

Johannes M. Wessels

## OFFERING THE GOSPEL *ADAPANON*

An Interpretation and Application of 1 Corinthians 9:18

Edited and provided with a foreword by Joachim Kügler



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of Bamberg  
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# EINE ARME KIRCHE DER ARMEN

## Deutsches Vorwort

Die Verbindung von Geld und Religion ist unauflöslich und doch stets heikel. Das gilt selbstredend auch für das Christentum. Selbst der vollkommen arme und besitzlose Kündler des Evangeliums, der durch Sachspenden überlebt, lebt vom Geld der anderen. In den staatlich anerkannten Großkirchen Deutschlands ist es inzwischen üblich, dass das pastorale Personal professionell ausgebildet ist und gegen ein festes Gehalt hauptamtlich für die Kirche arbeitet. Andere Formen, wie der nebenamtliche Diakon im katholischen Bereich, sind Ausnahmen und werden es auf mittlere Sicht wohl auch bleiben.

Im südlichen Afrika ist die Situation auch für etablierte Kirchen oft anders. In diese Situation führt der vorliegende Band von Johannes Wessels ein, der die leicht überarbeitete Fassung seiner Dissertation darstellt. Er analysiert den von Paulus abgeleiteten Begriff *tentmaker*/ ‚Zeltmacher‘, der für die pastorale Situation der südafrikanischen Dutch Reformed Church<sup>1</sup> (DRCSA), für die der Autor etwa zwanzig Jahre lang in Südafrika und Botsuana gearbeitet hat, prägend ist.

In dieser Kirche ist *tentmaker* ein fester Begriff für einen Pastor, der keine Vollzeitstelle bei der Kirche hat, sondern sich mit weltlicher Arbeit ein zusätzliches Einkommen verschaffen muss, um sich (und seine Familie) zu unterhalten. Diese Konstruktion wird meistens gewählt,

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<sup>1</sup> Die DRC ist eine alte, ins 17. Jh. zurückreichende Kirche in Afrika. Lange hat sie das Apartheid-System (1948-1994) unterstützt und es sogar in ihrer Kirchenstruktur abgebildet, indem für jede Gruppierung eine eigene ‚Schwesterkirche‘ geschaffen wurde. 1980 wurde die DRC wegen ihrer Unterstützung der Apartheid vom Weltverband der Reformaten Kirchen ausgeschlossen, welcher die Rassentrennung als Sünde brandmarkte. 1986, schon vor dem politischen Ende der Apartheid, hat die DRC ihre Einstellung geändert und alle Mitglieder ohne Ansicht ihrer ethnischen Zugehörigkeit aufgefordert, sich unter einem kirchlichen Dach zu einem gemeinsamen Christsein zu vereinen. Trotz dieser Integrationsbemühungen bestehen auch nach Ende der Apartheid, die die DRC inzwischen als Sünde einstuft, noch ethnische Trennungen, die das kirchliche Leben beeinträchtigen. Heute kümmern sich viele weiße DRC-Theologen in besonderer Weise um die Anliegen der (überwiegend schwarzen) Armen und versuchen durch ihre Solidarität nicht nur die Schuld der Vergangenheit abzutragen, sondern auch eine überzeugende Form zeitgemäßer Jesus-Nachfolge zu entwickeln.

wenn eine Kirchengemeinde zu arm ist, um sich das Gehalt für einen hauptamtlichen Pastor leisten zu können, und hat inzwischen auch dazu geführt, dass ein beträchtlicher Anteil des Klerus der DRCSA sich nach Stellen (und nach finanzieller Absicherung) außerhalb Afrikas umgesehen hat. Bedenkt man, dass es sich hier um eine wohl etablierte Kirche handelt, deren Mitglieder zu höheren, überwiegend weißen Gesellschaftsschichten gehören, dann kann man sich gut vorstellen, dass nur sehr wenige der ärmeren Schwesterkirchen in der Lage sind, ihr pastorales Personal adäquat zu unterhalten. Die Situation der Tochterkirchen außerhalb Südafrikas muss als noch prekärer betrachtet werden. Die früher übliche finanzielle Unterstützung der Mutterkirche, auch in Form der Übernahme von Besoldungsverpflichtungen für eine gewisse Zahl von Stellen, ist inzwischen weitgehend weggefallen. Diese finanziellen Engpässe haben dazu geführt, dass für die hauptamtlichen Pastoren die Zahl der Gemeinden und Gemeindemitglieder, für die sie zuständig sind, beträchtlich angewachsen ist. Auf der anderen Seite ist die Zahl der *tentmaker* gestiegen, allerdings mit der negativen Begleitererscheinung, dass sich manche mehr um den weltlichen Job für ihren Lebensunterhalt kümmern (müssen) als um ihren pastoralen Dienst.

Eine der erwähnten ärmeren Tochterkirchen ist die Dutch Reformed Church in Botsuana (DRCB), für die Wessels acht Jahre lang gearbeitet hat und die er in seinem Buch also aus eigener Anschauung beschreiben kann. Diese Kirche ist besonders interessant, weil sie Gläubige aus unterschiedlichen Kulturen und ökonomischen Schichten in ihren Gemeinden vereint. Die Gemeinden der DRCB bestehen größtenteils aus einheimischen *Batswana*, aber auch *Coloureds*<sup>2</sup> und *Afrikaners*<sup>3</sup> sind vertreten. Hinzukommt noch eine wachsende Zahl von Migranten aus Malawi, Sambia und Simbabwe, die sich der DRCB anschließen. Die ökonomische Situation der Gemeinden und ihrer Mitglieder ist in dieser Kirche extrem unterschiedlich. Eine arme Gemeinde auf dem Land hat oft weniger als 5% des Jahreseinkommens einer wohlhabenden Stadt-

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<sup>2</sup> Diese Bezeichnung bezieht sich im südlichen Afrika auf Menschen mit gemischten ethnischen Wurzeln, deren Vorfahren oft aus Europa, Asien und Afrika stammen. Im Apartheid-System wurden Untergruppen mit unterschiedlichem Sozialstatus beschrieben.

<sup>3</sup> Mit *Afrikaners* bezeichnet man in Afrikaans, der Sprache der Buren, Menschen mit ethnischen Wurzeln in Europa, deren Vorfahren jedoch seit langem in Afrika leben, und die sich deshalb nicht mehr als Einwanderer fühlen. Im Apartheid-System war dies die politisch und ökonomisch privilegierte Gruppe.

gemeinde zur Verfügung. Und überhaupt nur vier der insgesamt zwölf Ortsgemeinden der DRCB haben ein Einkommen von mehr als umgerechnet etwa 5000 EUR. Die ärmeren Gemeinden haben also gar keine andere Option als nur *tentmaker* zu beschäftigen. Das Ausweichen auf nebenamtliche Pastoren ist zwar eine pragmatische und oft alternativlose Lösung, aber es ist eben doch mit Problemen behaftet. So rührt die Armut der ländlichen Bevölkerung ja oft daher, dass es in der Gegend eben keine Arbeitsplätze gibt. Da ist es für einen Pastor natürlich auch schwierig, etwas zu finden, mit dem er seinen Lebensunterhalt verdienen kann. Zudem ist es selbst für diejenigen, denen das gelingt, eine echte Herausforderung, neben ihrem weltlichen Beruf noch Zeit und Kraft für den pastoralen Dienst zu finden. Diese und andere Probleme nötigen dazu, die *tentmaker*-Konzeption noch einmal von der praktischen und vor allem der biblischen Theologie her zu durchdenken.

Wessels stützt sich dabei auf vorausgehende Forschung, die ein erneutes Interesse am sozio-ökonomischen Hintergrund des Apostels und seiner Gemeinden zeigt und die er kritisch fortführt, indem er den Anspruch des Paulus, das Evangelium *ἁδᾶπᾱν* / ohne Gegenleistung (1 Kor 9,18) zu verkünden, eingehend untersucht. Seine Untersuchung des 1. Korintherbriefs innerhalb des afrikanischen Kontexts ergibt, dass die Bedeutung der Armutsthematik in der paulinischen Literatur weit höher zu veranschlagen ist, als dies die jüngere Forschung, vor allem im anglophonen Bereich, gewöhnlich tut.

Er vermag sogar zu zeigen, dass selbst die Einwohner der berühmten Stadt Korinth vermutlich weit ärmer waren, als die rezente Forschung meint. Dies gilt vor allem, wenn die Annahme einer Ernährungskrise zur Zeit des Paulus in Korinth zutrifft. Der ökonomische Zugang zu 1 Kor 9 fördert jedenfalls spannende Einsichten zu Tage. Wessels verbindet die Weigerung des Paulus, von der korinthischen Gemeinde ein Entgelt anzunehmen, nicht nur mit der Sammlung der Kollekte für Jerusalem, sondern betont auch den engen Zusammenhang zwischen 1 Kor 9,18 und dem folgenden Vers, in dem Paulus sich selbst als Sklave aller bezeichnet. Er sieht also die Ablehnung eines Honorars in Korinth als konkrete Weise der Selbstversklavung des Paulus im Dienste des Evangeliums. In solch kenotischer Existenz folgt Paulus dem Beispiel Jesu, und deshalb steht sein Verzicht gerade nicht im Widerspruch zu seinem hohen apostolischen Autoritätsanspruch, sondern ist genau die Lebensform, die diesen Anspruch konkret umsetzt. Gerade sein armer und anspruchsloser Lebensstil weist Paulus als Gesandten und Stellver-



treter Christi aus. Die Bereitschaft des Paulus, sich um des Evangeliums willen selbst zum Sklaven aller zu machen, sieht er zugleich als einen wichtigen pastoralen Impuls für die unter extremer Armut leidenden Teilkirchen im südlichen Afrika, insbesondere in Botsuana. In differenzierter Weise entwirft er das Bild einer Kirche, in der nicht nur die Bessergestellten mit den Ärmern solidarisch teilen, sondern in der auch Menschen bereit sind, in radikalem Status- und Rechtsverzicht eine arme Kirche der Armen zu leben.

Die – hoffentlich recht zahlreichen – Leser\_innen in Deutschland begnügen hier einer vermutlich recht fernen pastoralen Wirklichkeit, die doch auf besondere Weise mit der Ursprungswelt des Evangeliums und den sozio-ökonomischen Bedingungen des paulinischen Apostolats verbunden ist. Jedenfalls gelingt es Wessels auf beeindruckende Weise, den Text des Korintherbriefs nicht nur mit aller Sorgfalt als Dokument der Vergangenheit zu analysieren, sondern daraus auch biblische Impulse für Menschen des 21. Jahrhunderts, nicht nur in Botsuana, zu gewinnen. So wird das Evangelium mit “Freude und Hoffnung, Trauer und Angst der Menschen von heute, besonders der Armen und Bedrängten aller Art“ (*Gaudium et spes* 1) verbunden und gewinnt eine kritisch-motivierende Kraft auch für die reichen Kirchen des globalen Nordens. Insgesamt stellt Wessels Werk ein Beispiel pastoral orientierter Bibelwissenschaft im Kontext Afrikas dar, das auch Interessierten in Deutschland vielfältige Anregung zum pastoralen und exegetischen Lernen bieten kann.

Bamberg, im Juni 2015

*Joachim Kügler*

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## ABSTRACT

Albeit that often the only solution left to poor congregations in Africa is the practice of tentmaker ministry, this phenomenon remains problematic. There is a lack of job opportunities in the rural areas, and dividing one's time between the secular occupation and the ministry becomes increasingly complex. In the light of this situation, an (re-)evaluation of the Biblical foundations for being a tentmaker is certainly called for. Studies such as the book of Meggitt (1998), *Paul, poverty and survival*, stimulated renewed interest in the economic nature of Paul's ministry and the economic classes of the congregations where he ministered. Paul's offering of the gospel free of charge (1 Cor 9:18), and his sacrifice of "becoming a slave", offers interesting solutions for the poverty stricken churches in Africa, and in particular in Botswana.

**Keywords:** 1 Cor 9:18, Tentmaker, Paul, economy, slave, poverty, Botswana.

## OPSOMMING

Alhoewel dit dikwels die enigste oplossing is vir die bediening in Afrika, bly tentmakerbediening in die praktyk problematies. Daar is nie alleen 'n tekort aan werksgeleenthede in die platteland nie, maar die verdeling van die werkslas tussen 'n sekulêre beroep en die bediening word daaglik meer ingewikkeld. In die lig hiervan is 'n herwaardering van die Bybelse uitgangspunte rondom tentmakerbediening noodsaaklik. Studies soos dié van Meggitt (1998), *Paul, poverty and survival*, het nuwe belangstelling in die ekonomiese sy van Paulus se bediening en die gemeentes waar hy werksaam was geprikkel. Paulus se kostelose aanbieding van die evangelie (1 Kor 9:18), sowel as sy opoffering om 'n 'slaaf te word', bied inderdaad interessante oplossings vir die arm kerke in Afrika, en spesifiek in Botswana.

**Sleutelwoorde:** 1 Kor 9:18, Tentmaker, Paulus, ekonomie, slaaf, armoede, Botswana.



# 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Context

The label *tentmaker*<sup>1</sup> is an established expression in the Dutch Reformed Church (DRCSA)<sup>2</sup> for describing a minister of the Word who is not in service of the church full-time, but is doing a secular work that supplies additional income to sustain himself in his ministry. These measures are mostly taken in situations where a congregation cannot afford the full salary of their minister. This even prompted a considerable number of the clergy in the DRCSA to look for jobs (and financial security) outside Africa. If this is the situation in congregations of the well-established Dutch Reformed Church, with members mostly from the higher economic strata in society, it is no secret that very few of the sister churches, the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa (URCSA), the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa (DRCA) and the Reformed Church in Africa (RCA), are able to adequately support their ministers.<sup>3</sup>

In the rest of Southern Africa the economic situation in the daughter churches of the DRCSA may be regarded as even worse. Funds from the ‘mother church’ in South Africa are diminishing, and ‘sponsored ministers’ are not available anymore. Due to this lack of funds either the number of members and congregations that a single minister must attend to has increased, or has resulted in ministers focusing more on a secular job than on the ministry itself in order to sustain him-/herself.

The Dutch Reformed Church in Botswana (DRCB)<sup>4</sup> is an example of one such a daughter church where believers from different cultures and

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<sup>1</sup> The Biblical foundation for the word “tentmaker” is the apostle Paul, who provided for his own needs partly by making tents (Cf Acts 18:3). The Greek term σκηνοποιοί can, however, also refer to leatherworker or saddle-maker (Hock 1980:20-21).

<sup>2</sup> The Dutch Reformed Church is normally abbreviated as DRC, but due to the frequent references to the Dutch Reformed Church in Botswana (DRCB) this abbreviation is used for the sake of clarity.

<sup>3</sup> The lack of funds and solutions thereto in other churches, for instance the Baptist Union of Southern Africa (BUSA), is one of the themes focused on by Cantrell (2004:78). The concept of tentmaker ministry is so established in this denomination that he refers to the “lack of pastors that are bi-vocational” as a weakness in the church! (Cantrell 2004:99).

<sup>4</sup> Having been a minister in this church for a period of eight years, I view myself as having adequate insight and experience of the circumstances in this denomination.



economic classes are members of the same local congregation.<sup>5</sup> These congregations consist out of large contingents of local Batswana, as well as smaller entities of Coloureds and White Afrikaners. A growing number of expatriates from Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe are also joining the DRCB. The economic position in this denomination is also extremely diverse, with the income in the city and more Western-oriented congregations being much better than the situation in the Third-World rural areas.<sup>6</sup> Only four of the existing twelve congregations has an income of over P 50 000 per year, and therefore the poorer congregations have no other option than to use only tentmaker-ministers.<sup>7</sup>

The practice of the tentmaker ministry in Africa is problematic, due to lack of job opportunities in the rural areas, and the division of time between the secular occupation and the ministry. With some persons the secular occupation seems to enjoy priority above the pastoral calling. This is seen in the tendency amongst students who have finished their studies<sup>8</sup> to prefer a congregation in or around the city, in order to secure his/her secular occupation, and therefore financial security. In such an outstretched country as Botswana, this seems to hamper rather than to promote the spreading of the Word and the furthering of the Kingdom. In the light of this situation, an (re-)evaluation of the Biblical foundations<sup>9</sup> for being a tentmaker is certainly called for.

Since the concept ‘tentmaker’ originated from the Pauline corpus,<sup>10</sup> my study will focus on the undisputed Letters of Paul,<sup>11</sup> and especially on

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<sup>5</sup> Stoltz (2001:177-202) describes the complex composition of the DRCB and its local congregations in detail.

<sup>6</sup> A congregation in Gaborone (Botswana’s capital) may have an income of around P 400 000 p/a, whilst a rural congregation such as Sikwane and the Kgalagadi congregation will barely reach P 15 000 p/a (1\$ = P6).

<sup>7</sup> Whilst the existence of a congregation of the DRCSA previously mainly depended on its capability to support a pastor, this is not the case in the most sister and daughter churches. Most of the congregations in the DRCB have well developed lay ministries, and are therefore not so dependent on a resident minister.

<sup>8</sup> Just completing studies on an acceptable level with the available resources in a Third World situation is already a mammoth task. This is illustrated well by the case study: “I want to become a priest” (Neely 1995:118-127).

<sup>9</sup> Bible portions are quoted from the New International Version unless indicated otherwise. Portions from the Deuterocanonical books will be quoted from the Revised Standard Version.

<sup>10</sup> One of the major studies done in this regard is the work of Hock (1980), *The social context of Paul’s ministry: Tentmaking and apostleship*.

the Letters to Corinth<sup>12</sup> (in particular 1 Cor 9) and on 1 Thessalonians. In the past half-century Pauline studies mainly focused on social diversity.<sup>13</sup> Towards the end of the twentieth century, Meggitt in his book *Paul, Poverty and Survival* (1998) focused more on the economic composition of society rather than the social hierarchy. This study stimulated renewed interest amongst New Testament scholars in the economic nature of Paul's ministry and the economic classes of the congregations where he ministered.<sup>14</sup>

## 1.2 Problem Statement

In the current New Testament research Paul's reasons for not accepting any form of remuneration from the congregation in Corinth is still an area of contention (Horrel, 1997:587-603).<sup>15</sup> One of the reasons for this lack of present consensus can be found in the evolving paradigm which views Pauline ministry from a socio-economic, rather than from a position of social status. Interpreting Paul's attitude from the angle of the patron-client system,<sup>16</sup> is according to Aejmelaeus (2002:352-354) not

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<sup>11</sup> For the purpose of this thesis the undisputed Letters of Paul are used as the main focus of study, being Romans, 1 & 2 Cor, Galatians, Philippians, 1 Thessalonians and Philemon.

