associations: Texts, Translations, and Commentary*, 5.

association insider behavior. "Individual occupational or cult associations could exist," as F. Gerald Downing explains in his study of ideals of proper social order in the ancient Mediterranean world, "only by ensuring the orderly behavior of their meetings, and preferably by securing patronage from [approving local] notables."[154] I note here, for example, that the banquet regulations recorded by the Society of Diana and Antinous in Lavinium testify to these ordinary association needs by taking care to express the desire to be "salutary to the Emperor… and to the entire Augustan house, to us, to ours, and to our society,"[155] and by stipulating fines for unruly members creating disturbances:

> It was also voted that any member who moves from one place to another so as to cause a disturbance shall be fined four *sestertii*. Any member, moreover, who speaks abusively of another or causes and uproar shall be fined twelve *sestertii*. Any member who uses insolent or abusive language to a [presiding member] at a banquet shall be fined twenty *sestertii*.[156]

Similar association insider regulations on the penalties and fines to be imposed for "disturbances" and "disorder" during meetings can be found in numerous ancient inscriptions.[157] The regulations of the Bacchic Iobacchoi similarly

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[154] F. Gerald Downing, *Order and (Dis)order in the First Christian Century*: *A General Survey of Attitudes* (Boston: Brill, 2013), 27.

[155] See also here the inscription honoring the association president who "displayed good will… to the king and the king's parent, and conducts himself in a pious and holy manner toward Dionysios and the other gods" (*OGIS* 51) cited in Ascough, Harland and Kloppenborg, *Associations in the Greco-Roman World: A Sourcebook*, 179.

[156] *ILS* 7212; *FIRA* III, no.35, cited in Beard, North, and Price, *Religions of Rome*, Vol.2, 292-294. See too the rules collected in Beard, North, and Price, *Religions of Rome,* Vol. 1, 228-244, and by Ascough, Harland, and Kloppenborg, *Associations in the Greco-Roman World: A Sourcebook*, 180-184, 252-269.

[157] See for example the second-century "Regulations of a Club on Admission and Discipline" (*IG* II^2 1369) and the "Regulations of a Club on Sacrifice and Discipline" (SEG 31) cited in Ascough, Harland and Kloppenborg, *Associations in the Greco-Roman World: A Sourcebook*, 17-19.

specify, for example, the fines to be imposed upon "anyone who begins a fight or is disorderly or sits in someone else's seat or insults or abuses someone else" *and* also upon any "officer in charge of order" who fails to expel such "disorderly" members from a feast.[158] The desire indicated in such rules for the association to be seen as "orderly" and "salutary to society" confirms the impression that gaining a bad reputation for embarrassing disorder at such banquets was a real risk for ancient associations. The meetings of minority groups were particularly targeted in first-century rumor mills by horror stories about barbaric meal practices.[159] Certainly a general perception of associations as prone to such disorder was common enough to be depended upon by Philo of Alexandria when he depicted Jewish assemblies as loyal and orderly by comparing them to most "pagan" associations.[160]

The surviving evidence of association bylaws prohibiting drunken disorder and "sedition"[161] confirm that ancient elites were right to see rebellious social "dysfunction" and "disorder" as a real temptation in association life (again, see the opinions expressed in the correspondence of Pliny and Trajan below), but as mentioned already with reference to the work of Harland it is also clear that

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[158] See *IG* II^2 1368, cited in Ascough, Harland and Kloppenborg, *Associations in the Greco-Roman World: A Sourcebook*, 15.

[159] See Philip A. Harland, "'These People Are… Men Eaters': Banquets of the Anti-Associations and Perceptions of Minority Cultural Groups," in *Identity and Interaction in the Ancient Mediterranean: Jews, Christians and Others. Festschrift for Stephen G. Wilson* (Z. A. Crook and P. A. Harland, eds.; Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2007), 56-75.

[160] Torrey Seland, "Philo and the Clubs and Associations of Alexandria," in *Voluntary Associations in the Graeco-Roman World* (J. S. Kloppenborg and S. G. Wilson, eds.; New York: Routledge, 1996), 110-127.

[161] See on these bylaws MacMullen, *Enemies of the Roman Order*, 176.

associations were quite widely and positively engaged in public and political life.[162] Harland also cites in this vein the works of classicists Steven Friesen[163] and Stephen Mitchell,[164] which "challenge previous assumptions [of oppositional insular identity] and emphasize the significance of the emperor within intertwined social, political, and religious aspects of life among various social levels."[165] Apart from this more (to modern eyes) "cultic" engagement of associations with political life, there is also the fact that some ancient associations were at times called upon to support their patrons directly in public and political life, for example in election campaigns.[166]

What is needed here, then, is an awareness that the self-defining subcultural stances of associations conformed to the Law of the Membrane by displaying a range of self-assertion and accommodation, which were in fact two sides of the same coin of survival. Even more to the point, it must be understood that qualified accommodation and self-assertion could happen together, like the distinguishable but practically inseparable vectors of one movement. As Simon Price showed

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[162] See for example the honors exchanged between the "Initiates of Dionysos Breiseus" and a succession of emperors and benefactors cited in Ascough, Harland, and Kloppenborg, *Associations in the Greco-Roman World: A Sourcebook*, 115-118. On such positive engagement in general see Wilson, "Voluntary Associations: An Overview," 2-3; MacMullen, *Enemies of the Roman Order*, 175; MacMullen, *Roman Social Relations*, 78, 178-179.

[163] Steven J. Friesen, *Twice Neokoros: Ephesus, Asia, and the Cult of the Flavian Imperial Family* (Leiden: Brill, 1993); *Imperial Cults and the Apocalypse of John: Reading Revelation in the Ruins* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

[164] Stephen Mitchell, *Anatolia: Land, Men, and Gods in Asia Minor* (2 vols. Oxford: Clarendon, 1993).

[165] Harland, *Associations, Synagogues, and Congregations*, 10.

[166] MacMullen, *Roman Social Relations*, 76, 177; MacMullen, *Enemies of the Roman Social Order,* 175-177; L. Michael White, "Finding the Ties that Bind: Issues from Social Description," in *Social Networks in the Early Christian Environment: Issues and Methods for Social History* (L. M. White, ed.; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992), 16-18.

regarding the willing participation in Roman imperial cults on the part of colonized local elites in his *Rituals and Power* (a work cited by Harland approvingly as a scholarly game changer),[167] creative/strategic accommodation can itself *be* a mode of self-definition and self-assertion.[168] When Harland applied Price's insight in examining the (archaeological and epigraphic) remains of the associations of Asia Minor, he found that they participated in "outside" practices in qualified positive ways, as a means of "claiming a place in ancient Mediterranean society."[169] Ancient association communities aimed, in short (in Stephen Wilson's words), "not to overthrow the existing [external local cultural] system, but to find their niche within it – even if on their own terms."[170]

This view of subcultural community self-assertion and accommodation as two sides of the same coin guides the examinations of association network letters below, including the consideration that the coin can flip both ways: some modes of community self-assertion can function as positive engagement and accommodation vis-à-vis a wider "outside" society. The internally-applied language of family and brotherhood for members, for example (preserved in association epigraphy[171] and

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[167] Harland, *Associations, Synagogues, and Congregations*, 10.

[168] Simon R. F. Price, *Rituals and Power: The Roman Imperial Cult in Asia Minor* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 1-5, 234-248. Again, see also the discussion of postcolonial theory and subcultural self-definition and self-assertion below.

[169] Harland, *Associations, Synagogues, and Congregations*, 265-269, etc.

[170] Wilson, "Voluntary Associations: An Overview," 3. See also Downing, *Cynics, Paul, and the Pauline Churches*, 283-316; Klauck, *The Religious Context of Early Christianity*, 390-400.

[171] Harland, *Associations, Synagogues, and Congregations*, 32; Waltzing, *Étude historique sur les corporations professionelles chez les Romains*, 446-449; Ascough, "Greco-Roman Philosophic, Religious, and Voluntary Associations," 16.

especially letters),[172] clearly says, "We are a special insider group, defined at least in part over against the outsiders to whom we do not refer using this language." Since the usage was common to associations, however, its use *also* says on the other hand, "We are an association, in some sense meaningfully like other associations, and therefore socially understandable and acceptable in similar terms." From this point of view, the common cult of each ancient association has a similar function. All associations were in some sense "religious" associations, since their common lives almost always involved common cult practices.[173] The self-definition and self-assertion of this shared particularity ("We as an in-group have distinctive rites, or ideas, etc.") is at the same time an act of positive engagement and accommodation vis-à-vis the outside world ("We are recognizable and respectable as one legitimate association among others, as demonstrated in our participation in the widely understood and accepted practice of group piety").

It is important for the purposes of this study to notice that the relationship between internal piety and external reputation was an important one for associations in the first-century Mediterranean world. Social "approval" or "praise" (ἔπαινος) was widely and highly valued by people and groups throughout the first-

[172] See the references in Chapters 1 and 2 to *adelphos* as typical insider-to-insider address. On "brotherly" language in association letters generally, see Harland, *Associations, Synagogues, and Congregations*, 33, 285.

[173] Harland, *Associations, Synagogues, and Congregations*, 44, 59-87; Klauck, *The Religious Context of Early Christianity*, 42, 44; Franz Poland, *Geschichte des griechischen Vereinswesens* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1909), 5; Waltzing, *Étude historique sur les corporations professionelles chez les Romains*, 512; Ascough, "Greco-Roman Philosophic, Religious, and Voluntary Associations," 12.

century Roman imperial world.[174] One reason for this stress on ἔπαινος is that the "agonistic" character of ancient Mediterranean culture involved constant competition between individuals and groups,[175] and since ancient associations were usually dependent upon the hospitality and generosity of patrons,[176] they often needed (as Stephen Wilson suggested above) both to be socially attractive in terms of respectability, worthiness and honor,[177] and to avoid as much as possible the contempt and/or suspicion of powerful and respectable people.[178] In such a context, one of the primary concerns of group self-definition is naturally group reputation, and as Alicia Batten has argued, the practical ways in which "internal" ideals of harmony and "piety" were elaborated and enforced by first-century associations

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[174] Furnish, *The Moral Teaching of Paul*, 155-157; See H. Priesker, "Epainos," *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* 2:586.

[175] Bruce Malina, *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 36.

[176] See Peter Lampe, "Paul, Patrons, and Clients," in *Paul in the Greco-Roman World. A Handbook* (J. P. Sampley, ed.; New York: Trinity Press International, 2003), 488-523; Mason, "PHILOSOPHIAI: Graeco-Roman, Judean and Christian," in Kloppenborg and Wilson, *Voluntary Associations in the Graeco-Roman World*, 36; Ascough, "Greco-Roman Philosophic, Religious, and Voluntary Associations," 14-15.

[177] See Lief Vaage, "Preface," in *Religious Rivalries in the Early Roman Empire and the Rise of Christianity* (L. E. Vaage, ed.; Wilrid Laurier Press, 2006), ix-x; Lief Vaage, *Religious Rivalries and the Struggle for Success in Caesarea Maritima* (T. Donaldson, ed.; Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier Press, 2000.) 2, 5-6; Harland, "Spheres of Contention," 53, 63; On *epainos* see John S. Kloppenborg, "Greco-Roman *Thiasoi*, the *Ekklēsia* at Corinth, and Conflict Management," in *Redescribing Paul and the Corinthians* (R. Cameron and M. P. Miller, eds.; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 2011), 213; Philip Harland, "Spheres of Contention, Claims of Pre-eminence," 53, 63; Peter Richardson, "Building 'an Association (*Synodos*)… and a Place of Their Own,'" in *Community Formation in the Early Church and the Church Today* (R. N. Longenecker, ed.; Peabody: Hendrickson, 2002), 37; Richard S. Ascough, "Greco-Roman Religions in Sardis and Smyrna," in *Religious Rivalries and the Struggle for Success in Sardis and Smyrna*, 42.

[178] See Wilson, "Voluntary Associations," 2-3; Mason, "*PHILOSOPHIAI*: Graeco-Roman, Judean and Christian," 37; Arthur D. Nock *Conversion: The Old and the New in Religion from Alexander the Great to Augustine of Hippo* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1933), 185; Peter Lampe, *From Paul to Valentinus: Christians at Rome in the First Two Centuries* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 41.

always served in practice to build and guard their "external" public respectability.[179] The practice of eating and drinking together, for example, was an accepted and common characteristic of first-century associations,[180] but it was also (as revealed already above) a common site of trouble when it came to guarding the "internal peace" and "external reputation" of ancient associations, with the result that meal practice was much discussed and regulated internally, in the service of "group self-definition"[181] and in terms marrying piety to propriety.[182] The important relationship between the internal dining practice rules hammered out by "insiders" and natural group concerns about external respectability will move to center stage at several points in the chapters below, to help frame the discussion of foods, meal practice and proper insider behavior as they appear in the insider-to-insider association network paraenesis of Rom 12-15.

The mention of "networks" here brings me to a final aspect of the relationships of ancient associations with their "outside" worlds that needs

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[179] See Halvor Moxnes, "The Quest for Honor and the Unity of the Community in Romans 12 and the Orations of Dio Chrysostom," in Engberg-Pedersen, *Paul in His Hellenistic Context*, 203-230; Alicia Batten, "The Moral World of Greco-Roman Associations," 135-151.

[180] See Harland, *Associations, Synagogues, and Congregations*, 74-83; Klauck, *The Religious Context of Early Christianity*, 44; Waltzing, *Étude historique sur les corporations professionelles chez les Romains*, 512.

[181] See Richard S. Ascough, "Forms of Commensality in Greco-Roman Associations," *Classical World* 102 (2008): 33-45.

[182] Alicia Batten, "The Moral World of Greco-Roman Associations," 148; E. Ebel, "Regeln von der Gemeinschaft für die Gemeinschaft? Das Aposteldekret und antike Veriensregeln im Vergleich"; Kloppenborg, "Greco-Roman *Thiasoi*, the *Ekklēsia* at Corinth, and Conflict Management," 186-218; Kloppenborg, "The Moralizing of Discourse in Greco-Roman Associations"; Richard S. Ascough, "The Apostolic Decree of Acts and Greco-Roman Associations: Eating in the Shadow of Empire," in *Aposteldekret und antikes Vereinswesen: Gemeinschaft und ihre Ordnung* (Markus Öhler, ed.; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 313; Ascough, "Greco-Roman Philosophic, Religious, and Voluntary Associations," 16; Rachel M. McRae, "Eating With Honor: The Corinthian Lord's Supper in Light of Voluntary Association Meal Practices," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 130 (2011), 166.

mentioning. Ancient associations were not only far less insular in terms of adversarial sectarianism than some have assumed, but were also less insular in terms of geographical isolation and self-sufficiency than some have assumed: many association communities can be shown to have been connected meaningfully to the wider, looser communities of association networks.[183] Association members finding themselves far from home (for business, for example) could, therefore, temporarily depend upon, or in some cases settle down with the support of, a "sister association."[184] In the first century, for example, a devotee of Sarapis and Isis might be welcomed as a full member from city to city,[185] and a guild of artists could boast with good reason of a global network.[186] Our retrospective lines between "external" and "internal" obligations are at times blurred by such displays of piety, hospitality, public relations and business sense, as for example when the Tyrian merchant association at Rome paid the rent of the Tyrian merchant association of Puteoli in a pinch (at the request of the government of Tyre),[187] in a show of honor and fidelity

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[183] See Ascough, "Translocal Relationships Among Voluntary Associations and Early Christianity," 223-234; Harold Remus, "Voluntary Associations and Networks: Aelius Aristides at the Asclepion in Pergamum," in Kloppenborg and Wilson, *Voluntary Associations in the Graeco-Roman World*, 146-175.

[184] Wilson, "Voluntary Associations: An Overview," 3; Kloppenborg, "Collegia and Thiasoi," 17-18; Ascough, "Translocal Relationships Among Voluntary Associations and Early Christianity," 229, 232; George La Piana, "Foreign Groups in Rome During the First Centuries of the Empire," *Harvard Theological Review* 20 (1927): 337; Thomas A. Brady, "The Reception of the Egyptian Cults by the Greeks (330-30 B.C.)," in *Sarapis and Isis: Collected Essays* (Chicago: Ares, 1978), 21.

[185] Ascough, "Translocal Relationships Among Voluntary Associations and Early Christianity," 231-232; La Piana, "Foreign Groups in Rome During the First Centuries of the Empire," 337; Arthur D. Nock, *Conversion,* 147-149.

[186] Ascough, "Translocal Relationships Among Voluntary Associations and Early Christianity," 233, citing a letter of Claudius.

[187] Ascough, "Translocal Relationships Among Voluntary Associations and Early Christianity," 230.

evidencing and building what George La Piana called "a connection not only of commercial, but of social, moral, and religious interest, involving mutual obligations."[188]

Trans-local interactions and ties of the kind just mentioned testify to the fact that first-century associations could be networked in various ways and to various degrees. This fact is highly relevant to this study not only because there is growing evidence that "networks associated with occupation and trade were a key factor in the formation and ongoing life of some Christian groups,"[189] but also because the element of networking further complicates the question of self-definition. If one association group could be perceived by another distant association group in insider terms, and/or perceived as responsible for the behavior and honor of another in the eyes of "external" world, including the legal/civic authorities, the question of self-definition serving survival begins to apply to these developing networks, not just to individual local communities, and the question arises of who is defining whom. The project of the proper "self-definition" of an association network vis-à-vis the "external" world may, that is, often be pursued by some insiders and insider groups on behalf of others. I argue in the chapters below that letters were often used within community networks as eminently well-adapted to such projects of community

[188] La Piana, "Foreign Groups in Rome During the First Centuries of the Empire," 245-246.

[189] See Harland, *Associations, Synagogues, and Congregations*, 40-41, citing the work of Mark Humphries, "Trading Gods in Northern Italy," in *Trade, Traders, and the Ancient City* (H. Parkins and C. Smith, eds.; London: Routledge, 1998); Abraham J. Malherbe, *Social Aspects of Early Christianity*; Ronald Hock, *The Social Context of Paul's Ministry: Tentmaking and Apostleship* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980); Richard S. Ascough, "Voluntary Associations and Community Formation: Paul's Macedonian Christian Communities in Context" (Ph.D. dissertation, Toronto School of Theology, 1997); Richard Ascough, "The Thessalonian Community as a Professional Voluntary Association," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 119 (2000): 311-328; Ascough and Kloppenborg, *Greco-Roman Associations: Texts, Translations, and Commentary*, 2.

(self-)definition at a distance. In order to help introduce this phenomenon properly, the following section takes the step of clarifying my working definition of the kinds of community (self-)definition and assertion and/versus accommodation found in (non-Jewish and non-Christian) Greco-Roman association letters.

Section 1.2 Greco-Roman Association Letters and New Testament Studies

I have suggested that ancient association letter culture(s) should be treated as a particularly promising context for understanding the form and function of Romans, and in particular the forms and functions of Rom 12-15. I chose this approach for several reasons. First of all, the study of ancient letter theory and practice is widely recognized as helpful in understanding the cultural contexts of the ancient world[190] and (following the pioneering work of Adolf Deissmann on epistolary papyrus remains and their relevance for NT study)[191] the writings of the New Testament generally.[192] Attention to ancient epistolary theory and practice has

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[190] See, for example, E. M. Atkins, "Cicero," in *The Cambridge History of Greek and Roman Political Thought* (C. Rowe and M. Schofield, eds.; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 477-516; Francis X. Exler, *The Form of the Ancient Greek Letter: A Study in Greek Epistolography* (Washington: Catholic University of America, 1923); Miriam Griffin, "Seneca and Pliny," in Rowe and Schofield, *The Cambridge History of Greek and Roman Political Thought* (C. Rowe and M. Schofield, eds.; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 532-558; Heikki Koskenniemi, *Studien zur Idee und Phraseologie des griechischen Briefes bis 400 n. Chr*. (Helsinki: Suomalaien Tiedeakatemie, 1956); Patricia A. Rosenmeyer, *Ancient Epistolary Fictions. The Letter in Greek Literature* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Johannes Sykutris, "Epistolographie," in *Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft* (A. Pauly, G. Wissowa et al., eds.; Stuttgart: Metzler, 1931), 186-220; Klaus Thraede, *Grundzüge griechischrömisher Brieftopik* (Munich: Beck, 1970); Uri Yiftach-Firanko, ed., *The Letter: Law, State, Society and the Epistolary Format in the Ancient* World (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2013).

[191] See here again Adolf Deissmann, *Light From the Ancient East*.

[192] See, for example, Aune, *The New Testament in its Literary Environment*, 160-182; Detlev Dormeyer, *The New Testament Among the Writings of Antiquity* (R. Kossov, trans.; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 205-213; William G. Doty, *Letters in Primitive Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 1-19; H.-J. Klauck, "Compilation of Letters in Cicero's Correspondence," in *Early Christianity and Classical Culture. Comparative Studies in Honor of Abraham J. Malherbe* (J. T. Fitzgerald et al., eds.; Boston: Brill, 2003), 131-155; H.-J. Klauck, *Ancient Letters and the New Testament* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2006); Abraham J. Malherbe, "Self-Definition among Epicureans and Cynics," in *Jewish and Christian Self-Definition*, Vol. 3. (B. F. Meyer and E. P. Sanders, eds.; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982); Abraham J. Malherbe, *Ancient Epistolary Theorists* (B. B. Scott, ed.; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988); Henry G. Meecham, *Light From Ancient Letters: Private Correspondence in the Non-Literary Papyri of Oxyrhynchus of the First Four Centuries and Its Bearing on New Testament Language and Thought* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1923); M. Luther Stirewalt, Jr., *Studies in Ancient Greek Epistolography* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1993); Stanley K. Stowers, *Letter Writing in Greco-Roman Antiquity*. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986); Stanley K. Stowers,, "Social Typification and the Classification of Ancient Letters," in *The Social World of Formative Christianity and Judaism* (J. Neusner et al., eds.; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988); John L. White, *The Form*

accordingly developed into an established and active investigative focus in Pauline Studies[193] and in scholarship focused specifically on Romans.[194]

The study of ancient letters has, furthermore, great potential for addressing questions about authority and insider community definition in ancient contexts. The link between ancient letter culture and questions of power is readily apparent: the first sustained and extensive use of letters seems to have been developed in creating

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and Structure of the Official Petition: A Study in Greek Epistolography (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1972); John L. White, "New Testament Epistolary Literature in the Framework of Ancient Epistolography," in *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt*. Vol. II. 25.2 (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1984), 1730-1756; John L. White, *Light From Ancient Letters* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986); John L. White, "Ancient Greek Letters," in *Greco-Roman Literature and the New Testament* (D. E. Aune, ed.; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988), 85-106.

[193] See, for example, Gordon J. Bahr, "Paul and Letter-Writing in the First Century," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 28 (1966):465-477; Andrew J. Bandstra, "Paul, the Letter Writer," *Canadian Journal of Theology* 3 (1968): 176-188; Eve-Marie Becker, *Letter Hermeneutics in 2 Corinthians. Studies in Literaturkritik and Communication Theory* (M. Goodacre, ed., H. S. Heron, trans.; New York: T&T Clark, 2004); Doty, *Letters in Primitive Christianity*, 21-47; Christopher Forbes, "Ancient Rhetoric and Ancient Letters. Models for Reading Paul, and Their Limits," in *Paul and Rhetoric* (J. P. Sampley and P. Lampe, eds.; New York: T&T Clark, 2010); Klauck, *Ancient Letters and the New Testament*, 299-334; Paul V. Furnish, "Pauline Studies," in *The New Testament and Its Modern Interpreters* (E. J. Epp and G. W. MacRae, eds.; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989), 322-324; Gustav Karlsson, "Formelhaftes in Paulusbriefen?," *Eranos* 54 (1956): 138-141; Troy W. Martin, "Investigating the Pauline Letter Body: Issue, Methods, and Approaches," in *Paul and the Ancient Letter Form* (S. E. Porter and T. W. Martin, eds.; Boston: Brill, 2010); Andrew W. Pitts, "Philosophical and Epistolary Contexts for Pauline Paraenesis," in Porter and Martin, *Paul and the Ancient Letter Form*; Randolph E. Richards, *The Secretary in the Letters of Paul* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1991); Randolph E. Richards, *Paul and First-Century Letter Writing: Secretaries, Composition, and Collection* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2004); Otto Roller, *Das Formular der paulinischen Briefe. Ein Beitrag zur Lehre vom antiken Briefe* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1933); Paul Schubert, *Form and Function of the Pauline Thanksgivings* (Berlin: Töpelmann, 1939); M. Luther Stirewalt, Jr., *Paul, the Letter Writer* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003); John L. White, *The Form and Function of the Body of the Greek Letter: A Study of the Letter-Body in the Non-Literary Papyri and in Paul the Apostle* (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1972).

[194] See, for example, the essays on epistolary genre collected in Donfried, *The Romans Debate*; Jervis, *The Purpose of Romans*; Jewett, "Romans as an Ambassadorial Letter," 5-20; Robert Jewett, *Romans. A Commentary* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 42-45; Richard N. Longenecker, *Introducing Romans*, 169-235; Jeffrey A. D. Weima, "Preaching the Gospel in Rome: A Study of the Epistolary Framework of Romans," in *Gospel in Paul: Studies on Corinthians, Galatians, and Romans for Richard L. Longenecker* (L. A. Jervis and P. Richardson, eds.; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 337-366.

and maintaining the hierarchical orders of royal administrations,[195] a history testified to mythically in Mediterranean stories about the origins of letter-writing[196] and concretely in the fact that letters continued to serve as administrative/legal instruments and evidence (of decrees from above and petitions from below) in the Roman imperial period.[197] "The letters of political officials" also often had, for example, as noted by M. Luther Stirewalt Jr., a powerful public presence: "they were heard in public readings and displayed in temples, in other buildings, and along the highways. One collection was inscribed and displayed a century and a half after the event which it commemorated, a fact that witnesses to the continuing pertinence of such letters and their commanding presence."[198] It is also necessary to remember the fact that general literacy levels seem to have been very low across the early Roman empire – a reality that often left the writing and reading of letters in the

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[195] See Sophie Démare-Lafont, "Introduction A: The Letter as a Genre in Mesopotamia," in Yiftach-Firanko, *The Letter: Law, State, Society and the Epistolary Format in the Ancient World*, 15; James Sickinger, "Greek Letters on Stone," in Yiftach-Firanko, *The Letter: Law, State, Society and the Epistolary Format in the Ancient World*, 125-140; Ingo Kottsieper, "Briefe als Rechtsurkunden: Zu einigen aramaïschen Briefen des Aršames," in Yiftach-Firanko, *The Letter: Law, State, Society and the Epistolary Format in the Ancient World*, 141-154.

[196] See Klauck, *Ancient Letters and the New Testament*, 61; Démare-Lafont, "Introduction A: The Letter as a Genre in Mesopotamia," 13; Michele Faraguna, "Introduction B: Classical Greece and Persia," in Yiftach-Firanko, *The Letter: Law, State, Society and the Epistolary Format in the Ancient World*, 18.

[197] See Clifford Ando, *Imperial Ideology and Provincial Loyalty in the Roman Empire* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 73-130; Rosenmeyer, *Ancient Epistolary Fictions*, 24; Simon Corcoran. "State Correspondence in the Roman Empire. Imperial Communication from Augustus to Justinian," in *State Correspondence in the Ancient World. From New Kingdom Egypt to the Roman Empire* (K. Radner, ed.; Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2014), 209; E. G. Turner, *Greek Papyri: An Introduction* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1968), 139-140; Eldon Jay Epp, "New Testament Papyrus Manuscripts and Letter Carrying in Greco-Roman Times," in *The Future of Early Christianity: Essays in Honor of Helmut Koester* (B. A. Peterson, ed.; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 44; White, *Light From Ancient Letters*, 214-215.

[198] Stirewalt, *Paul, the Letter Writer*, 28.

hands of specialists[199] – and the related fact that producing and sending letters could require large investments of time and money.[200] Questions of who could afford to send letters (and expect their transmission and contents to be taken seriously by anybody), and questions of who was able and authorized to receive and/or perform and interpret the contents of letters for other addressees, are therefore by definition questions about power relationships, in terms of agency and social status. Finally, there is the fact that ancient letters were generated to serve household networks arranged in "large and complex social hierarchies," involving relationships among slaves and masters, clients and patrons, friends and associates.[201] First-century letters of many various types can therefore be found, for example, carefully naming co-senders, witnesses, and character references as a way to establish their authenticity.[202] Letter senders and letter recipients in such a context of networked and nested hierarchies are by definition actively embedded in culturally contingent systems of defining/enacting social power and order.

The link between ancient letter culture and ideal community definition is also readily apparent: as noted already above, the representation of epistolary material as communication between particular sender(s) *A* and particular receiver(s)/hearer(s) *B* creates by definition a (flexible but clear) kind of in-group –

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[199] See Harry Y. Gamble, *Books and Readers in the Early Church: A History of Early Christian Texts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 219-220; Joanna Dewey, "Textuality in an Oral Culture: A Survey of the Pauline Traditions," *Semeia* 65 (1994): 37-65.

[200] See AnneMarie Luijendijk, *Greetings in the Lord. Early Christians and the Oxyrhynchus Papyri* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008), 3.

[201] Stowers, *Letter Writing in Greco-Roman Antiquity*, 30-31.

[202] See, for example, Stirewalt, *Paul, the Letter Writer*, 40-41.

a "we" community engaged in communication by means of the letter. As the chapters below show, the most common specific epistolary-rhetorical habits of ancient association letters exploit and reinforce this insider-defining function.

The study of ancient letters is, of course (like the study of ancient associations), complex in its history and its implications for NT study, and not without its theoretical problems. The effort to establish a recovered or retrospective taxonomy of ancient letters is a major preoccupation of the relevant scholarly discussion, in the form of voluminous and inconclusive debates.[203] In theoretical terms, the category of "the letter" is a relatively wide and flexible category,[204] and in practical terms "ancient letters" come in a dizzying array of types and variations.[205] The "epistolary forms" discussed by theorists are, furthermore, dependably found in

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[203] See, for example, Robert W. Funk, "The Letter: Form and Style," in *Language, Hermeneutic, and Word of God: The Problem of Language in the New Testament and Contemporary Theology* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), 150-174; William G. Doty, "The Classification of Epistolary Literature," *Catholic Bible Quarterly* 31 (1969): 185-189; Stanley E. Porter, "A Functional Letter Perspective: Towards a Grammar of Epistolary Form," in Porter and Martin, *Paul and the Ancient Letter Form*, 9-31; John L. White and Keith A. Kensinger, "Categories of Greek Papyrus Letters," in *SBL 1976 Seminar Papers* (G. MacRae, ed.; Missoula: Scholars Press, 1976), 79-92; John L. White, "New Testament Epistolary Literature in the Framework of Ancient Epistolography," 1730-1731.

[204] See R. K. Gibson and A. D. Morrison, "Introduction: What is a Letter?," in *Ancient Letters. Classical and Late Antique Epistolography* (R. Morello and A. D. Morrison, eds.; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 1-16; Jean Delorme, "Une pratique de lecture et d'analyse des lettres du Nouveau Testament," in *Les lettres dans la Bible et dans la littérature* (L. Panier, ed.; Paris: Cerf, 1999), 22. Because the literary genre of "letters" is itself sometimes hard to define for the ancient world, my study will use only texts obviously represented in their own words as "letters." When a text labels itself as being "from so-and-so" and sent "to so-and-so," nobody is too confused by the ambiguities of literary genre to recognize that communication is happening of a kind that most interpreters would call "epistolary" (or at the least represented to some degree and for some reason as "epistolary"). As the discussion below shows, the letter form has been chosen as significant because it developed particular characteristics over time, and raised particular socio-rhetorical expectations distinct from those raised by other written forms of expression. These expectations and characteristics will be treated as important in texts represented as letters, with special attention paid to their social functions.

[205] Jeffrey T. Reed "Using Ancient Rhetorical Categories to Interpret Paul's Letters: A Question of Genre," in Porter and Olbricht, *Rhetoric and the New Testament, Essays from the 1992 Heidelberg Conference*, 292.

such ancient letters only in "mixed" forms.[206] As David E. Aune notes, as a result of such consensus-confusing investigative realities, "few typologies of Graeco-Roman or early Christian letters have been proposed, and none widely adopted."[207]

One particularly stubborn point of scholarly contention that is directly relevant for the purposes of this study is the question of a possible difference between "(real) letters" that preserve personal and situational communication, and "(ideal/literary) epistles" that preserve more abstract and impersonal efforts in speech-making or treatise-writing cast in epistolary form. This taxonomical distinction, a major scholarly focus since it was proposed by Deissmann as a key to understanding Paul (cast as a writer of letters as opposed to epistles),[208] has been discussed with great heat and at great length, especially with reference to his conclusion that literary epistles should be read with formal ancient rhetoric in mind (ancient categories derived from Aristotle or Demetrius, taxonomies and recommendations found in rhetorical training manuals, etc.), whereas real ancient letters should not.[209]

As I have just noted above, though, ancient letters come in a kind of profusion and variety that resists hard classifications like Deissmann's. Personal situational correspondence and literary/academic effort are found intertwined and

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[206] Watson, "The Three Species of Rhetoric and the Study of the Pauline Epistles," in Sampley and Lampe, *Paul and Rhetoric*, 46-47.

[207] Aune, *The New Testament in Its Literary Environment*, 161.

[208] Deissmann, *Light From the Ancient East*, 227-251.

[209] See Porter, "The Theoretical Justification for Application of Rhetorical Categories to Pauline Epistolary Literature" in *Rhetoric and the New Testament, Essays from the 1992 Heidelberg Conference* (S. E. Porter and T. H. Olbricht, eds.; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1993), 100-122.

overlapping so often in ancient letters, it is not clear that a clean distinction is ultimately possible or useful.[210] The relationship of the writing of ancient letters to the ancient theory and practice of rhetoric is also unclear.[211] There are no clear signs of rhetorical theory being used, for example, in the making or theorizing of letters by writers who had rhetorical educations and who sometimes commented on their own letter writing, like Cicero and Seneca,[212] and rhetorical "rulebooks" for writing letters were only produced in later centuries.[213] Ancient theorists accordingly describe the rhetorical "style" of letters as being distinct from, and somewhat loose in construction compared with, that of speeches,[214] and in fact ancient letters have been shown by modern scholars to draw upon elements of classical rhetoric in a remarkably mixed, loose way in general.[215] In this context of eclecticism and uncertainty, many scholars have decided that categorizing letters

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[210] See, for example, Cambron-Goulet, "Orality in Philosophical Epistles," 150; Patricia A. Rosenmeyer, *Ancient Epistolary Fictions. The Letter in Greek* Literature (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 5-6; Hans-Josef Klauck, *Ancient Letters and the New Testament* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2006), 40, 67-70.

[211] For an overview of the debate, see Stanley E. Porter, "The Theoretical Justification for Application of Rhetorical Categories to Pauline Epistolary Literature," in Porter and Olbricht, *Rhetoric and the New Testament. Essays from the 1992 Heidelberg* Conference, 100-102; C. Joachim Classen, "Paul's Epistles and Greek and Roman Rhetoric," in Porter and Olbricht, *Rhetoric and the New Testament, Essays from the 1992 Heidelberg Conference*, 265-291.

[212] Porter, "The Theoretical Justification for Application of Rhetorical Categories to Pauline Epistolary Literature," 113; Malherbe, *Ancient Epistolary Theorists*, 3.

[213] See Reed, "Using Ancient Rhetorical Categories," 294; Malherbe, Ancient Epistolary Theorists, 3; Faraguna, "Introduction B: Classical Greece and Persia," 16.

[214] See, for example, Demetrius, *De Elocutione* 230; Quintilian, *Institutio Oratia* 9.4.19-22. On the independence of letter practice from the norms of speech-making rhetoric, see Stowers, *Letter Writing in the Greco-Roman World*, 52.

[215] See Stowers, *Letter Writing in Greco-Roman Antiquity*, 51; Watson, "The Three Species of Rhetoric and the Study of the Pauline Epistles,"46-47.

according to ancient theory is misguided,[216] and have chosen instead to investigate "rhetoric" in ancient letters in the less taxonomically exacting sense of discernible modes and common habits of persuasion: modes and habits that may at times relate to ancient theories and practices of rhetoric, without being reducible to any dependable, faithful adherence to such formal norms.[217]

The question of what counts as a "real letter" is also complicated by the fact that "real" and artificial "ideal" letters influenced each other in the common practices of correspondence and basic education, a fact that further blurs retrospective hard lines between categories of letters.[218] Both real and ideal letters were, for example, commonly used to train people to write their own real and ideal letters.[219] For these reasons, a number of scholars have concluded that – like Deissmann's hard line between real and literary letters – a hard line between real

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[216] See Aune, *The New Testament in Its Literary Environment*, 203; Classen, "Paul's Epistles and Greek and Roman Rhetoric," 290; Reed, "Using Ancient Rhetorical Categories to Interpret Paul's Letters: A Question of Genre," 322-324.

[217] See Christopher Forbes, "Ancient Rhetoric and Ancient Letters," 159-160; Forbes, "Paul and Rhetorical Comparison," in Sampley, *Paul in the Greco-Roman World*, 151; Porter, "Paul of Tarsus and His Letters," 584-585; Porter, "The Theoretical Justification for Application of Rhetorical Categories to Pauline Epistolary Literature," 122.

[218] See Cambron-Goulet, "Orality in Philosophical Epistles," 150; Carol Poster and Linda C. Mitchell, *Letter-Writing Manuals and Instruction from Antiquity to the Present* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2007), 40; Léon Nadjo, "Plaute épistolier," in *Epistulae antiquae III. Actes du IIIe Colloque international "L'épistolaire et ses prolongements européens*" (L. Nadjo and É. Gavoille, eds.; Paris: Peeters, 2004), 120; Philippe Le Moigne, "l'obscur, le pseudo et son double" in Nadjo and Gavoille, *Epistulae antiquae III. Actes du IIIe Colloque international "L'épistolaire et ses prolongements européens*," 54-57.

[219] Stowers, *Letter Writing in Greco-Roman Antiquity*, 33; Rosenmeyer, *Ancient Epistolary Fictions*, 33; Malherbe, *Ancient Epistolary Theorists*, 6-7, 44-57; Cambron-Goulet, "Orality in Philosophical Epistles," 150-151.

and ideal letters is too arbitrary and blurry to be a generally trustworthy and useful investigative tool.[220]

For the reasons laid out above, my main interest in examining the ancient association letters in this study does not lie in establishing once and for all their personal/epistolary or real/ideal status, or in understanding them strictly according to any of the taxonomies and rules of ancient rhetorical or epistolary theory. My goal will instead be to establish what seems to have been widely expected to be persuasive in ancient insider-to-insider letters, and how (especially with reference to questions of community self-definition, power, and worlds "outside"). In general terms, ancient association letters often display (as will be shown in the chapters below) three such basic persuasive habits: 1) They construct powerful, persuasive kinds of "presence" for distant writers, for example the commanding presence of an authority figure and/or the salutary presence of a good friend or a good and worthy person. 2) They construct ideal communities of insiders connected meaningfully to such good and worthy writers and to each other, often situated within an ideal network. 3) They construct community-defining tensions (negotiating accommodation and assertion of difference) between ideal communities of insiders and social norms and groups rhetorically left "outside."

The widespread ancient expectation that a letter could meaningfully manifest the presence of its writer is well-known and well-attested.[221] Letters can be found

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[220] On the breakdown of the distinction between "real" and "ideal" letters, see for example Cambron-Goulet, "Orality in Philosophical Epistles," 150; D. R. Langslow, "The *Epistula* in Ancient Scientific and Technical Literature, with Special Reference to Medicine," in *Ancient Letters. Classical and Late Antique Epistolography* (R. Morello and A. D. Morrison, eds.; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 214.

describing senders being "as present" with recipients despite the physical facts of distance and absence.[222] The letters of Cicero to his friends stress, for example, an intimate kind of personal presence created over a distance through the writing of letters.[223] For the purposes of investigating common means of persuasion by letter, it looks significant that this idea of authorial presence is intimately connected to the idea of a deep revelation of the author's true self. "It may be said that everybody reveals his own soul in his letters," says the famous analysis attributed to Demetrius: "In every other form of composition it is possible to see the writer's character, but in none so clearly as in epistolary."[224] The correspondence of Seneca and Lucilius confirm the reality of an ancient expectation of epistolary presence offering special access to a true authorial self: "I thank you for writing to me so often, for you are revealing your real self to me in the only way you can. I never receive a letter from you without being in your company forthwith."[225]

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[221] See Stowers, Letter Writing in Greco-Roman Antiquity, 60-61; F. Galtier, "La dévoilement épistolaire dans *La Conjuration de Catalina* de Salluste," in *Epistulae Antiquae IV. Actes du IVe colloque international "L'épistolaire antique et ses prolongements européens*" (P. Laurence and F. Guillaumont, eds.; Paris: Peeters, 2006), 111; M.-A. Calvet-Sebasti, "Le bestiaire des épistoliers grecs," in Laurence and Guillaumont, *Epistulae Antiquae V. Actes du Ve colloque international "L'épistolaire antique et ses prolongements européens*," 205; Cambron-Goulet, "Orality in Philosophical Epistles," 151-155.

[222] See Chapter 1 below. See also Hans-Josef Klauck (with the collaboration of D. P. Bailey), *Ancient Letters and the New Testament: A Guide to Content and Exegesis* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2006), 192-193.

[223] See Élisabeth Gavoille, "La relation à l'absent dans les lettres de Cicéron á Atticus," in Nadjo and Gavoille, *Epistulae Antiquae I. Actes du Ier colloque international "Le genre épistolaire et ses prolongements. Université de Tours, 18-19 sept. 1998*," 162.

[224] Demetrius, *On Style* 227 (W. R. Roberts, ed. and trans.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1902): Πλεῖστον δὲ ἐχέτω τὸ ἠθικὸν ἡ ἐπιστολή, ὥσπερ καὶ ὁ διάλογος: σχεδὸν γὰρ εἰκόνα ἕκαστος τῆς ἐαυτοῦ ψυχῆς γράφει τὴν ἐπιστολήν. καὶ ἔστι μὲν καὶ ἐξ ἄλλου λόγου παντὸς ἰδεῖν τὸ ἦθος τοῦ γράφοντος, ἐξ οὐδενὸς δὲ οὕτως, ὡς ἐπιστολῆς.

[225] Seneca, *Epistulae morales ad Lucilium* 40.1: Quod frequenter mihi scribis, gratias ago. Nam quo uno modo potes, te mihi ostendis. Numquam epistulam tuam accipio, ut non protinus una simus

The relevance to epistolary strategies of persuasion seems clear: The resonance of an audience with a good man's highly personal *ethos* was seen by educated rhetoricians from Aristotle onward as a fundamental source of persuasive power,[226] and a deliberate commitment to articulating personal *ethos* as a tool of persuasion can accordingly be seen at work in the letters of Cicero[227] and Seneca.[228] The expectation that the communication of a "good man's true *ethos*" was key to convincing his audience can in fact be found even in situations where the "good man" in question is plainly a pseudonymous fiction.[229] The epistolary use of an ideal author's deeply true, powerfully present personal *ethos* as a persuasive force will be analyzed several times in the analyses of ancient letters offered in this study.

The potential of letters to construct ideal communities of insiders is also of great interest here, in terms of investigating ancient means of persuasion. As noted in the previous section, the definition and cohesion of community identity is recognized as a serious concern for networked communities in the ancient world,[230] and it is also clear that letters are naturally useful tools in accomplishing this work

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(*Sénèque. Lettres à Lucilius* Vol. 1. F. Préchac, ed., H. Noblot, trans; Paris: Belles Lettres, 1945). See also *Epistulae morales ad Lucilium* 67.2, 114.3 (*Sénèque. Lettres à Lucilius* Vol. 2. F. Préchac, ed, H. Noblot, trans.; Paris: Belles Lettres, 1947).

[226] Manfred Kraus, "Ethos as a Technical Means of Persuasion in Ancient Rhetorical Theory," in *Rhetoric, Ethic, and Moral Persuasion in Biblical Discourse* (T. H. Olbricht and A. Eriksson, eds.; New York: T & T Clark International, 2005), 73-87; Kathy Eden, *The Renaissance Rediscovery of Intimacy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 1-20.

[227] Eden, *The Renaissance Rediscovery of Intimacy*, 5-12.

[228] Eden, *The Renaissance Rediscovery of Intimacy*, 14-32.

[229] John W. Marshall, "When You Make the Inside Like the Outside. Pseudepigraphy and Ethos," in Olbricht and Eriksson, *Rhetoric, Ethic, and Moral Persuasion in Biblical Discourse*, 88-102.

[230] See, for example, Philip A. Harland, "Spheres of Contention, Claims of Pre-eminence," 63.

(as seen for example in the ways in which the letters of Epicurus influenced and linked "the friends" associated with Epicurean circles in various places).[231] As noted already above, letters have by definition the capacity to "transform and tighten the community in which they are held, [as] readers, or hearers, are included in the community – or its idealized image."[232] The fact that ancient letters were commonly read in communal settings[233] contributed to this community-building and community-defining function of insider-to-insider letters. The potential of epistolary community definition will be stressed throughout the analyses of specific ancient letters offered in the chapters below, with special attention paid to the ideal creative tensions articulated by such community definition between the "inside" worlds and "outside" worlds thus constructed.

In several of the letters reviewed in this chapter and the next, the rhetorical construction of ideal addressee insiders includes the insider-to-insider advice of community paraenesis. The precise definition of (ancient) "paraenesis" is a matter of some scholarly debate,[234] and its applicability in ancient technical rhetorical terms to NT texts like Rom 12-15 is also somewhat unclear.[235] I am interested here therefore only in the general, non-technical, and uncontroversial understanding of

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[231] See Lutz Doering, *Ancient Jewish Letters and the Beginnings of Christian Epistolography*, 389-390.

[232] Cambron-Goulet, "Orality in Philosophical Epistles," 165

[233] See Cambron-Goulet, "Orality in Philosophical Epistles," 162.

[234] See the landscape of approach and emphasis outlined by Tite, *Valentinian Ethics and Paraenetic Discourse*, 57-133.

[235] See Esler, "Social Identity, the Virtues, and the Good Life: A New Approach to Romans 12:1-15:13,"53.

paraenesis reflected in Martin Dibelius's reference to paraenesis as "admonitions of general ethical content"[236] and Abraham Malherbe's reference to paraenesis as "moral exhortation."[237] More detail is warranted and given below in introducing the paraenesis found in Rom 12-15 (See Section 3.1), but at this point the only refinements needing mention involve the theoretical relevance of the work Philip Tite has done in analyzing the paraenesis found in Valentinian sectarian texts.

As Tite points out in examining the gnostic paraenesis of *The Gospel of Truth* and *The Interpretation of Knowledge*, insider group identity can be rhetorically constructed in the community paraenesis offered by an insider text, using "we/us" language like the language of fictive kinship[238] to describe ideal insiders in contradistinction to the ideal "outsiders" simultaneously constructed by the rhetorical logic of the text.[239] The stress Tite identifies in such paraenetic texts on insider identity as defined by constructing insiders versus outsiders is obviously very relevant for our purposes here, and it recalls and supports Lieu's point that projects of defining and policing "who we are" can often be discerned in the production and use of ancient insider texts, even when questions of community identity are never explicitly addressed at all.[240] Tite further points out that by

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[236] Martin Dibelius, *James: A Commentary on the Epistle of James* (M. A. Williams, trans.; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976), 3.

[237] A. J. Malherbe, *Moral Exhortation. A Greco-Roman Sourcebook* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986), 122.

[238] Tite, *Valentinian Ethics and Paraenetic Discourse*, 287, 289, 292, 295.

[239] Tite, *Valentinian Ethics and Paraenetic Discourse*, 287-288, 298.

[240] See Lieu, *Christian Identity*, 30-31.

assuming audience agreement ahead of time with the insider social identity thus constructed and asserted, this form of paraenesis involves efforts to exert control:

> Not only does the construction of in-group identity, especially when contrasted with out-group identity, generate social solidarity, but even more so the construction of such social emplotments functions to establish shared perspectives while obscuring, if not explicitly countering, alternative worldviews. Thus, paranesis does not simply *hold* to a shared worldview, but even more importantly *presents its worldview as an assumed* shared worldview in order to generate mutual identity.[241]

Tite's point that the ideal community identity and insider worldview presented by a paraenetic text are strategically "assumed" to be shared by its inscribed ideal audience(s) is well taken. As J. M. Starr and Troels Engberg-Pedersen have pointed out in their analyses of the ancient literary evidence, the paraenetic form "expresses or implies a shared world view."[242] Because such paraenesis "assumes a shared worldview" and its exhortation is usually phrased as a "reminder,"[243] the ideal insider identities and behaviours thus promoted are implicitly, authoritatively *represented as already in place and normative*. The chapter below shows that community structures rhetorically represented as already in place and normative can be defined and regulated by letter, as addressees are (in keeping with the principles described above in the section on Social Identity Theory with reference to Althusser and McCutcheon) addressed as already properly belonging to

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[241] Tite, *Valentinian Ethics and Paraenetic Discourse*, 297.

[242] J. M. Starr and T. Engberg-Pedersen, "Introduction," in *Early Christian Paraenesis in Context* (T. Engberg-Pedersen and J. M. Starr, eds.; Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 2004), 4.

[243] See J. M. Starr, "Was Paraenesis for Beginners?" in Engberg-Pedersen and Starr, *Early Christian Paraenesis in Context* , 79-80; Aune, "Romans as *Logos Protreptikos*," in Donfried, *The Romans Debate*, 295; Malherbe, *Moral Exhortation*, 125; Meeks, *The Moral World of the First Christians*, 114, 126; Stowers, *Letter Writing*, 128.

a particular system of identity and order, and as already occupying a particular proper place within that social system of order. The epistolary insider paraenesis identified and analyzed below in Chapters 1, 2, and 3 is shown to be addressee-community-defining in this way at the level of both the local and the global: It is social-identity-defining in the sense of describing the ideal defining characteristics of recognizable insiders in good standing, partly in contradistinction to simultaneously-defined "outsiders." It is also social-identity-defining in the sense of promoting as assumed the ideal ways in which the larger ideal subcultural networks to which such insider communities belong are to be defined and maintained.

Section 1.3. The "Real" Letter of Ammonius to Apollonius

This section examines *P. Oxy* XLII 3057, the *Letter of Ammonius to Apollonius*,[244] in light of the investigative goals and assumptions outlined above. This letter appears to preserve correspondence between two association "brothers," dating (based on the script) to either the late first century or the early second century.[245] It is not clear, though, which association the men belonged to. Some have suggested that it may in fact be the oldest preserved Christian papyrus letter,[246] but this suggestion has generally been treated as speculative at best,[247] due to the text's lack of identifiably Christian content.[248] The resulting window of scholarly uncertainty about both the letter's date and its association provenance is a

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[244] The free-standing ancient letters analyzed and subsequently referred to in Chapters 1 through 3 are set apart with italics for ease of recognition as distinct literary works.

[245] See P. J. Parsons, *The Oxyrynchus Papyri*, *Volume XLII* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974), 144. Parsons bases his judgment on the fact that the "characteristic letters are *α*, sometimes angular and sometimes rounded, *μ* in three movements, *π* with a strongly curved right side, [and] *υ* as a wide 'v,'" adding that "Schubart *Pal*. Abb. 79, which is similar though more carelessly written, dates to A.D. 94." See also Stowers, *Letter Writing in Greco-Roman Antiquity*, 98; Stephen. R. Llewelyn, with the collaboration of R. A. Kearsley, *New Documents Illustrating Early Christianity*. *A Review of the Greek Inscriptions and Papyri Published in 1980-1981* (Marrickville: Southwood Press, 1992), 169.

[246] See Parsons, *The Oxyrynchus Papyri*, *Volume XLII*, 144-146; P. J. Parsons, "The Earliest Christian Letter?," in *Miscellànea Papyrològica* (R. Pintaudi, ed.; Firenze: Edizioni Gonnelli, 1980), 289; Orsolina Montevecchi, "Recensioni e Bibliographica," *Aegyptus* 55 (1975): 302; C. J. Hemer, "Ammonius to Appolonius, Greeting," *Buried History* 12 (1976): 84-91; E. A. Judge, *Rank and Status in the World of the Caesars and St.Paul* (Christchurch: University of Canterbury Press, 1982), 20-23; G. R. Stanton, "The Proposed Earliest Christian Letter on Papyrus and the Origin of the Term Philalellia," ZPE 54 (1984): 49-63; Stowers, *Letter Writing in Greco-Roman Antiquity*, 98; James R. Harrison, *Paul's Language of Grace in its Greco-Roman Context* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 82; Llewelyn, *New Documents Illustrating Early Christianity*, 172-177.

[247] See, though, the minority opinion pushback of Orsolina Montevecchi, "ΤΗΝ ΕΠΙΣΤΟΛΗΝ ΚΕΧΙΑΣΜΕΝΗΝ: P. Oxy. XLII 3057," *Aegyptus* 80 (2000): 187-194, and Ilaria Ramelli, "Una delle più antiche lettere cristiane extracanoniche?," *Aegyptus* 80 (2000): 169-185 – arguments recently rebutted in detail by Lincoln H. Blumell, "Is P. Oxy. XLII 3057 the Earlest Christian Letter?," in *Early Christian Manuscripts. Examples of Applied Method and Approach* (T. J. Kraus and T. Nicklas, eds.; Boston: Brill, 2010), 97-114.

[248] See Hemer, "Ammonius to Appolonius, Greeting," 89; Llewelyn, *New Documents Illustrating Early Christianity*, 177; Blumell, "Is P. Oxy. XLII 3057 the Earlest Christian Letter?," 112-113.

good thing for the purposes of this study. If it is true that, as I argue below, the epistolary-rhetorical habits of the *Letter of Ammonius to Apollonius* meet the expectations of association letters outlined above, and resemble the epistolary habits of other association letters (including Romans), the fact that the letter could reasonably be attributed to a number of neighboring associations or years testifies to a necessarily incomplete yet discernible spectrum of early Roman imperial association epistolary culture – an identifiable range of what one can reasonably expect to find in the internal correspondence of ancient associations. I give here the full text of the one-page letter, in transcription and then in translation. The English translation is from the edition of Llewlyn, with individual line numbers added according to the line breaks of the papyrus,[249] for the sake of easy reference in the discussion that follows.

[249] Note: Where words or phrases are interrupted mid-line in the Greek text, I have moved the English to the next line. The image of the papyrus used was accessed at the Oxyrynchus Online Image Database (http://163.1.169.40/cgi-bin/library?site-=localhost&a=p&p=about&c=POxy&ct=0&l=en&w=utf-8) on January 1, 2016.

P. Oxy. XLII 3057[250]

(Recto)

Ἀμμώνιος Ἀπολλωνίωι τῶι
ἀδελφῶι χαίρειν.
ἐκομισάμην τὴν κεχιασμένην ἐπιστολὴν
καὶ τὴν ἱματοφορίδα καὶ τοὺς φαινόλας καὶ τὰς
σύνριγγας οὐ καλάς, τοὺς δὲ φαινόλας οὐχ ὡς
παλαιοὺς ἔλαβον ἀλλ' εἴ τι μεῖζόν ἐστιν καιν-
ῶν διὰ προαίρεσιν. οὐ θέλω δέ σε, ἄδελφε, βα-
ρύνειν με ταῖς συνεχεσέσι φιλανθρωπίαις,
\ . . ./ οὐ δυνάμενον ἀμείψασθαι, αὐτὸ δὲ μόνον
ἡμεῖς προαίρεσιν φιλικῆς διαθέσεως νομί-
ζομεν παρεστακέναι σοι. παρακαλῶ
δέ σε, ἄδελφε, μηκέτι λόγον ποιεῖσθαι πε-
ρὶ τῆς κλειδὸς τῆς μονοχώρου. οὐ γὰρ θέ-
λω ὑμᾶς τοὺς ἀδελφοὺς ἕνεκα ἐμοῦ ἢ ἄλ-
λου διαφοράν τινα ἔχειν. ὁμόνοιαν γὰρ καὶ
φιλαλληίαν εὔχομαι ἐν ὑμεῖν διαμένειν
ἵν' ἦτε ἀκαταλήρητοι καὶ μὴ ⟦ἦτε⟧ ὁμοῖοι
ἡμεῖν. ἡ γὰρ πεῖρα ἐπάγεταί με προτρέψασ-
θαι ὑμᾶς εἰρηνεύειν καὶ μὴ διδόναι ἀφορ-
μὰς ἑτέροις καθ' ὑμῶν. πείρασαι οὖν καὶ δι'
ἐμὲ τοῦτο ποιεῖν, χαρισάμενός μοι ὃ με-
τ̣ο̣ξὺ ἐπιγνώσῃ ἀγαθόν. τὰ ἔρια ἂν ᾖς είλη-
φὼς παρὰ Σαλβίου πλήρη καὶ ᾖ σοι άρεσ-
τά, ἀντίγραψόν μοι. γελοῖα δέ σοι γέγραφα
διὰ τῆς προτέρας ἐπιστολῆς, ἃ παραδέξῃ·
ἡ γὰρ ψυχὴ ἀνειμένη γείνεται, ὅταν τὸ
σὸν ὄνομα παρῇ, καὶ ταῦτα οὐχ ἔθος ἐχού-
σης ἠρεμεῖν διὰ τὰ ἐπερχόμενα, ἀλ' ὑπο-
φέρει Λεωνᾶς. ἀσπάζομαί σε, δέσποτα, καὶ τοὺς
σ[ο]ὺς πάντας. ἔρρωσο, τ̣ε̣ι̣μιώτατε

(Verso)

Ἀπολλωνίωι Ἀπολλω( ) ἐπισκέπ(τῃ) ἀδε(λφῷ).

[250] Text from Heidelberg University's Gesamtverzeichnis der griechischen Papyrusurkunden Ägyptens. Accessed online March 23, 2017. Link: http://aquila.zaw.uni-heidelberg.de/hgv/25080

P. Oxy. XLII 3057

1) Ammonios to Apollonios his 2) brother, greeting.

3) I received the crossed letter, 4) the portmanteau, the cloaks and the

5) poorer quality reeds. I received the cloaks not as 6) second-hand but as better than

7) new because of your intention. I don't want you, brother, 8) to weigh me down with your continual 9) acts of kindness seeing that I am unable to reciprocate. Only

10) an intention of friendly disposition do we think 11) we have offered you. I ask you, brother, 12) no longer to concern yourself 13) about the key for the single-room. For I do not 14) want you, my brothers, on my account or on 15) another's to have any difference; for I pray that 16) oneness of mind and mutual friendship remain among you 17) that you may be free from gossip and not like 18) us. For experience urges me to 19) persuade you to live peaceably and not to give 20) occasions against you to others. Try then also 21) for my sake to do this, gratifying me, which 22) meanwhile you will recognize as a good thing. If you receive the 23) wool from Salvius in full measure and are 24) satisfied with it, write to me. I wrote you nonsense 25) in the previous letter which you'll admit. 26) For my soul becomes relaxed whenever 27) your name is present, and this though it is unaccustomed 28) to be at rest because of what is happening. But 29) Leonas bears up. I greet you, master, and 30) all your household. Farewell, most honoured one.

(Address on Verso) To Appolonios, son of Apollo, surveyor, his brother.

I argued above, based upon basic kinds of common epistolary theory and practice observable as operative in the first century, that association letters can be expected to 1) construct the commanding presence of an authority figure and/or the salutary presence of a good friend or a good and worthy person, 2) construct ideal communities of insiders connected meaningfully to such good and worthy writers and to each other, often situated within an ideal network, and 3) construct community-defining tensions (negotiating accommodation and assertion of difference) within the relationship of those resulting ideal communities of insiders to the social structures and groups rhetorically left "outside." This section examines the ways in which these association-epistolary functions appear and work in the *Letter of Ammonius to Apollonius*.

In terms of the construction of an authorial *ethos* (in the sense discussed above, presented as the persuasive and meaningfully present personal character of the worthy letter writer) *Ammonius to Apollonius* displays a number of features worth noting here. The common ancient expectation of meaningful presence through letter writing is only implied, and that only inversely, by the line "My soul relaxes when your name is there" (lines 26-27), but this is well within the range of ancient expectation described above, in which claims that "You are here in your letter(s)" and/or "We are together in our shared letters" did the job at least as often as claims that "I am with you in this letter." As Kathy Eden showed in her historical review of "the rhetoric of intimacy" in traditional epistolary theory and practice, the idea of letters as able to communicate the attractive, authoritative, edifying personal

ethos of a particular writer evolved over centuries,[251] but its roots can be found in Greco-Roman antiquity. It can be seen at work, for example, in Aristotle's depiction of letters as somehow capable of communicating the particular, edifying personal *ethos* of an author in the way a good speech might do,[252] and Cicero's application of the rhetorical principle that "the orator must present himself (that is, his character)… in a way that stimulates attachment and affection rather than alienation"[253] to the writing of letters as "writing intimately" (*scribere familariter*).[254] An *ethos*-focused rhetoric of intimacy is discernible here in the *Letter of Ammonius to Apollonius* in the construction of Ammonius as a good, worthy, and trustworthy friend. He writes to Apollonius as a fellow member in an established group of "brothers" (line 14), and in fact refers to Apollonius as "brother" repeatedly (in the address line, and lines 2, 7, 11). The use of such language of fictive kinship was, as noted already above, a normal way for ancient association members to express a sense of solidarity. It was possible, for example, to belong to a "family of gladiators,"[255] or lay down rules forbidding members of an "association (*koinon*)… to depart from the brotherhood (*phratra*) of the leader to join another brotherhood."[256] Closer to home for the purposes of this study, one member of an

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[251] K. Eden, *The Renaissance Rediscovery of Intimacy* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2012), 48.

[252] See Eden, *The Renaissance Rediscovery of Intimacy*, 20.

[253] See Eden, *The Renaissance Rediscovery of Intimacy*, 25.

[254] See Eden, *The Renaissance Rediscovery of Intimacy*, 29.

[255] See "A 'Family' of Gladiators" (IEph 1182), cited in Ascough, Harland, and Kloppenborg, *Associations in the Greco-Roman World: A Sourcebook*, 105-106.

association may address a letter to another as both "brother (*adelphos*)" and "friend (*philos*)," addressing questions of business and wishing good health to the addresee's literal family members.[257]

Ammonius also tells/reminds Apollonius that he is a good personal contact to have when it comes to managing the (personal and/or association) business Apollonius has with a third party named Salvius (lines 22-24). The presentation of this offer as helpful assumes that he is a useful and trustworthy friend for Apollonius. He is also specified to be already a close contact, with whom Apollonius has been in regular touch before (lines 3 and 24-25) and with whom Apollonius should be in touch further – close enough in fact to use the familiar and imperative words "Write [back] to me" in phrasing his offer of help (line 24).

Although Ammonius is not depicted as much of an authority figure, then (as will be seen in the discussion of "benefaction" below), the language of the letter constructs him as having the moral authority of a good and worthy insider friend. Ammonius thus takes for granted, for example, that it is his rightful place to advise and to "persuade you all" (προτρέψασθαι ὑμᾶς, lines 18-19) – i.e., the "brothers" who will all, he simply assumes, hear his words read aloud and/or shared as worth considering by Apollonius – concerning how they ought to behave. Due to this sense of brotherly closeness and parity, the bad experience suffered by the brothers with

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[256] See the "Regulations of an Association of Zeus Hypsistos" (PLond VII 2193), cited in Ascough, Harland, and Kloppenborg, *Associations in the Greco-Roman World: A Sourcebook*, 176-177. On the language of fictive kinship and the definition of association social identity generally, see Philp A. Harland, "Familial Dimensions of Group Identity: 'Brothers' (ἀδελφοί) in Associations of the Greek East," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 124 (2005): 491-513.

[257] See the "Letter Concerning Transportation of a Corpse" (PPetaus 28), cited in cited in Ascough, Harland, and Kloppenborg, *Associations in the Greco-Roman World: A Sourcebook*, 173-174.

Ammonius is presented as a good enough reason to offer advice to the brothers with Apollonius, i.e., to live in peace with each other, in order to avoid trouble from the outside world – lines 17-22). Ammonius again feels entitled in giving his advice to use direct imperative language, and further assumes that the moral authority of his meaningful intimacy with his audience justifies asking for such things to be done as personal favours and/or on his account personally: "Try to do this," he says, "for my sake, gratifying me" (lines 20-21).

As the reference to "our" intervention-justifying "experience" (lines 17-18) shows, though, the moral authority Ammonius depends upon as the friend and brother of Apollonius is not simply that of an individual. Friendship is something that he says "we" can offer to Apollonius (lines 10-11), and the language of the rest of the letter suggests that this switch to the plural is not merely a writerly figure of speech. Ammonius alternates between the singular "I/me" (as seen in the θέλω and με of lines 7-8) and the plural "we/us" (as seen in the ἡμεῖς and νομίζομεν of line 10) throughout the letter, which as Llewelyn notes is not unusual in roughly contemporaneous letters, whether Christian, Jewish or "pagan."[258] Llewelyn offers here the example of the business letter drafts preserved in *P. Cair. Zen*. I 59015 verso,[259] in which parallel uses of "Krotos told me" and "Krotos told us" suggest a rather casual interchangeability.[260] What is, however, particular about the switch from singular to plural on the part of Ammonius here is that the "we" sections imply

[258] See Llewelyn, *New Documents Illustrating Early Christianity*, 170-171.

[259] Llewelyn, *New Documents Illustrating Early Christianity*, 101-102.

[260] Llewelyn, *New Documents Illustrating Early Christianity*, 171.

a group of brothers on Ammonius's end (lines 17-18), an implication amplified by the fact that Ammonius also alternates between the singular "you" and the plural "you," and does so with reference to "brother" and "brothers" (as in the σε, ἄδελφε of line 11 and the ὑμᾶς τοὺς ἀδελφοὺς of line 14). In relation to that "you," the "we" of the letter evokes "the brothers" who are with Ammonius – an effect highlighted by Ammonius taking the time to assure Apollonius and those with him that Leonas, another local too well-known to need identification other than by name, is doing well (lines 28-29), despite problems also too well-known to specify and/or the troubles alluded to in lines 17-18 and 28.

In terms of testing and investigating the expectation that an association letter will construct the senders and recipients of the letter as insiders in a network, I note that it should already be clear by now that the *Letter of Ammonius to Apollonius* conforms to this expectation. "A certain view of proper life together in some sort of community," Stanley K. Stowers notes, briefly and without apparently seeing the claim as needing elaboration, "seems implicit."[261] I agree, and add that the insistent language of brotherhood, the image of proper peaceable community living free from trouble from the outside world, the language of meaningful I-thou and we-you relationships, the personal note on the wellness of an individual presumed to be both well-known and deserving of care over a distance all describe/prescribe a clear vision of insider community network life.

Two more details of the letter of Ammonius bear mentioning in a discussion of the expectation that such letters inherently involve the construction of ideal

[261] Stowers, *Letter Writing in Greco-Roman Antiquity*, 98.

communities of insiders. One detail concerns the kind of "peaceable living" the letter itself recommends for association insiders (lines 18-19), and the other concerns the kind of potential trouble the letter recommends avoiding from outsiders (lines 16-20). Ammonius gives us at one point, it seems, a further example in action (beyond those already mentioned above) of the peaceable living recommended in his letter. "I wrote you nonsense in previous letter," he confesses to Apollonius (lines 24-25). Llewelyn's translation of the entire phrase proposes, "I wrote you nonsense in the previous letter, which you will admit."[262] Parsons and Stowers propose instead "…which you will discount,"[263] which seems like a better translation of ἃ παραδέξῃ, given the fact that if Ammonius had really bothered Apollonius with nonsense (γελοῖα) in his last letter, the worst and most obvious risk would not be that Apollonius would dispute the claim that it was nonsense, but rather that Apollonius might not forgive being subjected to such nonsense. Since the verb παραδέχομαι can be found connoting both "allow" and "accept,"[264] one might say that Apollonius is being asked to "forgive" the nonsense. By admitting fault and asking forgiveness, Ammonius attempts here the kind of "brotherly," peaceable insider-to-insider community interaction recommended in his letter.

The mention Ammonius makes in line 2 of having received the "crossed letter" (τὴν κεχιασμένην ἐπιστολὴν) is similarly significant, in addressing the question of the construction of an insider community. Contrary to the suggestions of

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[262] Llewelyn, *New Documents Illustrating Early Christianity*, 171.

[263] Parsons, *P. Oxy*. XLII, 144; Stowers, *Letter Writing in Greco-Roman Antiquity*, 98.

[264] See, for example the great *Greek-English Lexicon* of Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), 1308.

those who have speculated about a Christian significance for this phrase,[265] the usual use of the word κεχιασμένην in comparable papyri suggests that the "crossed" document is either a letter marked to signify a (debt) cancellation,[266] or else a letter with the then-common feature of an X-shaped seal used to show a recipient that a letter had not been tampered with.[267]

The first possibility suggests that this "crossed letter" could have documented a cancellation, perhaps of a debt. If it were a financially useful document supplied by Apollonius and/or his "brothers," perhaps, for example, legal notice of a debt cancelled for Ammonius and/or his "brothers" by Apollonius and/or his "brothers" or some third party, it would make good sense as the first item in the list of "acts of kindness" acknowledged in lines 3-9. It would also serve to underline the normalcy and importance of the association culture elements reviewed above involving common business and mutual obligations (see also the controversial business of the key for the single room mentioned in line 13).

