

CHAPTER 3

THE POLITICS OF WORSHIP IN PAUL'S MESSIANIC ASSEMBLIES

For we are the circumcision—those who render due service in/by¹ the Spirit of God, who boast (vaunt their identity) in Messiah Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh.
(Phil 3:3)

When Paul uses the language of worship, for instance that of “rendering due service” (*latreuein*, Phil 3:3), he does not refer narrowly or exclusively to what contemporary Christians would think of as worship—ritual acts of religious devotion to God in the gathered assembly. Contrariwise, when Paul refers to activities of the gathered assembly, or to being “in assembly,” he does not describe this activity exclusively as engaging in worship in some limited sense. Paul’s loyalist believers gathered for more than merely worship (as narrowly conceived), and worship is more than what is done in the gathered community. Moreover, worship in Paul, as with the rest of the New Testament, never appears as some easily isolatable topic, discussed only in its own right. Rather, it is embedded in a variety of related topics, for instance, the Messianic assembly’s communal being in the world, the activities and corporate reality of the congregation when gathered, the assembly’s oaths of loyalty (creedal affirmations), or the exercise of “spiritual things” for the purpose of the community’s edification.²

Worship in Paul’s writings and assemblies, then, can be looked at from multiple perspectives. In the following discussion, we will first review (1) Paul’s vocabulary of “worship.” This will lead to (2) a treatment

of what can be known about the communal gatherings of assemblies in Paul's orbit of influence. In conclusion, the essay will offer (3) a synthesis of core elements of Paul's theology of worship.

THE LANGUAGE OF WORSHIP IN PAUL'S WRITINGS

Paul, along with the entire Greek New Testament, offers an extensive, rich vocabulary related to the theme of worship, or the act/posture/attitude of devotion or reverence to God. In the NRSV, for example, the English word "worship" occurs eighty-four times in the New Testament, translating five separate word groups. Of these eighty-four occurrences, fifty translate words related to *proskyneō* ("to prostrate oneself"; 61 total occurrences in the NT), twenty-one translate words related to *latreuō* ("to render due service"; 27 total occurrences), ten translate words related to *sebomai* ("to do homage, give reverence, be devoted"; 28 total occurrences), two translate words related to *leitourgeō* (the actual root of "liturgy," literally "to do public service"; 9 total occurrences), and one translates the word *thrēskeia* ("devotion, piety, religion"; 5 total occurrences). None of these words is translated in each of their occurrences with the English word "worship."

In today's usage, the English word for "worship" (when referring to an activity) is reserved for the "religious" exercise of honoring the Deity. By contrast, none of the words that Paul and the rest of the NT used for "worship" refer only to paying homage to the gods or the Deity. Rather, they regularly apply both to devotion to God (or many gods), and to reverencing worthy human beings, including kings and rulers (and institutions, symbols attached to them). Thus, in Paul's world, to pay homage to God alone is itself a crucial gesture with political consequences.

Paul's language of "worship," broadly understood (e.g. as "acts of personal or corporate homage to God"), can be placed into the following categories:

1. to render due service, to serve as a slave, perform public service:

The verb *latreuō* in Greek settings could refer to (a) rendering any kind of paid or due service [based on the noun *latron*, "pay, hire, wages"], as well as (b) serving the gods, giving them due service. In the Septuagint (LXX, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible) this word was used to translate the occurrences of the Hebrew *'bd*, "to serve," especially when it referred to temple or priestly service.³ The word for "idolatry" (*eidōlōlatría*, lit. "idol-service," e.g. 1 Cor 10:14) is also based on this root. Paul uses

the verb to refer to his apostolic “service of God in my spirit in the gospel of his Son” (Rom 1:9), and to “service in/by the Spirit of God” in parallel with “boasting in Messiah Jesus” and in contrast to “having confidence in the flesh” as general markers of the Messianic community (Phil 3:3). On the other hand, he uses the verb to denote pagan “service” of the creation (in idolatry) instead of the Creator (Rom 1:25). Paul uses the noun *latreia* (service, service rendered) to refer positively to the Jerusalem temple and its ritual service (Rom 9:4), and to denote the “substantive service” (*logikē latreia*)⁴ rendered to God in the form of offering one’s entire self (body) to God as a “living sacrifice” (Rom 12:1), in response to God’s mercies.

Paul uses the closely related verb “to render slave service” (*douleuō*) and its cognate nouns “slavery” or “slave service” (*douleia*) and slave (*doulos*) also to refer to the yieldedness of a person to God or Christ, notably in reference to apostolic service⁵ or to personal and ethical service to God: yielded and offered to God, one “renders slave service [to Christ] in the new life of the Spirit.”⁶ But Paul also stresses that this slave service operates within the context of liberation and freedom, apart from the constraint of a written law code.⁷ This verb is also used for “serving the true and living God” in contrast to idolatry (1 Thess 1:9) and for “serving the Lord” in general, perhaps alluding to the regular practice of corporate worship, but certainly not limited to that (Rom 12:11).⁸

The Greek words from which “liturgy” is derived provide an interesting case (*leitourgeō*, to serve the people, to do public service; *leitourgia*, public duty, act of public benefaction; *leitourgos*, public servant/minister). In Greek contexts these words denote especially public duties and offices in service of the people, a master, the gods (especially by the priests), or the state. In the Septuagint, these words translate the words *srt* (to be an attendant, wait on) and *ʿbd* (to serve), referring often to priestly or temple service. While some NT writings use these words to refer to the ritual worship of the gathered assembly,⁹ Paul uses these words to speak of (a) his sacrificial ministry for the congregation (Phil 2:17), (b) charitable service to the needy (Rom 15:27; 2 Cor 9:12; Phil 2:25, 30), (c) the state as God’s “public servant” (Rom 13:6), and (d) his apostolic service in general (Rom 15:16). This last occurrence is used in parallel with the word *hierourgeō*, “to do temple/priestly service” (Rom 15:16), illustrating how the language of “public service” often implied “priestly service.” Similarly, other words for “service/ministry” in Paul and rest of the NT are reserved for denoting service rendered to fellow humans (as an expression of obedient loyalty to God, resulting in thanksgiving to God, 2 Cor 9:13) or, less frequently, for human ministry in God’s work of redemption, and do not have an overtly ritual or liturgical connotation or usage.¹⁰

2. to be devoted, be in awe, revere, venerate, show piety:

Significantly, various words regularly used in the Greek world for “religious” devotion, reverence, and piety toward the gods (or to the state and emperor) are relatively absent in Paul, although found more frequently elsewhere in the NT. Thus, Paul uses the common verb *sebomai/sebazomai*, “to worship, honour, venerate,” only one time, and in reference to idolatry (Rom 1:25).¹¹ This avoidance might be because of the common Jewish practice of using this verb to refer to Gentile, monotheist sympathizers closely attached to the synagogue, but not full converts,¹² or because of the common use of this verb in pagan, polytheist practice. Paul uses the word *asebeia* (non-devotion) as a feature of both Gentiles (Rom 1:18, in parallel with their “injustice”) and Israel (Rom 11:26) that must be surmounted, and he speaks of God’s work as specially targeted to the “non-devoted” (*asebēs*, the “ungodly”; Rom 4:5; 5:6). The word *thrēskeia* (worship, religion, piety, devotion)¹³ occurs in Colossians 2:18 to refer to the veneration of angels.

3. to give homage or obeisance, to prostrate oneself:

The most frequently occurring Greek word group translated with the English word “worship” in the NT only occurs one time in Paul.¹⁴ This word *proskyneō* literally denotes “kissing up to,” and is used in the NT and in contemporary writings to refer to (a) concrete acts of giving homage (with physical prostration), or (b) more general giving of honour. The English equivalent today would be “to pledge allegiance.” In the Septuagint this word translates the Hebrew word *shbh*, “to bow down, do homage, prostrate oneself.” This kinetic posture is further indicated in the NT in places where the word is coordinated with the imagery of “falling before, falling down” (Matt 4:9; 18:26; Rev 4:10; 5:14; 7:11; 11:16; 19:4, 10; 22:8), “taking hold of one’s feet” (Matt 28:9), and blowing “before one’s feet” (Rev 3:9). Significantly, the one occurrence of this verb in Paul appears in the context of the specific worship activity of the gathered assembly, and is expressed in parallel with “falling on one’s face” (1 Cor 14:25).¹⁵ A closely related image in Paul is that of “bending the knee” before the judicial seat of God (Rom 14:11) or before Christ in an enthronement ceremony (Phil 2:10),¹⁶ in both cases in connection with making an oath of allegiance (citing Isa 49:23-24; below). In general, it could be noted that prostration is a posture for (a) thanksgiving and praise, (b) pledging allegiance/loyalty, or (c) petition and supplication.