<sup>12</sup> The central position of Corinth in Paul's dealings with issues surrounding work and compensation was already shown by Grant (1977:68): "It is probably significant that almost all Paul's letters were written from or to Corinth. This was the home of the Proto-Gnostics or Cynics, who were not eager to confront the realities in the world of work."

<sup>13</sup> The work of Theissen (1982), Malherbe (1983), and Meeks (1986) can be viewed as representative of a focus on the social context of the New Testament around the First Century, each with an own approach. See chapter 2 (2.5.1) for an analysis of their respective viewpoints on Paul and the social composition of the Pauline communities.

<sup>14</sup> The "Paul and poverty" debate was entered into by a number of scholars, such as Theissen (2001; 2003), Martin (2001), and Henderson (2002).

<sup>15</sup> The challenging study of Aejmelaeus (2002:344-376), *The question of salary between Paul and the super apostles in Corinth*, challenges almost all of the traditional reasons provided for Paul's refusal of accepting salary from the congregation in Corinth. His proposed alternative answers are still not overtly convincing.

<sup>16</sup> This line of argumentation is found frequently under New Testament scholars, e.g. Chow (1992), *Patronage and Power: A study of social networks in Corinth*; Mournet (2001), *Honor and shame in First Corinthians: Paul's conflict with the pivotal values of Mediterranean society*, and Barchy (2003), *Who should be called father? Paul of Tarsus between the Jesus tradition and patria potestas*.

relevant in the light of recent viewpoints on the economic status of the congregation in Corinth.<sup>17</sup>

Standing “on the shoulders of Meggitt”,<sup>18</sup> Friesen (2004:323-361) has explored poverty in the New Testament milieu further by not only exploring the way in which Pauline studies became progressively irrelevant to the local contexts in the second half of the twentieth century, but also providing a model with which poverty in the First Century can be measured. Oakes (2004:367-371) suggests a more detailed analysis than Friesen, and Barclay (2004:365) asks why no-one does “bring into this discussion comparative data from contemporary ‘third world’ urban churches of the poor”.

This leads towards the problem of relevance, which is not only pointed out from within New Testament scholarship,<sup>19</sup> but also from the outside.<sup>20</sup> Amidst the criticism of being ensnared in superfluous theoretical research ignoring present-day contexts (Punt 2000a:352-353), New Testament science needs research which responds to our Twenty-first Century society in all its aspects.<sup>21</sup> It does, however, have to be aware that it escapes the previous pitfalls of Marxist interpretation (Friesen 2004:264).

One of the problems with applications of Pauline teachings to the current context is the way in which “elite theologians assumed that first-century Mediterranean societies were similar in most crucial aspects to twentieth-century ... society” (Friesen 2004:330). It is therefore essential to determine the socio-economic factors that played a role in Paul’s choice to toil and labour as a craftsman rather than accepting financial support from the First Century Corinthian congregation before pondering upon implications for the present day ministry in Botswana.

Although it was already mentioned earlier in this section that the impact of the patron-client framework is probably not as substantial (as re-

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<sup>17</sup> The existence of a “super-rich elite” in Corinth is to my view successfully challenged by Meggitt (1998).

<sup>18</sup> The research article by Friesen is viewed by Barclay (2004:363-366) as being an elaboration of the theme that Meggitt introduced.

<sup>19</sup> See Punt (2000a:351-371) and Friesen (2004:331).

<sup>20</sup> See the keynote address of Naudé (2005:339-358) at the annual meeting of the NTSSA in 2005.

<sup>21</sup> The present-day indifference in academic circles towards the poor can be attributed to “a marked tendency for human beings to avoid contact with those of a noticeably different socioeconomic standing, seen in the extreme case by the widespread aversion towards the homeless” (Desilva 2000:312).

garded by some scholars),<sup>22</sup> recent research suggests that the concept of reciprocity<sup>23</sup> played a major part in the attitude of the Corinthian congregation towards Paul. Although reciprocity was often interpreted as integral to the patron-client network, Joubert (2000:17-72) has to my view<sup>24</sup> successfully shown the differences between the networks of patronage and benefaction. For the purpose of this study it is important to keep in mind that the bestowal of gifts and an expectation of some form of reciprocity can be part of any culture, and that the role of the Old Testament background to the ministry of Paul cannot be negated (Pao 2002:170-171).

The difference between Ancient reciprocity and First Century reciprocity is highlighted by Crook (2005:515-520) in an article titled *Critical notes: Reflections on culture and socio-scientific models*. Whilst ancient reciprocity could be mostly classified as equal or symmetrical reciprocity, the idea of “assymetrical”, altruistic or general reciprocity developed in the Roman patron-client system (Malina 2001:96). Reciprocity is mostly focused on kinship and “social distance in a family” (Crook 2005:515-516). The “reciprocity” model explores the bi-lateral exchanging of gifts “in kind”, where “particular kinds of relationships and obligation” are established between people (Davies 1996:721).

Several studies grappled with the way in which Paul submitted to or ignored the unwritten laws of reciprocity.<sup>25</sup> In these attempts, researchers like Joubert (2000:217) and Neyrey (2005:465-492) also investigated the role of God in terms of reciprocity. This opens the way for Paul’s offering of the gospel as ἀδάπανος (free of charge) (1 Cor 9:18)<sup>26</sup> as being a triangular reciprocity in which he does not receive any reward, but

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<sup>22</sup> Support for interpreting Paul within the patron-client framework is still very much alive. In a recent publication, *Reconceptualising conversion: Patronage, loyalty, and conversion in the Religions of the Ancient Mediterranean*, Crook (2004:193) refers to Paul as fitting “into a Mediterranean pattern of ... patronage and benefaction”.

<sup>23</sup> Reciprocity is part and parcel of the Roman patron-client system, although there are also other forms of reciprocity.

<sup>24</sup> It must be noted that Crook (2004:60-66) strongly criticizes the distinction that Joubert draws between patronage and benefaction, and his arguments are debated in chapter 4.

<sup>25</sup> See Joubert (2000): *Paul as benefactor: Reciprocity, strategy and theological reflection in Paul's collection.*, Bartsch (2003): *Who should be called father? Paul of Tarsus between the Jesus tradition and patria potestas.*, and Tannehill (2004): *Paul as liberator and oppressor: how should we evaluate diverse views of First Corinthians?*

<sup>26</sup> 1 Cor 9:18: “What then is my reward? Just this: that in preaching the gospel I may offer it free of charge, and so not make use of my rights in preaching it.”

expect from the Corinthians to give their lives to God in turn (1 Cor 9:19, 22-23).<sup>27</sup>

But Paul's offering of the Gospel as 'free of charge' may even have more radical implications when viewed from an economical angle. Studies such as the one of Szesnat (1997:70-84) can assist in ascertaining the relation between Paul's offering of the gospel as free of charge, and his "becoming a slave". In his article it is pointed out that considerable "profit" in First Century Mediterranean cities only originated from "slavery", where the income for "production" would be the same as in the case of a hired worker, but where the "expenses" would be more or less insignificant compared to what "bought labour" would cost.<sup>28</sup>

By toiling hard and providing for himself, Paul compares himself to a slave, who "forwards" the profit of his labour (of which he had the right to, according to 1 Cor 9:1-15) to the benefit of everyone. The poor would certainly be those who profited the most for "not having to contribute" to Paul's salary, and might be "deterred from receiving the gospel and entering the church" (Agrell 1976:110).

This explanation of the "free offering of the gospel" from the angle of Paul's plight for the poor has been overlooked (or only referred to by implication) in commentaries on 1 Cor 9 (Thiselton 2000:532; Ruef 1977:83; Pop 1974:186), as well as discussion on "tentmakership" from the side of Practical Theology (Grey 1990:236-244) and even Missiology (Kritzinger 1979:182-186). It is notable that Hock (1978:560) refers to Paul being able to reach the poor and the rich by not staying in a household with limited access, but making himself available to all people by entering the workshop and "plying a slavish trade".

In the Pauline Corpus, Paul often links his labour and "working free of charge" to his concern for the poor. In Gal 2:10<sup>29</sup> Paul refers to his undertaking to remember the poor (in Jerusalem), and reiterates that it was

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<sup>27</sup> 1 Cor 9:19: "Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible."

1 Cor 9:22-23: "<sup>22</sup>To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. <sup>23</sup>I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings."

<sup>28</sup> In this article Szesnat (probably inadvertently) echoes the Deuteronomist (Deut 5:18): "Do not consider it a hardship to set your servant free, because his service to you these six years has been worth twice as much as that of a hired hand".

<sup>29</sup> Gal 2:10: "All they asked was that we should continue to remember the poor, the very thing I was eager to do."

something that he was eager to do. In 1 Cor 16:1-2<sup>30</sup> he encourages the congregation to save up weekly for the poor in Jerusalem. In 2 Corinthians 8 and 9 he elaborates on the motivation for collection for the poor in Jerusalem. The arguments in 2 Cor 11:7-9<sup>31</sup> and 12:13-16<sup>32</sup> are important in portraying a development from Paul's initial explanation in 1 Cor 9 for offering the gospel free of charge. It is significant that he does not want to be "a burden" to the congregants, and them not having to "save up" for him as their spiritual father. Paul's portrayal of himself as an example,<sup>33</sup> i.e. to work hard with their hands in order to evade poverty, is evident in his admonitions to the Thessalonians.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> 1 Cor 16:1-2: "<sup>1</sup>Now about the collection for God's people: Do what I told the Galatian churches to do. <sup>2</sup>On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made."

<sup>31</sup> 2 Cor 11:7-9: "<sup>7</sup>Was it a sin for me to lower myself in order to elevate you by preaching the gospel of God to you free of charge? <sup>8</sup>I robbed other churches by receiving support from them so as to serve you. <sup>9</sup>And when I was with you and needed something, I was not a burden to anyone, for the brothers who came from Macedonia supplied what I needed. I have kept myself from being a burden to you in any way, and will continue to do so."

<sup>32</sup> 2 Cor 12:13-16: "<sup>13</sup>How were you inferior to the other churches, except that I was never a burden to you? Forgive me this wrong! <sup>14</sup>Now I am ready to visit you for the third time, and I will not be a burden to you, because what I want is not your possessions but you. After all, children should not have to save up for their parents, but parents for their children. <sup>15</sup>So I will very gladly spend for you everything I have and expend myself as well. If I love you more, will you love me less? <sup>16</sup>Be that as it may, I have not been a burden to you."

<sup>33</sup> Paul's use of his manual labour is also seen in the other undisputed letters of Paul (1 Cor 4:16, Php 3:12-17), the disputed letters of Paul (2 Thess 3:7-10), as well as the Lucan account of Paul's speech (Acts 20:35).

<sup>34</sup> 1 Thess 2:6-9: "<sup>6</sup>We were not looking for praise from men, not from you or anyone else. As apostles of Christ we could have been a burden to you, <sup>7</sup>but we were gentle among you, like a mother caring for her little children. <sup>8</sup>We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us. <sup>9</sup>Surely you remember, brothers, our toil and hardship; we worked night and day in order not to be a burden to anyone while we preached the gospel of God to you."

1 Thess 4:11-12: "Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business and to work with your hands, just as we told you, <sup>12</sup>so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders and so that you will not be dependent on anybody."

Last, but definitely not least, is Paul's speech from the pen of Luke in Acts 20:33-35.<sup>35</sup> Although the Lucan account of Paul is not regarded to be as historically trustworthy as the Pauline Letters themselves, Luke's account of Paul's motivation for offering the gospel free of charge is of the utmost relevance for this thesis, in the sense that it is the most direct link between Paul's labour and poverty.

In the light of the prominence that the poor takes in these other references from the Pauline Corpus referring to working "with his hands" and not accepting salary or support, it must eventually be asked why Paul is not referring explicitly to the poor in 1 Cor 9. Is Paul establishing a power base as apostle, or is he really involved in selfless ministry to everybody, especially to the poor?

The main problem to be researched is: What is Paul's view of his reward and how does it contribute towards **understanding why he preached the word ἀδάπανον?**

The following questions are considered in the research:

1. What is the current state of research on Paul's offering of the gospel ἀδάπανον?
2. What were the socio-economic circumstances of the Corinthians?
3. What were, from a Graeco-Roman perspective, the cultural predispositions towards the poor in Corinth?
4. How should altruism, especially regarding the poor, be viewed in the light of the Bible?
5. What was the financial situation of the apostle Paul, and what is his attitude towards money and labour?
6. What were Paul's motives in offering the gospel 'free of charge' to the Corinthians?
7. What are the implications of Paul offering the gospel ἀδαπάνον for the present-day ministry in the Dutch Reformed Church in Botswana?

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<sup>35</sup> Acts 20: 33-35: "<sup>33</sup>I have not coveted anyone's silver or gold or clothing. <sup>34</sup>You yourselves know that these hands of mine have supplied my own needs and the needs of my companions. <sup>35</sup>In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.' "

### 1.3 Aim and Objectives

The aim of this study is to establish the way in which Paul approached the economic situation in Corinth, and how this approach was perceived by the congregation. A subsidiary aim is to ascertain implications of Paul's approach for the present-day context in the Dutch Reformed Church in Botswana.

1. To gain an understanding of existing research on Paul's presenting the gospel ἀδάπανος.
2. To gain insight into the socio-economic reality of the Corinthians.
3. To determine, from a Graeco-Roman perspective, what cultural predispositions towards poverty existed in First Century Corinth.
4. To explore self-sacrifice and altruism from a Biblical perspective on the poor.
5. To construct Paul's financial situation, as well as his attitude towards money and labour.
6. To ascertain what Paul's intentions and motives were in offering the gospel 'free of charge'.
7. To suggest relevant applications of Paul's approach to his ministry for the present-day context in the Dutch Reformed Church in Botswana; to do this it has been necessary to establish the socio-economical position of members and ministers of the Word within the Dutch Reformed Church of Botswana. To provide comparative measures, an investigation of similar nature has also been done in the Spiritual Healing Church, the largest denomination in Botswana.<sup>36</sup>

### 1.4 Central Theoretical Argument

The central theoretical argument is that Paul is not competing for honour or titles of beneficence, but labours hard with the selflessness and unconditional altruism of a loving father towards everybody, especially

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<sup>36</sup> The Spiritual Healing Church is not only the largest Christian church in Botswana with 30 000 members, but the pastors are also mostly relying on secular occupations for their funding (Amanze 1994:250-253).



those in material need. By rendering his services free of charge, he trusts that the poor will also be won for God's Kingdom.

## 1.5 Method of Research

This New Testament study is undertaken from within the Reformed tradition. The study is done within the framework of a socio-historical approach<sup>37</sup> to the New Testament.<sup>38</sup> This approach not only takes into account available data from the historical sources, but views the data as interwoven with the specific text of the Bible, with relevance for present day readers (Joubert 1994:35-37). This methodology is applied to the specific objectives in the following way:

1. To establish the *Wirkungsgeschichte*<sup>39</sup> of Paul's offering of the gospel ἁδᾶπανων, relevant exegetical and historical studies, as well as biographies on the life and the work of Paul are utilized. This includes information on the Corinthian conflict, Paul's responses to this conflict, and Paul's trade.
2. To determine the socio-economic reality of the Corinthians and the rest of the Mediterranean World in the First Century, contextual studies, archaeological data, as well as socio-historical and socio-scientific studies are utilized.
3. To acquire an insight into the attitudes of persons in the different economic strata in First Century Corinth towards one another, special attention is given to relevant passages in extra-Biblical documents. An in-depth study of the role of benefaction, kinship, responsibility, hospitality, and altruism towards the poor is under-

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<sup>37</sup> Although scholars such as Crook (2004:37) use the socio-historical approach to accentuate the radical discontinuity between Biblical texts and its modern readers, this thesis utilizes the socio-historical approach as an important step in reaching responsible and relevant interpretations as well as applications for the modern-day church.

<sup>38</sup> To provide a full picture of the *Wirkungsgeschichte*, attention will also be given to New Testament scholars using socio-scientific approaches, eg. Theissen. De Klerk & Van Rensburg (2005:55) refers to the method I am employing as a 'socio-scientific enriched socio-historical approach'.

<sup>39</sup> In utilizing the socio-historical approach for this thesis, this chapter not only looks at a *Forschungsbericht* or research report, but also focuses on the 'complete history of interpretation'. The interpretation of 1 Cor 9:18 amongst First Century scholars in more or less the same socio-economical circumstances as Paul is essential to this study.

taken from a socio-historical angle. All of this is done from a Graeco-Roman perspective.

4. References to the topic of socio-economic relations (accentuating attitudes towards the poor) within Scripture are studied revelation-historically. Step 11<sup>40</sup> of the reformed exegetical model of De Klerk & Van Rensburg (2005:77-86) is used.
5. To construct the personal financial situation of the apostle Paul and the nature of his occupation, Biblical information concerning Paul and his attitude towards possessions and work, as well as his apostolic calling, is studied.<sup>41</sup> Special attention is given to recent developments in New Testament studies concerning Paul's theology, his approach to his ministry in general and his rhetorical style.
6. To determine Paul's understanding of offering the gospel *ἀδάπανον*, a detailed study of the coherence of 1 Cor 9, as well as its place and function in 1 Corinthians as a whole is undertaken. The relevant exegesis (focused on 1 Cor 9:18) is done according to the grammatical-historical method, utilizing the steps proposed by De Klerk & Van Rensburg (2005). The relevant meanings of *ἀδάπανον* and *δωρέαν* are established by utilizing the Greek-English lexicon of Louw & Nida (1988).
7. To derive practical implications for the ministry in the socio-economic context of the Dutch Reformed Church in Botswana, the results of the work done for 1-6 above are processed through analysis and synthesis. An assessment of the financial situation of Botswana church members and their congregations, as well as the economic position of their ministers, is made, utilizing the models provided by Hendriks (2004) and Nel (2004).<sup>42</sup> The desired product is a constructed model of Paul's approach to presenting the gospel in congregations and members with serious financial constraints. This

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<sup>40</sup> Step 11 comprises of a diachronic review of themes in the text as presented in the whole Bible, with special reference to the Revelation Historical place and the meaning of the pericope (De Klerk & Van Rensburg 2005:77).

<sup>41</sup> It is interesting to note that 2 Cor 6:9 ("as unknown, yet we are known..." NRSV) is true in the sense of Paul being "unknown" from any of the historical sources of his time (Den Heyer 2000:11).

