Chapter 7

The Relevance of Paul's Eschatological Ecclesiology for Ecumenical Relations

> The people of God is called to be today what the world is called to be ultimately. (John Howard Yoder, *Body Politics*[1])

Paul's writings provide a valuable resource for reflection on congregationalism and denominationalism. In the context of growing diversity and divergent streams within the emerging Jesus-loyalist movement,[2] Paul emphatically stresses the world-wide unity of the community of Messiah. But equally significant is Paul's accent on the future reconciliation between that elect community and the remainder of perishing humanity, within the scope of the reign of God. Foundational for both of these issues—that is, both intramural divergence and cross-mural distancing—is Paul's eschatological ecclesiology. Paul's understanding of the community of Messiah-loyalists is not just oriented to Messiah's prior career (life, death, resurrection) but just as crucially to the very goal (*telos*) of God's salvation for the entire created order—"the reign of God" made possible through the full presence and victory (*parousia*) of Messiah (e.g. 1 Cor 15:24-28). Paul's ecclesiology, not just his soteriology, has a critical eschatological dimension—that is, a future-oriented, world-transformational horizon—and to overlook it is a serious misunderstanding.

Paul's Eschatological Ecclesiology

What, then, is Paul's "eschatological ecclesiology?" The ultimate *ekklēsia* (citizen assembly) that Paul envisions is certainly not a notion of the heavenly congregation, past, present, and future. Nor is it some notion of the church invisible, and especially not the church universal as some remnant, a mere portion of those who are the subject of God's unfailing promises. Rather, it is the mediation of identity on the grounds of a universal hope of salvation through Messiah. It is, as a consequence of the dynamic activity of God through Messiah, the collapsing of the "portion"—the "remnant," the not-all—and its re-absorption into the "all." It is the process by which ultimately, as Paul puts it, "God will have mercy on all humanity" (Rom 11:32), and whereby "God will be all in all" (1 Cor 15:28). The *telos* that Paul envisions is nothing short of the shattering of the boundaries by which fidelity and infidelity (believers and unbelievers) mark divisions among humanity, further to the shattering of the boundaries marked by ethnicity, nationality, class, and gender (Gal 3:28). Thus the *ekklēsia* that now exists, that exists in Paul's now, is entirely provisional, interim, and contingent—a mere proleptic or vanguard expression of what must result ultimately through God's ongoing love story with all creation. In other words, it is an entity which exists to lose itself. Ecclesiology in Paul is subject to a crucial tension point between the so-called "not yet" and the "already," a tension point that has been typically collapsed into the "already," just as the overall drama of messianic salvation has been spiritualized into the drama of the individual's pilgrimage to heaven, and/or else muted into a drama of salvation-history, in which the church understands itself as the climax of God's redemptive work (and not as sign and agent toward the ultimate reign of God).[3]

But this characterization may require some elaboration, lest it be perceived to represent some notion of liberal universalism. The issue has instead to do with coming to terms with Paul's powerful and passionate vision of the reign of God, God's counter-sovereignty, and the implications of that for seeing our own identity and vocation as adherents in fidelity to Messiah Jesus, relative to those who, on that very account, are currently perceived (or named) as unbelieving "enemies of God" (cf. Rom 5:10; 9:25; 11:28).[4]

The central framework that gives coherence to Paul's entire theological vocabulary and to his activist, missionizing, and organizational undertaking, is his conviction of the imminent and inexorable arrival of the universal reign of God.[5] The underlying script in Paul's letters is the story of God's sovereign, imperial faithfulness from creation to re-

creation, whereby God will soon triumph throughout creation, signalled by the resurrection of Messiah (the "first-fruits"), himself victimized by the powers of darkness and death as operating in the framework of empire (1 Cor 2:6-8).[6] Whereas the creation was created good, it has suffered the entry of mysterious, created, yet rebellious powers that oppress God's creation (even as creation has also been subjected to its futility by God, Rom 8:20). Among these disparate powers Paul includes Error (Sin), Death, Law, Satan, Rulers, and Authorities. But beginning with and through Messiah, God is in the process of reclaiming all creation for God. Paul's script expresses this through the notion of the "age to come" versus the "age that now stands," a dualism that is at the same time cosmic (God vs. Satan, and their respective forces), anthropological (the conflict resides in each individual), historical (the conflict has a *telos*, goal), epistemological (God's wisdom vs. worldly wisdom), and soteriological (in the sense that final salvation can only come through a dynamic intervention from the transcendent "outside"). In Paul's understanding, his own generation is on the verge of a cataclysmic world transformation (e.g. 1 Cor 10:10; 1 Cor 7:26, 29, 31; Rom 13:11-14), a salvation-drama that is not fundamentally world-ending or world-denying but world-transforming (e.g. Rom 8:18-25; 11:15; 2 Cor 5:17-21; Col 1:20). It is a vision far more terrestrially next-worldly than vertically otherworldly, anticipating the goal not as disembodied individual immortality but as corporate re-embodiment in the context of a restored creation.[7] Final salvation in Paul does not entail the departure of the righteous from earth to heaven, but an ultimate merging of heaven and earth (another division overcome), so that God's imperial reign (now only supreme in heaven) will be universal.[8]

Within this framework, then,

> the church is primarily the interim eschatological community that looks forward to the future of the coming reign of God. . . . [It] is the proleptic manifestation of the kingdom of God in history,… the beachhead of the new creation and the sign of the new age in the old world that is 'passing away' (1 Cor 7:29). . . . The true *ekklēsia* is a future eschatological reality that will only be realized when it comprises the whole people of Israel (Rom 11:25).[9]

An eschatological understanding of Messiah's community resolves not only the matter of its ethical character as an assembly of the regenerated (e.g. 1 Thess 3:12-13; Phil 1:6, 9-11; 1 Cor 1:8), but also that of its ultimate reconciliation with a restored creation, a creation now hostile to God and Messiah (e.g. Rom 8:17-39; 11:1-36).