4. to swear allegiance, confess, reverence the name:

Closely related to the imagery of prostration is the act of “swearing allegiance,” rendering forms of the Greek word *homologia* that are usually but less adequately translated as “confession.” The word group related to *homologia* is originally at home in the practice of oath formulations, and that appears to be the case also in Paul’s writings.¹⁷ The close connection of “confession, swearing allegiance” with the act of prostration is evident especially in Philippians 2:10-11 and Romans 14:11 (citing Isa 45:23). The language of “swearing allegiance” is also tied to the themes of submission (2 Cor 9:13), of lauding in song (Rom 15:9, citing Ps 18:49), and of demonstrating loyal trust (Rom 10:8; 15:7-13).¹⁸ “Swearing allegiance” is also tied to declaring or reverencing “the name” (Phil 2:9-11; Rom 15:9, 20; 2 Thess 1:12).¹⁹ Accordingly, all activity, whether in word or deed, is to be performed “in the name of the Lord Jesus” (Col 3:17), and formal gatherings of loyalists occur “in the name of the Lord Jesus” (1 Cor 5:4).

5. to give honour, esteem, reverence, respect, status; glorify:

The word “glorify” has gone out of general English use, and is now restricted to “religious” uses. But the Hebrew and Greek words that it usually translates are not limited in that way, and simply mean “to extol, honour, esteem, respect, or revere,” whether a person, institution (e.g. ruling dynasty), or divine being. Of its twelve occurrences in Paul, half refer to honouring (or not honouring) God, and the other half apply to honouring humans.²⁰ Of the former, Paul uses the term in reference to (a) idolatry (“not honouring God,” Rom 1:21, parallel to “not giving thanks”), (b) charitable acts as “honouring” God (2 Cor 9:13), (c) “honouring” God with one’s personal being (1 Cor 6:20), (d) and more generally “extolling” God as a corporate practice (Rom 15:6, 9; Gal 1:24). The noun *doxa* is etymologically “that which seems,” and can refer to “suppositions” or “judgments,” but also to having or ascribing social “esteem, reputation, and honour,” and finally to “magnificent external appearance and splendour.” The word occurs frequently in Paul, and can refer to the “glory” of God or to the “esteem/glory” characteristic of or ascribed to humans (by God or other humans). For the purposes of this essay, most important is the use of *doxa* in doxological formulations that honour God (Rom 4:20; 11:36; 16:27; Gal 1:5; Phil 4:20),²¹ and in invitations to act, speak, or sing “for the glory” of God (Rom 15:7; 1 Cor 10:31; 2 Cor 1:20; 4:15; 8:19; Phil 1:11; 2:11).²² Closely related to this imagery is that of “making [someone] great, exalting [someone],” using the verb *megalynō*.²³ Paul uses this language to describe his resolution to

“make Messiah great” in the course of his defence trial before a Roman imperial tribunal (Phil 1:20).

The language of ascribing “worth” and “worthiness” to God found elsewhere in the NT in worship settings is largely absent in Paul’s writings.²⁴ Paul does, however, use the language of “worthiness” in regard to conduct appropriate to one’s identity as a member of God’s reign or of Messiah’s city-state, or as appropriate to the status of the recipient of hospitable action,²⁵ and warns against practicing the Lord’s supper “unworthily” by not properly “discerning the body” (1 Cor 11:27, 29).

6. to praise publicly, panegyryze, bless:

Closely related to the previous category are words for “praising, lauding, commending publicly.” A litany of synonyms appears at the close of Romans through Scriptural quotations, extending the call to give God “honour” (15:6-7): “swear allegiance to God,” and “sing songs [of homage] to God’s name” (15:9, citing Ps 17:50); “be jubilant” (15:10, citing Deut 32:43); and “panegyryze”²⁶ and “publicly applaud”²⁷ the Lord” (15:11; citing Ps 117:1). In its context, this entire closing flourish highlights the public acclamation of Messiah’s world-wide rule (Rom 15:13, citing Isa 11:10) and has a distinctly theo-political charge.²⁸ The other occurrence of “praise to God” (used synonymously with “glory to God”) is described as the ultimate goal of “the harvest of justice” made manifest in the believing assembly (Phil 1:11).

Reflecting the pattern of doxology in the synagogue (Hebrew *berakah*, blessing), Paul also uses the formula “blessed be God” (Rom 1:25; 9:5; 2 Cor 1:3-4; 11:31).²⁹ This formula is never used of Christ in Paul, reserved only for blessing God. Paul uses the verb *eulogeō* in the liturgical formula “blessing the cup of blessing” (1 Cor 10:16) and the practice of “blessing in the spirit” (1 Cor 14:16). Words of blessing upon a congregation is expressed by the opening formula “grace and peace to you,” reflecting the language of the Aaronic blessing (Num 6:4-6),³⁰ and by the closing formula “grace be with your spirit.”

Paul’s language of “boasting in the Lord/Messiah” might also be treated here;³¹ but this expression focuses more on the subjective posture of the one making the boast. The same could be said of the somewhat parallel expression, “being glad [rejoicing] in the Lord,”³² which could be closely associated with “lauding with song” (below), but again emphasizes the subjective state of the one rejoicing.³³

7. to laud with song:

Public praise of humans or the gods in the Judean and the Greco-Roman worlds was typically rendered in poetry and song, often resembling what

we would call chant. The gathered assembly does not simply sing, it “sings [the praise] to God. . .with psalms, hymns, and spiritual odes” (Col 3:16).³⁴ Other texts confirm that lauding with song was a core feature of worship activities in Paul’s network of congregations (1 Cor 14:15-17, 26; Rom 15:5-13).

8. supplication, intercession, and thanksgiving:

The theme of supplication and intercession is extensive in Paul, using words for petition, asking, praying, interceding.³⁵ The counterpart is the language of thanksgiving. Paul uses the verb *eucharisteō* and the noun *eucharistia* (a) in thanksgivings for food,³⁶ (b) in thanksgiving for the bread and cup in the Lord’s supper,³⁷ (c) in prayers of thanksgiving on behalf of his readers,³⁸ (d) in thanksgiving for specific acts of deliverance or service,³⁹ and (e) in close connection with prayer, petition, prostration, and praise as part of the assembly’s corporate worship.⁴⁰

9. to offer acceptable sacrifice or gifts, render priestly service, be God’s temple:

The use of sacerdotal and sacrificial imagery is relatively rare in Paul’s writings. Paul does speak proudly of the temple “service” (*latreia*) in Jerusalem as one of the great gifts to Israel (Rom 9:4),⁴¹ and he positively describes the practice of priestly livelihood from the sacrifices as an analogy for the rights of envoys of Messiah in preaching the gospel (1 Cor 9:13; 10:18). Accordingly, Paul likens his own apostolic ministry for the gospel as a “priestly ministry” (Rom 15:16). Meanwhile, he can also allude to his suffering in the course of his ministry through the imagery of sacrificial ministry, with himself as the sacrificial victim (Phil 2:17). Paul also proclaims the meaning of Christ’s death as both the place where (*hilastērion*, mercy seat), and the sacrificial victim by which (“by his blood”), sins are dealt with (Rom 3:25). He pronounces similarly, “Christ, our paschal lamb, has been sacrificed” (1 Cor 5:7).

Paul also refers to Messiah’s community as “the temple,” in which the Holy Spirit dwells (1 Cor 3:16-17).⁴² Moreover, Paul’s language of the assembly as “temple of God” implicates the community as an indissoluble unity, as a place of worship, and as a place of commemorative ritual.⁴³ Moreover, in response to God’s mercies, the dedication of all life in ethical service,⁴⁴ the offering⁴⁵ of one’s whole self “as a sacrifice that is living, holy, and acceptable to God,” is the “substantive⁴⁶ service” that can be rendered back to God. Accordingly, an act of charitable ministry is “an aroma of fragrance, a sacrifice that is acceptable and

pleasing⁴⁷ to God” (Phil 4:18).⁴⁸ An opportunity for giving alms (lit. “doing acts of mercy”) was apparently part of the corporate worship of the gathered assembly (1 Cor 16:1-4; 2 Cor 8-9).⁴⁹

While Israel’s priestly or sacrificial practice is now realized in the context of Messiah’s new community, nowhere in Paul is there a rejection of the sacrificial system as such, or the idea that Messianic communities have “replaced” the temple liturgy. For Paul, it seems that Messiah has absorbed the temple liturgy into himself and his community, without invalidating or destroying it.⁵⁰

THE “ASSEMBLY IN ASSEMBLY”: WORSHIP ACTIVITIES OF THE GATHERED COMMUNITY

Nowhere in Paul (or the rest of the NT) is there any reference to “gathering for worship.” We do read of “gathering to eat” (1 Cor 11:20, 33),⁵¹ and simply of “gathering/coming together” (1 Cor 5:4; 11:17, 18, 34; 14:23, 26),⁵² which apparently includes activities we would call worship.⁵³ These two expressions, then, seem to refer to gatherings/assemblies where “eating” and “worship” were two major, interrelated components. Paul refers to this combined activity as “gathering in assembly.” Paul’s preferred word for the “church,” *ekklēsia*, is a word that denotes the citizen “assembly” of a Greek city-state, both as the corporate body or institution that does business, but also as the activity of that assembly “in session” (e.g. Acts 19:32, 39-40).⁵⁴ Similarly, the congregation in its gathering is explicitly the *ekklēsia* “in *ekklēsia*” (1 Cor 11:18; 14:19, 28). The formality of its gathering “in assembly” is expressed by Paul with the language of “gathering in the name of the Lord Jesus. . .and in the power of our Lord Jesus” in association with the presence of the Spirit (1 Cor 5:4).

