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PAUL'S VISION OF THE CHURCH: EMBODIED OR ELECTRONIC?

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Abstract:

With the rise of the internet and electronic communications, the world has witnessed a rise in so-called "on-line communities." These on-line communities represent a loosely connected family of sorts where people interact with each other via electronic resources. As a result of these things, many Christian communities have attempted to build a "church community" in an on-line environment. Paul describes the church as a community in most of his letters, and in some letters he even describes the church as a body and a bride. The language Paul uses is very relational and almost physical. How would Paul respond to the move today to create on-line Christian communities? Paul would respond that the church that represents Christ is comprised of people who gather physically and by their worship and actions embody the Lord whom they serve. For Paul, the body and bride of Christ is more a physical reality than simply an on-line collection of disembodied electrons. Taking cues from Paul's letters (specifically but not limited to Romans and 1 Corinthians), a contrast will be built between on-line Christian communities and Paul's vision of the church as Christ embodied in life and action. The importance of physical contact, regular interaction, and actual (not virtual) community will describe the church as seen through Paul's eyes.

Introduction

Writing on the ecclesiology of Paul is a bit like jumping feet first off of a very tall bridge into a deep river. The diver is no doubt filled with trepidation, but he also cannot help but think that he is doing something many people of done before. A cursory search on the topic of Paul's theology yields a seemingly interminable number of sources. Narrowing that search to Paul's view of the church make the number is more manageable and less daunting.[1] As if the daunting task of deciphering a clear Pauline view of ecclesiology was not dangerous enough, adding to that overview a comparison to a more post-modern and electronic understanding of community could very well prove disastrous. So, the focus is not simply on Paul's doctrine of the church,

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[1] The first search for books on Paul's view of the church was a bit disappointing. Many of the works focused primarily on Paul's theology in general or on some application of Paul's idea of church, or ministry, or leadership. In some cases Paul's views on the church made up a chapter or two. Few books focus almost exclusively on Paul's view of the church, and some that do often have a particular ax to grind. For a variety of views, see Robert J. Banks, *Paul's Idea of Community: The Early House Churches in their Historical Setting,* (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1980); David Bartlett, *Paul's Vision for the Teaching Church,* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1977); Vincent Branick, *The House Church in the Writings of Paul,* (Wilmington, Delaware: M. Glazier, 1987); James Thompson, *The Church according to Paul: Rediscovering the Community Conformed to Christ,* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2014); and Eddie Gibbs, *The Rebirth of the Church: Applying Paul's Vision for Ministry in our Post-Christian World,* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013).

but on how Paul views community and its basic expression in the church. This will not be a full

formed ecclesiology then, but hopefully it will represent a robust discussion on the implications

of Paul's view of community in light of the often changing and sometimes confusing post-

modern understandings on the place of community (and, therefore, the church) in 21st century

society. To say the least, this project has caused quite a bit of mental meanderings as new

material was discovered or recommended, but the end product will be (hopefully) succinct and

clear.

The question pursued here is simple: How does Paul's view of community/the church

relate to post-modern understandings? The implications of those relationships will also be

considered. In order to pursue this thesis, three areas must be considered: 1) A definition of

community and the post-modern paradigm of community; 2) Paul's view of community and its

relationship to these definitions; and 3) the community of the "electronic church." Some

implications and conclusions will be teased from these three areas with the hope of showing that

Paul's version is not only still relevant, but something that the church should seek to preserve.

First, a definition of community and its post-modern counterpart will be offered.

Community—The Shifting Paradigm[2]

According to some contemporary sociologists, properly functioning communities are

defined by three primary characteristics. First, a community consists of a group of people who

are conscious that they share a similar frame of reference or perspective. This similarity in

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[2]Special thanks to Stanley Grenz for his article on "Postmodern Ecclesiology" in the *Cambridge Companion to Postmodern Theology,* edited by Kevin Vanhoozer. Much of the material found here is a paraphrase of his fine work. Downloaded from *Cambridge Companions Online* on Sun Nov 16 01:16:18 GMT 2014. Cambridge Companions Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006. Cambridge Companions Online © Cambridge University Press, 2006. http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/CCOL052179062X.015 Cambridge Companions Online © Cambridge University Press, 2014.

worldview inclines them to view things in a similar way, to "read" the world through similar lenses, while also constructing the symbolic world they inhabit using similar words and symbols (even if the members of the community are not united regarding what these world-building symbols actually mean). Second, communities tend to foster a group focus that evokes a shared sense of identity among members, whose attention is thereby directed toward the group itself (and its well-being).[3] Group identity, which is fostered in part by the belief that the participants engage in a common mission, nurtures a type of solidarity among the group members.[4] Moreover, rather than necessitating unanimity and uniformity of opinion among group members, group focus entails a shared interest in participating in an ongoing discussion as to what constitutes the identity of the group.[5] In other words, group members have a "felt responsibility" to define and to communicate the identity of the group.

A third major characteristic of a community is the "person focus" that balances its group orientation. Insofar as its members draw some kind of individual personal identity from the community, the group is a crucial factor in forming its participants.[6] This third aspect leads to what for the purposes of ecclesiology constitutes the central function of community; namely, the community's role in identity formation. According to contemporary sociology, then, a community may be understood as a group in which people share a worldview, engage in a group identity, and find some kind of individual personal identity as well. The functioning community

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[3]Arthur J. Dyke, *Rethinking Rights and Responsibilities: The Moral Bonds of Community* (Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim, 1992), p. 126.

[4]Derek L. Phillips, *Looking Backward: A Critical Appraisal of Communitarian Thought* (Princeton University Press, 1993), p. 17.

[5]Robert N. Bellah, "Community Properly Understood: A Defense of 'Democratic Communitarianism,' " in *The Essential Communitarian Reader*, p.16

[6]Michael Sandel, *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice*, 2nd edition (Cambridge University Press, 1998.

in a post-modern world offers its members a way to understand the world around them (a culture of some kind), a place to belong (group identity/family), and a means for developing a personal identity (how the member sees herself in the group and in the world).

