

## Introduction

When Jesus exhorts us to love our enemies, he does not expect us to stop annihilating them. If they are enemies of God, they must be dispatched to the safekeeping of hell, and as rapidly as possible.<sup>1</sup>

Accounting for the genesis of one's interest in a particular topic can be a difficult thing, especially when the origins of that interest are clouded by several years spent pouring over monographs and pecking at keys on a keyboard. Quotations like the one above, however, have a way of jogging one's memory. Recent interest in the political setting of Paul and his letters has irrupted within the field of New Testament studies. Rhetorical and Jewish "backgrounds" have had and continue to have their turn in the limelight, but it seems that Roman imperial politics has now arrived to take its turn as the grounding for a growing number of Pauline studies. Neil Elliot wrote, "We have not yet seen a full-length exploration of Paul's rhetoric in the wider contexts of imperial or colonial *rhetorics*, that is, the discourses shaped by the social dynamics of imperialism and colonialism, what James C. Scott has called the 'great' and 'little traditions,' or 'public' and 'hidden transcripts.'"<sup>2</sup> Having read dozens of fresh studies of Paul's engagement with Roman imperial themes, I was struck by the repetitive portrayal of violence in Roman literature. With the violence of antiquity fresh in my mind, a warning in Elliot's essay piqued my interest: "To continue seeking

1. Singer, *Nature of Love*, 1:262.
2. Elliot, "Paul and the Politics of Empire," 27.

## Paul's Non-Violent Gospel

analogues to Paul's letters in the classical rhetorical handbooks, without giving sustained attention to the publicly acknowledged relationship between rhetorical patterns of persuasion and the coercive force inhering in slavery and empire, would be profoundly inattentive to the sources themselves."<sup>3</sup> What struck me at the time was not so much that interpreters of the New Testament had failed to pay sufficient attention to the violence which was the counterpart of rhetoric, but that Paul himself had previously engaged in violent action and evidently had left that part of his life behind him after his Damascus-road<sup>4</sup> experience.

As briefly and pointedly as can be stated, my argument is this: adoption of a politics of non-violence was, for Paul and the communities he established, a constitutive part of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Rather than viewing Paul's references to peace and non-retaliation as generalized ethical principles drawn from his Jewish background (though this no doubt contributes to Paul's understanding of these concepts), these terms and their corresponding practices are linked to Paul's experience of being a violent persecutor of Jesus' followers whose violent life was shattered on the road to Damascus. Enlivened by the risen Jesus from this point on, Paul's task of announcing the gospel to the nations involved calling and equipping assemblies of people whose common life was ordered by a politics (by which I mean, chiefly, a mode of corporate conduct) characterized by peaceableness.

In this introduction I will set some parameters for the following study by defining *violence* and *politics* as they are used in this work before outlining the direction of the remainder of the present study.

## DEFINING VIOLENCE

It is perhaps best to begin by recognizing the challenge of offering a simple definition of violence. What at first seems so straightforward a task quickly becomes a conundrum. In the words of one introductory text, "Violence itself . . . defies easy categorization. It can be everything and nothing;

3. Ibid., 29.

4. I use "Damascus-road" as a shorthand here, fully aware that Paul never reveals the location (or exact nature) of his experience. Though this particular detail is derived from Acts, I do not intend to base my construction of Paul's so-called pre-conversion life on the account in Acts. I will make my own constructive case from Paul's letters. See chapter 4.

legitimate or illegitimate; visible or invisible; necessary or useless; senseless and gratuitous or utterly rational and strategic.”<sup>5</sup> In the light of such a slippery subject, it may be useful to offer a fixed point, and adjust the scope of the definition from there. The most convenient point of departure for a working definition of *violence* for this study is to be found in the *Oxford English Dictionary*: “The exercise of physical force so as to inflict injury on, or cause damage to, persons or property; action or conduct characterized by this; treatment or usage tending to cause bodily injury or forcibly interfering with personal freedom.”<sup>6</sup>