Paul’s letters give evidence that these gatherings and their observances were characterized by certain established “traditions” or conventional “customs,”⁵⁵ suggesting some level of commonality among Paul’s circle of congregations. Gatherings, however, were not all of the same sort. Gatherings of “the whole assembly” (Rom 16:23; 1 Cor 14:23) in the locale of a city, for instance, seem to be distinct from gatherings of particular “household assemblies,” the smallest unit of the broader “assembly.”⁵⁶ Major events, such as the annual celebration of the resurrection in connection with Passover, perhaps constituted the occasion for plenary meetings of house assemblies in a given area. Special activities—for judicial assembly (e.g. 1 Cor 5:4-5; 2 Cor 13:1-4), for baptism,⁵⁷ for funerals,⁵⁸ or for other purposes—might have involved distinct gatherings, or have been incorporated into regular gatherings.

Gatherings were hosted mainly in the homes or apartments of the more relatively wealthy members of an assembly, depending on the size of the gathering, but also (less commonly) in rented space.⁵⁹ While some gatherings may have been in the separate *domus* (villa) of a wealthy member, Acts also suggests a common practice of using the upper rooms of the standard multi-story *insula* (apartment complexes), where the first floor was used as artisan or business workspace.⁶⁰ Regular gatherings in Paul's network were apparently held weekly, and normally on the "first day of the week."⁶¹ But we should also assume that many assemblies, especially where there was a strong Jewish core, met on the Sabbath. Having gatherings on the "first day" might have made it possible for some members to attend both Jewish Sabbath gatherings, and gatherings specifically in honour of Messiah Jesus.⁶²

Gatherings in Paul's network (and beyond) involved some kind of communal meal, formally referred to as "the Lord's supper" (1 Cor 11:17-34) or "the Lord's table" (1 Cor 10:14-22). While Paul considers the entirety of the meal to represent "the Lord's supper," and thus to be observed properly (without social hierarchy and class division) under the aura of solemn divine sanction (1 Cor 10:21-22; 11:27-32), a focal point was the blessing of and participation (*koinōnia*) in the bread and cup (1 Cor 10:16-17; 11:23-29).⁶³ Paul's advice in 1 Corinthians is not designed to eliminate the communal meal, but to ensure that the communal meal itself is not abused by forms of gluttony, or by having separate tables for the elite apart from the lowly (1 Cor 11:33-34). "The Lord's supper," then, was both an act of social commensality, and at the same time a liturgical event: a remembrance, a sacramental/mystical participation in Christ, and an anticipation of life in the age to come.

Insofar as "eating" was constitutive of gatherings, these assembly events are specifically occasions of hospitality, namely "welcoming one another," and "loving the stranger." This hospitality issue as affecting the possibility of plenary corporate worship is especially problematic in settings where household-based gatherings were divided precisely over disputes about clean and unclean foods (Rom 14:1-15:13). In Rome, for instance, dispute over food in particular is what negated the possibility of all the faithful to acclaim Lord Messiah Jesus "in one voice, in a united gathering" (Rom 15:6-7).⁶⁴

It is also significant that Paul's restrictions on "idolatry" pertain not only to refusing homage to the multiple patron gods of a city, but to participating in the sacred ritual meals (even "liturgical" food handouts by the wealthy elite) in connection with these festivals (1 Cor 10:14-22).⁶⁵ For Paul, ritual participation in the Lord's table/supper involves an exclusive loyalty and identity ("you cannot have a part in both the Lord's

table and the table of divinities,” 10:21), and thus specifically means an act of dissociation (“uncoupling, unplugging”)⁶⁶ from the Greek or Roman political community, its altars, and feasts (1 Cor 10:1-22).⁶⁷

Just as eating together “in assembly” was both (a₁) an act of social commensality (a ritual of solidarity) and (b₁) an act of liturgy (*koinōnia* with Christ), so also the non-eating parts of the gathering were designed both (a₂) for corporate and mutual upbuilding (edification), not for private edification,⁶⁸ and (b₂) for corporate acts of homage and allegiance toward God, while invoking and celebrating the very presence of God (1 Cor 14:1-40). Some basic elements of this “liturgical” part of the gathered assembly can be discerned from (1) explicit comments about communal activities while assembled (e.g. 1 Cor 5, 9–14; Col 3:15-17), (2) allusions to worship activities in communal gatherings (e.g. Rom 15:5-13; Phil 4:4-7), and (3) features of Paul’s letters that seem to embed or replicate liturgical forms and formulations.⁶⁹ These elements evidently included some combination of formal greetings⁷⁰ or invocations, hymns of doxology or songs of meditation,⁷¹ confessional affirmations⁷² or oaths of allegiance, doxological acclamations,⁷³ prayers of petition or intercession, prayers of thanksgiving, mutual exhortation and teaching,⁷⁴ reading of scripture or other edifying literature,⁷⁵ words of prophecy and other outbursts of pneumatic ecstasy,⁷⁶ offerings for the poor, and closing benedictions and blessings⁷⁷ before dispersal. The only reference to any kinetic activity during the assembly is that of prostration, presumably in gestures of homage, loyalty, and supplication.⁷⁸ Much of this practice and material is patterned on the liturgy of the local Jewish assembly (the Greek term *proseuchē*, “prayer house,” was the common word for the building, indicating the main activity it was known for; the term *synagōgē*, “gathering, assembly,” emphasized the group or the gathering that met there). Particular elements showing influence from the Jewish liturgy include the *berakah* pattern of blessing God (“blessed be. . .”), the welcoming or closing grace and peace wish (modeled on the Aaronic blessing, Num 6:4-6), the Aramaic acclamation “Abba” (Rom 8:15; Gal 4:6), the Aramaic Messianic prayer *marana tha* (“O Lord, come!” 1 Cor 16:22), and the Hebrew/Aramaic “Amen.”⁷⁹

Paul’s emphasis is on orderliness within spontaneity (1 Cor 14:26-33, 36-40), and on mutual participation without hierarchy. The openness to preaching and reading (and prophesying and praying) to any competent member probably reflects Paul’s experience of synagogue liturgy.⁸⁰ He makes room for both inspired utterance (1 Thess 5:19-20; 1 Cor 14:39)—something characteristic of pagan ritual,⁸¹ not Jewish practice—but also stresses the need for “testing the spirits” (1 Thess 5:21; 1 Cor 14:32). While Paul posits the relative importance or status of some selected gifts

or roles (1 Cor 12:27-30; 14:1), this is moderated by the emphases on the distribution of gifts by the one Spirit to the entire congregation as one body (12:4-13), the interdependence of gifts and functions within the one body (12:14-21), and the inversion of standard measures of status and honour (12:22-26). Thus even his own apostolic role (first in order of importance, 12:28) is framed within the context of mutual exhortation (e.g. Rom 1:11-12).

Just as the “Lord’s supper” ritualized the sacred oneness and mutuality of the assembly, so also the non-eating worship activities emphasized the same. Thus, we must assume that Paul rejected any seating arrangement that ritualized social distinctions or hierarchies (as in the practice of the Lord’s supper).⁸² This would also explain why neither the distribution of gifts, nor speaking “in assembly,” is restricted by gender,⁸³ even if different rules of head attire for men and women must be distinguished (1 Cor 11:3-16). Finally, Paul assumes that gatherings are open and welcoming, including both the uncommitted and the uninitiated; to that extent, the gatherings also have a witness horizon (1 Cor 14:20-24, citing Isa 45:14):

For if the whole assembly gathers in the same place, and all are speaking in tongues, and uninitiated or uncommitted people should enter, will they not say (to others) that you are mad.

But if all are prophesying, and uncommitted or uninitiated people should enter, they will be convicted by all, they will be adjudicated by all, and the hidden things of their hearts will be made manifest (to themselves); and so falling on their face, they will give homage to God, declaring (to others) that “God is certainly among you” (Isa. 45:14).

This final citation of Isaiah 45:14 (which alludes to the *Shema Israel*, Deut 6:4-6) is especially significant in that it occurs in a passage that emphasizes the universal lordship of God, and the final yielding of all peoples, both Israel and the idolatrous nations, within the scope of that lordship (Isa 45:14-25).⁸⁴ That is, the worship of God is decidedly theological and eschatological, anticipating with hope the future whereby God’s restoration and rule of the cosmos is complete.