<sup>42</sup> Although these studies are written with reference to a Southern-African context, both studies would probably be useful for the purpose of equipping members, pastors, and congregations in the Botswana context because of the geographical and cultural proximity of Botswana and South Africa.

model can serve as a theoretical basis for present-day denominations in their structuring of congregational ministry. This will also be useful in the light of congregations from higher socio-economic strata becoming multi-cultural, often involving members entrenched in poverty.

## 2 THE WIRKUNGSGESCHICHTE OF PAUL'S SELF-SUPPORT

### 2.1 Introduction

Paul's decision to support himself in the ministry has not only created an animated response from within the First Century church in Corinth,<sup>1</sup> but has also been a contentious issue through the history of the church.

From a hermeneutical point of view the reader is increasingly recognised as a "vital component in the hermeneutical process" (Punt 2004b:288). In third-world academic circles there is also a growing awareness of the African context in which interpretation is exercised.<sup>2</sup> Such studies have up to date focused mainly on the Gospels and Acts, and not so much on Pauline literature.

The purpose of this section is to assess the *Wirkungsgeschichte* on Paul's self-support, beginning with relevant data from the Apocrypha and Church Fathers. The views of the Reformers, Luther and Calvin, as well as the research on this theme in the past four centuries will be reviewed. In conclusion the current views on Paul's self-support will be discussed in the light of the preceding interpretations.

### 2.2 *The Early Church Fathers and Apocrypha on Paul's Free Offering of the Gospel, and His Attitude towards the Poor*

In the early church Fathers and Apocrypha there are several interesting references to Paul and the remuneration of the apostles (although not

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<sup>1</sup> It is still debated in scholarly circles whether 1 Cor 9 was a response to a query from the congregation of Corinth, or whether Paul 'placed it on the table' himself as an illustration of the way that he set the example in laying down his own rights, in elaboration of his answer to the question of the eating of idol meat in 1 Cor 8 (Rueff 1977:76). What is commonly accepted, is that Paul's references to his refusal of accepting remuneration from the congregation and his manual labour (2 Cor 11:7-12; 2 Cor 12:14-18) is a good indication that Paul's self support became a prominent issue amongst his opponents in Corinth (Thrall 2000:699-700).

<sup>2</sup> As an exponent of African Theology, Ukpong (1998:189-210) convincingly showed the importance of taking the socio-economic position of modern-day readers into account.

always directly referring to Paul). In *The teachings of the twelve apostles* (Ch. 11)<sup>3</sup> it is stated that an itinerant apostle should not stay for longer than a day at one home, on the most two days, and that they should not be given money, but only food. Those who ask for money are considered “false apostles”. A further, more relevant reference is given in chapter 12. There it clearly states that a prolonged stay by a fellow Christian is only accepted if he has “his own trade”, and therefore can also provide for himself. This is an indication that this document has a clear inclination towards self-support, and that evangelists or fellow Christians using the goodwill of members to their own benefit were not regarded favourably.

The instruction in chapter 13 of *The teachings of the twelve apostles* to give the firstfruits of one’s harvest or income to the “true teacher” or prophet, is also important in this regard. This may serve to elucidate some of the tensions that existed regarding the remuneration of spiritual workers in the early church. The using of the firstfruits for the purpose of paying missionaries instead of sending it back to the temple in Jerusalem could be the underlying factor in the instruction to Paul not to forget the poor (Gal 1:10), and his subsequent collection for the poor in Jerusalem.<sup>4</sup>

A more direct referral to Paul’s missionary practice is found in the *Acts of Paul* (AD 150-200). Three interesting references are of note here: Firstly there is a clear reference that, although Paul was looked on favourably, there was no appreciation for his fellow travellers Demas and Hermogenes (*Paul and Thecla*, Ch. 1). Demas is recorded in 2 Timothy 4:10 to have deserted Paul ἀγαπήσας τόν νῦν αἰῶνα (whilst loving this present world)<sup>5</sup> and proceeded to Thessalonica.<sup>6</sup> Notable here is the aversion expressed to those who did not have pure intentions by spreading the gospel, and but only had personal gain in mind.

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<sup>3</sup> The *Teachings of the twelve apostles* was written around 100-150 AD (Van der Watt & Tolmie, 2005:756).

<sup>4</sup> Paul’s collection effort has been thoroughly discussed by Joubert (2000:73-113). He does, however, overlook the possibility that the re-channeling of offerings traditionally destined for the temple to pay spiritual workers could be a contributing factor to this tension. Wessels (2006) has convincingly argued that Paul’s opposition in Corinth probably came from a Jewish background. Therefore it is necessary that 1 Cor 9 receive more attention in the discussion on the collection for Jerusalem.

<sup>5</sup> The English version of the Greek and Latin texts to English are my own, unless otherwise specified.

<sup>6</sup> Hermogenes is also referred to in 2 Tim 1:15 as having deserted Paul in Asia, together with Phylegus.

The reference (and to my view most important in the light of the research theme), is to Paul's reaction when he and Onesiphorus' family (who left everything behind to follow Paul) ceased their fasting on Thecla's behalf, and the children became hungry (*Paul and Thecla*, Ch. 23). Paul reacted by taking off his cloak, and sent one of the children to go and buy more loaves. This would not only reflect a tradition where Paul and his followers often suffered from hunger, but also of Paul's responsibility and sacrifice on behalf of his fellow travellers.

Another relevant reference to the apostle Paul can be found in the *First Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians* (ca. AD 96). In Chapter 47 Paul's reference to the factions in 1 Cor 1:12 is quoted, and the congregation is blamed for supporting factions that are not even connected to apostles, but ordinary men. To my view it is important to note here that, since strife in the congregation continued long after Paul left Corinth,<sup>7</sup> the strife in Corinth was a real issue,<sup>8</sup> and that factions in the congregation were not merely a result of Paul's approach (including his self-support). Judging by the continuous problems between members according to 1 Clement, such tensions should rather be explained in terms of other reasons, such as the agonistic tendency that was present in this congregation and generally amongst First Century cultures.

### 2.3 The Latter Church Fathers on Paul's 'Independence'

Even in the recordings of the latter Church Fathers it is clear that the issue concerning the support of church workers was not totally resolved. It is clear that one of the main items of scholarly research evolved around Gnosticism and its dualistic world view. This point of view is illustrated well by the work of Tertullian (AD 145-220). Tertullian's *Elucidations* (I.45)<sup>9</sup> provides an interpretation of the Apostle Paul's<sup>10</sup> view of

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<sup>7</sup> The First Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians is dated around 80 AD.

<sup>8</sup> Some scholars assert that the existence of various factions in Corinth was not a reality, but a construction by Paul used as a rhetorical device (Meggitt 1998).

<sup>9</sup> Tertullian (*Elucidations* 1.45) states his interpretations of Paul's precepts as follow: "As for ourselves, we believe that the whole of faith is to be administered in the flesh, nay more, by the flesh, which has both a mouth for the utterance of all holy words, and a tongue to refrain from blasphemy, and a heart to avoid all irritation, and hands to labour and to give."

a coherent body and soul. Tertullian links Paul's manual labour and his *charity* with his holistic ministry, not only being an utterance of "holy words", but also consisting of labour and charity.

Origin of Alexandria and Caesarea (AD 185-254) commented on Paul's attitude towards labour as being "voluntarily" and "not in vain", because of the hope in the life with Christ (*De Principiis*, 7.5). He refers to Php 1:21-26 as Paul's calling to remain in this world and fulfil his task in the hope of the resurrection and the eternal life.

In the works of John Chrysostom (AD 347-370) it is evident that the manual labour and charity of Paul is linked to his ministry in apology to the "recluse" that have withdrawn themselves from the world, and devoted themselves to "fasting, and sleeping on the ground, and keeping vigil, and refraining from the bath, and great toil, and all other means which they use for the affliction of the body" (*Christian Priesthood*, 6.5). He further argues in the same passage that bodily deprivations do not assist the recluse at all if it is not accompanied by τὸ μήτε αὐθάδεις εἶναι, μήτε ὀργίλους, μήτε προπετεῖς, ἀλλὰ νηφαλίους καὶ σώφρονας καὶ κοσμίους καὶ τᾶλλα πάντα δι' ὧν λίους καὶ σώφρονας καὶ κοσμίους καὶ τᾶλλα πάντα δι' ὧν ἡμῖν ὁ μακάριος Παῦλος τὴν τοῦ ἀρίστου ἱερέως ἀνεπλήρωσεν εἰκόνα.<sup>11</sup>

Furthermore there are very interesting references to what Chrysostom has viewed to be the people that may be "hindered" by living of the gospel according to 1 Cor 9:12.<sup>12</sup> In his homily on 1 Cor 9:1-12 he approves of Paul's example of not using his right (although Christ commanded it).<sup>13</sup> Chrysostom proceeds further to order Paul's *modus operandi* in any

<sup>10</sup> The heading of this chapter of Elucidations is titled The old man and the new man of St. Paul explained.

<sup>11</sup> "...not being arrogant, nor proud, nor headstrong, but sober and prudent, and respectable, and all other aspects, wherein the blessed Paul portrayed the image of the most virtuous priest."

<sup>12</sup> 1 Cor 9:12: "...But we did not use this right. On the contrary, we put up with anything rather than hinder the gospel of Christ."

<sup>13</sup> Ἐγὼ γάρ σοι μείζονα λέγω, ὅτι κἂν αὐτὸς ὁ Χριστὸς ἐπιτετραφῶς ἦ, ἴδης δέ τινα βλαπτόμενον, ἐπίσχες καὶ μὴ χρῆση τῇ ἐπιτροπῇ. Τοῦτο γὰρ καὶ Παῦλος ἐποίησεν, ἐξὼν λαβεῖν Χριστοῦ συγχωρήσαντος, μὴ λαβόν. Καὶ γὰρ φιλόανθρωπος ὢν ὁ Δεσπότης, πολλὴν τοῖς ἐπιτάγμασιν ἐκέρασεν ἡμερότητα τοῖς αὐτοῦ, ἵνα μὴ μόνον ἐξ ἐπιταγῆς, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐξ οἰκείας πολλὰ ποιῶμεν γνώμης." "For I have something greater to say to you: 'although Christ Himself has permitted it, yet if you see any injured, stop and do not use the permission.' For this also did Paul; when he might have received, Christ having granted permission, he received not. Thus has our Lord in his mercy mingled much gentleness

instance where receiving a salary might be a hindrance to the gospel, especially where people are “βλαπτόμενον” (injured).<sup>14</sup> In the same homily, however, he also places great emphasis on the care for the poor. He encourages every member of the congregation not to give heed to their own desires, or φιλαργυρία (covetousness), but to take care of their *responsibility* towards the poor.

In his homily on 1 Cor 9:13-23 Chrysostom explicitly refers to Paul’s investing of the money by working for the gospel and not requiring pay. He refers to Paul breaching even the commandment of the Lord in order to win souls.

Cyprian (AD 200-258) in one of his letters addressed to the presbyters and deacons (*Ep.* 5.2), tells the presbyters and deacons to take special care of the poor. Besides the poor, however, he tells them to put those “who have stood strong and have not forsaken God’s flock” on top of their priority list, and to supply them with whatever food or maintenance they may need. Later in the same paragraph he exhorts them and their leaders to follow the example of Jesus, who became a slave, but also the apostle Paul who always, even after all his imprisonments and tribulations, stayed meek and humble, and supported himself by labouring night and day, in order not to charge the congregation for anything.<sup>15</sup>

It is notable here that Cyprian on the one hand encourages the care for the leaders above the care for the poor, but also exhorts the leaders to provide for themselves, following Paul’s example. In Cyprian’s treatise on the lapsed (*Treatise* 3.11), he emphasises the need for Christian leaders to let go of their earthly possessions and not to follow the example of the rich man, but abandoning their possessions and sell it to the poor, according to the example provided by Jesus and the apostles.

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with his precepts that it might not be all merely of commandment, but that we might do much also of our own mind.” (Chrysostom, *Homily on 1 Cor 9:1-12*).

<sup>14</sup> Chrysostom seems to use the term βλαπτόμενον in much the same way as Paul’s (ambiguous) use of ἀσθένεια. Several studies have been done on Paul’s use of the term ἀσθένεια (Theissen [1975] *Die Starken und Schwachen in Korinth*; Black [1984] *Paul, apostle of weakness: Astheneia and its cognates in the Pauline literature*. Savage [1996] *Power through weakness*.)

<sup>15</sup> “Item Pauli apostoli documenta sectentur, qui post carcerem saepe repetitum, post flagella, post bestias, circa omnia mitis et humilis perseveravit, nec post tertium coelum et paradisum quicquam sibi insolenter assumpsit dicens: *Neque gratis panem manducavimus ab aliquo vestrum, sed in labore et fatigatione nocte et die operantes, ne quem vestrum gravaremus.*” (Cyprianus, *Ep.* 5.2).



The views of the Church Fathers on Paul's ministry are concluded with the discussion of two of the Post-Nicene fathers: Aurelius Augustine (AD 354-430) and Gregory the Great (pope AD 590-604). In Aurelius Augustine's treatise, *De Monachorum*, the question of Paul's decision to do manual labour, and thereby offering the gospel 'free of charge' is discussed at length.

Aurelius Augustine responds to two factions amongst the monks, of which the one chose to defend the position of Paul, i.e. to work with his own hands and not to live of the peoples money, whilst there were others who held unto the commands of Jesus that those who preach the gospel should be looked after by those they minister to, also referring to the Lord caring for the lilies of the field according to Matthew 6:26. The division between these two groups were so strong that the faction in favour of not doing manual labour even allowed their hair to grow long! In defending the position of the group in favour of Paul, Augustine mentions that *ipsi manibus operentur* (working with their own hands) will result in more money being available for charity (*De Monachorum*, 33).

Lastly it is noteworthy that Gregory the Great, in his treatise *Of the life of the Pastor* (Ch. 5) discusses the pastor that must be a good neighbour to those around him, being able to realise the needs of others around him, especially the weak, but also being able to resist temptations and excel in contemplation. Gregory does visibly here advocate for the pastor to become more involved with congregants, but although he quotes from 1 Cor 9, he does not comment on the issue of self-support directly.

In summary it is clear to see that Paul's self-support was assessed differently amongst the Church Fathers. It is also clear that clergy doing manual labour were not just a foregone conclusion, such as scholars from Missiology<sup>16</sup> often conclude. It may be conceded, however, (especially in view of Aurelius Augustine's *De Monachorum*), that tensions on the position of self support surely increased through the history of the early church.

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<sup>16</sup> This is evident in the article of Vischer (1965:51) where he states "... we establish that the situation in the Early Church was characterized by great flexibility. There was no question of the ministry being understood everywhere as a full-time calling".

## 2.4 *Paul's Self-support as Viewed During the Reformation*

The Middle Ages brought new philosophies, amongst them one relevant for our theme: the way that the Papists interpreted 1 Cor 9. Calvin (1509-1564), in his commentary on 1 Corinthians, refers to the interpretation of the Papists, interpreting Paul's hard work and labour as supererogation, or doing excessive good works.

Calvin, however, points to the fact that the reward mentioned in verse 17-18 is referring to a reward after Paul has completed his work. He argues that this would refer to the joy that there is in doing one's task and duty with zeal, in comparison to those who do it out of necessity and under protest. Therefore Calvin states that God requires that his servants must always be cheerful (2 Cor 9:7).

In his commentary on verse 18 Calvin refers to his bringing the gospel "without charge", as something which proves his willingness to fulfil God's commandment. Continuing the dialogue with the Papist (who makes a distinction between those things done out of necessity and the things being done willingly) he acknowledges that Paul went further than was required by not taking pay. He explains it, however, by Paul's sense of duty to remove every hindrance that might cause offence.

Calvin argues therefore that there is no way that we can compensate for our faults by works of supererogation, and that everything that Paul did was because of him owing so much to God. Calvin also quotes Luke 17:10<sup>17</sup> in this regard, proving that good works cannot accomplish anything, but serves as a sign of gratitude to the Lord only. Calvin concludes his commentary on this verse by referring to the phrase: "that I may not abuse my power". He views that Paul refers to his liberty which must be used in such a way that it does not give occasion to offence.

John Wesley (1703-1791) argues along the same lines as Calvin in his commentary on 1 Cor 9. Although the dialogue with the Papists are not so prominent in the time of Wesley, the same principles and attitudes of Paul's voluntary preaching of the gospel is prominent in his views. He views the chapter as Paul's vindication of his apostleship and his apostolic liberty, although he remarks that some of the objections against his apostleship were probably a result of Paul's uniqueness in this regard.

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<sup>17</sup> Luke 17:10: "So you also, when you have done everything you were told to do, should say, 'We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty.' "

In reading his sermon on 1 Cor 9:22 (Spurgeon, 1879), one can sense that even a well known preacher such as Charles Spurgeon (1834-1892) still had a deep sense age-old reverence towards the apostle Paul.<sup>18</sup> The way Spurgeon is calling on his audience to imitate Paul is noteworthy.<sup>19</sup> Spurgeon realises that there is a great deal of detail on Paul's person that does not overlap with the present day reader. He does, however, focus on Paul's zeal as model not only for pastors, but for everybody.<sup>20</sup>

It is inevitable that the struggle against the Papists would be transparent in many of the commentaries and works on Paul, such as the one of Calvin above. It is, however, to be noted that Calvin (and for that matter Spurgeon) contributed to the view that we can serve God not only in our work, but also through our work (Van Wyk 1988:20).

## ***2.5 The Twentieth Century and Paul's free Offering of the Gospel***

The past century was one that has undergone several world wars and major power shifts across the earth; therefore it is difficult to capture the kaleidoscope of views on Paul's self support. To my view it is important not to neglect the way that the World Wars, as well as the poverty and politics in Germany affected the view on Paul's person.<sup>21</sup>

In Deissmann's treatise on Paul, there is a clear shift in the opinion of Paul as the energetic, vibrant apostle that would (according to Spurgeon in the previous section) have to take a step down to associate with the commoner. In the description of Paul by Deissmann (1912:62) a totally different picture of the apostle is drawn.

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<sup>18</sup> Spurgeon's reverence towards Paul is still subject to the understanding that Paul is only the result of God's grace in his life.

<sup>19</sup> I mention Paul, because what he was we ought every one of us to be; and though we cannot share in his office, not being apostles; though we cannot share in his talents or in his inspiration, yet we ought to be possessed by the same spirit which actuated him, and let me also add we ought to be possessed by it in the same degree." (Spurgeon, 1879).