Ultimate Salvation in Paul

There is a brief dramatic sequence of "final salvation" as envisioned by Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:20-28 that can provide some specificity to this generalized picture. It is a picture of the "ultimacies of the ages that have come upon us" (1 Cor 10:11), and more precisely an explication of the process by which "in(by) Messiah all [humanity] shall be made alive" (1 Cor 15:22).[10] (1) First, Messiah is made alive as "first-fruits," by being raised by God (cf. 15:20, 23a). (2) Then, also "made alive" at his coming, are "those who belong to (are of) Messiah."[11] (3) Then there is a making alive by "the de-activation (rendering ineffective) of every rule, authority, and power," by which Messiah will put all his enemies under his feet, concluding with Death itself (1 Cor 15:24-26). And (4) the culmination is the handing of the kingdom over to the Father, the subordination of Messiah to God (cf. 1 Cor 2:23), so that "God will be all in all" (1 Cor 15:27-28).

The third part of the sequence, the question of the "powers," is especially pertinent here. English translations have traditionally used the word "destroy" to translate the verb *katargein* in this passage (e.g. NRSV, TNIV). But a more adequate rendering would be "de-activate" or "render ineffective."[12] The verb contains the same sort of ambiguity of our use of the English verb to "pacify." Indeed, when one observes the imagery that Paul uses elsewhere of this part of the eschatological drama—that is, how the hostile powers of the cosmos are dealt with—there is a curious persistent tension: we find both images of conquest (and its attendant "pacification"), and of "transformation" or "reconciliation" (and its attendant "clemency").[13] And this tension corresponds with Paul's treatment of "salvation" both in negative terms (as a deliverance from judgment, condemnation, destruction, wrath, fiery purgation, etc.) and in positive terms, as the total transformation of the cosmos and the human individual within it into the design that God originally intended.[14]

For instance, some texts employ the imagery of conquest or world-subjection (Phil 2:9-11; 3:20-21; Rom 15:8-12; 1 Cor 2:6-8; 15:24-28). On the other hand, as an exhibit of final reconciliation imagery in Paul we have Romans 11:15, where the "reconciliation of the *kosmos*" is parallel to the coming of "life from the dead." Moreover, there is Romans 8:18-25, where the claim that "all creation will itself be set free from its bondage to decay" is parallel to the hope of the "redemption of our bodies," and Colossians 1:19-20, where Paul claims that in/by Messiah God intends "to reconcile all things unto Messiah, making peace by the blood of his cross, whether things on earth or in heaven."[15] Thus, Paul's language of "de-activating (*katargein*) the powers" signals not their "destruction" as

such, but ultimately their transformation and reconciliation. A proper Pauline ecclesiology, then, must take into account (a) the past messianic event of resurrection which inaugurates the "ends of the ages," (b) the eschatological vindication and perfection of those now allied and secure in the sphere of Messiah, and (c) God's eschatological deliverance to deal with all powers now opposed to Messiah, including unbelief.

The Part (Remnant) and the All: Romans 11

Romans 11 is the crucial text which explores how the very make-up of the ecclesial community is itself transformed in this telic dynamic. Romans 11 is indeed the highpoint of Paul's argument in Romans, but it is also a most subversive text that the church has continued to mute.

Romans is most fundamentally a bold proclamation and defense of God's own fidelity: if God is not faithful to promises of old, all new messianic proclamation collapses into irrelevance. From beginning (1:2) to end (15:8-9) the centrality of God's promise is highlighted: these are promises both to Israel, and to all the nations, together the constructs that for Paul make up all humanity (e.g. 1:16-17). Thus Paul rests his case on the Scriptures, cited more frequently in chapters 9-11 than elsewhere in his letters. This crucial section concludes with the most astonishing claim: "God will have mercy on all humanity" (11:32). Despite all appearances to the disconfirmation of the promises, Paul's hopes for the universal realization of God's promise is unwavering, just as Abraham resolutely expressed "hope upon hope" (Rom 4:18).

Romans 11 is especially designed to challenge the arrogance of new arrivals (11:18, 20, 25)—that is those "grafted in" where others have been "cut off." Thus Paul emphasizes the provisionality of both grafting in (potential inclusion) and of cutting off (potential exclusion; 11:17-24). In effect, there can never be a Part that takes the place of the All. Only the Part that understands itself as Not-All is worthy of being secure in the role of that Part relative to the All.[16] More specifically, in Messiah's time and instrumentality (11:26-27), and in God's mystery (11:25, 33-36) and grace (11:5-6; cf. 9:11, 16), that is, not by any human willing or running (Rom 9:16), the "remnant of Israel" will collapse into the salvation of "all Israel" (11:26), that is, into its "fullness" (or "wholeness," *plērōma*, 11:12). In the same way, the proclamation among the nations will become "the fullness of the nations" (11:25; cf. "wealth of the world, wealth of the nations," 11:12), nothing short of the "reconciliation of the world" and "life from the dead" (11:15). Corresponding to the messianic enthronement drama at the outset of the letter (Rom 1:3-4), this very theme of the world-wide (ecumenical) realization of Messiah's

reign concludes the argument of the letter, through a litany of scriptural citation (Rom 15:10-12): "Rejoice, O nations, with his people [Israel]" (Deut 32:43); "Praise the Lord, all nations, and the all the peoples praise him" (Ps 117:1); "The root of Jesse shall come, he who rises to rule the nations; in him shall the nations hope" (Isa 11:10). Any attempt to see Paul's language of fullness and universality as really only some mere portion (e.g. as a partial "full number" of willing or predetermined individuals) disregards the force of Paul's argument. Paul is not talking about individuals here; he is talking about corporate entities that together make up all humanity.