EXCURSUS: DEPICTIONS OF EARLY CHRISTIAN GATHERINGS IN PLINY THE YOUNGER AND JUSTIN MARTYR

The earliest depictions of early Christian worship do not appear till the second century. One is by the Roman provincial governor of Pontus-

Bithynia (northern Asia-Minor) writing to the Emperor Trajan around the year 112, seeking advice on how to deal with those who are accused of being “Christian.”⁸⁵ The second is by Justin Martyr (ca. 100-165), whose defense (“First Apology”) of the Christian faith and practice is formally addressed to the Emperor Antonius Pius around 150-155 CE. Both of these imply that what was done “in assembly” was of significant concern to the Roman imperial authorities, who kept a close watch on unlicensed clubs and associations of various kinds for possible acts of disloyalty, treason, or sacrilege (acts of religious sacrilege are coterminous with acts of political sedition).

In his letter to Trajan, Pliny first details how he has proceeded with trials involving Christians. This mainly involved interrogation upon the threat of death, inviting the accused to renounce their faith by bowing before the image of the emperor and the statues of the Roman gods. Those who refused were executed, although those among them who were Roman citizens were shipped to Rome for further trial. According to Pliny, accused Christians who had recanted, sometimes after torture,

affirmed, 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 [in the evening?] to partake of food—but ordinary and innocent [non-sacral] 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 (*betaeria*).⁸⁶ Accordingly, I judged it all the more necessary to find out what the truth was by torturing two female slaves who were called ministers (*ministrae*; Gk, *diakonoi*). But I discovered nothing else but a crooked and unrestrained superstition.⁸⁷

In Pliny’s letter, then, we see a separation of the practices of sacred worship and of gathering for a meal.

In Justin Martyr, however, we find a two-part service of what could be called “word and sacrament.” In the process of explaining Christian doctrine and practice to non-Christians, Justin describes the ritual of baptism and of incorporating new members into the church, which includes prayers, the saluting of one another with the holy kiss, and concludes with the Eucharist, which is more fully described (*First*

Apology 61-66). Justin then describes (ch. 67) the weekly worship:⁸⁸ “And on the day called Sunday, all who live in cities or in the country gather together to one place, and the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read, as long as time permits; then, when the reader has ceased, the presider⁸⁹ verbally instructs, and exhorts to the imitation of these good things. Then we all rise together and pray, and, as we before said, when our prayer is ended, bread and wine and water are brought, and the presider in like manner offers prayers and thanksgivings, according to his ability, and the people assent, saying Amen,⁹⁰ and there is a distribution to each, and a participation of that over which thanks have been given, and to those who are absent a portion is sent by the ministers/servers (*diakonoi*). And they who are well to do, and willing, give what each thinks fit; and what is collected is deposited with the presider, who helps the orphans and widows and those who, through sickness or any other cause, are in want, and those who are in bonds and the strangers sojourning among us, and in a word takes care of all who are in need.”⁹¹

SYNTHESIS AND CONCLUSION

(1) Members of Messianic assemblies certainly engaged in what we would call acts of “personal devotion,” and in acts of ritual as families or households (especially through blessings at meal time, in continuity with Jewish practice). Paul therefore speaks of how he personally “renders due service to God in/with my spirit” (Rom 1:9), referring however not merely to religious acts of personal devotion, but broadly to the dedication of his whole being in all of its activities (cf. Rom 12:1). Key elements of Paul’s “personal devotion” included prayer,⁹² mystical/ecstatic experiences “in the spirit,”⁹³ performance of vows,⁹⁴ and perhaps fasting.⁹⁵ Paul also encourages all the faithful to engage in the regular practice of prayer and thanksgiving to God (e.g. Phil 4:4-7; 1 Thess 5:17-18). Moreover, some pneumatic activities, he says, are designed especially for individual edification in private (1 Cor 14:4, 17, 28).

(2) But Paul’s language and theology of worship pertains mainly to what the Messianic community does as a community. Thus, even where Paul emphasizes the dedication of “your bodies” as a living sacrifice as “substantive service” (Rom 12:1-2), he uses the plural form of “you,” and means this dedication as distributed, individual, and participatory acts of corporate being and practice. Accordingly, Paul presents the outworking of this dedication in the scope of corporate life and liturgy (12:3-15:13).

(3) The empowering presence of the Spirit is a critical aspect of Paul’s understanding of “worship,”⁹⁶ whether in regard to the service of

the individual or that of the community, and whether in terms of more narrowly understood ritual practices of worship or the broader display of homage to God and Christ in individual or the community's service in the world.⁹⁷ Indeed, Paul depicts his ministry in service of a "new covenant" as part of "the ministry of the Spirit" (2 Cor 8:6-8). It is through and in the Spirit, therefore, that the loyal believer acclaim God as "Abba" (Rom 8:15; Gal 4:6) and Jesus as "Lord" (1 Cor 12:3; cf. 8:6). While "in assembly," then, the community liturgically experiences the very presence of God (1 Cor 14:25), the power of Christ (1 Cor 5:4), and the expression of "spiritual things" (*pneumatika*; 1 Cor 12-14).

(4) Liturgy enacts loyalty. Paul's language, theology, and liturgy of worship is decidedly theo-political, both in terms of the ritual activities the community practices and in terms of its very being as Messiah's alternative community that exemplifies and announces God's restoring work in the world. Just as the gods of the empire or the gods of a city-state have a polity, so also the one God has a polity.⁹⁸ And just as the sacral community and the political community were coterminous in the ancient world, so also the sacral and political dimensions of Christ's community are inseparable. Worship, therefore, is an expression of exclusive loyalty to, and (mystical-sacramental-corporate) participation in Christ, whereby the assembly becomes Christ's very body. It is for this reason, then, that Messiah-followers are advised to avoid the civic-imperial festivals in their community (1 Cor 10:1-22). The reason for this avoidance, then, is not simply "religious," but more deeply "theo-political." Worship in Paul's perspective is holistic, embracing multiple dimensions at the same time. At the core, however, is the posture of pledging allegiance both in sacred ritual (where vows of loyalty are renewed and reenacted) and in dedicated service in all of life. The politics of worship in Paul's network of communities, then, includes distinctly counter-imperial (and counter-idolatrous) resonances in its creedal affirmations.⁹⁹

(5) But the politics of worship in Paul's letters is also about alternative community (polity) formation under Christ's lordship. This alternative community formation is expressed both "in assembly" (in its ritual and social activities as a gathered community), but also in its being and activity in the location(s) where it exists ("in the world" or "in the flesh" more generally, and "in local communities" more particularly). It is for this reason, it seems, that Paul is intent on ensuring that the gathered community, when "in assembly," expresses a being and a practice that is entirely non-hierarchical, non-sacerdotal (no cultic priests, as in Judaism or in civic and imperial cults), and mutual (esp. 1 Cor 11:17-34; 12:12-26), representing not only the new reality of Messiah already in the world, but also the final renewal of all things, of which Messiah's body is the micro-cosmic and

provisional anticipation. In this politics of worship in anticipation, former structures of divisions and identities are transformed and reframed (Gal 3:26-28). Strikingly, therefore, while Paul acknowledges the dimension of leadership in his communities (e.g. 1 Cor 16:16; 1 Thess 5:12-13), when it comes to the community in sacral assembly (which more than anything represents what is to come) there is no hint of order established by proper leadership, but only by proper exercise of the mutuality of gifts (1 Cor 14).¹⁰⁰ Liturgy enacts and enlivens a polity in anticipation—the polity of the age to come.

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68. Rom 12:3, 6; 1 Cor 12:9; 13:2, “faith to move mountains”; 2 Cor 8:7.

69. See 1 Cor 11:18.

70. Regarding Abraham, see Rom 4:18-20. Further, “believing, being confident, being convinced” (*pisteuein*): that we shall live with him (Rom 6:8); that God raised Jesus from the dead (Rom 10:9); what we have heard (Rom 10:19); that Jesus died and was raised” (1 Thess 4:14); the word [of Christ’s death and resurrection] (1 Cor 15:2). Cf. 2 Cor 4:23: “Having the same spirit of conviction (*pistis*), according to what is written, ‘I believed, therefore I spoke’, we also believe, therefore also we speak, knowing that He who raised Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and will present us with you.” (1 Cor 4:13-15).

71. E.g. Rom 10:8-21; 15:21; Gal 1:23; 3:2, 5; 1 Cor 1:21; 3:5; 15:1-2, 11; 1 Thess 1:5-8; 2:10-13; Phil 1:27.

72. On the subordination of both “knowledge” and even of *pistis* to love, see 1 Cor 13:8-13; for the elevation of *pistis* over “seeing,” see 2 Cor 5:7: for we walk by *pistis*, not by seeing.

73. See 1 Cor 16:13; 2 Cor 1:24; 13:5.

74. Similarly, Revelation pictures the sword of Christ as coming out of Messiah’s mouth; Rev 1:16; 2:12; 19:15, 21.

75. On how issues of “power” are overlooked by conventional rhetorical studies of Paul, see Elliott, *Arrogance of Nations*, 18.

76. It is unclear whether the clarifying clause, “both toward the Lord Jesus and toward all the saints,” is meant to modify only fidelity, or love and fidelity in combination as a hendiadys (“two-in-one”).