While some views on the development of personal identity tie its formation to the idea of the "self" being dependent on the group (i.e., that the self is socially produced—see George Herbert Mead),[7] some recent scholars (like Alasdair MacIntyre) have linked these understandings of the self with narrative theory. MacIntyre argues that humans are storytellers.[8] Human identity develops through the telling of a personal narrative, in accordance with which one's life "makes sense," and these personal stories are tied up with the larger group story, the narrative of a community.[9] This narrative provides personal identity, but this identity is not created merely from the "factual data," or "chronicle," of the events of one's life, however, but requires an "interpretative scheme" that provides the "plot" through which the chronicle makes sense. The interpretative framework likewise cannot be derived from the data of one's own life; instead it arises from one's social context or "tradition."[10] For this reason, personal identity is never a private reality but may have a communal element; it is shaped by the community in which the person is a participant. Such a community contributes to the formation of the "self" by mediating the communal narrative necessary for personal identity formation. This community becomes the reference group to which the individual refers consciously or unconsciously, in the

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[7]George Herbert Mead, *Mind, Self and Society*, ed. Charles W. Morris (1934; University of Chicago Press, 1962), pp. 118–25, 134, 144-164.

[8]Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, 2nd ed. (University of Notre Dame Press, 1984), p. 216.

[9]Ibid, p. 216, 221.

[10]George W. Stroup, *The Promise of Narrative Theology* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1981), pp. 101-198. Here Stroup is in substantial agreement with social constructionist sociologists. See, for example, Peter L. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion,* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1969), p. 20.

shaping of his attitudes and beliefs and values on a given subject or in the formation of his conduct.[11] From this reference group the individual gains her fundamental identity. This community tells the story by which the individual identifies his or her personal identity and experience. This story is not simply past experiences, but it offers a transcendent narrative that encompasses the present and the future. So, post-modern community offers a means by which the individual can experience relationships with others as well as a personal identification that constitutes the individual's core identity and gives him a narrative by which to interpret the world around him. Paul's view of the church will reflect many of these very elements, but before examining that a paradigm shift must be acknowledged.

Peter Horsfield, in his article "The Church and Electronic Culture"[12] (1991) identifies a variety of ages in which cultural communication takes on different forms. Of course. If the communication of culture changes, then by necessity the communities made up by that cultural communication will also change. There is not enough space here to develop all of Horsfield's ideas, but three main eras must be understood: 1) the primary oral culture, 2) the "literate" or print culture which followed, and 3) the new secondary oral culture of post-modernity. In a nutshell, Horsfield argues that early development of human culture was primarily oral in nature. That meant that the elements of culture and human interaction relied heavily on oral or auditory presentations and preservations of culture.[13] The switch to a manuscript based culture required a shift in collection and preservation of the narratives and worldviews of various communities. As

[11]Robert Nisbet and Robert G. Perrin, *The Social Bond*, 2nd ed (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1977), p. 100.

[12]Much of the material found here is a paraphrase of Horsfield's article, "The Church and Electronic Culture" (19 pages). Downloaded from Religion Online Website, on Sun Nov 16 12:16:18 GMT 2014. http://www.religion-online.org . The material from the article is available in another form ("Selling Consent") in the book *Communication and Citizenship,* eds. P Dahlgren and C. Sparks, (London: Routledge, 1991).

[13]IBID, pp. 3-7

they were written down, these communities relied less on telling the story and relied more on the "objective" aspect of the written word. People could participate in culture simply by reading the texts and interpreting them properly. The early church took advantage of both cultures to promulgate its doctrines and cultural ideas (i.e., preaching and writing—Paul is a good example).

Horsfield contends, however, that post-modernity and the technological revolution of computers, fiber optics, and digital communication has created a paradigm switch that returns communities to an oral culture of sorts.[14] This represents a major paradigm shift in world societies from primarily literate-based communication and community organization to a more electronic-based communication. This shift is leading to major changes in cultural perception, thought and communities. For the first time since the beginning of the Christian era, a communications system other than writing is the most powerful medium of non-face-to-face communication. In this emergent electronic era, the most advanced and powerful communication now takes place through media which the church as the interpreter of the revelation of God has in many cases not mastered. In this shift, churches face an unprecedented situation unprecedented in which most churches' thought and practice—and by implication God's revelation—are framed within and associated with communication and modes of thought of a past stage of cultural development. The development of global electronic media has transformed the communications systems of the world, but the world of biblical scholarship, theology and church practice seems to be acting as if no change has taken place.[15] Their understanding and explanation of the meaning of revelation and the Bible is largely fixed in the old literate

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[14]Horsfield, "Church and Electronic Culture," pp. 8-9

[15]IBID, pp. 10-11

paradigm, putting most churches as institutions out of step and out of touch with the experience and culture of emerging generations.

For Horsfield, this paradigm shift has ushered in a secondary oral culture of sorts by means of a technological revolution.[16] The suggestion is that in the current era culture is experiencing a profound paradigm shift, brought about by the emergence and now dominance of electronic forms of social communication (technological changes) and their supporting ideological and economic structures (consumer capitalism).[17] Paradigm shifts do not happen overnight, but often take long periods of time to develop. A shift into a new social paradigm does not simply dispense with the old, however, but the old is brought into or taken up into the new, but in a new way or with new meaning. New computer technologies still rely on "text" or the "printed word" to communicate cultural ideas. Access to the new technology and its content is also somewhat governed by the power or economic situation.[18] Some literate persons will have access to the information delivered by the new technology while others will not. This is a reflection of both the technological change (and the blending of the old and new forms) and the

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[16]Horsfield, "Church and Electronic Culture," pp.. 4-5. These factors create particular dynamics of thinking, being and social interaction, so that there are a number of characteristics of dominantly oral cultures:
    * People tend to live in an all-at-once sense world using all senses.
    * Sound is a dominant sense. Sound is seen as action and having power in itself.
    * The physiology of sound produces an interiority of consciousness while sight has an external and individual component. Sight is exclusive, sound is inclusive!
    * There are common verbal devices used for structuring memory, such as: thinking memorable thoughts; use of mnemonic, heavily rhythmic and balanced patterns; use of frequent repetitions or antitheses, alliterations and assonances; use of epithetic, formulaic, proverbial sayings; use of standard thematic settings.
    * Oral cultures tend to be conservative and traditionalist. Knowledge not repeated disappears, therefore communication is frequently redundant, back-looping, backward looking. Print allows mechanical retention - print cultures therefore are able to be more forward-looking
    * Oral cultures tend to be close to the human life-world, (writing is able to be more abstracted); agonistic or narrative in nature or related to struggle (writing is able to disengage knowledge from the arena where the struggle is taking place); and empathetic & participatory (rather than objectively distanced).
    * Oral cultures tend to be relationship oriented.