Romans 11 is perhaps one of the most telling texts for Paul's vision of messianic redemption. It is not easily discarded as some situational outburst; nor is it the conclusion of some theoretical discourse on predestination and free will. And even less does it express some residual emotional attachment to an ethnic heritage (Israel) that goes against the logic of the gospel. Rather, Paul here is at his most consistent logic. Indeed, it is crucial to unpack here Paul's fundamental logic, further to its moorings in the overall cosmic drama of God reclaiming all creation, and its specific foundation in Scripture. Four critical logics need to be identified.

(1) First, Romans 11 expresses the movement from enmity to being loved. Romans 9-11 is one of the most profound discourses on enemy love in the New Testament, even as Paul nowhere explicitly says "love your enemies."[17] Paul takes up this logic specifically in Romans 11. Those "cut off" on account of their "infidelity" are from a certain vantage point certainly "enemies of God." But Paul reminds his predominantly and increasingly arrogant (and supersessionist) Gentile readers that this was "for your sake," in a grand drama of mutual interdependence and asymmetric reciprocity (11:28-32; cf. Rom 15:22-33). The outcome or counterpart of this enmity is that they are "beloved according to election" (11:28). This is the very same logic expressed earlier in the letter, notably in Romans 5:6-11 ("while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God"),[18] and more proximately in 9:25-26, when in fact Paul describes the counterpart movement of those nations (Gentiles) who were "not beloved" (that is, enemies) into the realm of being "the beloved." It is the movement from being "not my people" into being designated "my people," indeed, to becoming "sons [and daughters] of the living God," at the very moment when the very status of the apparently elected appeared to be in complete jeopardy (9:27-29). The fundamental logic is that God wills to move enemies into the status of the beloved, whether the nations or Israel.[19]

(2) Also foundational to Paul's universal claim is that no human infidelity can compromise God's fidelity, or the working out of God's intention: "What if some were unfaithful? Does their infidelity render ineffective (*katargein*, de-activate) the fidelity of God? By no means!" (Rom 3:3-4) Thus, let God be true if every human is false, and let God be just if every human is unjust (Rom 3:4-8). While Romans 3:1-8 refers especially to Israel, Paul later uses similar language of God's promise toward the nations: no imposition of Law can be allowed to "render ineffective (de-activate, *katargein*) the promise" (Rom 4:14-15, 17-18). Nothing can compromise the covenant fidelity and justice of God relative to the promises both to Israel (Rom 3:1-4; 11:25-29) and to the nations (e.g. Rom 15:7-13), for their final and interdependent salvation in God's work of universal restoration.[20]

(3) Thirdly, we have the interplay of the polarity of wrath and mercy in the divine economy of salvation, which in Paul entails an asymmetric economy of restorative justice, in which mercy transfigures distributive justice. This interplay can hardly be fully treated in short order.[21] But this theme is crucial in the present text, providing both the prelude to Paul's final claim of universal, interdependent salvation for Israel and the nations (11:17-24) and the concluding explication (11:30-32), the final statement of which is that God's mercy ultimately overcomes all human disobedience. This dynamic is also introduced at most critical junctures earlier in the letter. The very logic of salvation now in Messiah is that it represents a demonstration of God's justice (that is, covenant fidelity) precisely as an exhibition of God's mercy toward previously committed sins, namely all those sins that were the subject of the condemning excoriation in 1:18-3:20. The crux of the argument is that while the "whole world" is liable to the threatening wrath of God (3:19-20), God has acted in such a way that this wrath has been simply averted, "passed over" (Rom 3:21-26). It is only on that basis that anyone has any claim to status in the messianically reconstituted people of God.

This logic is repeated in Romans 9:19-26, a more direct counterpart to Romans 11. God is God insofar as it is completely in God's domain to show mercy instead of wrath: "What if God, while willing to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much forbearance the vessels of wrath made [i.e. destined] for destruction, in order to make known the riches of his glory for the vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory" (Rom 9:22). As such, God's mercy shatters any notion of a predictable economy of salvation based on distributive justice. It is in the very being and prerogative of God that humans simply cannot presume on God, whether God's mercy, in regard to any claims of insider status (Rom 2:4), or God's justice, relative to any

certainty about outsider destiny (Rom 3:21-26; 8:19-23; 11:22-24, 30-32; 12:17-21).