The importance of beginning with this particular definition is to focus our attention quite specifically on physical force. The aim in doing so is not to discount the possibility that non-physical action can be defined as violent, but to limit (*not eliminate*) our focus on that possibility in the field of inquiry for the present study. Despite focusing on concrete forms of violence, I will pay attention to the “boundary” between physical expressions of violence and their non-physical counterpart, that is, for instance, where verbal “violence” begins to carry over into forms of violence that are enacted in clearly physical ways. The presentation of Jesus at various points in the gospels, as well as certain points in the Pauline letters, are regarded by many interpreters as language which occupies the border between physical violence and verbal violence. So, although I will focus principally on physical expressions of violence, verbal attacks will call for my attention too, as indeed they should.

Another aspect of violence which is not captured by the definition offered, but that we wish to address throughout is that form of violence which is systemic (and sometimes indirect) rather than acute (and direct). This systemic violence will be traced in Paul’s context(s) by seeking to identify the sometimes “subtle forms of coercion that sustain relations of domination and exploitation, including the threat of violence.”<sup>7</sup> I am more

5. Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois, “Making Sense of Violence,” 2. Cf. Brubaker and Laitin, “Ethnic and Nationalist Violence,” 427: “Despite its seemingly palpable core, violence is itself an ambiguous and elastic concept . . . shading over from the direct use of force to cause bodily harm through the compelling or inducing of actions by direct threat of such force to partly or fully metaphorical notions of cultural or symbolic violence.”

6. *OED*, s.v. “violence,” 1.a.

7. Žižek, *Violence*, 8. Although I employ Žižek’s terms here, my attention throughout is concerned with subjective forms of violence which he claims is a distraction (10): “One should resist the fascination of subjective violence . . . subjective violence is just the most visible of the three” forms of subjective, objective, and symbolic violence.

## Paul's Non-Violent Gospel

interested in the systemic violence perpetuated by those in positions of power in the cities in which Paul lived and worked, but Paul and the communities he established too have been scrutinized for the ways in which they inevitably create and sustain relationships characterized by coercion.<sup>8</sup> I do not wish to dismiss such approaches to Paul and his communities, however, I want to focus instead on the way in which Paul's (minority) assemblies lived and related in societies where "outsiders" maintained social control in part through structural/systemic violence.<sup>9</sup>

In short, the present study includes in its assessment of violence those actions and systemic/structural features that employ physically coercive behavior or the threat of using it to construct and maintain a particular political or social arrangement. Put differently, we will examine those practices and communal habits that orientate life in the Roman world around the concept of peace created and sustained through physical coercion.

## DEFINING POLITICS

*Politics* too has a wide range of meaning. Rather than viewing politics or the political as only "the effort to sustain a hegemonic, territorial, sovereign entity, embodied in a physical collective of human beings and articulated to action for its own self-preservation,"<sup>10</sup> I include aspects of human ways

8. Cf. Marchal, *Hierarchy, Unity, and Imitation*; Hack Polaski, *Paul and the Discourse of Power*; Briggs Kittredge, *Community and Authority*; Castelli, *Imitating Paul*.

9. Schepers-Hughes and Bourgois, "Making Sense of Violence," 4, claim that most studied approaches to violence "fail to address the totality and range of violent acts, including those which are part of the normative fabric of social and political life. Structural violence is generally invisible because it is part of the routine grounds of everyday life and transformed into expressions of moral worth." I hope to show how Paul's gospel sought to create communities that were able to live under different (i.e., less violent) norms than those living around them in the Roman empire. Certainly Paul (and Jesus) could be said to have failed to challenge *all* forms of structural violence (e.g., beliefs about divorce and the resulting conditions that perpetuate systemic violence against women), but my goal is to address where they have directed their followers towards less violent (subjective and systemic) modes of living. Though I will not address every instance of their failures, I will try to identify prominent ways in which Jesus (as Matthew presents him) and Paul failed to recognize forms of violence that are re-inscribed by particular teachings or writings.