<sup>20</sup> "Do not tell me that the apostle was an exception, and cannot be set up as a rule or model for commoner folk, for I shall have to tell you that we must be such as Paul was if we hope to be where Paul is" (Spurgeon, 1879).

<sup>21</sup> A re-evaluation of Deissmann's theories are called for by Friesen (2004:323-361), who recons that the comfortable situation of modern-day scholars and the ideals of Capitalism have caused them to lose touch with the real Paul.

In the first instance he (Deissmann, 1912:62) portrays Paul as somebody with an ailing body, due to Paul describing himself as an “earthen vessel” in 2 Cor 4:7. He also refers to the poor living conditions he must have endured as a tentmaker, and the reference to an attack of illness in Gal 4:13-14, not to mention the “thorn in the flesh” referred to in 2 Cor 12:7, and his body with scattered scars from maltreatment.

Paul’s personality is also described as being of tender nature (Deissmann 1912:68). Paul’s alleged links with Seneca and the Stoic philosophers is questioned by Deissmann (1912:77) in the light of him being one of the “great crowd of weary and heavy-laden”.<sup>22</sup> Even his labour as a tentmaker is degrading, but Deissmann (1912:80) acknowledges that Paul was not bound to his devastating circumstances, and that he was “not narrowed in by the walls of his workshop or by the narrow gloomy allies of his ghetto”.

In terms of Paul’s motives for his self-support Deissmann (1912:208) does not hesitate to ascribe his motives as caring for the poor:

“Moreover, he abstained of his own free will from the exercising a right that was generally admitted and had the authority of Jesus to commend it, the right of a missionary to be supported by the churches. What he required he earned by his own labour. He is the first artisan missionary, and he is proud of the fact. *His churches are poor, and he will not be a burden to them*<sup>23</sup>...Only in the case of those who stood very near to him did he make an exception and accept charitable gifts.”

In the passage above Deissmann is clearly linking Paul’s initial motives for offering the gospel ‘free of charge’ to his care for the poor and his fear of placing a “burden” on them. But his successors have not accepted his views on Paul.<sup>24</sup>

The person largely responsible for the (temporary) demise of Deissmann’s theories was Ronald Hock, who viewed Paul’s missionary activities in a very different light. Paul’s reference to becoming a slave in 1 Cor 9:19 is according to Hock also a reference to his tentmaking. This

<sup>22</sup> The fact about Paul being mentioned nowhere else in historical writings of his time, is proof to Deissmann (1912:77) that he did not stand out at all, but disappeared in the crowd.

<sup>23</sup> My own italics.

<sup>24</sup> The commentaries of Ruef (1971:83) and Pop (1974:186) on 1 Cor 9 do not view the poverty of the Corinthian congregation as a reason for Paul’s self support. See also Hock (1978:557). There are, however, studies like the study of Agrell (1976:110) and the commentary of Barrett (1971:207) which directly refers to the hypothesis of Paul offering the gospel as ‘free of charge’ on behalf of the poor.

should point to Paul coming from a position of power to the work of an artisan. Paul's offering of the gospel as free of charge is also explained by Hock (1978:559) in terms of practices exercised by the philosopher Socrates.

We do, however, find Hock (1978:560) referring to Paul being able to reach the rich and the poor by not staying in a household with limited access, but making himself available to all people by entering the workshop and "plying a slavish trade". Paul's ministry is therefore not totally disconnected from the poor, but Hock is implying that he had to demote himself considerably to get access to the poor also.

The composition of the congregation in Corinth is also viewed by Hock (1978:561) as "drawn from the upper classes". In terms of this hypothesis these people would have looked degradingly unto Paul's trade, and Hock (1978:562) reckons that for Paul himself it would probably have been a humiliating experience. In conclusion Hock (1978:564) argues that the "attitude towards work... corresponded more to that of the upper classes than to that of the lower". This theory that Paul originated from the upper classes has also evolved into the interpretation of Paul's self-support in terms of patron-client relationships.

### 2.5.1 The development of the 'New Consensus' on Paul and poverty

The views of Hock concerning Paul and his trade evolved from a 'New Consensus',<sup>25</sup> a term which was used to indicate the assumption that a considerable number of Christians in the First Century came from the "middle or upper classes". The establishment of the New Consensus was even divided into three stages by Johnson (2004:24): the emphasis on the Corinthians as a social diverse group in the 1960's, the focus on the Corinthians as "a 'radically diverse' social constituency" in the 1970's, and the 1990's when studies emphasized the individuals of higher status people such as rhetors, members of the ruling class and Sophists.

From the preceding chapter it is evident that Deissmann and the theologians from the earlier centuries viewed the congregation in Corinth,<sup>26</sup> and the other First Century congregations to be predominantly from the

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<sup>25</sup> This term was probably coined by Malherbe (1983:31).

<sup>26</sup> This view was formulated mainly on an interpretation of 1 Cor 1:26, which reads: "Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth."

lower classes.<sup>27</sup> This historical assumption was, however, questioned by various scholars since the late fifties and early sixties of the previous century,<sup>28</sup> amidst the renewed interest in the social and historical contexts of First Century Mediterranean societies.

One of the first exponents of the New Consensus was Erwin Judge (1960). He questioned the assumptions that the different groups in First Century Corinth consisted out of poor Jewish farmers, or even a local group from the lower socio-economical ranks in the city (1964:50), and argued in favour of a considerable number of members being from the higher ranks of Roman society (1964:50-60). He also viewed Paul himself as being amongst the elite of First Century society (1960a:127). Last, but not least, Judge (1960b:60) also viewed the “dependant members of city households” as being “by no means the most debased section of society”.<sup>29</sup> Although scholars like Malherbe (1983:59) showed reluctance to accept Judge’s theories in full, a gradual shift in scholarly thought was clearly visible.<sup>30</sup>

The contribution of Theissen (1978:31-95), who distinguished between socio-political, socio-economical, socio-ecological and socio-cultural factors regarding the strata of First Century Society, announced a next phase in the New Consensus. Theissen expanded the theory of Judge also into the social nature and composition of the congregation in Corinth. He interprets 1 Cor 1:26-28 to confirm a class struggle within Corinth, and views the “wise”, “powerful”, and “noble” members as dominating the congregation.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> This view is still supported by some relatively recent commentators. In his commentary of 1 Cor 1:26 Ruef (1974:14) even ascribes this situation as God’s design: “Paul seems to be emphasizing here that the prevailing intellectual, economic, and social strata represented in the Corinthian church are low and that it is part of God’s plan”.

<sup>28</sup> Deissmann’s views did invoke early opponents, for instance Schumacher (1924).

<sup>29</sup> His argument is that those living in the city “enjoyed security and a moderate prosperity”, whilst the “peasantry and persons in slavery on the land were the most underprivileged classes” (Judge 1960b:60).

<sup>30</sup> In his commentary on social level and literary culture, Malherbe (1983:59) hypothesizes that Deissmann probably “aimed too low”.

<sup>31</sup> “By contrast, the Hellenistic congregations of early Christianity, as we find them in Corinth and Rome, display a marked internal stratification. In Corinth only a few are ‘wise,’ ‘powerful,’ and ‘of noble birth’ (1 Cor 1:26), but they seem to dominate and stand in contrast with the majority of members who come from the lower strata. A congregation so structured faces a difficult task in balancing differing expectations, interests, and self-understandings that are class-specific” (Theissen 1983:146).

A practical illustration towards understanding this interpretation of the Corinthian conflict is Theissen's view on the underlying divisions present in the communal meal in 1 Cor 11:17-34. The phrase τοὺς μὴ ἔχοντάς (literally translated as 'those who have not') in verse 22 was traditionally regarded as referring to the poor (who were being denied their share in the communal meal).<sup>32</sup> Fee (1987:534) reckons the implied object of the phrase to be 'houses'. This would mean that the rich (with houses of their own) facilitated the meetings, and adds to the view that the conflict was of socio-economic nature.

Although Theissen (1983:148) does not directly take the phrase τοὺς μὴ ἔχοντάς as an indication for the poor, he interprets the object of the phrase to be 'bread'. He refers to the habit of the first-century elite to hand out different portions of food to people to accentuate their status. Therefore his interpretation leads to the assumption that this phrase is an indication of people with a different socio-political status.

Concurrently with Theissen, Wayne Meeks (1983) published his book *The first urban Christians: The social world of the apostle Paul*. He (1983:51-73) argues very boldly in favour of the Christians in the First Century being from "mixed strata" within a substantial middle and higher class, rather than being "proletarians", as Deissmann argued. He does not only submit 'prosopographic evidence',<sup>33</sup> but also discusses various indirect indications of the relative wealth of the Christians.<sup>34</sup> The issue of Paul's self-support, mentioned here by Meeks (1993:71-72), does deserve some attention, being very relevant for the scope of this study.

In his discussion of the rivalry between Paul and the super apostles, Meeks (1983:72) names three factors which are emerging from Paul's arguments. These are (1) the emphasis on rhetoric ability and imposing physical presence, (2) the qualification of an apostle by the way he is supported, and (3) the emphasis on "peculiar religious qualifications". Especially the second factor is noteworthy – according to Meeks (1983:72) it was "not the amount of wealth, but the manner of income" that is in question.

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<sup>32</sup> See Grosheide 1953:268; Pop 1965:248; Groenewald 1967:147.

<sup>33</sup> As prosopographic evidence Meeks (1983:55) submits the names and known information regarding the more or less 80 fellow Christians mentioned by Paul.

<sup>34</sup> Amongst the most prominent cases cited by Meeks (1983:63-72) is the *familia Caesaris* (household of Caesar), presence of slave-owners, the passages addressed to handworkers and craftsmen, the collection for Jerusalem, the presence of lawsuits, the communal meal, and their reactions to Paul's self-sufficiency.

The argument that Meeks employs is that Paul's negative portrayal of the income that the super apostles received in 2 Cor 11:20<sup>35</sup> has triggered their questioning of his self-support.<sup>36</sup> He also mentions 2 Cor 12:16-18<sup>37</sup> as evidence that the Corinthians felt that Paul exploited them with his collection for the Jews in Jerusalem.

Also relevant is Meeks' (1983:66) theory that "Paul's refusal of support from the Corinthians is not absolute, for there are indications that he expected them routinely to help with travel expenses" (1 Cor 16:6, 2 Cor 1:16). Meeks' argument is based on the use of *προπέμπω* as not only referring to the lexical meaning or 'sending somebody forward', but having the added semantic component of equipping<sup>38</sup> somebody for his journey (Louw & Nida 1988a:191).<sup>39</sup> This would have involved "some financial outlay" (Meeks 1983:66).

In a sense Marshall's book, "Enmity in Corinth: Social conventions in Paul's relations with the Corinthians", functions as a bridge to the view on Paul in the 1990's. Marshall (1987:vii) takes an in depth look at the reasons for Paul's refusal to accept salary from the angle of the relationships of friendship and enmity between Paul and the Corinthians. In Marshall's treatment of Paul's relations to the Corinthians typical conventions of the Roman elite is dealt with: patronage, reciprocity, wealth and friendship.<sup>40</sup> Marshall (1987:233-258) gives ample attention to Paul's

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<sup>35</sup> 2 Cor 11:20: "In fact, you even put up with anyone who enslaves you or exploits you or takes advantage of you or pushes himself forward or slaps you in the face."

<sup>36</sup> To my view Meeks (1983:72) is anachronistic in this interpretation. The possibility that accusations in 2 Cor form the reason for an issue that Paul already addressed in his first letter, is rather slim.

<sup>37</sup> 2 Cor 12:16-18: "<sup>16</sup> Be that as it may, I have not been a burden to you. Yet, crafty fellow that I am, I caught you by trickery! <sup>17</sup> Did I exploit you through any of the men I sent you? <sup>18</sup> I urged Titus to go to you and I sent our brother with him. Titus did not exploit you, did he? Did we not act in the same spirit and follow the same course?"

<sup>38</sup> This use of *προπέμπω* is found in Titus 3:13-14: "<sup>13</sup> Do everything you can to help *Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their way* and see that they have everything they need. <sup>14</sup> Our people must learn to devote themselves to doing what is good, in order that they may provide for daily necessities and not live unproductive lives".

<sup>39</sup> The use of *προπέμπω* to indicate material assistance was previously argued by Malherbe (1977:230).

<sup>40</sup> One deficiency in Marshall's research on enmity is the absence of the correspondence of Favorinus to Corinth. The letter written by this philosopher and orator to Corinth after being ridiculed in his absence is documented by Winter (2003:291-236).



refusal to accept the “offer”<sup>41</sup> of the Corinthians, and also to his “variance” in accepting remuneration from other churches.

According to Marshall (1987:233) Paul himself gives 3 reasons for his refusal to accept salary or a “gift” in his Letters to the Corinthians:

1. He tried not to place an obstacle in the way of the gospel of Christ (1 Cor 9:12b).
2. He refrained from being a burden to anyone (2 Cor 11:9; 12:13, 14).
3. He loved them (2 Cor 11:11, 12:15).

Examining 1 Cor 9 from a First Century rhetorical perspective,<sup>42</sup> Marshall (1987:402-403) argues that Paul purposely denied to accept his salary or “gift” in terms of the patron-client relationship. According to Marshall (1987:402-403) Paul attempted to illustrate that status and wealth, being prominent in Graeco-Roman culture, should not be a factor in the Christian community.<sup>43</sup>

The attention Marshall gives to the focal point of this study, being 1 Cor 9:18 and the adjective ἀδάπανος (free of charge)<sup>44</sup> in particular, should not go unnoticed. Although ἀδάπανος is a *hapax legomenon* in the new Testament, Marshall (1987:250) points to Paul’s use of the same root, being δαπανάω (to spend), and ἐκδαπανάω (to expend), in 2 Cor 12:14, 15.<sup>45</sup> Marshall (1987:250) also draws attention to the parallel use of

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<sup>41</sup> Marshall’s hypothesis is built strongly on the research of Hock (cf 2.6 above), and he views the reason for Paul addressing of this issue as being an “offer of aid” made to Paul from an elite individual or group within Corinth (Marshall 1987:173-186).

<sup>42</sup> In his rhetorical approach to 1 Cor 9 Marshall (1987:282-325) is described as the “Free Man” (1 Cor 9:9-14), the “Slave” (1 Cor 9:15-18) and the “Flatterer” (1 Cor 9:19-23, 2 Cor).

<sup>43</sup> Paul’s intentions are summarized as follows by Meeks (1987:402-403): “He (Paul) introduced into the normal pattern of social relations the notion that Christ’s death was a death for all, regardless of status. This was seen generally in his remarkable use of servile terminology to describe himself, his associates and others of rank, and their servitude to others. In 1 Cor it is implicit in his attempts to replace the distinctions and discrimination of social standing with his own unconventional idea of communal relations. Its radical demands were ignored by some wealthy Corinthians who insisted on their traditional rights and rejected the apostle who had shamefully abandoned this”.

<sup>44</sup> This reference is in analogy with Hock (1980:62), who also draws attention to ἀδάπανος as describing Paul’s “boast that he offered the gospel free of charge”.

<sup>45</sup> 2 Cor 12:14,15: “<sup>14</sup>Now I am ready to visit you for the third time, and I will not be a burden to you, because what I want is not your possessions but you. After all, children should not have to save up for their parents, but parents for their children. <sup>15</sup>So I will very gladly spend for you everything I have and expend myself as well. If I love you more, will you love me less?”

δαπανάω by Aristotle in his *Ethica Nicomachea* (24:1.29), where Aristotle discusses parental duties and the reciprocal obligations of children.

In the next decade the focus on patronage, benefaction, reciprocity, and wealth (evident in Marshall's work) triggered a flurry of research into the individuals of higher status in the First Century Mediterranean,<sup>46</sup> as well as Paul's position in their midst.<sup>47</sup> A good example of these investigations is found in the work of Winter (1994), *Seek the welfare of the city*. Amongst the several references Winter also uses several texts from the undisputed Pauline Letters as departure points to illustrate Paul's attitude towards Christian benefaction.<sup>48</sup>

In his discussion of 1 Cor 8:11:1, Winter (1994:165-166) views Paul's referring to the ἐξουσία (right)<sup>49</sup> of some congregation members as indicating their "civic privilege".<sup>50</sup> He then proceeds to argue that Paul contrasts this use of ἐξουσία with not using his own ἐξουσία (1 Cor 9:4-6, 12, 18) to ask for money, but exercising his right being an ἐλεύθερος (free-man), and offering the gospel ἀδύπανος. According to Winter (1994:174-177) 1 Cor 9 eventually functions as Paul's example of taking into account the "welfare of others", rather than his own interests. 1 Cor 8 and 10, both addressing the issue of idol meat is therefore shown to be catalysed by 1 Cor 9, with the climax being in 1 Cor 10:23-11:1. In this peri-

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<sup>46</sup> See Wallace-Hadrill (1989:63-88) Patronage in Roman Society: From Republic to Empire.; Gonzales (1990) Faith and wealth; Kidd (1990) Wealth and beneficence in the pastoral epistles: A bourgeois form of Early Christianity?; Chow (1992) Patronage and power: A study of social networks in Corinth; Winter (1994) *Seek the Welfare of the city: Christians as benefactors and citizens*; Eisen (1996) *Amtsträgerinnen im frühen Christentum*; Elliott (1996:144-158) Patronage and clientage; Rajak (1996:305-319) Benefactors in the Graeco-Jewish Diaspora; DeSilva (2000) Honour, patronage, kinship & purity.

<sup>47</sup> See Sampley (1990:223-238) Faith and its moral life: A study of individuation in the thought world of the apostle Paul; Castelli (1991) *Imitating Paul: A discourse of Power*; Becker (1993:132-110) Paul and his churches; Savage (1996) Power through weakness: Paul's understanding of the Christian ministry in 2 Corinthians; Peterman (1997) *Paul's Gift from Philippi: Conventions of gift exchange and Christian Giving*.

<sup>48</sup> Rom 13:3-4, Php 1:27-2:18, 1 Cor 6:1-11, Gal 6:11-18, 1 Cor 7:17-24, 1 Cor 8 – 11:1, and Rom 16:3.

<sup>49</sup> 1 Cor 8:9: "Be careful, however, that the exercise of your freedom does not become a stumbling block to the weak."