(4) Finally, we have the logic of imperial world-wide sovereignty. Romans 11, which challenges any final answer being limited to a partial remnant, is founded on a logic of Messiah as God's agent of universal, counter-imperial, cosmic sovereignty. Here, we return to that theme of God's ultimate "de-activation of all rule, authority, and power" through Messiah (1 Cor 15:24), as expressed most clearly in Philippians 2:9-11: "so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acclaim, Lord Jesus Messiah, to the glory of God the Father." Naturally, the query is immediately: Well, is this acclaim coerced or voluntary? And aren't the true believers those that acclaim Jesus voluntarily? With this text, we are back to the tensive imagery between ultimate messianic victory as conquest, and ultimate deliverance as reconciliation and transformation. This imagery is indeed difficult for those of us immersed in liberal democratic ideology, that is, an approach which puts all the eggs on the side of individual choice, the autonomous individual. So the best way to unpack this imagery is in direct reference to imperial ideology, which this very proclamation uses in order to subvert or counter it.

Paul's imagery of the universal reign of Messiah is strikingly similar in some respects (as its anti-type) to the imperial rhetoric of Octavian (Caesar Augustus) himself, as contained in the *Res Gestae Divi Augusti*, "the mighty deeds of divine Augustus."[22] Augustus composed these memoirs to be released and published at his death, mounted on bronze tablets in front of his mausoleum, and which by the time of Paul could be found in multilingual translations broadcast from imperial temples across the empire, the most complete version surviving in Ancyra, the then capital of Galatia. A good portion of the *Res Gestae* concerns the account by which Augustus "subjected the whole world to the sovereignty of the Roman people" (*Res Gestae* 1; cf. Phil 3:21), through divinely-appointed and benevolent rule, and it highlights the concomitant honours that Octavian received as a bringer of such salvation and "peace." The whole rehearsal builds to the climax that confirms the true character of Augustus as exemplifying the virtues of "valour, clemency, justice, and piety" (*Res Gestae* 34). And his acts are meant to demonstrate that during his principate "other nations experienced the faith [fidelity; Lat. *fides*, Gk. *pistis*] of the Roman people" (*Res Gestae*, 32). That is, the other nations were not simply forced to make oaths of allegiance (e.g. *Res Gestae*, 25); rather, they voluntarily submitted in loyalty (faith) to the rule of Romans through the Romans' own demonstration of "fidelity" (faith) and friendship, through the agency of Augustus himself. Finally,

Augustus makes sure to highlight that he was only acting on behalf of the Roman people and Senate, not for his own personal aggrandizement: following his conquest and pacification of the world, he "transferred the republic from my own power to the will of the Senate and the Roman people," on the basis of which he was given the quasi-divine name of "Augustus" (*RG*, 34; cf. 1 Cor 15:24-28; Phil 2:9-11).

This parallel does not merely show how Paul appropriates imperial rhetoric in his messianic proclamation that nullifies (de-activates) any contrary sovereignty. More importantly, and specific to the argument here, this parallel illustrates the manner in which the imperial rhetoric, of which Paul is here a species, is not preoccupied with any final distinction between submission that is purely voluntary or submission that emerges out of demonstration of power (Rom 1:3-4; 11:25-27; 15:8-12; Phil 2:9-11; 3:20-21). In either case, the submission (loyalty, faith) is real, and the effect is "peace," resulting in the universal inclusion of peoples within the inhabited world (*oikoumenē*). The point, here, is that no ecclesial vanguard of those who are "on board" with the bringer of universal rule can claim that all outsiders (e.g. the current disloyal or pockets of resistance) are forever lost. Rather, the true deliverer, whether the Imperator ("Commander," thus Emperor) or Messiah, must embrace and reconcile the "whole world" in the saved dominion. Universal sovereignty actualizes universal acclamation and loyalty-faith. Nevertheless, while both the imperial and the messianic aim toward universality, what most significantly distinguishes imperial from messianic rule is the different modality of Messiah's effective rule: the latter involves (a) the embrace of the path of lowliness and weakness, indeed that of the cross, an ironic twist on the prime mechanism of imperial terror (Phil 2:5-11; 3:10-11, 20-21), (b) the operation of enemy love, not self-promoting benevolence and pacification by ruthless conquest, and (c) the primacy of mercy over justice, of restorative justice over distributive justice.

To summarize, then, Paul's eschatological ecclesiology involves a *telos* (goal) in which the provisional and interim Part (Remnant) collapses into the realization of the All, as expressed in the binary "fullness of the nations" and "all Israel." This vision of universal restoration is a subset of Paul's broader vision of final cosmic restoration through Messiah, and is founded on God's promises in Scripture which cannot be "de-activated" ("rendered ineffective"), and more particularly on the logics of (1) enemies transformed into becoming the beloved, (2) divine fidelity as more persistent than human infidelity, (3) an asymmetrical economy of restorative justice, in which mercy transfigures distributive justice, and (4) the universal sovereignty and reconciling work of Messiah.

The Theme of Wrath, Condemnation, Destruction on the Unfaithful (Unbelievers)

No doubt the rejoinder will come, that this presentation does not take into adequate account Paul's expectation of judgment, wrath, condemnation, or destruction upon the "non-believer"—that is, expressions of what appears to enact the simple logic of distributive justice (albeit transformed from one based on works, to one based on "belief"). Space does not permit a full discussion of this matter.[23] Suffice it to say that there are indeed points of tension in Paul's rhetoric.[24] Perhaps one can let the interplay stand, although articulated in a carefully nuanced way. On the one hand, according to Paul, no one (neither the unbeliever nor the believer, the just or the unjust) can presume on God's mercy (Rom 2:4)—the threat or prospect of wrath or destruction is real; there are real consequences. On the other hand, and this is the side I am highlighting in this paper, no one can calculate or predict the final outcome of God's justice—the potential of mercy, of the forbearing, long-suffering love of the enemy, can never be exhausted.