10. Heilke, "On Being Ethical," 513. Heilke points out that the Anabaptist ethic of peaceableness is not political when politics is thus defined, but he goes on to challenge this position when he claims that their pacifism "simply rejects a fundamental premise on which [political] life and [ethical] debate is often based." Pacifism does not, in other words, necessarily entail quietism.

of relating to one another (i.e., practices/behaviors that create and sustain human community) which might normally be thought of as falling outside of the political realm. For instance, I will concentrate on multiple instances in which community admonition figures in Paul's "political" order. The practices of mutual correction and forgiveness fall outside the political concerns of civic authorities in antiquity, but I show how these practices are part of Paul's instructions to his communities that are meant to address the peculiar challenges of living peaceably in a world which too often settles disputes by violent means.

The sense of politics just outlined at any rate may better capture all that was thought to be included in politics in antiquity. A summary of Aristotle's view of politics is worth repeating:

Aristotle's use of the term political (*politikos*) is much broader than most modern definitions. . . . For Aristotle, the political includes all aspects of living together in a community . . . [which] includes marriage, family, and household relationships (*oikos*), friendships, economic relationships, and what we now call political relationships, such as being members of or leading the assembly. Aristotle considers the *polis* the highest form of community (*koinonia*) because it exists not for the sake of merely living together, but for the sake of living well. . . . In other words, Aristotle understands the political (*politikos*) to include other kinds of communities or relationships now labeled "social" rather than "political."<sup>11</sup>

It is in this spirit that I will write of the politics of an assembly of people called together to engage in common practices which support them in living as a community of Christ's followers.<sup>12</sup> It is hardly surprising, given Aristotle's parameters, that Paul's assemblies were politically significant in their time.<sup>13</sup> What is worth restating and exploring in depth is my further claim that Paul's politics, in marked contrast to the politics of Rome (and played out in communities great and small all over the empire), were

11. Sokolon, *Political Emotions*, 29.

12. Cf. Horrell, *Solidarity and Difference*, 2, who formulates his approach in this way: "A study of Paul's ethics as social or political ethics, by which I mean ethics concerned with the formation and maintenance of human community, and with reflection on the ways in which this human sociality should rightly be sustained."

13. Cf. Judge, "Did the Churches Compete," 501–24, on the one hand dismisses any "provocative" political sense of the term *churches* (ἐκκλησία) (514), and on the other identifies the (late) moniker *Christians* (Χριστιανοί) as one which "classifies people as partisans of a political leader" and "appears to have arisen in the questions posed for Romans over the political loyalty of the followers of Christ" (515).

## Paul's Non-Violent Gospel

necessarily non-violent, built as they were on the shoulders of the politics of Jesus.

### POLITICS, RELIGION, AND ETHICS IN ANTIQUITY

One aspect of politics that is not addressed by the lengthy quotation from Marlene Sokolon above is that, in marked contrast to prevailing (contemporary) popular assumptions, politics and religion did not operate in separate spheres in antiquity. Classical scholars for more than half the twentieth century largely discounted the religious significance of the imperial cult(s), and biblical scholars fared only marginally better in ascertaining the political significance of the Jesus movement. The publication of S. R. F. Price's seminal monograph<sup>14</sup> seems to mark the turning of the tide, when the political *and* religious significance of the imperial cult in Asia Minor necessarily had to be viewed together once again. Subsequent to the publication of his work, biblical studies also has seen a revitalized interest in the political aspects of the Jesus movement.<sup>15</sup>

The prevailing attitude, that politics and religion operate in different spheres, is a relatively modern invention.<sup>16</sup> Of the modern separation of "politics" and "religion" ancient authors are innocently unaware.<sup>17</sup> So-called "statesmen" regularly served as priests in civic cults, and so-called "religious" leaders, in the course of their priestly duties, commonly performed functions we might slate as civic—providing for the building of roads or public gymnasiums, aqueducts, and similar "public" works. There was no division of interests because this fusion of politics and religion existed all