The second possibility (that Ammonius is confirming here that the previous letter from Apollonius arrived sealed), is also relevant for our purposes here in

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[265] See Blumell, "Is P. Oxy. XLII 3057 the Earliest Christian Letter?," 101-105.

[266] See Parsons, *P. Oxy.* XLII, 145; Llewelyn, *New Documents Illustrating Early Christianity*, 173. On the practice of signifying debt cancellation with an "X," see Llewelyn on "Business Transactions," in *New Documents Illustrating Early Christianity*, 107-108. See also Blumell, "Is P. Oxy. XLII 3057 the Earliest Christian Letter?," 104 – especially his note (30) on *P. Col*. X 249, a record of a loan "marked with a number of large crosses showing that it had been invalidated."

[267] See Parsons, *P. Oxy. XLII*, 145; Llewelyn, *New Documents Illustrating Early Christianity*, 173; Blumell, "Is P. Oxy. XLII 3057 the Earliest Christian Letter?," 105; R. S. Bagnall and R. Criboire, eds., *Women's Letters from Ancient Egypt*, *300 BC-AD 800* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2006), 33; Katelijn Vandorpe, *Breaking the Seal of Secrecy: Sealing Practices in Graeco-Roman and Byzantine Egypt Based on Greek, Demotic and Latin Papyrological Evidence* (Leiden: Papyrologisch instituut, 1995); Turner, *Greek Papyri*, 130, 139.

discussing how association letters construct networks of association insiders. There are two obvious possible reasons for confirming to Apollonius that his letter arrived sealed: the assurance of security could simply refer to the practice of protecting "insider stuff" as "insider stuff," or it could refer to the need (flagged by Ammonius himself later on in the letter, in lines 17-20, and perhaps again in 28) of protecting the association against trouble coming from the outside.[268] Both possibilities testify, then, to the construction and maintenance of an organizationally "healthy" insularity vis-à-vis the world "outside." The intimate relationship between "peaceable living inside" and a livable peace with the "outside" world is made even more clear when Ammonius advises (and prays for) concord "inside" explicitly in order to avoid trouble from the "outside" – i.e., from kind of "gossip" (line 17) that might give "occasions against" the brothers to "others" (20). This is a clear, explicit expression of the association insider concern described above in defining ancient associations and their subcultural needs and habits of self-definition: the maintenance of a respectable peace "inside" the group is a means of avoiding dangerous disdain, accusation, and other kinds of trouble with the "outside" world.

This observation leads my discussion of the *Letter of Ammonius* to the question of the construction in letters of self-defining tensions between associations and the worlds "outside." This letter displays several characteristics pointing to this subcultural problem of social identity construction and its ancient solutions. First of all, the addition of "brother" to both address line and salutation line clearly mark the

[268] See Llewelyn, *New Documents Illustrating Early Christianity*, 173; Blumell, "Is P. Oxy. XLII 3057 the Earliest Christian Letter?," 105.

letter as an insider association document. The letter is not addressed from X, who happens to be a member of a given association, to Y, who also happens to be a member of that association. It is addressed to Apollonius as an association member, from Ammonius who is writing as an association member. This is not a trivial point when we consider that in the imperial Mediterranean world, a sealed letter from one insider "brother" to another makes a strong statement about nested and tangled types of belonging. On the one hand, the communication thus marked is clearly, meaningfully flagged as belonging to the macro-cultural world in which the association is embedded, since many other groups and individuals are using such seals and such language. On the other hand, the communication of the letter thus marked is also thereby clearly, meaningfully flagged as somehow belonging to the members of one particular group and no other individuals or groups. In this way, even the most normal epistolary forms can be seen in a letter like *Ammonius to Apollonius* to serve the strategic border-tension-building of insider group definition.

A more specific example of such self-defining tension with "outside" realities in the construction of insider social identity can be seen in the letter's reference to Apollonius's uncomfortably accumulating acts of kindness or "philanthropy" (φιλανθρωπίαις, line 8-9). The fact that Ammonius protests because he is unable to reciprocate (line 9) implies that Apollonius has – or risks gaining – the status of a patron for Ammonius and/or his local "brothers," and acting (in ancient terms) according the mode "of benefaction rather than of friendship."[269] As John Barclay

[269] See on this perceived risk G. W. Peterman, *Paul's Gift From Philippi. Conventions of Gift-Exchange and Christian Giving* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 81-82.

notes, in the first-century Mediterranean world, "gifts may scramble and combine what we are accustomed to regard as polar opposites: freedom and debt, choice and obligation, interest and disinterest."[270] The kinds of ancient "strings attached" to a gifts like those sent by Apollonius may therefore be understood to include the potential power play of taking on the role of patron or benefactor. Against this reading it may be proposed that Ammonius is just being polite, but comparable letters of gratitude survive from the first century recording the most common and expected expressions of polite gratitude, and they merely highlight with their expressions of thanks the odd fact that, as G. W. Peterman notes, there is not a single "thank you" offered to Apollonius in this letter.[271]

It may also be proposed against this reading that Ammonius is just tired of receiving second-class reeds and second-hand cloaks (lines 4-6) from Apollonius, but the stress Ammonius places on his inability to reciprocate in kind underlines the fact that even if Apollonius is sending junk, it is more than Ammonius could hope to do. It seems more likely, then, that his protest against a level of generosity he cannot reciprocate indicates a genuine concern on the part of Ammonius about being made to play the part of a client. From this point of view, it seems significant that instead of thanking Apollonius the master (the δέσποτα of line 29) for his gifts, Ammonius protests to Apollonius as his *brother* (ἄδελφε, line 7) about a lop-sided kind of generosity that approaches the appearance of literally patronizing benefaction.

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[270] John Barclay, *Paul and the Gift* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 63-63.

[271] Peterman, *Paul's Gift From Philippi*, 81-82.

I flag the protest against excessive generosity found in lines 7-11 here because it represents an attempt to clarify the mutual obligations of Ammonius and Apollonius as "brothers" in terms of the commonly known and accepted practice of patronage, but not simply and clearly *as* patronage *per se*. The complex patronage systems and extended "household" systems noted above as essential to the health of an ancient association network are not explicitly rejected. Ammonius salutes Apollonius as a "master," acknowledges the "honour" proper to a man of his status, and greets the dependents of "all [the] household" under his headship as good and normal pieces in the hierarchical puzzle of civilized life as they knew it. On the other hand, Ammonius refuses to play the part of a dependent from whom Apollonius gains the honour of benefaction, no matter how many second-rate reeds and cloaks Apollonius can afford to send.

To conclude with the *Letter of Ammonius*, it has been shown here that numerous elements in the letter serve the definition of a particular insider social identity, in ways that meet the expectations for both subcultural community definition and association letters outlined in introducing this study. I have shown (in the letter's engagement of common epistolary forms and documentary practice, of ideas of peaceable community life within and without, of common norms of friendship and benefaction, etc.), common elements of "outside" culture being used by insiders as tools adapted to the construction and maintenance of a distinct insider subculture. I have shown in particular that the common association network need I proposed as central above – the need to avoid "external" trouble related to disdain, accusation, etc., by avoiding "internal" strife and dysfunction – emerges as a

central concern in the community-defining language of this particular association insider letter. The ideal network described/prescribed in the *Letter of Ammonius* is a socially healthy subcultural network of peaceful, cohesive units, deliberately distinct and "special" but not culturally idiosyncratic enough to be socially dysfunctional vis-à-vis the "outside" world, in terms of the letter's "insider" engagement with wider social structures of organization, status, honour, and power.

Section 1.4. The "Ideal" Cynic Epistle of Aristippus to Arete

This section offers an examination of one particular "Cynic Epistle" in light of the investigative questions and expectations outlined in my introduction to this study. The modern study of the cultures of the ancient philosophical "schools" or "associations" (including their epistolary cultures and common first-century ideas about ideal Cynics and Cynic networks or "schools) is introduced insofar as it is relevant to NT study, and an analysis of the letter of *Aristippus to Arete* is offered, in light of the investigative questions and expectations outlined in my Introduction and with a view to preparing the ground for the analyses of Chapters 2 and 3.

From the organized followers of Pythagoras onward, loosely-associated philosophical groups can be found forming "schools" (both physical and notional) dedicated to preserving and spreading the teachings of their respective idealized founders.[272] The types, methods, and ideas of these philosophical "associations" were very diverse,[273] but they nevertheless constitute an identifiable and usefully comparable expression of ancient subcultural community-building. They can, for example, as Steve N. Mason notes, be shown to be (like all the other associations discussed above) typically concerned with promoting and embodying respectable forms of *eusebia* and *pietas*.[274] They also, as Alan Culpepper's study has shown, "emphasized *philia* and *koinōnia*" as the associations reviewed above did, "observed communal meals" as they did, and – perhaps most significantly for our purposes

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[272] Mason, "*PHILOSOPHIAI*: Graeco-Roman, Judean and Christian," 31.

[273] See, for example the range of philosophical "schools" and "associations" recorded by Klauck, *The Religious Context of Early Christianity*, 331-335.

[274] Mason, "*PHILOSOPHIAI*: Graeco-Roman, Judean and Christian," 33.

here – they "often maintained" like the associations reviewed above "some degree of distance or withdrawal from the rest of society [as they] developed organizational means of insuring their perpetuity."[275] Philosophical associations are, for such reasons, often acknowledged to be somewhat analogous to Christian associations, not least in their networked structures and their willingness to define their own subcultures as somehow salutary to, and yet superior to, their host majority cultures.[276] The cultures of such philosophical associations are therefore often treated by modern researchers as instructive in understanding the emergence of early Christian cultures,[277] including for example their similar modes of sharing moral advice.[278] The analysis offered below of the Cynic Epistle of *Aristippus to Arete* will focus on the community-defining character of such "moral advice," including in particular its construction of insider social identity in terms of the proper "degree of

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[275] Alan R. Culpepper, *The Johannine School: An Evaluation of the Johannine-School Hypothesis Based on an Investigation of the Nature of Ancient Schools* (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1975), 258-259.

[276] Wilson, "Voluntary Associations: An Overview," 3; Robert L. Wilken, "Collegia, Philosophical Schools, and Theology," in *The Catacombs and the Coloseum: The Roman Empire as the Setting of Primitive Christianity* (S. Benko and J. J. O'Rourke, eds.; Valley Forge: Judson, 1971), 287; See also Steve N. Mason, "*PHILOSOPHIAI*: Graeco-Roman, Judean and Christian"; Klauck, *The Religious Context of Early Christianity*, 334-335.

[277] See, for example, F. Gerald Downing, *Cynics and Christian Origins* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1992); F. Gerald Downing, "Cynics and Early Christianity," in *Le Cynisme ancien et ses prolongements. Actes du colloque international du CNRS. Paris, 22-25 juillet 1991* (M. Goulet-Cazé and R. Goulet, eds.; Presses universitaires de France: Paris, 1993), 281-304; F. Gerald Downing, *Cynics, Paul and the Pauline Churches. Cynics and Christian Origins II* (New York: Routledge, 1998); Abraham J. Malherbe, *Paul and the Popular Philosophers* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989); Klauck, *The Religious Context of Early Christianity*, 331-428.

[278] See, for example, Norman Wentworth DeWitt, *St. Paul and Epicurus* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1954); Abraham J. Malherbe, "Hellenistic Moralists and the New Testament," in *Aufstieg und Niedergang Der Römischen Welt*. *Part II: Principate*. Volume 26.1 (New York: Walter De Gruyter, 1992), 267-333; David L. Balch, "Neopythagorean Moralists and the New Testament Household Codes," in *Aufstieg und Niedergang Der Römischen Welt*. *Part II: Principate*. Volume 26.1 (New York: Walter De Gruyter, 1992), 380-411.

distance… from the rest of society" noted by Culpepper to be so often noticeably important to defining such real and ideal communities.

Among the numerous and various ancient groups identified as philosophical associations, Cynic networks or "schools" have been recognized as particularly important for NT study.[279] For the purposes of this study, it seems particularly significant that Cynic expressions of community (self-)definition depend upon strategic tensions imagined vis-à-vis "outside" social structures and identities: On the one hand, Cynics were typically rightly seen as defining themselves over against mainstream political and social order,[280] since the "rejection of the city promotes Cynic freedom and virtue." On the other hand, by means of a "re-evaluation of conventional terms, Cynics use the *patris*, *basilea*, *polis*, *politeia* and so on as metaphors for the Cynic way of life."[281] Since they cast the common association tension between accommodation and self-assertion in such stark yet negotiated terms, the community-defining rhetorical habits of real and ideal ancient Cynics (including the material preserved in the Cynic Epistles) promise to be particularly interesting for the comparative-investigative purposes of this study.

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[279] See, for example, the dozens of studies cited and expanded upon by F. Gerald Downing in *Cynics and Christian Origins* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1992), 1. See also Downing's *Cynics, Paul, and the Pauline Churches* (New York: Routledge, 1998); the studies cited in Malherbe, "Hellenistic Moralists and the New Testament," 268, 204-298, 300, 314-318, 328, 331; and by Hans Dieter Betz, "Jesus and the Cynics: Survey and Analysis of a Hypothesis" *Journal of Religion* 74 (1994): 453-457; Marie-Odile Goulet-Cazé, "Introduction," in *The Cynics* (R. Bracht Branham and M.-O. Goulet-Cazé, eds.; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 19.

[280] See John Moles, "The Cynics," in Rowe and Schofield, *The Cambridge History of Greek and Roman Political Thought*, 415-434; Goulet-Cazé, "Le cynisme à l'époque imperiale," in *Aufstieg und Niedergang Der Römischen Welt* II 36.4 (1990): 2752-2759.

[281] Moles, "The Cynics," 426; see also John Moles, "Le Cosmopolitisme Cynique," in Goulet-Cazé and Goulet, *Le Cynisme ancien et ses prolongements*, 267.

Before moving to a consideration of "the Cynic Epistles," a note on the study of philosophical networks and letters is in order. One obvious place to look for the community self-definition of philosophical networks in action is in their letters, since, as William V. Harris and others have noted, "it was the habit of religious and philosophical sects to maintain a measure of contact and coherence with the like-minded by exchanging letters."[282] The field of NT Studies has accordingly shown some interest in investigating ideals about ancient philosophical association culture specifically as expressed in letter form,[283] but it seems clear that more is needed, as Abraham J. Malherbe argued in 1992: "Given the fact that that the paraenetic sections of the New Testament which have an affinity with the paraenesis of the moral philosophers are found mostly, but not exclusively, in the epistles, the tradition of pagan epistolary paraenesis should particularly be brought into the discussion more."[284]

The investigation of the association cultures of such letters promises, in fact, to be particularly relevant and useful here, since (as suggested already in the reference Harris makes to the "measure of contact and coherence" they provided, and seen already above in the *Letter of Ammonius to Apollonius*) ancient association network letters lent themselves handily to projects of defining insider social identities and networked communities. It has already been shown above that letters

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[282] William V. Harris, *Ancient Literacy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), 220. See also Smith, "Fifty-Five New Fragments of Diogenes of Oenoanda," *Anatolian Studies* 28 (1978): 53; MacMullen, *Paganism in the Roman Empire* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), 11.

[283] Victor P. Furnish, "Paul's Exhortations in the Context of His Letters and Thought" (PhD diss., Yale University, 1960), 34-36; Stowers, *Letter Writing in Greco-Roman Antiquity*, 94-106

[284] Malherbe, "Hellenistic Moralists and the New Testament," 279.

between insiders can find new "insider" meaning and value in common "external" cultural norms. Diogenes of Oenoanda provided history with an example of this phenomenon by preserving on inscribed stone around 125 CE a number letters apparently attributed to Epicurus, including several clearly "private" letters, preserving the philosophical argument that public sacrifices are good and demand the participation of the wise, but not for the reasons "outsiders" think they are good: "We know," the letters smugly affirm, as from one Epicurean insider to another, that public sacrifices do good by binding communities together in salutary piety, and not (as the "outsiders" think) by placating any capricious anthropomorphic gods.[285]

We saw in examining the *Letter of Ammonius* that common epistolary habits can be deployed to serve the definition of an in-group. The correspondence of Seneca preserves an "inside joke" relating to this potential for specifically epistolary community self-definition, in his lighthearted suggestion that insiders like Lucilius and himself should perhaps tailor conventional letter openings in ways that suit their "insider" status: "The old Romans had a custom which survived even into my lifetime," Seneca writes.[286] "They would add to the opening words of a letter: 'If you are well, it is well; I also am well.' Persons like ourselves would do well to say. 'If you are studying philosophy, it is well.' For this is just what 'being well means."[287]

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[285] Smith. "Fifty-Five New Fragments," 69-71.

[286] As the letter drafts preserved in *PCZ* 59015 show (see lines 1 and 26), the custom Seneca refers to here actually survived longer than his language of nostalgia would suggest (See Llewelyn 101-102).

[287] Seneca, *Ad Lucilium* 15.1 (English passages from Seneca's letters are from *Ad Lucilium Epistulae Morales*, ed. and trans. Richard M. Gummere. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967).

Seneca is making a joke here, but tailored epistolary conventions do in fact serve in-group definition in his letters, as for example when he addresses his letters to Lucilius, in his letter's salutation line, as "his friend."[288] Like the appellation "brother" included by Ammonius in his letter's address/salutation, this word "friend" is a term commonly used by one association member to refer to another[289] (including members of philosophical associations),[290] and as the context of philosophical insider instruction and advice evident in Seneca's letters to Lucilius shows, the most real and relevant "friendship" they share is defined by their relationship within a particular in-group imagined over time and space.

Continuing with the theme of insider-to-insider advice, one final example worth mentioning here of the ways in which association network letter material can serve community definition concerns the conventional modes of the giving of advice itself. I mentioned above that the ways in which ancient philosophical association letters framed their advice were flagged by Malherbe as under-studied and significant.[291] One such mode of epistolary advice-giving that is most obviously relevant for our purposes here is the way in which such epistolary forms of advice served community definition. Malherbe notes, for example, that paraenesis in philosophic letters is "avowedly traditional and unoriginal,"[292] and accordingly

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[288] *Ad Lucilium* 1.1.

[289] See Harland, *Associations, Synagogues, and Congregations*, 33; Waltzing, *Étude historique sur les corporations professionelles chez les Romains*, 446-449.

[290] See Ascough, "Greco-Roman Philosophic, Religious, and Voluntary Associations," 5, 16.

[291] Malherbe, *Cynic Epistles*, 2-3; Malherbe, *Paul and the Popular Philosophers*, 13, etc

[292] Malherbe, "Hellenistic Moralists and the New Testament," 280-281.

frequently takes the form of a "reminder" in the correspondence of Cicero and Seneca, for example,[293] since the recipient of such unoriginal advice is treated as if he or she "already knows what he [or she] should be doing," and as if he or she is in fact already (normally) doing it.[294]

This "reminder" pose in philosophical epistolary advice-giving, assuming as it does pre-existing willing compliance on the part of the recipient, is rhetorically convenient since it pushes the advice thus delivered as an established given – as something that could not and should not really be up for debate. Each piece of advice given in this way also conveniently pushes, I note, its own construction of an ideal in-group. Advice thus given is by definition framed as something that is not up for debate between proper insiders like the inscribed sender(s) and recipient(s).

As I noted in my Introduction with reference to the work of Tite, Starr, and Engberg-Pedersen, the common habit of framing insider community interventions as mere "reminders" is a powerful tool for the rhetorical construction of insider social identity, since it casts the community norms being articulated and promoted as reassuring, ennobling community realities already in place and authoritative. In cases where the internal "sameness" assumed as existing and good is framed (like the "friendship" and the "wellness" assumed by Seneca in the letters referred to above) in terms of assumed difference from "outsiders" (in the case of Seneca and Lucilius, those who are *not* their "friends," and who are *not* notably "well" due to studying philosophy), the resulting border tension serves what should at this point

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[293] See Malherbe, "Hellenistic Moralists and the New Testament," 281-282, 286-287.

[294] See Malherbe, "Hellenistic Moralists and the New Testament," 287.

be a familiar mode of community definition. Epistolary social identity definition is once again here necessarily simultaneously engaging/accommodating and self-defining/self-asserting vis-à-vis the "outside" world. Jason König has shown, for example, that the epistolary rhetoric of the philosophical *Letters of Alciphron* engages contemporary popular philosophical convention, but also stresses an ideal "insider" versus "outsider" dynamic serving the construction of an "idealised community [of the like-minded], often isolated from and resistant to the norms of wider society, and at least temporarily secure from challenge within its own safe and clearly bounded epistolary domain."[295] The analysis offered below of the Cynic Epistle of *Aristippus to Arete* accordingly traces the letter's use of the construction and maintenance of ideal community borders as a tool for defining ideal insider social identity.

The letter addressed to Arete and attributed to Aristippus is found in a collection of letters attributed to Socrates and associated "Socratics," preserved in a single medieval manuscript (*Codex Vaticanus graecus* 64), stored at the Vatican[296] and most often found published and discussed in the context of a larger collection called the Cynic Epistles. It is not known, though, who originally wrote or collected these letters,[297] and dating specific materials within the collection is very difficult. The letters attributed to Anacharsis, for example, are often dated to the early

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[295] Jason König, "Alciphron and the Sympotic Letter Tradition," in *Epistolary Narratives in Ancient Greek Literature* (O. Hodkinso et al., eds.; Boston: Brill, 2013), 198.

[296] See Johannes Sykutris, "Die handschriftliche Überlieferung der Sokratikerbriefe," *Philologische Wochenschrift* 48 (1928): 1284–1295.

[297] Lief E. Vaage, "Cynic Epistles (Selections)," in *Ascetic Behavior in Greco-Roman Antiquity* (V. L. Wimbush, ed.; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), 117.

imperial age,[298] but are also often argued to contain letter material from as far back as the third century BCE.[299] The separate collection of letters attributed to Diogenes contains materials dated as early as the second century BCE and as late the second century CE.[300] The precise immediate purpose of the letter collection(s) is also unclear. It has been suggested, for example, that they were originally school exercises, but today they are more often seen by scholars as propaganda – i.e., as depictions of inspiring ideal Cynics preserved and shared by interested parties.[301] The diversity of "Cynic" traditions and heroes makes it hard, though, to define "Cynicism" precisely,[302] which seems to have been a problem already known to observers in the ancient world.[303] The least one can say is that by associating their philosophical content with ancient heroes, the Cynic Epistles addressed problems of

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[298] See W. Schmid, "Anacharsis," in *Paulys Realencyklopädie*, Vol. I (1894): 2017-2018; Gustav Adolf Gerhard, *Phoinix von Kolophon* (Berlin: Teubner, 1909), 99, 172.

[299] See J. Sykutris, "Epistolographie," in *Paulys Realencyklopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft*. Supplement 5. (A. Pauly et al., eds.; Stuttgart: J. B. Metzler, 1931): 210-211; Olof Gignon, "Kynikerbriefe," in *Lexicon der Alten Welt* (Zürich: Artemis, 1965): 1658-1659; Ulrich von Wiliamowitz-Moellendorf, *Commentariolum Grammaticum,* Vol. 3 (Göttingen: Kunike, 1889), 28-29; Franz Heinrich Reuters, *Der Briefe des Anacharsis. Griechisch und deutsch* (Berlin: Akademie, 1963).

[300] Malherbe, *The Cynic Epistles. A Study Edition* (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 1977), 17.

[301] Vaage, "Cynic Epistles (Selections)," 118.

[302] See, for example, Malherbe, *Paul and the Popular Philosophers*, 12; See also Malherbe, "Self-Definition among Epicureans and Cynics," 49; See Goulet-Cazé, "Le cynisme à l'époque imperiale," 2817.

[303] See Diogenes Laertius, *Lives, Teachings and Sayings of Famous Philosophers* 6.103 (T. Dorandi, ed.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); Lucian, *The Fisherman* 44; R. Helm, "Lucian und die Philosophenschulen," in *Neue Jarbüch fur das classische Altertum* 9 (1902): 264 n.2; Marcel Caster, *Lucien et la pensée religieuse dans son temps* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1937) 71.

continuing interest to Cynics[304] or other ancient people interested in Cynics, and thereby served the piecemeal and *ad hoc* imperial-age project of Cynic community definition and assertion referred to bluntly by Eduard Norden and others as Cynic "propaganda"[305] (again, whether deployed by self-identified "Cynics" or by other people and groups who appropriated some Cynic heroes and values in their own projects of self-definition).[306] The letters are sometimes characterized as recycling traditional and unoriginal Cynic material for this purpose of propaganda by means of ancient ideal.[307] For our purposes here, propagandistic fictions, repetitions of well-known Cynic clichés, the possible textual accretions of centuries, and the fact that the people producing and preserving such letters may not even have identified themselves as "Cynics" do not present fatal problems. They present, in fact an opportunity. Consulting such stereotyped and "generalist" ancient expressions of community (self-)representation (real and ideal) makes it possible to test the theoretical expectations outlined above about what ancient association networks were commonly expected (by both insider and outsiders situated within a relatively

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[304] Malherbe, *Paul and the Popular Philosophers*, 13; See also Malherbe, "Self-Definition among Epicureans and Cynics," 49-52.

[305] See Norden, "Beiträge zur Geschichte der griechischen Philosophie," in *Jarbücher fur classische Philologie*. Suppl. 19 (1893): 393; Vaage, "Cynic Epistles (Selections)," 118; Malherbe, *The Cynic Epistles*, 15; Malherbe, *Paul and the Popular Philosophers*, 13; Otto Schering, "Symbola ad Socratis et Socraticum epistulas explicandas" (Diss., Greifswald, 1917), 32; Donald R. Dudley, *A History of Cynicism. From Diogenes to the 6th Century A.D.* (London: Methuen, 1937), 124.

[306] On the use of real and ideal ancient Cynics and Cynic writings in later projects of philosophical self-definition (for example the articulation of "Stoic-Cynic" philosophical ideals), see R. Bracht Branham and Marie-Odile Goulet-Cazé, "Introduction," in Branham and Goulet-Cazé, *The Cynics*, 12-16; Malherbe, "Self-Definition among Epicureans and Cynics," 46-59.

[307] See, for example, Dudley, *A History of Cynicism*, 123-124; Marie-Odile Goulet-Cazé, "Le cynisme à l'époque imperiale," *Aufstieg und Niedergang Der Römischen Welt* II 36.4 (1990): 2805.

wide temporal, social, and geographical ancient Mediterranean window) to adhere to as "best practice" in projects of defining networked community identity in letters.

The focus of the Cynic Epistles on real and ideal projects of community self-definition and self-assertion, added to the fact that at least some of the letters found in the collection were clearly in relatively wide circulation (Cicero expressed his interest by translating and publishing the Cynic Epistle of Anacharsis to Hanno, for example),[308] underlines the potential relevance of these letters to investigations of first-century epistolary expectations, and first-century epistolary community definition. Among the philosophical epistolary traditions flagged by Malherbe as evidence that "*should* particularly be brought into the discussion more"[309] in investigating group self-definition, he cites these clearly promising yet clearly under-studied[310] Cynic Epistles in particular as evidence that "*must* be introduced into the discussion."[311] The analysis of the Cynic Epistle of *Aristippus to Arete* offered below answers Malherbe's call with one such introductory treatment.

In terms of their relevance for comparative investigation with early Jewish and Christian epistolary projects of self-definition, I note that some Cynic Epistles have actually been identified (by scholars prominent in their study) as the works of

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[308] See Cicero, *Tusculanae disputationes* 5.32 (J. E. King, trans.; New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1945), letter number 5 in the Anacharsis collection.

[309] Malherbe, "Hellenistic Moralists and the New Testament," 279 (italics mine).

[310] See Malherbe, *The Cynic Epistles*, 2-3.

[311] Malherbe, *Paul and the Popular Philosophers*, 13 (italics mine).

Jews and/or Christians.[312] Such theories have over time been rejected by the majority,[313] but the confusion necessitating the debate testifies to the significant overlaps noted already above in first-century association needs and community habits, as networks ("Jewish" and/or "Christian," and/or "pagan") struggled to define themselves in shared or at least comparable ways and environments.

All of this is not to say that the letters collected in the Cynic Epistles can be compared casually and uncritically with early Jewish or Christian letters (or even with one another) in investigating the ideal insider stances they describe/prescribe vis-à-vis worlds imagined "outside." The collection contains a wealth of letters testifying to a daunting variety of ideas, voices, sources, times, and places.[314] It is therefore far from clear that they ever represented in their totality any real identifiable "association" network at all. It is, however, notable and useful here that one association-epistolary "stance" is discernible throughout the whole collection with regard to ideal community definition, across the sub-collections and the centuries to which they testify: the Cynic self-definitions of the letters are all in line with the philosophical association self-definitional tendency noted above, of depicting association insiders as separate from the outside world and morally superior to it, and yet somehow good for it. The message to ideal "outsiders" is

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[312] See Jacob Bernays, *Lucian und die Kyniker* (Berlin: W. Hertz, 1879), 96-98; Jacob Bernays, *Die heraklitischen Briefe* (Berlin: Hertz, 1869); K. von Fritz, *Quellenuntersuchungen zu Leben und Philosophie des Diogenes von Sinope* (Philologus Supplement 18. Leipzig: No publisher listed, 1926), 80.

[313] See Norden, "Beiträge zur Geschichte der griechischen Philosophie," 392-395; Gustav Adolf Gerhard, *Phoinix von Kolophon*, 172-174; Harold W. Attridge, *First Century Cynicism in the Epistles of Heraclitus* (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1976).

[314] See Malherbe, *The Cynic Epistles*, 2.

therefore something like "We don't belong, but we do," which means that the message to inscribed insiders is something like, "Don't belong, but do." This kind of self-asserting tension constructed vis-à-vis the "outside" world is, for example, clearly visible already in the oldest epistles attributed to Diogenes and Anacharsis.[315] Founding Cynic figure Diogenes of Sinope is depicted harshly ridiculing contemporary rulers Antipater[316] and Alexander,[317] but also as offering them philosophical help[318] and as assuming that it is his place to write such letters to such figures, expecting them to be read. The Diogenes of the letters also boasts about the fact that Alexander sought him out for advice, pressuring him to join him on campaign.[319] Similarly, Anarcharsis is depicted in the letters attributed to him upbraiding the rulers Solon,[320] Hipparchus,[321] a "son of the king,"[322] Tereus,[323] and Thrasylochus,[324] but also as being himself a foreign prince[325] who was sometimes on

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[315] On the early dating of these letters, see Johannes Sykutris, "Epistolographie," 210-211; O Gigon, "Kynikerbriefe," in *Lexikon der Alten Welt* (C. Andresen et al., eds.; Zurich: Artemis, 1965), 1658-1659.

[316] Letter of Diogenes 4 (All editions of "Cynic Epistles" cited are from Malherbe, *The Cynic Epistles: A Study Edition*).

[317] Letters of Diogenes 23, 24, and 40.

[318] Letter of Diogenes 24.

[319] Letters of Diogenes 33.

[320] Letter of Anacharsis 2.

[321] Letter of Anacharsis 3.

[322] Letter of Anacharsis 6.

[323] Letter of Anacharsis 7.

[324] Letter of Anacharsis 8.

[325] Letter of Anacharsis 10.

very good terms with rulers who were friendly (in philosophical terms) and deemed as behaving well.[326] The letters attributed to Socrates and the Socratics continue this tradition of qualified, stage-managed tension in their own particular ways.

The Epistles of Socrates (letters 1-7 in the Socratic collection) are usually dated to the first centuries BCE or else the first century CE,[327] and use (as noted above) the more ancient and respectable figure of Socrates to address questions of interest to Cynics.[328] The Socrates of these letters presents, in terms of association insider-outsider relations, a relatively "balanced" brand of Cynic identity (potentially attractive and inspiring to some later Stoics). On the one hand, the Socrates of these letters is a political outsider, "appointed by God" to act as a "gadfly" to those in power, criticizing and bothering them regularly for the good of the city.[329] As he himself notes, this calling has made him "pretty well hated" by the world outside his philosophical network of friends.[330] One must, however, he

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[326] Letter of Anacharsis 8.

[327] Sykutris, for example, offers support for both time periods – See Die Briefe des Sokrates und der Sokratiker (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1933), 112 and 121. See also Liselotte Khöhler, "Die Briefe des Sokrates und der Sokratiker," *Philologus*, Suppl. 20.2. (Leipzig: Dieterich'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1928); H. Dörrie, "Sokratiker-Briefe," in *Der kleine Pauly* V (1975): 257-258; Malherbe, *The Cynic Epistles*, 27.

[328] On this function of the Socratic collection in particular, see Malherbe, *Paul and the Popular Philosophers*, 13-16. See also Benjamin Fiore, *The Function of Personal Example in the Socratic and Pastoral Epistles* (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1986); Klaus Döring, *Exemplum Socratis: Studien zur Sokratesnachwirkung in der kynisch-stoischen Popularphilosophie der frühen Kaiserzeit und in frühen Christentum* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1979), 114-126.

[329] Letter of Socrates 1 (lines 25-30 in Malherbe, *The Cynic Epistles*, 220, and 1-15 in Malherbe, *The Cynic Epistles*, 222).

[330] Letter of Socrates 1 (lines 7-8 in Malherbe, *The Cynic Epistles*, 222)

asserts, choose either one life (public/political) or the other (philosophical),[331] and he himself has chosen to be a willingly poor and ascetic outsider, from the decision to refuse gifts to the decision to live shoeless[332] (as the Cynic hero Anacharsis also boasted he did in the famous letter circulated by Cicero and referred to above).[333] "I am satisfied to have the plainest food and the same garment summer and winter, and I do not wear shoes at all, nor do I desire political fame except to the extent that it comes from being prudent and just," says this outsider Cynic Socrates.[334] On the other hand, the Socrates of these letters also apparently has (again, like the Anacharsis of the letters) the ear of many an important man: He boasts of being "on familiar terms" with "the most distinguished men" of the age,[335] writes friendly letters to rulers like Xenophon,[336] and expects to be taken seriously when he meddles in inter-city politics as an influence broker[337] or uses unofficial political contacts like Xenophon to benefit "philosophical friends"[338] like Chaerophon traveling within his network and needing to find protection and hospitality.[339]

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[331] Letters of Socrates 1 (lines 14-29 in Malherbe, *The Cynic Epistles*, 224) and 4 (lines 13-17 in Malherbe, *The Cynic Epistles*, 226).

[332] Letter of Socrates 6 (lines 5-21 in Malherbe, *The Cynic Epistles*, 232).

[333] Anacharsis to Hanno, Letter 5 (lines 2-3 in Malherbe, *The Cynic Epistles*, 42).

[334] Letter of Socrates 6 (lines 17-21 in Malherbe, *The Cynic Epistles*, 232).

[335] Letter of Socrates 4 (lines 18-19 in Malherbe, *The Cynic Epistles*, 228).

[336] Letters of Socrates 1 and 2.

[337] Letters of Socrates 3 and 5.

[338] Letter of Socrates 2 (lines 17 and 20 in Malherbe, *The Cynic Epistles*, 220.

[339] Letter of Socrates 2.

Although many of these letters attributed to Socrates address "outsiders," their relevance for the definition of "insiders" is clear. The message of the Letters of Socrates to people wishing to be associated in some way with (or otherwise self-defined in some way with reference to) "Cynic circles" and "Cynic identity" is in line with the other Cynic Epistles referenced above: their implicit advice to such people defining themselves vis-à-vis the "outside" world is something like, "Don't belong, but do." The self-definitional balancing act of this implicit message to/about ideal Cynic insiders is carried on, made more explicit, and adjusted in terms of its balance in the remainder of the letters collected in the Socratic section of the Cynic Epistles, i.e., the letters attributed to "the Socratics."

The letters attributed to the Socratics are generally classified by scholars as didactic fiction from the second century CE,[340] but they may also contain much older material, including actual correspondence.[341] A number of the letters are attributed to the philosopher Aristippus (c. 435-355 BCE), whose reputation certainly lends itself to projects of adjusting the balance of opposition and accommodation in ideal Cynic identity. Aristippus is, for example, the philosopher remembered by Diogenes Laertius in the third century as the first of the students of Socrates to accept payment for his services.[342] Aristippus is also, I note, the philosopher condemned by Diogenes in one of the earliest Cynic Epistles as traitorously surrendering to an

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[340] Malherbe, *The Cynic Epistles*, 27, citing R. Bentley, *A Dissertation Upon the Epistles of Phalaris, Themistocles, Socrates, Euripides* (W. Wagner, ed.; Berlin, 1874).

[341] See Malherbe, *The Cynic Epistles*, 27.

[342] See Diogenes Laertius, *De clarorum philosophorum vitis, dogmatibus et apophthegmatibus*, 2.65.

overly easy life.[343] The Aristippus of the Cynic Epistles openly accepts hospitality and favors from "tyrants,"[344] including the use of their political influence to save philosophical "friends" in desperate need of protection as they travel – a practice he knows he needs to hide from his more rigorous Cynic associate Antisthenes,[345] who expresses in these letters the common ancient opinion (capitalized upon by other stories about brave Cynic heroes)[346] that good philosophers do not mix at all in any friendly way with foreign "tyrants."[347] The fact that Antisthenes is a Cynic hero praised by Diogenes by name as sober and wise in the same early collection of letters wherein he condemns Aristippus as lax[348] points to access on the part of the author(s) of the Letters of the Socratics to such older Cynic Epistles, or at least to some degree of access to Cynic-inflected traditions about the people around Socrates, offering through the contrasting reputations of Aristippus and Antisthenes figures who were "good to think with" in continuing Cynic projects of imagining the proper balance between ease/accommodation and rigor/separation vis-à-vis the "outside" world.[349]

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[343] Letter of Diogenes 32.

[344] Socratics Letter 9, Aristippus to Antisthenes.

[345] Socratics Letter 11, Aristippus to Aeschines.

[346] See Dudley, *A History of Cynicism,* 184-208.

[347] Socratics Letter 8, Antisthenes to Aristippus (lines 2-3 in Malherbe, *The Cynic Epistles*, 224).

[348] Letter of Diogenes 28 (lines 14-19 in Malherbe, *The Cynic Epistles*, 124).

[349] On the assumed opposition between "rigorous" and "hedonistic" varieties of ancient Cynicism, see G. A. Gerhard, *Phoinix von Kolophon*, 64-72, 165-168. See also G. A. Gerhard, "Zur Legende vom Kyniker Diogenes," *Archiv fur Religionswissenschaft* 15 (1912): 388-408.

Whatever the precise sources of this illustrative/imaginative opposition may have been, the attitude toward the "external" world revealed in the character of the Aristippus of the Letters of the Socratics is more optimistic and more positive than that of Antisthenes. Aristippus teases his strict and upright associate with the idea that living the good life at a tyrant's table is not so bad,[350] and in his letter to Arete he expresses his perfect confidence that that the local authorities in Cyrene who are troubling her would never go so far as to harm her or kill her.[351] All this being said, it seems significant that Aristippus nevertheless expects his heir "little Aristippus" to be treated as an outsider and an "enemy" by Cyrene's city officials, as a matter of course.[352] The Aristippus of the letters is therefore walking his own self-defining tightrope, in a way that leans toward accommodation. As Malherbe notes, for example, in his discussion of the opposition seen in the letters between *autarkeia* and association with tyrants (expressed in an opposition between Aristippus and Antisthenes), Aristippus provides an epistolary face for "the mild Cynic," negotiating between "harsh" and "mild" kinds of Cynic identity in a way that leans toward the "conciliatory" end of that implied spectrum.[353] This picture of Aristippus is certainly supported by his letter to Simon the shoemaker, in which he mocks the cheerless, shoeless rigorists "who have long beards and staffs for their boasting, who are dirty,

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[350] Socratics Letter 9, Aristippus to Antisthenes.

[351] Socratics Letter 27, Aristippus to his Daughter Arete (lines 21-22 and 34-35 in Malherbe, *The Cynic Epistles*, 282).

[352] Letter 27, Aristippus to his Daughter Arete (lines 9-13 in Malherbe, *The Cynic Epistles*, 284).

[353] Malherbe, *Paul and the Popular Philosophers*, 16; See also Malherbe, "Self-Definition among Epicureans and Cynics," 52.

louse-ridden and have long fingernails like wild animals and give advice that is contrary to your craft."[354] For this Aristippus, such painfully anti-social Cynics are not ideal Cynic insiders.

I have noted already that prominent ancient Cynics often defined themselves in terms of hostility and criticism toward dominant Greek social norms and groups. For this reason, many late republican and early imperial Roman observers therefore perceived "Cynicism" as a disgraceful and barbarous system.[355] As Miriam Griffin's study has shown, some Stoic philosophers sympathetic to Cynic traditions promoted the ideal of a "sanitized" Cynic-Stoic hero more suitable to polite Roman tastes: "The new, sanitized Cynic ideal helped Stoicism to shed unacceptable features of its historical heritage (Cynic and Stoic) and exploit Cynic notions that appealed to Romans."[356] The "mild Cynic" Malherbe identifies in the Letters of the Socratics is therefore either a textual witness or a parallel development to this late republican and early imperial (Stoicizing) desire for a "sanitized Cynic." In the words of Aristippus and the other "mild Cynics" constructed by the Letters of the Socratics, the insider Cynic advice that amounted to something like "Don't belong, but do" therefore becomes something more like "Belong, but don't." In turning now to my examination of the ideal insider-to-insider expression of such advice in the letter of

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[354] Socratics Letter 13.

[355] See Goulet-Cazé, "Le cynisme à l'époque imperiale," 2721-2722, 2727-2731, 2736-2738, 2746-2752, 2817-2818; Goulet-Cazé, "Introduction," in Branham and Goulet-Cazé, *The Cynics*, 14-15; Miriam Griffin, "Cynicism and the Romans: Attraction and Repulsion," in Branham and Goulet-Cazé, *The Cynics*; Miriam Griffin, "Le mouvement cynique et les romains: attraction et repulsion," in Goulet-Cazé and Goulet, *Le Cynisme ancien et ses prolongements.*

[356] See Griffin, "Cynicism and the Romans: Attraction and Repulsion," 204. Cf. Griffin, "Le mouvement cynique et les romains: attraction et repulsion," 258.

Aristippus to Arete, I include below the full translation of David R. Worley provided in the 1977 edition of Malherbe's *Cynic Epistles,*[357] with continuous individual line numbers added to the English for the sake of easier reference.[358]

[357] Malherbe, *The Cynic Epistles*, 282-285.

[358] Note: In his Greek line breaks, Malherbe only roughly follows the line breaks of Rudolf Hercher (*Epistolographi Graeci Recensuit Recognovit*. Paris: Editore Ambrosio Firmin Didot, 1873, 628-629), and also re-starts his numbering on each new page. For clarity's sake, I have simply based the English line numbers on Worley's text. Words interrupted by a line break have been numbered with the next line.

1) Aristippus to his Daughter Arete,

2) I have received the letters you sent to me by Telea 3), in which you request me to come as quickly as possible to 4) Cyrene. You say that you are not well received by the 5) municipal officials, and that your husband cannot 6) administer your affairs because he is shy and used to live far 7) removed from the clamor of public life. But as I tried 8) to gain my release from Dionysius and sail to you, fate 9) hindered me in Lipara and I became ill. When I saw that 10) the family of Sonicus treated me most kindly and that they 11) were genuinely interested in my welfare [text illegible]. 12) Concerning your questions as to how you should regard the men I 13) set free, who kept saying that they would not leave 14) Aristippus so long as it was in their power to please him 15) and you, trust them in everything. As a result of my way 16) of life, they will not be bad. I advise you to settle your 17) affairs with the officials so that this advice of mine may 18) be beneficial. And it would be this: do not desire too 19) much. For you are living your life in the very best way 20) when you disdain all excess. For they would not wrong you 21) to the point that you would be in need. You still have 22) two gardens, enough for a luxurious life. The property in 23) Berenice, even if it alone were left, would not fail to 24) supply you with a very high standard of living. I do 25) not bid you to despise minor matters, but not to be 26) disturbed by them, since even in major matters anger is not 27) good. If, after I have departed this life, you wish to do 28) my will, go to Athens, after you have given little Aristippus the 29) best possible education, and hold in the highest esteem 30) Xanthippe and Myrto who often urged me to bring you to the 31) mysteries. If you then live a pleasant life with them, 32) let the officials in Cyrene commit any wrong they wish 33) (for they will not wrong you to

the point that you die), 34) and try to live with Xanthippe and Myrto as I was pleased 35) to do with Socrates; you are arraying yourself all the 36) more through your friendship with them. For there, 37) insolence is not at home. But if Lamprocles the son of 38) Socrates, who was my companion in Megara, should rather 39) come to Cyrene, you will do well to share your livelihood 40) with him and regard him no differently than your own 41) child. If you no longer want to rear a young girl because 42) you are very disheartened at the prospect of rearing 43) children, adopt the daughter of Eubois whom you used to treat 44) as though she were free, and whom you called by my 45) mother's name, Mika, when you wanted to please me; indeed, 46) I too, often called her Mika. But above all I urge you to 47) care for little Aristippus so that he may be worthy of us 48) and of philosophy. That is the real inheritance I leave 49) him, for in the other respects of his life he will have the 50) officials in Cyrene as his enemies. But concerning 51) philosophy you have not written to me that anyone has robbed 52) you of it. So, my good woman, rejoice greatly in the 53) wealth which you have accumulated and make your son, whom 54) I would like to have as my own, its possessor. Since I 55) shall die without enjoying him, I trust that you will guide him 56) on a course of life that is customary for good men.

57) Farewell, and do not be distressed about us.

In the letter of *Aristippus to Arete*, the project of the definition of ideal insider social identity and ideal networked community is pursued in ways that are by now familiar. I argued above, based upon basic kinds of common ancient epistolary theory and practice, that association letters can be expected 1) to construct the compelling *ethos* and presence of a good and worthy sender, 2) to construct ideal communities of insiders connected meaningfully to such good and worthy writers and to each other within an ideal network, and 3) to construct community-defining tensions (negotiating the need for both accommodation and assertion of difference) within the relationship of ideal communities of insiders to social structures and groups rhetorically left "outside." It will become clear that the letter of *Aristippus to Arete* meets these expectations (as did the letter of *Ammonius to Apollonius* and others mentioned above) in its own particular association-specific ways.

In terms of constructing the authorial *ethos* of its sender as an intimate and worthy figure, the letter of *Aristippus to Arete* constructs Aristippus as a good father and a good teacher, recuperating the older traditions depicting a "moderate" Cynic hero. He gives Arete the "mild" and moderate Cynic advice to enjoy what wealth she has (lines 52-53), but also to refrain from "desiring too much" and to "disdain all excess" (lines 18-20). His advice here is both fatherly and philosophical, since Arete was well-known in the early centuries CE not only as his daughter, but also as his student who took over his school after his death.[359] His instruction to Arete about moving to Athens after his death, to live with the comfort and support of the

[359] See, for example, Diogenes Laertius, *De clarorum philosophorum vitis, dogmatibus et apophthegmatibus*, 2.72, 83, 86; Strabo, *Historica hypomnemata* 27. 3, 22 and *Geographica* 17.3.22.11; Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis* 3.17.22.

remaining family of Socrates (lines 27-37), or else to welcome Lamprocles the son of Socrates to live with her in Cyrene (lines 37-41), therefore concerns both her continued success and that of the school she will inherit. The Cynic philosophy of Aristippus thus takes the shape here of a networked school and a family business.

In this context, the reference to philosophy as something that "nobody has robbed you of" (lines 50-51) relativizes material wealth, but also holds out the implicit promise of a very real income. The Cynic philosophy of the Aristippus of the letters can offer a livelihood, as suggested in his own case by the hospitality and support he is receiving while sick and far away from the generous family of Sonicus (lines 10-11). This picture emerges even more clearly, I note, in the story passed on by Roman architect and author Vitruvius (c. 75-15 BCE) about Aristippus being shipwrecked in Rhodes: He and his companions lose everything, but the Rhodians value his philosophical services so much they give him and his companions everything they need, leading Aristippus to observe regarding wealth and security that "children ought to be provided with property and resources of a kind that could swim with them even out of a shipwreck."[360] This portable inheritance is the kind of inheritance the letter implies for his daughter Arete, and also for his grandson, who took over the school after Arete.[361] "I urge you to care for little Aristippus so that he may be worthy of us and of philosophy," he writes in lines 46-49: "That is the real inheritance I leave him." Since the future of his family is linked to the future of his

[360] Vitruvius, *De architectura* 6.1.

[361] See Diogenes Laertius, *De clarorum philosophorum vitis, dogmatibus et apophthegmatibus* 2.83, 86; Eusebius of Caesarea, *Praeparatio Evangelica* 14.18.

school, the efforts of Aristippus in the letter to discipline but also to encourage and support his daughter construct him as both a good *paterfamilias* and a good philosophical school network authority figure.

The reference to the hospitality of the family of Sonicus (lines 10-11) points to the fact that the Aristippus of the letter is also constructed as an honorably influential and connected man. He recalls how happy he was to live with Socrates (34-35), and expresses his happiness at the status this association connection offers Arete: "You are arraying yourself all the more through your friendship with them" (lines 34-36). The Aristippus of the letter is a "great" and "worthy" figure, in that he possesses this valuable honour of association, due to his intimate relationship with the Socratic circle, and in that that he can offer it to Arete. In terms of social and economic status, the Aristippus of the letter to Arete can afford to send men to serve Arete's needs – freed slaves who are utterly devoted to him and his family (lines 13-14) and utterly trustworthy "as a result of my way of life" (lines 15-16). The excellent serviceability of these men freed and sent by Aristippus testifies both to his valuable economic/social influence and to his valuable moral influence, and leads to the topic of ideal insiders.

In terms of constructing ideal network insiders, the letter's references to the help offered by the freed associates of Aristippus living in Cyrene (lines 12-16), the family of Sonicus with whom he is staying in Lipara (lines 7-11), the family of Socrates with whom he is connected in Athens (lines 27-31), and the son of Socrates with whom he lived in Megara (lines 37-40) together paint the picture of a network of mutual care and support. The letter characterizes this network as a community

maintained by the exchange of letters (lines 2, 12, 51), and by travel (lines 2-4, 7-9, 27-30, 37-40) that seems to serve and be served by the exchange of letters (as in the case of Aristippus himself being requested to come to Cyrene as referred to in lines 2-4, and the case of the freed men who were with him but are now in Cyrene to help Arete as referred to in lines 12-16). The *Letter of Aristippus to Arete* thereby exemplifies and promotes the insider community strategy of building and maintaining mutual support through the exchange of letters. At the local level, the nodes of the network of care constructed by the letter to Arete include educational, local "cultic," and household relationships. Arete is asked to "care" for little Aristippus specifically by giving him a good education in philosophy (lines 47-48 – see also the request for Arete to educate him in lines 28-29). The definition and integrity of the network constructed by the letter to Arete is also maintained in part by the communion offered by local cultic association practice. The Aristippus of the letter underlines the friendship offered Arete by Xanthippe and Myrto in Athens by noting that they "often urged" him to bring Arete to "the mysteries" (lines 30-31).

The ideal network relationships constructed by the letter of *Aristippus to Arete* are also articulated with reference to overlapping relationships of friendship, patronage, family, and household. I referred above to the support offered by the family of Sonicus in Lipara, and the support offered by the family of Socrates in Athens and Cyrene. These links of support and mutual obligation seem closely interwoven. If there are any hard and fast lines at all, for example, between friendship one the one hand and patronage or benefaction on the other, they are (as

seen above in the socially uncomfortable question of "generosity" in the *Letter of Ammonius to Apollonius*) not always clear, even to those involved.

In the ideal network constructed by the letter to Arete, an insider like Aristippus might free some slaves and expect them to serve his network and act in accordance with its ideals. An insider like Arete might adopt the child of another insider (lines 37-41), or a favourite slave (lines 41-46), to raise as her own properly loved and legal child, thus introducing him or her to the same little circle as little Aristippus and thereby presumably to a range of rights and responsibilities somehow similar to his. Since the household of Aristippus can overlap in these ways with his family and friends, and since the categories of his family and friends are expected (as seen above) to overlap with the category of his school, association "insider" status as constructed by the letter is defined by an intimate and constantly evolving tangle of household, friendship, family, and patronage ties. The complex relationship between friendship and patronage discussed above in examining the *Letter of Ammonius to Apollonius* is thus evident again here in the letter to Arete. In the network constructed by this letter, philosophical association relationships are built and maintained partly by the intimate and status-driven tangles of household and patronage relationships.

In terms of community-defining tensions vis-à-vis the "outside" world, negotiating the needs of accommodation and/versus assertion of difference, the letter of *Aristippus to Arete* constructs the relationship of ideal insiders to the "external" world as a live issue that needs active, creative, and socially-situated figuring out. Aristippus might want to come to Arete in Cyrene, but have trouble

getting permission from his tyrant patron Dionysius to leave (lines 7-8), and Arete and little Aristippus might have trouble with the municipal officials (lines 4-7, 20-21, 32-33, 49-50). Such troubles are constructed as something Arete can survive because they fall within a bearable range: "For they would not (οὐ γὰρ) wrong you to the point that you would be in need," Aristippus writes about the officials of Cyrene (lines 20-21). The hostility and wrongdoing of the same officials could also reasonably be borne by Arete if she moved to Athens, "for they will not (γὰρ οὐκ) wrong you to the point that you die" (lines 32-33). This reasoning depends upon the expectation that Arete can count on a minimal range of support drawn from her remaining property (lines 21-24) and her remaining friends (lines 27-41), and also the expectation of a bearable range of "external" official harassment. It is not clear at all from this reasoning, for example, that Arete could or should live contentedly in either Cyrene or Athens if city officials ever proved willing to harass her family to the point of death, or if the friendship of the family of Socrates ever proved unable to provide comfort and support.

In light of the need for such support drawn from connections with people of good reputation (like the family of Socrates), the need to maintain good relations with people of some status and means (like the family of Sonicus), and the need described in discussing ancient association reputations above to avoid "external" harassment partly by building and guarding the public honour of a network, it is not surprising to find in the letter of *Aristippus to Arete* a concern for the building and maintenance of honour and reputation. I have already noted that the Aristippus of the letters expresses pleasure in remembering his association with the family of

Socrates, and praises and further encourages such honorable association with them on the part of Arete. It is also true that he expresses as his last wish as a direct request that Arete pass on all remaining family wealth to little Aristippus (lines 52-54), and "guide him on a course of life that is customary for good men" (lines 55-56). It may be that little Aristippus faces an uphill battle in some areas of life, since "he will have the officials in Cyrene as his enemies" (line 49-50), but if he can claim in time to be a "good man," studying and teaching philosophy honorably at the head a family "arrayed" in honour by its contacts with people like Socrates and his family, he may still benefit from the kind of reputation needed to maintain crucial association network contacts with validating worthies (like the family of Socrates) and valuable patrons (like Dionysius and the family of Sonicus). In light of the discussions above and below of the central importace of ἔπαινος and a network's perceived honorability, it is worth noticing that honour is depicted in *The Letter of Aristippus to Arete* in such terms of association with worthies. The promise offered to Arete that "you are arraying yourself all the more by your friendship with [wise and famous worthies]" is thereby extended by implication to the letter's subtly inscribed later readers as well: By associating themselves (in whatever way and to whatever degree) with ancient and well-connected worthies like Aristippus and Arete, sympathetic philosophical "friends" who share and use letters like *The Letter of Aristippus to Arete* are invited to see themselves as being arrayed with honorable insider status by association with (real and ideal) circles of friendship.

1.5. Chapter 1 Conclusion

This chapter has shown that in understanding ancient associations the problem of community insider identity definition (including the definition of an association network's relationships to wider systems of culture and authority) is of central importance, and that in ancient projects of such social identity definition the tension between the self-assertion of a given association subculture and its accommodation to its host culture(s) is crucially important. As Philip Harland has shown, the sociological expectation I defined above in the Introduction as the Law of the Membrane (i.e., that associations must be simultaneously self-asserting and accommodating) is borne out by the material evidence of epigraphic remains. In this chapter, I have shown that this expectation is also borne out by the examination of ancient association networks' epistolary remains (real and ideal). Association letters served networked community definition and maintenance by facilitating the moving around of insider personnel and resources, and in the process helped define community structures of insider identity and order by instantiating and promoting particular insider representations of who had the right to expect what of whom. Insider-to-insider association letters were also shown to serve projects of community identity definition by applying a rhetorical strategy of qualified positive engagement with "outside" values in representing their insider network cultures as both honorably special and honorably intelligible and functional vis-à-vis wider cultures outside, and as therefore deserving of ἔπαινος from insiders and outsiders alike. As David deSilva notes in his study of honor and shame in the ancient

Mediterranean world, a social concern for honor vis-à-vis "outsiders" often motivated and shaped the social self-definition of ancient in-groups:

> The focus of ancient people on honor and dishonor or shame means that they were particularly oriented toward the approval and disapproval of others… As a group discovered and defined those qualities that it needed its members to display in order for the group to survive, the desire to be honored would ensure that the members would all do their part to promote the health and survival of the group.[362]

This chapter has confirmed that the motivations and strategies for insider community definition identified by deSilva were in fact at work in constructions of first-century association subcultures, using the tool of insider network letters. The real *Letter of Ammonius to Apollonius* (preserved by archaeological accident among other discarded papyri) and the ideal letter of *Artistippus to Arete* (preserved deliberately as part of a "Cynic" literary tradition) were both shown to serve such projects of insider social identity definition using comparable epistolary means.

From the point of view outlined in this study, the indeterminacies limiting the precise definition of ancient associations, and the social-identity grey areas created by their subcultural self-assertion versus their social accommodation, are not in the end obstacles to understanding. They are themselves important pieces of evidence, confirming the theoretical expectation outlined in my Introduction that subcultural social identity, self-definition, and stances of self-assertion versus accommodation are never simple, stable givens. The ideal community insider structures of identity and authority characterizing ancient associations were

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[362] David A. deSilva, *Honor, Patronage, Kinship and Purity: Unlocking New Testament Culture* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 2000), 35.

naturally always local projects of social consensus actively worked out in culturally contingent discursive terms of representation and persuasion, including in the examples treated above the evolving epistolary habits of the first-century Mediterranean world. As deSilva further noted, projects in the ancient pursuit of Jewish "insider" identity were also capable of appropriating common "outsider" Mediterranean habits and values in defining, ennobling, and edifying instances of Jewish "minority culture."[363] In Chapter 2, the focus of this study therefore moves to an examination of what the association-epistolary (self-)definition of subcultural social identity looked like in the first century when the "special" elements seen as defining the communal social identity of a given association network's ideal insiders and their relationship to the "outside" world included Jewish cultural traditions.

[363] See David A. deSilva, "The Wisdom of Ben Sira: Honor, Shame, and the Maintenance of the Values of a Minority Culture," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 58 (July 1996): 433-455.

Chapter 2. Community Identity Definition in Ancient Jewish Letters

The number of available ancient Jewish letters and in-depth studies dedicated to them is relatively small, but the importance of the study of such letters for NT study is increasingly recognized by scholars today (See Section 2.1). For this study, the relevance of ancient Jewish letters is found in the ways in which they, like the association network letters discussed above, can be shown to articulate insider community identity partly in relation to cultural worlds "outside," using insider traditions (in this case Jewish traditions including scriptures) and outsider forms (in this case the rhetorical and epistolary habits shown above to be well-adapted and common to the community-defining projects of ancient association networks).

The following chapter outlines the character and relevance of Jewish letters, with reference to two kinds of ancient community-network-defining letters: those preserved by chance in archaeological sites (See Section 2.2), and those portrayed and/or passed on in Jewish scripture and literature (See Section 2.3). It will be shown that such ancient Jewish letters (like the association network letters reviewed above) assert what is special and good about the ideal "inside" groups they construct in contradistinction to "outside" worlds in ways that accommodate and even subtly depend on such "outside" worlds. Establishing this character of ancient Jewish letter culture will help set the stage here for identifying and understanding comparable strategies and dynamics in the letter to the Romans.

It will become clear that since such projects of social identity construction depend upon works-in-progress of conceiving the "inside" in relation to the "outside," Jewish network epistolary culture ought not to be understood here as

something supplemental or opposed to the first-century Greco-Roman association network epistolary culture described in Chapter 1. It is better understood rather as one particular example of such first-century community network definition in action. Of course, first-century "Jewish culture" is not simply a given, either, to be found in, or brought to, the analysis of these letters. As will be discussed below, ideas of proper Jewishness were defined and promoted through cultural practices like the composition and circulation of these letters, in contexts of complex conversation with "outside" cultures. Ancient Jewish letters serve, like the association letters reviewed above, projects of community self-definition and self-assertion, and as we will see, special "inside" Jewish cultural inheritances are evoked in Jewish letters as part of the ideal community identities they articulate, making the "inside" ostensibly attractive and respectable vis-à-vis the "outside" in ways comparable to the social-identity-defining strategies seen above in letters produced by other first-century association networks.

From this point of view, it is significant for our purposes here that one consistent key strategy found in ancient Jewish projects of social identity definition is the deployment of an idea of "outside" powers as not good *per se*, but nevertheless instituted by a good god specially connected to ideal insiders, and used by that god for the overall good of insiders (See Section 2.1). This rhetorical move can be seen at work in the ideal community definition pursued in the production of ancient Jewish letters (See Section 2.2). Its deployment in such letters helps further clarify the context of ancient epistolary community network definition outlined in the chapters above, and sets the stage for understanding Rom 12-15 within such a context.

Section 2.1. Ancient Jewish Networks and New Testament Studies

The relevance of studying early Jewish culture for the purposes of understanding early Christian culture presumably needs no demonstration or defense at this point in the history of NT scholarship. A good understanding of ancient Jewish culture is rightly seen today as an essential tool in studying the earliest Christian communities and texts insofar as they were subcultural Jewish phenomena.[364] "Jewish identity" as understood and embodied by living communities in the first century is, however, a complex phenomenon.[365] The contours and borders of Jewish identity as found among Jewish communities in the diaspora are particularly hard to nail down, but they clearly involved 1) networks supporting insider community practices and leadership structures, among other means of "support available for such Jews who wished to maintain their Jewish identity,"[366] and 2) complex "negotiations" with "outsider" and "non-Jewish" communities and cultures.[367] Jewish communities articulated their insider identities through cultural balancing acts negotiating what Barclay calls the "oppositional" and the

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[364] See, for example, the history of studying "Jewish Christianity" vis-à-vis "Christian origins," in *The Rediscovery of Jewish Christianity: From Toland to Baur* (F. S. Jones, ed.; Atlanta: Society for Biblical Literature, 2012).

[365] See John M. G. Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora: From Alexander to Trajan (323 BCE- 117 CE)* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), 4-9; J. Z. Smith, "Fences and Neighbours: Some Contours of Early Judaism" in *Approaches to Ancient Judaism II* (W. S. Green, ed.; Chico: Scholars Press, 1980), 19-20.

[366] Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora*, 414-415.

[367] Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora*, 82-102.

"integrative" subcultural tendencies of "assimilation, acculturation, and accommodation."[368]

One key dimension of the complex balancing act of first-century Jewish community identity definition is Jewish "Hellenization." Scholars have long recognized, due largely to the pioneering work of Martin Hengel,[369] that all first-century Jews were "Hellenized" in some way, to some degree, regardless of how friendly or hostile they portrayed themselves to be vis-à-vis the "outside" Greco-Roman world.[370] For our purposes here, it is significant that the balancing acts involved in such processes of Hellenization included community definition in terms of "association" culture, and engagement in related first-century subcultural ways of talking about "insider" identity and vis-à-vis "outsider" identity.[371]

In terms of association culture and the balancing act of subcultural social integration, it is worth noting that both Jewish "insiders" and pagan "outsiders" at times perceived Jewish communities as "associations" (as defined above in Chapter 1).[372] For this reason, "Jewish communities in the Diaspora constituted a form of

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[368] Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora*, 93.

[369] Martin Hengel's *Judentum und Hellenismus* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1969) was published in English as *Judaism and Hellenism: Studies in their Encounter During the Early Hellenistic Period* (J. Bowden, trans.; London: SCM Press, 1974).

[370] See Martin Hengel, *The "Hellenization" of Judaea in the First Century after Christ* (In collaboration with Christoph Markschies. Philadelphia: Trinity, 1989), 1-5, 47-54; See also Hengel's "Qumran und der Hellenismus," in *Qumran: sa pieté, sa théologie, et son milieu* (M. Delcor, ed.; Paris: Duculot, 1978), 333-372; Elias Bickermann, *The Jews in the Greek Age* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), 233; Mary E. Smallwood, *The Jews Under Roman Rule, From Pompey to Diocletian: A Study in Political Relations* (Boston: Brill, 2001) 78-84.

[371] See S. Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness. Boundaries, Varieties, Uncertainties* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1999).

[372] See Peter Richardson, "Building 'an Association (*Synodos*)… and a Place of Their Own,'" 36-56; Alan F. Segal, "The Jewish Experience: Temple, Synagogue, Home, and Fraternal Groups," in

ethnic 'association,'"[373] as Richard Ascough has pointed out, characterized by "translocal" networked links that included participation in other compatible associations.[374] In this way, Jewish networks of association closely resembled both "ethnic" and "philosophical" associations.[375] While the participation of Jews in "non-Jewish" community networks and behaviors was selective (It is well-known, for example, that Jewish communities participated selectively in the public life of the *polis*), the cultural "tensions" involved in this selectivity must be seen in the same terms of overall "positive interaction" used to understand the identity-defining balancing acts performed by all ancient associations, including synagogues and Christian assemblies.[376] "[A]ssociations," Harland points out, "including some synagogues… could in varying ways participate in within certain areas of life in the *polis* under Roman rule, including involvement in imperial honors and connections."[377] The pattern seen in Chapter 1 of association networks guarding internal distinctiveness while simultaneously negotiating various levels of

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Community Formation in the Early Church and the Church Today (R. N. Longenecker, ed.; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2002), 20-35.

[373] Barclay, *Pauline Churches and Diaspora Jews* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 14.

[374] See Richard S. Ascough, "Translocal Relationships Among Voluntary Associations and Early Christianity," 234-236.

[375] Barclay, *Pauline Churches and Diaspora Jews*, 14. See also Richardson, "Early Synagogues as *Collegia* in the Diaspora and Palestine."

[376] See the review of "tension" vis-à-vis wider societies as an essential part of the "positive interaction" of associations with those societies offered in Harland, *Associations, Synagogues, and Congregations,* 213-269.

[377] Harland, *Associations, Synagogues, and Congregations*, 8.

integration with wider host societies holds true in this way for Jewish association networks.

One example of a characteristically Jewish pursuit of this common subcultural balancing act can be found in the practice of hosting closed communal meals. In the diaspora, the Jewish position on eating with "outsiders" was complex and uneven, but on the whole Jewish meal practice included an obvious element of social separation.[378] Since, however, many other groups also ate together (as seen above in Chapter 1) as part of establishing and expressing "insider" identity,[379] even this practical assertion of community distinctiveness itself expresses in its own way a high degree of wider cultural intelligibility and integration.

Finally, it is important to note for our purposes here that the balancing act of first-century Jewish community identity definition includes "insider" (Jewish) forms of common ways of talking about "inside" and "outside" authority. As Chapter 1 showed in the case of Greco-Roman association letters, the insider-defining dynamics of strategic dependence and integration engaged by ancient associations were commonly expressed partly in terms of tension with "outside" systems of identity and authority. The situation is analogous for ancient Jewish subcultural identity definition, as can be seen in first-century Jewish depictions of divinely-

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[378] See Barclay, *Pauline Churches and Diaspora Jews*, 17; Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora*, 434-437.

[379] See also on the relevance of meal practice in defining social order and identity Jerome Neyrey, "Reader's Guide to Meals, Food, and Table Fellowship in the New Testament," in *Social Sciences and New Testament Interpretation* (R. Rohrbaugh, ed.; Peabody: Hendrickson, 1996), 159-182; Jörg Rüpke, *Religion of the Romans* (Richard Gordon, trans.; Malden: Polity, 2007),137-153.

ordained authority that reflect a close but conflicted relationship with both Greco-Roman discourses on authority and actual Greco-Roman authorities.

The traditional Jewish idea that Gentile rulers are not especially good, but can be used by the Jewish god for the greater good (of Jews at the very least)[380] can be seen alive and well in the neo-deuteronomistic assertions of Josephus that Roman rule serves divine providence, and that the destruction of Judea serves as a punishment for the sins of the nation (*Jewish War* 4:201; 5:19). The implicit claim that foreign powers are disposable (and to some degree regrettable) divine tools is sometimes made explicit in other first-century works, too, for example when the *Wisdom of Solomon* describes pagan governments as being simultaneously both divinely ordained servants of a hidden divine plan (Wisdom 6:2-3), and also terribly flawed and ultimately doomed systems of power (6:4-5). In recent decades, numerous scholars have been tempted to see in such critiques an "anti-imperial" Jewish tradition, often expressed in the guarded, coded language of "hidden transcripts" of defiance.[381] This approach is, however, best employed with caution, since its eager identification of colonized Jewish (and subsequently Christian) communities with "the good guys" preaching political liberation in code may result in anachronistic retrojections of the values of "postcolonial" scholars, or even subtly

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[380] See the discussion of Jeremiah and the Epistle of Jeremiah below.