It should also be emphasized that Paul's universal hope in no way spells any diminution in the ongoing and active proclamation of the gospel by the church. In effect, here we are also left with an ongoing tension: (a) The active proclamation of Messiah, toward the animation of loyalty-belief both within and outside the church must continue, along with the church's witness to the powers-that-be with the uncompromising claims of messianic sovereignty. This active proclamation will necessarily involve gestures of separation and dissent, insofar as the gospel is inherently counter-imperial. But meanwhile, (b) the church must recognize that any division or boundary originating from that very proclamation is not one for us to calculate with any finality, but is rather one whose resolution toward the animation of universal loyalty, in response to universal messianic merciful sovereignty, is to be left in God's hands. This allows no room for any final ecclesial self-assurance, nor any confidence in a presumed destiny of the other, the enemy.[25]

Situating Paul in the New Testament

Paul is the only New Testament witness with such a profoundly universal and unwavering hope for God's redemptive work through Messiah. Paul stands at a critical juncture. As the earliest NT writer, he stands at a point before the church comes to terms with the non-fulfillment of the vision, the non-event of the *parousia*. Later, the church accommodates by, in effect, lowering (or delaying) expectations. Very soon after Paul,

in a process already evident in some of the later writings of the New Testament, the church increasingly adopted the premise of an economy of distributive justice, seeing itself (in its current formation) as the apex of God's plan. Its economy of distributive justice, along with an economy of scarcity (by which someone's loss helps to magnify someone's sense of gain), became the confirmation and legitimation of its own self-assured reality. Paul, however, stands at a point before the emerging institutional church routinizes itself as the thing in itself, which, granted, took place in the wake of hard practical realities (namely, extensive and persistent unbelief, not to mention severe persecution). But Paul is fiercely combative against any consequential form of supersessionism, and ultimately refuses a final identity-definition and self-understanding based on the loss of hope, based on someone else's misstep.[26] "In hope upon hope he believed" (Rom 4:18), as did Abraham, expecting nothing less than a miracle ("the mystery" of Rom 11:25; cf. 11:33-36). As a result, he pens Romans 9–11 with the deepest of anguish and sorrow, claiming that he himself would rather be "cut off" and be "accursed" (Rom 9:1-3) than for God's program of "(re)grafting in" toward the reconciliation of the *kosmos*, the fullness of the all, to be left with a final mere portion. For Paul, grief is the appropriate posture during the "not yet" when hostile unbelief still challenges Messiah's universal reign and thus divides humanity.[27]

Implications for a Believers Church Self-Understanding

Paul's ecclesial vision is nothing less than an ecumenical one—ecumenical in the sense that it concerns the reconciliation of the *oikoumenē*, the entire inhabited world, under the sovereign lordship of Messiah. Thus it is an ecumenicity that shatters even the boundaries of those who are currently believers and non-believers. Paul's ecumenicity, his global universalism, then, challenges any contentment with a final diminution of the messianic into a mere part, a subset, that is, into any final form of "denominationalism." Naturally, this ecumenicity also challenges any retreat to "congregationalism," although that matter is perhaps better addressed with Pauline texts other than those dealt with in this paper.[28] Paul's understanding of messianic sovereignty means that universality mediates identity, which fundamentally questions the finality of any partitive identity formation (e.g. I am of Paul, Apollos, Cephas, Christ, etc.; cf. 1 Cor 1:12; 3:21-23).[29] In the current post-denominational reality (which unfortunately is not a function of a Pauline universalism, but rather its opposite, namely congregationalism and regionalism, including nationalism and individualism), it may in fact become a necessity or

reality that networks of "believers," or transplants of the Anabaptist impulse, will be found across and beyond denominations.

This argument might also mean that one ought also to raise the question as to whether the term "Believers Church" is still the best way to carry the "concept." This issue might be raised in connection with other Pauline themes, in particular the character of belief itself as "loyalty" and "fidelity," and its consequential expression with the gesture of separation from the realities of empire. A generation ago it was felt that terms such as "free church" or "dissenters" or "non-conformists" were not well-suited for liberal democracies where there is a clear separation of church and state; thus the term "Believers Church" became the preferred way to express the concept that was once foundational to a family of denominations.[30] But in a context where "belief" is increasingly a private matter, but in symbiotic co-dependency with patriotic allegiance to a liberal democratic state, the term "Believers Church" increasingly lacks meaning. Less important than a focus on a mechanism for entry will be the matter of fundamental messianic allegiance and fidelity (what Paul especially means with the word *pistis*), along with its gesture of dissent or non-conformity (relative to any other dominion, spiritual or imperial). But that very gesture of separation will ultimately need to be accompanied by an equal passion for the hope in the final realization of messianic sovereignty, in the mode of cross-oriented humility, by which current partitions will give way to universal acclaim in the lordship of Messiah, to the glory of God.

Paul's ecumenical hope offers a challenge to any arrogance or complacency in the formation of a part that is short of the telic vision. That is, it questions any ecclesial formation that does not see itself as provisional or contingent relative to the reign of God, both spatially and temporally. The reign of God is both spatially and temporally not limited to its current expression in any bounded group of the faithful. Moreover, Paul's eschatological ecclesiology means that a messianic citizen is by consequence a global citizen, not just in the resistance to any current national sovereignty, but also in the hope that messianic sovereignty may be actualized globally, animating loyalty among all humanity and reconciling all creation.