14. Price, *Rituals and Power*.

15. For a commanding reassessment of the political importance of Acts, see Rowe, *World Upside Down*, 4: "In its attempt to form communities that witness to God's apocalypse, Luke's second volume is a highly charged and theologically sophisticated *political document* that aims at nothing less than the construction of an alternative total way of life—a comprehensive pattern of being—one that runs counter to the life patterns of the Graeco-Roman world" (emphasis added).

16. See Cavanaugh, "Rise of the State," 397–420, and *Torture and Eucharist*, 5.

17. Rowe, *World Upside Down*, 8–9, observes: "In contrast to the cultural encyclopedia relevant to modern democracies, Luke has no idea of a basic bifurcation that many people now claim is necessary, namely, the separation of religion from politics; this distinction is simply not part of the conceptual configurations or political practices current in the first century (or anywhere in antiquity for that matter). To access the cultural encyclopedia of the text of Acts is immediately to become aware of the unity of religion and politics in one form of life."

the way up to the emperor, who was *pontifex maximus*, high priest of the entire empire. For this reason, at various points in the present work I will refer to theological politics, and by using this expression I have tried to capture how these allegedly separate spheres were conjoined in the cities and provinces in which Paul worked.

Although it is increasingly common to see scholars highlight the political import of early Christian (or Jewish) theological commitments, it is still rare to encounter studies that take seriously the political significance of the ethical or moral dimension of Christian discourse.<sup>18</sup> But if we take a more culturally conditioned<sup>19</sup> approach to the theme *politics* (identified succinctly by Sokolon's summary), we will immediately see that just as there was no division in antiquity between a thing called "politics" and a thing called "religion," so too we should not so neatly divide politics from (theologically grounded) ethics. So when Paul (or Matthew) advocate a particular ethical virtue, we should view it not only as an effect of a particular theological idea, but also as the fruition of belonging to that particular political community which is so shaped by its politic-generating narrative(s).

## VIOLENCE IN THE ROMAN WORLD

Violence permeated the ancient world. One need not read far into the histories of Tacitus or Polybius, or Apuleius's *Metamorphoses*, before encountering the brutal conflicts that characterized life in antiquity. Life under Roman rule was certainly not unique in this regard, though it is the empire with which I am concerned since Paul wrote during Rome's sway over a vast empire. It was not only literature, but coins, too, that left a considerable deposit of violent images, though they may appear on the face of it to be more benign than threatening. Images of peace and victory, war and

18. The seminal treatment of Meeks, *Origins of Christian Morality*, is a benchmark in showing how the ethical dimension of Pauline theology is meant to reinforce the "political" position of early Christians in the Roman empire. That is, if there is a political dimension to Paul's ethics, it is a dimension that is meant to allow Roman outsiders to assent to Christian norms that are not terribly different.

19. Again referring to the work of Rowe, *World Upside Down*, 8–9, who provides a brief defense of employing MacIntyre's "historically situated rationality" for his own study. To attempt to take seriously the historically situated rationality of any given (New Testament) author's work is to endeavor to read the texts with greater sensitivity to the vast cultural (read in the broadest possible terms, i.e., political, social, economic, and religious) gulf between ancient authors and modern interpreters.

## Paul's Non-Violent Gospel

defeated barbarians saturate the imperial ideology that was transmitted on coins, emblazoned in statues, and incorporated into the very fabric of public space during the first century of the common era. Evidence is found in every corner of the empire.