[381] See, for example, Neil Elliott, "The "Patience of the Jews': Strategies of Resistance and Accommodation to Imperial Cultures," in *Pauline Conversations in Context: Essays in Honor of Calvin J. Roetzel* (J. C. Anderson et al., eds.; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 37-41; Richard A. Horsley, "Renewal Movements and Resistance to Empire in Ancient Judea," in *The Postcolonial Biblical Reader* (R. S. Sugirtharajah, ed.; Malden: Blackwell, 2006), 76.

underwrite modern imperial Christian cultures, including the privileged positions of scholars working within such cultures.[382]

Whether such "insider" Jewish criticisms of "outsider" Greco-Roman culture are implicit or explicit, idealistically "anti-imperial" or self-servingly "counter-imperial," it is important for our purposes here to note that they could themselves be expressed (due to the dynamics of the balancing act just described above) in terms that were pointedly, markedly Greco-Roman. "Good Jews" could, for example, be depicted in the literary productions of Jewish "insiders" as embodying "pagan" ideals more honorably than the pagan "outsiders" did themselves.[383] This claim that "good Jews" are, so to speak, better Greeks and Romans than the Greeks and Romans themselves is just one particularly recursive example of the common first-century Jewish elite tendency to depict "good Jews" as respectable world citizens, whose proper Temple rites[384] and synagogue practices[385] demonstrate honorable loyalty (in a proper Jewish way) to "outside" civilized world order. The letters reviewed in this chapter illustrate what such dynamics of ideal community definition look like in ancient epistolary contexts wherein the "special" elements deemed as defining a given ideal insider network and its ideal relationships with the "outside" world highlight inherited Jewish traditions.

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[382] See on these risks Hector Avalos, *The Bad Jesus. The Ethics of New Testament Ethics* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2015), 377-378.

[383] See for example T. Landau, *Out-Heroding Herod: Josephus, Rhetoric, and the Herod Narratives* (Boston: Brill, 2006); Aaron Ricker, "Foreign Tyrants: Greco-Roman Jewish Epideictic Rhetoric in Mark 10:42-43a" (MA thesis, McGill University, 2009).

[384] See Josephus, *Bellum judaicum* 2.197; Philo, *Legatio ad Gaium* 317.

[385] Philo, *In Flaccum* 48-49, 51-52.

Section 2.2. Ancient Jewish Letters and New Testament Studies

Although understandings of ancient Jewish culture are increasingly recognized as crucial to understanding the development of early Christian global culture, attention to ancient Jewish letters in such investigative contexts is still rare,[386] despite the corollary recognition that first-century Jewish epistolary habits must inevitably have shaped the letters that make up the bulk of the New Testament in significant ways.[387] Recent decades have, however, seen something of an increase in the number of studies recognizing the value of studying ancient Jewish letter culture, including the value of taking its dominant characteristics into account in analyses of NT materials,[388] and this dissertation depends upon, and contributes to, this promising new trend encouraged by Marvin Lloyd Miller and Lutz Doering.

Ancient Jewish letters apart from the idealized and/or edited forms found in Jewish literature are, it must be admitted, comparatively rare, whether due to the historical accidents of preservation or some as-yet-unclear cultural peculiarity of first-century Jewish communities.[389] The physical manuscripts of such letters usually reach the eyes of scholars in lamentable shape as well.[390] Some ancient examples have nevertheless survived, though, and can, I argue in this chapter, be usefully compared with the more plentiful extant embedded/literary letters in

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[386] See Marvin Lloyd Miller, *Performances of Ancient Jewish Letters,* 17.

[387] See Klauck, *Ancient Letters and the New Testament*, 229.

[388] For an overview of the history of this development, see Lutz Doering, *Ancient Jewish Letters and the Beginnings of Christian Epistolography*, 5-15.

[389] Catherine Hezser, *Jewish Literacy in Roman Palestine* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), 253.

[390] Dennis Pardee, *Handbook of Ancient Hebrew Letters* (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1982), 2-4.

clarifying cultural and epistolary norms relevant to this study. Four illustrative ancient Jewish letters (two of archaeological provenance and two of embedded literary provenance) are reviewed below with attention paid to their epistolary identity-defining characteristics most relevant to our purposes here, and then a conclusion is offered on the findings of Chapter 2 insofar as they relate to my turn in Chapter 3 to an analysis Paul's letter to the Romans.

Section 2.3. The "Real" Letters of Abaskantos to Judas *and the* Passover Papyrus

The "Letter of Abaskantos to Judas"[391] is a fragmentary letter written in Greek, recovered from the abandoned Jewish fortress at Masada. It may come, therefore, from any time between the rule of Herod and the destruction of that facility in 73 or 74 CE, making it "easily the earliest Jewish documentary evidence from Palestine."[392] It is written, despite this extremely early date, not in Hebrew or Aramaic, but in neat, competent Greek.[393] As noted above, by the first century many Jewish communities were actively engaging the Greek language and Hellenistic culture, and this letter provides physical evidence that real-world Jewish epistolary culture was at times a part of that engagement.

The letter of Abaskantos clearly represents communication between Jews: Abaskantos is rare but attested epigraphically as a first-century Jewish name, and Judas is "one of the most popular Jewish names of the period."[394] The salutation is damaged, but nevertheless quite clearly reads, "Abaskantos, to brother Judas, Greetings."[395] The standard Greek greeting (χαίρειν) offered to Judas as "brother" places the letter from the start squarely within the context of the first-century Greco-Roman insider-to-insider epistolary culture reviewed above in Chapter 1.

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[391] Hannah M. Cotton and Joseph Geiger, *Masada, II: The Yigael Yadin Excavations, 1963-1965. Final Reports: The Greek and Latin Documents* (Jerusalem: Hebrew University of Jerusalem Press, 1989), 85-88; Peter Arzt, "Abaskantos an Judas: Neuedition von P. Masada 741," *Archiv für Papyrusforschung* 44 (1998): 228-239.

[392] Cotton and Geiger, *Masada II*, 85-86.

[393] Cotton and Geiger, *Masada II*, 86.

[394] Cotton and Geiger, *Masada II*, 86-87; See also Arzt, "Abaskantos an Judas," 234.

[395] The reconstruction ΑΒΑΣΧΑΝΤΟΣ ΙΟΥΔΑ ΤΩΙ [Α]Δ[ΕΛ]ΦΩ ΧΑΙΡ[Ε]Ι[Ν is shared by Cotton and Geiger (*Masada II*, 85-88) and Arzt ("Abaskantos an Judas," 228-239).

Judas is addressed as a fellow insider, in implicit contradistinction to all those outside the Jewish national "family" and its fortress, using language and epistolary habits understandable with reference to the common practice of that wider world.

The content of the letter is more fragmentary, but its focus is on the practical insider business of moving and organizing people and goods. Abaskantos informs Judas that his letter is accompanied by produce, and also apparently by people. It is not clear from the context whether the food to which he refers was grown at Masada (as Josephus says Jews were able to do in his *Jewish War* 7.228), or (as Hannah M. Cotton and Joseph Geiger suggest as more likely) sent "from the nearby oasis of Ein Gedi."[396] The letter's apparent reference to a letter carrier is similarly unclear.[397] If we accept what Cotton and Geiger identify as "by far the likeliest restoration" of the reference as the name (attested elsewhere for non-Jews) "Mnemon,"[398] this mention of the deliverer of the letter provides further evidence[399] that letter carriers were themselves an important part of the sending of messages by letter from Jews to Jews, in a way comparable to the common epistolary practice of the non-Jewish world discussed above. In a world without a public postal service, Jews, like other people, depended upon their own personal and/or professional networks to send

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[396] Cotton and Geiger, *Masada II*, 86.

[397] Cotton and Geiger, *Masada II*, 88.

[398] Cotton and Geiger, *Masada II*, 88.

[399] See P.M. Head, "Letter Carriers in the Ancient Jewish Epistolary Material," in *Jewish and Christian Scripture as Artifact and Canon* (C.A. Evans and H.D. Zacharias, eds.; London: T&T Clark, 2009), 203-219; Pardee, *Handbook of Ancient Hebrew Letters*, 1-2.

letters.[400] In this way, the community insiders involved in the delivery of letters could satisfy the normal wider cultural expectation of validating (and, if necessary, helping to clarify) the messages sent.[401]

Whatever and whomever one concludes to have been sent to Judas with this letter by Abaskantos, the mere fact that the letter refers to the moving of community insiders and community goods around within an assumed network articulates (in a way familiar from the reviews of insider-insider letters conducted in Chapter 1) real and ideal ancient structures of mutual aid and authority within an insider network. Abaskantos is, for example, specified by the language of the letter to be the kind of "brother" willing and able to mobilize people like Mnemon in insider network projects like coordinating the management of community goods with other recognized "brothers" like Judas. In this way, the letter of Abaskantos can be seen to employ common epistolary practices of the "outside" world in articulating and instantiating insider structures of identity, network, and authority.

A second ancient body of "real" letter material that looks relevant for the purposes of this study, the so-called "Passover Papyrus" from Elephantine, can be usefully classified as a "Festal Letter," which can in turn be understood as a subcategory of the epistolary subcategory of "Diaspora Letter." The "Diaspora Letter" – an ancient Jewish epistolary tradition only recently identified by scholars

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[400] Hezser, *Jewish Literacy*, 255-256.

[401] See Doering, *Ancient Jewish Letters*, 271, 334; Head, "Letter Carriers in the Ancient Jewish Epistolary Material," 203-219; Pardee, *Handbook of Ancient Hebrew Letters*, 1-2.

as influential and deserving of more attention[402] – was a long-distance tool for encouraging Jewish community unity and solidarity in the face of alien and sometimes even hostile environments.[403] They were, to summarize the outline offered by Franz Schnider and Werner Stenger, letters addressed to communities in the ancient diaspora from weighty authority figures (*wichtige Autoritäten*), exhorting faraway addressees to conform to community practices seen as consolidating and preserving Jewish identity.[404]

The genre of the "Diaspora Letter" has, like all other retrospective epistolary classifications, somewhat blurry borders. Irene Taatz has written, for example, of "official letters" or "community letters" with similar forms and functions, and traced their popularity and authority to traditions like the letter to the exiles in Babylon found in Jeremiah 29, and the epistolary frame of 2 Maccabees (both of which are discussed below).[405] Taatz includes the "Passover Papyrus" in this category.[406] As Marvin Lloyd Miller notes, the exchange of letters served as "one of the ways an

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[402] See M. Tsuji, *Glaube zwischen Volkommenheit und Verweltichung: Eine Untersuchung zur literarischen Gestalt und zur inhaltlichen Kohärenz des Jakobusbriefes* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997); K.-W. Niebuhr, "Der Jakobusbrief im Licht früjüdischer Diasporabriefe," *NTS* 44 (1998): 420-443; Lutz Doering, "Jeremiah and the 'Diaspora Letters' in Ancient Judaism," in *Reading the Present in the Qumran Library. Perception of the Contemporary by Means of Scriptural Interpretations* (K. De Troyer and A. Lange, eds.; Atlanta: SBL, 2005). See also Marvin Lloyd Miller's review of the scholarship on "Diaspora Letters" in his *Performances of Ancient Jewish Letters*, 47-49.

[403] Miller, *Performances of Ancient Jewish Letters*, 48, 129.

[404] Franz Schnider and Werner Stenger, *Studium zum neutestamentlichen Briefformular*, NTTS I (Leiden: Brill, 1987), 34-41. See also the reference of M. F. Whitters to "festal letters" as intended to "consolidate or unify" in "Some New Observations about Jewish Festal Letters," *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 32 (2001): 273.

[405] Irene Taatz, *Früjüdische Briefe. Die paulinischen Briefe im Rahmen der offiziellen religiösen Briefe des Früjüdentums* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1991), 7-12, 102-114.

[406] Taatz, *Früjüdische Briefe*, 91-95.

ancient community could employ to reinforce its identity, while adjusting and responding to their present situation,"[407] and the specific form of the "Festal Letter" was, in this context, a letter sent to diaspora audiences in order to encourage a specific "correct" holiday observance, and thereby a community cohesion that could survive in alien cultural environments.[408] Lloyd Miller, like Taatz, identifies the "Passover Papyrus" from Elephantine as one example of such a letter.[409]

The identifiably "Jewish" status of the Elephantine military community is ethnically and ritually complicated, but nevertheless clear in outline, due to the "predominance of YHW(H)-theophorous names in the [community record of the] *onomasticon*, as well as an awareness of Sabbath and Passover and perhaps also of ritual impurity."[410] The letters unearthed in Elephantine therefore reflect Jewish culture, but like the later Greek sources discussed above, they conform closely to local standards of epistolography (in this case Imperial Aramaic epistolography),[411] to the point of including traditional invocations of various "gods" in their greetings, due to "either the discretion of the non-Judaean scribe who wrote the respective letter or a rather low-key adoption of the general epistolary conventions of the time."[412] The "Passover Papyrus" includes one such traditional introductory

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[407] Miller, *Performances*, 93.

[408] Miller, *Performances*, 48-49.

[409] Miller, *Performances*, 126-140.

[410] Doering, *Ancient Jewish Letters*, 28.

[411] Doering, *Ancient Jewish Letters*, 29-31, 43.

[412] Doering, *Ancient Jewish Letters*, 30. Doering cites for the former possibility B. Porten, "The Religion of the Jews of Elephantine in Light of the Hermopolis Papyri," *JNES* 28 (1969): 116-121, and for the latter possibility Klauck (*Ancient Letters*, 249) and Taatz (*Briefe*, 92-93).

reference in its opening lines to "the gods," and then proceeds to lay down rules for the proper Jewish observance of Passover. This (to modern eyes, at least) "mixed" cultural character of the letter points once again to the insider-outsider discursive balancing act I have identified in several sections above as essential to the exercise of subcultural community definition by letter.

One example of this borrowing and balancing act worth noting for our purposes in the case of the Jewish letters preserved at Elephantine is the use of words like "brother" in their address lines. References to "brothers" and "sisters" are common throughout the collection, and it is not always clear when the language is intended to indicate biological kinship,[413] especially since in the practice of Ancient Near Eastern epistolography words like "brother" were commonly used for either "correspondents of equal rank or colleagues."[414] Since one letter (from Oshea to Shelomam) is addressed to both "my brother" (*'hy*) and "my son" (*bry*),[415] it is safe to say that "brother" was sometimes used in the address lines of these letters to identify the senders and receivers as community insiders (again, as seen in the address lines of the Jewish and non-Jewish Greek letters reviewed above). The "Passover Papyrus" is clearly participating in this use of the word "brother" when it is addressed "to my brothers, Jedediah and his colleagues, the Judaean garrison,"

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[413] Doering, *Ancient Jewish Letters*, 32-33.

[414] R. Contini, "Epistolary Evidence of Address Phenomena in Official and Biblical Aramaic," in *Solving Riddles and Untying Knots: Biblical, Epigraphic, and Semitic Studies in Honor of Jonas C. Greenfield* (Z. Zevit et al., eds.; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1995), 60.

[415] See Doering, *Ancient Jewish Letters*, 33.

from a Judean identified as "your brother Hananiah."[416] It seems unlikely that one Jewish family would include enough brothers to staff an entire garrison in Egypt, and still have some left over with whom to exchange letters.

The use of a particular insider letter culture to establish identity, network, and authority is also evident in other ways in the "Passover Papyrus." The letter lays down a few rules for a "proper" observance of the Sabbath, for example, including the proper way to store and move around food storage jars,[417] and adds that the letter has been sent under the authority of King Darius – an indication that Hananiah has been authorized by the Persian imperial government to help define at a distance the proper practice of Jewish traditions at Elephantine.[418] The letter's explicit claim to royal authorization, and its implicit claim to be authorized to order both community ritual practice at Elephantine and the sending of messages and goods around within such a networked community articulates (as seen in the Jewish and non-Jewish letters reviewed above) structures of identity, network, and authority within an insider subculture intimately engaged with, and in some ways dependent upon, wider "outsider" cultural structures of power and identity.

In closing this section, before moving on to consider the distinct but related forms and functions of embedded ancient Jewish letters, it is important to acknowledge the way that letters relate to the definition of structures of identity, network, and authority, given the fact (discussed above) that such structures are in

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[416] Doering, *Ancient Jewish Letters*, 38.

[417] See the translation offered by Doering in *Ancient Jewish Letters*, 34-35.

[418] See Doering, *Ancient Jewish Letters*, 40.

practice both real and ideal. Marvin Lloyd Miller's observation that "[l]etters are one of the ways an ancient community could employ to reinforce its identity"[419] has already been mentioned, the significance of which, for our purposes here, is that the function of ancient Jewish letters is therefore to be found and understood "in the context of a community."[420] These observations are obviously true to some degree, and obviously relevant for our purposes here, but they need to be nuanced, since the "communities" involved are themselves both real and ideal. Efforts to define and promote ideal social identities through the exchange of letters cannot simply be equated with efforts to represent established, pre-existing community identities through the exchange of letters. As Stanley Stowers pointed out in discussing the communities imagined by scholars to be addressed by each of the Gospels, it cannot simply be assumed that any one ideal community audience was real and pre-existent. The process of the formation and use of the Gospels was itself part of the process of imagining and forming such communities.[421] This principle is also worth keeping in mind in the context of discussing community definition by letter, which is why the chapters above have focused not just on the real pre-existing community networks letters speak to and for, but also on the ideal community networks their language articulates and promotes.

Real networks must, of course, be assumed at some level for the kind of real (i.e., not embedded/literary) letters examined in this section. First-century Jews

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[419] Miller, *Performances*, 93.

[420] Miller, *Performances*, 24.

[421] See Stanley Stowers, "The Concept of 'Community' and the History of Early Christianity," *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion* 23.3-4 (2011): 238-256.

depended like everyone else upon personal and/or professional networks for the sending of letters,[422] and bigger and better-organized networks naturally excelled in providing platforms for such exchanges.[423] In this context, the exchange of letters provided a way of expressing, shaping, and reinforcing existing community networks. The networks thus expressed were also, however, both complex and evolving in nature and (in keeping with the principles of insider community definition outlined in my Introduction with reference to Social Identity Theory) always in the process of being discursively imagined and instantiated. It was mentioned in Chapter 1, for example, that ancient letters could be "expressions of patron-client relationships between unequals and friendship amongst equals," or negotiate in some cases a strategic rhetorical remix of such inscribed relationships.[424] In the Jewish letters just discussed, this interplay of insider ideals of mutuality and/or equality with equally useful insider structures of hierarchy can be clearly seen in the use of the common epistolographical habit of the "brother" address. One community member may affirm ideal community network norms of insider-hood by recognizing another as "brother" (as Abaskantos recognizes Judas, as Hananiah recognizes Jedediah, etc.), but the title may also signal insider status affirmed from a superior position toward one represented as inferior (as when Hananiah addresses those under his direct command at Masada as "brothers"), or from an inferior position toward one represented as superior (as when Oshea

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[422] Hezser, *Jewish Literacy*, 255-256.

[423] Hezser, *Jewish Literacy*, 256.

[424] Hezser, *Jewish Literacy*, 256.

addresses his “father” Shelomam as “brother”). The ideal insider relationships of senders to receivers are therefore once again in these letters complex and functionally socially-compelling inscribed realities, articulated using insider applications of epistolary habits common to the “outside” world.

Section 2.4. The "Ideal" Letters of Jeremiah 29, the Epistle of Jeremiah*, and 2 Maccabees*

In discussing the forms and functions of "real" ancient Jewish letters recovered by archaeological means, I mentioned that Taatz recognized in the extant examples of Jewish "Diaspora Letters" an important "official" character. This official character is of course related to the fact that the sending of epistolary instructions expecting the assent of addressees over time and distance is by definition to some degree an elite business. The embedded/literary letters represented in Jewish biblical traditions also often display such an elite, official character. They almost always take the form of messages sent in the names of kings,[425] messages sent to kings,[426] or communications appropriate to the attention of authorities like governors or generals.[427] The letters reproduced in the first-century historical narratives of Josephus similarly testify to Jewish letter-writing as a tool primarily used by elites[428] – a characterization supported by surviving material evidence[429] like the communications between Jewish administrators reviewed in the previous section. This section reviews the outlines and relevance of two influential literary

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[425] See 2 Samuel 11:14-15; I Kings 21:8-10; 2 Kings 5:5-7; 10:1-8; 19:9-14; 20:12; 2 Chronicles 2:10-15; 21:12-15; 30:1; 1 Esdras 4:47-63; 2 Esdras 7:11-26; 12:7-10; 16:1-19; Ezra 7:11-26; Nehemiah 2:7-10; 6:1-19; Esther 3:12-15; 8:7-12; Greek Esther 13:1-7; 16:1-21; 1 Maccabees 10:1-21; 10:24-25; 11:29-37; 11:57; 15:1-9; 3 Maccabees 3:11-30; 7:1-9; Daniel 3:31-4:34; 6:26-28; Daniel 4:4-5, 10-37 LXX; Letter of Aristeas 11.

[426] See 1 Esdras 2:15-25; 6:7-21; 2 Esdras 4:6-24; 5:6-17; Ezra 4:6-24; 5:6-17; 1 Maccabees 13:34-40; 16:18-19; Letter of Aristeas 28-33, 34-40, 41-46.

[427] See 1 Maccabees 5:9-15; 8:22-32; 9:60; 12:1-23; 14:16-23; 15:15-24; Isaiah 37:9-14.

[428] See the summary in Hezser, *Jewish Literacy*, 260-267.

[429] See Hezser, *Jewish Literacy*, 275-276, 288-290.

representations of "official" letters addressed by centralized authorities to Jewish addressee communities. As embedded/ideal "diaspora letters," they have their own particular ways of articulating ideal structures of network identity and authority to which ideal insiders are called to see and comport themselves as belonging.

Traditions associated with the prophet Jeremiah are particularly interesting for our purposes here, due to the fact that the diaspora letter(s) of Jeremiah 29 inspired later real and ideal diaspora letters,[430] due to the fact that the book and figure of Jeremiah were widely known and respected by first-century Jews and Christians, and due to the fact that the figure of Jeremiah is flagged by Paul himself as a justifying model for his own diasporic mission (Galatians 1:15-16). It is difficult to say how much of the "letter to the exiles" preserved in Jeremiah 29:1-23 is "real" as opposed to "literary," due to its varying manuscript forms[431] and its editorial integration into the narrative,[432] so it will be treated here as an ideal document embedded in Jewish scripture, i.e., as an embedded/literary species of diaspora letter.[433] It will also be assumed, however, that the principle (mentioned above with reference to Greco-Roman association letters) that "ideal" letters can be valuable in their own way for establishing real-world contemporary expectations concerning

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[430] Doering, *Ancient Jewish Letters*, 104-105; Irene Taatz, *Früjüdische Briefe.* 7-12, 102-114. See also Klauck, *Ancient Letters*, 243; Lutz Doering, "Jeremiah and the 'Diaspora Letters' in Ancient Judaism: Epistolary Communication with the Golah as Medium for Dealing with the Present," in *Reading the Present in the Qumran Library: The Perception of the Contemporary by Means of Scriptural Interpretation* (K. De Troyter and A. Lange, eds.; Atlanta, GA: Society for Biblical Literature, 2005), 43-72.

[431] Doering, *Ancient Jewish Letters*, 105.

[432] Pardee, *Handbook of Ancient Hebrew Letters*, 1; Doering, *Ancient Jewish Letters*, 105-106.

[433] See on this classification Miller, *Performances*, 141-186.

epistolary culture – since the ideals they embody can at times witness for or against our reconstructions of ancient expectations regarding "best practices" in the writing of letters – stands in the case of investigating ancient Jewish letters as well.[434]

In Jeremiah 29:1-23, a letter is embedded with obvious relevance to the topic of community definition at a distance: "These are the words that the prophet Jeremiah sent from Jerusalem to the remaining elders among the exiles," the text proclaims, "and to the priests, the prophets, and all the people, whom Nebuchadnezzar had taken into exile" (Jeremiah 29:1). The letter is specified to have been sent "by the hand of Elasah son of Shaphan and Gemariah son of Hilkiah, whom King Zedekiah of Judah sent to Babylon to King Nebuchadnezzar" (29:3). These diplomatic credentials help underwrite the "official" character and the compelling authority of Jeremiah's instructions to the Jews of Babylon, by adding supporting layers of Jewish royal and Babylonian imperial authority to Jeremiah's prophetic authority, which is assumed by the letter to be established and significant.

In keeping with the Jewish tradition discussed above, the "outsider" authority of Babylon is described in the letter of Jeremiah 29 in insider terms, as merely part of the divine plan of the god of the insiders – the national god of Jeremiah, Jerusalem, and the Jewish exiles. It is asserted that the insiders' god has ordained the exile for a reason, and will end it at the appointed time (29:10-14). The immediate practical stress of the letter is on the necessity of community survival in the meantime, a survival to be achieved through the exiled Jews finding a place of

[434] On this point, see P. S. Alexander, "Epistolary Literature," in *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period: Apocrypha, Pseudepigrapha, Qumran Sectarian Writings, Philo, Josephus* (M. E. Stone, ed.; Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1984), 582; Doering, *Ancient Jewish Letters*, 270-271.

their own in Babylon and taking root there (29:5-7).[435] The recommended strategy for the insider community's survival and success is temporary but deep positive integration into the wider "outsider" community of Babylon: "Seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile," says the divine message passed on in Jeremiah's letter, "for in its welfare you will find your welfare" (29:7).

The relationship of "inside" and "outside" in this definition of an ideal, viable community in exile is further complicated by the inclusion of material condemning false local prophets in Babylon (29:8, 15, 21). Jeremiah instructs the exiles to reject the competing prophetic interventions of certain local community insiders – certain "prophets and diviners who are among you" (29:8). His temporarily distant and outsider-supported Jewish "insider" authority and trustworthy *ethos* are asserted by the letter to be preferred when necessary to the competing status and influence of local "insiders" on the ground. A proper and viable "insider" community is thereby rather boldly constructed as a local in-group appropriately defined and regulated from a distance, underwritten by the approval of distant "outsider" authorities.

Significantly for our purposes here, this ideal of the definition and regulation of a proper, viable insider identity from a distance is portrayed as being a business best carried out, under the circumstances, through the exchange of letters. Jeremiah 29 refers to a previous letter (29:24-28) involved in this particular story of community-defining politics, and to yet another divinely-commissioned letter

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[435] See P. J. Scalise, *Jeremiah 26-52* (G. L. Keown et al., eds.; Dallas, TX: Word, 1995), 66; N. Kilpp, *Niederreißen und aufbauen: Das Verhältnis von Heilsverheißung und Unheilsverkündigung bei Jeremia und im Jeremiabuch* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1990), 56-60.

needing to be written in response to the situation (29:31-32).[436] The letter traditions preserved in Jeremiah 29 thereby testify to the practice (or at least the ideal) of community definition and regulation by letter, aimed at insider community survival, and rhetorically dependent upon the "proper" types and mixtures of "insider" and "outsider" authority. These traditions are, I note, very much in line with the principles and strategies of the epistolary construction of in-group social identity outlined above and traced in comparable ancient insider-to-insider letters, and these traditions are also, as I will show, picked up and used to define ideal social identity in comparable ways in the later deuterocanonical *Epistle of Jeremiah*.

The *Epistle of Jeremiah* is one of the oldest freestanding "Diaspora Letters" of its kind,[437] present (in fragmentary Greek form) at Qumran,[438] and preserved in various forms, including the apocryphal/deuterocanonical 1 Baruch (the chapters and verses of which I will use to cite the Epistle below).[439] The *Epistle of Jeremiah* seems to have functioned for some communities as an appendix to the book of Jeremiah, and creatively engages some the traditions and themes found in the letter(s) just reviewed.[440] The Epistle of Jeremiah is rarely approached by modern

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[436] Pardee, *Handbook of Ancient Hebrew Letters*, 178.

[437] Doering, *Ancient Jewish Letters*, 154; Nickelsburg, *Jewish Literature Between the Bible and the Mishnah* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005), 37; I. Assan-Dhôte and J. Moatti-Fine, *Baruch, Lamentations, Lettre de Jérémie* (Paris: Cerf, 2005), 297-298.

[438] See M. Baillet et al., eds., *Les 'petites grottes' de Qumrân: Exploration de la falaise. Les grottes 2Q, 3Q, 5Q, 6Q, 7Q à 10Q. Le rouleau de cuivre* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1962), 142-146.

[439] Doering, *Ancient Jewish Letters*, 154; Klauck, *Ancient Letters*, 244.

[440] R. G. Kratz, "Die Rezeption von Jeremia 10 und 29 im pseudepigraphen Brief des Jeremia," *Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic and Roman Periods* 26 (1995): 2-31; Doering, *Ancient Jewish Letters*, 157-158.

scholars as either a "real" epistle or a work connected historically to the prophet Jeremiah.[441] The date of the work is uncertain. Most scholars agree that it is dependent on extant biblical materials, meaning that it cannot be much older than the first few centuries BCE, but its presence at Qumran means it cannot have been composed later than the first century BCE.[442]

As a document composed somewhere within this later historical window, *The Epistle of Jeremiah* differs in its epistolary forms from those just seen above in Jeremiah 29,[443] but it nevertheless displays comparable patterns of community definition in its treatment of "insider" and "outsider" ideals of identity and authority. The Epistle shares with Jeremiah 29, for example, the idea of a divine plan at work behind the painful chaos of war and politics: the god of the Jews exiled in Babylon made the exile happen, and will end it at the appropriate time (Baruch 6:2-3). This shared perspective indicates that comparable ideals of qualified integration with "outside" worlds are at work, and the fact indicated above that the Epistle was either composed in Greek or translated into Greek very early on points to a degree of willingness to use cultural tools common to the wider "outside" world in pursuing the "insider" work of subcultural community definition.

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[441] See for example David A. deSilva, *Introducing the Apocrypha: Message, Context and Significance* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 216; Carey A. Moore, "Jeremiah, Additions to. The Epistle of Jeremiah," *Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992) 3:703; J. Alberto Soggin, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (3rd ed.; John Bowden, trans.; Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1987), 460.

[442] See Moore, "Jeremiah, Additions to," 705; Emil Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ 175 B.C.- A.D. 135* (rev. and ed. by G. Vermes et al.; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1987), 3.2: 744.

[443] The letter materials represented in Jeremiah 29:1-28 lack, for example, clear epistolary formulae, but this is normal for both real and literary ancient Jewish letters in Hebrew (See Doering, *Ancient Jewish Letters*, 22 notes 93-95, 107-108).

Whereas Jeremiah 29 stressed the importance, though, of the survival of a properly constituted insider Jewish community until the appointed time of return (through the strategy of fitting in), the Epistle calls for an insider community guarding its proper social identity and surviving intact precisely by not fitting in too much. The primary focus of the letter is the ridicule of the human-made gods of Babylon, who are on no account to be feared (Baruch 6:5, 16, 23, 29, 65, 69) and/or served (6:5-6, 73) by members of the Jewish community in exile there.

An insider belief 1) that the god of the inscribed insider community controls the political powers outside, and an insider belief 2) that the gods of the outsiders are ridiculous things unworthy of fear or reverence come together, I note, in the assertion that the gods of the outsiders have no such control over the fates of leaders and nations. Since they "are not gods but the work of human hands" (6:51), "they cannot set up a king over a country" (6:53). "They can neither curse nor bless kings" (6:66). This difference asserted between the gods of the "insiders" and the "outsiders" is presented as one more reason for a proper insider to have no reason to fear the gods of the "outsiders," and every reason to disdain them. "Better, therefore, is someone upright who has no idols," it is said (Baruch 6:73).

According to the logic of the letter, then, any Jewish insiders who do somehow fear or serve the gods of the Babylonian "outsiders" are in reality themselves outsiders too, to some degree, and not proper insiders at all, and this dimension of community definition is presented as appropriate insider self-definition even in the context of a letter coming from afar. The *Epistle of Jeremiah* thereby promotes the epistolary ideals consistently seen above of defining

community identity, practice, and systems of authority at a distance, in ways that invite addresses to identify with an ideal insider community defined in negotiated contradistinction to wider cultural worlds "outside."

The final "ideal/literary" letter I have chosen as relevant for comparative purposes here is the book of 2 Maccabees, another relatively late deuterocanonical Jewish text written or at least preserved in Greek.[444] In approaching 2 Maccabees with a view to understanding how its epistolary character relates to community definition and letters like Romans, it is important to notice that 2 Maccabees was, like Jeremiah, a book popular with early Christians, due in large measure to its focus on (Jewish) identity definition through martyrdom.[445] 2 Maccabees celebrates ideas of Jewish identity in relatively sophisticated Greek,[446] in a written expression of a Hellenized Hasmonean brand of Jewish culture: "The Hasmoneans, secure in the knowledge that the Jewish *politeia* was true and the Hellenic *politeia* was false, were not afraid to use the ideas, techniques, and weapons of their enemies… By understanding the Jewish way of life in Greek terms, they redefined Jewish identity."[447] One key way 2 Maccabees performs this negotiated insider-outsider balancing act of cultural self-definition can be found in its condemnation of

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[444] See Daniel R. Schwartz, *2 Maccabees* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2008), 3-15; Robert Doran, *2 Maccabees: A Critical Commentary* (Harold W. Attridge, ed.; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012), 13-16.

[445] See Marie-Françoise Baslez, "The Origin of the Martyrdom Images: From the Book of the Maccabees to the First Christians," in *The Books of the Maccabees: History, Theology, Ideology: Papers of the Second International Conference on the Deuterocanonical Books, Pápa, Hungary, 9-11 June, 2005* (G. Xeravits and J. Zsengellér, eds.; Boston: Brill, 2007), 113-130.

[446] See Jan Willem Van Henten, *Maccabean Martyrs as Saviours of the Jewish People. A Study of 2 and 4 Maccabees* (New York: Brill, 1997), 20-21.

[447] Shaye J. D. Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness. Boundaries, Varieties, Uncertainties* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1999), 138-139.

barbarian tyranny (a rhetorical topos common to Jewish works of the first centuries BCE and CE, including numerous examples found in the New Testament).[448]

2 Maccabees explicitly shares with Jeremiah 29 and the *Epistle of Jeremiah* the key insider assumption that the inscribed insider community's trouble with "outside" powers is part of a plan, and the result of a punishment imposed temporarily by the god of the insiders (2 Macc 7:18, 32, 37). The "cruel tyrant" Antiochus (7:27) has the power to kill for now, the martyrs of 2 Maccabees say, but he is limited to hurting their disposable physical bodies (6:30; 7:9, 11, 37), and he himself will in turn face terrible divine justice soon (7:14, 17, 19, 31, 36-37). It is precisely at this "insider-asserting" point, though, that the strategic borrowing of "outsider" Greco-Roman (philosophical) ideals becomes very evident in the overall rhetorical thrust of the text. The death by frying referred to in 2 Maccabees 7:5 recalls, for example, the legendary tortures inflicted by the prototypical Greek tyrant Phalaris.[449] The defiant courage of the martyrs under such torture recalls the courage attributed by Diogenes Laertius in his *Lives of the Philosophers* to the literally Stoic heroes Zeno and Anaxarchus, who similarly refused to buckle under the torture of a tyrant: "Both deaths show not only ultimate contempt for the tyrant, but also a heroic attitude toward physical suffering."[450] 2 Maccbees picks up this "outside" tradition of philosophical heroism and attributes it to Jewish insiders.

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[448] See Ricker, "Foreign Tyrants," 85-116.

[449] See Baslez, "The Origin of the Martyrdom Images: From the Book of the Maccabees to the First Christians," 121.

[450] Jan Willem Van Henten and Friedrich Avemarie, *Martyrdom and Noble Death. Selected Texts from Graeco-Roman, Jewish and Christian Antiquity* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 12.

The themes of transcending the physical body and of divine revenge are also, it should be noted, evident in the account of Diogenes. He says to Zeno, "The tyrant seized you and crushed you in a mortar – no, not you, your body" (*Lives of the Phil*osophers 9.28), and he quotes Anaxarchus himself extending this idea of the futility of such oppression to include the idea of divine retribution, in addressing his tyrant torturer/executioner: "Have them pound, Nicocreon, harder and harder. It is a bag. Anaxarchus is already with Zeus. In a while Persephone will pull you apart with her carding-combs" (*Lives of the Philosophers* 9.58-59). Ancient Jewish engagement with these ideals (including these specific traditions) is testified to by Philo, who, in discussing the independence of a good man's mind and will from his body, which may be martyred by "tyrants," mentions Zeno and Anaxarchus by name (*Every Good Man is Free* 105), and 2 Maccabees is clearly working along similar rhetorical lines. The logic of the text asserts that good Jewish insiders excel at embodying the best ideals of the "outside" world. Good Jews are also good Hellenes – better Hellenes, in fact, than "barbarian tyrants" who push humiliating forms of unwilling assimilation upon Jews the way Antiochus does.

In this context, the epistolary character of 2 Maccabees takes on a particular significance. The precise provenance and dating of the letters used to introduce 2 Maccabees (1:1-9 and 1:10-2:18) is debated,[451] but their inclusion in combination with the book's stress on proper ritual observance in the Egyptian diaspora (1:9, 18; 2:16; Cf. 10:5) clearly casts the work in its final form as a document in the Diaspora Letter tradition. The entire book is explicitly identified, for example, as a "letter" in

[451] Klauck, *Ancient Letters*, 263-270.

the Codex Alexandrinus.[452] 2 Maccabees is in this way comparable to the book of Esther.[453] In Esther, too, letters (especially letters sent out in support of proper ritual observance) are of central importance,[454] and in its Greek version, the whole book of Esther is, like 2 Maccabees, explicitly identified as a "letter."[455] The "letter" of Esther stresses the importance of the observance of Purim,[456] whereas 2 Maccabees stresses the importance of the observance of Hanukkah and the Festival of Booths.[457] Both works, though, in their prominent inclusion of epistolary forms and content, and in their shared stress on the definition and promotion of proper community ritual observance by letter from afar, participate in their final forms in the epistolary community practice identified above as Diaspora Letter tradition. 2 Maccabees may, in fact, refer to the Epistle of Jeremiah itself as inspiration, as a previous diaspora letter in this same tradition: "The records show that it was the prophet Jeremiah who ordered the exiles ... not to neglect the ordinances of the Lord, or be led astray by the sight of images of gold and silver with all their finery" (2 Macc 2:1-3).[458]

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[452] See Doering, *Ancient Jewish Letters*, 165-166; Klauck, *Ancient Letters*, 262.

[453] Klauck, *Ancient Letters*, 262.

[454] Doering, *Ancient Jewish Letters*, 108-110.

[455] Greek Esther 11:1. See Doering, *Ancient Jewish Letters*, 167.

[456] See Esther 9:18-32.

[457] See 2 Maccabees 1:9; 2:16.

[458] On the possibility of a reference to the Epistle of Jeremiah in 2 Maccabees 2:1-3, see George W. Nickelsburg, "Baruch and the Epistle of Jeremiah," in *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period*: *Apocrypha, Pseudepigrapha, Qumran Sectarian Writings, Philo, Josephus* (M. E. Stone, ed.; Assen: Van Gorcum, 1984), 148; Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ*, 744.

The epistolary language of 2 Maccabees is in keeping with the book's overall rhetorical strategy of insider community definition articulated in negotiation with ideals and norms common to the "outside" world. Both letters are identified as representing the authoritative, trustworthy insider opinions of ideal central Jewish communities. The first letter is addressed from "the Jews in Jerusalem and those in the land of Judea" (1:1), and the second is addressed from "the people of Jerusalem and of Judea and the Jewish senate and Judas" (1:10). This implicit claim to a (unified, central) Judean/Jewish addressing identity is underlined by the repeated use of the words "we/us/our" (at 1:6, 7a, 7b, 8a, 8b, 8c in the first letter, and 1:11, 17, 18a, 18b, 19, and 20 in the second). The ideal inscribed addressees are also, however, clearly addressed as members of this local in-group. The letters are addressed to "the Jews in Egypt," (1:1, 10), in clear and traditional insider-to-insider epistolary terms: they are sent *from* "the brothers" in Judea (οἱ ἀδελφοὶ) *to* "the brothers" in Egypt (τοῖς ἀδελφοῖς).[459]

The epistolary greetings included in the letter addresses of 2 Maccabees are marked by a similar insider-outsider balancing act when it comes to articulating ideal Jewish identity. Both letters extend the Greek epistolary "greeting" (χαίρειν), in 1:1 and 1:10. The second letter confirms this ease with "insiders" addressing "insiders" using language common to the wider "outside" world, by adding "and good health," an addition attested in other non-Jewish ancient epistolary contexts.[460] The first letter, on the other hand, adds instead the wish of "peace" for

[459] 2 Maccabees 1:1.

[460] Klauck, *Ancient Letters*, 267-268.

the Jewish brothers of Egypt (καὶ… εἰρήνην), recalling the "grace and peace" similarly addressed in Romans and 2 Baruch (Rom 1:7; 2 Baruch 78:2) to ideal insider epistolary "brothers" far away (Rom 16:17; 2 Baruch 78:2). It is not perfectly clear to what extent the use of "peace" as a single-word epistolary greeting originated in a Jewish adaptation of the Greek greeting χαίρειν, and ancient Jewish letter practice vacillates between using χαίρειν, εἰρήνην, or Hebrew/Aramaic equivalents.[461] The inclusion of both χαίρειν and εἰρήνην in the address of 2 Maccabees 1:1 amounts, in this context, to a composite Hellenistic Jewish form,[462] adding an additional epistolary dimension to the "insider/outsider" community-definitional balancing act perceptible in the language of the letter.

Finally, it is important for our purposes here to note that the ideal insider community articulated by 2 Maccabees is (like the ideal insider communities constructed by the Passover Papyrus and the letter of Abaskantos) in its final epistolary form a network shaped and supported by letter. There is reference made, for example, to another letter that "we Jews" sent "to you [Jews in Egypt]" on a previous occasion, in a situation of distress (2 Maccabees 1:7). It is not clear from the context to what extent such a letter would be about requesting and arranging support, as opposed to merely keeping the "brothers" in Egypt informed of the situation of the "brothers" in Judea, as part of building and maintaining a community connection. In either case, though, it can be said at the bare minimum that reference to letters sent in situations of distress suggest an ideal of a network of mutual care,

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[461] See Doering, *Ancient Jewish Letters*, 4, 29-34, 72-75, 168.

[462] See Klauck, *Ancient Letters*, 266.

supported in practice over a distance by letter. It is simply assumed that the situation of the Jews in Judea matters to the Jews in Egypt, and *vice versa*; as, for example, in the letter's reference to the prayers offered by the Jews of Judea for the Jews of Egypt (1:6).

There is no epistolary closing to the "letter" of 2 Maccabees in its final form, but it is assumed that the work will be read aloud (including, presumably, the appended framing/justifying letters contained in its final form), and hopefully "delight the ears" of its various audiences (15:39). The inscribed "proper" reaction to this community reading is clearly related to shaping and maintaining ideal forms of community identity and authority, since the expressed "goal" of the "letter" is the proper observance of holiday, encouraged by a central community authority. "And now see that you keep the festival of booths in the month of Chislev" (1:9), the first letter says. "Since, therefore, we are about to celebrate the purification," the second letter (2:16) adds, "we write to you. Will you therefore please keep the days?" In 2 Maccabees, then, insider-to-insider letters are revealed once again to be useful for articulating insider identity at a distance, inviting addressees to see and comport themselves as belonging to the ideal community thus conjured through a complex, negotiated alchemy of "insider" and "outsider" identities and cultures.

2.5. Chapter 2 Conclusion

This chapter has shown that ancient Jewish insider-to-insider letters served, like the association insider letters reviewed above in Chapter 1, ancient projects of community definition and maintenance by facilitating the moving around of insider personnel and resources, and in the process helped define ideal community insider social identity and order by instantiating and promoting particular insider representations of who had the right to expect what of whom. They articulated in this way ideal community identities and networks to which addressees were invited to perceive and comport themselves as belonging. Like the letters reviewed in Chapter 1, such letters served projects of community definition by applying a rhetorical strategy of qualified positive engagement with "outside" values to represent their insider network cultures as both honorably special and honorably intelligible and functional vis-à-vis wider cultures outside, and as therefore deserving of respect from insiders and outsiders alike. The ideal representations of insider identity and authority articulated in real and ideal ancient Jewish letters were, in short, articulated like their non-Jewish Hellenistic counterparts according to the Law of the Membrane, i.e., in terms of a creative, strategic tension between self-assertion and accommodation vis-à-vis wider host communities and cultures. I mentioned in introducing this chapter that the sociological expectation that viable subcultures must be simultaneously self-asserting and accommodating was borne out in the case of ancient Jewish subcultures, as seen in scholarly analyses of ancient Jewish cultural and literary productions. In this chapter's attention to "real" and

"ideal" relevant-looking letters, I have shown that this expectation is also borne out in the particular case of ancient Jewish epistolary remains.

Ancient Jewish ideal community structures of identity and order were, like those of non-Jewish associations and networks, always actively worked out in terms of culturally contingent discursive habits of persuasion and representation, including the "borrowed" evolving epistolary habits of their Hellenistic and early Roman imperial contexts. Since such Hellenistic Jewish modes of community definition were (as will be shown below) often inherited and exploited by early Christian cultures, the contexts and dynamics outlined in the chaters above will remain central as I turn my attention at last to Paul's letter to the Romans, with a view to identifying and understanding the social-identity contexts and dynamics discernible at work when ideal addressees are invited to perceive and comport themselves as belonging to the ideal community network of identity and authority articulated by Paul's community network insider-to-insider letter.

Chapter 3: *Romans 12-15 and First-Century Association Network Letter Culture*

I proposed in my Introduction that if insider-to-insider association network letters showed no common pattern of community definition being articulated in terms of qualified positive engagement with "outside" cultural structures of order and identity – or if Paul's letter to the Romans could not be shown to conform to any such pattern – the way past the longstanding critical impasse concerning the "purpose of Romans" proposed by this study would be a conjecture of little value. If, on the other hand, a pattern of ideal community "insider" order and identity finding definition with reference to "outside" order and identity can be shown to be present and comprehensible in such ancient insider-to-insider letters, both in terms of the logic of insider groups in general and in terms of the association-epistolary habits of the first century in particular – and if that common pattern can be shown to be at work in Romans – then the "purpose" of Romans can be helpfully understood in such terms. Chapters 1 and 2 of this study showed that the kind of community definition just described can in fact be seen at work in first-century association network letters, including in particular the letters of Jewish association networks. This chapter shows that these same forms and functions can be seen at work in comparable ways in Romans, when it is read as an example of such a letter.

In the rhetoric of Romans, an association-epistolary construction of ideal insider community identity once again asserts itself against (while subtly engaging and depending upon) projected "outside" systems of order and identity, articulating ideal living and working room for a global "Pauline" network. Chapters 1 and 2 of this study described the ways in which the letters of Greco-Roman (and) Jewish

association networks permitted the definition of ideal association networks in terms of socially functional "internal" order, painting their cultures as healthy and honorable subcultures within their "external" host societies. This chapter shows that the insider community advice of Rom 12-15 fulfils a comparable function in the epistolary context of Romans, by depicting the ideal networked association community articulated by the letter as both healthily distinct from the wider outside world and also healthily able to achieve peace with all and praise from all. Chapters 1 and 2 showed that the insider-to-insider epistolary projects of community definition served by such letters depend partly upon the assertion of a given subculture's "special" socially contradistinctive yet socially functional "insider" characteristics. This chapter shows that in the case of Romans and Rom 12-15, the ideal special subcultural properties invoked include appropriative notions of pre-existing "Jewish" and "Christian" traditions, and aspirational notions of a legitimate and legitimating global "Pauline" network.

Since Romans is a long letter containing a great wealth of and variety of material, I need to justify the choice of Rom 12-15 for comparative investigation in the service of addressing the perceived scholarly problem of "the purpose of Romans." First of all, the desire noted in my Introduction to build on and refine the attempts of others when possible, mentioned as part of the justification for choosing ancient association and epistolary culture as contexts, is also at work here. Rom 12-15 has often been used in the past to explain "the purpose of Romans" in various ways. When P. S. Minear argued that Romans addressed a "need in the Roman

church for a stronger, more obedient faith,"[463] he suggested that the stress found in Rom 12-15 upon proper Christian community life supported this theory of the letter's purpose.[464] When W. Marxsen argued that Romans addressed a need for peace in an unstable and tense Roman community,[465] he suggested that the stress found in Rom 12-15 upon irenic mutuality and unity supported this theory of the letter's purpose.[466] When W. S. Campbell argued that Romans addressed a pressing need for Jew-Gentile unity in the Roman Christian community,[467] suggested that the stress found in Rom 12-15 (in which, he said, the "full thrust" of the letter finally emerges)[468] upon peace between "weak" and "strong" dietary observances supported this theory of the letter's overall purpose.[469] When Robert J. Karris argued that Romans addressed a general need for unity in the Roman Christian community, as opposed to intervening in any one particular situation or specific crisis,[470] he suggested that the relatively vague exhortation on food observance found in Rom 12-15 (compared to the discussion found in the Corinthian

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[463] P. S. Minear, *The Obedience of Faith* (London: SCM, 1971), 1.

[464] Minear, *Obedience of Faith*, 8-17.

[465] W. Marxsen, *Introduction to the New Testament* (G. Buswell, trans.; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1968), 62.

[466] Marxsen, *Introduction to the New Testament*, 95-97.

[467] W. S. Campbell. "Why Did Paul Write Romans?," *Expository Tim*es 85 (1974): 264-269.

[468] Campbell, "Why Did Paul Write Romans?" 11-15.

[469] Campbell, "Why Did Paul Write Romans?" 269.

[470] Karris, "Romans 14:1-15:13 and the Occasion of Romans," 65-84.

correspondence) supported this theory of the letter's purpose.[471] In this chapter, I defend the important epistolary function of Rom 12-15 recognized by such scholars, but I characterize it as serving the "purpose of Romans" as defined by this study: The epistolary paraenesis of Rom 12-15 (read within the wider context of the letter's epistolary frame and the even wider context of comparable ancient insider-to-insider letters) shows that the "purpose of Romans" involves offering inscribed ideal addressees the opportunity to feel and act like insiders belonging to an ideal functional global community network, characterized by a "proper" and "appropriate" (i.e., socially well-adapted) construction of global "insider" order and identity made possible by means of an ideal inside/outside membrane articulated and maintained with the help of letters. The insider paraenesis of Rom 12-15 is therefore community-defining in the two senses defined above in Chapter 1's extension of the work of Philip Tite on ancient paraenetic texts: It is community-defining on the explicit level of describing the ideal defining characteristics of recognizable insiders in good standing, partly in contradistinction to simultaneously-defined ideal inscribed "outsiders." It is also community-defining on the implicit level of describing (as "assumed") the ideal ways in which the ideal subcultural networks to which its ideal insider addressees belong are to be defined and maintained.

[471] Karris, "Romans 14:1-15:13 and the Occasion of Romans," 81-84.

Section 3.1. Rom 12-15 as Association-Epistolary Paraenesis, the Construction of Social Identity, and the Purpose of Romans.

In turning to Rom 12-15, the perceived problem of "the purpose of Romans" described above returns in miniature. Scholars are deeply divided about "the purpose of Rom 12-15" as conceived in terms already familiar from the "Romans debate" summarized in the Introduction: How much, scholars ask, can be said about its intended audience? How "occasional" is its exhortation really? How related does it look to the exhortation found in other Pauline letters, or to comparable exhortation found in contemporaneous Greco-Roman and/or Jewish sources?

On the question of the specificity of its intended audience and situation, there is no clear scholarly consensus. Jeremy Moiser insists, for example, that Rom 12-15 must address a specific concrete situation unfolding in Rome and known to Paul (as opposed to being the collection of general Christian life advice perceived by many other scholars[472]), because the passage fails to address numerous ethical matters revealed as important to Paul by his other letters. A truly "general" collection of moral exhortation from Paul would, Moiser argues, need to include references to gluttony and other concerns Paul is careful to mention in his other genuine letters.[473] Karl Barth similarly argued that since the passage lacks a clear, full Pauline "sequence of thought," it ought not to be read as an example of general

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[472] See on this tendency R. Hasenstab, *Modelle paulinischer Ethik. Beiträge zu einem Autonomie-Model aus paulinischen Geist* (Mainz: Matthias-Grünewald, 1977), 67-147; K. Arvid Arvid Tangberg, "Romerbrevet 12, 1-2 og paranesebegrepet i nytestamentlig forskning," *Tidskrift for Teologi og Kirke* 2 (1986): 81-91.

[473] Moiser, "Rethinking Romans 12–15," *New Testament Studies* 36.4 (October, 1990): 571-572. Cf. the brief note of Gignac on Rom 12-15 not providing a "résumé" of "Pauline ethics" *per se*, in *L'épître aux Romains* (Paris: Cerf, 2014), 447.

Pauline exhortation: "We should therefore not expect to find anything like a systematic exposition, a kind of Christian ethics—not even in outline."[474] Käsemann made a distinction between Rom 12-13, which he saw as "general exhortation," and Rom 14-15, which he asserted was "a clearly separate set of teaching directed to the Christians at Rome,"[475] and Fitzmyer similarly saw Rom 12-13 as general Pauline advice, "reflecting problems with which Paul had to cope in the past in other churches founded by him, perhaps problems even of the church of Corinth," as opposed to Rom 14-15 which represented instead occasional specific exhortation for Paul's particular audience at Rome.[476]

On the question of the relationship of Rom 12-15 to contemporaneous ancient habits and texts of moral exhortation, Wayne A. Meeks reports that he is impressed by "the way in which Paul can mix together commonplaces of Greek and Roman moral rhetoric, arguments from Jewish scripture, and beliefs and rules peculiar to the Christian sect… He can employ standard political wisdom about the unity and autonomy of a city, expressed in the commonplace allegory of the body and its limbs (in chapter 12), yet it is not the polis he is describing, but the company of 'the holy ones.'"[477] David G. Horrell's analysis similarly remarks upon "the considerable extent to which Paul's moral teaching overlaps with both Jewish ethics

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[474] Karl Barth, *A Shorter Commentary on Romans* (London: SCM, 1959), 151.

[475] Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans* (G. W. Bromiley, trans.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 323.

[476] J. A. Fitzmyer, *Romans: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 638.

[477] Meeks, *The Moral World of the First Christians*, 131.

and Greco-Roman traditions of moral philosophy."[478] There is, however, no scholarly consensus on how precisely these insights can help identify an original intended audience for the passage.

The passage's relation to comparable Pauline epistolary paraenesis is commonly treated as a somewhat less controversial question. The suggestion of Fitzmyer mentioned above that Rom 12-15 includes reworked advice formulated originally for audiences at Corinth has been echoed by others,[479] and worked out with careful attention to textual parallels between Romans and 1 Corinthians by Robert J. Karris.[480] The stubborn questions of specificity and intended original audience remain, however. Whereas Horrell assumes that the resulting reworked Corinthian advice found in Rom 12-15 constitutes a response directed toward a particular situation unfolding in Rome and known somehow to Paul, in which "Paul's response to this situation is notable for the ways in which he attempts to foster the solidarity and unity of the whole community,"[481] Karris reminds scholars of the fact (already noted above) that the putative relationship of Rom 12-15 to "an actual situation within the Roman community" remains in many ways unclear.[482]

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[478] Horrell, "The Peaceful, Tolerant Community," 84, 92.

[479] See for example Manson, "St. Paul's Letter to the Romans – and Others," in Donfried, *The Romans Debate*, 15; Horrell, "The Peaceful, Tolerant Community," 90; V. P. Furnish, *The Love Command in the New Testament* (London: SCM, 1973), 115; Tobin, *Paul's Rhetoric*, 392, Gignac, *L'épître aux Romains*, 462-463; A. Nababan, "Bekenntis und Mission in Römer 14 und 15" (Ph.D Dissertation, University of Heidelberg, 1963).

[480] Karris, "Romans 14:1-15:13 and the Occasion of Romans," 70-81.

[481] Horrell, "The Peaceful, Tolerant Community," 90.

[482] Karris, "Romans 14:1-15:13 and the Occasion of Romans," 75-76; On the precise identities of the addressees of Rom 12-15 as uncertain see also Gignac, *L'épître aux Romains*, 448, 498-500; M. Reasoner, *The Strong and the Weak: Romans 14:1-15:13 in Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University

The debates about the purpose of Rom 12-15 recapitulate in this way the scholarly puzzlement and debates about just how "situational" (as opposed to "general") the letter as a whole should be understood to be.[483]

Since I argue in this chapter that Rom 12-15 is "Pauline" and "general" insofar as it helps articulate an ideal insider association network defined and regulated by letters and expert networks like Paul's, the "problem" of specificity as framed by the studies just mentioned is obviated. I do not want or need to show that Rom 12-15 is "Pauline" or "general" in the sense of including everything Paul might personally want to discuss as central to a proper Christian moral life. With my proposed "purpose of Romans" in mind, it looks only natural that Rom 12-15 is (like Romans as a whole) less specific in its situational character than an obviously occasional letter like Philemon, and at the same time also less general and systematic than a treatise written in the form of a letter (like the philosophical exercises cast in epistolary frame that can be found in the collections of writers like Seneca, and cannot even be assumed to have been sent anywhere).[484] As paraenesis

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Press, 1999), 1-23; A. J. M. Wedderburn, *The Reasons for Romans* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1988), 29-65; Wilckens, *Der Brief an die Römer*, Vol. 3 (Zürich: Neukirchener Verlag, 1982), 109-115; L. Keck, "What Makes Romans Tick?" in *Pauline Theology. Vol. 3. Romans* (D. M. Hay and E. E. Johnson, eds.; Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1995), 16-20. See also Stanley Stowers' account of the debate in *A Rereading of Romans. Justice, Jews, and Gentiles* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 317-323. On the idea that the lack of specificity in Rom 14-15 is deliberate and thereby somehow universalizing, see also J. Paul Sampley, "The Weak and the Strong: Paul's Careful and Crafty Rhetorical Strategy in Romans 14:1-15:13," in *The Social World of the First Christians: Essays in Honor of Wayne E. Meeks* (L. M. White and O. L. Yarbrough, eds.; Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1995), 40-52; W. Sanday and A. C. Headlam, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1895), 401-402.

[483] For more on the "situational" versus "general" nature of Romans, see Aune, *The New Testament in Its Literary Environment*, 219.

[484] See on such "letters" produced by Seneca see S. Reece, *Paul's Large Letters. Paul's Autographic Subscriptions in the Light of Ancient Epistolary Conventions* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2017), 209-213.

in a letter serving a complex project of community definition, Rom 12-15 also naturally displays qualified positive engagement with comparable "outside" Greco-Roman and Jewish traditions, and strategic reworking of both pre-existing "Christian" and "Pauline" materials. The paraenesis found in Rom 12-15 is, in short, both specific enough *and* general enough for the purposes of defining a functional ideal Greco-Roman Jewish association network, and by the same token both similar enough to comparable "outside" discourses *and* different enough from them for the purposes of defining such a network according to the Law of the Membrane defined above with reference to the sociological principles of subcultural self-definition and Social Identity Theory.

I have been using the words "paraenesis" and "exhortation" more or less interchangeably in referring to Rom 12-15, and assuming the importance of "insider" definition and epistolary framing for its investigation. The remainder of this introductory section defines and defends these choices for the purposes of this particular investigation. It is common and uncontroversial enough to call Rom 12-15 "paraenesis"[485] in the general sense defined above of "moral exhortation" – such words are often used to describe the passage.[486] I have already mentioned the

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[485] On the use of the word "paraenesis" to describe Rom 12-15, see Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 637; Karris, "Romans 14:1-14:13 and the Occasion of Romans," 81-84; Aune, "Romans as *Logos Protreptikos*," 289, 295-296; Wuellner, "Paul's Rhetoric of Argumentation in Romans: An Alternative to the Donfried-Karris Debate over Romans," in Donfried, *The Romans Debate*, 128; 143-144; J. Moiser, "Rethinking Romans 12–15," 573-574, P. F. Esler, "Social Identity, the Virtues, and the Good Life: A New Approach to Romans 12:1-15:13," 51, David G. Horrell, "The Peaceable, Tolerant Community and the Legitimate Role of the State: Ethics and Ethical Dilemmas in Romans 12:1–15:13," 82; Drane, "Why Did Paul Write Romans?," 220.

[486] "Moral exhortation" is the recurring phrase used by Malherbe, *Moral Exhortation*, 122; Stowers, *A Rereading of Romans*, 317; Jewett, *Romans*, 724, etc. Cf. the "exhortation" mentioned by Wuellner, "Paul's Rhetoric of Argumentation in Romans," 133; Aune, "Romans as a Logos Protreptilkos," 278, Cranfield, *Romans 9-16* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1979), 628, etc.

importance of fact that because paraenesis "assumes a shared world view," the exhortation thus offered is usually phrased as a mere "reminder" concerning things that ideal, proper insiders already know and do.[487] This principle is important in Pauline Studies too, as can be seen for example in Malherbe's citation of the use of "such phrases as 'as you know'" in the paraenesis of 1 Thessalonians (1:5; 2:2, 5, 11; 3:4; Cf),[488] and the encouragement Paul extends to the addressees of the letter concerning the things they are already doing correctly (1 Thess 4:1, 10; 5:11). As Malherbe points out, citing the letters of Ignatius (*Pol*. 1.2; *Eph* 4.1; *Trall*. 2.2) these Pauline strategies conform to the common habits of ancient paraenesis. I note here, for example, that in the letter of *Isocrates to Demonicus* (the earliest extant text that explicitly identifies itself as "paraenesis")[489] Isocrates promises Demonicus help in achieving moral excellence, "if you will but recall your father's principles."[490] As stressed already above, the representational and persuasive power of this rhetorical "reminder" pose for projects in the construction of social identity lies in the fact that the structures of order and identity promoted by such a piece of ancient paraenesis (including crucially the trustworthy, authoritative character of the exhorter) are

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[487] See Starr and T. Engberg-Pedersen, "Introduction," 4, Starr, "Was Paraenesis for Beginners?" 79-80; Aune, "Romans as *Logos Protreptikos*," 295; Malherbe, *Moral Exhortation*, 125; Meeks, *The Moral World of the First Christians*, 114, 126; Stowers, *Letter Writing*, 128.

[488] Malherbe, *Moral Exhortation*, 125; Cf. Meeks, *The Moral World of the First Christians*, 126.

[489] (Pseudo-)Isocrates says he has written a work of real moral exhortation (παραίνεσιν) - *Ad Demonicum* 5 (George Norlin, ed. and trans.; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press; London. 1980).

[490] Οὐ μὴν ἀλλα καὶ τὰς τοῦ πατρὸς προαιπέσεις ἀναμνηθεὶς - *Ad Demonicum* 9. On such paraenetic "reminders" see too Nancy Pardee, "Be Holy, for I Am Holy: Paraenesis in 1 Peter," in *Reading 1–2 Peter and Jude: A Resource for Students* (E. F. Mason and T. W. Martin, eds.; Atlanta, GA: Society for Biblical Literature, 2014), 116.

assumed as already in place and authoritative. In my Introduction, I referred as well to the socio-rhetorical observation that structures of identity and authority are not in fact such givens in acts of communication, but are rather articulated and performed in the act of communicative interaction itself. This chapter examines the forms and functions of the paraenesis found in Rom 12-15 in the general context of these common principles, and in the specific context of ancient epistolary paraenesis represented as addressed to a network well-served by such advice in such letters.

As Malherbe has pointed out, the letter form proved useful and popular for such ancient projects of paraenesis (Malherbe cites here 1 Peter, 1 *Clement*; *Barnabas*, Hebrews, James, the letter of Isocrates *To Demonicus*, and Seneca's *Epistles*).[491] This chapter examines the letter to the Romans and the paraenesis of Rom 12-15 as an epistolary species of the kind of definition of community identity by means of paraenesis discussed in my Introduction (as identified by Philip Tite in Valentinian sectarian texts). My epistolary focus necessarily involves, as explained in my Introduction, comparison with other ancient letters. My focus on the epistolary forms and functions of Rom 12-15 will also require making frequent reference to the wider epistolary frame of the letter as a whole provided by Rom 1:1-17 and Rom 15:14-16:23.

The inclusion of Rom 16 as important in understanding the epistolary frame of Romans deserves explanation, since a number of scholars have argued (based on abruptness of the shift at 16:1, questions of shifts in "tone," benedictions at different

[491] Malherbe, *Moral Exhortation*, 124-129; See also his discussion of letters in 79-85.

places in different manuscript traditions, and the oddity of the inclusion of such a long list of names and greetings closing a Pauline letter) that the passage was not original to Romans.[492] I treat Rom 16 as integral to the letter for two reasons here. First, the extant textual witnesses all include Rom 16 as an integral part of the letter,[493] which means that consideration of Rom 16 as integral to the present form of the letter is included by definition in the traditional scholarly question of "the purpose of Romans." Second, it is not at all clear that the reasons just listed are good reasons to treat Rom 16 as a later addition.[494] The abrupt change from exhortation to greetings found at 15:33-16:1 is not more abrupt than the changes to concluding language found in Paul's other undisputed letters. The long list of names and salutations Rom 16 is unusual (for an ancient letter in general and for a Pauline letter in particular), but so are many things about Romans. Rom 16 includes a lot of Latin names for a list of people represented as Paul's "kinsmen" and personal contacts, but as Harry Leon concluded from his review of the epigraphic evidence preserved by contemporaneous Jewish tombs found in the Roman catacombs, "purely Latin names surprisingly not only outnumber all the others but are more than equal to the Greek and Semitic names combined."[495]

Based on these considerations, and on the careful review of theorized textual variants conducted by Harry Gamble supporting all sixteen chapters of Romans as

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[492] Gamble, *The Textual History of the Letter to the Romans*, 33-47.

[493] Gamble, *The Textual History of the Letter to the Romans*, 35.

[494] I depend here on the summary offered by Donfried, "A Short Note on Romans 16," 44-52.

[495] Harry Leon, *Jews of Ancient Rome* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America,1960), 107.

original, my investigation here assumes for the moment for practical purposes that "the unity of the sixteen-chapter text and its Roman address are established."[496] It seems more likely to me in any case that the epistolary frame of Rom 16 would be deleted later in processes of copying and sharing the letter, as opposed to being added for reasons that remain even more unclear. I note here that the textual witnesses testifying (with out-of-place benediction passages) to have circulated without the closing epistolary frame of Rom (15 and) 16 also tend to omit words from the letter's introductory epistolary frame in 1:7, representing Romans as addressed "to the beloved of God," as opposed to being addressed specifically "to the beloved of God *in Rome*."[497] It seems far more likely to me that the specific address "in Rome" found in Rom 1:7 and the personal greetings found in Rom 16 would be deleted as Romans was recopied and repurposed in processes of preservation and sharing (processes discussed below as the "glocalization" of the letter),[498] as opposed to being inexplicably added. My decision here to treat Rom 16 as integral to Romans is therefore another refinement upon the method of Jervis discussed above: The epistolary frame of Rom 1 and Rom 16 is treated here as generally important in understanding the text of Romans as letter, and particularly important in that this frame contributes to the association-epistolary description of the network articulated by the insider paraenesis of Rom 12-15.

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[496] Gamble, *The Textual History of the Letter to the Romans*, 127.

[497] See Gamble, *The Textual History of the Letter to the Romans*, 29-33; Aune, *The New Testament in Its Literary Environment*, 221; Jewett, *Romans*, 17.

[498] See especially Sections 3.3 and 3.5.

The fact that paraenesis in textual form was a tool commonly used to define ancient insider communities leads me to a final point necessary in introducing my working understanding here of epistolary paraenesis: Since the Law of the Membrane requires in-groups to qualify the "inside/outside" binaries of the ideal boundaries between themselves and their host cultures and subcultures, even as they build such boundaries, the project of insider community network identity definition represented in Rom 12-15 is necessarily complex and "negotiated" in the sense defined in my Introduction. Subcultures draw upon complex repertoires of loyalties and identities in defining "inside" groups versus the "outside,"[499] and early Christian subcultures turn out upon inspection to offer no exception to this rule. As observed by Wayne Meeks in *The Origins of Christian Morality*, early Christian moral culture(s) emerged in the context of fraught "internal" conversations about how positive or negative "proper" Jesus devotees ought to be toward the "outside" worlds of global empires and local host cities.[500] "Sects can thus be defined both in terms of the boundaries they maintain between their members and the dominant society and in terms of their attitudes toward the world. Both factors were of great importance in the ethos of the Qumran Essenes," Meeks writes: "The same is true of the early Christians, although the degree of separateness from 'the world' and the

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[499] P. L. Berger, "Identity as a Problem in the Sociology of K*now*ledge," *European Journal of Sociology* 7 (1966): 106; J.-C. Deschamps and W. Doise, "Crossed Category Memberships in Intergroup Relations," in *Differentiation Between Social Groups: Studies in the Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations* (H. Tajfel, ed.; London: Academic Press, 1978), 141-158; J. Turner, "Social Comparison, Similarity and Ingroup Favouritism," in Tajfel, ed., *Differentiation Between Social Groups*, 265-266; G. Lemaine, J. Kastersztein and B. Personnaz, "Social Differentiation," in Tajfel, ed., *Differentiation Between Social Groups*, 286-294.