Resurrection and Renewal: The Making of the Babi Movement in Iran, 1844-1850 (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989); Negar Mottahedeh, "Ruptured Spaces and Effective Histories: The Unveiling of the Babi Poetess Qurrat al-'Ayn-Tahirih in the Gardens of Badasht," *UCLA Journal of History* 17 (1997): 59-81.

34. 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.

Chapter 7

1. John Howard Yoder, *Body Politics: Five Practices of the Christian Community before the Watching World* (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 1992), ix.

2. Space does not permit a thorough survey of the divergent streams within the emerging messianic movement, which in the time of Paul was still self-understood as a sub-unit (denomination) within the religio-political entity of Israel/Judaism (cf. Acts 16:20; 24:5, 14; 28:22, where the Jesus Messianists are a "party" within the people of Israel). These streams or divisions (evident both between and within regions of Paul's work) were based, as today, both on social factors (broadly speaking: linguistic-ethnic-cultural, economic-class, and status-rank-legal factors) and on the impact of key personalities that embody or express these factors (Cephas, Apollos, James, Barnabas, Paul; cf. Antioch in relation to Jerusalem; Paul's Greek-speaking congregations in relation to the "saints in Judea"; the agitators and "men from James" in Galatians; the super-apostles and their adherents in 2 Cor; rival preachers in Phil 1:15-18). Acts 6–8 also attests to divergent streams, that of Stephen and the "Hellenists" and those of Peter and James and the "Hebraists," including even more Torah-committed messianic Pharisees (cf. Acts 14:4; 21:20-21). That only the "Hellenists" were subjects of the persecution in Acts 7–8 confirms that there were significant differences in their approach to the Torah and the temple, the immediate cause of the persecution. Subsequent to Paul's ministry, a Johannine stream can be distinguished (along with schismatics from it; 1 John 2:18-25; 4:1-6; 2 John 7), as can a Petrine stream (Matthew). While considerable diversity is evident from the beginning of the messianic movement, such that one must recognize polygenesis, what is especially difficult is to provide appropriate descriptive terms or adequate characterization of the various streams. For instance, the terms "Jewish Christianity" or "Hellenistic Christianity" are certainly problematic, and even the term "Christianity" is significantly anachronistic for Paul's time and for his theology. See Daniel Boyarin, *Border Lines: The Partition of Judeo-Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004); J. D. G. Dunn, *Unity and Diversity in the New Testament: An Inquiry into the Character of Earliest Christianity*, 3rd ed. (London: SCM Press, 2006). While Paul takes pains to resolve emerging diversity and tension within the messianic movement itself, an equally crucial question for Paul is the growing "intramural" rift within Israel more generally, as a result of adherence and non-adherence to Messiah.

3. For a consistent apocalyptic-eschatological framework for Paul's ecclesiology, see esp. J. Christiaan Beker, *Paul the Apostle: The Triumph of God*

in Life and Thought (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980): 135-81, 303-349. By contrast, some other interpreters treat "anthropology" or "soteriology," but not "ecclesiology" under the framework of the Pauline already-not yet; e.g. J. D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998): 461-92. The eschatological framework for Paul's ecclesiology is certainly a neglected theme in most treatments of biblical ecclesiology.

4. For an apocalyptic, "illiberal" reading of Paul over against the Western liberal tradition, see Jacob Taubes, *The Political Theology of Paul*, trans. D. Hollander (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), 24 and throughout; see also Doug Harink, *Paul among the Postliberals: Pauline Theology beyond Christendom and Modernity* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2003).

5. On this reading of Paul's theology, see Beker, *Paul the Apostle*, 143: "Only a consistent apocalyptic interpretation of Paul's thought is able to demonstrate its fundamental coherence." See also the defense of this understanding of Paul's theology in approach in Douglas Campbell, *The Quest for Paul's Gospel: A Suggested Strategy* (London: T & T Clark, 2005); he calls this "pneumatologically participatory martyrological eschatology," over against justification by faith or salvation history models of Paul's theology. Below I draw language from my "The Politics of Paul: His Supposed Social Conservatism and the Impact of Postcolonial Readings," *Conrad Grebel Review* 21/1 (2003): 88-90.

6. V. P. Furnish, *Theology and Ethics in Paul* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1968), 122: "Salvation" is "Paul's overall descriptive term for the final victory of God in the coming age, when the last enemy shall have been destroyed and God shall reign as the unchallenged Sovereign above all." In Paul's thought, "the future dimension of 'salvation'" has primacy.

7. For Paul resurrection is what affects a "people," not merely what happens to individuals.

8. "Heaven" is a rare word in the undisputed writings of Paul (11 times, 16 times if Colossians is included), compared to the rest of the NT (273 times). "Heaven" is the source of deliverance (Rom 1:8; 2 Cor 5:2; 1 Thess 1:10; 4:16; cf. Rom 11:26), and the place where salvation is now reserved (Phil 3:20; Col 1:5; cf. Gal 4:26), until the time when it emerges with a renovated earth (e.g. Rom 8:18-25; cf. Rev 21); but it is not itself the final destination.