[17]IBID, pp. 11-13

[18]IBID, pp. 13-15

economic aspect that often drives the new information. In other words, electronic media has a

product for sale. To access it requires both a felt need and the means to satisfy that need.

Culture then becomes more defined by "felt needs" and individual participation than in the

past.[19] At any rate, the development of the electronic church (examined below) reflects this well

as it encompasses some form of the two aspects of technological revolution and consumer

economics in some interesting ways. Paul, however, also reflects this in some ways (although

with different technological changes and a different economic system). These similarities should

come out in the discussion of Paul's view of the church and the idea of the electronic church

below.

An Overview of Paul's View of the Church as Community

Considering Paul's ecclesiology raises more questions than can be answered in a short

paper, and for that reason alone the focus must be narrowed. In order to narrow the focus and

keep this paper within proper constraints, this essay will consider the primary images used by

Paul in Romans and 1 Corinthians to describe his view of the church as a community.[20] Three

primary images loom large in these two largest of the Pauline letters, the concepts of *ekklesia,*

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[19]Walter Ong, *Orality and Literacy,* (3rd edition, Routledge, 2012), 135-138. According to Ong, electronic culture is essentially literate but involving a new sensory mix that accentuate sound and pictures. This represents a "secondary orality." The nature of that blend of both primary orality and literacy is still emerging. "This new orality has striking resemblances to the old in its participatory mystique, its fostering of a communal sense, its concentration on the present moment, and even in its use of formulas .... Like primary orality, secondary orality has generated a strong group sense, for listening to spoken words forms hearers into a group, a true audience, just as reading written or printed texts turns individuals in on themselves. But secondary orality generates a sense for groups immeasurably larger than those of primary oral culture – a type of 'global village'. Moreover, before writing, oral folk were group-minded because no feasible alternative had presented itself. In our age of secondary orality, we are group-minded self-consciously and programmatically." (pp.. 136-137)

[20] To be sure, the other letters of Paul will be addressed in this essay where needed, but our main conversation partners will be Romans and 1 Corinthians.

the "Body of Christ," and family metaphors.[21] All of these concepts represent what can only be described as a somewhat physical entity or a community made up of real physical presence of real people in a particular place and time. These concepts will be considered through the three aspects of community mentioned above: True community fosters a worldview to interpret the world, offers a group identity, and provides the means for the individual to develop a personal narrative or story giving an individual identity tied to the group identity. Of course, no person represents this as well as Paul himself.

In Philippians 3, Paul offers his story (if you will, his individual identity). Here he offers the reader an overview of his past, his present, and his future. Although this passage does not explicitly use any of the words mentioned above, it serves to show how community works. Paul's story reveals his identity and identifies his community. Paul first identifies a threat to his community—the dogs, those who mutilate the flesh. The reference here may be to Judaizers of the type seen in Galatians (i.e., the people who seem to insist on circumcision as a prerequisite to proper relationship to God). Paul reminds his readers, however, that they are not "mutilators" but have participated in a circumcision that leads to proper worship of God. Paul then spells out his past as a member (of sorts) of the community of mutilators, then he reminds his readers of his present identity as a follower of the crucified and resurrected Messiah with whom Paul and his readers now identify. There is even reference in verses 13ff to a "future" of this narrative.[22]

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[21]Paul's use of other images should not be overlooked, however, and in other letters he includes ideas like "remnant," "Israel," the olive tree, the holy dough, and other physical metaphors. These three are chosen to keep this paper concise. Suffice it to say, quite a few of Paul's descriptive ideas for the church place it in a decidedly physical category. The church is a physical entity in a particular time and place.

[22]N. T. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God,* Parts III and IV, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2013), pp. 986-987.

In this short account, Paul reveals himself to be from a primarily oral age, but one that uses print media as well (since he is writing a letter!). Paul describes the community of Christians in very physical terms (e.g., they may be circumcised, they suffer together, they belong to of a band pursuing a prize in Jesus). Paul embodies here the three aspects of community above, and even shows some aspects of an almost secondary oral society—he adapts the culture of Judaism to describe the new experience of Christianity while using the new technology of letter writing to proclaim these new cultural ideas. Paul's view of the church and community is tied to his past experience, to his present experience, and to his identity as one who "in Christ" is now and will in the future participate in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.[23] A similar pattern will emerge in Paul's use of *ekklesia* to describe the community of the church.

Ekklesia ("assembly") is used 114 times in the New Testament with 62 instances in Paul (three in Matthew, twenty-three in Acts—perhaps an apologetic for Paul, twenty in Revelation, and six times in the non-Pauline letters).[24] The word means "congregation," "church,"

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[23]N. T. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God,* Parts III and IV, pp. 988-989.