[500] Wayne A. Meeks, *The Origins of Christian Morality. The First Two Centuries* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993) 13-14, 52-65, 99.

degree of negativity expressed toward it varied considerably from one group of Christians to another."[501] Naturally, Christian groups *also* needed to define their in-groups' relationships with the local Jewish subcultures out of which their assemblies emerged – including the traditional ways in which such Jewish subcultures qualified their own relationships with wider "outside" host cultures.[502]

Along with the investigative problem named by Meeks of needing to discern early Christian culture taking shape within Greco-Roman (and) Jewish "concentric circles"[503] of culture and subculture, there is also the "insider/outsider" problem of related and rival groups treating Jesus traditions as important to their own in-group culture. Any given Christian in-group may, for example, have shared their networks and neighborhoods with people who also saw themselves (as did later Muslims) as the heirs of Greco-Roman culture, Jewish culture, and traditions about Jesus, while interpreting those inheritances very differently. Their neighborhoods may have been visited by traveling experts (like those later called "Gnostics") who also placed Jesus traditions at the center of their "insider" identity definition, but were seen by competing missionaries like Paul as doing it "the wrong way." An emerging network of Jesus devotees therefore needed to define itself as "like" and "not like" such subcultures as well. This chapter therefore "zooms in" on the ideal sub-subculture articulated by Rom 12-15 within overlapping Greco-Roman (Section 3.2), Jewish (Section 3.3), and Pauline (Section 3.4) "insider" cultural circles. The letter to the

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[501] Meeks, *The Origins of Christian Morality*, 99.

[502] Meeks, *The Origins of Christian Morality*, 98, 110.

[503] Meeks, *The Origins of Christian Morality*, 97.

Romans and the paraenesis of Rom 12-15 are investigated as community tools produced and used as part of the story of the development of Christian cultures – the evolving cultural expressions Meeks calls the "the new songs they composed from old melodies."[504] In the case of Romans and Rom 12-15, one fundamental "idea" taken up in the project of new composition is the articulation of ideal working room for a particular functional global network subculture, i.e., an association network wherein letters like Paul's and leaders like Paul and his network associates are seen as key defining and regulating tools.

My new approach to Rom 12-15 as proposed above and pursued below has some important advantages. As noted already above, it brings to bear new materials and insights in the study of ancient associations and ancient letters. It also contributes to the application and refinement, as already noted above, of a recent trend of scholarly interest in the construction of early Christian identity. More importantly, in the context of the perceived problem of the purpose of Romans, it obviates the pitfalls set up by audience/situation "problem" described above, which continue to dog studies of Romans and Rom 12-15 in particular. The work of Philip F. Esler on Romans and Rom 12-15 will be discussed in more detail below, but a brief overview here can offer a useful example of the pitfalls to which I refer.

Esler's method looks at first glance very much in line with mine. His book on Romans approaches the letter as a work aimed at in-group definition,[505] his article

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[504] Meeks, *The Origins of Christian Morality*, 97.

[505] See the references to P. F. Esler, *Conflict and Identity in Romans* above.

on Rom 12-15 in particular has a similar focus on in-group definition,[506] and both book and article name many of the same sociological theories and theorists named in this study as important to the discussion. Esler bases his conclusions, however, upon the kind of reconstruction of "the" original Roman audience by means of "mirror-reading" flagged above (with reference to Karris and others) as unavoidably unclear and therefore relatively unhelpful. "Paul confronted a situation in Rome in which arguments over food, wine and holy days, based on ethnic divisions between Greeks and Judeans, were occurring within the Christ-movement and threatened its stability," Esler asserts, based upon his analysis of the discussion of the "weak" and the "strong" in Rom 14-15.[507] He further insists that "it is *likely* that Paul had some notion of affairs in Rome and that he tailored the letter to accord with what he knew"[508] and that "it is *likely* that the core elements of each group were Judeans among the weak and Greeks among the strong."[509] Esler consequently equates the construction of ideal insider social identity in Romans with an effort on Paul's part to mediate between two specific and established groups known somehow to him (and to Esler) to have really existed in a situation of real conflict at Rome: "I am concerned with the way in which Paul [is in Romans] creating a particular form of unity between Judean and Greek ethnic subgroups previously accustomed to mutual

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[506] Esler, "Social Identity," 51-63.

[507] Esler, "Social Identity," 61. See also Esler, *Conflict and Identity in Romans*, 26.

[508] Esler, *Conflict and Identity in Romans*, 17 (italics mine).

[509] Esler, *Conflict and Identity in Romans*, 344 (italics mine).

hostility and conflict. I am proposing that Paul was acting as an entrepreneur of identity," he explains.[510]

As indicated above and shown in Section 3.3 below, however, these situational likelihoods assumed by Esler as "likely" are at best merely likely, and other scholars have pointed out that such conjectures introduce problems of their own in reconstructing an original audience and a purpose for Rom 12-15. The "problem" of identifying the weak and strong in Romans disappears, however, if Rom 12-15 is read as serving a project of active, glocal community network identity definition rather than as an inexplicably unclear intervention in a reactive, local project of community identity definition. The letter to the Romans addresses in Rom 12-15 very important and very normal ancient Mediterranean association needs, and does so in a way that both offers its ideal addressees the opportunity to belong to a functional global network and sets up Paul and his circle as crucial pieces in the ideal network thus described. In this way, Romans provides the community-network-defining tools of shared structures of identity and authority facilitated by letter, like the association network letters reviewed in Chapters 1 and 2. The following sections (3.2, 3.3, and 3.4) concretely implement and offer specific textual support for my proposed new point of view, by examining Rom 12-15 as serving the community identity definition of an ideal inscribed Greco-Roman (3.2), Jewish (3.3), and Pauline (3.4) association network defined (like the ideal networks seen in Chapters 1 and 2) by means of the common ancient community-defining habits of insider-to-insider letters and according to the Law of the Membrane.

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[510] Esler, *Conflict and Identity in Romans*, 109.

Section 3.2. Greco-Roman Association Network Definition in Rom 12-15.

The review of the Greco-Roman association network letters undertaken in Chapter 1 showed that insider-to-insider letters served important social functions in the definition and regulation of first-century community networks. It was shown that letters could serve a variety of basic community needs, from facilitating the moving around of insider resources to articulating and instantiating insider structures of identity and order. It was also shown that such functions were interrelated, for example in the ways they can serve the articulation of models and figures of authority represented as integral to the success of such community business. It was shown furthermore that letters were represented in such letters as important tools in this insider business of networked community definition. Finally, it was shown that the definition of ideal subcultural inside worlds found in such letters was articulated in complex terms of negotiation with ideal wider cultural worlds represented outside: the subcultural Law of the Membrane necessitated the articulation of a stance of qualified positive engagement with those ideal worlds outside, notably in terms of social concerns about questions of relative honor and reputation. The exegesis of this section shows that Rom 12-15 displays comparable Greco-Roman association-epistolary characteristics appropriate to the service of comparable insider community definition.

I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. 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 (Rom 12:1-2).[511]

The ideal plural but unified addressee in-group assumed in Rom 12:1-2 to be already affiliated with Paul (designated by "you" and "brothers") contributes to the definition of the ideal senders and addressees constructed in Rom 12:1-15:13, with the help of the context of the letter's epistolary frame (Rom 1:1-17 and Rom 15:14-16:26). It has often been noted that the opening and closing sections of Romans are unusually long and developed.[512] For our purposes here, it is significant that this expansion of the epistolary frame of Romans serves the project of community definition. When twenty-two notable "insiders" are greeted by name in Rome in Rom 16:1-15 (not counting anonymous family members and "households"), and greetings are sent to Rome from seven more notable "insiders" in Rom 16:21 (not including the greeting included from Tertius, the letter's amenuensis), addressees are invited to imagine such notables as part of a real, viable network to which they might also properly, honorably belong.

In these references to nested circles of senders and addressess, the complex, plural nature of the contexts of sender(s) and addressee(s) noted above to be normal in Greco-Roman letters appears as significant here in Romans, as it does in Paul's other letters. "There are," as David Aune reminds us, "no really private letters

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[511] The English translation used is, unless otherewise indicated, that of the NRSV. Supplementary English translation and notes on the Greek thus translated are provided when necessary. The Greek text of Romans used is from the *Nestle-Aland Novum Testamentum Graece,* 28th edition (B. Aland, et al, eds.; Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2012).

[512] Jean-Pierre Lémonon, "L'écrit de Paul aux Romains est-il vraiment une lettre?," in *Les lettres dans la Bible et dans la littérature* (L. Panier, ed.; Paris: Cerf, 1999), 126-127.

among Paul's authentic letters."[513] "Even the specimen," notes Lutz Doering, "that in size and topic comes closest to private letters either on papyrus or collected in the literary tradition, that is, the Letter to Philemon, is not, in fact, a private letter."[514] Doering notes, to be specific, that Philemon is addressed from more than one person (Timothy is identified as co-sender, significantly called by the association title "brother") and to more than one person, all of whom are explicitly addressed by their titles ("co-soldier," "sister," etc.) as association members, including Philemon himself is addressed in terms of his relation to Paul not individually/personally but rather through the community of the association i.e., as Paul's "co-worker."[515] In the case of Romans, Paul is clearly inscribed as not writing alone. The inscribed Paul of Romans is presented as part of a networked group, including people like his patrons, his amenuensis, and the comrades he greets in Rome.[516]

When addressees are greeted as "brothers" (a term familiar from the insider-to-insider letters reviewed in Chapters 1 and 2) in the opening and closing of the letter (Rom 1:13 and 16:14), the invitation of networked belonging being extended to "a Roman audience" (singular) is made even more clear. The letter addresses "all the beloved of God in Rome" (Rom 1:7), constructing potential audiences of unclear nature and number (including the kinds of people and households named in Rom

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[513] Aune, *The New Testament in Its Literary Environment*, 160.

[514] Lutz Doering, *Ancient Jewish Letters and the Beginnings of Christian Epistolography*, 383.

[515] Lutz Doering, *Ancient Jewish Letters and the Beginnings of Christian Epistolography*, 383-384; See also Lémonon, "L'écrit de Paul aux Romains est-il vraiment une lettre?," 122.

[516] Richard N. Longenecker, *Introducing Romans*, 3-13. See also J. A. Loubser, "Media Criticism and the Myth of Paul, the Creative Genius and his Forgotten Co-workers," *Neotestamentica* 34.2 (2000): 329-47.

16:1-15) as one group – a single communal addressee. According to the earliest available archaeological evidence, Christian communities most likely emerged first in poor immigrant neighborhoods like the Trastevere and Porta Capena, but a few might have lived in richer neighborhoods in Marsfield and the Aventine.[517] All such various people and gatherings are invited here by the epistolary language of Romans to feel and act like insiders in a singular addressee community. The way for people and assemblies to comport themselves as belonging to this ideal social unit is clarified as the insider exhortation of Rom 12-15 unfolds.

Rom 12-15 begins with exhortation to pursue excellence "inside" the inscribed addressee community – a community called to be distinct from (and somehow superior to) "this world," and imagined in terms of "brotherly" fictive kinship. This opening recalls the kind of insider epistolary advice reviewed in Chapter 1: The letter of *Ammonius to Apollonius* similarly expressed the urgent need of the "brothers" of the network to cultivate the "good" life (13-22), and the letter of *Artistippus to Arete* similarly urged the use of family-related and family-like "insider" ties (10-54) to enable the cultivation of a "course of life that is customary for good men" (56). The ways in which the figure of Paul is constructed here as an appropriate, authoritative source of such exhortation are discussed in Section 3.4. I note here only that the paraenesis of Rom 12-15 is introduced in terms recalling those seen introducing calls to "the good life" in the letters above. Philip Esler picked up on this dimension of the passage when he argued (citing Ambrosiaster's claim that Rom 12-15 is a distinct section of the letter dedicated to describing "how to live

[517] See Lampe, *From Paul to Valentinus*, 19-66.

a good life") that Rom 12-15 promotes a special insider idea of "the good life" commonly promoted in first-century Greek moral philosophy.[518] As noted by Judith Lieu, early Christian writers worked at "inscribing" their communal "identities" by asserting both "continuities and discontinuities" vis-à-vis common Graeco-Roman "outside" cultural habits and ideals.[519] By promoting "the good life" as something comprehensible in very wide cultural terms (see below) and yet somehow markedly distinct from (and superior in practice to) life as lived "outside" the letter's ideal community, Rom 12:1-2 marks the community-defining advice of Rom 12-15 from the start as an exercise in precisely this kind of negotiation, conducted according to the subcultural Law of the Membrane.

As mentioned above, Philip Tite showed that sectarian paraenesis can serve projects of community identity definition by using "insider" language (for example "fictive kinship" language)[520] to define ideal insiders in contradistinction to ideal "outsiders,"[521] and as Dale L. Sullivan and Christian Anible note in their study of "the inscription of the early Christian community" in Galatians, letters can help define communities "by addressing issues of legitimacy, inclusion, exclusion, and virtue."[522]

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[518] Esler, "Social Identity," 58. On the Greco-Roman character of "the good life" represented in Rom 12-15, see the discussion of τὴν λογικὴν λατρείαν ὑμῶν (Rom 12:1-2), etc., below.

[519] Lieu, *Neither Jew Nor Greek?*, 1-6. See also Lieu, *Christian Identity in the Jewish and Graeco-Roman World*, 98-146.

[520] Philip L. Tite, *Valentinian Ethics and Paraenetic Discourse*, 287, 289, 292, 295.

[521] Tite, *Valentinian Ethics and Paraenetic Discourse*, 287-288, 298.

[522] Sullivan and Anible, "The Epideictic Dimension of Galatians as Formative Rhetoric: The Inscription of Early Christian Community," *Rhetorica: A Journal of the History of Rhetoric* 18.2 (Spring 2000): 117.

This "othering" dimension of community identity definition is perfectly in line with both the general theoretical sociological expectations outlined in the Introduction and the ancient evidence available in the specific case of the common community identity-defining habits of the first-century Mediterranean world. As Richard Ascough has shown, association insider identity was commonly defined in the ancient Mediterranean world over against "others" pictured outside,[523] and as noted by Judith Lieu, Christian groups were no exception to the rule: "[I]n the writings of those whom we label Greeks and Romans, Jews and Christians… they articulated who 'they' were, often over against various 'others.'" Anders Klostergaard Petersen has identified and described, for example, an epistolary project of defining proper insiders by means of "othering" non-qualifying people in 2 Corinthians.[524] A similar project of defining an ideal insider community in terms of "legitimacy, inclusion, exclusion, and virtue" can be seen at work here in Romans. The ideal insiders of Rom 12:1-2 are clearly special in contradistinction to others outside. They are a group not to be conformed (plural μὴ συσχηματίζεσθε) to "this age/world" (τῷ αἰῶνι τούτῳ), because of their special relationship with the particular god special to the group. That fact (seen below) that every good community gift is depicted as freely and graciously given by this god supports the ideal of exercising such gifts in humble mutuality,[525] particularly since as beneficiaries of this god (see also 12:3-8,

[523] Richard S. Ascough, "Defining Community-Ethos in Light of the 'Other': Recruitment Rhetoric among Greco-Roman Religious Groups," *Annali di storia dell'esegesi* 24 (2007): 59-75.

[524] Anders Klostergaard Petersen, "Othering in Paul: A Case-Study of 2 Corinthians," in *The Faces of the Other: Religious Rivalry and Ethnic Encounters in the Ancient World* (M. Kahlos, ed.; Turnhout: Brepols, 2011), 19-50.

[525] See Gignac, *L'épître aux Romains*, 458.

etc), the ideal addressees of Rom 12:1-2 would have been seen in first-century Greco-Roman environments as having particular obligations arising from that particular favor/privilege (See also 15:1).[526] The word "God" appears as a proper name three times in two verses to underscore this peculiar, devoted nature of the group, and the special sub-subculture-defining character granted the paraenesis of Rom 12-15 by reference to the particular advantages and requirements of devotion to this god are defined more in Sections 3.3 and 4.3. As a community defined as taking shape somehow "within" the subcultural stream of Jewish traditions (in this case in terms of devotion to the Judean god), the ideal addressee group of Rom 12 takes the form of a sub-subculture. It may be depicted as the rightful heir of such Jewish traditions, but its understandings and uses of those traditions can only be expected to make sense to those within the sub-subcultural in-group thus defined.

The ideal insiders of Rom 12:1-2 are not defined in terms of pure contradistinction, though. They are also a Greco-Roman association in-group recognizable in the very common terms reviewed in Chapter 1 as "brothers" pursuing "the good." Their proper "sacrifice" is, as George Smiga notes, "communal rather than factional,"[527] which helps underline the in-group-defining nature of the exhortation, but it is nevertheless a sacrifice defined in terms recalling Greek philosophical approaches to understanding sacrifice metaphorically in terms of mindful proper behavior, with reference to "logical/spiritual worship" (τὴν λογικὴν

[526] See H. W. Pleket, "Religious History as the History of Mentality: The 'Believer' as Servant of the Deity in the Greek World," in *Faith, Hope and Worship: Aspects of Religious Mentality in the Ancient World* (H. S. Versnel, ed.; Leiden: Brill, 1981), 183-189.

[527] G. Smiga, "Romans 12:1-2 and 15:30-32 and the Occasion of the Letter to the Romans," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 53 (1991): 270.

λατρείαν ὑμῶν) and "the mind" (τοῦ νοός)[528], recalling the sacrifice described by Isocrates in his letter to Nicoles: "With regard to the gods, do as your ancestors showed; and *regard it as the finest sacrifice and the greatest service to show yourself as the best and the most just*."[529] When Stanley Stowers identifies the "paraenesis" of Rom 12-15 as promoting a community ethic of "mutual aid and friendship,"[530] the friendship in question is therefore specified to be the "friendship" of the language of first-century popular philosophy, expressed in terms and concepts common throughout the Greco-Roman world.[531] Alain Gignac refers, for example, to the presence in Rom 12 of an ideal of enlightened mutual affection similar to that promoted in common first-century Stoic ideals of philosophical "friendship."[532]

Placing the brotherly mutuality of Rom 12 in the context of first-century majoritarian ethics (including popular Stoic traditions) makes sense given the fact that, as Runar M. Thorsteinsson illustrates in his review of the emergence of early Christian ethics, Christian insider ideals of brotherly love and mutuality would have been recognizable to many first-century hearers as respectable "philosophical"

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[528] See Jewett, *Romans*, 730-731; Gignac, *L'épître aux Romains*, 456-457; R. M. Thorsteinsson, "Paul and Roman Stoicism: Romans 12 and Contemporary Stoic Ethics," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 29 (2006): 147. See also D. Ullucci, "Contesting the Meaning of Animal Sacrifice," in *Ancient Mediterranean Sacrifice* (J. Wright Knust and Z. Várhelyi, eds.; Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2011), 57-74; L. Nasrallah, "The Embarrassment of Blood: Early Christians and Others on Sacrifice, War, and Rational Worship," in Knust and Z. Várhelyi, *Ancient Mediterranean Sacrifice*, 142-166.

[529] Isocrates, *Nicoles*, 20 (D. C. Mirhady and Y. L. Too, trans. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2000), 162. Cf. Gignac's citation of comparable ideas found in the letters of Seneca and in later imaginative representations of conversations between Seneca and Paul (*L'épître aux Romains*, 456-457).

[530] Stowers, *A Rereading of Romans*, 323.

[531] Stowers, *A Rereading of Romans*, 41, 318, 320-321.

[532] Gignac, *L'épître aux Romains,* 467.

values: Thorsteinsson cites here the common Greco-Roman philosophical definition of Stoic virtue in terms of the "mutual love" recommended by Seneca, the "mutual love and joy in association" recommended by Epictetus, and the "brotherly love… and concern for the welfare of one's neighbor" recommended by Musonius Rufus.[533] Thorsteinsson suggests based on his comparative study that this widely recognizable, widely respectable character of the emerging Christian global ethic of mutual care (as opposed to any putative novel or revolutionary character) would best account for its appeal in the cultural context of the first century.[534]

From this point of view, Bruce Winter is mistaken in reading the "brotherly" mutuality stressed in Rom 12 as a "radical" and "revolutionary" new association insider value that "flies in the face of" ancient association culture as known in Rome and its empire.[535] As was seen in the letters reviewed above in Chapters 1 and 2, the language of "brotherly" mutuality could coexist very comfortably in first-century association letters with hierarchical chains of command, the competitive pursuit of honor, etc. The "commander and president (*prytanis*) for life" of the "Synod of Dionysiac Performers" may therefore be honored in an inscription for behaving toward his guild "in a generous fashion (*philanthrōpōs*)" marrying the nobility of honorable leadership and benefaction to the honorable mutuality of "brotherly

[533] Runar M. Thorsteinsson, "The Role of Morality in the Rise of Roman Christianity," in Holmberg, *Exploring Early Christian Identity*, 139-157.

[534] Thorsteinsson, "The Role of Morality in the Rise of Roman Christianity," 157.

[535] Winter, "Roman Law and Society in Romans 12-15," 72, 75, 97.

love."[536] The review of Rom 12-15 offered below shows at several key points the assertion of hierarchical authority and the pursuit of honor at work in Rom 12-15 as well. The description in Rom 12 :1-2 of "brotherly" insider excellence is furthermore expressed in terms deemed important within wider "outside" cultural conversations about such excellence. The "brotherly" character of the community inscribed in Rom 12 is therefore not the "antithesis" of normal first-century association culture, as Winter suggests.[537] It is instead an example of the "social creativity" written about by Hogg and Abrams (discussed above in Chapter 2) as a way of ennobling ideal insider culture. "Social creativity strategies do not alter the status quo, yet they do render the social identity of the subordinate group relatively more positive," note Hogg and Abrams: "For example, the subordinate group can select and try to gain recognition for different dimensions of intergroup comparison, on which the subordinate group can be positively evaluated."[538] In the case of Rom 12-15, the ideal insider values of proper loyalty to the god and the code of the ideal inscribed in-group of Rom 12:1-2 are ennobled and promoted as flatteringly compatible and comparable with wider "outside" philosophical ideals.

The cultural/subcultural tension resulting from the "social creativity" of Rom 12:1-2 (between belonging and not belonging) can be seen reflected in the arguments of scholars over how "similar" versus how "different" the advice of Rom

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[536] See the "Honorary Decree and Membership List of a Synod of Dionysiac Performers" (*OGIS* 51), cited in Ascough, Harland, and Kloppenborg, *Associations in the Greco-Roman World: A Sourcebook*, 178-179.

[537] Winter, "Roman Law and Society in Romans 12-15," 75.

[538] M. A. Hogg and D. Abrams, *Social Identifications: A Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations and Group Processes* (New York: Routledge, 1988), 28-29; Cf. 56-58.

12-15 really is compared to the most widespread ideals of first-century Greco-Roman moral philosophy.[539] In his commentary on Romans, Wayne Meeks picked up on this tension between special "insider" identity and behavior on the one hand and conformity with common Greco-Roman ideals on the other, describing the resulting paraenesis of Romans as having a paradoxical character:

> We see then a certain paradox in this letter. The specific moral expectations that Paul expresses, of the sort that one could state as moral rules, are hardly different from those widely accepted as 'decent' in Greco-Roman society (note the admonition to behave 'decently' in the view of 'outsiders' in 4:12). Yet the overlaid theological warrants tend to emphasize distinctiveness and separation from the dominant society.[540]

Of course, from the point of view outlined above in this study, the tension noticed by Meeks is not a "paradox" at all. The normal, natural tension of the subcultural qualified positive engagement discernible in texts like Rom 12:1-2 only looks like a paradox to Meeks because he has depended (like Vernon Robbins in the "socio-rhetorical" analysis discussed above) upon sociologist Bryan Wilson's stress on sects as being necessarily oppositional vis-à-vis wider "outside" host cultures (in his article published in 1969)[541] without taking into account Wilson's stress on sects as being necessarily involved in complex balancing acts of identity negotiation vis-à-vis those same wider cultures (in his article published in 1959).[542] The former work is present in Meeks's bibliography and applied in his analysis, but the latter is not,

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[539] See the discussion of Esler versus Engberg-Pedersen *et al* in Gignac, *L'épître aux Romains*, 448-449.

[540] Meeks, *The Moral World of the First Christians*, 129.

[541] Wilson, "A Typology of Sects."

[542] Wilson, "An Analysis of Sect Development."

leading Meeks to see contradiction where this study sees coherence in the form of another example of the Law of the Membrane at work. This subcultural "law" is at work here in the epistolary project of identity definition found in Romans, just as it was in the cases reviewed above, and so the ideal community behaviour described in Rom 12 naturally involves, as Troels Engberg-Pedersen noted in his review of Rom 12-13, both "engagement in this world *and* disengagement from it."[543] As Sections 3.3 and 3.4 below show, the selection and representation of the perceived similarities and differences chosen for attention in Romans are as strategic as those found in the letters reviewed in Chapters 1 and 2. Perceived cultural similarity and perceived cultural difference are both useful to insider projects of representing given subcultures as worthy (worthy of ἔπαινος, for example, in the case of ancient Greco-Roman association networks) by comparison.

For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of yourself more highly than you ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned (Rom 12:3).

The Paul of Romans is depicted here, through the rare and "peculiar" phrase παντὶ τῷ ὄντι ἐν ὑμῖν,[544] as a figure with authority (See Section 3.4) over every ideal addressee belonging to the ideal pre-existing, unified addressee group depicted by the phrase. This ideal existing plural but unified "you" brought implicitly under Paul's authority with reference to his apostleship in Rom 1:1-7 is brought much

[543] Engberg-Pedersen, "Paul's Stoicizing Politics in Romans 12-13: The Role of 13.1-10 in the Argument," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 29.2 (2006): 163, 172 (italics his).

[544] See Jewett, *Romans*, 738.

more explicitly under the authority of the Paul of Rom 12:3, and the address of the instruction to "every one among you" sets the stage for the mutual nature of the behavior of ideal insiders depicted: their duties are to one other.[545] As such, the ideal insider behavior encouraged here underlines again the seeming subcultural "paradox" noted by Meeks: insiders are called to the kind of sober, mindful life (εἰς τὸ σωφρονεῖν) often praised in the Greco-Roman world outside,[546] but answering this call is assumed to be accomplished though the special gift of "faith" (μέτρον πίστεως) bestowed upon them by the special god of the insiders. As noted above, however, such seeming paradoxes of subcultural self-definition do not in fact present paradoxes, since every subcultural "inside" is quite naturally presented as somehow simultaneously honorable in selected terms shared with the outside *and* special compared to the outside. The form of the social focus of this warning in Rom 12:3 against "haughty" self-regard (see the comparable warnings at 11:18, 20; 12:16 against the kinds of "haughty" thoughts that promise to raise some insiders up by stepping on others)[547] thereby serves the definition of insider mutuality in a way conforming to the Law of the Membrane, as a characteristic quality of community identity deserving honor from all and yet achieved by means of a devotion and a divine gift depicted as particular to the inside. In this way, the typical association value of in-group mutuality introduced here is depicted (as it was in the letters

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[545] See Gignac, *L'épître aux Romains*, 460.

[546] See H. North, *SOPHROSYNE: Self-Knowledge and Self-Restraint in Greek Literature* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1966), 2-4; Jewett, *Romans*, 740-742; Gignac, *L'épître aux Romains*, 460-461.

[547] See also Esler, *Conflict and Identity in Romans*, 313.

reviewed in Chapter 1) as able both to serve the health of the inside and also to merit the respect of those outside.

The tension just described in Rom 12:3, and its typicality, are apparently hard for some interpreters to see. According to numerous NT critics, the stress on "insider" equality and mutuality in Rom 12:3 defiantly subverts the values of competition for honor and individual moral excellence found in the wider Greco-Roman culture "outside."[548] The Greco-Roman association letters reviewed in Chapter 1 also stressed necessary community-building dimensions of "insider" equality and mutuality, though (as seen for example in the mutuality urged by *Ammonius to Apollonius* 16, etc.), and just as such rhetoric did not necessarily prevent different members of the associations thus defined from pursuing different kinds of honor and different levels of power (as reflected for example in the anxieties over the potentially competitive mutuality of benefaction discernible in *Ammonius to Apollonius* 7-15 and 23-24, etc.), so the community-building exhortation to equality and mutuality in Rom 12:3 does not necessarily preclude the presence of honor-based hierarchical characteristics within the ideal organisation thus described. This principle is in fact illustrated in the language of Rom 12:3 itself, since its exhortation to humble mutuality is introduced as deserving of attention precisely because of the special "grace" given to the Paul it presents as exercising his divinely-appointed leadership (See Section 3.4). The next four lines underline and clarify, moreover, the typically Greco-Roman (and accordingly not-strictly-

[548] See for example Moxnes, "The Quest for Honor," 222; Esler, "Paul and Stoicism," 116; Gignac, *L'épître aux Romains*, 514.

egalitarian) character of this advice on insider mutuality, by picking up the commonplace community metaphor of the body.

For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another. We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophecy, in proportion to faith; ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching; the exhorter, in exhortation; the giver, in generosity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness (Rom 12:4-8).

In these lines, insider status and behavior are defined once again in terms familiar from "external" Mediterranean culture(s). The image in Rom 12 of the ideal in-group as a body is, after all, in the words of Eduard Schweitzer, an ancient public rhetorical commonplace that "does not go beyond widespread Greek usage."[549] The fact that ideal members are united here "in Christ" indicates a special character to the in-group identity not shared by others, but this too is of course normal. The insiders of the associations reviewed in Chapter 1 were also urged to certain standards of behaviour and mutuality grounded in particular bonds and particular expressions of ideals not shared by the outside: Ammonius prays, for example (*Ammonius to Apollonius* 13-22), for "oneness of mind and mutual friendship" to prevail among his distant "brothers," in a way and to a divine providence assumed to be recognized and valued by them, if not by everyone everywhere, and Aristippus urges his own insider addressee (*Aristippus to Arete* 12-16, 27-41) to share her life

[549] E. Schweitzer, "σῶμα κτλ.," *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* Vol. 7 (G. Kittel and G. Friedrich, eds.; G. W. Bromiley, trans.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971): 1069. See also Jewett, *Romans*, 742-743; Tobin, *Paul's Rhetoric*, 391. See also the Greek and Latin sources cited by Gignac, *L'épître aux Romains*, 461-462.

with insiders prepared for such ideal family/friendly mutuality by the common ideals and moral formation of their in-group's special philosophical heritage. The particularity of the ideal in-group of Rom 12:4-8 defined by its special bond/identity "in Christ" is therefore one of the ideal commmunity's most common and essential association network features. Insiders are called to be particularly, especially mutually supportive like everybody else, so to speak.

Again, this typical Greco-Roman character of community paraenesis in Rom 12 can be hard for some to see. Bruce Winter has argued, for example, that the image of the ideal community as a healthy body in Rom 12:4-8 is a "revolutionary" and "counter-cultural" attack on Roman social stratification and privilege.[550] The fact that the rhetorical topos of the community as body was (as noted by Schweitzer) both widespread and comfortably embedded in the maintenance of ancient social hierarchies is forgotten in Winter's rush to agree with the assertion of Rom 12 that the ideal community it describes is called to be somehow noble and special. In a similar interpretive vein, Wayne Meeks has suggested that the mutuality stressed in community rules like Rom 12:4-8 shows that Christian associations had a "moral" concern that made them unlike other associations.[551] As Alicia Batten showed in her study of Greco-Roman association ideals and ἔπαινος, though, clear distinctions between "proper" behavior, "pious" behavior, and "moral" behavior are anachronistic when it comes to understanding the rules produced by

[550] Winter, "Roman Law and Society in Romans 12-15," 75.

[551] Meeks, *Moral World of the First Christians*, 114.

ancient associations for the regulation of community life.[552] Even if one did decide, furthermore, that a moral bar perceived as unusually high and imagined in contradistinction to the cultures of other associations is deliberately set by the language of Rom 12, it would remain an insider representation aimed not at fairly describing the real values and behaviors of outsiders, but rather at defining ideal insider behaviors and ideals represented as worthy of ἔπαινος by comparison.

Other normal association needs addressed in Rom 12:4-8 include the need for financial supporters and the need for leadership. As Chapter 1 showed, associations depended upon honorable "givers" and "leaders" to accomplish their insider business. The normal need for the association position/function of financial supporter is reflected here in the reference in 12:8 to "givers," and the normal need for the offices/functions of leadership is reflected in the reference in 12:8 to ministers, teachers, exhorters, and leaders. The exact nature of the functions/offices named in Rom 12:8 are debated, partly since Christian church hierarchies do not yet seem to have been clearly defined, but the references to the essential "body" functions of ministering, teaching, exhorting and leading clearly assume and valorize administration and/or leadership of some kind.[553] The "Pauline" paraenesis of Rom 12-15 is, therefore, in a way self-authorizing here, since the Paul of Romans offers, with his special insider status and impressive global network, precisely these community-forming tools of teaching and exhortation and leadership, and the

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[552] Alicia Batten, "The Moral World of Greco-Roman Associations," 135-151.

[553] See Gignac, *L'épître aux Romains*, 463; U. Wilckens, *Der Brief an die Römer*, 3, 15; Dunn, *Romans 9-16* (Dallas: Word Books, 1988), 731; Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, 342; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 649.

opportunity to belong to an honorable and well-connected in-group worthy of generous financial support (see Section 3.4).

Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor (Rom 12:9-10).

In these lines, the special insider-to-insider glue of genuine love and mutual affection is once again imagined and stressed in language familiar and honorable to outsiders (See again *Ammonius to Apollonius* 13-16), involving adhering "to the good" (τῷ ἀγαθῷ) and promoting "brotherly love" (φιλαδελφίᾳ). The specific reference here to φιλόστοργοι is, therefore, while unique in the NT, easily understood as a local in-group invocation of "a concept widely used in Hellenistic ethics."[554] Attention to the unusual phrase in 12:10 about ideal insiders outdoing one another in showing honor can further clarify the way the ideal insider glue of brotherly love described in Rom 12-15 works according to the Law of the Membrane. The phrase "τῇ τιμῇ ἀλλήλους προηγούμενοι" is unusual, and its precise meaning is debated.[555] Because it is acknowledged by NT scholars that the giving and receiving of honor was (as discussed in Chapter 1) seen as crucially important to social life and social status in the first-century Mediterranean world,[556] some have concluded that imagining honor in terms of mutuality amounts to a

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[554] Jewett, *Romans* 761.

[555] See Gignac, *L'épître aux Romains*, 472.

[556] See, for example, Malina, *New Testament World*, 25-50; Jewett, "Honor and Shame," 257-272.

countercultural "transformation of values."[557] Alain Gignac suggests, for example, that since the brotherly love recommended here is owed to the entire insider community (and not reserved for friends alone), it is a "subversive" form of mutual love, and the resulting race to honor one another (as opposed to racing to claim honor for oneself) is "revolutionary."[558] As the letters reviewed in Chapter 1 show, though, association insiders are themselves "friends" and "brothers," and love and honor given them are assumed to be honorable things. An internal race to show honor can, in short, serve the normal wider cultural race to share in it.

I note in pursuing this line of argument that the advice found in the letter of Isocrates to Demonicus stresses the showing of honor as part of the pursuit of honor: "Fear the gods, honor your parents, respect your friends, obey the laws. Pursue the enjoyments which are of good repute; for pleasure attended by honor is the best thing in the world."[559] I note too that in the review of the letter of *Ammonius to Apollonius* undertaken above in Chapter 1, the ostentatious humility shown by Ammonius concerning his gifts to Apollonius and his high praise for the embarrassing generosity of Ammonius were shown to reflect a subtle expression of a culturally normal insider competition for honor, not a countercultural contempt expressed for the pursuit of honor *per se*. Finally, I note here that avoiding the pursuit of honor deemed excessive or unseemly could also be recognized as honorable in itself. The writings of Dio Chrysostom show, for example, that a

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[557] See S. Bartchy, "Undermining Ancient Patriarchy: The Apostle Paul's Vision of a Society of Siblings," *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 29 (1999): 71.

[558] Gignac, *L'épître aux Romains*, 472.

[559] Isocrates, *Ad Demonicum* 16.

concern for honor and prestige can coincide with a critique of the kind of pursuit of honor deemed indecorous: "In some instances men who craved these things [i.e., public praise] have actually been made wretched and reduced to beggary," Dio warns in *Discourse* 66.2: "Ah, but, says, he, his name is publicly proclaimed by his fellow citizens – just as is that of a runaway slave!" Looking down on people seen as undeserving of honor (such as slaves and householders who have impoverished themselves by mismanaging their wealth) can coincide, then, with the critique of people perceived as addicted to praise: the morbidly competitive benefactors Dio derides as public praise addicts (referring to δοξοκόπους in 66.3, and φιλοδόξοις in 66.11). In the same vein, I note Seneca's criticism of what he sees as the tawdry use of ostentatious or ungracious benefaction and/or generosity to gain honor by publicly humiliating others (in *De Beneficiis* 1.1.8, 2.7.2, 2.5.6).[560]

Read with these "outside" Greco-Roman cultural perspectives in mind, then, it is not at all clear that Rom 12:9-10 displays a "subversive" or "revolutionary" subcultural attitude in recommending that insiders compete in giving one another honor (τιμή), as opposed to pursuing it for themselves in ways deemed unseemly. Instead, this special insider value instantiates, in a way true to the Law of the Membrane, common values of the "outside" Mediterranean world: refraining from the competition for honor can itself be honorable behavior, and can in fact be one way for insiders to deserve the respect of those outside. In this way, inside and outside are once again revealed as mutually dependent ideal categories, especially since the honorable giving of τιμή from one insider to another thus conceived

[560] See Joubert, *Paul as Benefactor*, 43-44.

complements the honorable giving of τιμή (referred to below in Rom 13:7) from ideal insiders to deserving outsiders. The ideal subcultural "inside" depicted in Rom 12:9-10 is indeed marked as special by the ideal attitudes and behaviors described, but its special, honorable character is not imagined in countercultural terms *per se*. Instead, the resulting image of an honorable in-group rendered all the more honorable by pursuing honor only on its own admirably "enlightened" and insider-oriented terms offers the ideal community thus imagined another opportunity to be special like everybody else.

Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers (Rom 12:11-13).

These lines express a normal expectation that ideal insiders will demonstrate proper devotion to the particular god special to members of the ideal association network in-group, in this case the particular sub-subcultural version of the Judean god appropriate to a "Pauline Christian" in-group (On the use of κύριος to mean "the Lord Jesus Christ" and/or the Jewish god re-imagined with the help of the LXX as his father, see Sections 3.3 and 3.4). The reference to being patient in suffering (τῇ θλίψει ὑπομένοντες) indicates that they may, like, Arete and "little Aristippus," etc. (*Aristippus to Arete* 4-7, 16-17, 32-33, 49-51) at times have to expect a difficult relationship with the outside world, but it is nevertheless clear that they will also ideally – again, like Arete (*Aristippus to Arete* 19-54) – "persevere" (Rom 12:12).

The perseverance of the ideal insiders of Rom 12:11-13 is, like the perseverance expected of Arete, little Aristippus, Xanthippe, Myrto, and the rest in

the letter of *Aristippus to Arete* (See lines 2-4, 8, 10-16, 27-48), something achieved in community. Whether the reference in Rom 12:13 to sharing to meet "the needs of the saints" (ταῖς χρείαις τῶν ἁγίων) is taken to entail the offering for the "saints" in Jerusalem (See the discussion below on Rom 15:25-31),[561] help for Jewish members affected by the ban of Claudius,[562] or aid to be offered to any insiders perceived to be in need, it paints a scene of association network mutuality in line with the sharing of insider resources stressed in the letters reviewed above in Chapters 1 and 2, and sets the stage for the presentation of Paul as an admirable and important leader/coordinator in his efforts to facilitate the offering for the "saints" in Jerusalem (See Sections 3.3 and 3.4). The assumption (Rom 12:13) that ideal insiders will practice hospitality to strangers (τὴν φιλοξενίαν) continues the project of constructing them as honorable by building upon widely-respected Greco-Roman and Jewish ideals (See Section 3.3),[563] and like the ideal of insider sharing it follows here it also sets the stage for the letter's construction of Paul the traveling insider expert and his global network of associates as worthy of such generous hospitality (See Section 3.4).

Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly; do not claim to be wiser than you are. Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all (Rom 12:14-18).

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[561] See T. Zahn, *Der Brief des Paulus an die Römer* (Leipzig: Deichert, 1910), 550-551.

[562] See Jewett, *Romans*, 764.

[563] Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, 743-744.

The reference made here to blessing persecutors raises the question of ideal insider attitudes toward outsiders, which is complicated and discussed in the notes found directly below on Rom 12:19-21. It seems quite clear, though, that the wording of this advice recalls pre-existing traditions about the teaching of Jesus on the treatment of enemies, marking the Paul of Rom 12-15 as a moral teacher versed in insider Jesus-devotee tradition (See Section 3.4). Meanwhile, the connection drawn implicitly in the lines reviewed above between internal harmony and external reputation is made more explicit here, by the command to "live in harmony with one other" being delivered in the same breath as references to doing what is noble in the sight of all and living peaceably with all (Rom 12:17-18).

The concern for external reputation suggested by the reference to ideal insiders paying attention in choosing their behavior to "what is noble the sight of all" should be familiar from the letters reviewed in Chapter 1. The references made in the *Letter of Ammonius to Apollonius* to the internal need of the "brothers" to cultivate "oneness of mind and mutual friendship" and pursue the "good" life (13-22) are framed explicitly as matters related to external reputation. Ammonius gives the brothers this advice "that you may be free from gossip" (17), and urges them to "live peaceably" not only because it is "a good thing" (22) but also because such ideal insider behavior will "not give occasion against you to others" (19-20). In the letter of *Artistippus to Arete*, outsiders like the officials at Cyrene may at times be the "enemies" of good insiders (50) and give them trouble (4, 20-21), but a qualified positive relationship with them is nevertheless important, if only to ensure the internal peace and survival of the in-group: "I advise you to settle your affairs with

the officials so that this advice of mine may be beneficial" (17-18). More positively, the family-related and family-like insider ties promoted by Aristippus (10-54) are aimed at enabling the cultivation of a "course of life that is customary for good men" (56) and thereby deserving of respect from any outsiders worth caring about.

In keeping with the pattern traced above, the behavior constructed as deserving of outside honor in Rom 12:14-18 is expressed in terms of special insider tradition. The phrase "what is noble in the eyes of all men" recalls, as Robert Jewett has shown, Jewish scriptural tradition, expressed according to a widening Pauline "pattern of adaptation"[564] that leads from προνοοῦ καλὰ ἐνώπιον κυρίου καὶ ἀνθρώπων ("consider what is good in the sight of the Lord and of people") in Proverbs 3:4 LXX to προνοοῦμεν γὰρ καλὰ οὐ μόνον ἐνώπιον Κυρίου ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐνώπιον ἀνθρώπων ("for we consider what is good not only in the sight of the Lord but also in the sight of people") in 2 Corinthians 8:21, and finally to προνοούμενοι καλὰ ἐνώπιον πάντων ἀνθρώπων ("taking into consideration what is good in the sight of all people") in Rom 12:17b. As Jewett and others have noted, the final deletion of reference to "the sight of the Lord" and the final addition of "all" to the reference to "the sight of people" paints the principle involved as ever more universal,[565] and ever more about "what was perceived to be honorable… in Greco-Roman and Jewish cultures."[566] The immediate repetition of the phrase "all men"

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[564] Jewett, *Romans*, 772.

[565] Zahn, *Der Brief des Paulus an die Römer*, 552; P. Rossano, "l'ideala del Bello (*kalos*) nell' etica di S. Paolo," in *Studiorum Paulinorum congressus internationalis catholicus*, Vol. 2 (Rome: Biblical Institute, 1963), 373-382.

[566] Jewett, *Romans*, 772.

(πάντων ἀνθρώπων) in Rom 12:18 further underlines the global, externally-oriented character of the concerns expressed.

The reference to being "at peace with all" is in itself an example of positive engagement vis-à-vis the "outside," in that it is in line with widespread Jewish and Greco-Roman ideals.[567] Jewett cites in this context, for example, the advice of Epictetus to a fellow philosopher to make it publicly known "that you are at peace with all persons."[568] The fact that this "outsider-friendly" advice is directed at promoting insider mutuality and solidarity (See Section 3.4) underlines once again the community definition function of the paraenesis of Rom 12-15, and its resemblance to the comparable projects of insider community definition found in the association network letters reviewed in Chapters 1 and 2.

Following up on the discussion of Rom 12-15 as "countercultural" above, I note here that the positive engagement of the outside discernible in these lines also militates against readings of their advice as somehow contrarian in character. Jewett's claim, for example, that the command to "rejoice with those who rejoice" and "weep with those who weep" should be read as a reversal of common first-century values and "another arena in which the admonition concerning nonconformity with the world in 12:2 was to be carried through"[569] is complicated

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[567] Jewett, *Romans*, 773. Jewett cites here W. T. Wilson, *Love Without Pretense: Romans 12.9-21 and Hellenistic-Jewish Wisdom Literature* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1991), 191; E. Dinkler and E. Dinkler-von Schubert, "Friede," *Reallexicon für Antike und Christentum* 8 (1972): 434-505; and H.-W. Genischen *et al*, "Frieden," *Theologische Realenzyklopädie* 11 (1983): 599-646. See also Gignac, *L'épître aux Romains,* 475.

[568] *Dissertationes* 4.5.24.

[569] Jewett, *Romans*, 768.

by the fact that, as Jewett himself notes, this advice has clear Jewish (Section 3.3) and Greco-Roman parallels.[570] Jewett cites here, for example, Menander ("Return grief for grief, and more than love for love")[571] and Epictetus ("Where a man rejoices with good reason, there others may rejoice").[572] There is no reason to assume that such exhortation is meant to be radically, confrontationally "countercultural" in such sources, or that such exhortation becomes more countercultural when depicted as an ideal shared by the ideal sender(s) and addressees of Romans.

In the same vein, Philip Esler's idea that the warning against arrogantly claiming to be too "wise" here (Rom 12:16) is a critique of the external cultural values expressed in popular Stoicism since it uses the philosophical buzzword φρόνιμος[573] (Rom 12:16) is complicated by the fact that cognate words are used very positively in Rom 12:3 (ὃ δεῖ φρονεῖν, φρονεῖν εἰς τὸ σωφρονεῖν). If a philosophical cultural ideal of proper φρόνιμος is being critiqued, then, in 12:16, it would only be in terms of a particular subcultural ideal of proper φρόνιμος, in which case the critique would be, by definition, less countercultural than subcultural. It would therefore be another example of the kind of "social creativity" stressing values and comparisons "on which the subordinate group can be positively evaluated."[574] As such, a φρόνιμος-based critique of φρόνιμος would represent a

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[570] Jewett, *Romans*, 767; See also Gignac, *L'épître aux Romains*, 473-474.

[571] Menander, *Sententiae e codicibus Byzantinis* 448.

[572] Epictetus, *Dissertationes* 2.5.23.

[573] Esler, "Paul and Stoicism," 122.

[574] M. A. Hogg and D. Abrams, *Social Identifications: A Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations and Group Processes* (New York: Routledge, 1988), 28-29; Cf. 56-58.

sub-subcultural "Pauline Christian" analogue to the first-century Jewish claim that good Jews embodied the best "pagan" ideals better than the "pagans" themselves were able to do (See Chapter 2 above and Section 3.3 below). Whether seen as a positive comparison of insider excellence to noble "outside" values, or as a "superior" insider appropriation of those values, the ideal community characterized by φρόνιμος depicted in Rom 12 expresses "insider" worthiness in "outsider" terms according to the Law of the Membrane yet again.

Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave room for the wrath of God; for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." No, "if your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink; for by doing this you will heap burning coals on their heads." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good (Rom 12:19-21).

The ideal insider-to-insider attitudes represented here are in line with those already reviewed above. Addressees are depicted as one pre-existing unified group, loved by Paul (presumably with the "brotherly love" explicitly recommended in 12:10). The inscribed Paul of Rom 12 is thereby represented as modeling the insider-to-insider brotherly love he commands. The references to Jewish scripture (and probably Jesus traditions) as authoritative reinforce the sub-subcultural ideal identity of the addressee group already described above, and support the image of Paul as an expert in the use of such insider traditions in teaching (See Sections 3.3 and 3.4). The representation of ideal insider-to-outsider attitudes offered in Rom 12:19-21 is, on the other hand, quite complex and creative.

The social creativity discerned in the passages of Rom 12 discussed above ennobled the ideal insider culture portrayed by the letter by means of favorable

comparison with selected "outside" cultural values framed as positive, and this strategy may be reflected to some degree in Rom 12:19-21, since (as noted by Jewett) the Greco-Roman world "outside" offered at times comparable traditions of advice against retaliation (Jewett cites here for example Pseudo-Phocylides, Hesiod, Theognis, and Menander).[575] It is possible, then, that the ideal non-avenging insider community depicted here should be understood as ennobled by association with such "enlightened" perspectives on revenge. A willing decision on the part of a wronged party to forego the taking of revenge in kind assumes, however, a credible ability to take revenge, and since it is far from clear that the real and ideal addressees of Romans were in such a position, a second type of social creativity seems to be at work here.

As Abrams and Hogg point out, social creativity is not limited to a positive comparative focus on characteristics portrayed as already widely deemed positive: "Another creative strategy involves the evaluative redefinition of traditionally negative characteristics,"[576] they add. Unflattering in-group trait *A* may be re-imagined by insiders as flattering in-group trait *A2*. Relative poverty may be re-imagined and re-valued, for example, as laudable voluntary simplicity, or relative social isolation as a laudable independent streak. Henri Tajfel describes this process of redefinition with reference to the individual in-group member, pointing out that "an individual incapable of leaving a given social group, or unready to leave, may

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[575] Jewett, *Romans*, 771. See also Jewett, *Romans*, 774 and Gignac, *L'épître aux Romains,* 475.

[576] M. A. Hogg and D. Abrams, *Social Identifications: A Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations and Group Processes* (New York: Routledge, 1988), 28-29; Cf. 56-58.

reinterpret the stance of the group in a new way such that negative traits (for example inferior status) can be seen as either good or acceptable."[577]

I note that the kind of social creativity just described was seen at work in the letter of Jeremiah 29 examined above in Chapter 3, in the form of the self-ennobling, imaginative decision to interpret fact *A*) that the Jewish in-group represented in the letter depended for their return from exile upon the power and will of the foreign ruler Cyrus as meaning *A2*) that Cyrus was (however unknowingly) acting under the authority and according to the will of the special god of the insiders. From this insider point of view, in-group cooperation with the program of the superior temporal power of Cyrus was perceived as participating in a story that humbled the ruler, not the in-group, making a virtue of the necessity to act under the aegis and orders of Cyrus in order to return. A comparable creative re-interpretation of the necessity to cooperate with superior "outside" power as an expression of insider-ennobling virtue can be found in the exhortation of Rom 13 discussed below. Here in Rom 12:19-21, the picture of revenge and its abnegation painted comparably makes a virtue of necessity by offering ideal addressees a chance to re-imagine their community identity and status with reference to widespread first-century social ideas and practices of social honor and revenge.

As part of gaining and guarding their honor, men of consequence in the first-century Mediterranean world were expected to take vengeance on anyone seen as

[577] "[Un individu incapable de, ou pas prêt à, quitter un tel groupe social peut] réinterpréter différemment les attitudes du groupe de manière à ce que les traits négatifs (par exemple statut inférieur) puissent être alors soit justifiés soit acceptables." Tajfel, "La catégorisation sociale," 293.

having wronged that honor.[578] The required "payback" could take the form of legal action, social harassment and machination, or simple physical violence,[579] and as David E. Epstein observed, the widespread principle of the need to defend one's honor in such ways was certainly perceived as important for elite men in Rome: "A Roman risked losing a great deal of prestige if he gained a reputation for reconciling hostilities too easily."[580] It is far from clear, though, that the real and ideal addressees of Romans had the option of gaining and guarding honor in this way.

The community addressed by Romans has, as noted by Gignac, the look of a "marginal minority community, almost outside the purview of the law."[581] As mentioned above, many people in Rome (or elsewhere) likely to see themselves as addressed by Romans came from relatively low strata of society. The exhortation of Rom 12 has already assumed that its ideal addressees might need to endure a meaningful share of suffering (12:11) and persecution (12:14) in life. Genuinely attractive opportunities for taking revenge in kind for wrongs against personal and/or corporate honor would have been relatively rare for people really subjected to such social situations. As Philip Esler noted in his study of Romans, non-elite people and groups were not able to pursue honor-based self-defense with the

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[578] Malina, *The New Testament World*, 34, 39. See also B. Winter, "Roman Law and Society in Romans 12-15," in *Rome in the Bible and the Early Church* (P. Oakes, ed.; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2002), 79-80; J. E. Lendon, *Empire of Honour: The Art of Government in the Roman World* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1997), 50-55.

[579] Esler, Conflict and Identity in Romans, 80.

[580] D. F. Epstein, *Personal Enmity in Roman Politics 218-43 BC* (London: Crook Helm, 1987), 7.

[581] In the French original, "une communauté marginale, minoritaire et quasi hors la loi" (Gignac, *L'épître aux Romains*, 469).

relative freedom and confidence of elite people and groups.[582] By portraying non-retaliation as a laudable choice freely made by ideal insiders, Rom 12:19-21 offers an opportunity to redefine living with a relative inability to gain and guard honor through the taking of revenge in kind as a special insider virtue.

I note that the perceived nobility of this inscribed free decision to forego revenge makes it easy for readers to take the insider ideal thus expressed at face value, even today. Esler never stops to consider in his lengthy discussion of this passage, for example, that relatively safe and successful self-assertion by means of revenge might simply be impossible for the addressees of Romans,[583] despite his awareness of the fact that this relative inability would have been the situation of most non-elite people and groups[584] and his awareness that most people in the early "Jesus movement" (in Rome as elsewhere) were found at least at first in non-elite social strata.[585] For Esler, the command to conquer evil through non-retaliation represents "moving to a higher moral position by saying repay evil with good,"[586] not making a virtue of necessity, and he is not alone in seeing Rom 12:19-21 in terms of soaring moral/spiritual excellence. Bruce Winter perceived in the passage "a stark contrast" to the Roman value of revenge, and "a counter-cultural response to the lack of harmony and the undercurrent of strife and jealousy that pervaded

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[582] Esler, *Conflict and Identity in Romans*, 81-82.

[583] See Esler, *Conflict and Identity in Romans*, 36-330.

[584] See Esler, *Conflict and Identity in Romans*, 81-82.

[585] See Esler, *Conflict and Identity in Romans*, 84-100.

[586] Esler, *Conflict and Identity in Romans*, 327.

relationships in Roman society."[587] H. Weinel called the concluding exhortation of the passage to conquer evil with good through non-retaliation "the bravest statement in the world."[588] As noted above, though, the idea of non-retaliation as admirably "counter-cultural" is complicated by the presence of similar ideals found in first-century Greco-Roman traditions "outside," and the specific non-retaliation recommended in Rom 12 can only be interpreted as a "brave" freely-chosen stance if it is assumed that the letter's addressees were readily able to assert themselves as a relatively powerful group might do by exacting revenge – an assumption contradicted by both the most common apparent social status of early Christian groups and the language of the letter itself. As an example of social creativity offered to addressees presented with few real opportunities for taking safe and successful revenge, conquering through non-retaliation looks less like bravely renouncing revenge and more like putting a brave face on the probable relative inability of most in-group members to assert themselves in a way widely seen as deserving of respect in the world "outside."

The relevance of the redefinition of non-retaliation in Rom 12 to community definition vis-à-vis the "outside" is clear: "Transcending the psychological law of retaliation against outsiders requires the kind of psychological sense of superiority that comes from having an in-group set of relationships that is permeated by love."[589] From the point of view articulated in Rom 12, the ideal in-group is

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[587] Winter, "Roman Law and Society in Romans 12-15," 80, 98.

[588] H. Weinel, *Paulus. Der Mensch und Sein Werk: Die Anfänge des Christentums, der Kirche und des Dogmas* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1915), 253, cited in Jewett, *Romans*, 779.

[589] Engberg-Pedersen, "Paul's Stoicizing Politics," 166.

represented not as simply and meaninglessly powerless to take revenge, but rather as loving enough to one other and trusting enough of their god to freely choose foregoing revenge, a pious and group-supported choice thus presented as another important part of their ideal insider group identity definition vis-à-vis the outside.

The meaning and expression of the principle of non-retaliation vis-à-vis outsiders portrayed here is further complicated by the promise that ideal insiders can, by observing this generous form of non-retaliation, heap burning coals upon the heads of their enemies (Rom 12:20). The precise significance of the image is hotly debated, with opinions divided as to whether the kindness showed outsider enemies sets them up for harsher divine judgment, or whether it paves the way for their potential repentance (with reference to an obscure ancient Egyptian ritual in which penitents carried coals on their heads).[590] The idea of a reference here to helpfully encouraging the repentance of these enemies, as opposed to participating somehow in their humiliation and/or punishment, seems shaky. For this reading to be convincing, evidence would need to be presented that such a ritual was practiced (or at least known) widely enough in Rome and/or the Roman empire to be recognized and understood, and that the metaphor could stand up under the resulting image of such penitents having coals "heaped" on their heads by people perceived as their enemies. It seems safer to assume, then, that the heaping of hot coals by substituting kindness for retaliation in kind is offered here as a superior insider way to satisfy a desire for revenge, depicted as "better than" the "outside"

[590] See Jewett, *Romans*, 777; Gignac, *L'épître aux Romains,* 468, 475-476 (citing Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 657-658).

way of retaliating in kind. However it is read, though, it is clear that the relatively humbling ideal relationship with outsiders portrayed here is imagined once again (as in the letter of Jeremiah 29 discussed in Chapter 3) by means of in-group social creativity as being humbling for the outsider in the final analysis, not the insider.

Let every person be subject to the governing authorities; for there is no authority except from God, and those authorities that exist have been instituted by God. 2 Therefore whoever resists authority resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment (Rom 13:1-2).

Romans 13:1-7 is one of the oldest and hottest hot potatoes of biblical criticism. Over the centuries, this passage has caused a lot of ink to flow[591] – along with not a little blood in the world outside the ivory tower[592] – as readers have struggled with this text (and with each other) in trying to determine who needs to "be subject" to whom according to Paul. Interpreters tempted to "relativize"[593] the absolute and (pro-)authoritarian look of this sudden and somewhat surprising

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[591] See Gignac, *L'épître aux Romains,* 478; Cf. idem, "Romains 13, 1-7 et la politique," *Theoforum* 42 (2011): 409; Vilho Riekinnen, *Römer 13: Aufzeichnung und Weiterführung der exegetischen Diskussion* (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 1980), 118-202; Lutz Pohle, *Die Christen und der Staat nach Röm 13, 1-7 in der neueren deutschprachigen Schriftauslegung* (Mainz: Grünewald, 1984), 159-176; Mark Reasoner, *Romans in Full Circle. A History of Interpretation* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2005), 129-142; Jewett, *Romans*, 785; See Fritzhermann Keienberg, *Die Geschichte der Auslegung von Römer 13, 1-7* (Gelsenkirchen: Kommissionsverlag W. Hertel, 1956) 140-145; Ernst Käsemann, "Römer 13, 1-7 in unserer Generation," *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* (1959): 316-376; Wedderburn, *The Reasons for Romans*, 3, etc.

[592] See Gignac, *L'épître aux Romains*, 478-479; idem, "Romains 13, 1-7 et la politique," 409-410; Jan Botha, "Creation of New Meaning: Rhetorical Situations and the Reception of Romans 13:1-7," *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 79 (June 1992): 24-25; J. A. Draper, "Humble Submission to Almighty God' and its Biblical Foundation," *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 63 (1988): 30-38; J. C. O'Neill, *Paul's Letter to the Romans* (Baltimore: Penguin, 1975), 209.

[593] Gignac, *L'épître aux Romains*, 483-485; idem, "Romains 13, 1-7 et la politique," 415-419. See also the roughly equivalent methods of "relativisation" reviewed by Bernard Lategan in "Romans 13:1-7: A Review of Post-1989 Readings," *Scriptura* 110 (2012): 264-265; Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 806; Reasoner, *Romans in Full Circle*, 129-142.

lapidary "meteorite"[594] of a command have argued that Paul had in mind here only legitimate, well-behaved government authorities as worthy of obedience,[595] or that the "real Paul" had nothing to do with writing this part of Romans at all,[596] or that Paul's enthusiastic recommendation of obedience was a dark, bitter joke actually intended to encourage resistance.[597] This last "anti-imperial" type of reading

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[594] Gignac, *L'épître aux Romains*, 485; idem, "Romains 13, 1-7 et la politique," 420.

[595] Rebecca I. DeNova seems to be right in saying that "most scholars agree" that Rom 13:1-7 is not simply Paul's "theology of political power" for all times and places, as she puts it in "Paul's Letter to the Romans, 13:1-7: The Gentile-Christian Response to Civil Authority," *Encounter* 53.3 (1992): 223. Cf. Gordon Zerbe, "The Politics of Paul. His Supposed Social Conservatism and the Impact of Postcolonial Readings," in *The Colonized Apostle. Paul Through Postcolonial Eyes* (C. D. Stanley, ed.; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2011), 71. Although a scarce few simply choose to take the passage at face value (See for example Robert H. Stein, "The Argument of Romans 13:1-7, *Novum Testamentum* 31.4 [1989]: 325-343), usually even scholars who express few qualms about the ethics of the passage usually specify, like James D. G. Dunn, that Rom 13:1-7 expresses in their eyes "a theology of the orderly state, of good government" (*Romans 9-16*, 771).

[596] See James Kallas, "Romans 13:1-7: An Interpolation," *New Testament Studies* 11 (1965): 365-374; Walther Schmihtals, *Der Römerbrief. Ein Kommentar* (Gütersloh: Mohn, 1988), 191-197; Ernst Barnikol, "Römer 13: Der nichtpaulinische Ursprung der absoluten Obrigkeitsbejahung von Römer 13.1-7," in *Studien zum Neuen Testament und zur Patristik: Erich Klostermann zum 90. Gerburstag dargebracht, Texte und Untersuchungen*, *Vol. 77* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1961), 65-133; Alexander Pallis, *To the Romans: A Commentary* (Liverpool: Liverpool Booksellers, 1920), 141; Christian Eggenberger, "Der Sinn der Argumentation in Röm 13:2-5," *KRS 100* (1944): 54-7070; Christian Eggenberger, "Neue Gesichtspunkte zur neutestamentlichen Einstelung gegenüber die Staate," *Neue Wege* 44 (1950): 245-254; Winsome Munro, *Authority in Paul and Peter: The Identification of a Pastoral Stratum in the Pauline Corpus and 1 Peter* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 56-57; Winsome Munro, "Romans 13:1-7: Apartheid's Last Refuge," *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 20 (1990): 161-168; John Cochrane O'Neil, *Paul's Letter to the Romans*, 207-214; Keck, "What Makes Romans Tick?," 3-29.

[597] See Gignac, *L'épître aux Romains*, 483, 484; Gignac, "Romains 13, 1-7 et la politique," 417; T.L. Carter, "The Irony of Romans 13," *Novum Testamentum* 46.3 (2004): 209-228; William R. Herzog, "Dissembling, a Weapon of the Weak: The Case of Christ and Caesar in Mark 12:13-17 and Romans 13:1-7," *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 21 (1994): 339-360; Robert Hurley, "Ironie dramatique dans la mise en intrigue de l'empire en Romains 13, 1-7," *SR* 35 (2006): 39-63. Neil Elliott, "Disciplining the Hope of the Poor in Ancient Rome," in *Christian Origins: A People's History of Christianity* (R. A. Horsley, ed.; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005), 188-190; Neil Elliott, "Romans 13:1-7 in the Context of Imperial Propaganda," in *Paul and Empire* (R. Horsley, ed.; Harrisburg: Trinity Press, 1997), 203-204; Neil Elliott, "The Letter to the Romans," in *A Postcolonial Commentary on the New Testament Writings* (F. F. Segovia and R. S. Sugirtharajah, eds.; New York: T&T Clark, 2007), 194-219; Bruno Blumenfeld, *The Political Paul: Justice, Democracy and Kingship in a Hellenistic Framework* (London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 273; S. Wan, "Coded Resistance: A Proposed Rereading of Romans 13:1-7," in *The Bible in the Public Square. Reading the Signs of the Times* (C. B. Kittredge et al., eds.; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2008), 173-184; Roland Boer, "Resistance versus Accomodation: What to Do with Romans

participates in a well-established politically "engaged" trend[598] of "reading Paul against empire,"[599] expressions of which can be found promoted by sympathetic

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13?," in *Postcolonial Interventions: Essays in Honor of R. S. Sugirtharajah* (T.-S. Benny Liew, ed.; Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2009), 109-122.

[598] See for example the mention of a "polemical parallelism" between Pauline Christian and Roman imperial vocabularies in G. A. Deissmann, *Light from the Ancient East,* 346.

[599] See, for example, Horsley, *Paul and Empire: Religion and Power in Roman Imperial Society*, 1-24; Richard A. Horsley, ed., *Hidden Transcripts and the Arts of Resistance: Applying the Work of James C. Scott to Jesus and Paul* (Atlanta: SBL, 2005); N. T. Wright, "Paul's Gospel and Caesar's Empire," in *Paul and Politics: Ekklesia, Israel, Imperium, Interpretation. Essays in Honour of Krister Stendhahl* (R. A. Horsley, ed.; Harrisburg: Trinity Press, 2000), 160-183; Richard J. Cassidy, *Paul in Chains: Roman Imprisonment and the Letters of St. Paul* (New York: Crossroad, 2001); Efraín Agosto, "Paul vs. Empire: A Postcolonial and Latino Reading of Philippians," *Perspectivas: Occasional Papers* 6 (Fall 2002): 37-56; Jeremy Punt, "Towards a Postcolonial Reading of of Freedom in Paul," in *Reading the Bible in the Global Village: Cape Town* (J. S. Upkong et al., eds.; Atlanta: SBL, 2002), 125-149; Jeremy Punt, "Paul and Postcolonial Hermeneutics: Marginality and/in Early Biblical Interpretation," in *As It Is Written: Studying Paul's Use of Scripture* (S. S. Porter and C. D. Stanley, eds.; Atlanta: SBL, 2008), 261-290; Kwok Pui-lan, *Postcolonial Imagination and Feminist Theology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2005), 86; John Dominic Crossan and Jonathan L. Reed, *In Search of Paul: How Jesus' Apostle Opposed Rome's Empire with God's Kingdom* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 2004), x; Peter Oakes, "Re-mapping the Universe: Paul and the Emperor in 1 Thessalonians and Philippians," *JSNT* 27 (2005): 301-322; Peter Oakes, *Reading Romans in Pompeii;* Joerg Rieger, *Christ and Empire: From Paul to Postcolonial Times* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007); Tatha Wiley, "Paul and Early Christianity," in *Empire and the Christian Tradition: New Readings of Classical Theologians* (K. Pui-lan et al., eds.; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 47-62; Gosnell L. Yorke, "Hearing the Politics of Peace in Ephesus: A Proposal from an African Postcolonial Perspective," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 30 (2007): 113-127; Mark G. Brett, *Decolonizing God: The Bible in the Tides of Empire* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2008); Seyoon Kim, *Christ and Caesar: The Gospel and the Roman Empire in the Writings of Paul and Luke* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008); Tat-siong Benny Liew, *What is Asian American Biblical Hermeneutics? Reading the New Testament* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2008), 75-114; Theodore W. Jennings, Jr., "Paul Against Empire: Then and Now," in *The Bible and the Hermeneutics of Liberation* (A. F. Botta and P. R. Andiñach, eds.; Atlanta: SBL, 2009), 147-168; Klaus Wengst, *Pax Romana and the Peace of Jesus Christ* (J. Bowden, trans.; London: SCM Press, 1987); Dieter Georgi, *Theocracy in Paul's Praxis and Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), Helmut Koester, "Imperial Ideology and Paul's Eschatology in 1 Thessalonians," in Horsley, *Paul and* Empire, 158-166; Fernando F. Segovia and R. S. Sugirtharjah, eds., *A Postcolonial Commentary on the New Testament Writings* (New York: T & T Clark, 2007), 194-337; Neil Elliott, *Liberating Paul. The Justice of God and the Politics of the Apostle* (New York: Orbis, 1994); Neil Elliott, *The Arrogance of Nations: Reading Romans in the Shadow of the Roman Empire* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2008); Brigitte Kahl, *Galatians Re-Imagined: Reading with the Eyes of the Vanquished* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2009); Duk Ki Kim, "Cultural-Political Theology and East Asian Biblical Hermeneutics: Postcolonial Identity and Solidarity in Galatians 3:28," in *Mapping and Engaging the Bible in Asian Cultures: Congress of the Society of Asian Biblical Studies 2008 Seoul Conference* (Yeong Mee Lee and Yoon Jong Yoo, eds.; Seoul: Christian Literature Society of Korea, 2009), 141-173. For historical review of the growth the trend, see J. R. Harrison, *Paul and the Imperial Authorities at Thessalonica and Rome: A Study in the Conflict of Ideology* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 3-14.

scholars[600] and criticized as a misleading fad by scholars like less enthusiastic about supporting "anti-imperial" NT criticism.[601] One can also find more subtle "postcolonial" treatments of Rom 13, explaining the apparent "problems" and "dissonances" of the passage not simply as Paul's personal expression of coded underground resistance, but as an expression of his cultural conflicted-ness and "hybridity" as a leader within a colonized minority culture.[602]

The approach defined by this study has the potential to address these traditional questions about Rom 13:1-7 and in some cases to correct their controlling assumptions and emphases. It is clear, to begin with, that the function of community definition identified above in Rom 12 continues to control the letter's direction in Rom 13. It has been noted, for example, that the shift of attention to governing authorities in 13:1 marks a rhetorical change from an *ad intra* focus to an *ad extra* focus in discussing the "good life" insiders are called to lead.[603] As the

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[600] Robert M. Fowler, "Wriggling off the Hook: Strategies of Resisting Authoritarian Readings of Romans 13:1-7" (Conference paper for the SNTS Seminar on "The Role of the Reader" in Cambridge, England, 1988).