<sup>50</sup> The connection with eating sacrificed meat in an idol's temple (1 Cor 8, 10), together with the reference to the sport in 1 Cor 9:24-27, leads Winter (1994:166) to the conclusion that some believers were specially invited to public feasts at the Isthmian games, and therefore were of high status.

cope Paul therefore exhorts them to consider others and follow his example, just as he follows the example of Christ.<sup>51</sup>

The approach of Winter is a good example of how Paul's self-support is interpreted in terms of making a statement to the "strong", being the "civic privilege". The 'New Consensus' was, however, never accepted by all.<sup>52</sup> As one of the early critics of the New Consensus, Gager (1979:177) commented on Grant's choice of topics to reflect "in many ways his own and his readers' social location as well-to-do, moderate, middle-class Americans". The lack of attention to the poor were also pointed out by Gager (1979:177): "In treating alms, tithing, and endowments, more attention might have been directed to the eventual recipients of these benefices...". Hollenbach (1987:60) not only viewed the poor as the majority of society, but also looked at the poor from the angle of structural oppression. Gradually more and more voices arose for viewing the *Sitz im Leben* of 1 Corinthians also in terms of the poor.

One such a voice was raised by Mitchell (1993). In dealing with the question concerning lawsuits in 1 Cor 6:1-11, Mitchell (1993:562-563) argues against the traditional view, supported by Fee (1987:229) and Winter (1991:559-572). Mitchell's hypothesis is that the parties involved in the lawsuits were not two individuals of higher status (as Fee and Winter assumed earlier), but rather believers of higher status, suing members of lower status.

Important for my quest is Mitchell's arguments, who argues that the rich elite tried to gain honour by suing the poor, who were not able to pay for court cases (Mitchell 1993:580). He proceeds to argue that this case was probably coming forth from Clhoe's people, being slaves and freedmen according to Meeks (1983:59), and not from matters forwarded to Paul in writing by the elite community leaders.<sup>53</sup> Drawing on the

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<sup>51</sup> The argument introduced here by Winter (1994:177) is that Paul is encouraging the Corinthians to seek the welfare of the weak by sacrificing their right: "The lengthy argument to which Paul resorted in 8:1-11:1 shows not only the need to demolish the substantial case which they had mounted, but to reaffirm that the Christian's task was to seek the physical and spiritual welfare of others, as Paul himself had done in imitation of Christ".

<sup>52</sup> Counting amongst the critics of the "New Consensus" were Gager (1979:174-180), Schottroff (1990:247-256) and Schöllgen (1998:71-82).

<sup>53</sup> These leaders are associated by Theissen (1982:97) with the wealthy elite, being able to host the apostles at their homes.

sociological law theory of Black (1976:17-20),<sup>54</sup> Mitchell (1993:582-583) argues that the slaves and freedmen probably protested against being brought before court, being too poor to afford their own defence.

In conclusion to this article Mitchell (1993:583-584) not only views Paul to have taken the side of the weak,<sup>55</sup> but he uses 1 Cor 4 and 9<sup>56</sup> as evidence that Paul “calls for a suspension of the normal social activity of the strong” in conflicts. Although still in line with the New Consensus, Mitchell’s article does move in the direction of interpreting the Corinthian conflict in terms of economics and not only social status. It also disputes the law cases as issues between people of equal rank, but argues towards the presence of the poor in Corinth, and Paul’s sympathy with them.

The almost gullible way in which scholarship built one theory upon another, and accepted the First Century Mediterranean society to consist of several elite and a large middle class in the 1990’s, left the proponents of the New Consensus exposed to criticism. Such a corrective came from the pen of Meggitt (1998): *Paul, poverty and survival*.<sup>57</sup> Although being (by own admittance) more “destructive” than “constructive”, Meggitt (1998:179) systematically questions all the core assumptions about the socio-economic composition of First Century society, the material resources of the congregants themselves, the absence of elite and wealthy individuals in the congregations, and consequently the personal situation of the apostle Paul before and after his conversion to Christianity.

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<sup>54</sup> In his treatment on law and stratification Black (1976:17-21) makes some interesting comments on the important function of wealth in law. He states that “people with less wealth has less law”, and that “the total wealth of a society and community predicts the quantity of its law”.

<sup>55</sup> “Therefore, Paul’s proposed solution itself seeks a method that would equalize the imbalance and remedy the disadvantage of the lower status people in the courts. ... As we noted earlier, private arbitration offered Paul distinct advantages that would bring relief to the poor” (Mitchell 1993:584).

<sup>56</sup> The notion of Paul’s self-defence in 1 Cor 9 as being an example of siding with the poor/weak is very important, and will be taken up later.

<sup>57</sup> Criticism against using patronage as interpretative framework for Paul’s self-support is evident in the works of Pao (2002:165-173) and Aejmelaus (2002:352-344).

In his approach (which he identifies as “etic”),<sup>58</sup> Meggitt (1998:13) attempts to look at “history from below”, reasoning that the general literary material available mainly comes from material written for the purposes of the elite, and therefore not representing the true picture of poverty, and the socio-economic situation of the day. Given the tentative nature of such a quest, it is therefore strange that Meggitt (1998:50), by process of elimination (calculating the number of elite), comes to the conclusion that “over 99% of the empire’s population could expect little more from life than *abject* poverty”.<sup>59</sup> From this he concludes that Paul and the congregation members were all functioning at or below a subsistence level.

Although space does not allow me to enter into the detail of Meggitt’s arguments, two of the incongruent arguments concerning Corinth deserve attention. On the one hand he (Meggitt 1998:60) views the fish from the polluted Tiber river as being the only protein available to the inhabitants of Rome, whilst he defends the position of the poor as having access to meat according to 1 Cor 8 and 10 by stating that the *popinae* in Corinth sold meat, although being mostly the leftover scraps, like blood puddings, intestines, etc. (Meggitt 1998:111).<sup>60</sup>

Another argument of Meggitt (1998:118-122) that was not received well,<sup>61</sup> is his rendering of the phrase τοὺς μὴ ἔχοντάς as not referring to those “not having possessions/food/houses”.<sup>62</sup> He argues that it plainly refers to those that did not have “the Eucharist”. These explanations do

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<sup>58</sup> Although Meggitt views his approach and findings as “etic”, he makes the statement in his conclusion that the results from “emic” approaches still stands. It must be realised that pure “emic” approaches, i.e. for instance studying the socio economic situation of the congregations in the New Testament from documents originating from their midst alone, is practically impossible, given the scarce nature of the evidence available (Deist 2000:84).

<sup>59</sup> A more refined model was later provided by Friesen (2004:347), which renders 28% in *abject* poverty, 40% at subsistence level, 22% just above subsistence, 7% in the middle class, and only 3% forming part of the elite.

<sup>60</sup> In his response to Meggitt, Theissen (2001:371-391) argues for the presence of *macellae* (upmarket butcheries), which would prove that there were wealthy members in Corinth who could afford meat.

<sup>61</sup> Not only Theissen (2001:371-391) but Henderson (2002:195-208) views the phrase τοὺς μὴ ἔχοντάς to indicate that there was conflict between people of different socio-economic classes.

<sup>62</sup> The views of Theissen and Fee quoted earlier in this section refers to the Corinthians ‘not having’ possessions/food/houses.

have some artificial elements, but in general Meggitt's contribution is invaluable to forming a reassessment of poverty in First Century Corinth. Although his publication was surely not the final say about the presence or absence of elite in the Corinthian congregation, I believe that he stimulated an important field of research.<sup>63</sup>

A last remark about the research of Meggitt (1998:155-164): his contribution on the survival strategy that Paul followed in his congregations. According to Meggitt the four options available to Paul would have been *αὐτάρκεια* almsgiving, hospitality and mutualism. He points out that Paul seldom (if ever) refers to almsgiving, except for the reference in Gal 6:9.<sup>64</sup> He concludes that Paul uses and encourages the principle of mutualism: bilateral assistance and respect between members themselves, as well as congregations (Meggitt 1998:163-164).

From the above it is clear that an investigation into Paul's ministry from a socio-economic angle is more than relevant in terms of the current New Consensus debate. To have a good overview of the role of the reader in terms of the *Wirkungsgeschichte*, a few new angles of interpretation (the collection, missiology, feminism, African theologians, and the New Perspective on Paul) are investigated.

### 2.5.2 Paul and the Collection<sup>65</sup>

The renewed interest in socio-historic studies during the latter part of the twentieth century<sup>66</sup> also triggered renewed attention to Paul's collec-

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<sup>63</sup> In the light of the subsequent work done by Friesen it can be assumed that *at least* two thirds of the population, and probably also the congregation in Corinth, lived on or below the subsistence level.

<sup>64</sup> Gal 6:9: "Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up."

<sup>65</sup> The collection refers to Paul's promise made to the Jerusalem elders in Gal 2:10 that he would "continue to remember the poor", and his consequent effort to collect funds on behalf of the poor in Jerusalem.

<sup>66</sup> Socio-historic studies have probably become much more popular than Gager (1970:175) ever imagined: "As recently as five years ago, scarcely anyone would have ventured to predict a revival of interest in the social history of early Christianity. As things stand now, however, the case for the legitimacy and viability of the enterprise is clearly established and accepted. While it is still too early to determine whether this burst of energy will be sustained, it has already altered the shape of the field for all future members".

tion for the poor in Jerusalem.<sup>67</sup> The influence of the New Consensus was still very evident, especially in the work of Joubert (2000).<sup>68</sup> This work does not only make interesting reading in terms of the chronology of the Collection, but it discusses the differences between patronage and benefaction in depth. In Joubert's opinion<sup>69</sup> patronage has its roots in the Roman culture, whilst beneficence is from Greek origin. He views the essence of patronage to be social control, focused on a specific group, *contra* beneficence, being of a selfless and a more communal nature (Joubert 2000:68).

The model of beneficence being used here to describe Paul's collection for the poor in Jerusalem,<sup>70</sup> in a sense illustrates Joubert's thesis that Paul's collection was indeed intended to "address Jerusalem's poverty".<sup>71</sup> Although Joubert (2000:219) concludes by hinting at some present-day applications for this thesis,<sup>72</sup> Paul's self-support in 1 Cor 9 and its relevance for the Collection<sup>73</sup> is strangely missing,<sup>74</sup> especially in terms of the title of the book, focusing on Paul's beneficence.

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<sup>67</sup> See Nickle (1966) The collection: A study in Paul's strategy; Georgi (1992) Remembering the poor: The history of Paul's collection for Jerusalem; Beckheuer (1997) Paulus und Jerusalem: Kollekte und Mission im theologischen Denken des Heidenapostels.

<sup>68</sup> The title clearly shows the influence of the New Consensus: Paul as benefactor: reciprocity, strategy and theological reflection in Paul's collection.

<sup>69</sup> This view of Joubert was later challenged by Crook (2005:65), who argued that the only difference between patronage and benefaction is that patronage is more political, exploitative and elitist than beneficence or *euergetism*.

<sup>70</sup> In my opinion Crook (2005:63) justly criticizes Joubert for using the title "Paul as benefactor", whilst (according to Joubert himself) Paul's benefaction was a response to the initial "benefaction" granted to him by the elders from Jerusalem, being that he is allowed to proclaim the gospel to non-Jews.

<sup>71</sup> The "collection" has often been viewed primarily in terms of Paul's strategy to appease the Jerusalem leaders, and not as his concern for the poor as such (Holmberg 1978:38, Eckert 1981:66).

<sup>72</sup> The need for a modern application of the collection is articulated by Joubert (2000:219): "Perhaps present-day churches should once again pay serious attention to the principles inherent to the Pauline collection. ... Such efforts to address the situation of the socially destitute could at the same time give concrete expression to the bond of fellowship between God's people".

<sup>73</sup> It is notable that Theissen (1982:96) refers to the fact that Paul challenged the supporters of other missionaries (who were (according to Theissen) "wealthy" enough to blame Paul for not accepting support) to contribute to the collection.

<sup>74</sup> Apart from two superfluous references to 1 Cor 9:5, 16 (Joubert 2000:123,125), no references are made in the book to 1 Cor 9. This is unfortunately also true for Joubert's article (2002:678-688) *Shifting styles of church leadership: Paul's pragmatic leadership style in*

The Collection also became prevalent in studies concerned with poverty in South Africa, such as the articles of Punt.<sup>75</sup> Punt (2000b:470) does not only coincide with Joubert that the main aim of the Collection was to “relieve poverty”,<sup>76</sup> but also provides a refreshing hermeneutical model for addressing poverty in the African context.<sup>77</sup> The main point of concern, however, is Punt’s (2000b:470) (unmotivated) statement that “Paul’s repeated and (once) well-argued insistence on the need for churches to contribute to the alleviation of the poverty of the Jerusalem community stands in stark contrast to his disavowal of personal support”.

The phrase “stark contrast” probably refers to the difference in the face value of Paul’s self-support and collection, but the comment is peculiar in the light of his article on “Paul’s economic vision on work” published earlier in the same year (Punt 2000a:251-371). In this article Punt (2000b:364) takes into consideration the reasons for Paul’s self-support, also referring to 1 Cor 9. He does not only connect Paul’s labour to the poor, but also quotes Everts (1993:299): “(the gospel) ... was the controlling force in his requests for and refusal of money ...”. A closer investigation into Everts’ article reveals that he on the one hand states the contrast between the Collection and Paul’s self-support,<sup>78</sup> but on the other hand emphasises the consistency of Paul’s attitude towards “money and missions”.<sup>79</sup>

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*1 and 2 Cor during the organization of the collection for Jerusalem.* There is therefore definite need for a study that also investigates the relations between Paul’s self-support and the collection.

<sup>75</sup> See Punt (2000b:469-489) *Towards constructing Paul’s economic vision on poverty*; Punt (2004a:256-265) *Remembering the poor: Paul’s vision on poverty*.

<sup>76</sup> The concrete purpose of the collection is argued by Punt (2004a:256) in no uncertain terms: “The primary purpose of the collection was clearly the attempt to relieve what appeared to have been a situation of desperate poverty in the Jerusalem church”.

<sup>77</sup> Warning against the danger of “ventriloquising Paul”, Punt (2000b:470) describes the method of his exegetical quest as “... proceeding from a cultural-critical interest, interacting with socio-historical evaluations of the first century economic context, reviewing various scholarly opinions and using a literary-critical reading of the Pauline letters”.

<sup>78</sup> The first sentence in Everts’ treatise of the collection reads as follow: “Even though Paul did not ask the churches he worked in to support him financially, he had no hesitation about asking them to contribute to one of his ongoing projects – the collection...” (Everts 1993:297).

<sup>79</sup> Later in the same article Everts (1993:299) proceeds as follows: “Is Paul’s teaching about money contradictory and/or inconsistent? Not when one realizes that the controlling



Lastly it is important to give a cursory glance at research concerning the acceptance of the Collection in Jerusalem. The main problem is the fact that the Collection is not mentioned upon Paul's return to Jerusalem and his consequent arrest.<sup>80</sup> The reference to Paul and his delegation being received ὁσπένως (warmly)<sup>81</sup> in Acts 21:7, traditionally motivated some scholars to believe that the Collection was accepted favourably.<sup>82</sup> There is, however, also an opposing view, stating that the Collection was not received favourably at all (Roloff 1981:312). This view is in a sense taken to the extreme by Wedderburn (2001:149) who concludes that the non-acceptance of the Collection by James and the elders in Jerusalem, and the arrest of Paul eventually led to a "breakdown between the Judean churches and Paul".

It is therefore clear that the relevance of the Collection<sup>83</sup> for Paul's self-support, and him "labouring free of charge", has often been underestimated, or totally neglected in research, and therefore deserves attention in this study.

### 2.5.3 Paul's labour from a missiological perspective

During this era I also see a revival in interest concerning Paul's missionary praxis and his occupation as tentmaker from a missiological perspective. The study of Kritzinger (1979:135-185) does portray some differences compared to the argumentation as Hock (1987:564), and his other contemporaries. Kritzinger (1979:183-185) mentions five reasons

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force in his requests for and refusal of money was the gospel of Christ. ... In Paul's understanding of money the spiritual and material aspects of giving and receiving money are closely related".

<sup>80</sup> A good representation of the uncertainty in this regard is given by Joubert (2000:215): "The solution reached at the initial meeting between James and Paul was never concluded because of Paul's arrest in the temple. After ending up in Roman custody, the collection was out of his hands. Whether his companions returned the funds to their churches, or gave it to Jerusalem, we shall never know".

<sup>81</sup> Acts 21:17: "When we arrived at Jerusalem, the brothers received us warmly."

<sup>82</sup> According to Chacko (2000:182), arguing from Acts 21:17, "the collection was received with profound gratitude".

<sup>83</sup> The significance of the Collection for present day situations is highly valued. I totally agree with Punt (2004:256), who argues that Paul's treatment of the Collection has the potential to "provide a launching pad for theological reflection on poverty that ultimately goes beyond material altruism, however important it clearly is in South Africa".

why Paul reverted to tentmaking and refused to accept money for his labour.<sup>84</sup>

1. He avoided laying a burden on the congregations.
2. He declined any association with those preachers who misused their right on maintenance and became parasites.
3. He wanted to portray an example of manual labour to the congregation.
4. There were certain principles that he wanted to reiterate, for instance the principle of giving being better than receiving.
5. He is making this sacrifice mainly from a missionary point of view, i.e. becoming “everything to everybody to save at least some”.

Although Kritzinger approaches this issue within a Missionary paradigm, the sensitivity and interest for the socio-economic situation of at least some members in the Corinthian congregation is strangely missing here.<sup>85</sup>

Only three years later a serious challenge is directed to South African theologians and pastors by Van Niekerk (1982:6-14). In his publication *Dominee, are you listening to the drums?* he seriously questions “the assumption that is widely held that hard work and individual progress will automatically contribute to the progress of society, to the betterment of the poor, and the survival of Christianity and Western civilisation”. He further states that it is “not enough for theology to try to relate present day secularist Western society to God,” but that it “should also find ways to relate it to man, and specifically to the poor, which in South Africa means largely black people” (Van Niekerk 1982:121).

This deficiency, pointed out by Van Niekerk, was dealt with in part by the extensive work of David Bosch (1991), *Transforming mission*. Bosch (1991:420-457) does not only integrate the social aspects of mission in his model,<sup>86</sup> but also starts his book with an elaborate discussion on the New Testament models of mission. In his discussion of Paul’s self-consciousness he links Paul’s famous paradox in 2 Cor 12:10b<sup>87</sup> to his “decision to support himself through the work of his own hands and not

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<sup>84</sup> My own translation.