[24]P. T. O'Brien, "Church," in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1993), p. 124; James Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006), p. 537. Paul uses the term fifty-seven times in *Hauptbriefe* and an additional five times in the deutero-Pauline letters. Outside of the Pauline corpus, ἐκκλησία occurs in fifty-two other places with the bulk, twenty-three, of these in book of Acts. In order to evaluate Paul's ecclesiology, two sections of his letters will be understood. Scholarly consensus around Paul's letters and their authorship contends that the letters of Romans, 1 & 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, 1 Thessalonians, and Philemon are generally considered authentic to Paul. Questions and speculation around the remaining letters swirls. Though many scholars will accept Ephesians and Colossians as authentic, 2 Thessalonians and the Pastoral Epistles are largely considered deutero-Pauline. Though traditional authorship of the New Testament has been robustly defended by some critical scholars, there is enough scholarly challenge to create doubt about some of these letters. For the purpose of this paper, Paul's uncontested letters (particularly Romans and 1 Corinthians) will occupy center stage. For more on the authenticity of the letters of Paul, see John A. T. Robinson, *Redating the New Testament* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1976), and Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Writings of the New Testament : An Interpretation*, 3rd ed. (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2010). Compelling arguments for the authorship of Ephesians and Colossians have been made that seem to allow these works in the Pauline *Hauptbriefe* with the generally accepted epistles. The earliest evidence favoring Pauline authorship comes from Irenaeus *Against Heresies* 1.8.5; 5.2.3; 8.1; 14.3; 24.4 and Tertullian *Against Marcion* 5.17. More recently see Frank Thielman, *Ephesians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2010). 1-5, F. F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans, 1984). 229-231 and Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*. 60. For a good overview of the critical discussion around authorship, and a perspective

"gathering," or "assembly." Used for centuries prior to the time of Paul, *ekklesia* denoted the

popular assembly of citizens in the *polis* or the Greek city state. In other words, these

assemblies were political entities, and *ekklesia* may be characterized as a political phenomenon.[25]

The *ekklesia* existed primarily when it was assembled, and the group itself (i.e., the physical

gathering) carried the idea of an assembly. This assembly did not exist when the *ekklesia* was

not in session. In the LXX, the word *ekklesia* represented the Hebrew term *qahal* (which

described the congregation of Israel when they assembled to hear the Word of God or in their

regular solemn assemblies.[26] Before Paul ever used *ekklesia* in a letter, the word had been used to

connote a solemn assembly of people joined together by a common cause or belief. Paul's use of

this term shows some cultural innovation as he borrows the idea to refer to a new reality.

Paul's usage appears to rely on some correlation between ἐκκλησία and συναγωγή as they

are found in the LXX.[27] Each of these communities are gatherings with some correspondence to

the Old Testament forms of the gatherings of Israel and the post-exilic religious systems.[28] For

Paul, these communities gather with the purpose of reflecting the calling and character of God

(or, more specifically, Christ).[29] At times Paul joins together ἐκκλησία with τοῦ θεοῦ, and he

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against Pauline authorship, see Ernest Best, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Ephesians*, ed. JA Emerton and CEB Cranfield, International Critical Commentary (New York, NY: T & T Clark, 1998). 6-59. Compelling arguments for Pauline authorship of the Pastoral Epistles have been made by George W. Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, ed. I. Howard Marshall, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishers, 1992). 21-54 and for 2 Thessalonians by Charles A. Wanamaker, *The Epistles to the Thessalonians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, ed. I. Howard Marshall, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1990).

[25] O'Brien, *Dictionary of Paul and his letters*, p. 123.

[26] O'Brien, *Dictionary of Paul and his letters*, p. 124; Dunn, *Theology of Paul*, pp. 537-538.

[27] James D. G. Dunn, *Beginning from Jerusalem*, Christianity in the Making (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2008). pp. 599-601

[28] Dunn, *Theology of Paul*, p. 537

[29] IBID p. 540

does so in both the singular[30] and the plural.[31] This concept is unique to Paul in the New

Testament materials.[32]

In Pauline ecclesiology, the *ekklesia* is a local gathering that is the visible manifestation

of the body of Christ.[33] Paul tends to use the term to refer primarily to a local assembly gathered

together in a local place. The church is described as belonging to the God who brought it into

existence. The purpose of these gatherings (as the assembly of Israel in the OT) was to hear the

word of God and to worship God/Christ. The assembly formed a community that met in a

physical place and interacted in decidedly physical terms.[34] In other words, for Paul the *ekklesia*

is embodied in an actual physical gathering that requires interaction and connection.

Paul's local use of *ekklesia* does not mean that he does not view the community of

Christians as a larger entity. Indeed, in some of Paul's later letters (and even in some of the so-

called deutero-Pauline letters) the community is represented as a heavenly or even eschatological

entity (see Colossians 1:12ff and cf. Ephesians 1:22; 3:10, 21; 5:23-32). The point of these

references, however, seems to be that the members of the local *ekklesia* also share citizenship or

membership with a wider group of followers of Christ separated by distance and time. Even

though they do not gather in one location, they share a relationship to Christ and with one

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[30] 1 Corinthians 1:2; 10:32; 11:22; 15:9; 2 Corinthians 1:1; Galatians 1:13; 1 Timothy 3:5, 15.

[31] 1 Corinthians 11:16; 1 Thessalonians 2:14; 2 Thessalonians 1:4

[32] The only non-Pauline usage is an attributed quote to Paul in Acts 20:28.

[33] *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 1965), s.v. "Ἐκκλησία." pp. 507-509

[34] An integral part of this gathering is the Pauline usage of *ekklesia* to refer to a gathering that met in a particular person's house. These house churches are also an identifiable object (as opposed to a metaphor) and had the same physicality and community implications as the larger gathering of the people of God. Paul can even use the idea of *ekklesia* to describe both the house gathering and the larger corporate embodiment of the church as an almost city wide church. See Galatians 1 (to the "churches") and etc.

another. The idea in Paul's letters is that this gathering represented an ongoing fellowship with the resurrected and ascended Lord Jesus the Messiah. In fact, Paul saw the *ekklesia* and its gathering as a concrete expression of the relationship of all Christians to Jesus. In other words, the larger group provides a means to understand the world around them, it provides a group or corporate identity, and it offers a means by which individual members can develop a personal identity as a member of the community. The community founded among believers in the resurrected Messiah (whether meeting in a small or large gathering) becomes for Paul the expression of the body of Christ. This physical gathering is described by a variety of metaphors, but "body" is paramount among the variety offered.[35]

In Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12, Paul uses body imagery to describe this assembly. Paul is unique in his use of this metaphor. In fact, the metaphor of the body of Christ employed by Paul is applied to a number of entities with a variety of connotations. In 1 Corinthians, the metaphor represents the local congregation of Christians, while in Romans it is used to refer to Christians in their relationships with each other. Paul may use the body metaphor as well to refer to a wider range of Christians (perhaps including all Christians).[36] Like the concept of *ekklesia,* the origins of this metaphor may be found in Greco-Roman ideas of the city or state as a body consisting of independent members. [37] The metaphor may have some roots in a Jewish milieu, however, as Paul may be referencing the idea of a corporate personality in which the many are

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[35] Two other very physical metaphors used by Paul in Romans are the ideas of a "holy dough" and "the olive tree." Time and space do not allow a detailed treatment of these ideas, but suffice it to say that again Paul envisions a gathering of physical people into a particular situation or context. This is no phantasm or disembodied gathering, this is a physical thing that may be located in space and time.