[601] See, for example, Ron Cassidy, "The Politicization of Paul: Romans 13:1-7 in Recent Discussion," *Expository Times* 121 (2010): 383-389.

[602] John W. Marshall, "Hybridity and Reading Romans 13," *JSNT* 31.2 (December 2008): 157-178; See also Harry O. Maier's discussion of how Paul "was as much a part of the Roman Empire as he could have been opposed to it," in *Picturing Paul in Empire: Imperial Image, Text and Persuasion in Colossians, Ephesians and the Pastoral Epistles* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2013), 35-61. On colonial "hybridity" in Paul, see Gordon Zerbe, "The Politics of Paul," 72-73; Jeremy Punt, "Pauline Agency in Postcolonial Perspective. Subverter or Agent for Empire?," in Stanley, *The Colonized Apostle*), 53-61; Moore, "Paul after Empire," Paul After Empire," in Stanley, *The Colonized Apostle*, 18-21; Christopher D. Stanley, "Paul the Ethnic Hybrid?," in Stanley, *The Colonized* Apostle, 110-126; Davina C. Lopez, "Visualizing Significant Otherness. Reimagining Paul(ine Studies) through Hybrid Lenses," in Stanley, *The Colonized Apostle*, 74-94; L. Ann Jervis, "Reading Romans 7 in Conversation with Postcolonial Theory. Paul's Struggle toward a Christian Identity of Hybridity," in Stanley, *The Colonized Apostle*, 95-109; Robert Seesengood, *Competing Identities: The Athlete and the Gladiator in Early Christianity* (New York: T & T Clark, 2006), 20-34.

[603] Gignac, *L'épître aux Romains,* 479.

discussion of Rom 12 above showed, though, the understood "outside" contexts of the insider advice given in Rom 12-15 have been present and important from the beginning. Anders Klostergaard Petersen reads, for example, the ideal insider community attitude described in Rom 13 as congruent with the ideals found in Rom 12: "Paul's exhortation to Christ-adherents to be subject to the governing authorities by rendering taxes is indicative of his encouragement in the previous verses to have regard of good things before all men, and to live peacefully with all men."[604] As the discussion below makes clear, moreover, the "outside world" projected in Rom 13 is just as clearly defined in ideal insider terms and in the service of ideal insider needs as it was in Rom 12, and such insider-oriented conceptions of "inside" and "outside" remain just as interdependent in Rom 13 as they were in Rom 12, and just as oriented toward a negotiated ideal insider stance of positive qualified engagement vis-à-vis the world(s) "outside."

As Alain Gignac notes, the cultural ideals grounding the exhortation found here in Rom 13:1-3 are majoritarian and traditional ideals in Greco-Roman (and) Jewish terms,[605] including the idea that the positions and functions of earthly rulers are divinely ordained.[606] The analysis of Philip Harland similarly depicts the advice of Romans 13 as conventional and conservative in character: "The moderate perspective on the Roman Empire advocated by Paul in his letter to the assemblies

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[604] Anders Klostergaard Petersen, "Imperial Politics in Paul. Scholarly Phantom or Actual Textual Phenomenon?," in *People under Power. Early Jewish and Christian Responses to the Roman Empire* (M. Labahn and O. Lehtipuu, eds.; Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2015), 123.

[605] Gignac, *L'épître aux Romains,* 482; Engberg-Pedersen, 168.

[606] Gignac, *L'épître aux Romains,* 482, citing Seneca *De clementia* 1.1.2-4.

at Rome was paralleled in Christian literature from Asia; both found concrete analogies in the stances and practices of many other associations in the cities of the Greco-Roman world."[607]

For Gignac, the perceived conservative turn introduced in Rom 13 suggests a contradiction recalling the "paradox" perceived by Meeks, as the insider ethic of Rom 12, which Gignac perceives as "radical" and "countercultural" in character, takes on here a "conventional and conformist" attitude toward the outside.[608] There is an apparent "contradiction" between Rom 12:19 and 13:4,[609] creating the sense that Rom 12 militates against a stereotypical first-century Greco-Roman system of honor and order while Rom 13 depends upon it.[610] From the point of view outlined above according to the Law of the Membrane, however, there is of course no contradiction involved in a case of subcultural minoritarian insider ideals finding ideal outward expression in majoritarian conventional forms. This point can be usefully further clarified with reference to Daniel Ulluci's critique of "the critique model" that sees every example of ancient philosophical argument and dissent concerning the nature and function of animal sacrifice as evidence for thoroughgoing principled opposition to animal sacrifice. As Ulluci points out,

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[607] Harland, *Associations, Synagogues, and Congregations*, 268.

[608] Gignac, *L'épître aux Romains,* 483.

[609] Gignac, *L'épître aux Romains,* 484.

[610] Gignac, *L'épître aux Romains,* 484.

Epicureans apparently talked quite openly about public sacrifice as both theologically absurd and useless, and also morally and socially essential.[611]

> In short, Epicurus argued, the gods do not want sacrifice, the gods cannot receive sacrifice, and the gods do not respond to sacrifice. One might conclude from this that Epicurus would reject the practice of sacrifice, but, in fact, our sources suggest the opposite: Epicurus and his school taught that sacrifice was a good and proper religious act. He practiced sacrifice himself and instructed his followers to do the same. Under the critique model, Epicurus' position is completely incoherent.[612]

Ulluci suggests that the perceived incoherence of the teaching of Epicurus on animal sacrifice points to the misleading assumptions of modern interpreters: "His comments can only be construed as a critique of sacrifice if one brings to them a priori assumptions about what sacrifice means and what it does, assumptions that Epicurus did not hold."[613]

Ulluci's investigative principle of not mistaking in-group markers of difference for thoroughgoing critique of "the outside" applies here in understanding the "paradox" or "contradiction" or "incoherence" perceived by NT critics in the relationship of the "radical"-looking ethical character of the inscribed insider community of Rom 12-15 to its "conformist"-looking external cultural expression. Special insider-oriented rationalizations and motivations can support here in Rom 13 (as in Rom 12) the expression of values and behaviors eminently understandable and acceptable to wider cultural circles outside. The articulation of a subcultural insider identity simultaneously special enough and normal enough to deserve the

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[611] Ullucci, "Contesting the Meaning of Animal Sacrifice," 57-74.

[612] Ulluci, "Contesting the Meaning of Animal Sacrifice," 58-59.

[613] Ulluci, "Contesting the Meaning of Animal Sacrifice," 59.

honor of "all" is in fact an entirely normal and predictable function of community identity definition pursued according to the Law of the Membrane.

The qualified positive engagement and accordingly compatible expressions of cultural assertion and accommodation I am positing here can be seen in Rom 13:1-2 in the representation of external authority as being good and worthy of obedience due to being grounded in, and ultimately serving, the authority of the special god of the insiders. The Jewish subcultural habit seen in Chapter 3 of attributing the authority of all rulers (including hostile foreign rulers) to the authority and will of the special god of the in-group is adapted here to dignify the particular sub-subcultural interpretation of that god special to the inscribed ideal insider addressees of the letter (See Sections 3.3 and 3.4). This characterization of all "outside" rulers as unwitting and ultimately disposable servants of the god of the ideal insiders addressed in Rom 13:1-7 has been identified as a bold arrogating move[614] and a "massive act of political co-optation."[615] The characterization is hammered home in the passage by sheer repetition: "There is no authority except from God" (13:1). All such authority is "instituted by God" (13:1). It is "what God has appointed" (13:2). It "is God's servant for your good" 13:4). It is "the servant of God" (13:4). The authorities "are God's ministers" (13:6). The picture of the situation

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[614] See Jacques Ellul, "Petite note complémentaire sur Romains 13,1," *Foi et Vie* 89 (1990): 81-82; John H. Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972), 143-144; Taubes, *The Political Theology of Paul* (D. Hollander, trans.; Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), 24-27, 73-75; S. Schreiber, "Imperium" Imperium Romanum und römische Gemeinden. Dimensionen politischer Sprechweise in Röm 13," in *Die Bedeutung der Exegese für Theologie und Kirche* (U. Busse, ed.; Freiburg: Herder, 2005), 160-164; Gignac, *L'épître aux Romains*, 484; R. Walker, *Studie zu Römer 13, 1-7* (Munich: Kaiser, 1966), 16-17.

[615] Jewett, *Romans*, 790 (See also 789-791, 800).

painted in Rom 13 thus offers ideal insider audiences a way to make peace, so to speak, with the reality of outsider authority in emphatically insider terms. Just as first-century Isis worshipers reciting her "Kyme Aretalogy" could be invited to identify her as the secret "ruler of all lands" (3a), who is the ultimate source of law and order (4, 37, 52), who brings down tyrants and frees the oppressed (25, 48), and apart from whose consent "no one is held in honor (40),"[616] so too the inscribed ideal insiders of Romans 13 can be invited here to identify the ultimate ground of proper authority, honor, and freedom as *their* own special god. In this qualified positive insider appraisal of outsider authority, insider self-assertion and a necessary accommodation to the realities of outsider authority work together.

From the point of view defined here, this grounding of obedience to outsiders in loyalty to the god of ideal association insiders provides another example of reinterpreting necessity as a virtue. Biblical critics keen to praise the advice of Rom 13:1-7 point to the "willing subordination"[617] on the part of Paul's audiences implied by command, but in fact no indication is given in the passage that the inscribed addressees of Romans are rebel outlaws heroically defying all outsider powers including the Roman imperial authorities, and therefore capable of being invited here in Rom 13 to come in from the cold and begin to try submitting heroically instead. The inscribed addressees are apparently assumed, for example (see Rom

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[616] See the text supplied in Yves Grandjean, *Une nouvelle arétalogie d'Isis à Maronée* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1975), 122-124; See also on the title of universal "ruler" or "tyrant" of all lands (ΤΥΡΑΝΝΟΣ) here André-Jean Festugière, "À propos des arétalogies d'Isis," *Harvard Theological Review* 42 (October, 1949): 215.

[617] See for example Jewett, *Romans*, 789; S. Porter, "Romans 13:1-7 as Pauline Political Rhetoric," *Filologia Neotestamentaria* 3 (1990): 122.

13:6 below), to be dutifully paying their taxes already – a practice seen as a quintessential expression of orderly, obedient submission in the cultural context of the Roman empire.[618] The command to submit in Rom 13 seems to assume, then, a pre-existing situation of submission, which makes very good sense given the likely social status of the letter's average real and ideal addressees as described above, and as such offers another example of social creativity at work in Romans: in the call to obey their own special insider god by obeying outside authorities, the addressees of the letter are offered an opportunity to redefine the necessity of obediently accommodating the power structures of the outside world as a call to a special insider expression of virtue. From this point of view, the command to obey looks less self-contradictory coming from the Paul inscribed in Romans, and more clear and clearly related to the rest of Rom 12-15. The precise meaning of the reference here to a need to obey "because of conscience" (διὰ τὴν συνείδησιν) is, for example, debated,[619] but in the context just described it is clear that it helps rewrite of the necessity of obedience as a virtuous decision worthy of ideal insiders (as opposed to a potentially humiliating obligation imposed by the threat of "wrath").

For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Do you wish to have no fear of the authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive its approval; for it is God's servant for your good. But if you do what is wrong, you should be afraid, for the authority does not bear the sword in vain! It is the servant of God to execute wrath on the wrongdoer. Therefore one must be subject, not only because of wrath but also because of conscience. For the same reason you also pay taxes, for the authorities are

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[618] See B. Shaw, "Roman Taxation," in *Civilization of the Ancient Mediterranean,* Vol. 2 (M. Grant and R. Kitzinger, eds.; New York: Scribner's, 1988), 809-827.

[619] See Jewett, *Romans*, 797-798.

God's servants, busy with this very thing. Pay to all what is due them—taxes to whom taxes are due, revenue to whom revenue is due, respect to whom respect is due, honor to whom honor is due (Rom 13:3-7).

The promise here that insiders behaving well need not fear outside authorities (Rom 13:3-4) recalls the promise of the letter of Jeremiah 29 seen in Chapter 2 above that cooperation and cohabitation will mean success and safety for the ideal inscribed in-group as they await freedom from exile (Jeremiah 29:5-7). It also recalls the promise of Aristippus in his letter to Arete that although an ideal insider's relationship with powerful people outside will often involve tension and even "persecution" (*Aristippus to Arete* 49-50; Cf. Rom 12:12, 14), outsiders do not likely pose a credible fatal threat to ideal insiders who are behaving well (*Aristippus to Arete* 20-21) and who have done all they can to be on good terms with those outside authorities (*Aristippus to Arete* 16-18).

As numerous commentators have noticed, though, the blanket claim of Rom 13:3-4 that only "wrongdoers" need fear trouble from the authorities as they exercise their divine mission of keeping good order flies in the face of the most probable experience of Paul's potential audiences in Rome, and is also extremely hard to reconcile with the experiences and attitudes of Paul himself represented in his other genuine letters.[620] In the words of T. L. Carter, "a modern reader acquainted with Paul's other letters may be excused for wondering whether the apostle himself had not suffered from a severe case of amnesia when he wrote that rulers are not a terror to good conduct. What of the rulers of this age who crucified

[620] See Gignac, *L'épître aux Romains*, 479; idem, "Romains 13, 1-7 et la politique," 412; R. Horsley, "General Introduction," in Horsley, *Paul and Empire*, 1, 5.

the Lord of glory (1 Cor. 2:8)? [And then there was] Paul's own experience of the authorities."[621] The gap rightly perceived here between the probable life experience of both the sender(s) and addressees of Romans and this extremely positive claim made about external authorities in Rom 13:3-4 points to the fact that it is not offered here as a comprehensive, descriptive account of the behavior of powerful outsiders. It is offered instead as a representation of ideal outside power suitable to ideal insider community definition. The repeated reference, for example (Rom 13:4, 6), to external authority as being the servant(s) of the special god of the insiders (Θεοῦ γὰρ διάκονός ἐστιν … Θεοῦ γὰρ διάκονός ἐστιν … λειτουργοὶ γὰρ Θεοῦ εἰσιν) underlines the community-defining, community-ennobling rhetorical stance of "cooptation" just discussed above. The positive construal of outside powers in Rom 13 therefore ennobles the god (and his devotees) of the inside community in the final analysis.

The reference in 13:4 to external authorities rightly acting in the service of "wrath" (εἰς ὀργὴν) and rightly bearing "the sword" (τὴν μάχαιραν) as properly associated with external authorities also serves the project of insider community definition by drawing a hard implicit line between powerful people outside and ideal community insiders, for whom "wrath" (ὀργή) and retribution were explicitly defined as forbidden earlier on (See Rom 12:19-21). "It is inconceivable that these two verses [12:19 and 13:4], using such similar language, should be meant to be read independently of one another," writes John H. Yoder, concluding that insiders

[621] Carter, "The Irony of Romans 13," 211-212.

are thereby defined by Rom 13 as a special, separate group.[622] There is, indeed, never a thought reflected in Rom 13 that the "you" of the passage might take part in the exercise of authority thus described. Outsiders may serve the god of the insiders through the exercise of such authority, but ideal insiders will not. The character of the ideal inside community of Rom 12-15 is thereby further defined here, once again in terms of contradistinction to an "outside" imagined in qualified positive terms. The definition of the exercise of coercive authority as both divinely ordained and forbidden to insiders in Rom 13 introduces another example of social creativity in Rom 12-15. The suggestion of Troels Engberg-Pedersen that Rom 13:1-7 displays a very "Stoic" attitude toward imperial power, imagined in this case "from below,"[623] brings attention back to the fact that the real and ideal addressees of Romans are, as noted above, most likely relatively powerless people. By further defining non-participation in retaliation and coercive exercise of power (activities represented as more proper to "outside" authorities) as an expression of ideal insider status, Rom 13 furthers Rom 12's project of re-imagining of the relatively powerless status of its real and ideal addressees as an expression of insider virtue. In this way, inscribed addressees assumed to have few opportunities to exert coercive and/or retributive power are invited to re-imagine their social distance from the exercise of such power as yet another ennobling dimension of their insider status.

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[622] Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus*, 199, 205; See also on this distinction between "you" and those tasked with executing "wrath" F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans* (London: Tyndale, 1963), 238; Horrell, "The Peaceful, Tolerant Community," 88; Jewett, *Romans*, 796; Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, 765; D. J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 464.

[623] Engberg-Pedersen, "Paul's Stoicizing Politics," 167.

In attending here to the theoretically ennobling potential of the exhortation of Rom 13 for members of its ideal inscribed association network, I note that the promise of relative safety through a properly defined and pursued relationship with external authorities is significantly folded in 13:3 into a promise of honor (ἔπαινος). Any insider who does what is good in the eyes of "the authority" will thereby not only escape its potential wrath but also earn its ennobling approval: (θέλεις δὲ μὴ φοβεῖσθαι τὴν ἐξουσίαν; τὸ ἀγαθὸν ποίει, καὶ ἕξεις ἔπαινον ἐξ αὐτῆς).

As mentioned already, the approving dependence of the exhortation of Rom 13 upon common first-century Greco-Roman values of honor is puzzling to some commentators in light of the countercultural values they see as controlling the community definition of Rom 12, and this puzzlement extends here to the introduction of the ideal of the pursuit of human praise in 13:3.[624] As shown above, though, the insider values depicted in Rom 12 are consistent with the pursuit of reputation and honor (as framed and deemed proper in insider terms), and the exhortation of Rom 12 accordingly reflects a concern for external reputation throughout. Rom 13:3 therefore merely unfolds the implicit suggestion of external honor in lines like 12:17 into an explicit promise. As stressed in Chapter 1, public reputation (including the public "praise" or "commendation" connoted by ἔπαινος in particular) was a crucial association network concern. The promise in Rom 13 of external ἔπαινος for good insider behavior thus brings the exhortation of Rom 12-15 ever more in line with the Greco-Roman ideals concerning honorable virtue and

[624] See Jewett, *Romans*, 793.

public reputation reviewed in Chapter 1, as can be illustrated by returning here to the epistolary advice of Isocrates to Demonicus.

Isocrates introduces his advice on moral excellence with explicit reference to the pursuit of public honor: "I shall endeavor to set before you concisely by what practices I think you can make the most progress toward virtue and win the highest repute in the eyes of all other men."[625] Here, as in Rom 13:3, doing what is good is represented as contributing to the earning a good reputation. It is significant then, that Isocrates also stresses that showing obedience toward proper authority is part of this process of earning the honor of all, along with the pursuit of the perception of piety: "First of all, then, show devotion to the gods, not merely by doing sacrifice, but also by keeping your vows; for the former is but evidence of material prosperity, whereas the latter is proof of a noble character. Do honour to the divine power at all times, but especially on occasions of public worship; for thus you will have the reputation both of sacrificing and of abiding by the laws," Isocates writes.[626] Proper piety joins proper respectfulness, lawfulness, and regard for public opinion here in offering a high road to reputation and honor: "Fear the gods, honor your parents, respect your friends, obey the laws. Pursue the enjoyments which are of good repute; for pleasure attended by honor is the best thing in the world."[627]

As Alicia Batten has shown (in the study mentioned above in Chapter 1), the ideal expressed in the personal paraenesis of Isocrates of proper piety, proper

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[625] Isocrates, *To Demonicus* 12.

[626] *To Demonicus* 13.

[627] *To Demonicus* 16.

regard for things seen as excellent by all, and proper lawfulness operating together to earn public honor appears in the community-defining ideals of ancient associations as well: the "internal" ideals of "morality" and "piety" found in the self-representations of first-century associations were well-suited to the pursuit of "external" public respectability.[628] By describing the appropriate behavior and deserved honor of its own ideal insider community along these lines, Rom 13 distinguishes itself as Greco-Roman insider network paraenesis. Since the quality of being admirably "Greek" in the sense of being cultured and enlightened had in the first century a very fluid and (in modern terms) very "cultural" character, often understood in contradistinction to the dishonorable quality of being "barbaric" (regardless of ethnicity *per se*),[629] one might say that the attitudes toward authority and honor attributed to the ideal sender(s) and addressees of Rom 13 are portrayed as "honorably Greek." The Paul of Rom 13 is thereby represented as a cultured, enlightened community definer and leader honorably "indebted to Greeks" (Rom 1:14 – See Section 3.4).

The positive stance toward the outside world and its systems of honor displayed in Rom 13:1-7 led Bruce Winter to theorize that the passage is meant to encourage notable Christians to be civic benefactors,[630] and to suggest that the ἔπαινος promised in Rom 13:3 can therefore be seen as referring to the ἔπαινος

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[628] Alicia Batten, "The Moral World of Greco-Roman Associations," 135-151.

[629] See Esler, *Conflict and Identity in Romans*, 53-61.

[630] See Winter, "The Public Honouring of Christian Benefactors in Romans 13:3-4 and 1 Peter 2:14-15," 87-103.

earned by benefactors through their civic generosity.[631] The perception of a call to positive public engagement on the part of Christians in Rom 13:1-7 is pursued along slightly different lines by Philip Towner, who argues more broadly that the passage is meant to encourage the Christian communities of Rome to be positively involved in the public business of the city.[632] In trying to understand the meaning of ἔπαινος in the context of Rom 13 it should be remembered, though, that the ἔπαινος in question is promised for good behavior specifically defined by the context of Rom 13:3 as behavior wholly undeserving of trouble from "the authority." The promise of ἔπαινος in Rom 13 for behavior honorable in the eyes of outsiders therefore implies a promise that behavior widely deemed honorable can allow the ideal association insiders imagined in Romans to attract and keep benefactors of their own, not a command to act as benefactors. As noted in Chapter 1, the need for associations to be seen as deserving honor was directly related to the financial need to attract and maintain the support of benefactors keenly interested in their own public honor. The kind of public ἔπαινος widely recognized as a central goal of the good/noble life in the first century generally[633] was important to the survival and success of ancient associations, including by definition first-century Christian associations.[634] First-

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[631] Winter, "Christian Benefactors," 94.

[632] See Philip H. Towner, "Romans 13:1-7 and Paul's Missiological Perspective: A Call to Political Quietism or Transformation?," in *Romans and the People of God. Essays in Honor of Gordon D. Fee on the Occasion of His 65th Birthday* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 149-169.

[633] See Furnish, *The Moral Teaching of Paul*, 155-157; H. Priesker, "Epainos," 586; Malina, *The New Testament World*, 54-55; J. Pilch and B. Malina, *Biblical Social Values and Their Meanings: A Handbook* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1993), 88-91.

[634] Charles A. Bobertz, "Patronage Networks and the Study of Ancient Christianity," *Studia Patristica* 24: 20-27.

century Christian groups also apparently depended upon local patronage,[635] which could easily have led in some cases to both competition with other comparable associations[636] and a need to both deserve the positive attention of influential and powerful people and avoid their negative attention.[637] In the letters reviewed in Chapter 1, systems of patronage were represented as a common, important, and potentially fraught part of association network life (*Ammonius to Apollonius* 3-16, 22-24; *Aristippus to Arete* 9-16, 29-48). The public ἔπαινος earned by the well-behaved ideal association depicted in Rom 13 would, in this context, offer the important ability to attract support from insiders and outsiders capable of offering it as part of their own pursuit of duty and honor, as opposed to the negative attention specified in 13:3 to be attracted by bad behavior. In this context, external group reputation becomes extremely important. The recommendation of Halvor Moxnes for future studies of Romans to look into the relationships of ἔπαινος, association culture, and the "outside world"[638] therefore looks particularly relevant here.

As seen above, proper positive engagement with the "outside" world is constructed in Rom 12-15 as impossible without a proper internal peace between insiders, even as insider identity is articulated to some degree over against the ideal outside. The command to "do what is good" in Rom 13 should therefore not be

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[635] S. N. Mason, "PHILOSOPHIAI: Greco-Roman, Judean, Christian," 36.

[636] Lief Vaage, "Preface," ix-x; Donaldson, *Religious Rivalries*, 5-6; Harland, "Spheres of Contention," 53, 63.

[637] See Wilson, "Voluntary Associations," 2-3; Mason, "PHILOSOPHIAI: Greco-Roman, Judean, Christian," 37; Arthur D. Nock *Conversion,* 185; Lampe, *From Paul to Valentinus*, 41.

[638] Halvor Moxnes, "Honor, Shame, and the Outside World in Romans," 217-218. See also deSilva, *Honor, Patronage, Kinship and Purity*, 97-119.

understood in isolation from the pursuit of "the good" through proper honorable brotherly behavior encouraged throughout Rom 12. The letters of *Ammonius to Apollonius* and *Aristippus to Arete* were shown in Chapter 1 to urge their addressees to live peacefully with other enlightened insiders partly in order to be able to live in a qualified and philosophical kind of peace with imperfect human authority. The ideal inscribed networked audiences of those letters were thus rhetorically realigned and reinforced as insiders partly in order to avoid trouble with "outsiders." The intimate relationship of the need for internal peace and the need for external respect and safety will be treated in more detail below in examining Rom 14. It bears saying here, though, that the exhortation of Romans 13:1-7 displays a comparable association-epistolary form and function. The ideal inscribed addressees of the letter are constructed as a unified group in which every member is subject to the command to accept the "submission" and pursue the ἔπαινος defined in insider terms by the passage. They are also thereby defined in subordinate, networked terms of unity and mutuality by being implicitly gathered under the ideal insider authority of the inscribed Paul of the letter, who is assumed to be someone in a position to pass down such orders, reinforcing the letter's construction of Paul and his network as deserving of particular insider-to-insider expressions of honor and submission (See 3.4).

As the argument of Rom 13:1-7 progresses, the first-century ideal (discussed above) of deserving honor by giving honor where it is due and seemly guides the exhortation from the topic of proper submission to authority properly understood in insider terms, through the explicit promise of ἔπαινος for well-behaved insiders,

to a general call for insiders to give all their due, including specifically the rendering of duties, taxes, fear, and honor (Rom 13:7). M. Y. MacDonald's intuition that "[u]nderlying Paul's statements in Rom 13:1-7 about subjection to governing authorities and the payment of taxes, there may be a concern for the appearance of the sect with respect to the outside world"[639] looks correct and important from this point of view. In Rom 13, the payment of honorary and/or monetary dues is depicted (in the terms of the kind of qualified positive engagement and social creativity already seen above) as ennobling for insiders. The rendering of "honor" (τιμή) to deserving powerful people was a fundamental conventional value in the first century Mediterranean world,[640] and so rendering it to the proper people in the proper way was, as pointed out above, an ennobling act capable of earning well-behaved insider communities even more of the kind of ἔπαινος just mentioned in 13:3. Just as obedience was recast as an ennobling expression of insider piety ("The authority is God's servant… Therefore, it is necessary to submit," Rom 13:4-5), so the payment of taxes is recast too as an ennobling expression of insider piety and duty: "For this reason you also pay taxes, for the authorities are God's servants" (Rom 13:6).[641] In this way, the practically conformist and potentially humbling social stances and duties necessary to the survival of a first-century association are

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[639] M. Y. MacDonald, *The Pauline Churches: A Socio-Historical Study of Institutionalisation in the Pauline and Deutero-Pauline Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 42.

[640] F. Danker, *Benefactor: Epigraphic Study of a Graeco-Roman and New Testament Semantic Field* (St. Louis: Clayton, 1982), 30-44, 213-233, 467-468; Lendon, *Empire of Honour*, 73.

[641] I am taking here διὰ τοῦτου γὰρ καὶ φόρους τελεῖτε as an indicative phrase ("For this reason you also pay taxes") as opposed to an imperative, since the move to a command like "So you need to pay your taxes" would be more likely to read instead διὰ τοῦτου τελεῖτε καὶ φόρους – See Jewett, *Romans*, 798, citing H. Schlier, *Der Römerbrief* (Freiburg: Herder, 1977), 391.

once again redefined from an ideal insider point of view as pious and ennobling expressions of special insider values and virtues.

Owe no one anything, except to love one another; for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. The commandments, "You shall not commit adultery; You shall not murder; You shall not steal; You shall not covet"; and any other commandment, are summed up in this word, "Love your neighbor as yourself." Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law (Rom 13:8-10).

The shift of attention in 13:8 to what is "owed" to fellow insiders as opposed to outsiders – i.e., "love" (ἀγάπη) – makes the implicit importance of internal relationships discussed above explicit. There is a tendency among commentators to see this ideal community love as offered to outsiders as well, due to the mention of the "neighbor" in 13:10,[642] but the reference to loving "one another" (ἀλλήλους) used in 13:8 indicates that the love described here is (like the brotherly love promoted in the letters reviewed in Chapters 1 and 2) an insider-to-insider duty, particularly since ἀλλήλους dependably refers in Romans (1:12; 12:5, 10, 16; 14:13, 19; 15:5, 7, 14; 16:16) to insider-insider relationships.[643] The recent reference in 12:20 to heaping hot coals on the heads of enemies through kindness should also be remembered here. The reasons offered for being kind to insiders and "brothers" in Rom 12-15 are different from the reasons offered for being kind to outsiders and enemies.

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[642] Jewett cites here Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, 776; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 678; Cranfield, *Romans 9-16*, 675; L. Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988), 467-468, etc. See also Gignac, *L'épître aux Romains*, 494.

[643] Jewett, *Romans*, 807.

The mutuality expressed in the exhortation to insiders to love one another leads Robert Jewett to see here the indication of a "new obligation to replace the social dependency on patrons or families," alleviating the association network pressure discussed above of finding and keeping patrons through a stress on mutual support, illustrated and practiced particularly in the form of the communal ἀγάπη meal.[644] As noted already above, though, mutual support was a common association ideal. As James B. Rives observes, "virtually all associations shared the same basic features. One of these was a concern for mutual support."[645] I have also noted above that peaceable and honorable brotherly love among insiders would itself be seen in the first century as helping an association deserve patronage from people with varying levels of involvement. Whether read as a reference to earning such patronage or obviating it, though, Rom 13:8-10 continues the letter's project of insider community definition as imagined vis-à-vis "outside" people and practices. The definition of the proper brotherly love thus called for as a means to fulfilling divine "law" (Rom 13:9-10) once again represents exhortation to fulfill a normal, important association duty (in this case insider-to-insider φιλαδελφία) as offering a chance to participate in an ennobling expression of special insider identity and duty, by framing it in the sub-subcultural terms of a Jewish inheritance (See Section 3.3) expressed in a form recalling pre-existing Jesus-oriented traditions about loving "neighbors" (See Section 3.4). Bruce Winter's reading of the "obligation" to "love"

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[644] Jewett, *Romans*, 806.

[645] James B. Rives, *Religion in the Roman Empire* (Malden: Blackwell, 2007), 125.

found in Rom 13 as a "totally countercultural"[646] on normal first-century association culture and Roman values is, from the point of view just described, overstated. In its dependence upon the normal first-century values and practices of benefaction and the pursuit of honor, the assertion of insider "obligation" in Rom 13:8-10 pursues ideal community definition in negotiated conformist terms, according to the subcultural Law of the Membrane.

Besides this, you know what time it is, how it is now the moment for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers; the night is far gone, the day is near. Let us then lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armor of light; let us live honorably as in the day, not in reveling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarreling and jealousy. Instead, put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires (Rom 13:11-14).

In Rom 13:11-14, normal, important first-century association concerns are imagined and addressed once again in special insider terms, with reference to what Jürgen Moltmann has called historical Christian culture's traditional "apocalyptic proviso" – the insider community sense that some kind of strategic distance must qualify ideal Christian engagement with the imperfect and temporal (and ultimately doomed) "outside world."[647] The ideal insider identity articulated in Rom 12 already included the assertion of dignified difference. The ideal insiders of Rom 12-15 already know that they are not to be "conformed to the pattern of this world" (12:2), and they are reassured here that the duties and efforts of making their way in this

[646] Winter, "Roman Law and Society in Romans 12-15," 89.

[647] J. Moltmann, *The Coming of God: Christian Eschatology* (M. Kohl, trans.; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 167.

world are only temporary: "Do this, understanding the present time… our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed" (Rom 13:11).

The properly-conceived subjection of ideal community insiders to outside powers described in 13:1-7 is specified by the apocalyptic proviso in 13:11-14 to be temporary, recalling the letter's previous reference to creation itself being "subjected" (See the reference to the ὑποτάξαντα in Rom 8:20 – Cf. the cognate ὑποτασσέσθω of 13:1) for a time to the barbaric reign of sin and futility, while expecting to be "freed… into the freedom of the glory of the children of God" very soon (8:20-8:21). The typically "Pauline" ideas of the divine trumping and destruction of "outsider" authority structures – remembered and flagged by the puzzled commentators mentioned above as noticeable by their absence in Rom 13:1-7 – are in this way in fact present, in the implicit assumption that "outside" authorities are ultimately doomed (and soon), and that ideal "insiders" share neither their identity nor their fate. The special sub-subcultural "Jewish" and "Pauline" character of these ideas is discussed below in Sections 3.3 and 3.4. For now it is enough to notice that the positive engagement with the world "outside" promoted in Rom 13 is once again qualified here by the re-assertion of these typically "Pauline" and "apocalyptic" conceptions of "outsider" social structures of identity and authority.

The addressee group inscribed in Rom 12-15 as already real and unified and properly related to Paul and his network is reinforced by the folding the plural "you" of 13:11 into the plural "us" of 13:11-13, and then back into the plural "you" of 13:14. The local "you" group constructed in Rome is constructed once again as a

node in the ideal global Pauline network of "us," with Paul himself assumed to be in a positon to hand out insider teaching and community rules (See Section 3.4). The stress discussed above on proper, honorable Greco-Roman association insider behavior is also reinforced by the characterization of the duties of this ideal networked "us" group found in Rom 13:12-14. The prohibitions expressed here against drunken reveling and other unseemly excesses have at times been read as defining the ideal community of Rom 13 in contradistinction to stereotypically bad "pagan" association behavior.[648] This reading fails to take into account, though, the important dimension (stressed above in the Introduction and elsewhere) of representation in all such ancient association insider discussions.

As the review of ancient association culture offered in Chapter 1 showed, it was common for association insider rules to prohibit the unseemly excesses often associated in the first century with such groups. The "Divine Instructions for the Household Association of Dionysios" stipulate, for example, that a male member in good standing is "not to seduce someone else's wife, whether free or slave, nor a boy, nor a virgin girl," or indeed apparently anyone at all "[b]eyond his own wife," and it is clear that questions of "internal" peace and "external" reputation are simultaneously at stake: it is specified in the same inscription that such rules for insiders have been laid down "[f]or health, common salvation, and the best reputation."[649] The comparable exhortation in Rom 13:13 to behave "decently"

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[648] See Gignac, *L'épître aux Romains*, 497; Jewett, *Romans*, 825; Winter, "Romans 12-15," 86.

[649] LSAM 20, cited in Ascough, Harland, and Kloppenborg, *Associations in the Greco-Roman World: A Sourcebook*, 82-83.

(εὐσχημόνως) underlines the majoritarian, conformist character of the call to shun unseemly behavior, by referring to "a Greco-Roman moral concept concerning the avoidance of public shame by outwardly conforming to accepted standards."[650] As noted above, it was, moreover, also common practice to picture other groups as addicted to engaging in drunkenness, sexual impropriety, and excesses and barbarisms of all kinds at *their* feasts.[651] By following standard Greco-Roman association practice in ruling against the feast-related excesses widely perceived as dishonorable, the ideal insiders imagined in Rom 13:12-14 define their community once again as somehow superior and special like everyone else.

Finally, it is important for the purposes of this study to notice that unseemly internal squabbling due to "dissension" and "jealousy" is explicitly described and forbidden as "indecent" in the same breath as the unseemly excesses of drunken revelry (Rom 13:13). This reference to the normal, important association need for "decent," honorable behavior of ideal insiders toward one another in the lived context of community and/or commensality carries on the rhetorical stress of Rom 12-15 upon loving, peaceful, orderly, and respectful and thereby respectable insider-to-insider behavior. As stressed in Chapter 1, rules enforcing orderly and peaceful insider-to-insider behavior were commonly promoted as important within

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[650] See by C. Spicq, "εὐσχημνός κτλ.," *Theological Lexicon of the New Testament* 2 (1994): 139-142, citing Aristotle's *Ethica nichomachea* 1101a1; Plutarch *Quaestionum convivialum* 746d1; Epictetus *Dissertationes* 2.5.23, etc.

[651] Harland, "'These People Are… Men Eaters': Banquets of the Anti-Associations and Perceptions of Minority Cultural Groups," 56-75.

ancient associations.[652] The exhortation of Rom 13 therefore contributes to the construction of the ideal association in-group of the letter as a "good" Greco-Roman association. The implied context of commensality gives a particular shape to the ideal insider-to-insider behavior thus described, by pointing to the important perceived relationship between good community dining practice and good community reputation reflected in the exhortation of Rom 14, discussed immediately below.

Welcome those who are weak in faith, but not for the purpose of quarreling over opinions. Some believe in eating anything, while the weak eat only vegetables. Those who eat must not despise those who abstain, and those who abstain must not pass judgment on those who eat; for God has welcomed them. Who are you to pass judgment on servants of another? It is before their own lord that they stand or fall. And they will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make them stand (Rom 14:1-4).

The identity and situation of the people introduced here as "weak" are longstanding, stubborn matters of scholarly debate.[653] As Robert Jewett notes, "most scholars… identify them as Jewish Christians who remain committed to kosher regulations or to an ascetic vegetarianism. However, in view of Greco-Roman ascetic ideals present in Rome, it is altogether possible that the 'weak' also included ascetics from a pagan background."[654] On the latter possibility, Jewett cites for example the

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[652] See too the rules for insiders collected by Richard S. Ascough, Philip A. Harland, and John S. Kloppenborg, *Associations in the Greco-Roman World: A Sourcebook* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2012), 252-269. See also the rules collected in M. Beard, J. North, and S. Price, *Religions of Rome. Vol. 1. A History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 228-244.

[653] See Karris, "Romans 14:1-15:13 and the Occasion of Romans," 75-76; Gignac, *L'épître aux Romains*, 448, 498-500; Reasoner, *The Strong and the Weak: Romans 14:1-15:13 in Context*, 1-23; Wedderburn, *The Reasons for Romans*, 29-65; Wilckens, *Der Brief an die Römer*, 109-115.

[654] Jewett, *Romans*, 835.

proposals of Mark Reasoner.[655] As the words "present in Rome" indicate, the debate over the identity of the "weak" has traditionally been aimed at establishing the precise identity and situation of a real group in Rome, living in some kind of tense relationship with another real local group designated Paul and/or themselves as the "strong." Philip Esler's analysis of Rom 12-15 as an intervention aimed at resolving a real community conflict between identifiable "weak" and "strong" groups in Rome provides a good example of this kind of guesswork. Paul "is sending a letter to the Christ-movement in the city that is experiencing internal problems, notably those involving tension between Judean and non-Judean members," Esler asserts,[656] and the need to resolve these community tensions in Rome is therefore reflected in the discussion of food, etc. in Rom 14 and 15.

> "Paul confronted a situation in Rome in which arguments over food, wine and holy days, based on ethnic divisions between Greeks and Judeans, were occurring within the Christ-movement and threatened its stability… The resources he leveled at this disorder consisted essentially of the 'norms' or identity descriptors he had formulated in general terms in Romans 12-13, especially *agape* and its various manifestations listed in Romans 12:9-21. Paul saw the practice of this virtue as the key to the reconciliation of the rival groups. But he also recommends the need for them to think in unison (Romans 15:15), thus signifying yet again his general alignment with the rational traditions of Greek moral philosophy."[657]

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[655] Mark Reasoner, *The Strong*, 75-84, 137-138.

[656] Esler, *Conflict and Identity in Romans*, 26.

[657] Esler, "Social Identity," 61. See also Wedderburn's assertion that we can "read between the lines" and conclude from the presence of the discussion of foods and days in Rom 12-15 that Paul must have had a desire to correct a strong "Judaizing" Christian tendency he had heard about in Rome (Wedderburn, *The Reasons for Romans*, 63-65).

Esler's account of the identities of the more-or-less "Judean" weak and the more-or-less "Greek" strong, and of the relationship of their rhetorical contradistinction in Rom 14-15 to a concrete situation in Rome, adopts a very clear and confident tone. As noted above, though, the identities of the weak and the strong and the relationship of their discussion to a concrete situation in Rome are subjects of debate.[658] My analysis here therefore depends gratefully upon previous work like Esler's aimed at understanding the ideal "social identity" constructed in Romans, while avoiding guesswork like Esler's about the precise authorial plans and intentions of Paul, and about putative positive, accurate knowledge on Paul's part concerning real tensions experienced between real identifiable groups labeled "weak" and "strong" in Rome over different levels of association with Jewish dietary ethnic/cultural markers. I will instead focus in the following discussion on the question of how the inscribed sender(s) and addressees of Romans emerge in 14-15 as community-defining ideals aimed at further articulating the ideal global association network constructed by the letter, defining ideal insider identity and behavior again with reference to the "outside" (in the form of projected "outsider" identities and behaviors and concerns about in-group reputation).

The exhortation of Rom 14-15 is commonly seen as having clear implications for insider discussions and habits of meal practice and commensality.[659] This seems

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[658] See Karris, "Romans 14:1-15:13 and the Occasion of Romans," 75-76; Gignac, *L'épître aux Romains*, 448, 498-500; Reasoner, *The Strong and the Weak: Romans 14:1-15:13 in Context*, 1-23; Wedderburn, *The Reasons for Romans*, 29-65; Wilckens, *Der Brief an die Römer*, 109-115.

[659] See Jewett, *Romans*, 835-836, citing Schlatter, *Romans. The Righteousness of God*, 249-252; Otto Michel, *Der Brief an die Römer* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1978), 422; M. Black, *Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 200.

to me like a safe understanding of the passage, dealing as it does with discussions of food and brotherly mutuality and propriety in an association-epistolary setting, and following directly as it does the association-oriented exhortation concerning proper "mutuality" and "decency" in the context of communal life and commensality in 13:13. It also seems safe to me to say that the passage addresses the association danger (familiar from the review of association culture and the *Letter of Ammonius to Apollonius* offered in Chapter 1) of infighting. The precise meaning of the phrase rendered "quarreling over opinions" above (διακρίσεις διαλογισμῶν) may be debated, but the negative sense of potentially divisive argument thus connoted is not.[660] As discussed above, internal squabbles were perceived by association insiders as dangerous to the health of their in-groups, partly because of their potential to contribute to a bad external reputation capable of being used against them (See again *Ammonius to Apollonius* 13-20, etc.). Rom 14-15 therefore makes very good sense when read as insider-to-insider paraenesis concerning mutuality and propriety in the context of meal practice. As indicated in Chapter 1, commensality was a very normal practice among ancient associations,[661] and so was the promotion of community rules to keep the peace at such events, due to a perceived need to protect the peace and the reputation of the group.[662] From this

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[660] See the review of the discussion in Gignac, *L'épître aux Romains*, 515.

[661] See Richard S. Ascough, "Forms of Commensality in Greco-Roman Associations," *Classical World* 102 (2008): 33-45; Harland, *Associations, Synagogues, and Congregations*, 74-83; Klauck, *The Religious Context of Early Christianity*, 44; Waltzing, *Étude historique sur les corporations professionelles chez les Romains*, 512.

[662] See Alicia Batten, "The Moral World of Greco-Roman Associations," 148; E. Ebel, "Regeln von der Gemeinschaft für die Gemeinschaft? Das Aposteldekret und antike Veriensregeln im Vergleich," 317-339; Kloppenborg, "Greco-Roman *Thiasoi*, the *Ekklēsia* at Corinth, and Conflict

point of view, the discussion of meal practice in Rom 14-15 can be seen as serving the particular project of association identity definition pursued in Rom 12-15, in much the same way as Richard Ascough understands the meal practice instructions found in 2 Thessalonians 3:6-14 to have worked as association regulations articulating a particular ideal social identity.[663]

From this point of view, and for the purposes of this study, formulating a proper understanding the character and significance of the specific representation of the ideal inscribed sender(s) and addressees of Rom 14 involves deciding how the categories of "strong" and "weak" are presented as capable of informing meal practice in a way directed at defining community identity and order with reference to "outside" realities (represented in insider terms and for insider purposes).

Approached from the perspective outlined by this study – i.e., as part of a letter serving the construction of an ideal global association network in which Paul and his associates are key players – the stubborn difficulty just mentioned of precisely identifying the "weak" and the "strong" offers in itself an indication of the character and function of these categories in Rom 12-15. Robert Jewett has suggested that the ambiguity of the designations "weak" and "strong" points to a

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Management," 186-218; Kloppenborg, "The Moralizing of Discourse in Greco-Roman Associations"; Richard S. Ascough, "The Apostolic Decree of Acts and Greco-Roman Associations: Eating in the Shadow of Empire," 313; Ascough, "Greco-Roman Philosophic, Religious, and Voluntary Associations," 16; 2011, Rachel M. McRae, "Eating With Honor: The Corinthian Lord's Supper in Light of Voluntary Association Meal Practices," 166; J. C. Hanges "1 Corinthians 4:6 and the Possibility of Written Bylaws in the Corinthian Church," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 117 (1998): 275-298.

[663] Richard S. Ascough, "Of Memories and Meals: Greco-Roman Associations and the Early Jesus-Group at Thessalonikē," in *From Roman to Early Christian Thessalonikē: Studies in Religion and* Archaeology (L. Nasrallah et al, eds.; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), 49-72.

perceived need for caution and tact: "This indirect, covert, oblique[664] style of reference is consistent with the advice of ancient rhetoricians in addressing sensitive circumstances requiring good taste or arousing a fear of retribution,"[665] he writes, citing J. P. Sampley's application of principles drawn from Frederick Ahl's "The Art of Safe Criticism in Greece and Rome"[666] to Rom 14-15.[667] Since as Jewett notes himself, though, the word "weak" was used in first-century Rome to refer to people perceived as inferior in terms of their education and accordant social position[668] (citing for example "the uneducated and weak" – τοις ἀπαιδεύτοις καὶ ἀσθενέσι – looked down upon by Epictetus), the designation "weak" seems most likely to be perceived as insulting, not fearful or tactful. The suggestion of Robert Karris therefore looks much more promising: the ambiguities concerning the "weak" and the "strong" in Rom 14-15 retool and redeploy the community paraenesis concerning the "weak" and the "strong" preserved in Paul's Corinthian correspondence, making its applicability more general.

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[664] See also the reference to the "weak/strong" discourse of Rom 14 as "oblique" in W. Meeks, "Judgment and the Brother: Romans 14:1-15:13," in *Tradition and Interpretation in the New Testament. Essays in Honor of E. Earle Ellis* (G. F. Hawthorne and O. Betz, eds.; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987), 292.

[665] Jewett, *Romans*, 834.

[666] F. Ahl, "The Art of Safe Criticism in Greece and Rome," *American Journal of Philology* 105 (1984): 174-208.

[667] Sampley, "The Weak and the Strong: Paul's Careful and Crafty Rhetorical Strategy in Romans 14:1-15:13," 43-45.

[668] Jewett, 834, citing Reasoner, *The Strong and the Weak: Romans 14:1-15:13 in Context*, 49-55. See also Tobin, *Paul's Rhetoric in its Contexts: The Argument of Romans* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004), 409.

In his essay "Romans 14:1-15:13 and the Occasion of Romans," Karris argues that the exhortation treated by many commentators as situational in Rom 14-15 is in fact an exercise in more "general" Pauline "paraenesis."[669] Building on Hans Conzelmann's idea that Rom 14:1-15:6 is a development of 1 Cor 8-10, Karris outlines the clear verbal parallels between the two letter sections,[670] arguing that the absence in Romans of the kinds of references to specific people and situations found in 1 Corinthians serves to make the reworked exhortation of Rom 14-15 more general in nature.[671] This argument seems to provide credible support for Gunther Bornkamm's proposal that Paul's previous debates and advice are universalized in Romans,[672] and offers help here in theorizing the character and function of the categories "strong" and the "weak" vis-à-vis the ideal addressees of Rom 12-15.

If new methods or new evidence ever appeared to confirm the guesswork exemplified above by Esler, identifying Rom 14-15 as a deliberate intervention in a real local community dispute over Judean cultural markers, it would make very good sense, since many of the first Jesus devotees were apparently associated with synagogue communities and preferred to keep "kosher" in some sense (See Section 3.3), which could apparently at times be difficult in Rome.[673] The availability of

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[669] Karris, "Romans 14:1-15:13 and the Occasion of Romans," 81-84.

[670] Karris, "Romans 14:1-15:13 and the Occasion of Romans," 73-75.

[671] Karris, "Romans 14:1-15:13 and the Occasion of Romans," 75-76.

[672] Bornkamm, "The Letter to the Romans as Paul's Last Will and Testament," in Donfried, *The Romans Debate*, 16-28.

[673] Miriam Pucci ben Zeev, *Jewish Rights in the Roman World. The Greek and Roman Documents Quoted by Josephus* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1998), 381-408; Barclay, *Pauline Churches and Diaspora Jews*, 44.

"suitable" or "kosher" meat in the Roman marketplace in particular depended upon the concessions and interventions of the current imperial administration, and the level of goodwill found between local officials and local Jews fluctuated.[674] The stress on proper brotherly unity in the face of questions of dietary restrictions (with the specific mention of meat) found in Rom 12-14 is well-suited to addressing the possibility of community differences over the definition of proper "insider" relationships with the local "outsider" meat market.[675] The "weak" can easily be seen as members trying to keep "kosher" (in the broad sense of conforming to Judean dietary customs). The "weak" could also be seen as other members trying to accommodate them. The pathetic conversation partner imagined by the poet Horace, who does not want to offend the Jews by disrespecting their customs because he is, as he admits, "a small man of weakness" (*sum paulo infirmior*)[676] suggests that it was in fact seen by some Romans as "weak" to be afraid to offend Jewish sensibilities.

On the other hand, a real group living in Rome on a (kosher and/or ascetic) diet limited to "lettuces" alone (λάχανα) would have been extremely unusual. No known ancient kosher diets limited their adherents to eating leafy vegetables.[677] The fact noted by Jewett that the writings of Diogenes Laertius record their own

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[674] See Josephus, *Antiquitates Judaicae* 14.261, etc.

[675] Bruce Winter, "Roman Law and Society in Romans 12-15," 90-91; Gignac, *L'épître aux Romains*, 515-516.

[676] Horace, *Satire* 1.9.71, cited by Jewett, *Romans*, 834. See also Gignac, *L'épître aux Romains*, 514.

[677] See Jewett, *Romans*, 837-838; Reasoner, *The Strong*, 75-84.

disparaging account of (Cynic) extremists who ate nothing but λάχανα[678] confirms the impression that the picture involves some conventional rhetorical exaggeration. I note here that Seneca claims to have given up meat for a time when he joined a Pythagorean circle, and then taken up eating meat again to avoid a sectarian social stigma (since ascetic vegetarianism was flagged as a mark of *superstitio* in Tiberian Rome, and thereby put Seneca at risk of potential expulsion).[679] If ascetic vegetarianism was associated in some circles with unreasonable sectarian extremism, it would make sense to find it in the "reasonable" and conformist advice of Rom 12-15 as something to avoid.

Whatever local specific and/or local connotations it may have had, the image of the person who eats nothing but lettuces in Rom 14 caricatures the position of "the weak" (in contradistinction to the equal opposite caricature of the "strong" as people who are willing to eat "everything"), presumably to make the compromise-based perspective promoted in the following chapters appear comparatively reasonable and honorable.[680] Jewett's conclusion therefore looks mostly correct: "In this way a series of critical issues relating to ethnic identity expressed in eating habits, as well as the configuration of common meals, could be dealt with at a level of generality that includes all while leaving the resolution of details up to the Roman churches."[681] As Jewett's references to different kinds of ascetic diets and to

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[678] Diogenes Laertius, *De clarorum philosophorum vitis, dogmatibus et apophthegmatibus* 8.38, cited by Jewett, *Romans*, 838.

[679] See *Letter* 108.22.

[680] Gignac, *L'épître aux Romains*, 516; Jewett, *Romans*, 838.

[681] Jewett, *Romans*, 838.

majoritarian (anti-Cynic) propaganda remind us, though, the ideal proper mutuality in meal practice thus promoted by Rom 14-15 is not in fact necessarily limited to addressing potential squabbles over ethnic identity markers or keeping kosher in particular (in this case, by observing Jewish dietary rules about the slaughter of animals, as opposed to observing Jewish dietary rules about the type of animal being eaten). Any unseemly infighting over any differences concerning dietary rules is out of place in the ideal Greco-Roman association meal practice depicted by Rom 14-15.

The palatably majoritarian Greco-Roman character of Rom 14-15 just described also complicates Jewett's description of the rule against the strong holding the weak in contempt as "strikingly countercultural."[682] As was shown above, the stressing of insider respect and mutuality against the arrogance and division of excessive competition is very much in line with majoritarian Greco-Roman cultural ideals. The expression of an ennobling and somewhat superior benevolence on the part of powerful people toward less powerful community members is too (See the discussion below of the need expressed in Rom 15:1 for "we the strong" to "bear the failings of the weak"). Jewett's similar description of the command in Rom 14 to refrain from judging as "clearly countercultural," since Greco-Roman and Jewish cultures commonly called upon members to make "judgements" about good versus bad behavior,[683] looks similarly overstated in the light of the mutuality stressed in letters reviewed in Chapter 1, and the fact that (as Jewett himself notes elsewhere) similar warnings against judgmental attitudes can

[682] Jewett, *Romans*, 839.

[683] Jewett, *Romans*, 839-840.

be found in Greco-Roman sources: In *Ajax* 583, Sophocles records the exhortation to avoid "judging" and scrutinizing (μὴ κρῖνε, μὴ ξέταζε) in favor of being "sober-minded" (σωφρονεῖν καλὸν).[684] The same kinds of ideals and in fact the same words (κρίνω and σοφρονεῖν) are, I note, present when the exhortation (Rom 14:13) to "not judge one another" (μηκέτι οὖν ἀλλήλους κρίνωμεν) is made in the context of the call (Rom 12:3) to be "sober-minded" as a community (σοφρονεῖν). The making of "proper" meta-judgments about what is worth formulating judgments about (versus what is not) is itself a popular Greco-Roman philosophical ideal.[685] The ideal community insiders of Rom 14 are therefore called to "judge" (κρίνατε) between good and bad insider behaviour (Rom 14:13), a process in which community-eroding judgmental attitudes must (as seen already above) presumably fall under bad behavior. It seems to me, then, that Jewett's judgment of the nonjudgment referred to in 14:13 as "clearly countercultural" is overstated, and that he admits as much when he agrees with Calvin Roetzel[686] that "Paul's intention in Romans 14 is not so much to discourage judgment altogether as it is to call for a new concern for the brother."[687] The prohibition of excessive and/or misdirected judging is in fact another example of positive engagement with Greco-Roman culture in Rom 14, an

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[684] See Jewett, *Romans*, 857.

[685] Gignac, *L'épître aux Romains*, 517.

[686] Jewett, *Romans*, 840, 857.

[687] C. Roetzel, *Judgement in the Community: A Study of the Relationship between Eschatology and Ecclesiology in Paul* (Leiden: Brill, 1972), 134. See also Gignac, *L'épître aux Romains*, 508.

expression of its tendency toward the integration of widely-held Greco-Roman values in its articulation of special insider values.[688]

The conventional Greco-Roman character of Rom 14 is also discernible in its depiction of Jesus Christ (and/or the insider conception of the Jewish god imagined as his father – See Sections 3.3 and 3.4) as the common "master" of all ideal insiders and thereby the only person truly qualified to judge them (Rom 14:4). The ideal insiders of Rom 14 embrace the normal association duties of "welcoming" and accommodating each other for the special insider reason that their common god has "welcomed" them (See Sections 3.3 and 3.4). This image, too, has been depicted as countercultural: "Paul ultimately subverts the patronal system" in Rom 14-15, writes James Harrison, "by subjecting everyone to a common master who outshines all."[689] The stress, though, on insider propriety and mutuality continued here by the reservation of ultimate judgment to the special divine patron of the insiders remains subcultural as opposed to countercultural *per se*. Just as there is no reason to conclude that the *Isis Aretalogy* discussed above effectively "subverts" the patronage system of benefaction and obligation by defining Isis for insiders as the ultimate source of benefaction, protection, and honor, there is no reason to conclude that Rom 14 effectively "subverts" the same system by similarly defining Jesus Christ for insiders as the ultimate master and patron. Ideal insider life is still shaped here by

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[688] On this tendency, see Gignac, *L'épître aux Romains*, 514.

[689] Harrison, *Paul's Language of Grace in its Greco-Roman Context*, 322.

the "logic of the relationship of dominion,"[690] according to which insiders are the "property" of their "Lord."[691]

Several examples of scholars seeing Rom 12-15 as laudably "countercultural" have already been discussed above in examining Rom 12. The string of questionable "counterculture" sightings, though, in commentary on Rom 14 here deserves comment, suggesting as it does the presence of an apologetic urge at work in mainstream (post-)Christian interpretive tradition. J. Z. Smith's extended argument in *Drudgery Divine* that depictions of NT culture as strikingly, admirably different from the Hellenistic and Roman cultures of the "pagan" world are more likely to serve the pursuit of particular Christian polemical agendas than thoroughgoingly historical projects of critical comparison is very relevant here. In Jewett's case, for example, such a depiction of NT culture in Romans helps serve the theological project of recovering a Christian ethic in Rom 14 capable of ennobling Christian church behavior in the modern world.[692] His identification of a "mutual welcome based on the welcome of Christ, overcoming the tensions between Jews and Gentiles, conservatives and liberals, that marked the Roman church"[693] posits a deliberate intervention on Paul's part aimed at resolving real conflicts between real identifiable groups in Rome, in order to redeploy the program thus attributed to

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[690] See L. Schottroff, "ζῶ, ζωή," *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament* (1992): 106.

[691] See Godet, *Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans,* 453; H. Meyer *Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the Epistle to the Romans*, Vol. 2 (J. C. Moore, trans.; Edinburgh: Clark), 1876 309; Schlier, *Der Römerbrief*, 409-410.

[692] See for example the church-directed "Pauline" advocacy offered in R. Jewett, *Christian Tolerance: Paul's Message to the Modern Church* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1982), 139.

[693] Jewett, *Romans*, 890.

Paul in a modern intervention aimed at resolving modern perceived Christian problems (like internal tensions between "conservatism" and "liberalism"). Wherever it comes from, the temptation to see "radical" and "countercultural" values everywhere in Rom 12-15 obscures the Greco-Roman character of the first-century exhortation of the passage, and thereby hampers understandings of the particular association network project of community definition it serves.

Recognizing the exhortation of Rom 14 as subcultural as opposed to countercultural *per se* helps explain the transition from the discussions of ideal insider mutuality, order, and propriety vis-à-vis "outside" reputation in Rom 12-13 to the attention given ideal meal practices in Rom 14-15. The properly conceived and pursued status of the ideal insider community of Rom 12-15 as "honorable" (i.e., worthy of ἔπαινος as defined above) is impossible without attention to meal practices deemed honorable. As John Kloppenborg notes in his study of Paul's Corinthian correspondence, ἔπαινος was a term of commendation used of and within associations, used to reward perceived honorable conduct in association business: "Paul seems at least aware of the mechanisms of commendation, takes for granted that his addressees also understand them, and invokes the vocabulary of commendation precisely at a point where association-like activities – conduct of meetings, and conduct of the communal meal – are at issue."[694] The promise of safety and ἔπαινος vis-à-vis the world "outside" as the reward for good insider behavior held out in Rom 13:3 therefore informs the articulation of ideal insider

[694] Kloppenborg, "Greco-Roman *Thiasoi*, the *Ekklesia* at Corinth, and Conflict Management," 213.

meal practice in Rom 14 by means of its generalizing redeployment of the situational meal practice paraenesis worked out in the Corinthian correspondence.

As a final note on meal practice and association reputation, I note here that the positive promise of ἔπαινος was only one side of the reputation coin. The promise of ἔπαινος was sweetened by contrast with the threat of negative attention. The general principle of avoiding negative attention and the specific need to avoid outside gossip about unseemly inside squabbling that could be used against the association (as seen for example in the *Letter of Ammonius to Apollonius*) have already been discussed above. It is worth remembering then, that early Christians could be accused of being "disorderly" or "disloyal" or "impious," with the implication of being socially dysfunctional.[695] The need for the ideal association insiders of Rom 12-15 to avoid such negative attention can be understood as related to the question of peaceful, orderly meal practice, and to questions about the eating of meat of debatable kosher status in particular, with reference to the situation of Christian assemblies reflected in the correspondence of Trajan and Pliny.

Pliny (the Younger) was emperor Trajan's local administrator in charge of law[696] and order[697] in the province of Pontus/Bithynia. Among the many real and

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[695] Tacitus therefore refers to the Christian sect, for example, as a well-known "deadly *superstitio*" with a bad reputation, exercising a bad foreign influence on Rome and understandably persecuted by Nero (Tacitus, *Annales* XV.44 – cited in Beard, North, and Price, *Religions of Rome*, Vol. 2, 277). For further examples, see Harland, *Associations, Synagogues, and Congregations*, 246; A. N. Sherwin-White, *The Letters of Pliny: A Historical and Social Commentary* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1966), 709; Albert Henrichs, "Pagan Ritual and the Alleged Crimes of the Early Christians," in *Kyriakon: Festschrift Johannes Quasten* (P. Granfield and J. A. Jungmann, eds.; Münster: Aschendorff, 1970), 21; Robert L. Wilken, *The Christians as the Romans Saw Them* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), 5.

[696] Sherwin-White, *The Letters of Pliny*, 82. See Pliny, *Epistulae ad Trajanum* 10.56, 58, 65, 72, 81, 96.

ideal letters he left behind, his letters to Trajan are among those not seriously suspected of artistic rewriting,[698] and they are dated to just after the year 100 CE because of their reference to Calpurnius Macer (in *Letter* 10.42) as governor of Moesia Inferior, a post recorded elsewhere as spanning the years 111-112 CE.[699] In the course of maintaining law and order under Trajan's command, Pliny dutifully publicized and enforced imperial edicts regulating associations,[700] and in his collected *Letters* 10.96 and 10.97, a conversation is preserved concerning how the laws on associations ought to be applied with regard to local episodes of unrest related to accused members of an association commonly called "Christians."

> In the case of those who were denounced to me as Christians, I have observed the following procedure: I interrogated these as to whether they were Christians.... Soon accusations spread, as usually happens, because of the proceedings going on, and several incidents occurred. An anonymous document was published containing the names of many persons... Others named by the informer declared that they were Christians, but then denied it, asserting that they had been but had ceased to be, some three years before, others many years, some as much as twenty-five years… They asserted, however, that the sum and substance of their fault or error had been that they were accustomed to meet on a fixed day before dawn and sing responsively a hymn to Christ as to a god, and to bind themselves by oath, not to some crime, but not to commit fraud, theft, or adultery, not falsify their trust, nor to refuse to return a trust when called upon to do so. When this was over, it was their custom to depart and to assemble again to partake of food – but ordinary and innocent food. Even this, they affirmed, they had ceased to do after my edict by which, in accordance with your instructions, I had forbidden political associations… I therefore postponed the investigation and hastened to consult you. For the matter seemed to me to warrant consulting you, especially because of the number involved... For the

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[697] Sherwin-White, *The Letters of Pliny*, 82. See Pliny, *Epistulae ad Trajanum* 10.19, 31, 74.

[698] Sherwin-White, *The Letters of Pliny*, 11-12, 691-692.

[699] See Sherwin-White, *The Letters of Pliny*, 80, 625.

[700] See Pliny, *Epistulae ad Trajanum* 10.97.7; 10.33, 34, 92, 93.

> contagion of this superstition has spread not only to the cities but also to the villages and farms. But it seems possible to check and cure it. It is certainly quite clear that the temples, which had been almost deserted, have begun to be frequented, that the established religious rites, long neglected, are being resumed, and that from everywhere sacrificial animals are coming, for which until now very few purchasers could be found.[701]

It is important to notice for our purposes here that for the locals tried as Christians in this affair, trouble is represented here as coming in the form of being denounced by accusers. Pliny is only concerned with those who are brought before him (*qui ad me Christiani deferebantur*), and/or those named in public accusations like the anonymous pamphlet. He portrays it as normal that such accusations would drive such a public scandal and its investigation, and that accusations of various levels of seriousness and credibility should come up in the course of such an affair. I note here that the Christian apologist Justin Martyr recounts not much later a story about a private quarrel leading to an individual being legally accused of being a Christian,[702] supporting the idea that denouncing people as Christians to the authorities could serve all kinds of motivations and ends.

The defense Pliny hears from those denounced to him includes (predictably, given the discussion of associations and reputation above) an insistence that their association practices did not merit being brought before him: they were normal and harmless, even honorable. They sang together honoring their special insider hero/god like any other association might do, and they swore to live upright,

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[701] Pliny, *Epistulae ad Trajanum* 10.96 (The Latin text and English translation cited are both from Sherwyn-White's edition).

[702] See Justin Martyr's *Apologia ii*, 2.

respectful and respectable public lives (*convenire carmenque Christo quasi deo dicere secum invicem seque sacramento non in scelus aliquod obstringere, sed ne furta, ne latrocinia, ne adulteria committerent, ne fidem fallerent, ne depositum appellati abnegarent*). The ideal association practices they describe are represented as worthy of public ἔπαινος rather than public accusation and persecution.

It is specified that they were in the habit of eating together (again, like any other healthy association might do), and the food they ate is specified to be perfectly unoffensive, ordinary food (*morem sibi discedendi fuisse rurusque coeundi ad capiendum cibum, promiscuum tamen et inoxium*). Their reported insistence that their group was a perfectly normal, functional association includes, then, the insistence that their meal practice was undeserving of negative public attention, including specifically here accusation and prosecution/persecution. They claimed, furthermore, Pliny reports, to have obediently stopped meeting and eating together in this way once he had handed down Trajan's association ban (*quod ipsum facere desisse post edictum meum, quo secundum mandata tua hetaerias esse vetueram*).[703] The accused are clearly represented as understanding and defending their assemblies as (normal and harmless) association meetings of some kind, and Pliny's implicit acceptance of the idea that their disbanding was appropriate given Trajan's

[703] Sherwyn-White's translation given above of *hetaeria* as "political associations" refers to the fact that Trajan had banned all *collegia* because they risked becoming *hetaeria* i.e., (political) factions (Pliny, *Epistulae ad Trajanum* 10.34). The activities of the Christian groups described in *Epistulae ad Trajanum* 10.96 are assumed by both Pliny and the accused to be "harmless" and typical association behaviours, and there is no mention at all of group purposes or group habits that would distinguish them as "political associations," as opposed to "private associations," or "cultic associations," etc. Pliny nevertheless respectfully repeats Trajan's reference to *hetaeria* in referring to his ban on all such groups.

ban indicates that he too thought they could be properly understood as association meetings of a harmless kind if the testimonies of the accused were true.

Finally, it is important to notice that the only "certain" evidence Pliny can offer Trajan that the perceived public problem of these Christian assemblies is clearing up is an assurance that local cult practice and the meat market associated with it are peaceful and thriving (*Certe satis constat prope iam desolata templa coepisse celebrari, et sacra sollemnia diu intermissa repeti pastumque venire victimarum, cuius adhuc rarissimus emptor inveniebatur*). It is apparently simply assumed, as Downing notes, that the renewed stability of such "traditional observance is proof enough that all is now in good and reliable order."[704] Whether this indicates that some Christians were trying to keep kosher (in the wide sense defined above) without official recognition, or that they were upsetting the normal business of local cult practice and its associated meat market in some other way, it is clear that Pliny assumes the disruptive crime of being a Christian has something to do with the scandalous disturbance of local cult practice and its associated meat market. Social unrest somehow intimately related to these things is the only practical "problem" caused by Christian associations and identified by Pliny, and public denunciations and accusations constitute the only way the problem finds its way to him. Pliny's letter confirms the promise of Rom 12-14 that respectability in terms of food practice and good relations with "outsiders" (including in this case following best practices for associations, and not getting mixed up somehow with trouble related

[704] Downing, *Order and (Dis)order in the First Christian Centur*y, 27.

to common meal practice) is the way to avoid negative attention, including the serious problems of gossip and denunciation to the authorities.

In his reply, Trajan congratulates Pliny on limiting his investigation to people publicly accused of being Christians, and advises him to disregard anonymous accusations as dangerous. Presumably the primary danger is that the proliferation of accusations referred to by Pliny as normal in such affairs could lead to abuse, for example in serving personal or political character assassinations of the kind described above involving honor-based competitions and vendettas.

> You observed proper procedure, my dear Pliny, in sifting the cases of those who had been denounced to you as Christians... They are not to be sought out; if they are denounced and proved guilty, they are to be punished... But anonymously posted accusations ought to have no place in any prosecution. For this is both a dangerous kind of precedent and out of keeping with the spirit of our age.[705]

As seen above, the danger of gaining a bad reputation due to squabbles and meal practices deemed unseemly loomed large for ancient associations (especially those serving minority groups), and survival and success required the maintenance of a reasonable measure of respectability in the eyes of outsiders able to patronize and/or police. The mere fact that "Christian identity" was being defined in the context of insider meal practice could have exposed some Christian groups to accusations of social "disorder" and even "resistance" because insular practices were so often seen by elite Romans as superior and suspicious.[706] The conversation

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[705] Pliny, *Epistulae ad Trajanum* 10.97 (English translation is Sherwyn-White's).