9. Beker, *Paul the Apostle*, 303, 313, 316.

10. Cf. Paul's discussion in Rom 5:12-21.

11. That is, their own resurrection/vindication; cf. Phil 3:10-11, 21; 1 Thess 4:13-18.

12. See LSJ. Indeed, a quick survey of Paul's vocabulary yields a number of words that more specifically denote "destroy," ones which Paul appears to have deliberately avoided here: e.g. *olethros*, *apōleia*, *kataluō*, *phtheirō*, *apolummi*, *kathairesis*, *kathaireō*, *portheō*.

13. E.g. putting enemies under his feet; 1 Cor 15:25, from Ps 110:1; 8:7; cf. 1 Thess 5:1-11; Phil 2:9-11; 3:20-21; Rom 15:8-12; 16:20. For another expression of messianic sovereignty, see 1 Cor 10:26, "the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof."

14. E.g. Furnish, *Theology*, 122-23.

15. See also 2 Cor 5:16-19; Eph 1:10, 22-23; 2:1–3:21; cf. Acts 3:21,

apokatastasis pantōn, "re-establishment of the universe."

16. Note the explanation of the implications of Romans 11 by the philosopher Giorgio Agamben, *The Time That Remains: A Commentary on the Letter to the Romans*, trans. P. Dailey (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005). "[The remnant] is therefore neither the all, nor a part of the all, but the impossibility for the part and the all to coincide with themselves or with each other. *At a decisive instant, the elected people, every people, will necessarily situate itself as a remnant, as not all*" (p. 55; italics original). "The remnant is precisely what prevents divisions from being exhaustive and excludes the parts and the all from the possibility of coinciding with themselves. The remnant is not so much the object of salvation as its instrument, that which properly makes salvation possible. . . . The remnant is therefore both an excess of the all with regard to the part, and of the part with regard to the all" (p. 56). The remnant is thus never any self-assured "kind of numeric portion or substantial positive residue" (p. 50), but rather a division "without ever reaching any final ground" (p. 52), while still providing the means to that destination. "In the *telos*, when God will be 'all in all,' the messianic remnant will not harbour any particular privilege and will have exhausted its meaning in losing itself in the *plērōma* [the fullness]" (p. 56). Similarly Alain Badiou, *Saint Paul: The Foundation of Universalism*, trans. R. Bassier (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003). He argues that there can never be a contentment with any historical realization of the Pauline hope, nor with any preoccupation with a new identity apart from the hope for the universal. Paul's "clearest conviction is that the evental figure of the Resurrection exceeds its real, contingent site, which is the community of believers such as it exists at the moment. The work of love is still before us; the empire is vast. . . Paul's universalism will not allow the content of hope to be a privilege accorded to the faithful who happen to be living now. It is inappropriate to make distributive justice [which focuses on the punishment of the wicked] the referent of hope" (p. 95).

17. Thus, Romans 11 is also a crucial build-up toward Rom 12:14-21.

18. On the imagery of "reconciliation," see further Rom 5:6-11; 11:15; 2 Cor 5:18-21; Col 1:20.

19. Note also the imagery of rejection and casting off in relation to inclusion and reception in Rom 11:11-14.

20. At the same time, the animation of human fidelity-faith is certainly crucial in Paul, though based on the prototypical fidelity of Messiah himself; e.g. Rom 1:16-17; 3:21-26; 5:12-21; 10:5-21; 11:22-23. For analysis of these texts, see John E. Toews, *Romans* (Scottdale/Waterloo: Herald Press, 2004).

21. See further below, n. 24.

22. Available in the public domain, in Latin, Greek, and English translation. See "Monumentum Ancyranum" from the Loeb Classical Library at LacusCurtius, http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Augustus/Res_Gestae/home.html, accessed May 29, 2012.

23. For the theme of eschatological recompense in Paul (using terms such as wrath, condemnation, judgment, perishing, destruction, etc.; day of the Lord; *parousia* of Messiah) note: (a) the reality/principle of divine wrath/judgment in response to injustice (Rom 1:18-3:20 [day of wrath, 2:5-16]; 5:16, 18; vessels of wrath destined for destruction, Rom 9:22; Col 3:5-6 [cf. transformed in Eph 5:6

to focus "upon the sons of disobedience"]), which operates via Law (Rom 4:15; 5:20; cf. ministry of condemnation, 2 Cor 3:9); (b) references to the "day of the Lord" or "*parousia* (coming, presence) of Messiah" as a time of final judgment, used as warning, assurance, or theodicy/vindication: "day" (Rom 2:5, 16; 13:12; 1 Cor 1:8; 3:13; 5:5; 2 Cor 1:14; Phil 1:6, 10; 2:16; 1 Thess 5:2, 4; cf. 2 Thess 1:10; 2:2, 3); *parousia* (1 Cor 15:23; 1 Thess 2:19; 3:13; 4:15; 5:23; cf. 2 Thess 2:1, 8); (c) those destined/liable for wrath, destruction (those perishing, 1 Cor 1:18; cf. 2:6-8; 2 Cor 2:15; 4:3); those who will meet destruction, (Phil 3:19, *apōleia*; 1 Thess 5:3, *olethros*; but not Phil 1:28, which refers to outsiders' expectation of the church's demise); the condemnation of the world (1 Cor 11:32; cf. 2 Thess 1:5-12; 2:3, 8, 10, 12); (d) salvation as deliverance from wrath, condemnation (1 Thess 1:10; 5:9-10; Rom 5:9, 16, 18; 8:1-4); (e) judgment of those now "in Messiah," as threats, warnings (e.g. Rom 14:10-12; 2 Cor 5:10; 1 Cor 3:10-15, 16-17; 4:1-5; 10:1-12; 11:30-34); for purgation, see 1 Cor 3:12-15; 5:3-5; (f) deferring judgment of "outsiders" to God (1 Cor 5:12-13; Rom 12:17-21; Phil 4:5); (g) believers to participate in judgment of "world" and "angels" (1 Cor 6:2-3); (h) oracles of judgment on some (believers or not; Rom 3:8; Gal 1:8-9; 5:10-12; Gal 2:11; 2 Cor 11:15; Phil 3:19); (i) divine recompense in the present age (Rom 1:18-32; 13:2-5; 1 Thess 2:16; 1 Cor 11:30-32). What is noteworthy is that the most assured, vivid, and indeed vindictive statements of wrath and condemnation on outsiders appear in deutero-Pauline writings (esp. 2 Thess 2:5-12; cf. Eph 5:6). One might say in general that this broad theme in Paul reflects: (a) the conviction that God wills the good, that which is just, on account of God's holiness; and (b) the conviction that all people are ultimately and individually accountable to God for their actions. Paul speculates neither on the certainty of any final judgment, or the specifics of any rewards or punishments, in contrast to later NT and Christian writers. Paul's purpose throughout is hortatory, that is, to encourage even stronger fidelity. See Furnish, *Theology*, 120-22.