<sup>85</sup> The referral to Paul as not wanting to “lay a burden” can at most be interpreted as an indirect indicator of his sympathy with their economic situation.

<sup>86</sup> As part of his chapter on “Elements of an emerging missionary Paradigm” Bosch addresses social aspects like justice, contextualization, liberation and inculturation”.

<sup>87</sup> 2 Cor 12:10b: “for when I am weak, then I am strong.”

to accept any financial support from the churches he has founded". Bosch (1991:133) gives the credibility of the gospel, as well as the aim to win as many as possible,<sup>88</sup> and the necessity to preach the gospel as reasons for Paul's approach.

Although not denying the prominence of eschatology in Paul, the way in which Bosch (1991:123-178) defines "Mission in Paul" as an "invitation to join the eschatological community" seems somewhat artificial. This approach leads him to lengthy discussions on Pauline theology (of a more abstract nature) and relatively little attention to Paul and his First Century context.<sup>89</sup> In what he (1991:176-177) describes as "Paul's missionary paradigm", Paul's "mission in weakness" is being granted prominence under its own heading. In my view Bosch's contribution towards a more relevant appropriation of Paul's labour and approach towards compensation for his ministry should not be underestimated.

### 2.5.4 Reading Paul's self-support from a feminist perspective

Although some studies have been done concerning Paul's identification with female images,<sup>90</sup> Paul's approach to gender issues is currently surely one of the most debated issues in New Testament circles. On the one hand Paul is viewed as a proto-feminist preaching radical egalitarian-

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<sup>88</sup> 1 Cor 9:19: "Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible."

<sup>89</sup> This does not mean that Paul's commentary on his context is negated at all. In discussing Paul's mission and the transformation of society, Bosch (1991:175) discusses Paul as not inclining towards any of the opposite sentiments of 'pure' apocalyptic or enthusiasm. In this regard Bosch (1991:176) states: "Paul opposes both postures of non-involvement in society, and he does it with the aid of a radically reinterpreted apocalyptic. Precisely because of God's sure victory in the end Paul emphasizes not ethical passivity but active participation in God's redemptive will in the here and now". The apocalyptic emphasis that Bosch places in Paul's approach is, however, still evident in the next paragraph, where he argues that "Paul is clearly hesitant about stressing too much participation in the world. This undoubtedly is due, in part, to his context and his expectation of the imminent parousia as well as to his conviction that human exertion will not usher in the new world".

<sup>90</sup> Although the title of the article of Malherbe (1970) *Gentle as a nurse: The Cynic background to 1 Thess ii*, implies a deeper look into Paul and his image as a 'mother', this is certainly not the case, and focuses more on Cynicism in general. In a subsequent treatment of the same text Van Rensburg (1986) convincingly shows how Paul is comparing him and his fellow workers to a baby, to a mother and a father.

ism,<sup>91</sup> whilst on the other he is viewed as the “favorite of conservative Christians, however, who think Paul teaches that women are inferior to men and thus wives ‘should obey their husbands’ ” (Eisenbaum 2000:506).

Paul and traditional interpretation on gender issues increasingly became the target of feminist scholars. In the book of Wire (1990:62-66) Paul is played down to the Corinthian Women prophets, whilst Fiorenza (2000:41) proposes that the hermeneutics of Paul’s writings be submitted to a “public health enquiry”.<sup>92</sup> In the same line Kittredge (2000:108) pleads for sympathetically tracing the positions of Paul’s opponents (including the Corinthian women prophets) in his Letters, and to “compile and critically interpret evidence of women’s prophecy and ascetism within the early Christian tradition and the wider Greco-Roman world”.

Although not agreeing with the view that Paul acts as an ‘oppressor’,<sup>93</sup> I sense the need to investigate not only the financial position of female elders, apostles and prophets in First Century Corinth, but also the position of women clergy (and clergy marriages) in our present day context.<sup>94</sup> Furthermore attention to Paul’s ‘mother’ image is not to be disregarded in the light of him offering the gospel ‘free of charge’.

One such a study was done by Gaventa (2004:85-97), titled *Our mother St. Paul: Toward the recovery of a neglected theme*. Interested in ‘maternal imagery’, Gaventa (2004:87-90) lists no more than seven references involving maternal imagery<sup>95</sup> in the undisputed Pauline Letters. She ar-

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<sup>91</sup> The reference here is to Fiorenza (1983), who viewed Paul as idealizing and preaching for equal women’s rights, especially based on Gal 3:28.

<sup>92</sup> The implication is that some of the statements by Paul and by Pauline scholars are detrimental to “public health” (Stendahl 1982:204-205) and should be removed.

<sup>93</sup> A term used by Tannehill (2004:122-137) in describing (amongst others) the views of Wire and Fiorenza.

<sup>94</sup> Early studies in this regard did not look at gender at all (probably because of the absence of women in these churches), eg Bonifield (1980:146-158). Studies already done in this field include: La Magdaleine (1986) *Catholic church related jobs as dual labor markets: A speculative enquiry*; Francis & Robbins (1997:219-235) *Differences in the personality profile of stipendary and non-stipendary female Anglican parochial clergy in Britain and Ireland*; and Chang, Lummis & Sigmund 1998 *Clergy women: an uphill battle*.

<sup>95</sup> A distinction is made here between texts where Paul depicts himself (and his fellow apostles) as mother, being in 1 Cor 3:1-2, Gal 4:19, and 1 Thess 2:7. In the next two references there is imagery in which Paul depicts himself as child of a mother in 1 Cor 15:8 and Gal 1:15, and the last two instances refers to “mother nature” being “in labour”: 1 Thess 5:3, Rom 8:22. It should also be noted that 2 Cor 6:13 and 2 Cor 12:14 (which is

gues that this is even more than the usage of paternal imagery by Paul<sup>96</sup>, which was the focus of several studies.<sup>97</sup> Although revealing, the argument of Gaventa (2004:90) that maternal imagery is used more by Paul than paternal imagery is rather weak. To come to that conclusion she takes out of contention all Paul's references to God as father, and interprets texts such as Gal 4:12-20 to be solely referring to maternal imagery.<sup>98</sup>

There are, however, some aspects that need consideration in the rest of Gaventa's article. The third aspect of parental imagery pointed out by Gaventa (2004:90), is that Paul always uses the image of being a mother or a father in relation to his office, and not necessarily his person. She furthermore points to Old Testament maternal imagery<sup>99</sup> that could have served as a background for Paul's portrayal of himself as a 'mother' (Gaventa 2004:91). In her conclusion Gaventa (2004:96) gives to my view her most valuable contribution to this study: the notion that the maternal imagery in Paul may contribute to subvert "the reductionistic dichotomy between hierarchical and egalitarian texts"<sup>100</sup> (Gaventa 2004:96).

From the investigation into Paul and feminism it is clear that looking at a text through the eyes of different readers does not have to be a burden, enforced on the exegete, but may be the door to exploring new territories, providing models that can function as catalysts for current conflicts in scholarship.

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also under scrutiny in this thesis), refers to the Corinthians as children or being their parent in a neutral sense (Gaventa 2004:86-90).

<sup>96</sup> According to Gaventa (2004:89) the only direct allusions to Paul being a father can be found in Phm 10, 1 Cor 4:15, Php 2:22 and 1 Thess 2:11-12.

<sup>97</sup> Amongst the studies that have Paul's paternal imagery as focus, there are Lassen (1991:127-136) The use of the father image in Imperial propaganda and 1 Cor 4:14-21; Joubert (1995:213-223) Managing the household: Paul as Paterfamilias of the Christian household group in Corinth; Bartchy (2003:1-17) Who should be called father? Paul of Tarsus between the Jesus tradition and patria potestas; and White (2003:457-487) Paul and pater familias.

<sup>98</sup> To my view the article of White (2003:457-487) is a good example of how paternal and maternal imagery can be interpreted from a more balanced perspective.

<sup>99</sup> See Jer 6:24, Num 11:12.

<sup>100</sup> The argument here is that Paul's approach as 'mother' to the congregants cannot be categorised as being either 'egalitarian' or 'hierarchical', and may therefore serve to reconcile these opposite views of Paul's approach.

### 2.5.5 African views on Paul, labour and compensation

Although the work of David Bosch (1991)<sup>101</sup> were globally accepted and acclaimed,<sup>102</sup> substantial criticism was brought in against it, amongst which was the review of Mofokeng (1990:168-180), branding it as a “Euro-American” publication, not really in touch with theology from an African perspective. In taking the New Testament discipline as departure point for a study which eventually makes certain conclusions for Botswana, a country in the heart of Africa, it is important to take into consideration also the views of indigenous African New Testament scholars.<sup>103</sup>

Until recently the main contributions of African New Testament Scholarship was focused on the gospels.<sup>104</sup> Recently the appearance of the *Africa Bible commentary* (2006)<sup>105</sup> proves that there is a growing interest in Pauline studies and the rest of the New Testament as well. Such an African perspective on Paul and Peter is clear in the comparison that Obed Dube (2004:37-49) makes between the apostles’ divine experiences and calling.

Exploring the similarities and dissimilarities of their calling experiences,<sup>106</sup> Dube (2004:46) concludes that Paul’s diverse cultural background, his Jewish training, his tentmaking skills, and his celibacy gave him an advantage over Peter and other apostles. He applies Paul and Peter’s calling to the need for African scholars to “undergo the same process of transformation as did Paul and Peter” (Dube 2004:48). He pleads for African Christian workers to “reflect faithful commitment to honouring the God they worship” with their lives. He proceeds to state

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<sup>101</sup> See the discussion on Bosch in 2.5.3 above.

<sup>102</sup> Besides receiving several South African awards, it has been listed as one of the top 100 books of the 20th century by the journal *Christianity Today*.

<sup>103</sup> Although attention is given to scholars having lectured at African universities, and having been involved in missionary activities themselves, an effort must be made to listen to the voices of those who often interpret the Bible having experienced (and are experiencing) powerlessness and poverty themselves.

<sup>104</sup> The observation is made by Manus (2003:205) that the “epistles of Paul appear not so much resorted to in the preaching or daily readings of the local churches as much as the gospels”. Although recent publications such as the doctoral thesis of Banda (2004) on 1 Cor, and the book by Loba-Mkole (2005) *Triple Heritage: Gospels in intercultural mediations* testify to the research being done in the gospels, there are relatively few publications published on Pauline literature in general.

<sup>105</sup> Seventy African scholars co-authored this commentary on the whole Bible.

<sup>106</sup> This study focuses mainly on Acts 9:4-5 and 11:9-10.

that God is not “couched in racism and favouritism”, but that he is “above culture while he utilizes culture”.<sup>107</sup>

The role of feminist theologians from an African perspective is also not to be overlooked. From the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians,<sup>108</sup> Musa Dube (2002:535-549), originating from and still lecturing in Botswana, challenges the church and Christian workers to be practically involved in the plight of the poor, especially those affected by HIV/AIDS. She draws from Pauline body imagery in 1 Cor 12:26<sup>109</sup> to call upon all the members of the church to suffer together with those who have HIV/AIDS, and pleads for Christians to be united in Christ with members that have HIV/AIDS (Gal 3:27-28).<sup>110</sup>

In listing the required responses from the church to the HIV/AIDS pandemic, Dube (2002:542) refers to the self-emptying<sup>111</sup> act of Jesus in Matthew 20:28.<sup>112</sup> She challenges the church to “give up its glory”<sup>113</sup> and

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<sup>107</sup> Although criticism can be brought against the fact that Dube works uncritically from Acts as a source of historical information on Paul, his application does shed new light on the similarities between the struggles of Paul and Peter and the battles that African Christian workers face in working within cross-cultural and global contexts. This is in stark contrast with Crook (2005:37). In his “emic” treatise (Crook 2005:40) on Paul’s conversion experience he constantly focuses on the discontinuity between Paul’s world and our modern, Western world. I do believe, however, that Crook (2005:38) and Dube (2004:48) would agree that the African culture is more resemblant of the First Century Mediterranean culture in terms of its “allocentrism”. This notion also supported by a recent article of Botha (2007:147-169), *Exploring issues around Biblical, Western, and African social values*.

<sup>108</sup> The *Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians* is a forum creating opportunities for researching and publishing “theological literature written by African woman with special focus on religion and culture” (Anon, 2003).

<sup>109</sup> 1 Cor 12:26: “If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.”

<sup>110</sup> Gal 3:27-28: “There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”

<sup>111</sup> Paul’s ‘Christ hymn’ in Php 2:5-11 is often cited in the context of self-emptying, or *kenosis*. Frederiks (2005:211-222) points to *kenosis* as becoming a new model for missionary strategy.

<sup>112</sup> Mat 20:28: “... just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

<sup>113</sup> I do not concur with the application that the “glory” of the church that must be emptied lies (amongst others) in “maintaining its morals”. In increasingly secular states theologians often find glory in questioning the morals of the church, and “emptying oneself of glory” would then mean precisely the opposite of what Dube (2002:541-542) suggests, being holding on to morals anchored in the Word of God. Was John the Baptist

realize its mission in the world as serving the “poor, the suffering, the powerless, the hopeless, the vulnerable youth, women and the stigmatized PLWHA (people living with HIV/AIDS)”. The last relevant contribution from Dube (2002:545) pleads for a re-interpretation of texts from the perspective of HIV/AIDS and the poor, for highlighting texts such as the narrative of Job and John 9 that illustrates that not all illness comes from God.<sup>114</sup>

A text re-interpreted from an African angle, is found in Manus (2003:55-66); it is an exposition of Gal 6:1-6. In his interpretation he (2003:59-61) uses Yoruba folklore to interpret the *crux interpretum* in these verses, where a king reprimands his sons for not respecting one another, while reigning together over their respective provinces. He (2003:64) then interprets Gal 6:1-6 as a call to mutualism and solidarity, and also views the climax of the pericope as the obligation of the Christian Community to “provide material needs and even the ‘good things of life’ to support those who teach the Word, the good news of the kingdom”.

As a last thought on this pericope Manus (2003:65) appeals for exegetes in Africa to “respond to ‘Bread and Butter’ issues”, and that it must be “allowed to address the African Hunger situation, international food aid and charity, health-care problems, the ravage of HIV/AIDS, imbalances of the education sector amongst various ethnic groups, the empowerment of African rural woman, the cry for justice and peace, human rights, wars, and the ethical dimensions of Africa’s indebtedness to World Powers ...”. There is surely an increasing challenge to explore a text like 1 Cor 9:18 for its relevance in our African context.

## 2.5.6 The New Perspective on Paul

Although the “New Perspective on Paul” probably falls in the category of abstract theological debates without relevance for ‘bread and butter’ issues, I am of opinion that it cannot be ignored in any study concerning

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not laying down his glory in opposing the immoral king Herod’s deeds (Mat 14:1-5, Lk 3:19-20)? A recent ‘non-religious’ study by Allen & Heald (2005:1141-1154) has shown that churches sticking to their moral principles contributed to major success against the HIV/AIDS pandemic in Uganda, versus the failed government policy in Botswana.

<sup>114</sup> The main argument from Dube’s perspective is that women in the African context is often raped, abused, and exploited, and therefore ‘staying faithful’ to their less faithful spouses (who often commutes to distant jobs) is not always a guarantee to escape the HIV/AIDS virus. The victims of the virus can therefore not be judged indiscriminately (Dube 2002:541).



Paul. This section will, however, provide only a cursory glance at the debate, and point out two areas of relevance. The designation “New perspective on Paul” was first coined and developed by Dunn (1983:95-122), being the product of Sanders’ view (1977) that Paul was not negative about the law or Judaism as such, but that he disapproved the way that the Jews used the law to promote separatism and exclusiveness.<sup>115</sup>

Recently Wessels (2007:1) referred to the reason for the lack of engagement with the New Perspective as the scholars being “white, middle class, privileged, and therefore not particularly interested in what the New Testament had to say regarding how contemporary society should be structured”. It is therefore that, just like amongst the Diaspora Jews in the First Century Mediterranean, the law and the interpretation thereof can be used in the wrong way to foster separateness and exclusivity.

In what I believe to go hand in hand with the preceding theory, Jewett (2007:xv) argues that Paul’s Letter to the Romans is to “elicit support for his mission to the ‘barbarians’ in Spain”. Furthermore Jewett (2007:xv) acknowledges Bishop Colenso,<sup>116</sup> an earlier missionary to South Africa, as the initiator of his theory. Looking at 1 Cor 9, for instance, the way in which church law often prohibits (or inhibits) dynamic ministry and church unity between middle class and impoverished societies, is certainly worth investigating.

A present-day exponent of the New Perspective school of thought is Wright, currently the bishop of Durham in the Anglican Church. The main aspects of the New Perspective is succinctly summarised by Wright (2003) as follows:

1. **The gospel** as an announcement that ‘Jesus Christ is Lord’.
2. **The righteousness of God** as his faithfulness to the covenant.
3. **Final judgement according to works.**
4. The place of justification in the *ordo salutis*.
5. **Justification** as vindication.

<sup>115</sup> The basic departure point for Sanders (1977:75) was “covenantal nomism”, which described keeping the law not as a good work to earn God’s grace, but as a way to “maintain one’s position in the covenant”. Sanders is therefore regarded as exposing the anti-Jewish bias of New Testament Scholars in the 20th century.

<sup>116</sup> The theme of Colenso’s commentary was that all human beings stood equal before God “in Christ their Head” (Colenso 2003:xxiv), and that there was an analogy between the lack of acceptance between the Jews and the Christians, as well as the English colonialists and the Zulus.

I view that the way in which the final judgement is interpreted in the New Perspective as according to works, has relevance in terms of Paul's labour and his self support. Although the New Perspective on Paul is to my view not nearly depending on works to the same extent as the Papists (see 2.5 above), it is clear that Zweck (2007:22-25), a Lutheran, still feels uncomfortable with this view.<sup>117</sup>

In the interpretation of Paul's efforts therefore, one will find the "New Perspective" approach on the one hand substantiating their views with 1 Cor 3:11-15,<sup>118</sup> 9:25-27,<sup>119</sup> and 2 Cor 5:9, 10<sup>120</sup> versus the view of labour as a response to the grace of God, concurring with 1 Cor 9:16-17<sup>121</sup> and 15:10.<sup>122</sup> It is therefore clear that this study has the promise to provide not only a framework for practical applications of the New Perspective on Paul, but can provide some insight into Paul's motives for rendering his services to the congregation 'free of charge'.

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<sup>117</sup> In the light of Rom 5:1-10 and Gal 2:21 Zweck (2007:21, 24) argues that justification cannot come through the law at all.