[36] Fung and O'Brien, *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, pp. 77, 127. See also Dunn, *Theology of Paul,* pp. 537-538.

[37] Fung, *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, 77.

represented in the one (e.g., Adam, Abraham, Jesus). Jesus also taught a type of solidarity between himself and his followers in the Gospels (Mark 9:37; cf. Matthew 18:5;25:40; also note John's use of "in me" language in chapter 14 and 15 of his Gospel). The idea is that the risen Christ both represents and identifies himself with his people (Acts 9:4—notice Jesus' words to Paul on the road to Damascus—"Saul, why do you persecute me?").[38] The point is that Paul's use of the idea of the "body of Christ" as a description for the church apparently finds its roots in Paul's education and experience.

The concept of the church as the body of Christ is not allegorical in Paul's writings. Nonetheless, Paul's use of this language in 1 Corinthians and Romans is more like a simile or a metaphor than anything else. The church is "like" a body. In 1 Corinthians 12 and Romans 12, Paul claims that the church is "the body of Christ." "The metaphor of the body combines the sense of a living organism and an articulate, many-membered structure."[39] The idea in these chapters is that the organic unity of all Christians as a body is grounded in their common incorporation into Christ. The common theme in these chapters is "many members but one body," and this usage probably represents the mutual relationships and obligations of Christians to each other as well as speaking about their union with Christ. The exact relation of the church as Christ's "body" to Christ himself is left undefined for the most part, although later letters describe Christ as the "head" and the church as the "body."[40] In 1 Corinthians, however, Paul makes it clear that the community of the church is one body with many members who are

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[38]Fung, *Dictionary of Paul*, 78; Dunn, *Theology of Paul*; Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God,* p. 828.

[39]Luke Timothy Johnson, "Paul's Ecclesiology," *The Cambridge Companion to St. Paul,* ed. James Dunn, (Cambridge University Press), p. 206. Downloaded from Cambridge Companions Online on Sun Nov 16 00:58:12 GMT 2014. http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/CCOL0521781558.015 Cambridge Companions Online © Cambridge University Press, 2014

[40] Fung, *Dictionary of Paul*, 79.

designed (and empowered by Jesus' Spirit) to build up the community as a whole. The idea of "body" includes within it the concept of ministry by the community to the community (very much like the *ekklesia*). Paul indicates that to be united in Christ as a community is to work together to make sure all members are growing, healthy, and expressing the character of Jesus (cf. Ephesians 4).[41]

The church is meant to grow in relationship to the individual members as they work together to build each other up to be more like the character of Jesus. In other words, the body of Christ is the locus of Christian ministry. Outreach is found in evangelism (and presumably in discipleship), but the body of Christ is primarily constituted to build up its own health by means of the life giving Spirit of its Head, Jesus Christ.[42] In other words, the larger group provides a means to understand the world around them, it provides a group or corporate identity, and it offers a means by which individual members can develop a personal identity as a member of the community. In conclusion, then, the "body of Christ" metaphor (like *ekklesia* before it) represents a primarily local gathering of individual members in real time and in a real place. It is a "physical" reality. The "body of Christ" satisfies the sociological definition provided above in a very real sense. This body has individual community expressions, and it is these individual communities which form the primary focus of Paul's ministry.[43] Paul's focus keeps in view the larger universal Church, while becoming immediately interested in building up the local churches in his ministry. This focus on building up local communities leads to Paul's final metaphor for the church—a family or a household of God.

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[41]Luke Timothy Johnson, "Paul's Ecclesiology," p. 206, Dunn, *Theology of Paul,* pp. 255ff.

[42]Fung, *Dictionary of Paul and his Letters*, p. 81.

[43]Luke Timothy Johnson, "Paul's Ecclesiology," pp. 199-200; Dunn, *Theology of Paul,* pp. 257.

N. T. Wright describes the "united family" as the central symbol of the church in Paul. Indeed, family imagery is found in many of Paul's letters including words describing relationships like "Father" and "brothers" and even the idea of a "household" of God.[44] When Paul uses this language, he seems to have one united community in mind. For Wright, Paul understands that members of the church are the people of the renewed covenant of God, they are God's people. "The long story of Israel, of Abraham and his family, has found its goal, its *telos,* at last. It has had its explosive fulfillment in Jesus as Messiah, the *Christos; . . .* The Messiah is the one who sums Israel up in himself, so that what was true of Israel is true of him."[45] This family responds to God's faithfulness with a faithfulness that they learn (or receive) from God as the faithful one. So, this "Israel" or "family of God" becomes the embodiment of sorts of God's covenant faithfulness to Israel. Paul thus views God's work as an "ordering" of the "chaos" caused by human unfaithfulness. This "ordering" was accomplished in the faithful works of Jesus the Messiah and is embodied concretely in the faithful community. This community seems to be the center of Paul's worldview, and it is from and in this community that Paul expects God to express his order and unity. "United community as family" is the goal of God's faithfulness.[46] In conclusion, then, the "family" concept also represents a primarily local gathering of individual members in the present in a real place. It is a "physical" reality. In other words, the "family of God" provides a means to understand the world, it provides a group or corporate identity, and it offers a means by which individual members can develop a personal identity as a member of the community.

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[44]N. T. Wright, *Jesus, Paul, and the People of God: A Theological Dialogue with N. T. Wright,* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2011), pp. 265ff; O'Brien, *Dictionary of Paul*, p. 128.

[45]Wright, *Jesus, Paul,* pp. 269-279.

[46]Wright, *Jesus, Paul,* pp. 269-272. Dunn, *Theology of Paul,* p.