77. Cf. Gal 5:6, “For in Messiah Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is something significant, but fidelity (*pistis*) working through love.”

78. See Rom 1:17; 3:30; 4:16; 5:1; 9:30, 32; 10:6; Gal 3:8, 9, 11, 12, 24; 5:5. Similarly *epi pisteōs*, “upon fidelity,” Phil 3:9; *dia pisteōs*, “through fidelity,” Rom 3:25, 30, 31; Gal 3:14; simply the dative *pistei*, “in/by fidelity,” Rom 3:28.

79. See esp. Elliott, *Arrogance of Nations*, 4, 12.

80. See, for instance, the discussion in Stuart Murray, *The Naked Anabaptist: The Bare Essentials of a Radical Faith* (Scottsdale/Waterloo: Herald Press, 2010), 51-70. Privileging the Gospels (presumably the Synoptic Gospel), he proposes that Anabaptists should perhaps call themselves “followers of Jesus,” and not Christians, although he stresses that the Anabaptist Network of the UK is committed to “following Jesus as well as worshipping him.”

Chapter 3

1. The meaning is either “in (the sphere/modality of) the Spirit,” or “in (the power of) the Spirit.”

2. For helpful discussions of various aspects of early Christian worship, see D. E. Aune, “Worship, Early Christian,” *ABD* VI, 973-89; R. Banks, “Gifts and Ministry,” chapter 9 in *Paul’s Idea of Community: The Early House Churches in their Cultural Setting*, rev. ed. (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994); A. A. Bichsel, “Hymns, Early Christian,” in *ABD*, III, 350-51; G. Borchert, *Worship in the New Testament: Divine Mystery and Human Response* (St. Louis: Chalice, 2008); P. F. Bradshaw,

P. F. *The Search for the Origins of Christian Worship* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992); O. Cullmann, *Early Christian Worship* (London: SCM, 1973); G. Dellling, *Worship in the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1962); F. Hahn, *The Worship of the Early Church* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1973); W. Isenberg, "Hymnody: New Testament," in *Key Words in Church Music*, ed. C. Schalk (St. Louis: Concordia, 1978), 181-85; R. P. Martin, *Worship in the Early Church*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974); C. F. D. Moule, *Worship in the New Testament* (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1961); R. E. Webber, "New Testament Worship; Early Christian Worship," in *Worship Old and New* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 41-63.

3. Of its 21 occurrences in the NT, the KJV translated it 4X as "worship," whereas the NRSV translates it, and its cognate noun (*latreia*, "service," 5X in NT), as "worship" 20 times (Luke 2:37; John 16:2; Acts 7:7, 42; 24:14; 26:7; 27:23; Rom 9:4; Phil 3:3; 2 Tim 1:3; Heb 8:5; Heb 9:1, 9, 14; 10:2; 12:28; Rev 7:15; 22:3). In the NT, it generally refers to serving in the sense of "performing religious/priestly rites."

4. It is not easy to render the phrase, usually translated "spiritual service." Paul uses the adjective *logikē*, that is, pertaining to the *logos*, the essential, substantive or true being or reason, not that which is merely outward. It has the sense of "spiritual" as non-literal, non-outward, or non-physical; but it has more the sense of that which is truly substantive. Paul expands on the reality of the physical *latreia* offered in the Jerusalem temple, but is not attempting to replace that outward, ritual service. Unlike the perspective of the Gospel of John, Paul nowhere denies the significance of the temple, its sacrifice, and the land.

5. Rom 1:1; Gal 1:10; Phil 1:1.

6. Rom 7:4-6; more generally, Rom 6:1-7:6; 7:25. Cf. Col 3:24.

7. Rom 7:1-6; 8:15; Gal 4:24; 5:1; 1 Cor 7:21-23; 2 Cor 3:17.

8. The likelihood of a liturgical connotation of this passage is suggested by the imagery of "being aglow with the Spirit," "rejoicing in hope," and "being devoted to prayer" in the immediate context (Rom 12:11-13). An emphasis on the corporate being of the assembly is also clear in Rom 12:15-16.

9. The KJV translated these words in the NT with "minister/serve," while the NRSV translates these words in a few cases with "worship" (Acts 13:2; Heb 9:21). Outside of Paul, these words refer to public service in the senses of (a) "performing religious rites as part of one's religious duties or role"—temple/priestly/sacrificial ministry (Luke 1:23; Heb 8:2; 9:21; 10:11), (b) the service of angels, both in worship of God and in ministry to people (Heb 1:7, 14), (c) the priestly ministry of Christ (Heb 8:6), and (d) corporate worship of the church, "ministering" to God (Acts 13:2).

10. *diakoneō*, "to serve," *diakonia*, *diakonos* (100X in the NT); *hypēreteō*, lit. "to row underneath," thus "to serve" more generally, *hypēretēs*, "servant" (23X in the NT). On a few occasions, Paul uses *diakonia* to refer to apostolic ministry in general (2 Cor 3:6; 4:1; 5:18), based on God's ministry/administration of a new covenant (ministry of the Spirit, ministry of righteousness-justice, 2 Cor 3:7-9), and to Christ as minister in God's act of redemption for humanity (Rom 15:8; Gal 2:17).

11. *sebomai* (10X in NT; Lat. *veneror*; to be devout, devoted; to do homage,

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pay respect to; to express/feel especially religious honour/awe/fear; in the NT “to express in attitude and ritual one’s allegiance to and regard for deity” [L&N]; Acts 13:43, 50; 16:14; 17:4, 17; 18:7, 13; 19:27 [re: Artemis]; also Matt 15:9; Mark 7:7; used often in reference to “god-worshippers,” see n. 12 below); *sebasma* (2X, place or objects of devotion, veneration: Acts 17:23; 2 Thess 2:4); *sebastos* (3X, revered, venerable, worthy of reverence, august [holy, majestic]; only applied to the emperor, e.g. his “majesty,” Acts 25:21, 25; 27:1). Compounds related to this root generally refer to adherence to God/the faith, not to worship practice in particular: *eusebeia* (15X; Lat. *pietas*, piety, godliness, holiness: Acts 3:12; 1 Tim 2:2; 3:16; 4:7, 8; 6:3, 5, 6, 11; 2 Tim 3:5; Tit 1:1; 2 Pet 1:3, 6, 7; 3:11); *eusebeomai* (2X; to worship, show piety: Acts 17:23 [re: pagan worship]; 1 Tim 5:4); *eusebēs* (3X, devout, godly person: Acts 10:2, 7; 22:12; 2 Pet 2:9); *eusebos* (2X, in godly way: 2 Tim 3:12; Tit 2:12); *theosebes* (god-worshipper, John 9:31); *theosebeia* (godliness, 1 Tim 2:10); *asebeia* (6X, ungodliness); *asebēs* (5X, ungodly); *asebeō* (not devoted to God, 2 Pet 2:6; Jude 15). Another term that can refer to religious observance is *eulabeia* (2X, caution, circumspection, scrupulousness, e.g. Heb 12:28, to serve/worship acceptably with awe and reverence) and its cognates *eulabēs* (3X, pious, devout, fearing: Luke 2:25; Acts 2:5; 8:2); the verb *eulabeomai* (2X; fear, caution, reverence, awe, obey) is not used in the NT for reverencing God. Also *deos*: fear, alarm, awe (1X; Heb 12:28).

12. For “worshippers of God,” see Acts 16:14; 17:4, 17; 18:7, synonymous with “god-fearers” (see Acts 10:2, 22, 35; 13:16, 26), and closely associated with “the devout” (*eusebēs*; Acts 10:2, 7). For “fearing God” (with *phobeomai*), see e.g. Luke 1:50; Acts 9:31; Col 3:22; 1 Pet 2:17; Rev 14:7 [with giving glory to God]; 15:4; 19:5). “Fearing” God in a positive sense represents only a fraction of the occurrences of the use of these words. Cf. also Phil 2:12.

13. Elsewhere in the NT, the word occurs in Acts 26:5 (re: Judaism); Jas 1:26, 27 (pure religion/devotion); *thrēskos* (religious person: Jas 1:26).

14. *proskynēō* (verb, 60X); *prokynetēs* (“worshipper,” 1X, John 4:23). Of the 61 occurrences, the NRSV uses “worship” 50 times; the KJV used “worship” for all 61 occurrences. Apart from the 50 times that the NRSV translates this word as “worship,” the word is also translated as “to pay homage” (Matt 2:2, 8, 11), “to kneel down” (Matt 8:2; 9:18; 15:25; 20:20; Mark 15:9), “to bow down” (Mark 5:6), “to bow in worship” (Heb 11:21), “to fall on one’s knees” (Matt 18:26). Finally, it is noteworthy that 24 of the 60 occurrences of the verb occur in Revelation, confirming its preoccupation with worship and allegiance (homage of those in synagogue to believers: Rev 3:9; homage to God/Lamb: 4:10; 5:14; 7:11; 11:1, 16; 14:7; 15:4; 19:4, 10; 22:9; homage to idols: 9:20; homage to the Beast and its image: 13:4, 8, 12, 15; 14:11; 16:2; 19:20; 20:4; homage to angels: 19:10; 22:8). In two cases, this word is coordinated with *latreuō* (“to minister, serve,” Luke 4:8; Matt 4:10 [citing Deut 6:13]).