<sup>118</sup> 1 Cor 3:12-14: "<sup>12</sup>If any man builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, <sup>13</sup>his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man's work. <sup>14</sup>If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward."

<sup>119</sup> 1 Cor 9:25-27: "<sup>25</sup>Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. <sup>26</sup>Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air. <sup>27</sup>No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize."

<sup>120</sup> 2 Cor 5:9,10: "<sup>9</sup>So we make it our goal to please him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it. <sup>10</sup>For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad."

<sup>121</sup> 1 Cor 9:16-17: "<sup>16</sup>Yet when I preach the gospel, I cannot boast, for I am compelled to preach. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel! <sup>17</sup>If I preach voluntarily, I have a reward; if not voluntarily, I am simply discharging the trust."

<sup>122</sup> 1 Cor 15:10: "But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them—yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me."

## 2.6 Recent Developments

It has already been argued in Chapter 1<sup>123</sup> that Paul's reasons for not accepting any form of remuneration from the congregation in Corinth is still an area of contention. The evolving paradigm, viewing Pauline ministry from a socio-economic angle can also be seen in the way DeSilva (2004:595) is referring to Paul's example as a tentmaker,<sup>124</sup> as well as the article of Davids (2005:355-384), where the differences between Paul's and James' attitude to the poor are discussed.

Interestingly Kritzing (2001:46-58) shows his growing awareness<sup>125</sup> of the impact of poverty and the importance of the sustainability of the ministry in a third-world context. He does not only point out the implication of Paul's exhortation in 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12 for impoverished communities, but also refers to the Dutch Reformed Church's lack of enthusiasm when the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa decided on "tentmaking ministry" as a viable solution to the problem of poverty in the church.

With tentmaking being a viable option for entering and evangelising the Muslim countries, studies on tentmaking ministry has been experiencing a new impetus. In *Tentmaking: Avoiding the trap*, Gibson (2002) explores a typical example of a ministry that does not have the financial constraints of tentmaking in Africa, but has other unique stressors. Although the blossoming of tentmaking ministry in the Middle East is blossoming, the unique situation of all tentmakers must be taken into account.

It is clear that there is an emerging paradigm which is re-evaluating the relevance of studies on poverty and labour in the First Century Mediterranean such as those done by Deissmann (1912) and Agrell (1976). Neyrey, for example, agrees with Malina in viewing the poor from a socio-scientific point of view (Ling 2006:119), and in his articulation of the poor as a 'social' rather than an 'economic' phenomenon. He holds

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<sup>123</sup> Although this section has already been dealt with under section 1.2, there are some important contributions that need further attention.

<sup>124</sup> In his treatise on Pauline stewardship DeSilva (2004:595) makes the interesting comment that "believers need to be careful today not to look down on those who engage in tent-making ministries as if they were less legitimate than professional clergy, for, in point of fact, they have a clearer testimony to the sincerity of their heart and their obedience to God".

<sup>125</sup> Cf. discussion of Kritzing's earlier approach under section 2.6.3.

that the frequent use of *πτωχός* instead of *πένης* in the New Testament probably refers to the beggars, or those who constantly asked for alms, and who was “...destitute of all resources, especially farm and family” (Neyrey 2002:1).

In a recent study Ling (2006:98,110) approaches the Johannine “poor” from the angle of contemporary religious groups, and argues that the poor in the New Testament were closely related to piety and Judea.<sup>126</sup> Although science has changed radically in the past forty years, the opportunity is there to re-assess 1 Cor 9 and especially verse 18, from an economic perspective.<sup>127</sup>

## 2.7 Conclusion

It has become clear that there never was a totally homogenous stance on Paul’s self-support. In retrospect it is necessary to look at the reasons forwarded for Paul offering the gospel ‘free of charge’, and supporting himself in Corinth.<sup>128</sup> The different proposals are the following:

1. Because “plying a trade” was a normal practice amongst the Jews (Hock 1980:28).
2. Because of Paul’s reluctance to enter into a client relation within the framework of patronage (Marshall 1987:402-402).
3. Because Paul acts spiteful and with irony in the light of the continuing divisions in the congregation (Aejmelaeus 2004:366).
4. Because he wants to distinguish himself from the Cynics who often reverted to begging, and to show himself as an example for those who do not want to work (Grant 1977:68; Punt 2000b:362).

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<sup>126</sup> The notion of ‘the poor’ as a religious concept was already introduced by Karl Holl (1921:920-947) referring to the church and believers as viewing themselves collectively as ‘the Poor’, irrespective of their financial position. This theory has successfully been repudiated by Keck (1965:100-129), who showed that the term *πτωχός* does not even occur in Acts, and is never used as a collective term for the church in Luke either.

<sup>127</sup> In a socio-rhetorical approach Robbins (1996:87-88) links 1 Cor 9:18 closely to the next verses, having important implications for the interpretation of this verse: “The argument from the example immediately after it (9:19-23) reveals that this decision to offer the gospel ‘free of charge’ wilfully takes the form of slavery to all people to gain or win Jews, those outside the law and the weak”.

<sup>128</sup> Paul’s work and his offering of the gospel as *ἑδαιπάνας* has been shown in 1.2 to be closely interrelated. Also see Punt (2000:363) in this regard.

5. Because Paul wants to present himself as self-sufficient, being a Stoic virtue (Fitzgerald 1978:189).
6. Because Paul was a “community organiser” missionary, not functioning within the same parameters as other missionaries, as well as having more flexible skills than those who were fishermen of trade (Theissen 1982:28-29).
7. Because he wanted to protest against the “abuse” of the “super-apostles”, who exploited the Corinthians for their money, and using “irony” as a means to do so (Schrage 1988:230).
8. Because he wanted to use his trade as a “springboard” for evangelism in the “marketplace” (Hock 1978:560).
9. Because he avoided being a burden to the congregation (Kritzinger 1979:183-185).
10. Because he wanted to illustrate the laying down of one’s “rights” in contrast with the strong in 1 Cor 8 and 10 (Winter 1994:174-177).
11. Because he wanted to adopt a servant attitude in line with Jesus’ command in Matthew 20:28, also “shaming himself”, as is evident in his catalogues of hardships in 1 Cor 4:12, 2 Cor 4:8-9, 6:4-10,<sup>129</sup> 11:23-28, 12:10 (Wolff 1989:145-150).
12. Because he wants to demonstrate his love towards the congregation (Aejmelaeus 2004:374).
13. Because he practically wanted to demonstrate to the congregation that giving is better than receiving (Kritzinger 1979:183-185).
14. Because he wanted to make sure that the collection for Jerusalem is not misinterpreted as a collection for himself (Agrell 1976:110-111).
15. Because he evaded the perception of him being a burden to the congregation (Kritzinger 1979:183-185).
16. Because he wanted to open the door, “especially for the poor” (Deissmann 1912:208, Agrell 1976:110-111), so that people can enter the church irrespective of their socio-economic status, and be saved (Robbins 1996:87-88).

This study is mainly focusing on the last reason for Paul’s self-support, which is Paul’s plight for the poor. It has also been shown that in none of the sources consulted a definite connection Paul’s self-support as a sacrifice on behalf of the Jerusalem Collection has been drawn. I believe this to be an additional field of study that does deserve attention.

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<sup>129</sup> On this specific pericope, Fitzgerald (1978:193-194) refers to the last three of Paul’s hardships: hard work, sleepless nights, and hunger as “occupational hardships”.

As has been argued above, and in the rest of the chapter, Paul's offering of the gospel as 'free of charge' and his manual labour has been the object of many different interpretations through the centuries, whether it involved Paul and the Corinthians, Chrysostom and the recluse, Augustine and the long-haired monks, Calvin and the Papists, or the German Deissmann versus the American Hock.

Although not always realised in the past twenty centuries, their own environment, being missionary, feminist, African, American or German origin, had a distinct influence on the work of scholars, as well as on their areas of study. The question still stands whether we are more in touch with our 21<sup>st</sup> century environment than the elite were in the First Century Mediterranean context. Recent studies from within New Testament scholarship,<sup>130</sup> as well as from the outside,<sup>131</sup> has shown that we are not really in touch with our environment to the same extent that Paul was in First Century Corinth.

In the current Southern African context, the hermeneutist is to my view not only responsible to account for his context or the context of his peers, but he also needs to be a champion for the context of those neighbours who do not have the capacity to speak up about the plight of spiritual workers where it really matters.

Paul's reference to his apostleship in 1 Corinthians and the contexts in which it is received are not fully understood and grasped at all, and deserves a thorough investigation.

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<sup>130</sup> Cf. Punt (2000:351-371) and Friesen (2004:331).

<sup>131</sup> See the keynote address of Naudé (2005:339-358) at the annual meeting of the NTSSA.



### 3 CORINTH AND ITS PEOPLE FROM A SOCIO-ECONOMIC PERSPECTIVE

#### 3.1 Introduction

First Century Corinth is viewed by many contemporary and present day historians and scientists to be a glamorous, wealthy city, a sight for the eye, and a place that must be visited. In the second century AD Aristides (*For Poseidon* 23) wrote:

πάντα τε δεῦρο φοιτᾶν τὰ πανταχόθεν κατά τε γῆν καὶ κατά θάλατταν, καὶ τοῦτ' εἶναι ὕφ' οὗ καὶ ἐκ παλαιστάτου ἀφνειόν τε ὕμνηται χωρίον ὑπὸ τῶν ποιητῶν, ἅμα μὲν διὰ τὸ πλῆθος τῶν παρόντων ἀγαθῶν, ἅμα δὲ καὶ διὰ τὴν ὑπάρχουσαν εὐδαιμονίαν ἐν αὐτῷ. ἔστι γὰρ οἷον ἀγορά τις καὶ αὐλὴ κοινὴ τῶν Ἑλλήνων καὶ πανήγυρις, οὐχ ἦν διὰ δυοῖν ἐτοῖν συμπληροῖ αὐτῇ τὸ Ἑλληνικόν, καθάπερ ἡ παρούσα αὕτη, ἀλλ' ἦν διὰ παντὸς ἔτους καὶ καθ' ἡμέραν ἐκάστην.<sup>1</sup>

This optimism about Corinth, however, is not shared by everyone. Strabo (*Geographia* 8.6.20) and Horace (*Epistulae* 1.17.36) quoted the proverb οὐ παντὸς ἀνδρὸς ἐς Κόρινθον ἐσθ' ὁ πλοῦς.<sup>2</sup> By this Strabo referred to the fact that many captains also squandered their money there. The darker side of Corinth is also elaborated on by Alciphron (*Epistulae* 3.24):<sup>3</sup>

Οὐκέτι εἰσῆλθον εἰς τὴν Κόρινθον· ἔγνων γὰρ ἐν βραχεὶ τὴν βδελυρίαν τῶν ἐκεῖσε πλουσίων καὶ τὴν τῶν πενήτων ἀθλιότητα.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "Everything travels here from every place by land and sea, and it is because of this that the ancient poets sang of this place as wealthy, and also because of the delights always present and the happiness that always resides in it. For it is like the marketplace, the common meeting place and festival of the Greeks, which they crowd into, not every two years, as for the present festival, but every year and every day." (own translation).

<sup>2</sup> "Not of every man is the voyage to Corinth".

<sup>3</sup> Regarding these negative statements from Alciphron, Murphy-O'Connor (1983:120) comments: "The truth of this picture should not be accepted too easily, for it is rooted in Athenian envy." The same argument can, however, be used against Aristeides' comments on Corinth, being an "Ode to Aphrodite" of a religious nature (cf. Aristeides *For Poseidon* 24), rather than a clinical historical recollection.

<sup>4</sup> "I did not go to Corinth. I came to know in a short time the extreme greed of the rich, and the utter misery of the poor." (own translation).



If the historians differed on their opinion of the socio-economic context and ‘atmosphere’ in Corinth, we can expect that the differences would be likewise, and even more diverse in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. But with the amount of research regarding ancient economics, as well as the city of Corinth to our disposal, we should at least be able to form a broad picture of the socio-economic situation in Corinth, as well as the socio-economic situation of the church there.

As pointed out in the introduction scholars have often made the assumption that First Century Corinth was a very wealthy city without attending to the specific socio-economic circumstances of Corinth at that point of time in history. The assumption was often made upon images of the glorious Greek city before its demolition by Lucius Mumius in 146 BC, and even on the basis of Corinth’s famous trade from 200-400 AD. Therefore the first section of this chapter is devoted to ancient concepts of economics.

In studying the socio-economic composition and identity of the various groups in the city of Corinth, it is necessary to have an overview of the city itself and its history. This is the aim of section 3.3, whilst the next section (3.4) is devoted to the archaeological and historical data on the economic strata in the city from secular sources. Section 3.5 explores the socio-economic status of different groups in the city.

## **3.2 Understanding Socio-economics in the First Century**

Considering the myriad of terms for describing the life, circumstances, “Umwelt”, and subsistence levels of people, it is very important to define clearly what is meant by ‘socio-economic’. Therefore sections 3.2.1 & 3.2.2 looks at approaches to the portrayal of First Century economics.

### **3.2.1 Opposing views on the nature of ancient economics**

The first writings touching on “economics” in the ancient world, was probably the work of the Athenian Xenophon, *circa* 400 BC. The title of Xenophon’s work, *Oeconomica*, may at the first glance seem somewhat misleading (Finley 1973:17). In this work of Xenophon, he is focusing more of the social relationships in Ancient Greece that developed around the οἶκος (house), than on economics proper. The word “economics”, Greek in origin, was therefore developed from οἶκος and the νεμ-

root, designating the function of regulate, administer, manage. Xenophon's *Oeconomica* was written as a guide for the gentleman landowner, not only regulating social relations in the small household, but also using the basic relationships in the household as a model for other relationships, such as agriculture and slave labour.

Xenophon's work practically functioned as a basis for initial scientific research regarding First Century economics, and the study of the household as scale-model for the rest of society dominated socio-economic research on the ancient economy up to the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century (Morris *et al* 2007:2). At the end of the 1890's research practically divided into the 'primitivists' (working with the household as basis) and the 'modernists', who insisted that there was a considerable similarity between the functioning the economies of "early-modern" Europe, and the ancient economies in the Graeco-Roman times.

In line with the modernist approach Theissen defines the term 'socio-economics' independantly. To Theissen (1978:31) the prefix "socio-" refers to the notion that the "factors under investigation do not have an immediate effect on human behaviour, but make their impact through the 'totality' of all social interconnections". He defines economics as "the organization of work and the distribution of its products between productive workers and those who enjoy the profits."

This 'modernist' approach is often referred to as 'anachronistic', and not relevant to First Century Economics anymore (Love 1991:11, Volschenk 2003:428). Supporters of the 'modernist' approach have from their point of view stated that the 'primitivist' approach is in itself a "modernising" assumption, built on the negative view of the city life that developed in the Dark Ages (Engels 1990:141).

In a comprehensive description of Corinth in the First Century, Engels (1990:136) argues for using the model of the service city instead of the consumer city model used by Finley in his renowned work, *Ancient Economy*. By the term "service city" Engels (1990:43) argues that Corinth's income and economic activity was not primarily dependant upon its rural surroundings, but that the financial strength of the city was mainly dependent on being a major trade centre, as well as services<sup>5</sup> that

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<sup>5</sup> Two types of services are indentified by Engels (1990:43), being primary or attractive services (which would draw people to the city), as well as secondary services, which are required for visitors staying in the city, such as latrines, bathing facilities, lodging and food.

it rendered to visitors from abroad and the surrounding rural areas. The ancient perspective that taxes “poverised” a city is questioned by Engels (1990:121,124-125)<sup>6</sup> with the view that there was economic growth even during times of taxation.

An interesting approach that in a sense mediates between the two views, is that of Silver (1995:196); he views ancient economy in the light of “periods of crisis”. To my view Silver convincingly argues that although there may have been “lengthened periods of unfettered market activity and prosperity, including even affluence”, there has also been periods of “pervasive economic regulation” by the state, which eventually led to “economic retrogression”. Furthermore he elaborates on this theory stating that household economies increased greatly in importance relative to both markets and hierarchies whenever an economic system experienced ‘Dark Ages’ or Periods of crisis (Silver 1995:196).

Recent studies such as the work of Perrotta (2003:177-229), is witness to the fact that the ‘primitivist’ approach towards ancient economies are far from dead and buried. In conclusion to a comprehensive survey on the ancient writers in relation to economy and wealth, Perrotta (2003:217) states that the “ancient world lacked in general an idea of ... a sum of goods produced by, belonging to, and distributed within the whole society.”

### 3.2.2 Socio-historical and socio-scientific approaches

To a certain extent the differences between the ‘primitivists’ and the ‘modernists’ can also be understood in terms of the terms ‘socio-historic’ and ‘socio-scientific’. In his article Van Rensburg (2000:564-582) explains that the more recent socio-historical approach focuses upon the context of the readers, interwoven with their situation, instead of viewing historical data as mere background, as a separate set of data without any real dynamic interaction with the dynamics of the Biblical text.

In the socio-scientific approach the emphasis is on using contemporary sociological theories as a tool in understanding more of ancient history. In terms of the approach to the socio-economic milieu of the First Century, Engels (1990:141) already pointed to the fact that those who claim

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<sup>6</sup> “It will be shown that Greeks and Romans thought that high taxes promoted poverty and not economic growth as is currently believed” (Engels 1990:121).

to approach First Century economics *tabula rasa*, are also influenced by later schools of thought.

As already stated in section 1.5, this study is therefore done primarily from a 'socio-historic' angle, but also using the results of 'socio-scientific' studies where applicable. In interpreting the socio-economic circumstances in First Century Corinth, this section will commence at the location of Corinth in relation to the rest of the Ancient World and the significant historical events<sup>7</sup> that impacted upon the city. Furthermore it will 'zoom in' on Roman Governance and taxes, the city's buildings and activities, as well as agriculture, trade and commerce. Last, but definitely not the least, the actual people living in Corinth, i.e. the demography of Corinth will be discussed. In the light of the Biblical evidence on Corinth and its people being discussed in Chapter 5, I deliberately refrain from utilizing Biblical portions as far as possible in this chapter.

### 3.3 The City of Corinth

#### 3.3.1 Topography

Corinth is generally viewed to be a famous and prosperous city in the Ancient world (Thiselton 2000:1). The favourable geographical location contributed to this, because it was located on the Isthmus<sup>8</sup> connecting Northern Greece with the Peloponnesus, and it was adjacent to two harbours, namely Lechaem to the West, and Cenchrea to the East (Martin 1986:xxvii). The Isthmus was a narrow strip of land, about 6 kilometers wide, which was the only obstacle for maritime traffic between the Aegean and Ionian seas (Sanders 2005:11).