In these three concepts Paul incorporates cultural ideas and religious symbols into an expression of a new community that has a presence in real time and space. Paul, as an innovator of sorts, utilizes Greco-Roman ideas, Jewish concepts, and even (in a sense) technological advances to describe the new reality of the church as an assembly, a body, and a family. This group, the church, provides a narrative (starting with Jesus but certainly including Paul's Damascus Road testimony) that makes sense of the past, present, and the future of the individuals involved in it. These concepts then show how Paul is able to make a cultural impact by using current concepts to tie in his doctrinal realities and his spiritual experiences. In other words, Paul uses culture to organize and to explain the realities of Christian incorporation into Christ in a way that created a community in local places. The use of current culture is not unusual, and the digital or electronic church is not unaware of the embracing of culture/technology in an effort to define and to build a community.

The Community of the Electronic/Digital Church

The digital/electronic church finds its real origins in the rise of television, but more recently is making inroads into the computerized and digitized medium of computer communications. For the digital church, a change in the dominant media of mass communication in the culture creates a radically new situation for communication in general and, in particular, for the transmission and interpretation of the church's understanding of the Bible and of community. The 21st century may well be the period of greatest media change in the history of humanity. The development of global electronic media has transformed the communications systems of the world.[47]

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[47]Horsfield, "Church and Electronic Culture," p. 10

The impact of the technologies and institutions of electronic culture need to be understood in relation to their interaction with two other major movements, each of which is dependent in some way on the other. One is the vast expanse of technological/scientific development, which has provided almost unlimited (albeit particular) insights into how things work as well as manufacturing amazing machinery for controlling, changing, and creating physical processes and products. The second is a consumer mentality (some even tie it to capitalism in particular). This approach attempts to tap into the human drives of individual gain and desire, rewarding incentive and encouraging participation in the system by the prospect of increased consumption of pleasurable goods or services and access to otherwise restricted activities.[48] Simply stated, mass production of pleasurable goods via technological development coupled with a consumer mindset equals a "community" that wants more of what it likes in the least expensive manner possible. These developments dove tail into the rise of the electronic/digital church.[49] On the heels of an amazing technological shift in media, along with a consumer mentality that wants products whose ends are to please, the electronic/digital church arrives and attempts an innovation utilizing these dramatic changes in life. As such, the digital church is a decidedly post-modern entity or community.

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[48]IBID, pp. 11-12

[49]A word needs to be added here regarding the parallel of these "modern" events to the events faced by Paul and the early Christians in the first century. How do the changes in technology and economics show up there? The rise of Rome as a global power had a direct influence in both of these areas. The Greco-Roman religious ideas brought to Israel by the Romans bumped up against the monotheism of the Jews and called for a response of some sort. The Roman economy also led to some changes. In the religious environment of Judaism, the rise of Roman ideas and economy may have played a role in the commercialism of the Temple as it becomes a place of commerce to buy and sell items needed for proper worship. The social structure of the Temple also seems to have changed to a focus on powerful persons rather than a focus on God and proper worship. Paul's views address these issues by placing the focus back on what God has faithfully done and on how the community of God must reflect that activity in humble service to each other and even to those outside the community.

Quentin Schultze lists six characteristics that distinguish the electronic/digital church (and particularly the phenomenon of televangelism) from other types of Christian communities.[50] First, they tend to be "audience supported" in such a way that viewers or "audience members" donate to the ministry to keep it in production. The community is supported by outside people and not primarily by the individuals who make up the primary gathering. Second, the electronic/digital churches tend to be "personality-led." The programs focus on a charismatic personality who can attract large numbers of people. Third, the services or meetings tend to be "experientially validated," that is, viewing the event provides people with a religious experience or some sense of satisfaction of having a "felt need" met. On the other hand, people can experience this from afar without any physical involvement or any real connection. Fourth, the electronic or digital churches are "technologically sophisticated." They employ the most current or popular technology, and by doing so offer themselves (in some cases) as a more sophisticated or "modern" version of a religious community. Fifth, the meetings tend to be "entertainment-oriented." In other words, these programs must try to avoid being boring. They must capture the interest of the audience/viewers. So, the purveyors of the digital church will go to great lengths to hold their audience's attention. They will offer spectacular events, they will advertise their technological advantages or superiority, or they will even resort to exaggerated behavior to draw attention or to keep the audience intact. Sixth, the digital church tends to focus on expansion. The primary goal seems to be to increase audience, ratings, and donations. In some cases, they will even modify their production to expand into different venues while keeping the focus on the "personality" who drives the attention (and presumably, the growth). The brand is incredibly important, and this becomes the focus of the community. How can the recognition of the brand

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[50]Richard G. Kyle, "The Electronic Church: An Echo of American Culture," *Direction Journal,* Fall 2010, Volume 39, No. 2, pp. 162-176. The following overview borrows the outline of Shultze presented in this article.

be increased? Failure to do so will lead to diminishing returns in donations and audience and may lead to the "brand" fading away.[51]

The idea of "community" or "church" in the digital/electronic church is not easily defined. As mentioned above, a community may be understood as a group in which people share a worldview, engage in a group identity, and find some kind of individual personal identity. The functioning community in a post-modern world offers its members a way to understand the world around them (a culture of some kind), a place to belong (group identity/family), and a means for developing a personal identity (how the member sees herself in the group and in the world).[52] The digital church appears to do these things, but in a quite different way from the tangible or even physical expressions of community offered from Paul above. Above all, the electronic/digital church seems to define "community" primarily by brand loyalty. That is, the "member" or "consumer" must find his or her "felt need" met in the production of the program of the electronic church. This means that the use of electronic or digital media offers a broader means to advertise or solicit for the brand, but the brand MUST be able to attract an audience that is perhaps beyond the physical gathering of a community or a church. The identity of the members then becomes subsumed in the promotion or even growth of the brand.[53] A member need not be in a specific location or physically in contact with other members of the community to accomplish this promotion. In order to ensure that the brand will grow (and that brand loyalty

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[51] Quentin J. Schultze, *Televangelism and American Culture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1991), 28. See also, Quentin J. Schultze, "The Electronic Church," in *Dictionary of Christianity in America*, ed. Daniel G. Reid et al. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1990), 385

[52] Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, 2nd ed. (University of Notre Dame Press, 1984), p. 216-221.