[706] See H. Taussig, *In the Beginning Was the Meal: Social Experimentation and Early Christian Identity* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2009), 118-143.

of Pliny and Trajan shows that these realities were reasonable concerns for Christian association in-group members in the early Roman empire, reflecting from a powerful "outsider" perspective that fact that the intimate and potentially deadly serious relationship between perceived propriety, meal practice, and safety in matters of public reputation (including the specific case of potential scandals related to local meat markets) would be a very appropriate subject to address in association exhortation like Rom 14, regardless of any concrete local Roman situation Paul may or may not have had in mind. The identity of the "strong" and the "weak" in Rom 14 may not be perfectly clear, and their relationship to a concrete situation in Rome may be even harder to establish definitively, but the definition of ideal insiders articulated with reference to the "outside" is as clear as it was in Rom 12 and Rom 13: Ideal insiders are careful, like the members of any respectable Greco-Roman association, to avoid getting into disruptive "internal" meal practice situations capable of rocking the boat vis-à-vis the "outside."

Some judge one day to be better than another, while others judge all days to be alike. Let all be fully convinced in their own minds. Those who observe the day, observe it in honor of the Lord. Also those who eat, eat in honor of the Lord, since they give thanks to God; while those who abstain, abstain in honor of the Lord and give thanks to God. We do not live to ourselves, and we do not die to ourselves. If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord; so then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ died and lived again, so that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living. (Rom 14:5-9).

In 14:5-9, the stress on mutual insider acceptance is applied to differences over the observance of special days. The ambiguity noted above in the discussion of differences over food practices remains, leading to a tradition of guesswork in the

relevant literature wherein "scholars have argued that Paul had in mind the early development of Sunday as a day of worship, the Jewish Sabbath, and/or the Jewish festivals, fast days, the lucky days of Greco-Roman astrological calculation, or Roman feast days."[707] Jewett observes here that any one or even "several" of these explanations can be made to seem "more or less plausible," since the language used in Rom 14:5 is so "generic."[708] From the point of view outlined above, this continued ambiguity makes good sense. By not mentioning specific days or groups observing them, Rom 14 continues to address the need for acceptance and mutuality on the part of an ideal unified community at Rome, understood as a node in a wide and diverse but unified global network, and not only (for example) insider-to-insider agreements on Sabbath observance.

A "generic" kind of exhortation on the ideal insider approach to the observance of special days (capable of being applied to a variety of cases) thus makes sense, especially given the fact that there is good evidence that many early Christians observed various special days. Jewett cites here for example the rule of *Didache* 8.1 in which proper days for fasting are identified, in contradistinction to those which are observed by "the hypocrites."[709] The specification of the rule that the "correct" choice of fast days distinguishes proper insiders from "outsiders" who might otherwise be mistaken for insiders underlines three facts important here: Such observances were understood to be happening in Christian groups, they were

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[707] Jewett, *Romans*, 844.

[708] Jewett, *Romans*, 844-845.

[709] See Gignac, *L'épître aux Romains*, 516.

understood to vary, and they were understood as serving (like meal practice) ideal community identity definition: "real insiders" are those who do it "the right way."

Taken at face value, the reference in 14:6 to proper devotion and proper thanks as more important (and more unifying) than particular choices about the observance of days makes the ideal association inscribed look unusually lax in terms of attention to particular duties on particular days. The society of Diana and Antinous discussed in Chapter 1 makes very sure, for example, to specify which dinners are to celebrated on which days in its club bylaws.[710] By not specifying the special days in question to be Jewish holidays, Rom 14 makes it possible to conclude that the ideal insider community practice/identity defined in the passage is very special indeed, in ancient association terms. It should be remembered, however, that in the early imperial Roman world, a degree of flexibility may have at times been necessary in the maintenance of a healthy, respectable, legal association. The society of Diana and Antinous just mentioned specifies, for example, that at least two important communal banquets are to be held in August (i.e., the birthday of Diana herself, and the birthday of local worthy Caesennius Silvanus),[711] while recognizing in the same inscription the official imperial order that no such society may meet more often than once a month.[712] The Christians referred to in the correspondence of Trajan and Pliny just discussed above were said to have met weekly. Varying rules on the the legally allowed frequency of such meetings (and/or varying local

[710] See the "Diary of dinners" listed in *ILS* 7212; *FIRA* III, no.35, Colum 2, lines 11-16 (cited in Beard, North, and Price, *Religions of Rome*, Vol.2, 294).

[711] *ILS* 7212; *FIRA* III, no.35, Column 2, lines 13-14.

[712] *ILS* 7212; *FIRA* III, no.35, Column 1, lines 10-12.

interpretations of such decrees, and/or varying levels commitment to their enforcement) could put such associations in a tight spot. Associations finding themselves in such complex and evolving administrative situations would at times have needed to be somewhat creative and flexible about honoring their special days. Rom 14:6 effectively sanctions this kind of flexibility for the ideal association addressed and defined by Romans, and gives its practice an appropriately special "insider" justification.

However special the rule laid down in Rom 14 about (not) observing days may have seemed, it is worth noting as well here that the argument appeals once again to common "outside" ideals in articulating this piece of insider definition. The one who eats and the one who abstains are each acceptable, it is explained, since each gives thanks (εὐχαριστεῖ). Giving thanks for food is a common ancient Jewish ideal practice (See Section 3.3), and also a common Greco-Roman ideal,[713] as seen for example in the exhortation of Epictetus: "For dry fruits, for wine, for olive oil, give thanks to God" (εὐχαρίστειτῷ θεῷ).[714] Here again, then, an appeal to a common ideal "outside" serves the definition of ideal community insiders, partly by defining the practice as ennobling service owed to the particular special god of the insiders, i.e., the "Lord" Jesus and/or the Jewish god imagined as his father (See Section 3.4). This dimension of ritual observance (or non-observance) articulates a shared

[713] See Jewett, *Romans*, 846; Schubert, *Form and Function of the Pauline Thanksgivings*, 85, 138-139; H.-J. Klauck, *Herrenmahl und hellenistischer Kult. Eine religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung zum Ersten Korintheerbrief* (Münster: Aschendorff, 1982), 278-279.

[714] Epictetus, *Dissertationes* 2.23.5.

unifying insider ideal by dedicating the entire assumed group (referred to collectively as "we" in 14:8) to this special god of insiders.

In a similar way, "the reference to not living or dying for oneself (ἑαυτῷ) reflects group identity," since ideal insiders have special shared identity by virtue of having a relationship with their special insider hero/god,[715] while simultaneously displaying positive engagement with "outside" values. Jewett cites here for example the saying attributed by Plutarch to Cleomenes that "it is shameful to die, as well as to live, for one's own self alone" (αἰσχρὸν γὰρ καὶ μόνοις ἑαυτοῖς καὶ ἀποθνῄσκειν).[716] The specification that ideal insiders observe this apparently widely-respectable principle as an expression of devotion to their own particular resurrected "Lord" qualifies its expression of positive engagement in a way now familiar from the similar examples above.

The degree to which the positive engagement with "outsider" ideals is qualified here can, however, be overstated. Jewett says for example that the movement from death to life on the part of "Christ [who] died and lived again" represents "a reversal of the usual career of famous people celebrated in Greco-Roman biography, moving from living to dying,"[717] and cites approvingly J. Gibson's argument[718] that this "Christian formula is also the antithesis to the tradition of the

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[715] Jewett, *Romans*, 847-848.

[716] Plutarch, *Agis et Cleomenes* 31.5.

[717] Jewett, *Romans*, 840.

[718] J. Gibson, "Paul's 'Dying Formula': Prolegomena to an Understanding of Its Import and Signficance," in *Celebrating Romans: Template for Pauline Theology. Essays in Honor of Robert Jewett* (ed. S. E. McGinn; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004), 28-40.

heroic warrior." Like the examples of "radical" and "countercultural" insider culture seen by commentators in Rom 14 discussed above, though, this decision to call the story of the death and resurrection of a community hero a countercultural "reversal" or "antithesis" looks like an overstatement. Stories about glorious killed and resurrected heroes and gods like Asclepius, Achilles, Castor, Herakles were, after all, popular enough in the world "outside" to prompt Justin Martyr to write: "When we say… Jesus Christ, our teacher, was crucified and died, and rose again, and ascended into heaven, we propose nothing different from what you believe regarding those whom you consider sons of Zeus."[719] It therefore seems once again safer to see here instead of a "reversal" a qualified positive engagement with "outside" ideas and values, framed from an insider point of view and articulated in a way serving a particular project of ideal insider community definition.

Why do you pass judgment on your brother or sister? Or you, why do you despise your brother or sister? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God. For it is written, "As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall give praise to God." So then, each of us will be accountable to God (Rom 14:10-12).

In Rom 14:10-12, the typical "brotherly" language of fictive kinship continues to stress the ideal insider duty of honorable mutuality. An appeal is made once again to special insider traditions of Jewish scriptures and a particular insider idea of the Jewish god (See Sections 3.3 and 3.4), to bolster and apply internally what been pointed out to be an attack on arrogance with numerous "outside" Greco-Roman

[719] Justin Martyr, *Apologia i,* 21.

parallels to be found in the challenging, haranguing language of the "diatribe."[720] Jewett compares for example "Who are you to judge your brother?" (σὺ δὲ τί κρίνεις τὸν ἀδελφόν σου;) in Rom 14:10 to the similar challenge (σὺ δ᾽εἶ τίς;) in Menander.[721] As Jewett also observes, the "generic" character of Rom 14 noted above persists throughout: "Paul contents himself with generalities here, apparently assuming that the Roman believers will make the proper decisions about how to follow the general guidelines."[722] Of course, from the point of view outlined in this study, the passage's continued failure to refer to specifics (about foods or days or groups or perceived faults in Rome or elsewhere) is more helpfully understood as serving the particular global project of community network definition articulated by the letter than a sign of authorial trust in any putative pre-existing unified addressee community in Rome. Values rhetorically constructed as respectable in theory to all respectable outsiders and unifying in theory for a wide variety of insiders are thereby presented as capable of serving any and all within the ideal global Pauline network depicted by the letter.

Let us therefore no longer pass judgment on one another, but resolve instead never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of another. I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself; but it is unclean for anyone who thinks it unclean. If your brother or sister is being injured by what you eat, you are no longer walking in love. Do not let what you eat cause the ruin of one for whom Christ died. So

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[720] Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, 372; Schlier, *Der Römerbrief*, 410; Stowers, *The Diatribe and Paul's Letter to the Romans*, 115.

[721] Menander, *Epitrepontes* 174.

[722] Jewett, Romans, 852, citing Nélio Schneider, "Die 'Schwachen' in der christlichen Gemeinde Roms Eine historisch-exegetische Untersuchung zu 14,1-15,13" (Ph.D Dissertation, University of Wuppertal, 1989), 157.

do not let your good be spoken of as evil. For the kingdom of God is not food and drink but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. The one who thus serves Christ is acceptable to God and has human approval (Rom 14:13-18).

In Rom 14:13-18, the references to an ideal plural but unified "you" and "us" continue, as does the "brotherly" language of fictive kinship, in pursuing the project of community definition. The exhortation remains, in Jewett's words, "abstract and generalizing,"[723] and thereby suitable to the letter's project of community network definition as described above. The introduction of the "I" of Paul (Rom 14:14) serves the same project in its own way, as the Paul of the letter claims a measure of global authority within this ideal inscribed "us" group, based on pre-existing Jesus tradition assumed to be authoritative (See Section 3.4). The Jesus and Paul of Rom 14 are thereby aligned with the implied ideal "us" of an overall "strong" group seen as behaving properly (a representation made even more explicit in Rom 15 below), framing the normal association need for "proper" peaceful meal practice once again in insider terms as an expression of loyalty to special insider Jesus tradition.

The implicit exhortation to judge rightly (shown above to be more evident in Rom 12-15 than the blanket judgment against judging posited by some commentators) is made more explicitly. The ideal addressees of Rom 14:13 will not engage in judging one another (μηκέτι οὖν ἀλλήλους κρίνωμεν:), but will rather judge rightly (κρίνατε μᾶλλον) that it is wrong to afflict other insiders with "stumbling blocks" (a special insider description of such troublemaking behavior inherited from Jewish tradition – See Section 3.3). "Judgment among members

[723] Jewett, *Romans*, 855, citing Nababan, "Bekenntis und Mission in Römer 14 und 15," 97.

should continue but in a way that guards against mutual caricature and arrogance,"[724] as Clarence Glad put it.

The exhortation in Rom 14:16 to "not let your good be slandered"[725] (μὴ βλασφημείσθω οὖν ὑμῶν τὸ ἀγαθόν) raises explicitly the normal ancient association concern discussed above of the threat of a bad external reputation resulting from unseemly internal behavior like the strewing about of stumbling-blocks (in this case a dishonorable lack of "brotherly" behavior in the context of commensality).[726] The added positive promise of human approval for good insider behavior (Rom 14:18) further underlines the fact that the ideal insider behavior of Rom 12-15 is related to the normal first-century association concerns seen in Chapter 1 and elsewhere above regarding external reputation: a good insider "serving Christ" in a way "acceptable to God" can expect, Rom 14:18 promises, to be "approved by men as well" (καὶ δόκιμος τοῖς ἀνθρώποις).

Because he has come to expect (as seen above) admirably "countercultural" ideals in Rom 12-15, Jewett finds it "odd" that human approval should be held out as an attractive ideal at this point: "That 'pleasing God' can so easily be combined with being 'acceptable to people' seems odd, in light of Paul's characteristic admonition not to be conformed to this world (e.g., Rom 12:1). Apparently, to be respected in

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[724] C. Glad, *Paul and Philodemus: Adaptability in Epicurean and Early Christian Psychagogy* (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 217.

[725] On βλασφημείσθω as "be slandered," see O. Hofius, "βλασφημέω κτλ.," *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament* 1 (1990): 220.

[726] See Jewett, *Romans*, 862; Reasoner, "The 'Strong' and the 'Weak' in Rome and in Paul's Theology" (PhD. Dissertation, University of Chicago, 1990), 71-73; J. Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans: The English Text with Introduction, Exposition, and Notes* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997), 193.

the world does not require conformity to its practices, but it does require attention to issues of honor and dishonor that would be exhibited in unseemly conflicts over food."[727] Of course, the offer of public approval for good insider behavior found in Rom 14:18 is not odd at all in light of the normal self-definitional habits and needs of subcultures in general (and ancient associations in particular) traced in this study above. According to the Law of the Membrane, the tendency of an in-group to represent itself as "standing out" honorably and the tendency for it to represent itself as "fitting in" honorably are inseparable, necessary sides of the same coin.

The reference to the "kingdom of God" being about more than food and drink provides yet another insider expression of ideals deemed honorable in the world "outside." As Peter-Ben Smit points out, the ideal loving, brotherly commensality promoted in Rom 14 might have sounded lot like an ideal symposium to a first-century audience deemed cultured and enlightened: ideal "brotherly" insider behavior is not all about food and drink *per se*, even when the sharing of food and drink is precisely the association activity being pursued.[728] I note here further that the process of identifying proper "enlightened" priorities in living well (in contradistinction to the less important *adiaphora* of life) was itself a popular Greco-Roman philosophical ideal, discernible in the exhortation of Rom 12-15.[729] The special insider expression of the "kingdom of God" experienced in "the Holy Spirit" in ideal insider commensality of Rom 14:13-18 is therefore depicted once again as

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[727] Jewett, *Romans*, 864.

[728] P.-B. Smit, "A Symposium in Rom 14:17? A Note on Paul's Terminology," *Novum Testamentum* 49 (2007): 52.

[729] See Gignac, *L'épître aux Romains*, 517.

deserving in theory of the honor and ἔπαινος of enlightened outsiders as well. Perhaps for this reason, the words "pleasing" (εὐάρεστος) and "approved" (δόκιμος) appear again together here, recalling the description of proper insider worship in Rom 12:1-2,[730] which was (as shown above) depicted in very special insider terms that could nevertheless command in theory the respect of enlightened Greco-Roman (and) Jewish outsiders.

Let us then pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding. Do not, for the sake of food, destroy the work of God. Everything is indeed clean, but it is wrong for you to make others fall by what you eat; it is good not to eat meat or drink wine or do anything that makes your brother or sister stumble. The faith that you have, have as your own conviction before God. Blessed are those who have no reason to condemn themselves because of what they approve. But those who have doubts are condemned if they eat, because they do not act from faith; for whatever does not proceed from faith is sin (Rom 14:19-22).

Rom 14:19-22 continues the rhetorical construction of ideal association insider community inscribed in the letter, using more "us" language and "brotherly" fictive kinship language, and extends the community-oriented priorities-versus-*adiaphora* ideal noted above by stressing that the community goals of edifying mutuality and in-group solidarity trump the goal of staking out specific positions on specific rules of conduct.[731] The ideal insider group of the letter is stressed again to be a "mutually nurturing community"[732] in line with the typical ideal Greco-Roman

[730] See Gignac, *L'épître aux Romains*, 520.

[731] See A. Gignac and A. Gagné, "N'est pas fort qui croyait l'être, et sa foi n'est pas celle qu'il convenait d'avoir!" *Theoforum* 35 (2004): 21-46; D. Horrel, "Solidarity and Difference: Pauline Morality in Romans 14:1-15:13," *Studies in Christian Ethics* 15 (2002): 60-78.

[732] Jewett, *Romans*, 866; See also R. Jewett, *Christian Tolerance: Paul's Message to the Modern Church*, 139; C. Kruse, *Paul, the Law and Justification* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1997), 238-239.

associations discussed above in Chapter 1, and Clarence Glad has in fact written about the resemblance of this community of mutual upbuilding to the Epicurean community ideal of mutual edification.[733] This theoretically widely-honorable ideal is, however, once again articulated in special insider terms like "clean" and "faith" and "sin" (See Sections 3.3 and 3.4), in accordance with the Law of the Membrane as discussed above.

Generalizing references to "anything" (14:21) and "everything" (14:23) capping an already remarkably general discussion paint the community rule laid out in Rom 14 as very broad in nature. I note here that it has proven very easy for commentators over the years to see this passage as describing the duty of all Christians to all Christians, whether in Rome[734] or in any time and place.[735] The ease with which commentators can assume that "Paul has the whole community of God in mind"[736] here points once again to how easily the formulation of insider community definition found in Rom 12-15 lends itself to general use. The exhortation of the passage is general enough to be applicable not only to the entirety of "the community" the letter constructs as a real, existing singular unit in Rome, but also to the ideal global Christian community the letter constructs as properly associated with Paul, his network, and his letters. The generalist retooling and redeployment in

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[733] Glad, *Paul and Philodemus*, 124-132.

[734] Jewett, *Romans*, 869-870.

[735] Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 491; Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, 829; Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, 378-380; Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 492.

[736] Jewett, *Romans*, 866; Cf. A. Schlatter, *Romans. The Righteousness of God* (S. Schatzmann, trans.; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1995), 258; Michel, *Der Brief an die Römer*, 436.

Rom 14 of the situational community-defining paraenesis found in 1 Corinthians thereby serves a new project of global community network definition.

The figure of Paul the exhorter that emerges in Rom 14 serves this project well (See Section 3.4). As noted by Judith Lieu, a widening shared interest in the translocal careers and letters of "individuals like Paul or Ignatius" seems to have supported the consolidation of a sense of global Christian unity.

> From very early, even texts which are locally conditioned convey a sense of the threads that connect them with others, perhaps particularly inspired by Paul's own self-understanding, and this means that the literary construction of Christianity's universal domain begins there also (for example, 1 Thess. 1. 6-10; Col. 1. 15-23).[737]

As Ian Henderson has pointed out, the ideal global network that emerged over time with help from the increasingly networked sharing of such leaders and letters involved complex community needs and negotiations concerning ideal Christian authority, and recalls the Roman imperial model of administration by letter.[738] From the point of view described in my Introduction, the global status and function of Paul the community definer as represented in his letters (and subsequently those of his imitators) is more important to the construction of identity and order in such an ideal global networked Christian community than "Paul's own self-understanding" *per se* (See Section 3.4). As the following community paraenesis found in Rom 15 shows, though, Lieu's basic point about the evolving application of "locally conditioned" community-defining Christian texts to projects of defining "global"

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[737] Lieu, *Christian Identity*, 22.

[738] Henderson, "Early Christianity, Textual Representation, and Ritual Extension," 86-87.

visions of networked Christian identity is supported by the application in Rom 12-15 of the results of a local project of insider community identity definition worked out in the Corinthian correspondence to a more explicitly global project of ideal community network definition.

We who are strong ought to put up with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Each of us must please our neighbor for the good purpose of building up the neighbor. For Christ did not please himself; but, as it is written, "The insults of those who insult you have fallen on me." For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, so that by steadfastness and by the encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope (15:1-4).

The theme of obligation mentioned above as opening the paraenesis (Rom 12:1) is made more explicit here, as the rules about food and days are folded into an even more general duty[739] to which all insiders "ought" and "must" attend. As before, the duty arises from an obligation to the group's generous (divine) patron, in line with the widely-shared first-century social value reflected in Cicero's assertion that "no duty is more imperative than that of proving one's gratitude" (*nullum enim officium referenda gratia magis necessarium est*).[740] The insider mutuality now depicted more explicitly in 15:1 as a "duty" by the verb ὀφείλειν is therefore "a social obligation that derives from a particular relationship in which benefits have already been received."[741]

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[739] Gignac, *L'épître aux Romains*, 525.

[740] *Off*. 1.47, cited by Jewett, *Romans*, 876 and Reasoner, *The Strong and the Weak*, 178.

[741] Jewett, *Romans*, 876, citing Reasoner, *The Strong and the Weak*, 192. See also Reasoner, *The Strong and the Weak*, 175-199; Danker, *Benefactor*, 436.

The implicit self-awarded status of the Paul and the ideal insiders of Rom 12-15 as "strong" is now made explicit in the reference to "we" the "strong." As Gignac points out, the complex movement back and forth between "you" and "we" in Rom 12-15 serves the emergence now and then of an ideal "we" wherein all are included.[742] In Rom 15, the assumed thinkable subgroup of the strong who do not judge the weak (as opposed to the assumed thinkable groups of the strong who judge, the weak who judge, and the weak who do not judge)[743] is even more clearly revealed as the ideal "we" of the entire group. All ideal insiders (whether they observe rules about foods and days or not) are assumed to be "strong" in the sense of acknowledging that specific rules about foods and days are *adiaphora* compared to their mutual duties of proper brotherly acceptance and support.

The potential implication here that "we the strong" are somehow superior by virtue of their enlightened and magnanimous attitude toward differences over the observance of foods and days has troubled some commentators. "It is extraordinary that he [Paul] can use such prejudicial language in a passage that is aimed at reconciliation,"[744] writes J. Ziesler, for example. Jewett addresses the implication of superiority by positing another counter-cultural "reversal" here in Rom 15: "The key is that while using the social language of honor and shame being employed in Rome," he explains, "Paul reverses the ordinary structure of obligation. Rather than the weak being forced to submit to the strong as was typical in Greco-Roman

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[742] Gignac, *L'épître aux Romains*, 505-507, 523.

[743] Gignac, *L'épître aux Romains*, 499.

[744] J. Ziesler, *Paul's Letter to the Romans* (Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1989), 337.

culture, the powerful are here under obligation to 'bear/carry' (βαστάζειν) the weaknesses of the powerless."[745]

The identification of "reversal" and "inversion" is, however, as overstated here as in the similar examples reviewed above. The reference in Jewett's argument to "the powerless" refers to fact noted above that "weakness" tended to connote a social dimension of helplessness or dependence, and it has already been noted above in discussing in the mockery directed at obsessive benefactors by Dio Chrysostom that powerful people seeking honor had a social obligation to be generous toward the less powerful, and depended in a sense upon the gratitude of beneficiaries for their status.[746] As another passage in the writings of Dio Chrysostom shows, the privileged, honorable work of benefaction and service could also be seen in the Greco-Roman world "outside" as an ennobling burden for the "strong" to bear.

> Do you really mean to say that being trusted [with some important private or public office] brings to those persons themselves some benefit? …Or, on the contrary, shall we say that such a responsibility is vexatious and the source of much trouble and many worries, sometimes indeed even of the greatest perils? But we may examine the question by beginning immediately with those who are thought to be of highest rank; for those of necessity neglect their private interests, both property and children, and devote their attention to the public interests and are absorbed in them… [Positions of power and trust] entail untold trouble and labours, and often not even gratitude, however slight, is their reward. On the contrary, it often happens that the very men who have

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[745] Jewett, *Romans*, 877. See the similar reference to "inversion" here in Gignac, *L'épître aux Romains*, 522-523.

[746] See also on this obligation and dependence S. Joubert, *Paul as Benefactor: Reciprocity, Strategy and Theological Reflection in Paul's Collection* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 54-55; deSilva, *Honor, Patronage, Kinship and Purity*, 97-119.

> received benefits at their hands charge them with not having paid all that is due with justice and clean hands.[747]

Dio Chrysostom's reference to the risk of being accused by one's inferiors of not acting with regard to all that is due (δικαίως) underlines the perceived "obligation" of powerful benefactors and public servants to serve their inferiors with magnanimous generosity, and also expresses the kind of patronizing and resentful attitudes such "strong" members of society may have entertained about the insufficiently grateful "weak" people they were obliged to support. The fact that social obligations toward the "weak" can be portrayed in this way by a member of the elite in the first century (as an ennobling burden to bear from the point of view of the "strong") complicates the claim that the similar portrayal of the ennobling burden of the "strong" in Rom 15:1 qualifies as a radical cultural "reversal."

The normal, important association insider duty of "brotherly" mutuality is once again given a special insider characterization and warrant with reference to the example of Jesus and a particular reading of Jewish scriptures as written for "us" (See Sections 3.3 and 3.4). In accordance with the Law of the Membrane, however, this duty remains recognizable and honorable in first-century cultural terms as a Greco-Roman association insider duty. Robert Jewett's claim here that mutual upbuilding is a radical and countercultural ideal "reversing the cultural habit of seeking honor for one's group while heaping dishonor on competitors"[748] is

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[747] Dio Chrysostom, *De fide* 73 (H. Lamar Crosby, ed. and trans.; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1964).

[748] Jewett, *Romans*, 879.

therefore once again overstated. As seen in Chapter 1, the promotion of in-group mutuality over competition deemed excessive or harmful is not an odd thing to find in an insider-to-insider association network letter. The reference to upbuilding or "edification" (15:2) also recalls here, I note, the Epicurean network ideal mentioned above, and the "heaping" of relative dishonor upon outsiders was in fact already seen as present above, in the reference of Rom 12:20 to heaping hot coals on the head of the enemy. It seems much safer, therefore, to say that common Greco-Roman cultural values are applied strategically here from an insider point of view to promote insider honor and ideal insider community definition, not "reversed."

May the God of steadfastness and encouragement grant you to live in harmony with one another, in accordance with Christ Jesus, so that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Welcome one another, therefore, just as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God. For I tell you that Christ has become a servant of the circumcised on behalf of the truth of God in order that he might confirm the promises given to the patriarchs, and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy. As it is written, "Therefore I will confess[w] you among the Gentiles, and sing praises to your name"; and again he says, "Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people"; and again, "Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles, and let all the peoples praise him"; and again Isaiah says, "The root of Jesse shall come, the one who rises to rule the Gentiles; in him the Gentiles shall hope." May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. (Rom 15:5-13).

In Rom 15:5-13, the focus on internal harmony phrased in terms that were remarkably general but also consistently capable of addressing cultural differences over the observance of Jewish rules about foods and days is promoted with reference to special insider tradition about the example of Christ, who has generously and humbly "become servant of the circumcised" (διάκονον γεγενῆσθαι περιτομῆς). The Greco-Roman ideal of duty of gratitude to a benefactor returns here

in the obligating reference to what the group's ultimate divine patron and benefactor has already done.[749] The honor of service discussed above is grounded in what is assumed to be the inspiring, humbling, and ultimately obligating and unifying action of the hero/god assumed to be most special to insiders. There is still no explicit reference to any real specific situation in Rome, but the theme of association in-group mutuality is thereby related explicitly to an ideal of Gentile-Jew unity, promoted in global terms in the following verses as justifying the collection and mission activities of Paul introduced soon after (see below).

The normal association need for mutuality in community and commensality is stressed again in special insider terms (Rom 15:7). Ideal insiders welcome each other as Christ has already welcomed them (See Section 3.4). As noted above, since "welcome" connotes acceptance into household/friendly/family circles, proper honorable hospitality and meal practice are likely implied again here.[750] Jewett sees here a universal welcome of some kind ("The Messiah welcomes both insiders and outsiders to his banquet"[751]), but the only explicit reference to those welcomed in the text remains focused on insiders (specifying the ἀλλήλους noted above to refer dependably in Romans to insider-to-insider attitudes and behaviors). The sub-subcultural inheritance of Jewish tradition is applied once again in articulating this insider vision of unity, with reference to the Jewish god as the father of Jesus and the ultimate divine source empowering community mutuality (15:6). The Paul of Rom

[749] See Gignac, *L'épître aux Romains*, 525.

[750] See Jewett, *Romans*, 888-889, citing Schlatter, *Romans. The Righteousness of God*, 260; Michel, *Der Brief an die Römer*, 447; Black, *Romans*, 200; Gignac, *L'épître aux Romains*, 515.

[751] Jewett, *Romans*, 889.

15:5-6 is thereby represented like the Ammonius of the *Letter of Ammonius to Apollonius* as praying for the crucial goal of unity, with reference as expected to the special god of the letter's inscribed ideal insiders (See Sections 3.3 and 3.4). The according reference in Rom 15:13 to ideal community life as made possible "by the power of the spirit" (ἐν δυνάμει πνεύματος) reaffirms this picture, as well as the implication discussed above that all ideal insiders are in some sense "we the strong" of Rom 15:1 (ἡμεῖς οἱ δυνατοὶ). The exhortation to unity of mind found in Rom 12 is repeated here,[752] as mutuality "toward one another" (Rom 12:16) reappears in Rom 15:7,[753] extended to include sharing mutuality "among one another" (Rom 15:5).[754] The ideal unified "you" group remains, stressing by the reference in Rom 15:6 to praising the special god of insiders "with one accord in one voice" (ὁμοθυμαδὸν ἐν ἑνὶ στόματι) the "unity" in "community."[755] As Gignac observes, the image is "performative" in that it promotes potential real unity by articulating an ideal unity.[756]

Ideal local unity is, by virtue of being represented in 15:7-13 as part of an ideal global unity destined to fulfil a divine promise to the Jews in a way that includes Gentiles, made to serve not only the articulation of an ideal local group with

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[752] Gignac, *L'épître aux Romains*, 527.

[753] See Gignac, *L'épître aux Romains*, 533.

[754] See B. Weiss, *Der Brief an der Römer* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1899), 571.

[755] See A. B. Dutoit, "Die Kirche als doxologische Gemeinschaft im Römerbrief," *Neotestamentica* 27 (1993): 69; Jewett, *Romans*, 884-885; Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, 383; Gignac, *L'épître aux Romains*, 528-529.

[756] Gignac, *L'épître aux Romains*, 523.

a social shape and identity of its own, but also a much larger ideal network to which it properly belongs. In the references to Gentiles as included in praising the Jewish god cited from Jewish scripture (Rom 15:9-12), the one-voiced community of praise imagined in Rom 15:6 becomes global.[757] This stress on the global nature of blessing coming to "all nations" through Israel in Rom 15:8-12 prepares the ground for the letter's upcoming promotion of Paul's own global mission, including the collection for Jerusalem and his planned trip to Spain (See Sections 3.3 and 3.4), and provides an example of the application of sub-subcultural material in building ideal glocal community identity in a way recalling the image of the cell as discussed above. If the local ideal community can be like a cell, the ideal global community can be like a body composed of such cells. The definition of inside and outside is still important to the functioning of the organism, and a healthy degree of separateness must still be achieved in negotiation with a healthy degree of engagement. Just as the cell mentioned above as unable to eat, eliminate, or communicate with its environment will die, a body unable to eat, eliminate, or communicate with its environment will die. The ideal global community of praise imagined in Rom 15:8-12 therefore functions in a sense as the properly functioning body that serves and is served by the properly functioning cell of the ideal local community of praise imagined in Rom 15:7 and 15:13, lending a "glocal" character to the ideal association network constructed by Romans and served by the paraenesis of Rom 12-15.

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[757] Jewett, *Romans*, 893, citing H. Schlier, *Besinnung auf das Neue Testament: Exegetische Aufsätze und Vorträge,* Vol. 2 (Freiburg: Herder, 1967), 315.

I myself feel confident about you, my brothers and sisters, that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, and able to instruct one another. Nevertheless on some points I have written to you rather boldly by way of reminder, because of the grace given me by God to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles in the priestly service of the gospel of God, so that the offering of the Gentiles may be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit (Rom 15:14-16).

As noted by Alain Gignac, the letter starts to sound more like a "real letter" between real, particular people again after Rom 15:13, making the entire body of teaching and preaching found in 1:18-15:13 sound almost parenthetical.[758] The ideal nature of the community promoted here should not, however, be forgotten. The construction of Paul as personally invested here, and personally connected to his addressees, continues to serve the construction of an ideal community (singular) of "brothers" at Rome, seen as properly related to an ideal global network in which Paul is a key figure.

The direct address made to "my brothers" suggests a mutuality of concern and respect in which Paul himself is explicitly included.[759] The fact that the members of the ideal existing unified community of insiders thus addressed are affirmed as already "empowered" (δυνάμενοι) to instruct one another (15:14) reinforces the implication discussed above that they are all ideally much like Paul, and included among the "we the strong" group evoked in Rom 15:1 (ἡμεῖς οἱ δυνατοὶ). The ideal community continues to be represented as one in which "members admonish and censure each other in friendship" as the philosophical

[758] Gignac, *L'épître aux Romains*, 539.

[759] See K. Schäfer, *Gemeinde als "Bruderschaft." Ein Beitrag zum Kirchenverständnis des Paulus* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1989), 348-350.

brothers/friends in an Epicurean association network might for example be expected to do.[760] The epistolary encouragement and chiding seen in Chapter 1 being offered to Arete by Aristippus, or to Apollonius and the "brothers" with him by Ammonius, provide good examples of what forms such insider-to-insider admonishing and edifying work might take. Jewett's analysis of Rom 15 runs counter to this impression, seeing here instead yet another radical reversal of typical Greco-Roman values, since "[r]ather than 'mature members' evaluating 'their erring co-members,' Paul assigns the 'weak' a responsibility to admonish the 'strong' and vice versa, thus undercutting the superiority claims that each side was making in Rome. It is a countercultural strategy of corporate psychagogy, reversing the hierarchical and elitist premises of the Mediterranean world."[761] Claims of a radical reversal look overstated here again, though, given that a Greco-Roman association member like Ammonius could (as seen in Chapter 1) admonish his more able benefactor Apollonius, given that the ideal insiders pictured in Rom 15 as doing the admonishing are (as noted above) in some sense all clearly "strong," and given that Paul himself is assumed here to be in a position due to special divine appointment to intervene and hand down instruction with authority (Rom 15:15-16).

Because ideal insiders are depicted in Rom 15:14-16 as already empowered to instruct one another, the instruction of the previous chapters is accordingly described in a polite and conciliatory way as a mere "reminder"[762] to them. Stanley

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[760] See Glad, *Paul and Philodemus*, 108.

[761] Jewett, *Romans*, 905.

[762] See Godet, *Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans*, 477; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 711; Jewett, *Romans*, 905; M. Kettunen, *Der Abfassungsweck des Römerbriefes* (Helsinki: Snomalainen

Olson has argued that Pauline "expressions of confidence in his addressees" like this should be read in the context of the practice seen in Hellenistic letters of prefacing requests with flattering apologies stressing that such requests are really quite unnecessary,[763] citing for example the Greek letter to an Egyptian official (*Papyrus Berlin* 2753) that begins its "reminder" concerning the sender's needs and the official's duties with the words, "I know well that without any letter from me, your Excellence can rely upon himself and has no need to be reminded of my affairs, but…"[764] For the purposes of this study, the mention of reminders here calls even more urgently for a reminder of my own that ancient paraenesis habitually "expresses or implies a shared world view"[765] and is phrased as a "reminder."[766] Ancient paraenesis dependably "*presents its worldview as an assumed* shared worldview in order to generate mutual identity."[767] The reference in Rom 15:15 to the instruction found in the letter as only a "reminder" about what its ideal inscribed addressees already do exemplifies this typical ancient paraenetic strategy, by talking about the ideal community articulated and promoted in Romans as already existing and accepted and normative. The Paul of Romans is accordingly constructed

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Tiedeakatemia, 1979), 151; Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 510; Sanday and Headlam, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 404.

[763] S. Olson, "Pauline Expressions of Confidence in His Addressees," *Catholic Bibilcal Quarterly* 47 (1985): 291.

[764] See Jewett, *Romans*, 903.

[765] Starr and Engberg-Pedersen, "Introduction," 4.

[766] Starr, "Was Paraenesis for Beginners?," 79-80.

[767] Tite, *Valentinian Ethics and Paraenetic Discourse*, 297.

as a "minister" or "ambassador of Christ" (λειτουργὸν Χριστοῦ)[768] the hero/god of the in-group, with a divine right and responsibility to intervene with such reminders arising from his important insider place in an ideal global community similarly assumed to be already in place and authoritative (See Section 3.4).

In Christ Jesus, then, I have reason to boast of my work for God. For I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me to win obedience from the Gentiles, by word and deed, by the power of signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God, so that from Jerusalem and as far around as Illyricum I have fully proclaimed the good news of Christ. Thus I make it my ambition to proclaim the good news, not where Christ has already been named, so that I do not build on someone else's foundation, but as it is written, "Those who have never been told of him shall see, and those who have never heard of him shall understand" (Rom 15:17-21).

The Paul of Romans is further constructed here as a special insider chosen and used by the special god of the ideal addressee insiders, supported by expert insider use of the sub-subcultural inheritance of Jewish scripture (See Sections 3.3 and 3.4). The network produced by his work in this capacity is represented as widespread and established, with a stress on what "Christ has accomplished" through him, and "fully." The global "we" network with which the ideal unified community in Rome is invited to identify is represented here as a global networked "we" with proper implementation of insider traditions and proper kinds of insider order and authority already in place.

The explicit reference to Paul's mission as "ambitious" (φιλοτιμούμενον) similarly stresses his important and honorable status (See Section 3.4). Robert

[768] See Jewett, *Romans*, 906-907, citing Godet, *Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans*, 477; Danker, *Benefactor*, 330-331; C. Spicq, "λειτουργέω κτλ.," *Theological Lexicon of the New Testament* 2 (1994): 382.

Jewett is careful in his analysis of this passage to differentiate Paul's ambition from the pursuit of honor seen as driving the "outside" world by warning the reader that in the first century φιλοτιμία "no longer was restricted to the technical sense of striving after civic honors, and was being used to describe vocational goals or the willingness to carry out a task set by a superior,"[769] but it nevertheless seems clear that some kind of honor is being claimed here for Paul.[770] It is worth noting that the example Jewett offers of φιλοτιμία as denoting a desire to fulfil a vocational goal is the reference of Josephus (*Ant*. 15.330) to Herod as "ambitious [φιλοτιμούμενος] to leave behind to posterity still greater monuments of his reign than cities." It is very hard to understand Herod's imputed motivations thus described without any reference to the pursuit of honor. The legitimization of Paul's mission "by power of signs and miracles" (Rom 15:19) is, furthermore, not only in line with ancient Jewish expectations (See Section 3.3), but would also be expected to mark his career as impressive and important in Hellenistic and Roman environments.[771]Finally, as Jewett himself notes, "modestly boastful statements similar to the one commencing in this verse have an honored place in Greco-Roman, ambassadorial rhetoric."[772] This too is hard to reconcile with a reading of Paul's reference to his own φιλοτιμία as a global λειτουργός as admirably unrelated to the kind of Greco-Roman pursuit of

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[769] Jewett, *Romans*, 915, citing Lendon, *Empire of Honor*, 86; G. Horsley, "φιλοτιμία," *New Documents Illustrating Early Christianity* 1 (1981): 88, etc.

[770] See Gignac, *L'épître aux Romains*, 545.

[771] Jewett, *Romans*, 911.

[772] Jewett, *Romans*, 909, citing S. Olson, "Epistolary Uses of Expressions of Self-Confidence," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 103 (1984): 588. See also Jewett, *Romans*, 914. See also Gignac, *L'épître aux Romains*, 553; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 713.

honor Jewett posits "outside." It seems much safer, once again, to see common Greco-Roman values framed in insider terms and applied in ideal insider community network definition here, not an admirable freedom from inferior outsider values.

This is the reason that I have so often been hindered from coming to you. But now, with no further place for me in these regions, I desire, as I have for many years, to come to you when I go to Spain. For I do hope to see you on my journey and to be sent on by you, once I have enjoyed your company for a little while (Rom 15:22-24).

The reference here to Paul's ambition to reach Spain confirms the impressively global character of the mission and ideal insider network described in Rom 12-15. As the "end of the earth" on common ancient maps,[773] Spain was commonly seen as the western edge of the world.[774] The assertion that there is no longer any need for Paul "in these regions" evokes the success of a widely and solidly established network ready for such a far-flung step in Paul's global mission.[775] The unified Roman community constructed as already known and dear to Paul (see too the address "beloved" of 12:19) is invited to be a part of this ideal network by receiving and helping Paul on his way (Rom 15:24). The verb used to refer to being sent on by them (προπεμφθῆναι) denotes elsewhere in NT usage the

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[773] Dunn, *Romans* 9-16; 872; Jewett, *Romans*, 912, citing K. Miller, *Mappaemundi. Die ältesten Weltkarten* (Stuttgart: Roth, 1895-1898), 6, 145-149; O. Dilke, "Maps in the Service of the State: Roman Cartography to the End of the Augustan Era," in *The History of Cartography, Vol. 1, Cartography in Prehistoric, Ancient, and Medieval Europe and the Mediterranean* (J. B. Harley and D. Woodward, eds.; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 205-209. See also Jewett, *Romans*, 924.

[774] Gignac, *L'épître aux Romains*, 542, citing S. Légasse, *L'épître de saint Paul aux Romains* (Paris, Cerf, 2002), 925

[775] See C. K. Barrett, *A Commentary on The Epistle to the Romans* (New York: Harper, 1991), 277; Nils A. Dahl, *Studies in Paul: Theology for the Early Christian Mission* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 1977); Jewett, *Romans*, 923; Gignac, *L'épître aux Romains*, 546, 553-554.

providing of material support for people traveling on their own (1 Cor 16:6, 11; 2 Cor 1:16; Titus 3:13, 3; 3 John 6; Acts 15:3), leading C. H. Dodd to conclude that "the expression seems to have been almost a technical term with a well-understood meaning among missionaries."[776] In this way, the typical use discussed in Chapter 1 of letters as association tools serving the proper moving around of insider personnel (*Aristippus to Arete* 1-5, 23-24) and resources (*Ammonius to Apollonius* 3-13, 22-24) reappears here in Romans.

The proper ideal insider behaviour stressed in previous chapters of giving, hospitality, teaching and exhorting has laid the groundwork for Paul's request here in Rom 15, with the result that the ideal community addressed in Rome is offered a chance to help make the ideal network constructed by the letter real to some degree. In receiving Paul, receiving blessings from Paul, and sending him on to Spain, ideal community members can get in on the relationships of reciprocity painted in Rom 12-15 between Jews, Gentiles, Judea, the nations, the ideal global network of Pauline churches, and Paul himself (See also the discussion of the collection for Jerusalem below).[777] The established and global nature of the network described in Rom 15:17-30 means that the offer of a relationship with Paul in Rom 15:24 and 28 entails the offer of belonging to a wide, solid network with established global leadership (See Section 3.4).

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[776] C. H. Dodd, *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans* (London: Collins, 1959), 229. See Jewett, *Romans*, 925-926; Michel, *Der Brief an die Römer,* 463; Gignac, *L'épître aux Romains*, 554.

[777] See Gignac, *L'épître aux Romains*, 547.

The reference to Paul's longstanding desire to visit Rome recalls the stress and vocabulary of Rom 1:11-13, which both marks good rhetorical style[778] and reintroduces the typical tone and topics of a "non-literary" letter,[779] further supporting the sense noted above that the entire bulk of the letter is a kind of parenthesis supporting the idea of Paul's proposed visit. Paul and his network need to be in a relationship of mutual support with some kind of viable insider community in Rome for the Spain plan to be feasible,[780] and that ideal sponsoring community in Rome needs to be an organized, functional group willing and able to participate in such a plan.[781]

At present, however, I am going to Jerusalem in a ministry to the saints; for Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to share their resources with the poor among the saints at Jerusalem. They were pleased to do this, and indeed they owe it to them; for if the Gentiles have come to share in their spiritual blessings, they ought also to be of service to them in material things. So, when I have completed this, and have delivered to them what has been collected, I will set out by way of you to Spain; and I know that when I come to you, I will come in the fullness of the blessing of Christ. I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to join me in earnest prayer to God on my behalf, that I may be rescued from the unbelievers in Judea, and that my ministry to Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints, so that by God's will I may come to you with joy and be refreshed in your company. The God of peace be with all of you. Amen (Rom 15:25-33).

The description in Rom 15:25-33 of the collection for Jerusalem continues the construction of the ideal addressees of Romans as a unified ideal local

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[778] Jewett, *Romans*, 921, 923.

[779] Jewett, Romans, 921, citing Michel, *Der Brief an die Römer*, 462; White, *Light from Ancient Letters*, 190-191.

[780] Gignac, *L'épître aux Romains*, 542.

[781] See Jewett, *Romans*,922-926.

community properly associated with Paul's global community network. The mention of Macedonia, Achaia, and Jerusalem as associated with Paul and his mission and network underlines the global character of the ideal network of Pauline mission and mutual insider care represented. The material help offered to Jerusalem in return for spiritual blessings received mirrors and further ennobles the material support the ideal Roman community is invited to give Paul in return for the spiritual blessings offered by his fellowship.[782] The proper insider behavior of sharing with saints mentioned in Rom 12:13 takes on new meaning in the context of Paul's "ministry to the saints" in Rom 15:25, since (with or without sending a contribution of their own for the "saints" in Jerusalem) the ideal community at Rome can, by supporting and communing with Paul, establish itself as a new important node in the global network depicted by the letter to be participating in shared important global business by working with him.[783] Dieter Georgi may therefore conclude that the simple, matter-of-fact language of Rom 15:25 marks it as an "unpretentious statement"[784] on Paul's part, but in reality a collection depicted as making a global community real through relationships of obligation and mutuality[785] makes Paul a very important and honorable figure by definition in the first-century Mediterranean world (See Section 3.4).[786] The collection is thereby represented in

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[782] Gignac, *L'épître aux Romains*, 547-548.

[783] Gignac, *L'épître aux Romains*, 544.

[784] D. Georgi, *Remembering the Poor. The History of Paul's Collection for Jerusalem* (I. Racz, trans.; Nashville: Abingdon, 1992), 115.

[785] Joubert, *Paul as Benefactor*, 216-219; See also Gignac, *L'épître aux Romains*, 555.

[786] Joubert, *Paul as Benefactor*, 216-219; See also Gignac, *L'épître aux Romains*, 555.

Rom 15 as yet another honorable way in which Paul is the special sacred global assistant of Christ.[787]

The ideal Roman addressee insiders continue to be addressed in the passage as a single group of "brothers" assumed to value his work in Macedonia, Achaia, Jersusalem, and Spain and welcome him. They are the kind of "brothers" assumed to be willing to pray for Paul to be safe from the "unbelievers" in Jerusalem. Just as the Paul of the letter prays for them (1:10), they can pray for him (15:30),[788] drawing them closer to him and also drawing them further into the ennobling global Pauline mission of the collection.[789] The assumption expressed in Rom 15:31-32 that an ideal insider community at Rome will want to pray for the delivery of the collection to succeed "*so that I can come to you*" (and then be sent on to Spain) assumes that ideal insiders at Rome will just naturally want to be a part of both the eastern Jerusalem collection dimension of the global Pauline network mission described in the letter and the western Spanish mission dimension as well.

In the ways just described, the global community depicted in Rom 12-15 as offering functional, honorable structures of insider identity, order, and mutual support is made very explicit in Rom 15. The construction of ideal insider community definition articulated with reference to a particularly globalizing understanding of a sub-subcultural relationship with Jews and Jewish tradition is

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[787] See Gignac, *L'épître aux Romains*, 546, 552-553, citing Cranfield, *Romans 9-16*, 755; Dunn, *Romans 9-16,* 859, etc.

[788] Gignac, *L'épître aux Romains*, 544.

[789] See R. Aasgaard, *"My Beloved Brothers and Sisters!" Christian Siblingship in Paul* (London: T. & T. Clark International, 2004), 275-278; Jewett, *Romans*, 934.

maintained, and represented as explicitly and literally global with reference to the collection aimed at serving "the saints" in Jerusalem and the Spanish mission aimed at bringing "the nations" into the promises made to Israel (See Section 3.3). David Sloane Wilson's point noted in introducing this study about the sociological importance of the eventual Christian subcultural development of "a membrane and a social physiology comparable to Judaism for anyone who wanted to join, regardless of their ethnicity"[790] is therefore worth recalling here. The construction of exactly that kind of global community-defining "membrane" is demonstrably served by the paraenesis of Rom 12-15, supporting the claim of this study that clear and comprehensive ideas of "the purpose" of the passage and "the purpose of Romans" need to include community definition as central. Sloane Wilson's mention of the fact that the construction of the "membrane" in question here can be helpfully understood with reference to Judaism is also worth attention in that it leads the discussion to a new necessary point: The ideal insider culture thus defined in Rom 12-15 is not only articukated (as predicted by the Law of the Membrane defined in the Introduction and demonstrated by the review of this section) in negotiated terms vis-à-vis "outside" Greco-Roman cultural systems of identity and order. As the following section makes clear, a similar instantiation of the subcultural Law of the Membrane can be seen at work in the way the passage's ideal inscribed association network is defined in qualified positive terms vis-à-vis Jewish cultural traditions, in order to represent the "inside" as being identifiably and honorably "special" without

[790] Sloan Wilson, *Darwin's Cathedral*, 151.

being dishonorably unintelligible or dysfunctional vis-à-vis wider “outside” social structures of identity and order.

Section 3.3. Jewish Association Network Definition in Rom 12-15

The Greco-Roman Jewish association network letters reviewed in Chapter 2 served important social functions in the definition and regulation of first-century Jewish community networks. Like Greco-Roman association network letters generally, they served a variety of community needs, from facilitating the moving around of insider resources to articulating/instantiating insider structures of social identity and order. It was shown that the definition of ideal subcultural inside worlds found in such letters was articulated in complex terms of qualified positive engagement with ideal, projected wider cultural worlds outside. The exegesis of this section shows that Rom 12-15 displays comparable Jewish epistolary characteristics, appropriate to the service of comparable functions of ideal community network definition. As Chapter 2 stressed, although it is clear that first-century Jewish letters were shaped by Hellenistic epistolary forms/habits,[791] it is also clear that Jewish epistolary culture had characteristic aims and forms of its own.[792] Lutz Doering has identified, for example, three characteristics that Jewish "diaspora letters" have in common: they are characterized by 1) a translocal, subcultural focus on issues of community conduct, 2) the use of scriptural example and argument, and 3) a frequent stress on eschatological expectation – all of which look highly relevant, he suggests, to the study of NT letters.[793] As demonstrated

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[791] See Doering, *Ancient Jewish Letters*, 500-507; Aune, *The New Testament in Its Literary Environment*, 177-180, etc.

[792] see Aune, *The New Testament in Its Literary Environment*, 180.

[793] Doering, *Ancient Jewish Letters*, 511-512.

below, Doering's suggestion is confirmed as accurate and relevant here by the important presence of these Jewish "diaspora letter" characteristics in Rom 12-15.

I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship (Rom 12:1).

The subordination of literal Temple-related "sacrifice" and "worship" in the rhetoric of Rom 12:1 to proper insider attitudes and behavior (as described in the verses that follow – see below) indicates a clear but complex relationship with Jewish tradition. On the one hand, it recalls the similar community-minded stress found in prophetic "critiques" of temple worship: "'The multitude of your sacrifices – what are they to me?' says the Lord… 'Learn to do right; seek justice. Defend the oppressed'" (Isaiah 1:1-17). As noted in the previous section, on the other hand, the promotion of the proper worship and sacrifice owed to the god of Israel as "spiritual" or "reasonable" worship represents remarkably "Hellenistic" ideals. Räisänen's argument that the evidence of Paul's letters qualifies him as a "Hellenist" in his attitude toward first-century Christian culture's Jewish inheritances[794] therefore seems to find support in this passage, recalling as it does Hellenistic Jewish ideals of proper worship.[795] This qualified positive engagement with Hellenistic ideals is, from the point of view on subcultural self-definition outlined above in the Introduction, to be expected. As noted in Chapter 1 with reference to

[794] H. Räisänen *Paul and the Law* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), 251-256; H. Räisänen, *Jesus, Paul and Torah. Collected Essays* (D. E. Orton, trans.; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1992), 149-202.

[795] See for example W. Gilders, "Jewish Sacrifice: Its Nature and Function (According to Philo)," in *Ancient Mediterranean Sacrifice* (J. Wright Knust and Z. Várhelyi, eds.; Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2011), 94-105; See also Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, 711; Barrett, *Commentary on Romans*, 232.

the work of Shaye Cohen, John Barclay and others, "Jewishness" was defined in the ancient world in terms of insider identity imagined in terms of borders and boundaries with "pagan" cultures "outside," and as noted with reference to Martin Hengel and others, the borders thus imagined were porous and continually-negotiated borders. Every known Jewish identity of the first century was therefore to some degree a Hellenistic Jewish identity. As noted by Judith Lieu, early Christian writers "inscribed" and promoted communal "identities" by asserting both "continuities and discontinuities" with contemporary Jewish cultural habits and ideals.[796] The appropriation of common Jewish symbols and ideals discernible in Rom 12:1 marks the community-defining advice of Rom 12-15 from the start as an exercise in precisely such negotiated community identity definition, operating according the Law of the Membrane as surely as the self-definition seen in Section 3.2 as articulated in negotiated terms vis-à-vis a Greco-Roman cultural "outside."

As noted in Chapter 1, first-century Hellenistic Jewish culture is widely recognized as relevant in understanding the evolution of early Christian culture, since the earliest groups of Jesus devotees (in Rome as elsewhere) were drawn from environments connected to urban Jewish communities and synagogues,[797] including the groups one might call emerging "Pauline churches."[798] One of the first questions involved in theorizing and investigating early Christian identity is therefore its

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[796] Lieu, *Neither Jew Nor Greek?*, 1-6. See also Lieu, *Christian Identity in the Jewish and Graeco-Roman World*, 98-146.

[797] See Donfried, "A Short Note on Romans 16," 47-48; Wayne A. Meeks, *The Moral World of the First Christians*, 108-110; Wiefel "The Jewish Community in Ancient Rome and the Origins of Roman Christianity," 85-101; Stark, *The Rise of Christianity*, 129-145.

[798] See Barclay, *Pauline Churches and Diaspora Jews*, 3.

relationship to ancient constructions of Jewish identity.[799] The precise types and degrees of "Jewishness" discernible in Romans are, however, topics of scholarly debate. In the years following the anti-Semitic violence of World War 2, scholars looking for ways to avoid reading Paul in anti-Jewish ways[800] explored approaches like the one modeled by W. D. Davies in *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism*,[801] in which the extremely well-established attention to Paul's use of the traditions of Israel took a noticeable turn away from a tendency to read Paul against (Pharisaic) "Judaism" toward treating Judaism (both "Palestinian" and "Hellenistic/Diaspora") more as a "neutral" cultural "background."[802] In this new interpretive climate, the historical tendency to read Romans in particular as the primary document of "Paul against Judaism" fell out of favour,[803] as scholars recognized an interpretive need (methodological and ethical) to understand Paul as a Jew.[804] As noted already above,

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[799] See for example Holmberg, "Understanding the First Hundred Years of Christian Identity," 1.

[800] Amy-Jill Levine, *The Misunderstood Jew. The Church and the Scandal of the Jewish Jesus* (New York: HarperOne, 2007), 4-5, 87-88; Frank D. Gilliard, "The Problem of the Antisemitic Comma between 1 Thessalonians 2.14 and 15," *New Testament Studies* 35 (1989): 481-502; M. D. Nanos, *The Mystery of Romans. The Jewish Context of Paul's Letter* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996).

[801] William D. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism: Some Rabbinic Elements in Pauline Theology*. London: S.P.C.K., 1948.

[802] E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism. A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977), 7. Cf. Johannes Munck, "Pauline Research Since Schweitzer," in *The Bible in Modern Scholarship: Papers read at the 100th meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature, December 28-30*, 1964 (J. P. Hyatt, ed.; Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1965), 174.

[803] See, for example, John G. Gager, *The Origins of Anti-Semitism* (New York, Oxford, 1985); Lloyd Gaston, *Paul and the Torah* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1987), 22-23.

[804] See, for example, Pamela Eisenbaum, *Paul Was Not a Christian: The Real Message of a Misunderstood Apostle* (New York: HarperCollins, 2009); Daniel Boyarin, *A Radical Jew: Paul and the Politics of Identity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994); Nanos, *The Mystery of Romans*; Räisänen, *Paul and the Law*; idem, *Jesus, Torah and Paul*; P. J. Tomson, *Paul and the Jewish Law: Halakha in the Letters of the Apostle to the Gentiles* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 1-30, 259-264.

scholars continue to disagree on how much of Romans 12-15 refers to Jewish groups (whether "inside" or "outside" the letter's intended audience) in Rome,[805] but it is nevertheless clear that Hellenistic Jewish habits of community self-definition and self-expression were inherited and exploited by early Christian cultures,[806] and as Wayne Meeks has observed, one such habit that is particularly relevant in reading Pauline letters is the kind of cultural negotiation with Hellenistic culture "outside" just described: "On the whole, it is likely that the Christians made their appearance in the Greek cities as a sect within the Jewish communities. As this sect developed its own life in the urban environment, it doubtless absorbed many of the ways of thinking and took as its own many of the ways of adapting to the pluralist culture around it that generations of other Jews had learned."[807]

In terms of the specifically epistolary expression of these principles, it is worth noting that the reference in Rom 12:1 to ideal insider addressees as "brothers" recalls both the fictive kinship language of the Greco-Roman letters reviewed in Chapter 1 and the Jewish kinship language seen in the letters reviewed in Chapter 2. The usage thereby identifies and ennobles ideal insiders in a way intelligible and honorable in theory to outsiders, including other associations given to using the same strategy, marking the ideal insiders of Rom 12-15 once again as special like everyone else. The particular fictive insider family denoted is defined,

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[805] See also Werner G. Kümmel, *Introduction to the New Testament* (H. C. Kee, trans.; New York: Abingdon, 1973), 309-310; Stowers, *Rereading Romans*, 22-33.

[806] See Harland, *Associations, Synagogues, and Congregations*, 11, 20-21; Todd Penner, *In Praise of Christian Origins: Stephen and the Hellenists in Lukan Apologetic Historiography* (New York: T&T Clark, 2004), 224-260.

[807] Meeks, *The Moral World of the First Christians*, 110.

through the passage's reference to proper service offered to the god of Israel, as the "brothers" who are the proper heirs of the traditions and promises of Israel. The implication that there may be other competing groups unworthy of being thus recognized as proper heirs to these traditions is picked up by Philip Esler, who sees ideal insiders being defined in Rom 12:1-2 in contradistinction to most "Judeans" or "Israelites," who are not Jesus devotees: "When Paul, as early as Romans 12:1-2, tells the Roman Christ-followers who they are and who they are not, he is adopting the basic strategy of in-group/out-group differentiation. The outgroups he has in mind are Judeans who have not converted to Christ."[808] The "unbelievers" in Jerusalem in Rom 15:31 would offer an explicit example of such rhetorically useful outsiders. In this depiction of comparable people as "not truly insiders," the insider-epistolary strategy referred to above as explored in Galatians by Sullivan and Anible, and in 1 Corinthians by Klostergaard Petersen, of defining ideal insider addressee communities through the articulation and promotion of ideals of "legitimacy, inclusion, exclusion, and virtue" is discernible in Rom 12-15. Whether the inferior worship of "the unbelievers" is adumbrated or not in Rom 12:1, in the context of the claim laid to proper insider Jewish identity, the hortatory turn seen in the phrase "I urge you therefore, brothers" (παρακαλῶ οὖν ὑμᾶς, ἀδελφοί) recalls the "and now/and therefore" hortatory turns seen in the Diaspora Letters reviewed in

[808] Esler, "Social Identity," 59; See also Esler, *Conflict and Identity in Romans*, 311: "The outgroups here are Israelites who have not turned to Christ and who continue with the sacrificial cult." On the "social function" of definition in Romans of Pauline insiders over against Jews who are not Jesus devotees, see also F. Watson, *Paul, Judaism, and the Gentiles: A Sociological Approach* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 172; Reasoner, "The Theology of Romans 12:1-15:13," in *Pauline Theology, Vol. 3. Romans* (D. M. Hay and E. E. Johnson, eds.; Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1995), 294-295.

Chapter 2.[809] In this way, the paraenesis of Rom 12-15 is introduced as legitimate Jewish epistolary paraenesis (or "halakha" – see below) with a special insider character represented as qualifiedly, honorably Greco-Roman.

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. For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of yourself more highly than you ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned (Rom 12:2-3).

The representation here (discussed in Section 3.1) of ideal insiders as simultaneously not belonging to the world "outside" and yet somehow excelling in terms deserving in theory of its ἔπαινος takes on a particular shape given the Jewish dimension specified by repeated reference to insider ideal loyalty to the Jewish god. Although Jewish populations living under the early Roman empire often enjoyed a certain level of status or favor (I have already noted that King Herod, for example, enjoyed close ties with Rome and reciprocated with emperor-cult-dedicated temples),[810] they were also often viewed with suspicion and disdain by elites. In Rome itself, for example, the status of Jews as a tolerated group was often complicated, and not always secure,[811] a state reflected in in the opinions expressed

[809] See also C. J. Bjerkelund on the resemblance of Rom 12:1 to LXX 2 Macc 9:26 in *PARAKALÔ. Form, Funktion un Sinn der parakalô-Sätze in den paulinischen Briefen* (Oslo: Universitetsvorlaget, 1967), 91-92.

[810] Smallwood, *The Jews under Roman Rule*, 137; E. M. Smallwood, "The Diaspora in the Roman Period before CE 70," in *The Cambridge History of Judaism. III. The Early Roman Period* (W. Horbury et al. eds.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 171; P. Richardson, *Herod: King of the Jews and Friend of the Romans* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999), 174-215; L.C. Kahn, "King Herod's Temple of Roma and Augustus at Caesarea Maritima," in A. Raban and K.C. Holum, *Caesarea Maritima: A Retrospective after Two Millennia* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1996), 130-45; E. Nezter, "The Augusteum at Samaria-Sebaste. A New Outlook," *Eretz-Israel* 19 (1987): 95-105.

[811] Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora*, 282-292.

by elite writers and governors of the early imperial era.[812] "Not long after Paul wrote his letter to Rome," notes Neil Elliott, "the emperor Nero's adviser Seneca complained bitterly about the Judean population of the city. 'The customs of this accursed race have gained such influence that they are now received throughout the world. The vanquished have given laws to the victors…' It had been more than a century since the Roman general Pompey subjugated distant Judea and introduced thousands of his captives as slaves in Rome, causing his contemporary Cicero to characterize the whole people as 'born to slavery' (*Of the Consular Provinces* 5:10)."[813]

The social status of Jews in Rome can therefore be described as somewhat liminal, being characterized in turns by respect, tolerance, suspicion and derision. Most seem to have lived in poorer neighborhoods and their right to assemble was at times precarious.[814] They often faced the disgrace of social exclusion (sometimes to the point of ostentatious orders of mass expulsion) as part the imperial project of Roman identity definition in contradistinction to the "foreign" and the "other."[815] In this context, Jews struggling to define their own respectable identities can be found imitating elite Hellenistic Roman culture and even mocking other "barbarian" groups as being insufficiently "Greek" and/or "Roman," in order to represent

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[812] Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora*, 292-319.

[813] Elliott, "Disciplining the Hope of the Poor," 177.

[814] See Esler, *Conflict and Identity in Romans*, 84-100.

[815] See Birgit van der Lans, "The Politics of Exclusion. Expulsion of Jews and Others from Rome," in *People under Power. Early Jewish and Christian Responses to the Roman Empire* (M. Labahn and O. Lehtipuu, eds.; Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2015); Margaret H. Williams, "The Disciplining of the Jews of Ancient Rome: Pure Gesture Politics?," in *Studies in Latin Literature and Roman History*, Vol. XV (C. Deroux, ed.; Brussels: Latomus, 2010).

themselves as properly "Greek" and/or "Roman."[816] This first-century Jewish subcultural habit offers another example of the "social creativity" described and discussed more than once above, whereby a subcultural group of dubious social status can represent itself as honorably similar to a dominant culture by stressing the relative failure of a subculture of equal or even lower status to approximate the perceived qualities and values of that dominant culture: "Rather than make social comparisons with the dominant group where the outcome is inevitable and immutable (relatively low self-esteem for subordinate group members)," observe Hogg and Adams, "comparisons can be made with other subordinate groups or, better still, with even lower-status groups."[817] The idea just seen expressed in Rom 12:1 of proper Jewish sacrifice as honorably philosophical and reasonable in nature was also promoted by Philo, for example, as yet another way to show that real Jews, good Jews were not like the unenlightened "barbarians" rightly looked down upon by all cosmopolitan and enlightened (i.e., properly Hellenized) inhabitants of the Roman empire.[818]

Since (as noted above) most of the first Christian assemblies in Rome, as elsewhere, likely drew members from and/or had ties of other kinds with Jewish assemblies, and since (as shown in Section 3.1) the ideal addressees of Rom 12-15

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[816] See Katell Berthrlot, "The Use of Greek and Roman Stereotypes of the Egyptians by Hellenistic Jewish Apologists, with Special Reference to Josephus' Against Apion." in *Internationales Josephus-Kolloquium Aarhus 1999* (J. U. Kalms and F. Siegert, eds.; Münster: LIT, 2000); Landau, *Out-Heroding Herod*; Ricker, "Foreign Tyrants."

[817] M. A. Hogg and D. Abrams, *Social Identifications: A Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations and Group Processes* (New York: Routledge, 1988), 28-29; Cf. 56-58; See also H. Tajfel, "La catégorisation sociale," 293.

[818] See W. Gilders, "Jewish Sacrifice: Its Nature and Function (According to Philo)," 94-105.

value their Jewish cultural inheritances and seek Jew-Gentile unity, the validation of Jews and Jewish culture discernible here is important to the definition of the ideal insider community constructed by Romans. The liminal and isolated status of ideal Jewish insiders is thereby redefined (like the status of low-status ideal insiders in general, as seen in Section 3.1) as an ennobling choice to refuse to be conformed to the system of the dominant world outside – a choice imagined nevertheless in philosophical-sounding terms exemplifying in theory the best ideals of that outside world (seen for example in the phrase εἰς τὸ σωφρονεῖν in 12:3, recalling the stress on performing the community's λογικὴν λατρείαν and the reference to νοός just seen above in Rom 12:1). Ideal insiders are thereby imagined as able to excel in ways also valued in theory outside. In Rom 12:3, it is specified further that the typically Greco-Roman ideal of enlightened, sober thinking is possible for insiders through ideal Jewish insider means, i.e., by means of "the measure of faith that God has assigned." An ideal Jewish "inside" thereby emerges that manages to compare favourably with outside ideals, and to suggest the existence of other groups compared to which it is superior – real or hypothetical groups who fail to deserve ἔπαινος and/or fail to serve the special god of the insiders properly, such as the people who engage in unseemly disputations and lose the right to the honor of both the god of the insiders and "all men" outside in Rom 14:1-18, or the "unbelievers" in Jerusalem in Rom 15:25-33 whose competing brand of Jewish identity and practice is not ideal (see below).

For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are

members one of another. We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophecy, in proportion to faith; ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching; the exhorter, in exhortation; the giver, in generosity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness. Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor. Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers (Rom 12:4-13).

In Rom 12:4-13, the kind of piety stressed in previous lines as due to the Jewish god (defined in special insider terms as the father of Jesus, and at times conveniently indistinguishable as here in Rom 12:12 from Jesus as "Lord" – see Section 3.4) is further described in terms of qualified positive engagement with common first-century Greco-Roman Jewish ideals. The stress on proper holy "zeal" expressed in prayerful obedience recalls the Jewish insider ideals and identities promoted in the Maccabean letters reviewed in Chapter 2 above, and as some commentators have noticed, the reference to meeting "the needs of the saints" strongly connotes community support for relatively underprivileged Jewish insiders, potentially in terms of future offerings for "the saints" in Jerusalem (like the one promoted later as important in Rom 15:25-31),[819] help for local Roman Jewish insiders targeted by the emperor Claudius,[820] etc.

Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly; do not claim to be wiser than you are.
Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all.
If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all (Rom 12:14-18).

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[819] See Zahn, *Der Brief des Paulus an die Römer*, 550-551.

[820] Jewett, *Romans*, 764.

As noted by Jewett and others, the kind of ideal insider excellence of character and behavior expressed here in humility and rejoicing with those who rejoice and weeping with those who weep (seen above to be in line with Greco-Roman ideals) has suggestive traditional Jewish parallels (Jewett cites here Sirach 7:34 – "Do not withdraw yourself from weepers, and mourn with mourners").[821] The fact that such traditional Jewish values and exhortation are specifically directed here at promoting practical community mutuality and solidarity[822] of a kind seen to be appropriate to the service of association networks in the letters reviewed in Chapters 1 and 2 underlines yet again the community-defining focus and function of the passage and the letter. The ideal of behaving nobly in the sight of "all" and managing to live in peace with "all," with its particular traditional relevance for struggling Jewish communities in diaspora situations (see the discussion of Rom 13:1-7 below) is given a further specifically sub-subcultural ideal Jewish character and warrant through the allusion of Rom 14:17 to Jewish scripture (Prov 3:4 LXX).

Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave room for the wrath of God; for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." No, "if your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink; for by doing this you will heap burning coals on their heads." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good (Rom 12:19-21).

As Jewett and others have shown, the exhortation found in Rom 12:19-21 is in line, once again, not only with common Greco-Roman traditions (See Section 3.1)

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[821] Jewett, *Romans*, 767 ; Gignac, *L'épître aux Romains*, 473-474; Wilson, *Love Without Pretense*, 165-171.

[822] Wilson, *Love Without Pretense*, 179-180.

but also with ideals expressed in popular Jewish traditions (Jewett cites here similar traditions advising against retaliation from the book of Proverbs, the Wisdom of Sirach, and the *Apocalypse of Sedrach*, etc., the closest in wording being found in the phrase "Do not pay back evil for evil to any person" found in *Joseph and Aseneth*).[823] The traditional-looking, Jewish-looking paraenetic character discernible in the passage is also underlined by the citation of Proverbs 25:21-22a in its reference to the heaping of coals. I note here that Jewett argues that the call in Rom 12:19-21 to refrain from retaliation in order to give way to God's wrath "places Paul even more firmly on the side of the nonjudgmental tradition in Judaism, which assumes that God alone should be the final avenger."[824] As mentioned in Section 3.1, though, the promise of heaping coals on the enemy's head complicates the depiction of the resulting ideal insider attitude as non-judgment. It is hard to see the temptation to heap coals on the head of one's enemy purely and simply as a desire that illustrates "being motivated by 'genuine love' (12:9)" and "therefore illustrates what might be involved in being 'at peace with all persons' (12:18)."[825]

Like the exhortation to be honorably "not conformed," the exhortation to abstain honorably from exacting revenge suggests, given the situation of most Jews in Rome and its empire described above, a redefinition of practical necessity as insider virtue (as described with reference to the most likely low-status situation of the majority of Roman Jesus devotees more generally in Section 3.1). The offer of a

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[823] Jewett, *Romans*, 771. See also Gignac, *L'épître aux Romains,* 469, 475.

[824] Jewett, *Romans*, 776.

[825] Jewett, *Romans*, 778.

traditional-looking, Jewish-looking paraenetic warrant and a scriptural justification for imagining non-retaliation as an expression of insider loyalty ennobles the distance between real and ideal low-status members and communities (including members belonging to precarious local Jewish communities) and realistic opportunities for social self-assertion through the taking of revenge in kind for injuries and slights.

The application of scripture here in Rom 12 is, I note, of particular importance in and of itself, since as David Aune has observed, "Paul presents himself as a Christian teacher and preacher" in Romans, and this ideal presentation of Paul demands demonstrations of Paul's insider-friendly control of Jewish scriptural traditions and midrashic/halakhic methods: "The concentrated Old Testament exposition in Romans underlines the didactic character of the letter."[826] I mentioned in introducing this section Doering's point that Jewish diaspora letters represent their senders as proper sources of insider identity definition partly by presenting them and the inscribed insiders who agree with them as the proper heirs and correct interpreters of textual traditions identified as "(the) scriptures" of Israel. The early Christian in-groups identified above with reference to Lieu as "textual communities" dependably represented themselves in their community habits of sharing and interpreting texts as being somehow "Jewish" in the right sense and to the right degree, by behaving as if their particular in-groups were in fact the most

[826] Aune, *The New Testament in Its Literary Environment*, 220.

appropriate heirs and most correct interpreters of such scriptural traditions.[827] Rom 12 offers an example of this early Christian appropriation of characteristically Jewish habits of constructing social identity by representing Paul (and inscribed insiders assumed to be in community and agreement with him) as rightly inheriting and interpreting such scriptures.

Let every person be subject to the governing authorities; for there is no authority except from God, and those authorities that exist have been instituted by God. 2 Therefore whoever resists authority resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Do you wish to have no fear of the authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive its approval; for it is God's servant for your good. But if you do what is wrong, you should be afraid, for the authority does not bear the sword in vain! It is the servant of God to execute wrath on the wrongdoer. Therefore one must be subject, not only because of wrath but also because of conscience. For the same reason you also pay taxes, for the authorities are God's servants, busy with this very thing (Rom 13:1-6).

The construction of the negotiated Greco-Roman "Jewishness" of ideal insiders seen above in Rom 12 continues in Rom 13. It has been suggested that by advising good relations with the "outside" powers of the Greco-Roman "pagan" world, Rom 13 affirms Paul's Jewish heritage.[828] It has also been suggested that the accommodating language of Rom 13 betrays Paul's Jewish heritage.[829] In the context

[827] On this point see Henderson, "Early Christianity, Textual Representation, and Ritual Extension," 83-86.

[828] C. Barrett, *The Epistle to the Romans* (London: A&C Black, 1957), 245; C. Cranfield, *Romans 9-16*, 663-664; P. Stuhlmacher, *Der Brief an die Römer* (Göttingen: Vanderhoeck and Ruprecht, 1989), 201-202.

[829] E. Barnikol, "Römer 13: Der nicht Paulinische Ursprung der absoluten Obrigkeitsbejahung von Römer 13,1-7," in *Studien zum neuen Testament und zur Patristik: Erich Klosterman zum 90.*

just traced with reference to the creative, situated tension between "insider" and "outsider" identity seen at work in the letters reviewed in Chapters 1 and 2, though, such debates about the Jewish character of Rom 13 and its ideal inscribed addresses are unnecessary. I have already mentioned that a proper response to the increasing scholarly stress on the importance of first-century Jewish cultures in understanding Paul's letters,[830] including Romans[831] and Romans 13:1-7,[832] will not investigate the Jewish character of such letters separately from their Greco-Roman character.[833] As noted in Section 3.1, it is commonly recognized by scholars, for example, that the language of Rom 13 recalls common Greco-Roman *topoi* advocating respect for proper authority and order as good, natural, divinely-ordained realities. It is also recognized, though, that Jewish audiences of the first-century diaspora would be just as likely as Gentile audiences to recognize and appreciate such Greco-Roman ideas and rhetorical habits,[834] and the language of Rom 13 also resembles Jewish traditions concerning political authority.[835] The passage therefore offers another

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Gerburstag dargebracht (J. Dummer at al, eds.; Berlin: Akademie, 1961), 73-74; J. O'Neill, *Paul's Letter to the Romans*, 207-214.

[830] See Brian S. Rosner, *Paul, Scripture, and Ethics – A Study of 1 Corinthians 5–7* (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 16-17.

[831] See Nanos, *The Mystery of Romans*; Longenecker, *Introducing Romans*, 236-262.

[832] See Riekinnen, *Römer 13*, 53-60.

[833] See, for example, *Paul Beyond the Judaism/Hellenism Divide* (T. Engberg-Pedersen, ed.; Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001); Troels Engberg-Pedersen, "Introduction," in Engberg-Pedersen, *Paul in His Hellenistic Context*, xvii.

[834] See Ernst Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, 353-354; Jon Nelson Bailey, "Paul's Political Paraenesis in Romans 13:1-7," *Restoration Quarterly* 46 (2004:) 17-18.

[835] Gignac, *L'épître aux Romains*, 482; Engberg-Pedersen, 168; Engberg-Pedersen, "Romains 13, 1-7 et la politique," 410. Cf. S. Bielecki, "Rom 13:1-7 in the Context of Salvation History," *Roczniki Teologiczno-Kanonicne* 34 (1987): 209-220; See also the Hebrew Bible prophetic passages cited as

example in Rom 12-15 of the negotiation and creative tension described above as typical of subcultural community definition.

The negotiated community-defining strategies seen in the Greco-Roman and Greco-Roman Jewish association letters examined in Chapters 1 and 2 can provide relevant perspective here again – a potential relevance indicated for example by Richard Barclay in his study of *Pauline Churches and Diaspora Jews*: "How did Diaspora Jews and early Christian assemblies negotiate their potentially awkward relationship with Roman power," Barclay asks, and "how were frontiers with 'outsiders' defined and negotiated?"[836] Significantly for our purposes here, Barclay comes to the conclusion that Christian assemblies "are most like Diaspora synagogues at the point where both assemblies and synagogues were most like philosophical schools."[837] His recommended directions for future research into the history of the development of Pauline communities[838] therefore include careful attention to the "other types of urban group"[839] first-century Jewish communities resembled, including ancient association communities in particular.[840] By reading the exhortation of Rom 13 as comparable to the epistolary association network projects of the definition and negotiation of meaningful borders with "outside"

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influence on Rom 13:1-7 by Neil Elliott, *Liberating Paul*, 224; David Winston, *The Wisdom of Solomon* (New York: Doubleday, 1979), 152-153; Das, *Solving the Romans Debate*, 146; Nanos, *The Mystery of Romans*, 297.

[836] Barclay, *Pauline Churches and Diaspora Jews*, 8.

[837] Barclay, *Pauline Churches and Diaspora Jews*, 14.

[838] Barclay, *Pauline Churches and Diaspora Jews*, vii.

[839] Barclay, *Pauline Churches and Diaspora Jews*, 3.

[840] Barclay, *Pauline Churches and Diaspora Jews*, 5.

systems of identity and power reviewed in Chapters 1 and 2, this study contributes to such research.

In this context, it is significant that the vocabulary of Rom 13:1 recalls the promulgation of authoritative Jewish "insider" rules. In its reference to an ideal insider behavioral standard to which "every soul" (πᾶσα ψυχὴ) must conform, Rom 13:1 recalls the Jewish habit of referring to human individuals as "souls,"[841] and aligns the command thus given with the language of the giving of community rules found in the LXX: "Every soul (πᾶσα ψυχὴ) shall refrain from eating blood," says Leviticus 17:12. "Every soul (πᾶσα ψυχὴ) not humbled," says Leviticus 23:29, "shall be cut off from his people," and "every soul (πᾶσα ψυχὴ) that works [on the Sabbath] shall be destroyed from among the people," says Leviticus 23:30.[842] In the language of these verses, πᾶσα ψυχὴ defines an in-group characterized by proper insider behavior. In Rom 13, πᾶσα ψυχὴ becomes every ideal insider of the community constructed by the letter displaying proper insider behavior and gathered under Paul's apostolic authority to give such orders (See Section 3.4). in this way, the letter to the Romans acts like the "administrative-halakhic" letters discussed in Chapter 2, applying the expert promotion of proper insider teaching and behavior to an association-epistolary project of community definition.

The application of a special sub-subcultural Jewish inheritance of insider tradition to insider community definition can also be seen in the representation of

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[841] See Jewett, *Romans*, 787, citing D. Lys, "Israelite Soul according to the LXX," *Vetus Testamentum* (1966): 181-228; Gerhard Dautzenberg, "Seele (naefaeš-psyche) im biblischen Denken sowie das Verhältnis von Unsterblichkeit und Auferstehung," in *Seele, ihre Wirklichkeit, ihr Verhältnis zum Leib und zur menschlichen Person* (K. Kremer, ed.; Leiden: Brill, 1984), 186-203.

[842] See also Leviticus 7:27; 17:15 LXX.

outside authority in Rom 13. Like the Letter of Jeremiah 29 examined in Chapter 2, Rom 13 aligns ideal insider attitudes with the Jewish tradition that foreign rulers are not especially good, but can be used by Israel's god as his "servants" for good. It was mentioned in Chapter 2 that the Wisdom of Solomon, for example, paints a similar picture. Human (foreign) rulers are, on the one hand, asserted as in Rom 13:4, etc. to be divinely appointed "servants" (ὑπηρέται in Wis 6:4) of an ordained order: "Listen therefore, O kings, and understand… Your dominion was given you from the Lord, and your sovereignty from the Most High" (Wis 6:2-3). The formulation of Sirach 10:4 similarly agrees with Rom 13:1-6 that earthly power (ἐξουσία τῆς γῆς) comes from "the hand of the Lord." The very same rulers are, on the other hand, specified in the Wisdom of Solomon to be (like the "powers" and "principalities" of Paul's other genuine letters – see Sections 3.1 and 3.4) ultimately doomed: "Because as servants of his kingdom you did not rule rightly… he will come upon you terribly and swiftly" (Wis 6:4-5). Similarly, in the Greek version of Daniel, it is predicted that every "authority" (ἐξουσία Cf. the ἐξουσίαις of Rom 13:1) must be subordinated (ὑπακούσονται – Cf. the cognate ὑποτασσέσθω of Rom 13:1) to the god of Israel or be destroyed (Daniel 7:26-27, LXX), a principle illustrated in subsequent chapters when King Antiochus, who defies the will of Israel's god, meets his just downfall and divine judgment (Daniel 11:45-12:1, LXX).

Like the Jeremiah of the Epistle reviewed in Chapter 3 (Baruch 6:5-73), the Paul of Romans defines and praises proper "insider" identity partly by distancing it from the "outsider" nations' devotion to ridiculous, blasphemous human-made gods (Rom 1:18-25). Like the Jeremiah of the Epistle (Baruch 6:2-3, 51-53), the Paul of

Romans asserts that "outside" rulers have in fact been set up by the god of the insiders for insider-friendly purposes (Rom 13:1-4), and reminds his ideal audiences that the power of such rulers over them is furthermore only temporary (Rom 13:11-12). Like the Jeremiah of Jeremiah 29:5-7 and Jeremiah 29:10-14, the Paul of Romans commands his ideal insider addressees to live until the revelation of the proper time of liberation in respectful but qualified peace with the ultimately doomed society in which they find themselves as part of the divine plan (Rom 13:1-7, 11-12).

As mentioned in Chapter 2 and Section 3.1, the grounding of foreign human power in the divine power and will of the special god of the insiders can be seen as an arrogating move. As David Horrell puts it, "the (Jewish) strategy Paul adopts both legitimates and limits the state's authority at one and the same time. Insofar as Paul – along with many other Jewish writers – regards rulers as there because God has given them their position, he does add a certain divine legitimation to Roman imperial rule. But equally, by insisting that it is God who has granted the rulers their role, Paul, again along with the same Jewish writers, relativizes their position: it is theirs not on the grounds of their own might or (pseudo-divine) status, but only because God has chosen to allow it to be so; and what God has granted God can equally take away – and may well do so soon."[843] Horrell's final point about the significance of an implied "apocalyptic proviso" in Rom 13 (discussed above in Section 3.1) deserves special attention here, given the similar qualifying mentions of

[843] Horrell, "The Peaceful, Tolerant Community," 88.

the divine destruction of divinely-ordained rulers just seen in Daniel and the Wisdom of Solomon, and is addressed in the discussion of Rom 13:11 below.

From the point of view just described, the Jewish character of Rom 13 serves ideal community definition by once again framing the loyal and peaceful behavior seen above to be necessary to the success and safety of any first-century association networks as a special insider duty. Just as Josephus can see his cooperation with the Roman conquest and occupation of Judea as ultimately serving the will of the Jewish god, and look down on those Jews who insisted on rebelling at all costs to the Jerusalem temple as "atheists" (*Jewish Wars* 5.13.6), the ideal insiders addressed in Rom 13 can think of submitting to the practically necessary duties of loyalty and obedience to local and imperial outside authority as an ennobling expression of their special insider sub-subcultural Jewish identity, imagined in contradistinction to real or ideal claimants to the heritage of Israel seen as doing it "the wrong way." The letters reviewed in Chapters 1 and 2 dependably highlighted characteristics of their "insider" association cultures that were honorably special and yet honorably functional vis-à-vis wider "outside" social structures. Such self-awarded community-defining distinctions constructed the ideal associations thus represented as being both normal enough and special enough (including the distinction of being both loyal/pious enough and yet independent/self-asserting enough) to claim a place of their own in wider host societies. In Romans, Jewish scripture and tradition are claimed and deployed as an insider network property, including the depiction in Rom 13 of external powers as realities set up (and eventually cast down) to serve the power of the Jewish god of the ideal insiders constructed by the letter. Ideal

addressees invited to see and comport themselves as connected to networks characterized by Jesus devotion (and thereby somewhat liminal in their sub-subcultural relationship to Jewish networks and identities[844]) are offered once again in Rom 13 a chance to claim traditional Jewish concepts and attitudes as part of their own special "insider" identity, an identity represented once again as both honorably self-asserting and honorably functional vis-à-vis the world "outside."

Pay to all what is due them—taxes to whom taxes are due, revenue to whom revenue is due, respect to whom respect is due, honor to whom honor is due. Owe no one anything, except to love one another; for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. The commandments, "You shall not commit adultery; You shall not murder; You shall not steal; You shall not covet"; and any other commandment, are summed up in this word, "Love your neighbor as yourself." Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law (Rom 13:7-10).

As noted above in Section 3.1, the rendering of social honors and duties deemed due was seen as normal and necessary in first-century Greco-Roman culture, and taxes (like the Roman "Jewish tax") were included among such normal expressions of dutiful submission. By framing the rendering of such honors and taxes as ideal insider expressions of cooperation with a divine plan known only to insiders, in which powerful outsiders function unwittingly and temporarily (see Rom 13:11 below) as the "servants" of the special Jewish god of the insiders (Rom 13:1-6), Rom 13:7 once again redefines necessity as virtue. Conforming to the normal association network need to display loyalty and obedience is depicted as an ennobling expression of the special sub-subcultural Jewish identity of ideal insiders.

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[844] See on this point William S. Campbell, *Paul and the Creation of Christian Identity* (London: T & T Clark, 2006), 67.

Accommodating the normal association community need for functional, honorable mutuality is similarly defined in special, ennobling sub-subcultural Jewish terms as fulfilling "the law" (Rom 13:8-10). The reference here to love for the neighbor as the fulfilment of Jewish law supports the depiction of Paul as a trustworthy insider and expert when it comes to valuing and applying traditions about Jesus (See Section 3.4), but as Gignac notes, the requirement or at least the ideal of loving one's (insider) "neighbor" can be also be found elsewhere in Jewish tradition (citing for example the Qumran's community rules about loving behavior in 1QS 5:26-6:1; 8:2; CD 6:20-21; 9:7-8).[845] The application of this ideal to the depiction of the functionally, honorably mutual community life of the passage's ideal insider addressee community (the ἀλλήλους of Rom 13:8) therefore offers another example of Paul's administrative-halakhic expertise (See Section 3.4) in knowing and applying the ideal insider community's special, ennobling sub-subcultural Jewish inheritance.

Besides this, you know what time it is, how it is now the moment for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers; the night is far gone, the day is near. Let us then lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armor of light; let us live honorably as in the day, not in reveling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarreling and jealousy. Instead, put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires (Rom 13:11-13).

The addition in Rom 13:11 of an "apocalyptic proviso," qualifying the external submission and conformity just commanded with reference to special insider knowledge of the nearness of "the time" of "salvation" makes the community

[845] Gignac, *L'épître aux Romains*, 495-496.

rule of submission to powers outside an interim rule, bringing the passage back in line with the kind of apocalyptic exceptionalism and critique commonly expected from Paul based on the usual language of the other genuine Pauline letters.[846] This reading of Rom 13:11 finds additional support in the presence of the same complex of ideas about "powers" and "insiders" and "outsiders" in the discussion of the doomed puppet Pharaoh in Rom 9:17-18.

The definition of ideal "insider" and "outsiders" with reference to ideal "Jewishness" in Rom 9 is somewhat convoluted. In claiming the chosen-ness and heritage of Israel for the ideal insiders constructed by the letter – the "we" and "us" of Rom 8:37 – Rom 9 places most of the Jews temporarily in a qualified "outsider" category, since "it is not the children by physical descent who are God's children, but it is the children of the promise who are regarded as Abraham's offspring" (Rom 9:8). In a remarkable twist of biblical argumentation, the divine justice of this reversal is illustrated with the example of the way the god of Israel had every right to use the foreign ruler Pharaoh: "For the scripture says to the Pharaoh: 'I raised you up for this very purpose, that I might display my power in you, and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth'" (Rom 9:17). The description of the ideal insider community constructed by Rom 9 thus includes both the traditional Jewish picture of foreign rulers set up and cast down as part of a divine plan, and an

[846] See Jewett, *Romans*, 783-784, citing V. Zsifkovits, *Der Staatsgedanke nach Paulus in Röm. 13,1-7 mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der Umwelt und der patristischen Auslegung* (Vienna: Herder & Herder, 1964), 106-108; V. Riekkinen, *Römer 13: Aufzeichnung und Weiterführung der exegetischen Diskussion* (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 1980), 12-13.

identity framed in traditional Jewish terms that both affirms and qualifies a "kinship of promise" with most Jews.

It seems significant in this context that it is not specified in Rom 9:17 that Moses or Yahweh explained the theology behind all this to the Pharaoh, but rather that "the scripture says" this to the Pharaoh. The scriptures of Israel are portrayed as the relevant authority speaking in support of the special insider identity being constructed. In much the same way that the scriptural argumentation of Paul's letter to the Galatians has been shown by Dale Sullivan and Christian Anible to serve the definition of a "Christian community that at once identified with its Judaic roots and yet dissociated itself from [alternative sub-subcultural Jewish identities such as that promoted by] a conservative sect of Jewish Christians,"[847] the insider-defining scriptural argumentation of Rom 9 and Rom 13 can be seen, then, to claim and deploy Greco-Roman Jewish ways of talking about authority in the service of its own epistolary project of ideal inscribed insider community definition.

Welcome those who are weak in faith, but not for the purpose of quarreling over opinions. Some believe in eating anything, while the weak eat only vegetables. Those who eat must not despise those who abstain, and those who abstain must not pass judgment on those who eat; for God has welcomed them. Who are you to pass judgment on servants of another? It is before their own lord that they stand or fall. And they will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make them stand. Some judge one day to be better than another, while others judge all days to be alike. Let all be fully convinced in their own minds. Those who observe the day, observe it in honor of the Lord. Also those who eat, eat in honor of the Lord, since they give thanks to God; while those who abstain, abstain in honor of the Lord and give thanks to God (Rom 14:1-6).

[847] Dale L. Sullivan and Christian Anible, "The Epideictic Dimension of Galatians as Formative Rhetoric," 117.

The sub-subcultural Jewish character of the paraenesis found in Rom 14 continues the articulation in Rom 12-15 of an ideal insider community simultaneously specific enough and general enough to serve the construction and promotion of the ideal inscribed global Pauline network of the letter. As mentioned in Section 3.1, the passage's discussion of community differences over food practices and special days underlines the "administrative-halakhic" character of Romans and Rom 12-15. It was noted that any such prescriptive discussion of proper community behavior and proper ritual observance grounded in traditional Jewish theological and scriptural argumentation (see Rom 14:7-23 below) and boasting a prophetic pedigree (Isaiah 1:13-17, etc.) is a "halakhic" project by definition, articulating and advocating for an understanding of proper applied Torah obervance. The ideal mentioned of making food acceptable by giving thanks recalls, for example, common first-century Jewish ideas of proper and honorable meal practice, and can be seen as basing a sub-subcultural piece of halakhic reasoning on the perceived propriety of giving such thanks. If Philo can assert that it is "unlawful to enjoy and partake of any form of food [however clean] for which thanks had not been offered in the proper and rightful manner,"[848], and Rabbi Akiva can later assert that "it is forbidden to enjoy anything of this world [however clean] without first saying a blessing,"[849] Paul can argue in the opposite direction that any food (however questionable) is "clean" for insider community consumption if proper thanks have been given (Rom 14:6). I

[848] Philo, *De specialibus legibus* 2.175 (G. P. Gould, ed.; trans. F. H. Colson; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1937).

[849] *Bavli Tractate Berakhot* 35a, English translation by Marcia Falk, *The Book of Blessings* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1999), xvi.

note here that Peter Tomson and David J. Bolton have in fact independently proposed understanding the discussion of foods and days Rom 14-15 precisely as one expression of first-century "halakha" among many.[850] The insider-community-defining paraenesis of Rom 12-15 resembles in this way once again the community-defining exhortation of the "diaspora letters" discussed in Chapter 2, with their "administrative-halakhic" focus on proper insider community behaviour. In the discussion of proper ritual observance including foods and purity, the definition of the community as a healthy, united body emerges as the priority.[851]

As noted in Section 3.1, the identities of "the weak" and "the strong" are debated, but since the discussion of their practices and attitudes looks so well suited to internal community discussions of traditional Jewish identity markers[852] (in light of that fact that Jews apparently sometimes avoided meat and wine, to help avoid association of any kind with idolatrous practices[853]), the "weak" are usually seen as (primarily Jewish) Christians and/or their sympathizers who avoid basically all meat and wine to help stay "kosher" (in the wide sense defined above) by avoiding all association with foods previously offered to idols.[854] It was also emphasized,

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[850] See Tomson, *Paul and the Jewish Law: Halakha in the Letters of the Apostle to the Gentiles*, 221-258; D. Bolton, "Who Are You Calling 'Weak'? A Short Critique on James Dunn's Reading of Rom 14,1-15,6," in *The Letter to the Romans* (U. Schnelle, ed.; Leuven: Peeters, 2009), 621-622.

[851] See Daniel R. Schwartz, "Someone who considers something to be impure – for him it is impure" (Rom 14:14): Good Manners or Law?," in *Paul's Jewish Matrix* (T. G. Casey and J. Taylor, eds.; Mahway, NJ: Paulist Press, 2011), 310. See also MacDonald, *The Pauline Churches: A Socio-Historical Study of Institutionalisation in the Pauline and Deutero-Pauline Writings*, 68.

[852] See Gignac, *L'épître aux Romains*, 498-500.

[853] See Daniel 1:8-16; Judith 12:1-4; Josephus, *Life* 40, etc.

[854] Michel, *Der Brief an die Römer*, 422; Cranfield, *Romans 9-16*, 700; Stuhlmacher, *Der Brief an die Römer*, 195-197; P. Lampe, *From Paul to Valentinus*, 72-74; Schneider, "Die 'Schwachen' in der

though, that the designations of the foods and days represented as disputed are remarkably vague and easily applicable to observances unrelated to Jewish identity markers. It was further stressed that the reference to eating only "lettuce" (λάχανα) looks particularly unrelated to specific first-century Jewish food laws. Since no known kosher diets can be reasonably characterized as limiting Jews to eating nothing but lettuces, the reference seems to suggest a fictional extreme position – a "straw man" inviting addressees to identify with the ostensibly comparatively "moderate" and "reasonable" compromise position promoted in Rom 14-15.[855] By applying traditional Jewish methods of administrative-halakhic community definition to questions appropriate to discussions of Jewish observances but adjusted here to include other types of common observances and conflicts (See Section 3.1), Rom 14 addresses the normal association network need to define ideal insider community identity and practice with reference to community markers assumed to be special to the inside. The repeated reference to mutual acceptance as an insider duty owed to "the Lord" (conveniently left undefined so as to refer to both Jesus Christ and the Jewish god re-imagined as his father – See Section 3.4)[856] grounds, for example, the household member/servant metaphor forbidding internal dissension and judgment in Rom 14:4 (an argument theoretically intelligible and

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christlichen Gemeinde Roms. Eine historisch-exegetische Untersuchung zu 14,1-15,13," 122-123; P. Tomson, *Paul and the Jewish Law: Halakha in the Letters of the Apostle to the Gentiles*, 195; J. Barclay, "Do We Undermine the Law? A Study of Romans 14:1-15:6," in *Paul and the Mosaic Law* (J. D. G. Dunn, ed.; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1996), 294-308; Esler, *Conflict and Identity in Romans*, 26; Esler, "Social Identity," 61.

[855] See Jewett, *Romans*, 837-838; Reasoner, *The Strong*, 75-84.

[856] Gignac, *L'épître aux Romains*, 509, 515.

honorable to the majority of the wider "outside" Greco-Roman world) in the LXX tradition of referring to the god of Israel as "Lord," and leaves the door open for insider Christological understandings of the "Lord" offering and requiring such acceptance.

We do not live to ourselves, and we do not die to ourselves. If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord; so then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ died and lived again, so that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living. Why do you pass judgment on your brother or sister? Or you, why do you despise your brother or sister? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God. For it is written, "As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall give praise to God." So then, each of us will be accountable to God (Rom 14:7-12).

In Rom 14:7-12, the continuing "leitmotif"[857] of the name "the Lord" is extended with a reference to the judgment (day) of the Lord presented as revealing the "judging" of one's fellow association in-group insider to be ridiculous and unseemly. The potential association of Jesus with this "Lord" continues to give the argument a doubly special insider sub-subcultural character (See Section 3.4), as does the new bolstering of the ordinary association value of peaceful, respectful insider mutuality with sub-subcultural scriptural argumentation (in the welding together of Isaiah 49:18b[858] and Isaiah 45:23b[859] in Rom 14:12).

Let us therefore no longer pass judgment on one another, but resolve instead never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of another. I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself; but it is unclean for anyone who thinks it unclean. If your brother or sister is being injured by what you eat, you are no longer

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[857] Jewett, *Romans*, 832.

[858] "As surely as I live," declares the LORD, "you will wear them all as ornaments" (Isaiah 49:18b).

[859] "Before me every knee will bow; by me every tongue will swear" (Isaiah 45:23b)

walking in love. Do not let what you eat cause the ruin of one for whom Christ died. So do not let your good be spoken of as evil. For the kingdom of God is not food and drink but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. The one who thus serves Christ is acceptable to God and has human approval. Let us then pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding. Do not, for the sake of food, destroy the work of God. Everything is indeed clean, but it is wrong for you to make others fall by what you eat; it is good not to eat meat or drink wine or do anything that makes your brother or sister stumble. The faith that you have, have as your own conviction before God. Blessed are those who have no reason to condemn themselves because of what they approve. But those who have doubts are condemned if they eat, because they do not act from faith; for whatever does not proceed from faith is sin (Rom 14:13-23).

As noted in Section 3.1 and in the discussion of Rom 14-15 as "halakha" above, the idea of what makes a food "clean" or "unclean" promoted in Rom 14 has a pronounced "Hellenistic" and "philosophical" character, discernible in the mentions here in Rom 14:13-23 of "faith" and "doubt" and concern for "the brother" as determinative factors, but is not at all therefore "less Jewish." As David Rudolph puts it, "Paul's stance was more nuanced (not less Jewish) in that he permitted the eating of indeterminate food... This was consistent with the on-the-ground reality that some Diaspora Jews ate indeterminate food from the *macellum* regularly or on occasion."[860] Rudolph accordingly cites here the expectation expressed by E. P. Sanders that Paul's attitude as reflected in Rom 14-15 "has a home somewhere in Judaism."[861]

The typically Jewish character of the paraenesis found in Rom 14-15 is easy to miss. I note here, for example, that Jewett perceives the judgment of all foods as

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[860] D. Rudolph, "Paul and the Food Laws. A Reassessment of Romans 14:14, 20," in *Paul the Jew. Rereading the Apostle as a Figure of Second Temple Judaism* (G. Boccaccini and C. Segovia, eds.; Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2016), 163.

[861] E. P. Sanders, *Jewish Law from Jesus to the Mishnah*: *Five Studies* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2016), 281.

"clean" as boldly "countercultural," given the fact that food laws were seen as so important by first-century Jews,[862] but this characterization only works if we assume that attitudes like those attributed to Jesus were countercultural as opposed to subcultural, and also ignore the fact pointed out by and Bolton that any attempt to engage and define the Hellenistic-Jewish halakhic category of "common/unclean" (κοινός) in order to make judgements about proper insider behavior is by definition an insider Jewish halakhic discussion serving Torah observance of a kind. A detail further complicating the reading of Rom 14 as boldly "counter-cultural" is found in the fact that the passage asserts explicitly that it is indeed right and in fact necessary for insiders to avoid foods of questionable "clean" status, if they happen to be convinced that they should (Rom 14:5-6, 14).

The paraenesis of Rom 14 thus understood can be seen to serve the continuing project of sub-subcultural community definition in Rom 12-15 described above. The grounding of the idea of "all things" being "clean" in a conviction found "in the Lord Jesus" (ἐν Κυρίῳ Ἰησοῦ), for example, represents the sub-subcultural halakhic opinion expressed as reassuringly associated with ideal insider respect and teaching expertise when it comes to existing traditions about Jesus (See Section 3.4). In Rom 14, the traditional and normal "us and them" distinguishing sociological function of Jewish food laws discernible in Jewish observances in the contexts of first-century Hellenistic environments[863] is applied in drawing a particular ideal

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[862] Jewett, *Romans*, 859-860.

[863] See W. Pascher, *Rein und Unrein. Untersuchumg zur biblischen Wortgeschichte* (Munich: Kösel, 1970), 165-168; D. Freidenreich, *Foreigners and Their Food: Constructing Otherness in Jewish, Christian, and Islamic Law* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 34.

insider "us": the ideal "us" group is (as shown in Section 3.1) in some sense "strong." Such ideal insiders are, to be precise, recognizable and honorable by holding a certain halakhic "strong" take on food laws not shared by the imperfect "them" of Rom 14-15 who fail to think and behave like ideal insiders, i.e., the "weak" who eat against the advice of their convictions, the "weak" who judge the "strong," the "strong" who dishonorably judge the "weak," and the "strong" guilty of afflicting their "weak brothers" with a "stumbling-block" by promoting "strong" behavior improperly understood and practiced.

The reference to "placing an offence" in the path of a fellow insider as a "stumbling block" (τιθέναι … σκάνδαλον) in Rom 14:13 is, I note in this context, itself a markedly Jewish characterization of a dishonorable lack of proper association insider mutuality. It picks up on the usage of σκάνδαλον in the sense of "cause of ruin" found in the LXX,[864] referred to in passages condemning the placement of a σκάνδαλον in the way of another or of oneself (Lev 19:14; Sir 7:6, etc).[865] The preference of not making problems for a fellow insider "brother" over questions of community observance and/or ritual purity is therefore represented in Rom 14 as a Torah-observant decision. Rudolph is therefore justified in referring in his analysis to "Paul halakhically applying the Torah's *skandalon* command in Lev 19:14 to the situation in Romans 14."[866] Once again, the insider paraenesis of Rom 12-15 represents and promotes a normal association need (for a functional,

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[864] G. Stählin, "σκάνδαλον, σκανδαλίζω," *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (1971): 339-343.

[865] See Jewett, *Romans*, 858. See also Gignac, *L'épître aux Romains*, 520.

[866] Paul and the Food Laws, 165.

honorable standard of insider mutuality) in special insider terms (as ennobling sub-subcultural halakha). The reference in Rom 14:15 to the need for ideal insiders to "walk in love" – a typical description of right insider behavior in Paul's genuine letters (See Section 3.4) – is in fact literally "halakhic" in the sense of connoting the upright "walking" of right living (and a Greek usage also found in the LXX).[867]

By applying a special sub-subcultural application of halakhic reasoning to the topic of proper insider community observance, while walking a fine line between specifics appropriate to insider discussions of Jew-Gentile relations in particular (soon to reappear in Rom 15) and ideals applicable to the definition of ideal community life and commensality in general, Rom 14 gives the paraenesis arising from situational community intervention in 1 Corinthians a "glocal" appropriate to the ideal global network promoted by Rom 12-15 and the letter in general. The exhortation of the passage is phrased in a way readily applicable to potential differences and disputes arising from the fact that it could at times be hard to find unquestionably kosher meat in Rome, unconnected with the meat market function of local pagan cults,[868] but also to other disputes over proper community observance requiring a stress on proper insider mutuality (See Section 3.1). The requirement to behave acceptably in the eyes of God (Rom 14:18) frames the issue as a very special insider duty to do the right thing in terms of a faithful relationship with a very particular sub-subcultural god, in the way that David and others were

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[867] See G. Bertram and H. Seesemann, "κατέω κτλ.," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (1967): 544.

[868] See Jewett, *Romans*, 868; Winter, "Romans 12-15," 90-91.

said to have lived to do the right thing "in the Lord's eyes" (ἐνώπιον κυρίου) in the LXX (e.g. 3 Kingdoms 15:5),[869] but the promise of human approval is repeated in the same breath, too. An ideal insider acting in accordance with the community paraenesis of Rom 14 is "acceptable to God *and* approved of men" (εὐάρεστος τῷ θεῷ καὶ δόκιμος τοῖς ἀνθρώποις). In this way, the ideal inscribed addressees of Rom 14 are once again offered a chance to claim traditional Jewish concepts and attitudes as part of their own special insider identity, a potentially global association network identity represented once again as both honorably special and self-asserting and also honorably intelligible and functional vis-à-vis the world "outside."

We who are strong ought to put up with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Each of us must please our neighbor for the good purpose of building up the neighbor. For Christ did not please himself; but, as it is written, "The insults of those who insult you have fallen on me." For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, so that by steadfastness and by the encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope (Rom 15:1-4).

The assumption that ancient scriptures speak to the present situation of insiders is typical (See the discussion of the doomed Pharaoh above, the discussion of Paul's use of scripture in Section 3.4, and the discussion of the use of passages from the Hebrew Psalms and Prophets below). In Rom 15:1-4 this reading strategy is used again to serve the special sub-subcultural Jewish identity of the letter's ideal addressee community, as the image of the noble suffering servant of Psalm 69:9 is read Christologically (Rom 15:3) in a way once again directed at insider community support and mutuality.

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[869] Jewett, *Romans*, 870, citing H. Krämer, "ἐνώπιον," *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament* 1 (1990): 462.

May the God of steadfastness and encouragement grant you to live in harmony with one another, in accordance with Christ Jesus, so that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Welcome one another, therefore, just as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God. For I tell you that Christ has become a servant of the circumcised on behalf of the truth of God in order that he might confirm the promises given to the patriarchs, and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy. As it is written, "Therefore I will confess you among the Gentiles, and sing praises to your name"; and again he says, "Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people"; and again, "Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles, and let all the peoples praise him"; and again Isaiah says, "The root of Jesse shall come, the one who rises to rule the Gentiles; in him the Gentiles shall hope." May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit (Rom 15:5-13).

The likelihood that the phrase "glorify God" (δοξάζητε τὸν θεὸν) here in Rom 15:6 "derives from traditional Jewish doxologies"[870] underlines the dependence already noted above of Rom 12-15 upon Jewish traditions in constructing the single-minded, univocal ideal community (See Section 3.1) promoted by the passage. The fact that the Jewish scriptures cited represent all three traditional collections of the Law, the Prophets and the Writings[871] supports the representation (seen above) of Paul and also by implication his ideal addressees as valuing the whole body of Torah tradition, and the representation (also seen above) of Paul as a trustworthy, honorable insider expert in the sub-subcultural use of such tradition.

The ennobling insider ideal of Israel as a source of blessing for all the world's nations is picked up here in a way that supports the ideal of community solidarity just promoted in Rom 12:1-15:7 and also prepares the ground for the mission to

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[870] Jewett, *Romans*, 885 citing H. Hegermann, "δοξάζω," *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament* 1 (1990): 348.

[871] Jewett, *Romans*, 893; Wilckens, *Der Brief an die Römer*, 104; Michel, *Der Brief an die Römer*, 449.

Spain about to be promoted in Rom 15:23-28. The unity of weak and strong is folded into the unity of Jew and Gentile,[872] as a rapid-fire string of scriptural citations[873] mentioning Gentiles being called to honor and praise the Jewish god is offered (Rom 15:9-12) in a way depicting all nations as included in the ideal global insider community of praise described above. The framing of the citations serves this rhetorical goal by downplaying the traditional theme of the primacy of the nation of Israel and playing up the theme of the solidarity of all nations. As noted by Jewett, the threatening reference to "that day" (of judgment) found in Isaiah 11:10 is omitted, for example, in Rom 15:12, shifting emphasis away from the equally traditional idea of the judgement of the nations, and the citation is cut off before the mention (in Isaiah 11:11) of the restoration of Jewish exiles as the real culmination of the divine promise.[874] "Looking back over the catena of citations," Jewett concludes, "one cannot help but be impressed with the careful selection and coherent editing, which effectively recontextualizes the meaning of each verse."[875]

Citing Jewish scripture in the way just described helps paint the picture of a "cosmic goal of redemption" in this passage,[876] in which "Christ has become a servant of the circumcised… in order that he might confirm the promises given to

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[872] See Jewett, *Romans*, 893; Michel, *Der Brief an die Römer*, 442.

[873] Psalm 18:49; Deuteronomy 32:43; Psalm 117:1; Isaiah 11:10.

[874] See Jewett, *Romans* 895-897.

[875] Jewett, *Romans*, 897. See also Reasoner, "The Theology of Romans 12:1-15:13," 298; N. T. Wright, *Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1991), 248, 262-263; R. Hays, "Christ Prays the Psalms: Paul's Use of an Early Christian Exegetical Convention" in *The Future of Christology: Essays in Honor of Leander E. Keck* (A. J. Malherbe and W. A. Meeks, eds.; Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1993), 136.

[876] Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, 387.

the patriarchs, and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God" (Rom 15:8-9). In this way, a special Christological understanding of the traditional divine promises to Israel informs the resulting global picture: "Paul's whole point is that Christ became servant of the circumcised not with a view to their salvation alone, but to confirm both phases of God's saving purpose: to Jew first and also to Gentile."[877] Many of the key themes of Romans identified above come together neatly in this picture, and as Gignac[878] (citing Hay)[879] says, the overall point of Romans can easily be seen as encapsulated here. From the point of view of this study, this encapsulation includes the ideal community-defining functions of the special place assumed by Paul and his network in the resulting global picture (See Section 3.4), the representation of properly understood sub-subcultural Jewish traditions as authoritative, community-defining, and ennobling, and the representation of such traditions and Paul's application of them as supporting the normal need for insider mutuality in the ideal unified addressee community, i.e., ideal unity "among you" (Rom 15:5). The normal association need of mutuality is once again represented as desirable and possible in special ennobling insider terms. The ideal pointed out in Rom 12-15 several times above (and seen in the *Letter of Ammonius to Apollonius*) of healthy in-group unity as a divine gift returns, for example, in this context: only the special sub-subcultural Jewish god of the insiders specified to be the father of Jesus (Rom 15:6) can "give

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[877] Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, 848 (italics in original).

[878] Gignac, *L'épître aux Romains*, 534.

[879] R. B. Hays, "Adam, Israel, Christ: The Question of Covenant in the Theology of Romans: A Response to Leander E. Keck and N. T. Wright," in *Pauline Theology, Vol. 3. Romans* (D. M. Hay and E. E. Johnson, eds.; Minneapolis, MI: Fortress, 1995), 84.

you" – the ideal unified addressee community constructed by the epistolary paraenesis of Rom 12-15 – the necessary "unity" thus promoted (Rom 15:5).

I myself feel confident about you, my brothers and sisters, that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, and able to instruct one another. Nevertheless on some points I have written to you rather boldly by way of reminder, because of the grace given me by God to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles in the priestly service of the gospel of God, so that the offering of the Gentiles may be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit. In Christ Jesus, then, I have reason to boast of my work for God. For I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me to win obedience from the Gentiles, by word and deed, by the power of signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God, so that from Jerusalem and as far around as Illyricum I have fully proclaimed the good news of Christ. Thus I make it my ambition to proclaim the good news, not where Christ has already been named, so that I do not build on someone else's foundation, but as it is written, "Those who have never been told of him shall see, and those who have never heard of him shall understand" (Rom 15:14-21).

In its description of Paul and his mission, the language of Rom 15:14-21 continues to define the ideal global insider community of Rom 12-15 by continuing to assume and claim the authority of Jewish tradition, and to apply it in a sub-subcultural way further articulating and supporting the ideal global network just described in Rom 15. As noted by Jewett, the reference of Rom 15:16 to Paul being made a "minister" (εἶναί με λειτουργὸν) by the grace of God and preparing his Gentile converts as a worshipful "offering" (προσφορὰ) construe Paul's position/mission as a priestly calling (by recalling the vocabulary of the λειτουργός seen in Neh 10:39; Isa 61:6; Sir 7:30 LXX, etc. and the προσφορά seen in Psalm 39:6; Dan 3:38 LXX, etc.).[880] The mention of the divine "signs and wonders" that accompanied Paul's successful global mission to date in Rom 15:19 similarly claim divine validation by satisfying, as mentioned in Section 3.1, common first-century

[880] See Jewett, *Romans*, 907-908.

Greco-Roman (and) Jewish expectations regarding divine actions and divinely-given authority on earth.[881]

The representation of Paul's travels as circling (See the κύκλῳ of 15:19) a world with Jerusalem at its centre[882] recalls the ideal seen in Chapter 2 of insider diaspora communities as nodes in an administrative-halakhic network of letters and leaders radiating from Jerusalem, and also prepares the ground for the further validating mention in Rom 15:25-32 that Paul himself has an important Jerusalem connection in the form of the collection for the "saints" there entrusted to him to deliver personally. The reference to Isaiah 52:15 in Rom 15:21 thereby represents Paul not only as a respectable expert teacher skilled in the insider use of Jewish traditions and thereby a desirable guest and global network contact (See Section 3.4), but also as a player in a global divine plan.[883] The ideal inscribed network that emerges in the language of Rom 15 is therefore a divinely-ordained successful network of expert teaching (with an ennobling sub-subcultural connection to Jerusalem and Jewish tradition), in which the ideal addressee community of Romans is invited to find its own validating, honorable place.

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[881] Jewett, *Romans*, 910, citing F. Stolz, "Zeichen und Wunder. Die prophetischen Legitimation und ihre Geschichte," *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 69 (1972): 125-144; P. Gräbe, *The Power of God in Paul's Letters* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 209-210.

[882] Jewett, *Romans*, 912-913, citing J. Scott, *Paul and the Nations: The Old Testament and Jewish Background of Paul's Mission to the Gentiles with Special Reference to the Destination of Galatians* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1995), 5-56; J. Knox, "Rom 15:14-33 and Paul's Conception of His Apostolic Mission," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 83 (1964): 11.

[883] See Cranfield, *Romans* 9-16, 765; Jewett, *Romans*, 916-917, 921; Schlier, *Besinnung auf das Neue Testament*, 433; C. Wilke, *Die Bedeutung des Jesajabuches für Paulus* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998), 81-82.

This is the reason that I have so often been hindered from coming to you. But now, with no further place for me in these regions, I desire, as I have for many years, to come to you when I go to Spain. For I do hope to see you on my journey and to be sent on by you, once I have enjoyed your company for a little while. At present, however, I am going to Jerusalem in a ministry to the saints; for Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to share their resources with the poor among the saints at Jerusalem. They were pleased to do this, and indeed they owe it to them; for if the Gentiles have come to share in their spiritual blessings, they ought also to be of service to them in material things. So, when I have completed this, and have delivered to them what has been collected, I will set out by way of you to Spain; and I know that when I come to you, I will come in the fullness of the blessing of Christ. I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to join me in earnest prayer to God on my behalf, that I may be rescued from the unbelievers in Judea, and that my ministry to Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints, so that by God's will I may come to you with joy and be refreshed in your company. The God of peace be with all of you. Amen (Rom 15:22-33).

The inclusion here in Rom 15 of a brief discussion of the collection for Jerusalem adds further support to the project of community definition just described above. The precise destination and significance of this collection are debated, but it is clear that it had some kind of "ecumenical purpose."[884] The collection is represented as the happy sharing of wealth on behalf of the networked communities found in various places with the Judean "saints" in recognition of gratitude for the "spiritual" gifts received from them (Rom 15:26-27), supporting the idea just described in Rom 15 of "the nations" being brought into the insider circle defined by the traditional divine promises to Israel.[885] Whether "the poor among the saints" is best read as a technical term for Judean Christians, or as

[884] David J. Downs, *The Offering of the Gentiles: Paul's Collection for Jerusalem in Its Chronological, Cultural, and Cultic Contexts* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 161.

[885] See Gignac, *L'épître aux Romains*, 546, citing Downs, "The Offering of the Gentiles in Romans 15:16," 180.

designating the poorest among them,[886] the resulting image is one of global association network solidarity with Jewish Christians in Judea.[887] As David J. Downs has shown, it was not at all unusual in the first century for local and networked association groups to collect money for group projects, including projects of benefaction.[888] The particular association network inscribed as ideal in Rom 12-15 is characterized by global unity and a special relationship with Judea and Jews. As noted in Section 3.1, the assumption expressed here that the ideal addressee community at Rome will want to participate in Paul's mission to Jerusalem through prayer support (with a view to soon participating as well in Paul's mission to Spain) implicitly invites them to see and comport themselves as belonging to the global community of divine callings and mutual benefactions thus imagined. The fact that the common Greco-Roman representation (See Section 3.1) of Spain as one end of the earth can also be found in Hellenistic Jewish tradition (as seen for example in the reference of *Ps. Sol*. 8.16 to Pompey coming to Jerusalem "from the ends of the earth" in Spain)[889] adds further opportunity for ideal insiders represented as to some degree knowing and valuing Jewish traditions to accept the network thus represented as meaningfully global in nature.

The particular sub-subcultural ideal Jewish group identity constructed by Rom 12-15 is further articulated and supported with reference to the need to pray

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[886] See the debate described by Jewett, *Romans*, 929-930.

[887] See Berger, "Almosen für Israel. Zum historischen Kontext der paulinischen Kollekte," *New Testament Studies* (1976-1977): 183-195; Jewett, *Romans*, 930.

[888] Downs, *The Offering of the Gentiles*, 85-119.

[889] See Jewett, *Romans*, 924, citing also LXX Ps 71:8, 10.

for Paul due to the perceived threat of the "unbelievers" in Jerusalem (Rom 15:31). As seen above, ideal Gentile insiders are depicted in Romans as having a complex and potentially conflicted relationship with Jewish insiders, and also with Jewish "outsiders." Gentile insiders are, for example, depicted as being in some sense subordinate to their Jewish "outsiders" even as they supplant them as the acting community of the chosen people (see Rom 9-11). The mention of the "unbelievers" in Jerusalem returns to the implication seen above that some Jewish identities may not be ideal and not be legitimate. As Wayne Meeks observes in his study of the evolution of early Christian moral culture and global community identity, the tendency of Christian in-groups to define themselves in negotiated contradistinction to dominant cultural identities "outside" was a well-established Jewish subcultural inheritance,[890] but using the strategy in their own sub-subcultural context necessitated its application to "outside" Jewish identity as well: "To call early Christianity a sect means that it was a deviant movement within a cohesive culture that was defined religiously (in our sense of the word). The Christian movement understood itself in terms of the great traditions of that locally dominant culture [i.e., Greco-Roman Judaism] – both positively and negatively."[891] The representation in Rom 15:25-31 of Paul's global network as honorably recognizing and supporting the "saints" in Jerusalem adds the promise of mutual support to the promise seen above of expert teaching (expressed once again in terms of an ennobling sub-subcultural connection to Jerusalem and Jewish tradition). The invitation extended

[890] Meeks, *The Moral World of the First Christians*, 99.

[891] Meeks, *The Moral World of the First Christians*, 98.

in Romans to its ideal inscribed addressees to be associated with Paul and his network is sweetened here by the representation of Paul as an insider VIP divinely sanctioned to serve this global network of shared insider identity and support with the spiritual center of a venerable remnant community in Judea (See Section 3.4).

The closing reference in Rom 15:33 to "the God of peace" seems to be a traditional Jewish usage,[892] as does its concluding "Amen."[893] Read aloud (as Chapter 1 showed first-century letters commonly were), the intonation of an "amen" at this point in the exhortation to pious, peaceful unity would likely have marked an invitation to those assembled to reply "Amen,"[894] thereby simultaneously assenting to the unity thus described and instantiating it by agreeing with it aloud as a group. This ideal assenting addressee community is assumed in the benediction in the use of the phrase "all of you" (πάντων ὑμῶν), which underlines the ideal existing unity of the group and also "echoes the inclusive address in 1:6-7, where the theme of peace for all is also found,"[895] promoting once again in special insider terms the values of internal mutuality and solidarity shown above to have been seen in the first century as normal and important for any honorable, functional first-century association and to have been consistently promoted by the insider-to-insider epistolary paraenesis of Rom 12-15.

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[892] See Michel, *Der Brief an die Römer*, 468.

[893] See Jewett, *Romans*, 939, citing J. Jeremias, "Amen," *ThRE* 2.386-387.

[894] Jewett, *Romans*, 939-940, citing Jeremias, "Amen," 2.390; H. Schlier, "ἀμήν," *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* 1 (1964): 336-337; H.-W. Kuhn, "ἀμήν," *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament* 1 (1990): 70; M. Alamo, "La aclamación litúrgica 'Amen' en S Pablo," *Liturgia* 1 (1946): 197-200, 227-232; U. Heckel, *Segen in Neuen Testament. Begriff, Formeln, Gesten. Mit einem praktisch-theologischen Ausblick* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002), 308-312.

[895] Jewett, *Romans*, 939.

The basic argument of Taatz[896] and Doering[897] that the Pauline strategy of community regulation by letter was modeled to some degree on the kinds of Jewish "administrative-halakhic" letters used for the purposes of networked community definition at a distance in the diaspora (discussed above in Chapter 2) is confirmed by my reading of Rom 12-15. Like all of the association letters reviewed in the chapters above, Romans offers its inscribed ideal audiences in chapters 12-15 an invitation to feel and act like unified nodes in an ideal unified insider network, and like the letters reviewed in Chapter 3 Romans offers in chapters 12-15 an ideal insider application of traditional Jewish cultural inheritances as the ingredient of special insider culture definition necessary to its own particular recipe for the epistolary construction of ideal association network identity vis-à-vis "outside" cultural contexts of identity and authority. As noted above throughout Sections 3.1 and 3.2, the ideal association insider community thus articulated and promoted in Romans is always depicted as properly recognizing the ideal inscribed authority of Paul and properly associated with his ideal global network. Section 3.4 below examines in more detail the nature and relevance of the specifically "Pauline" character of the ideal insider community inscribed and promoted in Rom 12-15.

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[896] Taatz, *Briefe*, 111.

[897] Doering, *Ancient Jewish Letters,* 380-381.

Section 3.4. Pauline Association Network Definition in Rom 12-15

Sections 3.2 and 3.3 of this chapter applied the focus on subcultural community definition defined in the Introduction and informed by comparative reference to the Greco-Roman and Jewish letters reviewed in Chapters 1 and 2 to an examination of the subcultural and sub-subcultural forms and functions of Rom 12-15 as an example of Greco-Roman (and) Jewish association-epistolary paraenesis. This section applies the same investigative focus to an examination of the third important dimension of Rom 12-15 identified by this study: the specifically "Pauline" character of the sub-subcultural ideal insider community network constructed by the passage in the context of the letter to the Romans. The ideal Pauline insider community is represented in Rom 12-15 as an established, attractive global association network offering insider expert leadership and mutual support. It is constructed by means of the subcultural strategy of qualified positive engagement seen already in Sections 3.2 and 3.3 as both validatingly special and validatingly intelligible and honorable in theory vis-à-vis wider Greco-Roman and Jewish cultural systems of identity and order "outside." The "Pauline" character of Rom 12-15 is thereby revealed to be best understood as a third dimension of the epistolary project of ideal community definition most clearly discernible as "the purpose of Romans," and not (as noted already above in the Introduction) a window into the mind of "the real Paul" or a comprehensive summary of "Pauline ethics" pointing to any systematic "Pauline theology" encapsulated in Romans.

I argued above that understanding the form and function of any given insider-to-insider ancient association network letter involves analyzing it as a

discursive tool used in the service of community definition. This section stresses the implications of the fact that a letter's inscribed author plays a part in such epistolary projects of representation and persuasion (an insight that can be phrased in the case of mainstream Pauline studies as the principle that Paul the letter writer "projects the image of himself that is deemed appropriate to the argumentative ends he seeks to achieve").[898] This section shows how the "argumentative ends" of A) defining ideal insider community identity and B) defining an appropriate ideal authorial Paul are intimately related in Rom 12-15, and in fact mutually dependent.

Understanding the ideal figure of Paul as useful to networked communities engaged in projects of identity definition is not in itself an innovative departure. Judith Lieu has argued, for example, that the translocal character of "Pauline Christian" identity "may have been mediated more through Paul's own person as founder and traveller than fixed in any primary community consciousness,"[899] and since the exchange of letters was, as Doering notes, such a key element in the Pauline Christian strategy for "the maintenance of a network of communities,"[900] the representative and persuasive figure of Paul provided by letters attributed to him is recognized by scholars as essential to this process. In letters portrayed as coming from Paul in his capacity as a figure of ideal insider authority, a whole range of ideas and claims could be, in the words of Robert Jewett, "reified under the canonical aegis

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[898] Penner and Lopez, "Rhetorical Approaches," 41.

[899] Lieu, *Neither Jew Nor Greek?,* 173.

[900] Lutz Doering, *Ancient Jewish Letters and the Beginnings of Christian Epistolography*, 383, 508.

of the apostle… and hence rendered authoritative,"[901] including ideas and claims about proper insider community identity. While the usefulness of the figure of Paul may be more blatantly obvious in later "Pauline" ideologies and networks – for example in the ideal "Paul" Harry Maier finds authorizing ideal insider behavior in the Pastoral Epistles[902] – this section shows that its usefulness for community network definition can be clearly discerned already in Romans.

I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. 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. For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of yourself more highly than you ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned (Rom 12:1-3).

It was stressed above in Section 3.2 that the phrase "I exhort you brothers" goes a long way toward defining the ideal inscribed addressees of Rom 12-15. They are clearly addressed as a unified group in Rome properly associated with Paul and his network. Much has been made of the fact that Romans is not addressed "to the church (τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ) of Rome," following the form of other genuine Pauline letters (see, for example, the way the address line of 1 Corinthians 1:2 addresses the letter

[901] Jewett, *Romans*, 2.

[902] Harry O. Maier, *Picturing Paul in Empire*, 37, 170-173. On the elusive figure of "the real and authoritative Paul" as a useful community tool see also MacDonald, *The Pauline Churches: A Socio-Historical Study of Institutionalisation in the Pauline and Deutero-Pauline Writings*, 86-122; Wayne Meeks, "The Christian Proteus," in *The Writings of St. Paul* (W. A. Meeks, ed.; W. W. Norton, 1972), 435-444; Dennis R. MacDonald, *The Legend and the Apostle: The Battle for Paul in Story and Canon* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1983).

"to the church in Corinth" (τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ… τῇ οὔσῃ ἐν Κορίνθῳ). It has been suggested that Paul knew there was no real Christian community in Rome, that even if there was one Paul did not recognize it as a proper "church," etc.[903] It seems to me, though, like a bad idea to get caught up on the presence or absence of a single word in Romans 1. As noted above, other typical Pauline words and habits are oddly missing too in Romans – must all such omissions indicate something important about Paul's personal conception and/or opinion of his addressee community at Rome? It seems like a bad idea to build overarching theories of Paul's conception of his Roman addressee community that would be instantly useless if researchers found an impressively old fragment of Romans in an ancient dump tomorrow addressing the letter "to the church of Jesus Christ" (i.e., "to the called-out community of Jesus Christ" – ἐκκλησίᾳ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ) in Rome rather than to the linguistically cognate and theologically indistinguishable "called of Jesus Christ" (κλητοὶ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ) in Rome (Rom 1:7).

For the purposes of this study, at least, the point here is that the letter's addressees are addressed as part of an ecclesial network. In the closing of the letter they are addressed as networked insiders willing and able to greet the Roman "church" (ἐκκλησία) that meets in Prisca and Aquila's house, and able to be greeted as a unit by "all the (other) churches of Christ" (ἀσπάζονται ὑμᾶς αἱ ἐκκλησίαι πᾶσαι τοῦ Χριστοῦ - Rom 16:16) and Gaius the patron of "the whole church" (ὅλης τῆς ἐκκλησίας - Rom 16:23). They are repeatedly addressed in Romans, in short, as

[903] For a summary of this discussion see Young-Ho Park, *Paul's Ekklesia as a Civic Assembly* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015), 138-150.

a unified local Roman ecclesial node in a global ecclesial network. Rom 12-15 conforms to this pattern. For example, I have already discussed above the fact that the paraenesis of Rom 12-15 "recycles" paraenetic material from the Corinthian correspondence. It is hard to imagine why this strategy would be attempted in Rom 12-15 if the nature and function of the Roman addreseee community were really understood by Paul to be radically different from the nature and function of the addressee community in Corinth which *is* explicitly addressed by Paul in the address line of 1 Corinthians as an ἐκκλησία. In short, the cumulative and consistent construction of the addressees of Romans as a unified ecclesial group already belonging to an established global ἐκκλησία network is more important to the construction of the addressee community of Romans than the presence or absence of the word ἐκκλησία in the address line, and this construction is continued in the construction of the "you" of Rom 12-15. The inscribed Roman community (singular) is addressed as a unified node within a unified global network. In this way, various people and gatherings in Rome are invited to see and comport themselves as belonging to both unifying social groups.

It is important to notice that the way the Paul of Rom 12-15 addresses the inscribed "you" of Rom 12-15 also strategically, persuasively constructs the ideal inscribed sender(s) of the letter. When the Paul of Rom 12:1 says "I exhort you… by the grace given me," he is applying the special divinely-appointed status/duty claimed for himself in Rom 1:5 (and significantly stressed again in closing the paraenesis that follows, at Rom 15:15) to a new claim: the claim to the special insider right/duty of "exhortation" (παράκληση) defined immediately afterward as

a body function essential to the healthy ideal community (Rom 12:4-8). Paired with the imperative phrase "Do not be conformed" (μὴ συσχηματίζεσθε), the phrase "I exhort you" expresses the ideal authority of the Paul of Rom 12-15 and by extension any figure performing the reading of the letter (including the members of Paul's network who were, as already mentioned above, likely charged with carrying and reading the letter, like Phoebe, for example – see Rom 16:1).[904]

The "therefore" of "I exhort you therefore" points not only to the presumably elucidating and compelling nature of the insider teaching given previously in the letter,[905] but also (more subtly though no less forcefully) to the compelling nature of the Paul who thereby emerges as an insider teacher worth listening to when he exhorts. "Because I am a demonstrably respectable insider teacher in a network to which you properly belong," says the Paul of Rom 12, pointing back at the expert insider teaching of the letter, "therefore I exhort you to do the following, based on the special duty/status given me." This construction of Paul confirms Bruce Winter's point that the stress discernible in Paul's letters on proper insider teaching as divinely supported and essential to the ideal community network body has a socio-economic function: "Paul is not, in principle, considered a unique individual. He is considered as representing a socio-economic group whose interests he is assumed to be promoting when he writes," Oakes points out: "Structurally, the New Testament letters represent a pattern of settled assembly groups in various towns, being resourced by a network of travelling teachers who visit them and write to

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[904] See Jewett, *Romans*, 738.

[905] See Gignac, *L'épître aux Romains*, 447.

them. A structural aspect of the rhetoric of the letters is that it reinforces dependence on the network of teachers."[906] The construction of the ideal Paul of Romans in Rom 12:1-3 conforms to this pattern by constructing the authority of his divinely-appointed position and his successful global network as a good given.

I mentioned above that the sharing of traveling insider authorities and/or letters (including trans-local leaders and letters associated with Paul) helped build networked relationships between emerging Christian communities, including eventually the idea at least of a global network. Rom 12 contributes to this network-identity-defining process by representing expert traveling teachers like Paul as good and necessary, and it represents Paul himself (along with appropriately recognized members his network) in particular as qualified for the job. Timothy Marquis has argued that Paul consistently constructs himself as a global traveler in his letters in order to associate himself with other famous real and ideal traveling heroes and teachers of the ancient Mediterranean world: "To put it simply, Paul struggles to make himself a more central facet of the worldwide movement, and he calls to mind famous travelers and the discourses they represent as part of his rhetorical strategy."[907] As Marquis notes, Paul the letter writer is in this way "a signifier central to the network of signifiers he constructs."[908]

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[906] Oakes, "Economic Approaches. Scarce Resources and Interpretive Opportunities," in Marchal, *Studying Paul's Letters: Contemporary Perspectives and Methods*, 81.

[907] Timothy Luckritz Marquis, *Transient Apostle. Paul, Travel, and the Rhetoric of Empire* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), 23.

[908] Marquis, *Transient Apostle*, 152.

Marquis is interested in Paul's inscribed status as global traveler as a literary strategy, but for the purposes of this study it is also important to remember that traveling expert teachers were a real and present element in community definition. The assertion of Paul's expert authority as superior to that of his opponents the "super-apostles" in 2 Corinthians 11:5 testifies to the existence of a competitive market for visiting experts. The Paul inscribed in Rom 12-15 is therefore relevant, as noted by Oakes, to questions of community identity definition and expert teacher job security on the ground. In keeping with the specifically epistolographical focus of this study, I note that the construction of Paul in Rom 12-15 as a traveling expert teacher supports, and is supported by, the epistolary frame of Romans. The unusually extended opening inserts, for example, a good chunk of traditional "insider" material into Paul's self-identification as sender, constructing him as a proper community insider[909] familiar with proper kinds of proclamation:

> Paul… set apart for the gospel of God, w*hich he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy scriptures, the gospel concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh and was declared to be Son of God with power according to the spirit of holiness by resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord*… to all the beloved of God in Rome.[910]

The unusually extended greeting and thanksgiving sections also stress his apostolic authority over his addressees:[911] The greeting inserts a reference to "Jesus Christ our Lord, through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for the sake of his name, including

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[909] Jervis, *The Purpose of Romans*, 85, 158; S. Brown, *The Origins of Christianity: A Historical Introduction to the New Testament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), 127.

[910] Rom 1:1-7.

[911] Jervis, *The Purpose of Romans*, 158-159.

yourselves."[912] The thanksgiving includes a second reference to his position of global apostolic authority over his addresses: "First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you… I want you to know, brothers, that I have often intended to come to you… that I may reap some harvest among you as I have among the rest of the Gentiles."[913] The letter's unusually extended closing supports this picture of Paul the global VIP, by sending greetings to his "dear friend Epenetus, the first convert to Christ from the province of Asia," details indicating Paul's close connection to both the presumably already familiar and venerable Epenetus, and to the kind of globetrotting apostolic work responsible for such landmark conversions.[914]

The Paul of the opening and closing sections of Romans is part of a networked group including his co-senders, his co-greeters, his amenuensis, his association network comrades, and his Roman "insider" contacts (mentioned by name and with an unusual level of detail). He sends greetings from other assemblies in his network, and in fact on behalf of "all the assemblies of Christ," demonstrating that "he is the one who has authority to convey such greetings."[915] These cumulative epistolary details all support the impression that the Paul of Romans is an authoritative member of a viable global network intimately and meaningfully connected to the letter's ideal singular inscribed addressee community in Rome.

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[912] Rom 1:4-6.

[913] Rom 1:8-13.

[914] See Jervis, *The Purpose of Romans*, 151-152; Donfried, "A Short Note on Romans 16," 56; Barensten, "Pre-Pauline Leadership and Pauline Constitution in the Roman Church," in *The Letter to the* Romans (U. Schnelle, ed.; Leuven: Peeters, 2009), 596-599.

[915] Jervis, *The Purpose of Romans*, 152.

In examining the authority of the inscribed Paul of Rom 12-15, it is important to notice that it is represented as a proper, welcome given. It not represented as an authority simply imposed somehow from above and/or outside. The insider-to-insider address of "brothers" in Rom 12:1 underlines this fact: the authority claimed for Paul in Rom 12 is rooted in picture of him as a special insider with an attractive, authoritative, edifying character, in line with the strategy of "the rhetoric of intimacy" identified above with reference to Kathy Eden. In the *Letter of Ammonius to Apollonius* reviewed in Chapter 1, a rhetoric of intimacy was clearly discernible, depicting the good and closely connected character of Ammonius as supporting his epistolary exhortation: "Try then also for my sake to do this, gratifying me, which meanwhile you will recognize as a good thing... I wrote you nonsense in the previous letter which you'll admit. For my soul becomes relaxed whenever your name is present" (lines 20-27). In Rom 12:1-3, a comparable "rhetoric of intimacy" grounds the delivery of the paraenesis of Rom 12-15 in the *ethos* of its inscribed Paul as a special yet caring and trustworthy insider. The ideal Paul of Rom 12:1-3 is a rightly important figure to the plural, unified "you." He is a true insider and a "brother," but also a special kind of insider with a special status in the global network thus imagined. It is simply assumed, for example, that Paul is not showing a failure to be humble when he writes as one qualified and authorized to tell others to be humble.