15. See also Luke 17:16, associated with “giving thanks.”

16. See also Rom 11:4, for refusing to “bend the knee” before Baal (citing 1 Kings 19:18). See also Eph 3:14, for “bending the knee” in the posture of supplication.

17. See Chapter 2, pp. 40-41.

18. Elsewhere in the NT: *homologeō*, Heb 13:15 (confess his name, coordinated

with offering “sacrifice of praise”); 1 John 4:2,3,14; 2 John 7; *homologia* (confession, e.g. 1 Tim 6:12-13; Heb 3:1; 4:14; 10:23); *anthomologeomai*, Luke 2:36-38, Anna, with nuance of “giving thanks, praise”; *exomologeomai* (10X; e.g. confessing sins, Matt 3:6; Mark 1:5; Acts 19:18; Jas 5:16; making a compact, Luke 22:6; make full acknowledgement, Matt 11:25; Luke 10:21).

19. See further Eph 1:21 (above every name that is named); 2 Tim 2:19 (everyone who names the name of the Lord, citing Num 16:5; Isa 26:13). On the significance of “the name,” note also: the formula “in the name of” (frequent); to call on the name of... (Acts 2:21; 9:14, 21; 15:17; 22:16; Rom 10:13; 1 Cor 1:2); hallowed be the name (Matt 6:9); proclaim your name in the middle of the congregation and I will sing praise to you (Heb 2:12, citing Ps 21:23, LXX); do all in the name of... (Col 3:16-17; Eph 5:18-20); sing unto the name (Rom 15:9, citing Ps 17:50, LXX); glorify the name... (2 Thess 1:12).

20. In the rest of the NT, a majority of occurrences refer to praise of God or Jesus: Matt 5:16; 9:8; 15:31; Mark 2:12; Luke 2:20; 5:25, 26; 7:16; 13:13; 17:15; 18:43; 23:47; John 12:28; 15:8; 21:19; Acts 3:13; 4:21; 11:18; 13:48; 21:20; 1 Pet 2:12; 4:16; Rev 15:4.

21. See also Luke 2:14; 19:38; Eph 1:6, 12, 14; 3:21; 1 Tim 1:17; 2 Tim 4:18; Heb 13:21; 1 Pet 4:11; 5:11; 2 Pet 3:18; Jude 25; Rev 1:6; 4:11; 5:12, 13; 7:12; 19:1.

22. See also Luke 14:10; 17:18; John 9:24; Acts 12:23; Rev 4:9; 11:13; 14:7; 16:9; 19:7; 21:24, 26. Other cognates are not used in specifically worship settings: *endoxos* (4X, honourable, glorious); *endoxazomai* (2X; 2 Thess 1:10, 12); *sundoxazōo* (Rom 8:17); *kenodoxos*, *kenodoxia* (conceit).

23. The verb occurs eight times in the NT, three times in regard to humans, and five times in regard to Messiah or God (e.g. Luke 1:47, 58; Acts 10:46; 19:17; Phil 1:20).

24. *timaō* (21X: a. to honour, ascribe worth; b. set price/value on; c. assist; 14X re: humans; 7X re: God, e.g. Matt 15:8; Mark 7:6; John 5:23; 8:49), *timē* (41X: meanings: honour, value, worth, price, pay; in doxologies, “honour be to...”: 1 Tim 6:16; Rev 4:11; 5:12, 13; 7:12; 19:1); cognates not used in worship contexts: *timios* (13X, honourable, precious), *timotes* (1X, costliness). *axios* (“worthy, deserving,” Rev 4:11; 5:2, 4, 9, 12). Some words for “honour” refer only to humans: *semnos*, honourable, worthy of reverence; *semnotēs*, propriety, gravity.

25. For *axiōs*, “worthily,” see Rom 16:2; Phil 1:27; 1 Thess 2:12; Col 1:10; cf. Eph 4:1. See also 2 Thess 1:11, “that God might make you worthy (*axiōō*) of his call.”

26. For other uses in the NT: *aineō* (to praise, 8X: Luke 2:13, 20 [with glorifying]; 19:37 [with rejoicing]; 24:53 [with blessing]; Acts 2:47; 3:8, 9; Rev 19:5); cf. *ainos* (praise, 2X: Matt 21:16; Luke 18:43), *ainesis* (Heb 13:15, sacrifice of praise).

27. Using *epaineō* (to praise, commend); of its 5 uses in the NT, only this one refers to praise of God; of the 11 occurrences of the cognate *epainos* (praise, commendation), praise toward God is the focus only in Eph 1:6, 12, 14; Phil 1:11 (in parallel to “glory” to God).

28. See Chapter 2, pp. 53-54.

29. Using *eulogētos*, see also Luke 1:68; Eph 11:31; 1 Pet 1:3; using *eulogia*,

see Rev 5:12, 13; 7:12.

30. Elmer Martens, "Intertext Messaging: Echoes of the Aaronic Blessing (Numbers 6:24-26)," *Direction* 38/2 (2009): 163-178.

31. "Boasting" or "vaunting" (*kauchaomai*) is literally "being loud-tongued, speaking loudly"; See LSJ. E.g. Phil 1:26; 3:3; 1 Cor 1:29-31; 2 Cor 10:17; Gal 6:14 (boasting in the cross of our Lord Jesus).

32. E.g. Phil 3:1; 4:4; cf. "being glad in hope" (Rom 12:12); "being glad in the Holy Spirit" (Rom 14:17; 1 Thess 1:6); "being glad in loyal trust, hope" (Phil 1:25; Rom 15:23); prayer with joy (Phil 1:4).

33. Similarly, the language of "being thankful," *eucharistos*, Col 3:15.

34. Paul uses the verb *adō* (utter words in melodic pattern, sing the praise, sing; also found in Eph 5:19; Rev 5:9; 14:3; 15:3), the cognate noun *ōdē* (song, ode, a melodic pattern with verbal content), *psalmos* (originally song sung to harp, then just song; cf. Luke 20:42; 24:44; Acts 1:20; 13:33; 1 Cor 14:26; Eph 5:19), *hymnos* (a festive song in praise of gods, heroes, or conquerors; see also Eph 5:19). For the verb *psallō* (to sing) see Rom 15:9; 1 Cor 14:15; cf. Eph 5:19; Jas 5:3. The verb *hymneō* (to sing a hymn in praise) does not appear in Paul; cf. Matt 26:30; Mark 14:26; Acts 16:25 (with praying); Heb 2:12.

35. For references to corporate prayer, see 1 Cor 11:4, 5, 13; 14:14-15. For general invitations or expectations to be in prayer, see Rom 12:12; 1 Cor 7:5; Phil 4:6-7; 1 Thess 5:17. For the Spirit's intercession in prayer, see Rom 8:26. For references to particular intercessory prayers, see 2 Cor 9:14 (Macedonians for the Corinthians); Col 4:12 (Epaphras for the Colossians). For references to prayer for his readers in letter openings, in connection with thanksgiving and remembrance, see Phil 1:4; Col 1:3; 1 Thess 1:2; Phlm 4. For the content of Paul's prayers, see Rom 1:9-10 (that he may get to Rome); 10:1 (for the salvation of his fellow Jews); 15:5-6 (for unity); 15:13 (for maturity); 2 Cor 13:7, 9 (for the maturity of the Corinthians); Phil 1:9-11 (for their maturity); Col 1:9-13 (for maturity); 1 Thess 3:10, 11-13 (for reunion, and maturity); 5:23 (for maturity, wholeness); 2 Thess 1:11 (for maturity); 2:16-17 (for encouragement); 3:5, 16 (for maturity); Phlm 6 (for increasing fruit of loyalty). For requests for intercession from readers, see Rom 15:30-32 (for Paul's success and safety); 1 Cor 14:13 (for the power to interpret); 2 Cor 1:11 (for Paul); Phil 1:19 (for Paul's release); Col 4:3-4 (for Paul's ministry); 1 Thess 5:25 (for Paul and his co-workers); 2 Thess 3:1-2 (for Paul and his co-workers); Phlm 22 (for Paul's release).

36. Rom 14:6; 1 Cor 10:30. Cf. Matt 15:36; Mark 8:6; John 6:11, 23; Acts 27:35.

37. 1 Cor 11:24; cf. Matt 26:27; Mark 14:23; Luke 22:17, 19.

38. Rom 1:8; 1 Cor 1:4, 14; Phil 1:3; Col 1:3; 1 Thess 1:2; 2:13; 3:9; 2 Thess 1:3; 2:13; Phlm. 4

39. 2 Cor 1:11; 4:15; 9:11, 12; Col 1:12; cf. Eph 1:16; 5:20.