To claim that violence was ubiquitous is no exaggeration, even once one tempers such a claim by admitting the real benefits, and the extraordinarily complex cultural negotiation,<sup>20</sup> which accompanied the spread of Roman imperial peace. Whatever benefits were had under the Romans, there is no denying that Roman violence is legendary. The most obvious place to look for Rome's reputation is its military, made up of roughly twenty-five legions "with unfettered readiness for violence" who, once deployed, imposed their so-called peace "without restraint."<sup>21</sup> Although the "gruesome orgies of violence were . . . a fundamental and unquestioned element of Roman warfare," the strategy was hardly novel.<sup>22</sup> Shock and awe have long played a role in military campaigns, and the terror and fear generated by the spread of such reports was a pragmatic political tool for an empire too large for its legions to manage.<sup>23</sup>

It would be a mistake, however, to limit our consideration of violence in Roman antiquity to military incidents, for violence between private individuals peppers literature from the age too. Banditry on the roads and piracy on the seas were common enough experiences that the eventual suppression of them by Augustus became a cliché. Banditry (*latrocinium*), an all-encompassing term for violence perpetrated by persons who were not a recognized authority, was such a common danger that a formulaic expression can be found on tombstones—"killed by bandits."<sup>24</sup> Violence needn't

20. Shaw, "Rebels and Outsiders," 361, points out: "The empire was a militarily created hegemony of immense land mass that harboured hundreds, if not thousands, of different societies." Massive unity and massive diversity problematize any attempts to reduce Romanization to a unidirectional project. Cf. Woolf, "Beyond Romans and Natives," 341, who suggests: "Rather than conflict, competition, or interaction between two cultures, we have to do with the creation of a new imperial culture that supplanted earlier Roman cultures just as much as it did the earlier cultures of indigenous peoples."

21. Zimmermann, "Violence in Late Antiquity," 346. On the number of legions, which was fairly stable across time, see Keppie, "Army and the Navy," 387–89, who identifies twenty-five at the death of Augustus (14 CE) and twenty-eight or twenty-nine in 70 CE.

22. Zimmermann, "Violence in Late Antiquity," 346.

23. Ibid. So too Lendon, *Empire of Honour*, 3–4. Levick, *Government of the Roman Empire*, 40, notes that the mobility of the legions was making a virtue of necessity: "Rome could not afford to support more" legions.

24. See Shaw, "Bandits in the Roman Empire," 10–11: *interfectus a latronibus*.

originate with the empire's most unsavory characters either. Senators were in as much danger from their fellow senators as they were traveling beyond city walls. And in an ironic twist, later jurisprudence protected the individual who used force, *even lethal force*, to quell the activities of bandits.<sup>25</sup>

It will not do, however, to create or perpetuate an assumption that ancient societies had a greater tolerance of or inclination toward violence.<sup>26</sup> The bloodiest century in human history (I'm thinking of the twentieth, though the twenty-first has not started promisingly) should disabuse us of holding such views. Instead, what I wish to assume is that the violence depicted in the literary and material remains of the first centuries is just the tip of the proverbial iceberg and that the shared experience of violence was much more immediate than it might be for many who read and write academic monographs today.<sup>27</sup> This immediacy of violence is the light by which I want to consider Paul's letters. That is, if Paul's letters were written in and to contexts where violence was an ever-present threat, how do Paul's teaching and indeed even his personal biography vis-à-vis violence intersect with this particular political reality of his day?

This question is all the more important when one considers that Paul once himself participated in a violent, community boundary-policing action, and did so notoriously;<sup>28</sup> only *after* his encounter with the risen Christ did he cease to participate in violent opposition to this assembly of God. Paul's "conversion" (i.e., his "joining" of the "Christian" group)<sup>29</sup> most cer-

25. The laws in question, *CJ* 3.27.1–2 and 9.16.3 are admittedly quite late (the former is late fourth century CE, the latter from the third century) and highly uncharacteristic. However, they demonstrate the importance placed on maintenance of the "common peace," even at the expense of normal avenues of justice. See Shaw, "Bandits in the Roman Empire," 19. The Greek equivalent of *latrones/latrocinium*, of course, was *ληστές* (the culprit) or *ληστεία* (the activity).