[53] Richard G. Kyle, "The Electronic Church: An Echo of American Culture," *Direction Journal*, Fall 2010, Volume 39, No. 2, pp. 162-176.

will continue), a charismatic leader or spokesperson is often put in place to keep the focus on the product (as it were).

Most important, because the electronic church is brand or market driven it caters to popular expectations.[54] As William Fore notes, the digital church often focuses on entertainment and tends to be experience driven.[55] Worship becomes a form of entertainment and popular music replaces traditional songs. The sermon becomes another product to meet "felt needs" instead of equipping the body to do the work of service. Experience and feelings seem to be more important than serious thinking.[56] As a result, the electronic church tends to be a private religion rather than a community experience. The audience does not have to meet other people just focus on the brand or the leader. On the contrary, the Paul knows only one kind of community—a physical, service ordered group of faithful members equipping each other to be like Jesus. As described by Robert Wuthnow, the electronic church is furthering the restructuring of American religion as churches move away from the community structure to more decentralized forms—parachurch organizations, loose federations, and private forms of the faith. The electronic church may be seen as a factor in this transition.[57]

Take for example recent events surrounding Mars Hill in Washington. This is a technological and culturally savvy congregation that showed innovation in using media and in

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[54]Richard G. Kyle, "The Electronic Church: An Echo of American Culture," *Direction Journal*, Fall 2010, Volume 39, No. 2, pp. 162-176.

[55]William F. Fore, "Beyond the Electronic Church," *The Christian Century,* 7–14 January 1981, p. 29

[56]Fore, "Beyond the Electronic Church," pp. 29, 30.

[57]Robert Wuthow, *The Restructuring of American Religion* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988), 71–99. See also, Richard G. Kyle, "The Electronic Church: An Echo of American Culture," *Direction Journal*, Fall 2010, Volume 39, No. 2, pp. 162-176; Thomas Luckmann, *The Invisible Religion* (New York: Macmillian, 1967); Alan Jamieson, *A Churchless Faith* (London: SPCK, 2002).

attracting members. At least part of the success, however, was due to the charismatic and

sometimes controversial lead pastor of the church. Multiple sites were developed where the

sermons and songs of the main "brand" could be piped in electronically for the "audience" to

consume. On person described it in these words:

> "A hipster with an epic beard and shaved head tested the upper levels of human hearing
> with the first few guitar riffs as about 40 young adults hurried in late to join the rest of the
> singing congregation. . . . The service leader stepped up and warmly welcomed everyone
> for the night. The audio-visual team, all dressed in black, zoomed in on him as he set the
> stage for the lead pastor to appear and preach on Acts. The lights dimmed and suddenly a
> digital image of the pastor flickered to life on five giant screens, broadcast from a place
> far, far away. My companions and I looked at each other: were we at a church or a movie
> theatre? After almost an hour of staring at those five giant screens, listening to a sermon
> that had little to do with expository teaching, they faded to black. There were two more
> songs and an invitation to join communion at the front. There was no reading of the Bible
> beforehand or "This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me" – just a
> queue. Once the main service ended and the auditorium quietly emptied, my friend
> challenged us to meet our brothers and sisters over supper. We walked into a large coffee
> room lined with spoons, sugar and mugs – but no people. Maybe it was getting late.
> Maybe they'd shared coffee before the service. Maybe."[58]

This description fits many of the elements above—technological innovations, entertainment

quality, a "star" personality, etc. Missing for the reviewer, however, was any real connection to

other people in the crowd. This seems to be the product of many digital/electronic churches.

While trying to build a brand, they often fail to build a real community. This expression is quite

different than Paul's view discussed above.

The primary element in Paul's community was a desire for unity and a worldview that

included a physical interaction in which all members made a contribution. There were certainly

stars involved (Paul, Peter, John), but they were not the focus. The focus was on the community

who was incorporated into Jesus Christ and by that incorporation became a called out assembly,

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[58]Scott Monk, "The Dangers of the Digital Church," *Ministry Thinking* (blog), November 12, 2014, accessed November 15, 2014, http://sydneyanglicans.net/blogs/ministrythinking .

a body, or even a family of people working together NOT to further a brand, but rather to increase the growth and well-being of each member. The biggest difference between the stereotype of the digital or the electronic church and the community of Paul is just that—the emphasis on community instead of a brand. The digital church seems to be caught up in the media and knowledge revolution while also drinking too deeply from the consumer mindset. Paul does not have a "brand" to promote, he has a living, breathing, risen Savior into whose body or family an individual can be incorporated as a member of those "called out" to serve each other in the development of Jesus' character in the community. Whereas the electronic church focuses on increasing the brand's reach or brand loyalty, Paul's community is focused on uniting around the idea that Jesus wants the group to help each individual reach the potential that the Spirit of Christ has given them.

Multisite vs. physical location/community

Consumerism and the cult of personality leads to an unhealthy focus on "felt needs" and desires, while a community of service focuses on helping others become what God intended them to be. In other words, the electronic/digital church fails to build community to the degree that it focuses on brand instead of service. That is not to say that technological or even cultural innovations cannot be incorporated into genuine community, but it is to understand that the means are not the end. If the end is to build up the body of Christ, then many tools may be used. If the end is brand loyalty, community probably will not happen.   Paul would not endorse some of the founding characteristics of the digital church, but he may well use some of the technological innovations to serve the very real very physical community of God. To use technology correctly, good theology must come into play. What are the implications of the digital/electronic church and its comparison to Paul's community?

The Implications for Today

Horsfield suggests that the abstracted ideas of theology and doctrine were the means by which the early church adapted their largely oral, lived faith to the abstracted world of Greco-Roman manuscript culture. He asks whether, as the 21st century church moves into a new culture that is strongly oral in character, theology and doctrine are necessarily the best way of ensuring integrity and continuity of our faith tradition.[59] Paul would answer with a resounding "Yes." Sound theology helps the community identify itself and helps the individual members of the community identify their roles and identities in the larger whole. As Paul says to the Corinthians, the seemingly less important members of the body can often attain the highest order. In order to worship well, the community must understand its Founder and the One who created it. That requires a theological environment and commitment. To interact with culture and its changes, the church must first be properly grounded in the doctrine of the Lord who empowers her.