40. 1 Cor 14:16, 17; Phil 4:4-7; Col 2:7; 3:17; 4:2; 1 Thess 5:18; cf. against idolatry, Rom 1:21; Eph 5:4.

41. Note the participation of Paul in temple sacrifice and ritual in Acts 21:22-26; for other references to Paul and Jewish liturgical practices, see Acts 2:46; 18:18; 20:6, 16; 24:17; 27:9.

42. See also 2 Cor 6:16; 1 Pet 2:4-10. As applied to the individual, see 1 Cor

6:19-20.

43. Esp. 1 Cor 10:14-22.

44. For the idea of all of life, including conduct, as an act of worship, see also 1 Cor 6:19-20; 2 Thess 1:12; Col 3:17.

45. For the “presentation, yielding, or offering” of the self, see also Rom 6:13, 19.

46. *logikē*, in the sense of “non-outward, non-ritual, essential, true, symbolic.” See above, n. 4.

47. For the imagery of “being pleasing” to God, see also 2 Cor 5:9-10; cf. Col 3:20; Eph 5:10. For “pleasing God,” see also Rom 8:8; 1 Cor 7:32; 1 Thess 2:4; 4:1.

48. For good deeds as “sacrifice,” see also Heb 13:16. For the idea of praise as the worthy sacrifice, see Heb 13:15; cf. *Didache* 14, where the proper celebration of the Eucharist (requiring confession of transgressions and the reconciliation of quarreling members) is understood as a “pure sacrifice.”

49. For the close connection of “offerings” for the poor and corporate worship in the second century, see Justin, *First Apology*, 67.

50. The “fleshly” dimension of Messiah, land, persons, or liturgy is never discounted; it is only further realized in a spiritual or eschatological dimension. This is in contrast with later developments of supersessionism in the emerging church and later parts of the NT.

51. Cf. “gathering to break bread,” Acts 2:42; 46; 20:7, 11; cf. Luke 24:30, 35; Acts 27:35.

52. Paul uses the verb *synerchomai* and in one case uses *synagō*, the verbal root of *synagogē* (“gathering, assembly,” 1 Cor 5:4).

53. See also Heb 10:25. The language of Acts 13:2-3 (“giving due service to the Lord” in the presence of the Spirit, using *leitourgeō*) also seems to indicate gatherings focused on “worship.”

54. Similarly, the Hebrew word for the legislative “assembly” (*knesset*) in Israel today was originally used in connection with the local assembly, *beit knesset*, “the house of assembly.” The Greek words *ekklēsia* and *synagōgē* are synonymous with the Hebrew *knesset*.

55. For the language of “tradition,” see 1 Cor 11:2, 23; 15:1-3; for “custom, customary practice (*synētheia*),” see 1 Cor 11:16; for “directions” (*diatagē*) regarding observances, see 1 Cor 11:34. See also Rom 6:17; 1 Cor 4:17.

56. For explicit references to house assemblies, see Rom 16:5, 10-11, 14, 15; 1 Cor 16:19; Col 4:5; Phlm 2. The groupings of names in Rom 16 also seem to indicate house assemblies, even where *ekklēsia* is not used. See also Acts 1:13; 2:2, 46; 8:3; 12:12; 17:5; 18:7; 20:8-9; 21:8, 16; 2 John 10.

57. Possible fragments or allusions to a baptismal liturgy include: Gal 3:28; Rom 6:4-5, 11; 1 Cor 6:11; Col 2:11-3:15 (cf. also 2 Cor 4:4-6; Tit 3:4-7; Eph 2:19-22; 5:14). Many have proposed that the acclamation “Abba” by newly baptized believers was a part of the baptismal liturgy, ritualizing “adoption” into God’s family: Rom 8:15-16; Gal 4:5-7 (cf. 3:26-29). For a reconstruction of the ritual and theology of baptism in Paul’s churches, see Wayne Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), 150-57.

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58. For corporate mourning, weeping, or grieving, see Rom 12:15; 1 Cor 7:30; 1 Thess 4:13; cf. 1 Cor 12:26. For funeral rituals and concerns, see e.g. 1 Cor 15:29; 1 Thess 4:13-18. For the language of formal musical dirge in the NT (*thrēneō*, *thrēnos*, mourning chant, dirge), see Matt 11:17; Luke 7:32; 23:27; John 16:20.

59. E.g. Gaius in Corinth (Rom 16:23); Lydia in Philippi (Acts 16:14-15, 40). Cf. one reference to gatherings in the (rented?) “lecture hall of Tyrannus,” Acts 19:9.

60. Acts 1:13; 20:7-9. For handy visual examples of *insula* ruins, see “Insula (buildings),” Wikipedia The Free Encyclopedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Insula_%28building%29, accessed May 29, 2012.

61. E.g. 1 Cor 16:1-2; cf. Acts 20:7; Rev 4:1. In this way, the early Christians seem to avoid the Roman designation “day of the Sun,” and instead eventually come to name the preferred day as “the day of the Lord, the Lord’s Day,” (Rev 1:10; *Didache* 14:1; Ignatius, *To the Magnesians* 9:1), as a counterpart of the expression “Day of Augustus” (Day of the Venerable One, Imperial Day), observed as the first day of the month in Egypt and Asia Minor.

62. Not until Ignatius (ca. 117 CE) in Antioch do we see a deliberate avoidance of the Sabbath so as to eschew any “judaizing” practices in the by-then-dominant Gentile churches.

63. It cannot be absolutely known whether this occurred before, during (cf. Mark 14:22, “while they were eating”), after, or at the beginning and the end of the meal (cf. 1 Cor 11:25, where only the cup is shared specifically “after” the supper). See Aune, “Worship,” 983-94, who prefers both at the conclusion of the meal.

64. Compounding “in one voice,” is the modifying adverb *homothymadon*, found only here in Paul. While the adverb can simply denote “in agreement,” in all of the other occurrences of the word in the NT (all in Acts), the reference is specifically to “togetherness” in physical gathering and in communal sharing, or the agreement that comes from or with physical gathering (Acts 1:14; 2:46; 4:24; 5:12; 8:6; 12:20; 18:12; 19:29). This seems to be the sense also in Rom 15:6.

65. For rhetoric against Greco-Roman polytheistic idolatry, see also 1 Thess 1:9-10; Gal 4:8-9; Rom 1:18-30, esp. vv. 21, 23, 25 (they did not honour God as God or give thanks; they exchanged the honour/glory of the immortal God for images; they worshipped and rendered service to the created things instead of the Creator). In Paul’s understanding, following the perspective of the Wisdom of Solomon (13–15), idolatry is the root of all Gentile sin.

66. For a discussion of the political dimensions of the separation of the alternative community relative to the existing “organic community,” see Slavoj Žižek, *The Fragile Absolute – Or, why is the Christian legacy worth fighting for?* (London/New York: Verso, 2000), 122-30.

67. Similarly, Richard Horsley, *Covenant Economics: A Biblical Vision of Justice for All* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 2009), 140-41. On the ubiquity of imperial altars and rituals in connection with civic shrines and sacred festivals in Roman Corinth, see Barbette Stanley, “Imperial Cult in Roman Corinth,” in *Rome and Religion: A Cross-Disciplinary Dialogue on the Imperial Cult*, ed. J. Brodd and J. Reed (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011), 61-81.

68. The stress on corporate and mutual edification is evident throughout 1 Cor 14, notably verses 4, 12, 17, 26. See also the stress on “the common good” (*to sympheron*) in 1 Cor 12:7.

69. For instance, opening/welcoming grace and peace wish, opening thanksgiving formulations, personal updates, exhortation and teaching, doxologies, prayers, confessional statements, hymnic fragments, benedictions, and the closing grace wish. Some have argued that Paul’s letters themselves as a whole replicate liturgical patterns; see John Paul Heil, *The Letters of Paul as Rituals of Worship* (Eugene: Cascade, 2011).

70. For “greeting with the holy kiss,” see Rom 16:16; 1 Cor 16:20; 2 Cor 13:12; 1 Thess 5:26; cf. 1 Pete 5:14.

71. In the rest of the NT, one can observe complete hymns/songs (Luke 1:46-55; 2:29-32), doxologies identified as songs (Rev 4:11; 5:9-10, 12, 13; 7:12; 11:17-18; 15:3-4), and possible fragments of songs (Eph 5:14; 1 Tim 6:15-16; 2 Tim 2:11-13; Tit 3:4-7; Rev 22:17).

72. See Rom 1:3-4; 4:24; 8:34; 10:9; 1 Cor 8:6; 12:3; 15:3-7; 16:20-24; Gal 1:4; Phil 2:6-11; Col 1:15-20; cf. Eph 1:3-14.

73. Three forms can be found in Paul’s writings: using the form “blessed be” (following the Jewish *berakah* pattern; Rom 1:25; 9:5; 2 Cor 1:3; 11:31), using the form “thanks [*charis*] be” (Rom 7:25; 1 Cor 15:57; 2 Cor 9:15), using the form “glory be” (Rom 11:33-36; 16:25-27; Gal 1:5; Phil 4:20). Strikingly, all these are theological acclamations of God, never of Christ.