It was stressed above in Sections 3.2 and 3.3 that the exhortation in Rom 12:2 to "be not conformed" marks ideal addressees right away as somehow identifiably, honorably special. The second part of the phrase – "to this age" –

suggests an assumed eschatological context[916] for this special insider identity (See the discussion of Rom 13 below). It is important to notice here that this way of defining the inscribed addressees of Rom 12-15 further supports, from the sociological point of view defined above in the Introduction, the authority of the inscribed Paul of the passage, as Philip Esler notes in his discussion of Paul's "authority" or "leadership" as represented in Romans.[917]

> Alexander Haslam follows Michael Hogg in observing that "as individuals identify more strongly with a group they increasingly confer leadership on those who are perceived to be prototypical of the ingroup's position." Thus a dynamic develops in which as attributions of leadership escalate, so also does the ability of the leader to influence the group as a whole: "Having acquired power in these ways, the person occupying the leader position will be able to adopt the more positive aspects of being a leader, including the power to maintain his/her leadership by influencing the social comparative context and thus his/her prototypicality." All of this means that within a social identity perspective the preference of group members for leaders is not a function of those leaders' qualities in the abstract, but of their capacity positively to differentiate between ingroup and outgroup and to make their group "special."[918]

Esler's point that a perceived ability to define an identifiable, special in-group is essential to a claim to leadership is well taken here. Rom 12:1-3 offers an example of such a principle at work in Romans, depicting Paul as a legitimately important figure whose exhortation is worth listening to partly by depicting Paul as capable of defining a suitably identifiable, special in-group to exhort. The paraenesis of Rom 12-15 is seen once again here to be "Pauline," but not in the sense of encapsulating everything Paul ever thought Christians ought to do or not do, revealing a

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[916] See Jewett, *Romans*, 732.

[917] Esler, *Conflict and Identity in Romans*, 33-39.

[918] Esler, *Conflict and Identity in Romans*, 38.

comprehensive systematic theology attributable to him, revealing his personal opinions, etc. Rom 12-15 is instead demonstrably "Pauline" in the sense of defining the *ethos* and status of Paul (and his ideal network of associates) in association-epistolary terms appropriate to the definition and promotion of the ideal insider community network constructed in the letter.

For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another. We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophecy, in proportion to faith; ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching; the exhorter, in exhortation; the giver, in generosity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness. Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor. Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers (Rom 12:4-13).

The switch from the authorial "I" of Rom 12:1-3 to the "we" of Rom 12:4 underlines the point made above about the validating assumed insider status of the Paul of Rom 12. The Paul of Romans is identified as "I/me" and "we/us" frequently enough to have drawn the attention of several commentators.[919] As noted in Section 3.2, the shifting "we" of Rom 12-15 serves a complex project of defining an ideal inscribed addressee in-group. In Rom 12:4, the switch from "I" to "we" connects the ideal sender(s) of Romans to this group. Through this switch and the reference to παράκληση ("exhortation") as insider behavior natural and proper to this in-group,

[919] Llewelyn, *New Documents Illustrating Early Christianity*, 171; Chantal Reynier. "L'investissement passional de Paul dans l'épître aux Romains," in *Les lettres dans la Bible et dans la littérature* (L. Panier, ed.; Paris: Cerf, 1999), 148-149.

Paul's παράκληση is itself characterized as such proper insider behavior, justifying and ennobling the return of his paraenetic authorial voice to the delivery of a long series of direct orders to his ideal second-person plural addressee group in Rom 12-15.

The precise tasks/offices referred to in Rom 12:4-8 are in some cases debated, but it is clear that they seem to include existing church offices,[920] a fact that further serves the rhetorical depiction of the Paul of Rom 12 as a proper insider more interested in helpful, encouraging "reminders" than in convincing anyone to change anything or try anything novel to accommodate him and his network.[921] As noted above in Section 3.2, the ideal global insider network promoted by Romans is specified here to have a proper place for leaders, teachers and exhorters like Paul and his associates. Such members serving the community deserve, according to the body logic of Rom 12:4-8, to be supported by generous "givers," who can thereby find their own proper, honorable place. Rom 12:1-13 thereby serves the socio-economic project identified by Oakes (just mentioned above) of promoting a perceived community need for standing experts like Paul himself. The mention of support for "saints" and hospitality for people in need of it brings Paul and his network even further into view, since support for "the saints" is precisely the kind of generosity Paul is depicted as qualified to facilitate (See the account of the collection for the "saints" in Jerusalem offered in 15:25-3), and a species of honorable "giving"

[920] See Jewett, *Romans*, 746, 748, 750-751, 753; Gignac, *L'épître aux Romains*, 463.

[921] See J. Barensten, "Pre-Pauline Leadership and Pauline Constitution in the Roman Church," in Schnelle, *The Letter to the Romans*, 595-616.

and support that includes "hospitality" is precisely the kind Paul needs (See the help requested of addressees at Rome for his mission to Spain in 15:24-32).

From the point of view outlined here, Philip Esler is right to see a focus on community definition in Rom 12-15, in the listing of "attitudes and behaviours necessary to preserve the unity of the congregations,"[922] but confuses the issue by accepting at face value the text's representation of itself as addressing real, pre-existing congregations known to Paul and thereby discernible to scholars. "Paul's direction against having arrogant thoughts is rooted in the actual experience of his addressees," Esler asserts, for example, offering no hard evidence at all for such a pre-existing real-life situation in Rome other than his reading of the letter itself as intervening in one.[923] A less speculative kind of community definition project is discernible here in the ideal community identity promoted by Rom 12, which demonstrably meets ideal first-century expectations of honorable, healthy association in-groups (See Section 3.2) and also demonstrably includes a special place for members like Paul. Paul's ideal status/duty is in a sense self-authorizing here, as he exhorts ideal insiders to support exhorters like himself – workers represented as natural, crucial parts of "the body" and essential to the health and success of the in-group thus imagined.

As noted in Sections 3.2 and 3.3, references like the one found here in Rom 12:12 to "the Lord" as deserving the devotion and obedience of ideal insiders ties the Jesus Christ depicted in Rom 12-15 through a traditional LXX usage to the Jewish

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[922] Esler, *Conflict and Identity in Rome*, 324.

[923] Esler, *Conflict and Identity in Rome*, 324.

god imagined as his father, and opens the door to Christological creativity in the theological formulations and scriptural argumentation of the passage.[924] The inscribed ideal authorial-apostolic Paul of Rom 12 is therefore confirmed here as an interpreter of sub-subcultural Jewish tradition capable of reconciling special insider traditions about Jesus and "scripture," and thereby capable of delivering on the leadership requirement of supplying attractive visions and methods of insider community definition.

Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly; do not claim to be wiser than you are. Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all (Rom 12:14-18).

Rom 12:14-18 continues the construction of Paul as an honorable, valuable in-group teacher. He is presented as knowing pre-existing insider traditions (in that Rom 12:14 seems to reflect sayings of Jesus also found in Matthew 5:44 and Luke 6:28).[925] The citation of such traditions in this context serves the construction of Paul as a good insider teacher,[926] much as the demonstrations of apparent expertise in Jewish traditions including scriptures was shown to do in Section 3.3. "This

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[924] See further in particular here Jewett, *Romans*, 832; Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 840; W. Thüsing, *Gott und Christus in der paulinischen Soteriologie. Per Christum in Deum. Das Verhältnis der Christozentrik zur Theozentrik* (Münster: Aschendorff, 1986), 34-36.

[925] Gignac, *L'épître aux Romains*, 473, citing M. Thompson, *Clothed with Christ: The Example and Teaching of Jesus in Romans 12.1-15.13* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991), 96-105; Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, 745; E. K. C. Wong, "The De-Radicalization of Jesus' Ethical Sayings in Romans," *New Testament Studies* 43 (2001): 248; D. C. Allison, "The Pauline Epistles and the Synoptic Gospels: The Pattern of the Parallels," *New Testament Studies* 28 (1982): 11.

[926] See A. Mustakallio, "Motivation of Paraenesis and Jesus-Tradition in Romans," in Schnelle, *The Letter to the Romans*, 453-461.

section of Romans," Mark Reasoner writes of Rom 12:1-15:13, "contains more allusions to teachings of Jesus attested in the Gospels than we find anywhere else in the Pauline corpus."[927] From the point of view outlined above, this unusually generous citation of traditions about Jesus serves to identify Paul as a safe, honorable insider teacher whose exhortation deserves attention and trust, particularly because the Paul thus represented is capable of applying such traditions to the project of defining an ideal community deserving in theory of loyalty partly by virtue of deserving ἔπαινος in ideal Greco-Roman and Jewish eyes "outside" (See Sections 3.2 and 3.3). The Paul of Rom 12 is able to apply very special insider traditions related to Jesus to define an ideal in-group community of "brothers" who are "living in harmony with one another" and pursuing "what is noble in the sight of all" (ennobling association in-group characteristics depicted in typical first-century terms in Rom 12-15 as intimately related – see Section 3.2). The unified, plural "you" addressed repeatedly from here on in Rom 12-15 is offered the chance to see and comport itself as this ideal community properly exhorted by Paul and associated with his network. The representation identified above of Paul in Rom 12 as a "good leader" by virtue of being able to help define an attractively identifiable, special in-group is thereby reinforced here in Rom 12:14-18.

The Paul of Rom 12:14-18 is also constructed as an appropriate in-group leader in that he continues to be assumed to be qualified and authorized to give

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[927] Reasoner, "The Theology of Romans 12:1-15:13," 293. On the extent and importance of the use of Jesus traditions in Rom 12-15, see Thompson, *Clothed with Christ*; Gerry Schoberg, *Perspectives of Jesus in the Writings of Paul: A Historical Examination of Shared Core Commitments with a View to Determining the Extent of Paul's Dependence on Jesus* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2013).

orders about how to address the normal association concerns of insider mutuality and being sufficiently "noble" in the sight of "outsiders." It has been noted that the passage seems to recycle Pauline paraenetic material also found elsewhere, with the command to "be of the same mind" recalling 2 Corinthians 13:11/Philippians 2:2; 4:2, and the command to "set [that] mind on exalted things" recalling Philippians 3:19/Colossians 3:2.[928] In applying such exhortation here, Rom 12 indicates that Paul is able to apply his special insider ideals and interventions to the definition of an in-group appropriate to both the association network context outlined in Chapters 1 and 2 and the particular ideal global network constructed by the letter.

Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave room for the wrath of God; for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." No, "if your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink; for by doing this you will heap burning coals on their heads." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good (Rom 12:19-21).

The reference to the ideal addressee in-group as "beloved" (ἀγαπητοί) reinforces the *ethos* of Paul as above: the Paul of Rom 12:19-21 represented as a caring insider, who practices the ideal insider brotherly mutual love he preaches in Rom 12-15 (See Section 3.2) even as he teaches and exhorts. His trustworthy insider status is underlined by another reference to pre-existing insider tradition: "The exhortation not to return evil for evil clearly became an established element in early Christian paraenesis," as Horrell notes, and "the tradition is reproduced, in similar

[928] See Jewett, *Romans*, 768.

form, in 1 Thess 5:15 and 1 Pet 3:19."[929] As demonstrated in Sections 3.2 and 3.3, this insider tradition associated with the teaching of Jesus is applied specifically and explicitly here to ideal insider community definition (as opposed, for example, to a less explicitly community-minded ideal goal like individual moral perfection), applying "social creativity" to reframe and ennoble the likely relative inability of the letter's addressees (real and ideal) to assert and guard in-group social honor by the exacting of vengeance in kind for perceived slights. Finally, the insider status of Paul and his exhortation is underlined once again with reference to the special sub-subcultural inheritance of "the law" (See Section 3.3). In these ways, the Paul of Rom 12:19-21 is confirmed once again as an honorable, useful expert in insider tradition capable of applying such tradition to the project of defining the ideal in-group involved as identifiable and special.

Let every person be subject to the governing authorities; for there is no authority except from God, and those authorities that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore whoever resists authority resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Do you wish to have no fear of the authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive its approval; for it is God's servant for your good. But if you do what is wrong, you should be afraid, for the authority does not bear the sword in vain! It is the servant of God to execute wrath on the wrongdoer. Therefore one must be subject, not only because of wrath but also because of conscience. For the same reason you also pay taxes, for the authorities are God's servants, busy with this very thing. Pay to all what is due them—taxes to whom taxes are due, revenue to whom revenue is due, respect to whom respect is due, honor to whom honor is due (13:1-7).

I noted in Section 3.2 that many commentators have trouble reconciling the optimistically pro-authoritarian tone of Rom 13:1-7 with the Pauline attitudes

[929] Horrell, "The Peaceful, Tolerant Community," 84.

toward outside powers discernible in other genuine letters (as opposed to the "Pastoral" and "deutero-Pauline" letters). I noted too, though, that the passage serves to identify and ennoble insiders more than to give a comprehensive and positive account of outside powers. The clean distinction assumed, for example, between the ideal addressee group "you" and the authorities who are tasked with executing "vengeance" and "wrath" in precisely the way "you" were just forbidden to do (in Rom 12:19) serves the definition of insiders as identifiable and honorable, and thereby serves the definition of Paul in Rom 12-15 as an attractive leader in the subculture-sociological sense defined by Social Identity theorists. The possible echoes perceived by commentators in Rom 13:1-7 (and particularly in the command to "Pay to all what is due them") of the traditional command of Jesus to "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's"[930] further underline the passage's construction of Paul as knowledgeable in Jesus tradition and capable of applying it in such projects of ideal insider community definition.

Because it is assumed that ideal insiders will accept the special ennobling duty described for them in Rom 13:1-7, and are in fact acting accordingly already (explicitly, for example, in Rom 13:6), the epistolary function discussed above of defining ideal insider communities through the articulation and promotion of ideals of "legitimacy, inclusion, exclusion, and virtue" in contradistinction to ideal "others" defined as "outsiders" serves here in Romans to underwrite Paul's insider authority. Since the proper ideal insiders of Rom 12-15 are assumed to understand Rom 13:1-

[930] Gignac, *L'épître aux Romains,* 488, citing Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, 768; Cranfield, *Romans 9-16*, 670; T. Schreiner, *Romans* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1998), 686; Jewett, *Romans*, 801.

7 as proper insider instruction and comply, the category of "others" and "outsiders" constructed by Rom 13:1-7 includes not only "outside" rulers, but also any improperly-aligned insiders who fail to recognize it as proper insider teaching, fail to observe it in a way recognized as proper, fail to recognize Paul's right to order its observance in Rome, etc. The exhortation of Rom 13:1-7 accordingly phrases traditional ideals about "outside" powers (See Chapters 1 and 2) as a direct insider-to-insider order – perhaps as one of the things the Paul of Romans claims the right to have reminded his addressees about "boldly" (Rom 15:15). The insider stance toward outside powers promoted in Rom 13:1-7 is presented as something that ideal insiders properly living up to the best special insider Jesus traditions and the best "outsider" Hellenistic Jewish ideals will naturally already know and embody, and therefore something concerning which the respectable insider teacher Paul has the apostolic right and duty to give orders.

In the very traditional yet very particular depiction of proper insider attitudes toward outside authority that emerges in Rom 13:1-7 from the "Pauline" syntheses just described, a special place is imagined in the ideal addressee community thus articulated not only for Paul but also for people perceived as properly associated with Paul and his network. As Bernard Oestreich has observed, the perceived social status of a letter's senders, receivers, readers, and hearers has a direct effect upon what communities will decide something said in a letter "really means."[931] Local leaders and visiting readers of Rom 13:1-7 perceived as connected meaningfully to Paul, and delivering its authoritative (and frankly authoritarian)

[931] Bernard Oestreich, *Performanzkritik der Paulusbriefe* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012), 12.

advice in the Pauline voice inscribed by the letter, would not only be involved in constructing Paul's perceived authority as an important person in an ideal insider network – they would also be perceived as having a share in it. The ideal inscribed Paul of Romans thereby promotes once again here both the evolving global network of traveling expert teachers pointed to as an important community-epistolary function by Oakes, and the related systems of local standing leaders and experts defined over time by evolving community uses of such letters.

Owe no one anything, except to love one another; for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. The commandments, "You shall not commit adultery; You shall not murder; You shall not steal; You shall not covet"; and any other commandment, are summed up in this word, "Love your neighbor as yourself." Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law (Rom 13:8-10).

The exhortation of Rom 13:8-10 continues to construct Paul as an attractive insider expert. The "halakhic" references to applied Torah observance demonstrate what is presumably supposed to look like sufficient knowledge of the special insider cultural inheritance of "the law" appropriate to attractive ideal community definition (See Section 3.3), and the references (recalling to special pre-existing insider Jesus traditions) to love as "fulfilling" that law[932] mark the resulting halakhic ideal as appropriately special and ennobling sub-subcultural exhortation.

Besides this, you know what time it is, how it is now the moment for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers; the night is far

[932] See Gignac, *L'épître aux Romains*, 491, 495; Wischmeyer, "Das Gebot der Nächstenliebe bei Paulus. Eine traditionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung," *Biblische Zeitschrift* 30 (1986): 182; Thompson, *Clothed with Christ*, 130.

gone, the day is near. Let us then lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armor of light; let us live honorably as in the day, not in reveling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarreling and jealousy. Instead, put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires. Rom 13:11-14).

The reference to inscribed addressees already "knowing" about the nature and significance of "the time" is thought by some to function as introducing a citation of pre-existing popular Christian tradition,[933] in the form perhaps of a hymn assumed here to be well-known.[934] The fact that Rom 13:11 resembles material found in 1 John 2:18 and Revelation 3:3 adds support in the eyes of some for the idea that the tradition apparently thus cited "does not appear to derive from within the Pauline circle."[935] In any case, it is clear that insider ideas and/or materials are presupposed as shared and authoritative by this reference to what ideal insider addressees already know, underlining the construction of Paul as a trustworthy insider and the construction of his community-defining exhortation as a mere community-affirming "reminder" (Recall here the common ancient representation of paraenesis as "reminder" discussed above, and the claim of Rom 15:15 that Paul has only been bold with his addressees in offering helpful "reminders"). The commands about proper behavior offered here to "you" accordingly make room for repeated references to an inclusive "we/us" in-group living in communion with "the Lord Jesus Christ" in the light of the traditional apocalyptic proviso just invoked.

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[933] See Jewett, *Romans*, 817-819 (See also 821-824 on 13:12).

[934] Gignac, *L'épître aux Romains*, 496, citing Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, 362; B. Byrne, *Romans* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1996), 398; Wilckens, *Der Brief an die Römer*, 74-75; Jewett, *Romans*, 817; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 882.

[935] Jewett, *Romans*, 819.

The re-appearance here of the kind of Pauline apocalyptic perspective[936]and apocalyptic urgency[937] perceived by many commentators as noticeable by its absence in Rom 13:1-7 was shown in Sections 3.2 and 3.3 to serve the project of community definition in Rom 12-15. It also continues the construction of the ideal Paul of Rom 12-15 by demonstrating that he knows such apocalyptic traditions well, and can apply them to defining the special insider community characterized in the passage by honorable mutuality and a disdain for quarreling and other bad behavior informed by such a relatively grand and urgent insider perspective. Robert Jewett has suggested in particular that a comparison of Rom 13:14 with Galatians (5:16, 24) indicates that "desires of the flesh" should probably be understood as including the desire for status gained by gaining more honor than a fellow.[938] For the purposes of this study, it is worth noting that if such a community-minded "Pauline" understanding of "the desires of the flesh" is operative here, the resulting "Pauline" apocalyptic perspective thus promoted serves once again here to present the normal, necessary first-century association duty of mutuality versus dishonorable and dangerous dissension and squabbling (including unhealthy kinds or levels of competition) as an expression of a special, ennobling insider identity. In the light of the imminent apocalyptic "day" of Rom 13, ideal insiders act like "good" outsiders in their association lives, but they do so partly because they know something outsiders

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[936] See Reasoner, "The Theology of Romans 12:1-15:13," 293-294.

[937] Gignac, *L'épître aux Romains*, 492.

[938] See Jewett, *Paul's Anthropological Terms*, 99-108.

do not, and are thereby included in a special divine relationship granting a special place in a divine plan to which outsiders do not have access.

Welcome those who are weak in faith, but not for the purpose of quarreling over opinions. Some believe in eating anything, while the weak eat only vegetables. Those who eat must not despise those who abstain, and those who abstain must not pass judgment on those who eat; for God has welcomed them. Who are you to pass judgment on servants of another? It is before their own lord that they stand or fall. And they will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make them stand. Some judge one day to be better than another, while others judge all days to be alike. Let all be fully convinced in their own minds. Those who observe the day, observe it in honor of the Lord. Also those who eat, eat in honor of the Lord, since they give thanks to God; while those who abstain, abstain in honor of the Lord and give thanks to God (Rom 14:1-5).

As seen in Sections 3.2 and 3.3, most commentators see Rom 14-15 as "Pauline" in the sense of defining and defending Paul's attitudes concerning the (non-)observance of Mosaic law on the part of Christians, and being directed at promoting his ideal of Jew-Gentile unity (particularly at Rome). Esler's summary picture offered in *Conflict and Identity in Romans: The Social Setting of Paul's Letter* of the people and situation seen as being on Paul's mind provides a useful example of this approach: "Thus, although the weak and the strong did not represent a tidy split between Judeans and non-Judeans, the differentiating factor was attitude to the Mosaic law, and it is likely that the core elements of each group were Judeans among the weak and Greeks among the strong."[939] As also noted in Sections 3.2 and 3.3, this "Real Knowable Groups Thesis" solution to the perceived problem of the epistolary-occasional ambiguity of Rom 14-15 has problems of its own. I mentioned already that in the absence of hard evidence, this summary of the situation requires

[939] Esler, *Conflict and Identity in Romans*, 344.

assuming that the categories of "weak" and the "strong" correspond to real existing identifiable groups living in Rome and known accurately by Paul, based on hunches identified by a significant number of scholars as overreaching.

The problem with the Real Knowable Groups Thesis is not simply that in the absence of new and better evidence, it must remain limited to conjecture deprived of the textual specifics usually relied upon to ground such "mirror reading" guesswork. If better evidence surfaces in the future, but it indicates instead that there were Jesus devotees in first-century Rome associated with the kinds of Cynic identities and ascetic practices mentioned in Section 3.1 above (or that the category of "the weak" was already an established didactic literary fiction in some first-century circles, etc.), analyses of Romans and Rom 14-15 based on the Real Knowable Groups Thesis will need to be dramatically overhauled.

Finally, there is the problem that if a difference in attitudes about food that may have been offered to idols (See Section 3.3) was indeed the issue driving the putative conflict, the conflict would not necessarily therefore involve different attitudes toward Mosaic Law, since specifics on foods offered to idols are not given in the Torah, since the ideal of abstaining from foods offered to ideals is attributed elsewhere to Christian leaders in Jerusalem but also presented as normative for all Christians (Acts 15:29, 21:25; Rev 2:14, 20), and since (as seen in Section 3.3) the exhortation of Rom 14-15 is a species of Torah-observant halakhic community definition, not a simple dismissal of Mosaic law. For all these reasons (and those indicated above in Sections 3.1 and 3.2), Rom 14-15 is best seen as "Pauline" in the sense of defining the ideal compelling Paul of the letter (recall Eden's point about

authorial *ethos* as a persuasive textual tool) and his inscribed network, and not in the sense of necessitating and informing guesswork about what "the real Paul" knew and thought about any real, specific groups at Rome.

We do not live to ourselves, and we do not die to ourselves. If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord; so then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ died and lived again, so that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living (Rom 14:7-9).

Rom 14:7-9 confirms the picture of Paul as an attractive, appropriate insider leader and teacher in the sociological sense defined above by applying what looks like pre-existing tradition[940] (for example baptismal[941] or other hymnic material[942]), presented as expressing convictions and ideals already shared by all and authoritative for all, to define "proper" insider attitudes and behavior. These attitudes and behaviors are once again significantly focused on honorable insider mutuality, and thereby specifically opposed to the kind of in-group infighting identified in Chapter 2 and Section 3.1 as seen in the first century as dishonorable and potentially fatal to association life.

Why do you pass judgment on your brother or sister? Or you, why do you despise your brother or sister? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God. For it is written, "As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall give praise to God." So then, each of us will be accountable to God. Let us therefore no longer pass judgment on one another, but resolve instead never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of another (Rom 14:10-13).

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[940] See Jewett, *Romans*, 832, 849.

[941] Michel, *Der Brief an die Römer*, 143.

[942] See Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, 797; Gignac, *L'épître aux Romains*, 517; Schlier, *Römerbrief*, 409.

Rom 14:10-13 recycles and reapplies Pauline paraenetic material from the Corinthian correspondence, relieved of specific references to food offered to idols etc., so that "the concrete situation is lifted up into the typical and fundamental. Paul does not lose himself in the details but lifts up the fundamental insights of the earlier controversies reflected in 1 Cor 8 and 10."[943] Its advice is not "Pauline" in the sense of revealing any comprehensive, systematic "Pauline ethic" or "Pauline theology" but rather in the sense of showing that the ideal Paul of Romans can apply his insider ideals and interventions to the definition of an ideal in-group appropriate to both the association network context outlined in Chapters 1 and 2 and the particular ideal global network constructed by the letter.

To be more specific, it is further confirmed that the Paul of Rom 14 knows and can apply special traditional insider teachings about not "judging" (found elsewhere in Matthew 7:1 and its parallels)[944] to the definition of proper insider identity and behavior as nonjudgmental. It is also further confirmed that he has similar knowledge and can make similar use of sub-subcultural insider scriptural argumentation. The citation "As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow" (ζῶ ἐγώ, λέγει κύριος, ὅτι ἐμοὶ κάμψει πᾶν γόνυ) combines LXX Isaiah 49:18 (ζῶ ἐγώ, λέγει κύριος ὅτι) and LXX Isaiah 45:23 (ἐμοὶ κάμψει πᾶν γόνυ), making it possible once again in theory to see "the Lord" as Christ and the group of people judged by him as

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[943] Nababan, "Bekenntis und Mission in Römer 14 und 15", 25 (as cited by Jewett, *Romans*, 833).

[944] Gignac, *L'épître aux Romains*, 519, citing Thompson, *Clothed with Christ*, 237.

including all insiders and all humans, as opposed to only the Gentile "nations" mentioned in the original text of Isaiah 45.[945] Paul is thereby represented once again by Romans as a trustworthy, qualified insider teacher – qualified in particular to scold insiders for scolding each other, in the service of ideal, viable in-group community definition.

I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself; but it is unclean for anyone who thinks it unclean (Rom 14:14).

In Rom 14:14 Paul is represented once again as a trustworthy insider authority, qualified to pronounce on sub-subcultural administrative-halakhic internal discussions of proper insider meal practice, with reference to special insider traditions about Jesus[946] assumed to be already shared and authoritative. The application of the Jesus-related tradition that nothing is "unclean" (Rom 14:14)[947] to an argument against dishonorable and dangerous association infighting further confirms Paul as a trustworthy insider who knows traditions about Jesus and can apply them to practical and theoretically ennobling projects of community definition. As Section 3.3 showed, the Paul of Romans 14 is presented as an expert in a very particular kind of sub-subcultural insider discussion. He is therefore qualified

[945] Gignac, *L'épître aux Romains*, 518. See also See Gignac, *L'épître aux Romains*, 537 and C. D. Stanley, *Paul and the Language of Scripture: Citation Technique in the Pauline Epistles and Contemporary Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 180 on the "Lord" of Psalm 17:50 LXX in Rom 15:9.

[946] Gignac, *L'épître aux Romains*, 518.

[947] See Jewett, 858-589; W. Pascher, *Rein un Unrein*, 171-172; M.-J. Lagrange, *Saint Paul. Épître aux Romains* (Paris: Gabalda, 1950), 329; Michel, *Der Brief an die Römer*, 431; Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, 818-819; Thompson, *Clothed with Christ*, 185-199; M. Theobald, *Studien zur Römerbrief* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), 491-495.

to pronounce on questions of defining healthy, peaceful community practice, including food practice. He can usefully scold insiders for scolding each other. He can use his insider teaching and exhorting expertise to build up the healthy, honorable unity of the ideal local community addressed by the letter, imagined as a node within the wider ennobling Jew-Gentile unity of the ideal global network of mission and mutual support to which it is represented as properly belonging (see Rom 15:15-21 below).

If your brother or sister is being injured by what you eat, you are no longer walking in love. Do not let what you eat cause the ruin of one for whom Christ died. So do not let your good be spoken of as evil (Rom 14:15-16).

Rom 14:15-16 continues the demonstration of Paul's ability to apply his expert moral exhortation to proper insider community definition. While the borrowing of the LXX usage of upright "walking" (περιπατῶ) to describe moral living is normal in Paul's letters (See for example 1 Thess 2:12; 2 Cor 4:2; Phil 3:17), the specific reference here to walking "in love" is unique to this passage.[948] The implicit community-minded, community-defining nature of paraenesis defined above is made explicit here: insider moral excellence is depicted as expressed in community. The similarly explicit exhortation in Rom 14:16 to avoid dishonorable, dangerous negative attention from the world "outside" by behaving like good association in-group insiders (See Section 3.2) reinforces the construction of the

[948] See Jewett, *Romans*, 861.

Paul of Rom 12-15 as a network teacher called, qualified, and authorized to hand down teaching and direct orders related to internal peace and external reputation.

For the kingdom of God is not food and drink but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. The one who thus serves Christ is acceptable to God and has human approval. Let us then pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding. Do not, for the sake of food, destroy the work of God. Everything is indeed clean, but it is wrong for you to make others fall by what you eat; it is good not to eat meat or drink wine or do anything that makes your brother or sister stumble. The faith that you have, have as your own conviction before God. Blessed are those who have no reason to condemn themselves because of what they approve. But those who have doubts are condemned if they eat, because they do not act from faith; for whatever does not proceed from faith is sin (Rom 14:17-22).

In Rom 14:17-22, the Pauline stress on "edification" or "building up" found in the Corinthian correspondence's descriptions of assembly-building work (1 Cor 3:9-10; 14:3, 5, 12, 26; 2 Cor 10:8; 12:19; 13:10)[949] is added to the reworked Corinthian correspondence's paraenesis on the "strong" and the "weak" directed in Rom 14-15 at a more general kind of functional community definition. The affirmation that "all things are indeed clean" (πάντα μὲν καθαρά) confirms Paul as an appropriate, attractive insider teacher by recalling traditions like Luke 11:41 (πάντα καθαρὰ… ἐστιν)[950] and underlining the fact that (as shown above in Section 3.1) the ideal insider addressees of Rom 14 are all "strong" in the sense of being better-informed, better-positioned insiders, with an attitude and a status portrayed as relatively privileged and enlightened (See also the strong "we" of Rom 15:1 discussed below). The ideal Paul of Rom 14 is thereby further confirmed as a trustworthy in-group

[949] See Jewett, *Romans*, 865.

[950] Jewett, *Romans*, 867; Pascher, *Rein und Unrein*, 170-173.

teacher, qualified to define what the sub-subcultural ideal of living in "the kingdom of God" really is, and to apply it to paraenetic projects of promoting proper insider identity, insider peace, and insider reputation.

We who are strong ought to put up with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Each of us must please our neighbor for the good purpose of building up the neighbor. For Christ did not please himself; but, as it is written, "The insults of those who insult you have fallen on me." For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, so that by steadfastness and by the encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope. May the God of steadfastness and encouragement grant you to live in harmony with one another, in accordance with Christ Jesus, so that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Welcome one another, therefore, just as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God (Rom 15:1-7).

In Rom 15, the implied "strong" character of all ideal insiders is made explicit. The "strong" are represented as included in a "we" group obliged with Paul (Rom 15:1) to properly imitate Christ and thereby glorify the Jewish god imagined sub-subculturally as his father (Rom 15:3-7). As better-informed, better-positioned ideal insiders willing and able to condescend (See Section 3.2), the ideal "strong" are therefore specified explicitly to be like Paul. The review of the letters offered in Chapter 1 showed that a perceived intimate personal connection with the *ethos* and example of a good insider-to-insider exhorter was widely expected in the first century to have a salutary effect and inspire proper insider behavior (See, for example, *Ammonius to Apollonius* 20-22; *Aristippus to Arete* 12-16). Here in Rom 15, a similar assumption is discernible about the help Paul's example and *ethos* properly understood and acted upon can lend in achieving the common community goal

(remember the paraenetic strategy of assuming shared values and agreement) of properly-defined insiders living in healthy community.

The idea that ancient Jewish scriptures were written for "our" benefit is a relatively normal early Christian and Pauline idea (as seen for example 1 Cor 9:10; 10:11; Rom 4:23-25),[951] used here in Rom 15:3 to see the example of Christ as imagined in Rom 15 in passages from the Psalms[952] and Isaiah.[953] The reference to the inspiring, obligating the example of Christ is repeated in Rom 15:7,[954] underlining the impression that the particular creative picture of community problems and solutions painted in Rom 15 is grounded in existing special insider culture assumed to be already shared and authoritative.[955] Once again, the application of all this special insider teaching supports the construction of Paul as an attractive, appropriate in-group leader in the sociological sense defined above: he is represented as knowledgeable in such inherited insider traditions[956] and able to explain how they relate to "our" ideal insider community needs "now," in particular the need for a proper insider culture of mutual acceptance and support. In keeping with the "we" language of Rom 15:1, the Paul of Rom 15 is depicted as part of the in-

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[951] See Jewett, *Romans*, 880; E. Ellis, *Paul's Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1957), 147-158; D.-A. Koch, *Die Schrift als Zeuge des Evangeliums. Untersuchungen zur Verwendung un zum Verständnis der Schrift bei Paulus* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1986), 322-324; Gignac, *L'épître aux Romains*, 524.

[952] Gignac, *L'épître aux Romains*, 523-524, 526.

[953] See Gignac, *L'épître aux Romains*, 530-531.

[954] Gignac, *L'épître aux Romains*, 513, 523, 526, 529-530, 531.

[955] See Gignac, *L'épître aux Romains*, 514.

[956] See M. T. Brien, "The Psalter at Work in Paul's Letter to the Romans," in Schnelle, *The Letter to the Romans*, 475-486.

group served by such expert exhortation. The special sub-subcultural inheritances of the in-group are tools provided (for use by teachers like Paul) by the special god of the in-group, "to teach *us*… so that *we* might have hope" (Rom 15:4). They can help provide a "spirit of *unity*" allowing the community to praise "*together with one voice*… the father of *our* Lord" (Rom 15:5-6).

For I tell you that Christ has become a servant of the circumcised on behalf of the truth of God in order that he might confirm the promises given to the patriarchs, and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy. As it is written, "Therefore I will confess you among the Gentiles, and sing praises to your name"; and again he says, "Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people"; and again, "Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles, and let all the peoples praise him"; and again Isaiah says, "The root of Jesse shall come, the one who rises to rule the Gentiles; in him the Gentiles shall hope" (Rom 15:8-12).

The words "I tell you" introducing the depiction of the divinely-ordained global community of Rom 15:8-12 reassert the special status/duty of the Paul of Romans as called to make this plan known and real (see his apostolic-prophetic call to bring the Gentile "nations" into the promises made to Israel as described in Rom 1:1-6 and 15:15-21). The ideal insider community presented as built by Paul with divine help as a global network properly encompassing the ideal local addressee community of Romans therefore has both a legitimate sub-subcultural Jewish identity and a universal, global character. The scriptural argumentation confirms Paul's status as an appropriate teacher/leader for such an in-group, citing traditional materials from the Law, the Prophets and the Writings as miraculously

pointing to the example of Jesus described in Rom 15 as relevant to "us" in the "now."[957]

Like the scriptural argumentation seen already above, the use of scripture here in Rom 15:8-12 is directed and imaginative. The result is described by Jewett as impressive: "Looking back over the catena of citations, one cannot help but be impressed with the careful selection and coherent editing, which effectively recontextualizes the meaning of each verse."[958] The phrase "Praise the Lord, all you nations" (αίνεῖτε τὸν κύριον πάντα τὰ ἔθνη) found in Psalm 116:1 LXX becomes, for example, "Praise, all you nations, the Lord" (αίνεῖτε, πάντα τὰ ἔθνη) in Rom 15:11, presumably to place more emphasis on the Gentiles as addressees,[959] and as already mentioned in Section 3.3, the potentially threatening reference to "that day" (of judgment) is deleted from Isaiah 11:10, presumably to downplay the traditional idea suggested by the phrase of the judgement of the nations, in a citation cut off before the return of Jewish exiles to Judea can be specified as the culmination of the promise.[960] This directed and imaginative citation of special sub-subcultural Jewish tradition confirms the particular global character of the ideal network and mission of Paul described in Romans, the divinely-ordained universal nature of which militates against infighting and division arising from the unhealthy insistence of members upon previous or parallel group identities (as seen in Rom 14). The

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[957] See Gignac, *L'épître aux Romains*, 533-537; J. C. Miller, *The Obedience of Faith, the Eschatological People of God, and the Purpose of Romans* (Atlanta, GA: SBL, 2000), 83.

[958] Jewett, *Romans*, 897.

[959] Gignac, *L'épître aux Romains*, 538.

[960] Jewett, *Romans* 895-897.

depiction of Israel as a source of blessing for "the nations" underwrites the letter's picture of a global canvas for Paul's mission as apostle to "the nations,[961]" and prepares the ground for the request coming soon in Rom 15:24-28 for help with his Spain mission in particular.[962]

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit (Rom 15:13).

The blessing of Rom 15:13 continues the project of ideal in-group community definition at the surface level by assuming a real, existing plural unit "you" at Rome capable of being filled with proper internal association in-group "peace" through proper behavior arising from a proper relationship with the insider god preached by Paul. The same project is also pursued in more subtle way, through the reference made in the blessing to "the spirit." As mentioned in Section 3.1, the reference made soon after in Rom 15:30 to insiders empowered to live in ideal unity by the power of the spirit further underlines the implication of Rom 14-15 that all ideal insiders are in some sense spiritually "strong" (Recall here again "we the strong" of Rom 15:1), and constitute thereby an ideal identifiable, special group. This depiction of the ideal in-group addressees of Rom 15 supports the depiction of Paul as a trustworthy, attractive insider authority figure in the sociological sense defined above. The fact that the normal, important association value of peaceful in-group unity is thereby

[961] Jewett, *Romans*, 894; Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, 387; Nababan, "Bekenntnis," 118-121; Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, 848.

[962] Jewett, *Romans*, 892.

depicted in Rom 15 as something that happens with the special help of divine grace[963] frames necessity once again as insider virtue. Ideal addressees of Rom 15 are invited here once again to understand and pursue the kind of mutuality seen in Chapter 1 to have been expected as a normal and necessary part of first-century association in-group culture as an expression of their in-group's special, ennobling insider identity.

I myself feel confident about you, my brothers and sisters, that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, and able to instruct one another. Nevertheless on some points I have written to you rather boldly by way of reminder, because of the grace given me by God to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles in the priestly service of the gospel of God, so that the offering of the Gentiles may be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit (Rom 15:14-16).

In Section 3.1, I argued that Jewett's construal of the ideal of mutual exhortation and correction promoted here as a "countercultural [idea] reversing the hierarchical and elitist premises of the Mediterranean world"[964] is overstated, given the fact that members who are somehow "made strong" (Rom 15:14) like Paul are thereby assumed to be doing the exhorting. I argued that the fact that Paul is assumed to be in a position to endorse and police this process "by virtue of the grace" (διὰ τὴν χάριν) – i.e., the important divinely-ordained status/mission – given him (Rom 15:15-16, recalling the claim to this χάριτος already laid in Rom 12:3 and Rom 1:5) also militates against such an anti-hierarchical reading. While the ideal addressees of Rom 15:14-16 may be Paul's "brothers," then, and his exhortation to

[963] Gignac, *L'épître aux Romains*, 527.

[964] Jewett, *Romans*, 905.

them may be a mere example of the kind of mutual correction they themselves are already qualified to do, and a mere "reminder" of the kinds of things they already know, the Paul of Rom 15:14-16 is nevertheless special. He has been personally chosen by the special god of the in-group for a global mission of priestly/ambassadorial service.[965] Like the Christ of Rom 15, the Paul of 15 serves the community – describing his mission with a string of words related (through the root εργ) to workers and working[966] – and the reappearance in Rom 15:16 of a reference to "the spirit" recalls the point just made above that the ideal mutuality and unity of the global community thus imagined is an expression of the special relationship members have with the god of the in-group and their accordingly special insider identity. The Paul of Romans is thereby further confirmed here in Rom 15:14-16 as an attractive insider authority figure in the sociological sense defined above.

In Christ Jesus, then, I have reason to boast of my work for God. For I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me to win obedience from the Gentiles, by word and deed, by the power of signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God, so that from Jerusalem and as far around as Illyricum I have fully proclaimed the good news of Christ. Thus I make it my ambition to proclaim the good news, not where Christ has already been named, so that I do not build on someone else's foundation, but as it is written, "Those who have never been told of him shall see, and those who have never heard of him shall understand" (Rom 15:17-21).

[965] See Jewett, *Romans*, 906; Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 510; Gignac, *L'épître aux Romains*, 545.

[966] Gignac, *L'épître aux Romains*, 545, 553.

The international scope of Paul's work and network, and the miraculous "signs and wonders" accompanying and validating them (See Sections 3.2 and 3.3) stressed in Rom 15:17-21 underline the claim just made that Paul's mission is ordained and supported by the god assumed to be recognized as shared and authoritative by the ideal sender(s) and addressees of the letter. The ideal Pauline mission and network that emerge are depicted as impressively, "ambitiously" global, with the Paul of Rom 15:20-21 dependably going where no comparable network VIP has gone before – a choice justified by the Paul of Rom 15:21 by flexing his Torah-expert muscles one last time, reading Isaiah 15:21 as authorizing his special duty/status as the ambassador and/or priest (λειτουργός) of Christ sent to all nations.[967] The network-supported global mission of the Paul of Rom 15 is thereby represented as divinely-ordained, divinely-supported insider expert work.

This is the reason that I have so often been hindered from coming to you. But now, with no further place for me in these regions, I desire, as I have for many years, to come to you when I go to Spain. For I do hope to see you on my journey and to be sent on by you, once I have enjoyed your company for a little while (Rom 15:22-24).

In Rom 15:22-24, the ideal addressee community of Romans is (as discussed in more detail in Section 3.2) offered a chance to claim their proper, honorable place in the global Pauline mission and network just described. As a VIP with a global territory and global connections, the ideal Paul of Rom 15 is not a dependent sponge when he asks for help to go to Spain. He is a "somebody," and a unified Roman

[967] See Jewett, *Romans*, 916; D. Zeller, *Der Brief an die Römer. Übersezt und erkälrt* (Regensburg: Pustet, 1985), 239; Gignac, *L'épître aux Romains*, 554.

community would therefore be honored by hosting him and helping him on his way to Spain. It is further clarified that he has wanted to include them in his exciting global mission/network in some such way for many years (Rom 15:23). The ideal addressee community of Rom 15:22-24 can be, if they act now, welcomed into Paul's attractive network of expert insider teaching, beneficiaries of the kind of expert insider community-defining exhortation demonstrated in Rom 12-15, and important players in a divine plan for the entire world. The ideal inscribed Paul of Rom 15:22-24 is thereby confirmed as a very attractive in-group leader in the sociological sense defined above.

At present, however, I am going to Jerusalem in a ministry to the saints; for Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to share their resources with the poor among the saints at Jerusalem. They were pleased to do this, and indeed they owe it to them; for if the Gentiles have come to share in their spiritual blessings, they ought also to be of service to them in material things. So, when I have completed this, and have delivered to them what has been collected, I will set out by way of you to Spain; and I know that when I come to you, I will come in the fullness of the blessing of Christ (Rom 15:25-29).

As discussed in Section 3.2, the reference here to a collection for particular special insiders in Jerusalem offered by assemblies from among "the nations" further underlines the impression that Paul is a VIP in a big successful network. The mere fact that Paul is represented here as personally entrusted with handling this project of resource sharing and benefaction marks him as an insider of great responsibility and honor.[968] I have already pointed out that although Dieter Georgi may see the matter-of-fact language of Rom 15:25 as the mark of an "unpretentious

[968] See Joubert, *Paul as Benefactor*, 216-219, etc.

statement,"[969] the collection for Jerusalem as described in Rom 15 also has the potential to make the ideal global community imagined in Romans real, through relationships of obligation and mutuality,[970] underlining the sense that Paul is an extremely important insider. The collection as described in Rom 15 offers evidence that Paul has both the validating trust of assemblies across the map and a validating relationship with a vulnerable but venerable group of insider VIPs in Jerusalem. The possibility is thereby raised that if Rome had a unified addressee community resembling the one assumed by Romans and described in appropriate detail in the exhortation of Rom 12-15, Paul could connect it with such global networks and resources, including an ennobling relationship with these VIPs in Jerusalem who are interestingly, honorably, usefully Jewish like Paul (Rom 10:1), and able to deliver "spiritual blessings" like Paul (See Rom 1:11; 15:29).

In this context, the fact that the collection is offered by Gentiles grateful for the spiritual inheritance they have received from Jewish insiders offers encouraging support here for Paul's claim that "the nations" are at long last being brought (particularly by him) into the insider community and promises of Israel.[971] The material benefaction offered by these assemblies out of gratitude for spiritual services received mirror the material support the ideal Roman community is invited to offer when they receive the "blessings" Paul's visit brings.[972] By receiving such

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[969] Georgi, *Remembering the Poor*, 115.

[970] Joubert, *Paul as Benefactor*, 216-219.

[971] Gignac, *L'épître aux Romains*, 546, citing Downs, "The Offering of the Gentiles in Romans 15:16," 180.

[972] Gignac, *L'épître aux Romains*, 547-548.

blessings from him and sending him on to Spain, a unified Roman community would be able to get in on the global relationship of reciprocity depicted in Rom 15, involving Judea, the nations, assemblies around the world, and Paul himself.[973] The Paul of Rom 15:25-29 is thereby represented as an expert in insider networking, teaching, and exhortation who is well worth welcoming and supporting.

I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to join me in earnest prayer to God on my behalf, that I may be rescued from the unbelievers in Judea, and that my ministry to Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints, so that by God's will I may come to you with joy and be refreshed in your company. The God of peace be with all of you. Amen (Rom 15:30-33).

Rom 15:30-33 continues the project of defining the Paul of Romans as a trustworthy, attractive insider expert in the ideal global network to which the ideal insider addressees of the letter rightly belong. He is further confirmed as a good in-group authority figure in the sociological sense defined above by the assumption that he is on the side of the inscribed addressee insiders in Rome against the "others" called "the unbelievers" in Jerusalem. He therefore needs and deserves their desire for him to succeed, for example, in delivering the collection. Failure or rejection in Jerusalem would greatly dishonor Paul and the communities involved in offering the benefaction,[974] and it is simply assumed (Rom 15:30-31) that the "brothers" at Rome will not want this to happen. It is assumed instead that (as described in more detail in Section 3.2) in offering their willing (prayer) support,

[973] See Gignac, *L'épître aux Romains*, 547.

[974] Joubert, *Paul as Benefactor*, 208.

born of their desire for Paul to succeed in Jerusalem so that he can visit them in Rome and be sent on by them to Spain (Rom 15:32), the "brothers" in Rome will see and comport themselves as an ideal local node (as pictured in the letter) in Paul's ideal global network (as pictured in the letter). Like the ideal Jews and Gentiles of Rom 15, then, and like the ideal traveling expert Paul and welcoming, unified local Roman community of Rom 15, the project of defining the ideal Paul of Romans and the project of defining the ideal addressee community of Romans are intimately related and mutually supportive.

Section 3.5. Chapter 3 Conclusion

This chapter confirmed that the community advice of Rom 12-15 serves, in its association-epistolary context, a project of community identity definition analogous to those served by the Greco-Roman and Jewish association network letters reviewed in Chapter 1 and 2. Once again, a stance of qualified positive engagement with "outside" identities and values is modeled, representing ideal insider network culture as both honorably special and honorably intelligible and functional vis-à-vis wider cultural systems of identity and order "outside." By pursuing the project of constructing community insider social identity in this way the insider paraenesis of Romans asserts, according to the Law of the Membrane, the ideal of a "proper" first-century network identity deserving of ἔπαινος from insiders and outsiders alike. In serving this project in this way, Rom 12-15 confirms the theoretical expectations laid out in my study's Introduction. The paraenesis of Rom 12-15 invites, in ways conforming to both common ancient association-epistolary habits and the subcultural Law of the Membrane, the inscribed ideal addressees of the letter to perceive and comport themselves as belonging to a particular ideal community network of social identity and order – in this case the ideal global association network depicted as properly associated with and served by the ideal leader Paul simultaneously constructed by the rhetoric of the letter. By showing that the Paul of Romans can authoritatively, usefully define the insider community as special and viable, Rom 12-15 promotes him as an attractive leader in the Social Identity terms: an inspiring leader is an insider capable of defining the community as an identifiable, special group. In much the same way that the various

readers of the *Letter of Aristippus to Arete* were invited to array themselves with honor through various kinds of insider-defining association with ancient worthies, the inscribed addresees of Romans are invited to array themselves through association with the ennobling and community-defining expert teaching, global network, and impressive divine mission of the Paul described in the letter.

Conclusion

The Introduction to this study outlined the history and shape of the longstanding perceived problem of "the purpose of Romans," and Section 3.1 outlined the related "problem" of the nature and purpose of Rom 12-15, i.e., the fact that the historical-critical and "scientific" (i.e., evolutionary and comparative) method dominant in understanding NT letters since the time of F. S. Baur is frustrated by both this particular passage and this particular letter. The traditional reading of Romans as kind of systematic-kerygmatic Pauline treatise encapsulating in letter form a compendium of Christian doctrine has been more or less abandoned in the academy in favor of readings pursuing "scientific" ideals like Baur's, but the not-quite-"occasional"-and-yet-not-quite-"literary" character of the letter has frustrated the rebuilding of scholarly consensus on the proposed new foundations of concrete specific situation, intended audience, and authorial purpose. The "real" addressees and sender(s) of the letter remain inaccessible in Romans, to the point where the kind of "mirror reading" used in investigating other letters to recover original audiences and situations more reliably holds up a mirror to the investigator.

I recommended in this study as a way forward past this "impasse" an approach informed 1) by insights gleaned from Social Identity Theory, 2) by the context of ancient association culture recommended as promising but unattempted thus far in Romans scholarship by Richard Ascough, 3) by the context of ancient insider-to-insider epistolary culture recommended as promising but unattempted thus far in Romans scholarship by Lutz Doering and others, 4) by the "evolutionary" and "comparative" approach proposed by Frederick Wisse and 5) by a qualified

form of the "socio-rhetorical" and "subcultural" focus promoted by Vernon Robbins. I argued that Paul's letter to the Romans is best read first and foremost in association-epistolary comparative terms as a tool of community insider social identity definition, and that the paraenesis of Rom 12-15 is best read as both confirming and clarifying this primary "purpose" of the letter. This is the distinctive contribution to the scholarly discussion of Romans and Rom 12-15 for which the original approach found in my Introduction was formulated, and at which the original work of research and analysis found in Chapters 1-3 was directed.

I noted in Section 3.1 that Rom 12-15 has been used in the past to try to clarify the purpose of Romans in various ways. Reading Rom 12-15 as an exercise in community definition is not new in and of itself.[975] Philip Esler argued, for example, that "Romans 12:1-15:13 covers the norms necessary for the maintenance and enhancement of the identity of the group."[976] Scholarly interest in Rom 12-15 as serving community definition and clarifying the problem of the purpose if Romans is, however, still controlled by the sesquicentenarian assumption of Baur that the ultimate holy grail of such investigation is the recovery by means of informed guesswork of an original specific, concrete community and occasion addressed by an identifiable original authorial intention: "If we accept Rom 14-15 as directed to a real situation in Rome, that means we will read the rest of the letter as an occasional letter addressed to a church about which Paul was informed, and not as a

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[975] See Kümmel, *Introduction to the New Testament*, 307; Koester, *Introduction to the New Testament Vol. 2* (New York: Walter De Gruyter, 1987), 141; Esler, "Social Identity"; Esler, *Conflict and Identity in Romans*, 309; Stowers, *A Rereading of Romans*, 323; Gignac, *L'épître aux Romains*, 66, 447, 527.

[976] Esler, "Social Identity," 55.

compendium doctrinae Christianae," Mark Reasoner concludes, for example: "Rom 12:1-15:13 therefore cannot be ignored."[977] Rom 12-15 is seen as crucial, in other words, because it might reveal the purpose of Romans by revealing its true, original occasional nature. This persistent, unrealized goal of establishing and understanding the "occasional" nature of Romans is what leads Reasoner to say that "after centuries of neglect, Rom 12:1-15:13 is now recognized as crucial to our understanding of the letter."[978]

The analysis I have offered in this dissertation does not begin, though, with the common investigative assumptions summarized so helpfully here by Reasoner and Esler. Because (as seen in the Introduction and in Section 3.1) there is in reality no hard evidence and no real scholarly consensus when it comes to "the intended audience of Romans" (and therefore no consensus on "the real intention of Paul"), because fully constituted communities with stable self-understandings cannot necessarily be assumed as pre-existing in any case "behind" the sending or receiving of ancient association letters, including Paul's,[979] and because such well-defined ideal community identities were in fact one of the subcultural products created and promoted by the first-century use of texts like Romans,[980] I approached the ideal addressees and sender(s) of Romans as products and tools of community identity

[977] Reasoner, "The Theology of Romans 12:1-15:13," 292.

[978] Reasoner, "The Theology of Romans 12:1-15:13," 292.

[979] On this see David G. Horrell, "The Letters to all Christians? Were there Pauline Churches?" (Paper delivered at the annual meeting of the British New Testament Conference at Liverpool Hope University, September 1-3, 2005).

[980] See again Stowers, "The Concept of "Community" and the History of Early Christianity," *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion* 23.3 (2011): 238-256; Sullivan and Anible, "The Epideictic Dimension of Galatians as Formative Rhetoric," 117-145.

definition, and not as real and accessible pre-existing people waiting "behind" the letter to be recovered with the help of guesswork based on mirror-reading. The insight of Philip Tite regarding Valentinian sectarian paraenesis was accordingly applied in this study to the paraenesis found in Romans: ancient depictions of ideal community identity are prescriptive, not descriptive, and they testify most demonstrably to projects of defining ideal insiders in contradistinction to equally ideal outsiders, i.e., not to theological/philosophical positions and propositions *per se*, or to real identifiable ancient individuals or groups defined by them.

The approach of this study to representations of the "inside" versus the "outside" in the community-defining language of Romans and Rom 12-15 is, for the reasons just cited, also new. Reading Rom 12-15 as a passage addressing the ways in which (Pauline/Christian) community "insiders" relate to "outsiders" is not new in and of itself.[981] Unfortunately, since it is easy for scholars (as mentioned in the Introduction and shown in Section 3) to exaggerate the subcultural insularity of "sectarian" identities and materials, readings of Romans as a sectarian document have (as seen particularly in Section 3.2) exaggerated its "countercultural" appearance, accepting its normal and strategic representations of ideal insider identity as honorably distinct from the world "outside" at face value. I suggested in the comparative sections of Chapter 3 that the modern interpretive habit of mistaking strategic assertions of ennobling distinctness in Rom 12-15 for accurate descriptions of real community ideals and identities serves a (post-)Christian

[981] See, for example, Kuo-Wei Peng, *Hate the Evil, Hold Fast to the Good: Structuring Romans 12.1-15.13* (London: T&T Clark, 2006), 194-195; Horrell, "The Peaceful, Tolerant Community," 93.

apologetic urge to affirm the ideal community insiders of Rom 12-15 as admirably and even heroically "defiant" and "countercultural" vis-à-vis the outside world better than comparative work *per se* (confirming the seriousness of the dangers of insufficiently critical "comparison" pointed out by J. Z. Smith). For these reasons, my study supplemented the application of Bryan Wilson's oft-cited insight about the "countercultural" stance necessary to subcultural identity definition with his oft-ignored insight about the carefully negotiated and maintained "*degree* of separateness"[982] necessary in any such "sectarian" stance. The image of a cell membrane was used to illustrate the principle of a successful ideal "inside" needing to be both healthily connected to, and healthily distinct from, environments "outside." The attention paid in my study to the operation of this Law of the Membrane in Romans thereby provides a corrective to common and influential (but imprecise and exaggerated) interpretive ideas about how "special" the ideal community of Rom 12-15 is portrayed to be, and why: all three major dimensions of the ideal social identity articulated in the passage (Greco-Roman, Jewish, and Pauline) were shown above to constitute the ideal association network described by the letter as respectably "special like everyone else."

I argued in this new investigative context that the ideal community articulated by the language of Romans and the epistolary paraenesis of Rom 12-15 in particular was given, by means of the qualified positive engagement pursued according to the Law of the Membrane, room to survive and thrive (like other ideal first-century association network defined by letters) first of all "within its own safe

[982] Wilson, "An Analysis of Sect Development," 10-11, italics mine.

and clearly bounded epistolary domain."[983] Like the association-epistolary materials reviewed in Chapters 1 and 2, Rom 12-15 represented itself as able to serve networked community definition and maintenance in the real world by facilitating the moving around of insider personnel and resources, and by instantiating and promoting particular insider representations of who had the right to expect what of whom. Like the other association-epistolary letter materials examined above, Rom 12-15 represented itself as appropriate for such projects of community definition in applying the "insider" strategy of qualified positive engagement with "outside" values casting the inside as both honorably special and honorably intelligible and functional vis-à-vis wider cultures outside, and therefore deserving of ἔπαινος from insiders and outsiders alike. My comparative project confirmed, in short, the presence and function in Rom 12-15 of subcultural habits of ideal community representation predictable according to the "Law of the Membrane," in forms appropriate to a first-century association-epistolary context.

In terms of the specific relationship of the identity-defining "epistolary domain" articulated in Romans vis-à-vis concrete lived community on the ground in the ancient "real world" just evoked, I suggested in Chapter 3 that in the "evolutionary" terms proposed by Frederick Wisse, the particular project of community definition pursued by Rom 12-15 was well-suited to serving the development and functioning of the appropriately-defined communities Rodney Stark credits with allowing early global Christian culture to survive and evolve long enough for all its other cultural "borrowings" and "mutations" (of the kind posited

[983] König, "Alciphron and the Sympotic Letter Tradition," 198.

and investigated by Wisse) to happen in the first place. The cultural "membrane" described by Stark as the crucial innovation of emerging global Christian culture is, it bears repeating here, exactly the kind of recognizable yet permeable "social membrane" serving community definition and mutual support discerned in Rom 12-15 in Chapter 3 and in all of the real and ideal association network letters reviewed in Chapters 1 and 2. It has been argued more than once that the promise of healing held out by early Christian leaders and groups would have been very attractive in the first century due to the kinds of health crises that tend to accompany periods of social transformation and rapid urbanization.[984] The promise of solid networked community and mutual support articulated by the "insider" paraenesis of Rom 12-15 would have been similarly attractive in this context.

My identification in this study of the Christian community rhetorically constructed by Romans as being ideally "special like everybody else" does not, however, confirm Stark's evolutionary model in every way. From the point of view offered by the theoretical and comparative chapters above, Stark's idea of Christian mutual care as an "innovation" and "revolutionary stuff"[985] indicates a misunderstanding of the attractive nature of this insider community ideal. As was shown above in Chapter 1, an ethic of association network mutual care had a very common and majoritarian kind of appeal in the first-century Mediterranean world.

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[984] See A. von Harnack, "Medicinisches aus der ältesten Kirchengeschichte," *Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur* 8 (4, 1892): 37-152; Hector Avalos, *Health Care and the Rise of Christianity* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1999), 3-15, 117-120.

[985] See Stark, *The Rise of Christianity*, 212.

Its majority-cultural respectability was likely just as attractive as its subcultural social utility.[986]

However "revolutionary" they are deemed to be, the markedly ideal expressions of community identity found in Romans and Rom 12-15 in particular are not hard to "ground" in the context of the needs of communities negotiating borders and building networks in the "real world" from the network-evolutionary point of view outlined here. The very local, occasional epistolary project of defining insider community identity by rhetorically constructing "the strong" and "the weak" in the Corinthian correspondence was shown, for example, to appear in Rom 12-15 in a form more appropriate to articulating the "imagined community" of a global network characterized by respectable internal peace and mutual care. From the point of view outlined in this study, then, the stubborn perceived oddity of Romans (as not-quite-occasional, etc.) points in the end not to a reading "problem" revealed in the 19th century and waiting to be "solved," but rather to a writing strategy appropriate to the first century waiting to be further understood and explored. The "purpose of Romans" is to represent its project of community definition – again, like the real and ideal letters reviewed in Chapters 1 and 2 – as a social tool capable of defining viable networked community identity at a distance and over time.

I suggested in my Introduction that if insider-to-insider association network letters failed to show a common pattern of epistolary community definition through both "positive" and "negative" engagement with "outside" identity and power, or if Romans (and Rom 12-15 in particular) could not be shown to conform to such a

[986] On this point see Thorsteinsson, "The Role of Morality in the Rise of Roman Christianity," 157.

common pattern, my proposed solution to the critical impasse concerning "the purpose of Romans" would be a conjecture of little value. If, on the other hand, it can be shown that a pattern of ideal community insider identity, order, and authority finding definition with reference to "outside" cultural systems of identity, order, and authority is demonstrably present in ancient insider-to-insider letters – and if that common pattern can be shown to be at work Romans – then attention to such association-epistolary needs and strategies is clearly appropriate and can provide, I suggested, a viable way forward.

Chapters 1 and 2 of this study confirmed that the identity-articulating characteristics expected from the theoretical point of view sketched in the Introduction were indeed present in association network letters. It is uncontroversial, I pointed out, to assert that community definition and cohesion were serious concerns for networked associations,[987] and that letters from (real and ideal) insiders to (real and ideal) insiders were useful tools in addressing this need,[988] due to their capacity to "transform and tighten the community in which they are held, [as] readers, or hearers, are included in the community – or its idealized image."[989] This community-defining function of letters was strengthened in practice, I noted further, by the fact that such letters came out of, and were read in, communal environments.[990] As noted by Kendra Eshleman, among ancient

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[987] See Philip A. Harland, "Spheres of Contention, Claims of Pre-eminence," 63.

[988] See Lutz Doering, *Ancient Jewish Letters and the Beginnings of Christian Epistolography*, 389-390.

[989] Cambron-Goulet, "Orality in Philosophical Epistles," 165

[990] See Cambron-Goulet, "Orality in Philosophical Epistles," 162.

association cultures the community project of insider-versus-outsider definition was a major preoccupation, serving for example as a means to define levels of "insider" and "expert" status useful in deciding questions of appropriate leadership.[991] For communities engaged in defining community and authority in the context of the early Roman empire, with its sudden explosion of letters as a primary means of managing long-distance organization,[992] and in the context of the kind of epistolary community definition just described in developing Christian networks, a letter like Romans could help identify "insider" authorities in local assemblies as well as in networks of assemblies constructed by such uses of letters.

Because my analysis was focused on such contexts of community use, the function of Romans I described here is not timeless. Its particular shape belongs to a moment in a complex evolutionary process. The work of AnneMarie Luijendijk on the centuries following Paul's lifetime demonstrates that global Christian networks slowly developed an identifiable letter culture of their own, characterized by its own "in-group language" (like the Christian *nomina sacra*)[993] and by standing authorities established as the proper senders/handlers of such letters.[994] From the point of view outlined in this study, Paul's letter to the Romans is one early snapshot of this evolutionary process in action, both in terms of its experiments with defining "insider" epistolary culture and in terms of its experiments with defining the kinds

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[991] Kendra Eshleman, *The Social World of Intellectuals in the Roman Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 259-262.

[992] Hezser, *Jewish Literacy*, 254-255.

[993] Luijendijk, *Greetings in the Lord*, 229-230.

[994] Luijendijk, *Greetings in the Lord*, 229.

of authorities who would practice and police such epistolary community definition and maintenance. Because not just anyone in the first century could be expected to read and write, and because scribal fees for the making and copying of letters were relatively onerous,[995] the mere concrete facts of the making, sending, and performance of a major letter like Romans would have granted the "insiders" involved various degrees of privilege and importance. In a cultural context where a public reader of valued texts could expect to be treated as a person with some authority,[996] texts like Romans functioned as "mechanisms of ideological debate" in the definition of community hierarchies, since their production and control required and conferred such positions of power and influence.[997]

For the reasons just outlined, the inscribed figure of the Paul of Romans was itself (as shown in Section 3.4) a social tool suitable to projects of community network definition. As noted by Stowers, the centuries immediately following the time in which Romans was composed and sent witnessed the development of "a network of churches often led by articulate bishops which mutually supported and sometimes feuded with each other. Belief, religious practice, and the social fabric of these communities were developed and maintained over distances through letters."[998] In the developing global Christian network(s) of these centuries, the

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[995] Harris, *Ancient Literacy*, 231.

[996] Bridget Gilfillan Upton, *Hearing Mark's Endings: Listening to Ancient Popular Texts through Speech Act Theory* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 12.

[997] Philip R. Davies, "The Dissemination of Written Texts," in *Writing the Bible: Scribes, Scribalism and Script* (P. R. Davies and T. Römer, eds.; Durham: Acumen, 2013), 45.

[998] Stowers, *Letter Writing in Greco-Roman Antiquity*, 44.

letters of insider expert authorities came to the forefront as tools for creating and maintaining "the boundaries of developing self-definition."[999] I argued here that the figure of Paul inscribed in Romans provides an early snapshot of this association-epistolary process in action. The ideal Paul of the later Pastoral Epistles picks up, for example, the language of Rom 13 (including the specific vocabulary of "being subject to the authorities" – ἐξουσίαις ὑποτάσσθεσθαι) in defining the stance toward "external" authority appropriate to proper community insider behavior (Titus 3:1). As Section 3.4 showed, though, this ideal social product/tool called "Paul" can be seen at work already in the genuine epistle to the Romans.

For all the reasons just given, I argued in this study that although the epistolary character of Romans sharpened the interpretive appetite for "what Paul meant" (due partly to ancient epistolary theory's interest in the perceived personal authorial *ethos* and voice of a letter writer), approaching Romans today as first and foremost an association network letter also offers a way past the critical impasse created by the question of the purpose of the letter, by shifting the focus from the "real" addressees and sender(s) of Romans to the evolving needs and habits of first-century community networks. The promise of this method was identified: It offers a way forward for the investigations called for by Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza in the case of the rhetorical and political character of "the inscribed Paul," by Marchal, Johnson-DeBaufre and Nasrallah in the case of seeking community contexts less limiting than quests for "the real Paul," and by Oakes and Doering in the case of tracing the transpersonal structural context of Pauline letters.

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[999] Stowers, *Letter Writing in Greco-Roman Antiquity*, 45.

In conclusion, I have shown that an association-epistolary project of defining a "proper" first-century association network culture can be seen at work in the community paraenesis of Rom 12-15. As noted by cognitive anthropologists Scott Atran and Robert Axelrod, religious values are remarkably powerful and resilient makers and markers of "core social identity,"[1000] but they are also remarkably ambiguous and malleable, and their strategic reinterpretation can dramatically change the ways in which those who subscribe to such values see and comport themselves.[1001] The project of community identity definition traced by this study in Rom 12-15 depends upon both of these characteristics of religious identity definition, reshaping and promoting particular ideals (about proper "insider" values and behaviours) in the service of the construction of a particular ideal networked social identity. The ideal subcultural social identity thus defined is depicted as properly belonging to a particular ideal global Pauline network, articulated in terms of the community needs and strategies found in other association network letters. This is the most demonstrably normal and important "purpose of Romans" in terms of its social function, and also the most textually demonstrable.

There are, of course, always questions remaining at the end of an investigative project like this one, and as just noted above, the questions that gave rise to the perceived problem of the purpose of Romans do not present a "problem" to be "solved" once and for all, but point rather to an evolving process of epistolary

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[1000] Scott Atran and Robert Axelrod, "Reframing Sacred Values," *Negotiation Journal* 24 (2008): 242.

[1001] Atran and Axelrod, "Reframing Sacred Values," 235-236.

community definition to be explored. The unusual length of Romans looks like a question still waiting to be satisfactorily explained, for example. The ways in which later "Pastoral" and "deutero-Pauline" letters run far and fast with the kind of intimate-looking, personal-looking construction of authorial *ethos* discussed in Section 3.3,[1002] and the cultural contexts and reasons for doing so, could benefit from being explored as part of the community-definitional story traced here with reference to Paul's genuine epistle to the Romans. The increasingly global uses of Paul's genuine epistles, with all their "occasional" and "local" specificity, deserve to be better understood as part of the same story. I note too that the approach taken to Romans 12-15 here could also be usefully further applied to other sections of the letter to the Romans itself. The construction of the pagan "them" in Romans 1 and elsewhere, and of the Jewish "them" in Romans 11 and elsewhere, could be profitably investigated as performing functions similar to those I have traced here in Romans 12-15, as particular expressions of the common creative tension between accommodation and self-assertion commonly used by first-century association network insiders to understand the "outside world" and "to find their niche within it – even if on their own terms."[1003] For Romans 12-15, at least, this new subcultural association-epistolary investigative track has now been opened.

[1002] See on this point Henderson, "Early Christianity, Textual Representation, and Ritual Extension," 87-88.

[1003] Wilson, "Voluntary Associations: An Overview," 3. Cf. Downing, *Paul and the Pauline Churches*, 283-316; Klauck, *The Religious Context of Early Christianity*, 390-400.

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