26. Zimmermann, "Violence in Late Antiquity," 351.

27. Although demonstrating what I assume in these few paragraphs might be helpful, I hardly think it necessary. It is uncontroversial to suppose that violence was experienced *and wielded* by people from every social or economic status, by individuals and groups (official or unofficial), and by people of any variety of ethnic, tribal, or cultural difference. The use and experience of violence discriminated against none.

28. Lopez, *Apostle to the Conquered*, 223n8, points out this curiosity: "In many of the most famous pictures [representing Paul's conversion], he is represented as a Roman warrior." Cf. *ibid.*, 230–31n54. Paul himself hints at the notoriety he gained through his activity in Gal 1:13 and 23.

29. Since this is not the place to address the complicated issues surrounding my choice of terms, I put the three in scare quotes to flag my awareness that each term is charged with meaning and requires greater definition if more is to be made of Paul's experience.

## Paul's Non-Violent Gospel

tainly explains Paul's turn from violence, but only partially. Few have ever considered what contribution a non-violent Jesus made to Paul's disavowal of his once violent ways. I want to consider the point.

### THE ARGUMENT AND STRUCTURE OF THIS STUDY

As briefly as it can be stated, my thesis is this: After his transformational encounter with the risen Jesus, Paul became a herald of the gospel of Jesus, a message that included at its core a commitment to eschewing the inherently violent politics of the present evil age. This dramatic transformation cannot be reduced to a new commitment to non-violence on Paul's part, but this aspect of the story and effect of Jesus' life and teaching is fundamental; indeed, I would submit that non-violence (of Jesus, and subsequently his followers) is one of the most enduring features of the gospel, and its presence, indeed centrality, in Paul's gospel has been overlooked in studies of Paul's theology. The history of the reception of this aspect of the gospel may throw up hard questions for my thesis, but I feel that it is entirely suitable to put my thesis for the significance of non-violence in early Christianity in such strong terms since the evidence in favor of viewing non-violence as a core teaching *and way of life* of Jesus and his followers is overwhelming.

In order to build a case for the weight I wish to give to non-violence in early Christian circles, I must begin by demonstrating that Jesus was remembered by his followers as a person who eschewed violence. In order to maintain a small measure of control on a topic that could be greatly expanded, I will trace the construction of a non-violent Jesus through Matthew's gospel, referring to the other gospels only where it is particularly illuminating. At the beginning of chapter 2, I will present a brief methodological justification for choosing Matthew and for my strategy of focusing primarily on the narratively presented Jesus rather than trying to reconstruct the so-called historical Jesus. One reason among others for why I chose Matthew is because a similar effort has been made already for Luke's gospel,<sup>30</sup> and even though Matthew possesses the most famous of all passages that presses in the direction of non-violence (i.e., the Sermon on the Mount), it also includes some of the most challenging material to a "pacifist" position.<sup>31</sup> In chapter 2, I will demonstrate that Matthew preserves the memory of Jesus as a teacher of non-violence who also embodies

30. Yoder's seminal *Politics of Jesus* argued primarily from Luke's gospel.

31. E.g., Matt 10:34–39; we will look at more in the next chapter.

his teaching all the way to his violent death on the cross. I will also show how those passages that have commonly challenged this picture of a non-violent Jesus instead provide the context for Jesus (and later, his followers) to eschew violent politics by trusting in the justly-judging God. The core of this second chapter illustrates that Jesus' non-violence is far from apolitical quiescence; he remains unreservedly political while refusing to become a mirror image of the politics of Rome, i.e., a violent revolutionary. In short, I trace the non-violent teaching and behavior of Jesus through Matthew's gospel, but demur from making Jesus into a passive isolationist on the one hand or a violent revolutionary on the other.