74. See “word of knowledge” (1 Cor 12:8); “teaching” (*didachē*, 1 Cor 14:6, 26), “knowledge” (1 Cor 14:6).

75. For the reading of scripture, see 2 Cor 3:14-15; cf. 1 Tim 4:13; 2 Tim 3:16. For the reading of letters during assembly, see e.g. 1 Thess 5:27; Col 4:16.

76. Ecstatic, in-spirited expressions include (a) prayers, which can be verbal or “in the spirit” (1 Cor 14:15; Rom 8:26-27); (b) visions and revelations (1 Cor 14:6, 26, 30; 2 Cor 12:1-7); (c) tongues/glossolalia (1 Cor 14:2, 4, 18-19), not common among Jews, but familiar to Greek religious experience; (d) prophecy (Rom 12:6; 1 Cor 12:10; 13:8-9; 11:4-5; 14:1-6, 22, 24, 31, 39; 1 Thess 5:20).

77. See Rom 15:33; 1 Cor 16:23-24; 2 Cor 13:14; Gal 6:18; Phil 4:23; 1 Thess 3:12-13; 5:23-24, 28; 2 Thess 3:16, 18; Phlm 25. See also Eph 6:23-24; 1 Tim 6:21; 2 Tim 4:22; Tit 3:15; Heb 13:20-21; 1 Pet 5:14; Rev 22:21.

78. See 1 Cor 14:25: “falling on one’s face,” “giving homage to God”; Phil 2:11, “bending the knee.” For prostration, see also Matt 26:39; Mark 11:25; Luke 22:41; Eph 3:14. Elsewhere in the NT we have the practice of “lifting hands” in prayer (1 Tim 2:8) or “standing” in prayer (Mark 11:25; Luke 18:11, 13).

79. Meaning “so be it, it is true indeed.” 1 Cor 14:16 and 2 Cor 1:20 confirm this basic usage in worship settings such as thanksgivings. Paul also follows his own prayers, doxologies, or benedictions/blessings with “Amen” (Rom 1:25; 9:5; 11:36; 15:33; 16:27; Gal 1:5; 6:18; Phil 4:20). Other Hebrew liturgical formulations, but not found in Paul, include *allelouia*, “praise the Lord” (Rev 19:1, 3, 4, 6), and *hosanna* (all from the “triumphant entry”; a plea and acclamation “come and save”; a familiar Jewish liturgical formula, part of the Hallel [Ps 113-18], e.g. 118:25-27), coordinated with *eulogemenos* (“blessed is...,” Matt 21:9; Mark 11:9; John 12:13).

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80. For an overview of synagogue worship, see E. Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ (175 B.C. – A.D. 135)*, rev. and ed. G. Vermes, F. Millar, M. Black (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1979), Vol. II, 423–63.

81. Thus Paul stresses that inspired speech must be assessed from the point of view of its content in 1 Cor 12:1–2.

82. Cf. James 2:1–26.

83. There is substantial evidence that the verses specifically designed to silence women in assembly (1 Cor 14:34–35) were added later to biblical manuscripts in the second century or later. See Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 699–708; Philip B. Payne, *Man and Woman, One in Christ* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 252–61.

84. This passage is also cited in Rom 14:11 and Phil 2:10–11 (Isa 45:23).

85. See especially Robert Wilken, *The Christians as the Romans Saw Them* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 1–47.

86. Sacred, cultic meals were regularly forbidden of unregistered (secret) societies under the application of the *lex Julia*. For discussion of the complex, politically pragmatic approach of the Roman imperium to voluntary associations, see Ilias N. Arnaoutoglou, “Roman Law and *collegia* in Asia Minor,” *Revue Internationale des droits de l’Antiquité* 49 (2002): 27–44; W. Cotter, “The Collegia and Roman Law: State Restrictions on Voluntary Associations, 64 BCE–200 CE,” in *Voluntary Associations in the Graeco-Roman World*, ed. J. S. Kloppenborg and S. Wilson (London: Routledge, 1996), 74–89.

87. For this translation in the public domain, with minor changes, see <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/pliny.html>, accessed May 29, 2012.

88. Roberts-Donaldson translation, with minor changes, at <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/justin.html>, accessed May 29, 2012.

89. *prostatís*, “leader, president”; the same word describes Phoebe in Rom 16:2.

90. He earlier explained Amen as a Hebrew expression, meaning “so be it.”

91. Earlier Justin remarked (*First Apology* 67): “And the wealthy among us help the needy; and we always keep together; and for all things wherewith we are supplied, we bless the Maker of all through his Son Jesus Christ, and through the Holy Spirit.”

92. See above n. 35. It was common practice to encourage a certain number of prayer observances during the day (e.g. three times day, as in *Didache* 8, Mishnah, *Berakoth*).

93. Note Paul’s “visions and revelations” (2 Cor 1–7). Paul also assumes that prayer and song can be verbal and with the mind engaged, or “in the Spirit” (1 Cor 14:14–16; Rom 8:26–27). He claims to “speak in tongues” far more than most others (1 Cor 14:18–19).

94. Acts 18:18; 21:24.

95. The practice of personal fasting may appear in 2 Cor 6:5; 11:27. Though usually translated “hunger,” the same word (*nēsteia*) is used for fasting in Luke 2:37, Matt 6:16–18, and elsewhere in the NT. Fasting, however, is more of a communal practice, apparent for instance in connection with worship and commissioning, see Acts 13:2–3; in connection with ordinations, Acts 14:23. For the corporate fast in connection with the Day of Atonement, see Acts 27:9. For

fasts before baptisms, see *Didache* 7; Justin, *First Apology* 61. *Didache* 8:1 specifies regular fast days as Wednesdays and Fridays.

96. See Gordon D. Fee, *God's Empowering Presence: the Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994); idem, *Paul, the Spirit, and the People of God* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1995).

97. See e.g. Rom 1:9; 7:4-6; 8:4-16, 26-27; 12:11; Gal 4:6; 1 Cor 1:5-7; 5:4-5; 12:1-14:40; 2 Cor 3:6-18; 13:13; Phil 3:3; 1 Thess 5:19.

98. Indeed, things are somewhat more complex, in that the Greco-Roman world also saw a variety of elective, voluntary options, such as the pervasive "mystery religions." But these functioned easily alongside revered civic or imperial divinities, and where that was not the case (where cultic devotion was perceived to compromise identification with the civic-sacral community), they were pressured in the same way that emerging Christian communities were.

99. John E. Toews, "The Politics of Confession," *Direction* 38/1 (2009): 5-16.

100. A Christocracy is otherwise an anarchy. In a certain crucial sense, then, leadership as a formal structure is a concession to the practical needs of communal life short of the *parousia* of Christ, just as continued slavery "in the realm of the flesh" is a concession short of the total revolution that emerges with the final presence of Messiah. For the tensions and ambiguities that this creates for Paul, see Chapter 4. On the dilemma of leaderless movements among movements of radical social change, see Chapter 10, n. 43.

Chapter 4

1. See 1 Cor 2:6-8; 15:24-28, Phil 2:9-11; 3:20-21; Rom 15:12; 16:20.

2. See Rom 8:18-25; 11:25-36; Col 1:19-20; cf. Eph 1:10.

3. For the texts, see Rom 3:3-8, 19-26; 4:13-25; 5:6-11; 9:6-29; 11:17-36; 15:7-13; Phil 2:9-11; 3:20-21; 1 Cor 15:24-28. See Chapter 7.

4. This is the two-fold grouping that also worries Paul in Rom 15:31.

5. See Rom 8:23-25; 13:11-14; 16:20; 1 Cor 7:29-31; 10:11.

6. Rom 9:1-5.

7. Phil 1:27-4:1.

8. Gal 3:26-28; 1 Cor 12:12-13; Col 3:12, 15; cf. "both as one," Eph 2:14, 15.

9. 1 Cor 10:17; anticipating 1 Cor 11:17-34, and evoking comparisons with the problem of table fellowship between Jew and non-Jews in Gal 2 and Rom 14-15.

10. 1 Cor 12:4-31; Rom 12:3-8; cf. Eph 4:1-16. For the inversion theme, see 1 Cor 12:22-26; Rom 12:3.

11. Rom 12:3; cf. 1 Cor 12:14-26.

12. Phil 2:2-13; Rom 12:16; cf. Rom 11:18, 20, 25; 12:10, 13; cf. boasting by factional proponents in Corinth: 2 Cor 5:12; 11:12, 18, 21.

13. Rom 15:5; 2 Cor 13:11; 1 Cor 1:10-11. Factionalism is associated with (a) intolerance of legitimate variation (Rom 14-15); (b) faulty identity formation (1 Cor 1-4); or (c) faulty practice or teaching (Rom 16:17-19).

14. Phil 4:2-3.

15. Phil 1:27-28.