Since the gospel is always received and appropriated in a specific cultural form, and since the church is established and functions as a social institution, the changes that are taking place in global societies have profound implications for churches (as profound, some have suggested, as our initial transition from a regional Jewish Jesus movement into a global Gentile church).

The challenges before the 21st century church are not necessarily unique ones. Nor are they necessarily bad or destructive. Some criticisms of post-modern electronic culture reflect the threat being felt by people whose power base lies in the differently ordered literate societies.

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[59]Horsfield, "The Church and Electronic Culture" (19 pages). Downloaded from Religion Online Website, on Sun Nov 16 12:16:18 GMT 2014. http://www.religion-online.org . The material from the article is available in another form ("Selling Consent") in the book *Communication and Citizenship,* eds. P Dahlgren and C. Sparks, (London: Routledge, 1991).

However, if seen as the characteristics of a new culture into which society is moving, these

characteristics present themselves simply as a new context within which the Gospel needs to be

embodied and contextualized in a physical community of service. Useful for guidance, therefore,

may be previous work that has been done on intercultural communication and on the

contextualization of the gospel.

Horsfield sees several broad implications that may arise from this new context:[60]

1) *The widespread influence of consumerist ideology*. As consumerism becomes a dominant ideology in Western culture, its influence may be felt in how the Christian faith is understood and explained. The Western church will need to deal with these implications by helping its members sort through the impact of consumerism on their theology and spiritual lives

2) *Changes in people's relationship to the media*. The media should no longer be seen as simply one aspect of culture. Rather, the media (in all its various aspects) represents a matrix or a "web" of culture by which many in the West get insight on life or try to exert influence on important events. Look at the rise of social media (Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, etc.) as an indicator of how prevalent such influences are in the United States. In other words, people tend to see all forms of communities (or even the process of community forming) through the lens of media and their enculturation in it. In other words, people have a hard time defining "community" without "media".

3) *Changes in churches' visibility in the public realm*. The loss of power for "institutional" churches could be seen as a positive as the church returns to a "primitive" position of influencing culture as a "counter-culture" agent instead of as a power player. Instead of determining culture, the church in the new oral age will now play the role of "underminer" or "deconstructor" of the culture as church communities choose to live in a way that culture does not necessarily support.

4) *Changes in the nature of community and effects on the church as community*. The consumer orientation of electronic culture and the expansion of widely advertised and available alternatives has brought a shift away from a committed and sacrificial relationship to organically-integrated communities towards one where individuals construct their own individualized networks characterized by tentativeness and usefulness. That is, the new "media orientation" of society causes a focus on individual choice rather than communal loyalty or a unified approach to creating community of committed people. In other words, people tend to choose based on individual preference instead of based on community values. This rabid individualism runs contrary to much of Paul's understanding of the church and will require some

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[60]Horsfield, "The Church and Electronic Culture" (19 pages). Downloaded from Religion Online Website, on Sun Nov 16 12:16:18 GMT 2014. http://www.religion-online.org . The material from the article is available in another form ("Selling Consent") in the book Communication and Citizenship, eds. P Dahlgren and C. Sparks, (London: Routledge, 1991).

investigation into how to rebuild the structure of community on thousands of potential individual preferences. Since social communities are given only a tentative commitment, how will the church in the 21st century foster the kind of loyalty and commitment found in Paul's writings? Perhaps a return to a family model may be helpful, but the bottom line seems to be that how the church presents itself as community, cultivates loyalty, and embodies authority in such a competitive culture must be faced.

Conclusion—Paul the Innovator and Task Theologian

The paradigm shift of technological and cultural innovations are not going to disappear. The body of Christ cannot assume that these things will simply "fade away" or cease having an influence. Further, the idea that consumerism will remain and influence 21st century society indefinitely seems likely. What is the church to do in light of these things? Perhaps a clue can be found in Paul the innovator.

Above Paul was described as a technological innovator or a person who took advantage of technological and cultural changes to use them positively in the growth and development of a community. In order to understand this better, think of Paul as a task theologian or a missionary theologian. Paul addresses specific issues with theological answers, yet in providing those theological answers he showed a bit of creativity. In other words, the church should not be afraid to utilize new technological tools. The community can change the tools it uses without losing a proper theological expression or without de-emphasizing the importance of physical community. But how does that occur?

Paul might say that the 21st century body of Christ should embrace the tools of technological change without buying into the false doctrine of consumerism. In other words, take advantage of the new means of communication but not at the risk of the goal of producing a community that builds itself up to serve. The church is not offering a "product" competing for attention in a sea of new ideas, rather the church IS a physical community offering a place where

individuals can find their true godly identity formed in the crucible of humble service and edification. The church in a post-modern age must understand itself as a group in which people share a worldview, engage in a group identity, and find some kind of individual personal identity as well. All of these things are based on the premise that the faithful acts of God in Christ have caused faithful acts of individual people. The incorporating power and aspect is Jesus. As he served, so should the church (Philippians 2). As the church develops that identity, it may make use of a variety of means of communicating the truth of God's Word. These are tools, they are not goals. If the church develops a "brand" or "consumer" mentality, it is not Pauline. If the church pursues humble service and the building up of each individual in a physical community (i.e., the ministry of reconciliation), it reflects a Pauline approach. Innovation in and of itself is not a problem, but the incorporating vision or goal is the ultimate driving force. The church focused on the humble service of Jesus is aimed in the right direction. It will become a functioning community in a post-modern world that offers its members a way to understand the world around them (a culture of some kind), a place to belong (group identity/family), and a means for developing a personal identity (how the member sees herself in the group and in the world). How that may be worked out is up to each community—like Paul, be a task theologian and seek innovative ways to make the truth of Jesus known in this radical paradigmatic shift. On occasion we may be on the outside of culture looking in, but even then we can innovate a counter-culture Pauline approach to build community instead of a brand.