In chapter 3, I will focus on one of the most vexing problems of Pauline studies—how much Jesus Tradition Paul knew. By narrowing the focus of my study to the issue of non-violence in Paul and Jesus, I hope to bypass some of the more entrenched debates among exegetes, and demonstrate that the continuity between Jesus and Paul on the issue of non-violence is critical to understanding the importance of a non-violent praxis in early Christianity. My aim in this chapter is to demonstrate that the traditions preserved in the gospels which point to the memory of a non-violent Jesus are found in *nuce* in Paul's letters, and that this results not from a shared cultural heritage of the two,<sup>32</sup> but instead springs from Paul's encounter with Jesus and his subsequent receipt of "authorized" testimony about Jesus that confirmed what Paul may have already known on reflection—Jesus, though the option of (messianic) violence was open to him, chose instead the way of the cross, of self-emptying, non-violent engagement with those who rejected him. Establishing this link is critical to demonstrating that the early Christian commitment to the centrality of non-violence is quite early and geographically widespread. In other words, non-violence was such a central feature of the gospel that there is concrete evidence for it (in terms of teaching and praxis) as early as 50 CE (when 1 Thessalonians was written), and the evidence taken in aggregate points to the reliability of the gospels on this point such that we can be confident (the historical) Jesus eschewed the use of violence to further his own ends.

Having established the non-violent teaching and praxis of Jesus, and the subsequent continuity of Paul in this regard, chapter 4 of this book traces the trajectory of violence in the biography of Paul, attending to his letter to the Galatians. The two main reasons for selecting Galatians as the primary text for tracing a trajectory of violence (and peace) in Paul's biography are

32. *Pace* Zerbe, *Non-Retaliation*, 23. Paul and Jesus still shared the same cultural heritage when Paul was operating in the mode of violent persecutor.

## Paul's Non-Violent Gospel

these: first, Galatians contains the longest single autobiographical narrative among all his letters, and second, among those biographical details is Paul's self-description of persecuting the church with the goal of destroying it. It also stands to reason that if a trajectory towards peace can be established for this, what some interpreters might call his most angry letter, then we have argued for the non-violence of Paul from perhaps the most difficult of positions. In addition to sketching the arc from violence to peace in Paul's story, chapter 4 also follows the inverse arc of Paul's Galatian audience. Whereas Paul's biographic trajectory turned on his encounter with the risen Jesus, the Galatians' "biography" turned on the influence of the agitators. That is, one transformation turned a violent zealot into a peacemaking Apostle; the other transformation turned a group once influenced by the spirit of Jesus into an assembly realigning itself with relations governed by violence.

In the penultimate chapter, I use 1 Thessalonians as a test case, attempting to tie the strands of my argument together. I demonstrate in this chapter that there are competing theo-political paradigms at work in Paul's mission to the nations. The gospel of Jesus, which we will have shown to be political, which we will have argued Paul is in continuity with, is orientated toward non-violent conflict with the politics of the present evil age. The gospel of Caesar, which is clearly political, which Paul once mirrored through his own violent persecution, is orientated around the use or threat of violence.<sup>33</sup> In short, what I hope to show in chapter 5 is that the new assemblies Paul formed in Thessalonica (and across the empire) shared both an assumption that they would encounter violent opposition for their theo-political activity and beliefs, and that the proper response to such opposition unequivocally ruled out violent measures. Paul's non-violence was not merely pragmatic, but tells instead of the alternative politics to which the churches were committed.

In the final chapter, I summarize the argument(s) that are advanced in this book, which *together* fill an important gap in scholarly treatments of Paul. It is my hope that the argument presented here will call greater attention to the centrality of peacemaking and non-violent confrontation of friends and enemies alike which suffused early Christian discourse and discipleship.

33. Although it is not in the context of announcing the gospel of Caesar, Velleius Paterculus' (*Roman History* 2:126 [Thayer, LCL]) pithy expression of the effects of Augustus' theo-political success demonstrates with clarity the acceptable response to Caesar's gospel: "All citizens have either been impressed with the wish to do right, or have been forced to do so by necessity."