24. It is crucial, however, to try to distinguish in Paul between argument and conviction; this is not always easy. It is also important to discern the particular function of statements in this area: that is, are they meant to warn, to console, to assure, to provide a theodicy, etc.? Moreover, it can also be noted that Paul is not overly preoccupied with the fate of the unbeliever (noted, for instance, by Badiou, *Saint Paul*, 95), quite in contrast to later writers in the New Testament and beyond. Furthermore, Paul can indeed say things to some audiences quite in tension with things said to other auditors. Paul's letters are interventions that certainly display a theological coherence; but they are certainly not products of systematic, abstract theologizing that smooths out all points of tension. The point is that clearly not all statements have the same probative force for Christian theology.

25. See the impressive treatment of Paul's ecclesiology, especially of the church's groaning along with the rest of creation in anticipation of "the apocalypse of God's love which conquers all the powers of separation," in the work of Baptist Doug Harink, *Paul among the Postliberals*, 180 and throughout.

26. On Paul's resistance to supersessionism, see ibid., 151-207.

27. On the notion that the divide between Christianity and Judaism "did not have to be," see John Howard Yoder, *The Jewish-Christian Schism Revisited*

(Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003).

28. For instance, 1 Corinthians, which has been described as "one great fugue around the single word *pan* [all]," in Taubes, *Political Theology*, 1. Paul's internationalism and his emphasis on corporate unity relative to Corinthian congregationalism, localism, and individualism is evident from the outset (e.g. 1:2, 9; 4:6-7, 17; 7:17; 11:16; 12:1-13; 16:1-4, 15, 19). Romans 15:7-33 (the "collection," cf. Gal 2:10; 1 Cor 16:1-4; 2 Cor 8–9) is also a crucial text for Paul's vision of a globally united church.

29. This also suggests that we can never rest content with a retreat to any so-called tradition-based rationality and its attendant identitarianism, by which one implicitly posits that you must be "X" to understand and justify "X-ness."

30. E.g. D. Durnbaugh, "Believers Church," *Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encylopedia Online* (1987; <http://www.gameo.org/encyclopedia/contents/B4458.html> accessed 10 June 2008).

Chapter 8

1. *Faith Today*, March/April 22/2 (2004): 2. *Faith Today* is the publication of the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada.

2. As cited on the web-site, www.tmconference.com [no longer posted]: Ps 45:4 ("In your majesty, ride out to victory, defending truth, humility, and justice. Go forth to perform awe-inspiring deeds."); Heb 12:4 ("You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood."); Joel 3:9 ("Proclaim among the nations: Prepare for War! Rouse the warriors! Let all the fighting men draw near and attack.").

3. Michel Desjardins, *Peace, Violence and the New Testament (*Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997).

4. Desjardins, *Peace, Violence and the New Testament*, 82.

5. E.g. Desjardins, *Peace, Violence and the New Testament*, 63-65; David Williams, *Paul's Metaphors: Their Context and Character* (Peabody: Hendricksen, 1999), ch. 10, "Warfare and Soldiering," 211-44; Raymond Collins, *The Power of Images in Paul* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2008), 36-38, 62-63, 107, 133, 172, 169-72 and passim (see index). W. Swartley ("War and Peace in the New Testament," *ANRW* II.26.3: 2315) rightly correlates the war and peace images in Paul, but minimizes the frequency and diversity of military language and images. Similarly, O. Bauernfeind, "*strateuomai*," TDNT VII, 708-710, suggests that the *strateuomai* (fighting, battling) word group is "not really at home" in the vocabulary of Paul.

6. A. Malherbe, "Antisthenes and Odysseus, and Paul at War," *Harvard Theological Review* 76 (1983): 143-73.

7. The Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible, abbreviated LXX, dating to the second century BCE.

8. See Victor C. Pfitzer, *Paul and the Agon Motif* (Leiden: Brill, 1967); Martin Brändl, *Der Agon bei Paulus: Herkunft und Profil paulinischer Agon metaphorik* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006). Particularly relevant is the use of *athlēsis* (striving, contending) and *agōn* (struggle) to describe military struggle and