Corinth lay on an elevated area directly below the Acrocorinth, a steep mountain face (574 meters), from which the Geranea mountain range at the northern side of the Isthmus, as well as mount Oneia to the Southeast, Mount Skiona to the south, and Mount Apesias to the Southwest could be seen. Directly below the Acrocorinth lay the well-known foun-

<sup>7</sup> See 3.2.1 for the significance that Silver (1995:196) attaches to the close relationship between the economic situation of a city and the point of time at question.

<sup>8</sup> The Isthmus, the narrow strip of land dividing the Gulf of Corinth and the Saronic Gulf, is more or less 5 km at its narrowest point.

tain of Peirene, with the Leukon river flowing past the east of Corinth, and the Longopotamos to the west into the Gulf of Corinth.



Fig 3.1 A topographical map of Corinth (Salmon 1984:4).

A specially constructed road (called the *diolkos*) provided easier passage over the Isthmus between the Gulf of Corinth and the Saronic Gulf (Thiselton 2000:1). Even boats were sometimes transported over land to evade the dangerous detour around the Peloponnesus (Willis 2000:280).

Corinth not only marketed merchandise from both harbours, but a considerable number of roads converged at the city. The reason was that the only passage from the Peloponnesus and Northern Greece was over the Isthmus, passing Corinth (Martin 1986:xxviii). This ideal position was a great advantage for the city, but also made it a strategic military target.

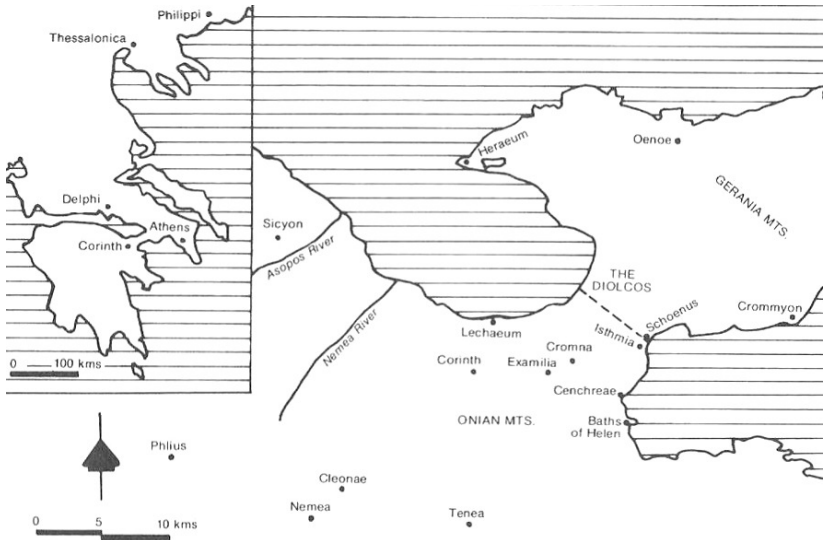


Fig 3.2 Location of Corinth, Source: Murphy O'Connor (1983:20)

As was the case with other large cities in the classical world, Corinth was immediately surrounded by “a zone of villas, gardens, and prosperous farmsteads” (Engels 1990:82). This surrounding rural area around Corinth was called the Corinthia. The Corinthia included about forty settlements, of which five were large towns: Crommyon, Cenchreae, Tenea, Ayios Charalambos, and Asprokambos (Engels 1990:82).

As seen on Figure 3.3 the actual land that was arable was relatively small due to the mountains in the vicinity of Corinth. Most commentators argue that the soil was quite fertile, due to the alluvial deposits from the mountains after the rain. Corinth had the lowest rainfall in all of Greece (Salmon 1984:7), but erosion had quite disastrous effects in some areas, due to the rain normally falling with heavy showers. Corinth was also surrounded by forests in the more mountainous area, where the Aleppo pine grew (Salmon 1984:30).

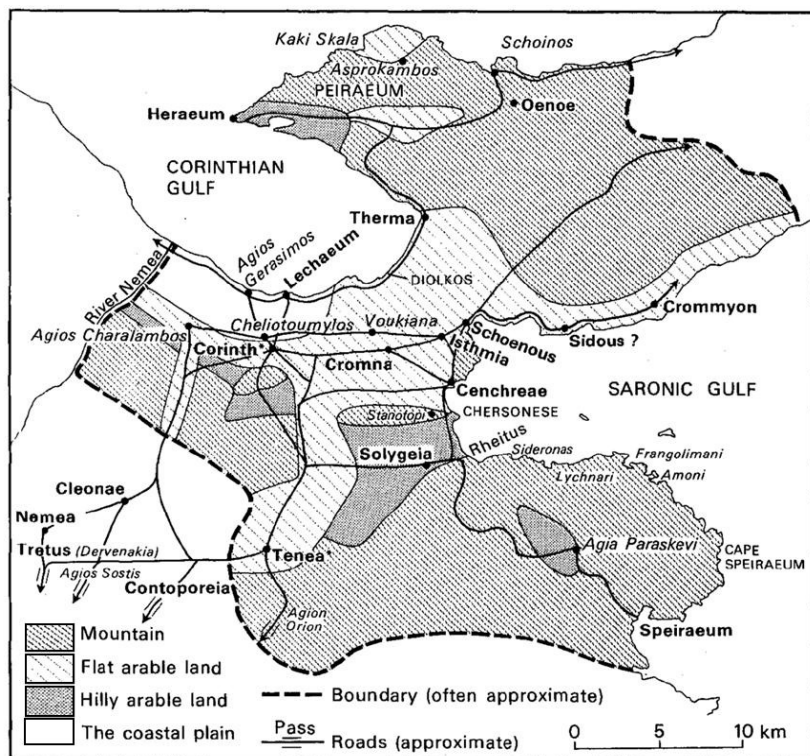


Fig 3.3 The Corinthia (Salmon 1984:74).

### 3.3.2 History of the city

In examining the history of Corinth it must be realised that the general economy of a city in the First Century could not be described as an isolated, stable, unchanging economy, but was also dependent on external factors, such as wars, uprisings, earthquakes, outbreaks of disease, and food shortages (see 3.3.1). For the purpose of this study therefore, a broad overview of ancient Corinth's history is given, but the focus will be on the time of Paul's involvement in Corinth as well as his Letters to Corinth: around 50-57 AD.<sup>9</sup> In studying Corinth through history, three

<sup>9</sup> The general consensus is that Paul visited Corinth initially around 50-52 AD, and that 1 Corinthians was written between 52-54 AD, and 2 Corinthians from 54-57 AD (Murphy-O'Connor 1983:129-152; Thiselton 2000:29-32; Malina and Pilch 2004:59,134).

periods will be used: “Wealthy Corinth” (4000-146 BC), Corinth rebuilt (146-77 AD), and Corinth since the earthquake in 77 AD.

### Wealthy Corinth<sup>10</sup>

Corinth has a rich and colourful history as one of the great cities of Ancient Greece. Evidence indicates that it has been inhabited as early as 4000 BC, and it reached the height of its prosperity and fame around 600 BC (Broneer 1951:81), when Periander constructed the *diolkos* (Salmon 1984:37).<sup>11</sup> The *diolkos* was initially built for military purposes, but later became of great importance to commercial traffic across the Isthmus (McRay 1992:3). The city later became the capitol of the senatorial province of Achaia, and when Flamininus proclaimed the independence of Greece in 196 BC at the Isthmian Games, Corinth was the largest city in Greece (Thiselton 2000:2).

In the Peloponnesian War (431-404 BC) Corinth sided with Sparta against Athens (Murphy O'Connor 1983:49). This eventually resulted in Corinth being subjected to Roman rule, and implied paying tax to the emperor. In 146 BC the Achaian League (including Corinth) led a revolt against Rome and Sparta (which was Rome's ally).<sup>12</sup> In 146 BC the Roman army under Lucius Mummius reacted by attacking the city, and taking all the inhabitants captive (Strabo, *Geographia* 8.6.23). All the inhabitants were sold as slaves, and the city virtually demolished (Cicero, *Tusculanae Disputationes* 3.53).

### Corinth rebuilt (44 BC – 77 AD)

After a period of 102 years since the destruction of the city, Julius Caesar started to rebuild the city, in 44 BC. By this time Corinth was an official Roman colony (Button 2003:6). According to Appian (*Historia Romana* 8:136) this rebuilding was done on behalf of the poor, who pleaded for land. Strabo (*Geographia* 8.6.23) records that this action by Julius Caesar was mainly taken due to Corinth's excellent location, and that Caesar

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<sup>10</sup> This heading is given in analogy to the title of Salmon's (1984) description of Ancient Corinth's history up to 338 BC.

<sup>11</sup> According to Salmon (1984:185) there is no sign that there was a decline in wealth from the seventh to the fourth century, despite several wars during this time, although the wars would have surely hampered the growth and expansion of Corinth.

<sup>12</sup> The origin of this revolt was partly due to the heavy taxation that was placed on the Achaian league, which they could no longer afford (Thiselton 2000:2).



populated the city mostly with freedmen.<sup>13</sup> The reason for rebuilding Corinth therefore was mainly to provide land for the freedmen, who were probably anxious to place some distance between them and their previous masters, under whose influence they still lived (Murphy-O'Connor 1992:1136).

The establishment of Roman colonies in some of the cities in the Empire was not a novice way of relieving pressure of this nature. Caesar in the same way provided war veterans with space to live after their retirement (Jones 1974:3). Besides freedmen and war veterans, urban trade persons and labourers were also introduced to the city (Thiselton 2000:3). Jews and Syrians from the east soon afterwards came to settle in Corinth (Wiseman 1979:497).

The city recovered well, and was rebuilt without delay.<sup>14</sup> The ransacking of graves for valuables which were sold for high prices in Rome, as well as the traffic between the Corinthian Gulf and the Saronic Gulf contributed largely to this growth. The option of transporting goods between the harbours of Lechaëum and Cenchrea (and often through Corinth) was increasingly preferred to the shipping of goods around the dangerous and treacherous Peloponnesian coastline (Staff 2003:1).

In 27 BC, at the start of the reign of Emperor Augustus, Corinth was established once more as the capital of the Roman province Achaia and the seat of the Roman government (Botha & Van Rensburg 2002:52-66, Myers 1987:235). The re-introduction of the Isthmian Games between 7 BC and 3 AD attests to the status of Corinth as a leading city. According to Willis (2000:279) the fact that the city hosted the games was not only a witness to the financial power of some of its citizens, but provided an additional source of income to the city. By then the city of Corinth had not only surpassed Athens as a centre of culture and science, but grew into the third largest city of the Roman Empire, after Rome and Alexandria (Murphy-O'Connor 1992:1136).

According to Furnish (1988:16) excavations revealed that there were several building projects during the reigns of the Roman emperors Ti-

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<sup>13</sup> The freedmen are usually associated with the poor, because they were often dependant on the very master from whom they received *manumissio* (Martin 1990:22).

<sup>14</sup> It must be noted that Oster (1992:54-55) is of the view that archaeological evidence does not support the notion (by most ancient writers, as well as modern scholars) that Corinth was totally demolished by Lucius Mumius in 146 BC.

berius (14-37 AD), as well as the emperor Claudius (41-54 AD).<sup>15</sup> During this time the restoration progress of the city's "official, commercial and religious edifices", as well as some new buildings were under construction (Furnish 1988:16). Nevertheless, an emperor such as Claudius would probably be remembered more (especially in Christian history) for his expulsion of the Jews from Rome (Bruce 1982:275-287) than any building feats in Corinth.

It seems as though Claudius initially had good relationships with Herod Agrippa, and even wrote a letter to the Jews in Alexandria (Josephus *Antiquities* xix 279), which grants them the freedom to exercise their religion. The continuous problems in cities with Jewish groups, like Alexandria and Rome, eventually let him to first prohibit Jews from gathering, and later even expelling them from Rome. The clashes between the Jews and Christians recorded often in Acts, was partly responsible for this action by Claudius (Bruce 1982:280-281).

It is important to note that although Corinth was a very strong and prominent city in its times, it was also the target of those aspiring power and control in the Mediterranean. It has been shown above that the Greek as well as the Romans had a major influence on the city and its composition, but that the location of the city contributed to people of all countries and all levels of society converging on this rapidly growing city. Furthermore, the picture painted above of the glorious city of Corinth in the First Century BC was not always so bright at specific periods in history. Amongst the descriptions found in the city there are several inscriptions mentioning (and praising) Tiberius Claudius Dinippus, appointed three times as the *curator annonae* of the city of Corinth (Winter 1989:86). The previous appointment of a specific *curator annonae* for three times to administer the grain supply, indicated the presence of famine in a city (Garnsey 1988:14). One of these inscriptions is dated around 51 AD, which indicates that a severe famine occurred in Corinth (Furnish 1988:19).

More evidence of famines in these years is to be found in the prophesy of Agabus in Acts 11:28<sup>16</sup> of a world-wide famine, and the well-known

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<sup>15</sup> A study of the table of building activity that Engels (1990:169-171) provides, does not support these data.

<sup>16</sup> Acts 11:28: "One of them, named Agabus, stood up and through the Spirit predicted that a severe famine would spread over the entire Roman world. This happened during the reign of Claudius."

famine that occurred in Jerusalem around 47-48 AD. This is also concurrent with the world wide famine in this time described by Eusebius, especially under the reign of Claudius (Gapp 1935:258-265). In the light of this evidence it seems highly probable that there was a famine in the specific time of Paul's stay in Corinth. This gives all the more reason to look anew at Paul's Letters to Corinth in the light of famine and subsequent poverty.

After Nero succeeded Claudius as emperor, the situation improved for Corinth. Nero even visited Corinth in 67 AD (Jones & Sidwell 1997:69), where he was awarded victories and received honours. In return he proclaimed the freedom of Achaëa at the Isthmian Games, from the same stadium that Flaminius made such a proclamation 250 years earlier (Bookidis & Williams 2002:262).

This freedom granted Achaean cities autonomy over their local affairs, and meant exemption from tax. Nero even attempted to improve the economic situation of the Corinthians by trying to cut a canal through the Isthmus. Nero used soldiers to dig the canal on the softer alluvial plains, whilst using Jewish prisoners to cut through the rock in the middle section of the Isthmus. Due to several uprisings, as well as his premature death by suicide (Jones & Sidwell 1997:71), Nero failed to finish the canal.<sup>17</sup>

Not leaving a heir or successor, Nero was succeeded by three generals, each seizing the emperorship by military force. After the short reigns of Servius Sulpicius Galba and Marcus Salvius Otho (all during AD 69), Titus Flavius Vespasianus established stability in the empire. All of this happened in one year (AD 69), when Vespasian's reign eventually brought about some sanity, and the Pax Romana was established under his reign (Jones & Sidwell: 1997:73).

### **Corinth since the earthquake in 77 BC**

Another disaster struck the city of Corinth during the reign of Vespasian, in 77 AD. An earthquake shook Corinth, and the damage was of disastrous proportions.<sup>18</sup> Even though Vespasian withdrew the gift of

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<sup>17</sup> Vespasian imported 6000 Jewish slaves during his reign to finish this canal, but was also unsuccessful (Engels 1990:60).

<sup>18</sup> This earthquake is reported by all the historians to be of disastrous proportions, but the seismologists Ambraseys and Jackson (1990:663-708) estimate that earthquakes in First

freedom from the Corinthians, he assisted them greatly after the earthquake. Vespasian intervened and sponsored the city to restore the ruined buildings with marble instead of the previously used limestone (Engels 1990:20). This resulted in Corinth being renamed to Colonia Julia Flavia Augusta Corinthiensis (Engels 1990:20).

Further assistance to Corinth was given by Vespasianus' successor Hadrian,<sup>19</sup> who provided the city with a new bath, and an aqueduct to supply the city with water (American School 1954:14). After the renovations in the city, it grew in popularity, and was reckoned to be the *μητρόπολις* "metropolis" of Greece by the end of the second century (Aristeides *For Poseidon* 23).

But yet again Corinth became a military target, and during the third and the fourth centuries AD the city was repeatedly attacked by Gothic intruders from the North. After being destroyed in 521 AD, the emperor Justinian rebuilt it, and it "continued to function as an imported commercial center through the Middle Ages" (DeVries 1997:362). In 1858 Corinth was struck by an earthquake again, and the present day Corinth was built in the 20<sup>th</sup> century near the Gulf of Corinth (see Fig 3.1).

In the light of historical data Corinth had all the potential to recover quickly from the setbacks it had suffered in history (Garland 2003:2), but the disasters definitely had a serious influence upon the city. The famine around 50-55 AD had a serious impact on the city, and the continuous uprisings prevented Nero from finishing the canal through the Isthmus. The presence and the attitude of the emperors toward Corinth was decisive in their economic situation, and without Vespasian's assistance, the rebuilding of the city after the earthquake in 77 BC would have taken much longer, and had a big influence upon the city's ability to recover.

### 3.3.3 Government and taxation

Whilst still part of the Achaian league, Corinth was known as a typical *polis*. That also meant that the *Corinthia* was dependant upon the authority and rule of Corinth. The city was the basis of social and economic life (Ferguson 1987:13).<sup>20</sup> After colonization, the governmental pattern of

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Century Greece rarely exceeded a magnitude of 6.5 on the Richter scale, and never exceeded 7.

<sup>19</sup> Hadrian made these donations on his way to suppressing the Jewish revolt in Jerusalem (Engels 1990:20).

<sup>20</sup> The composition and nature of a *polis* is described extensively by Meeks (1986:23-28).

the city of Corinth bore close resemblance to the larger Roman empire, and could in fact be viewed as a “minor replica of the civic government of Republican Rome” (Kent 1966:23).

The city was governed by *duovirs*<sup>21</sup> who were elected annually by the *comitia tributa* (Thiselton 2000:3). These two men presided over the city council (*duoviri iure dicundo*), and acted as executive officers. They also had the important function of acting as judges and was also in charge of the census every fifth year. This resulted in them being referred to as *duoviri quinquennales* (Button 2003:8).

The *duovirs* were assisted by two annually-elected *aediles*. The *aidiles* “superintended buildings and public works”, whilst *quaestors* attended to the financial administration of the city. An inscription in Corinth, found in 1928-29, and recorded by Kent (1966:99) refers to the *aedile* Erastus, who was also expected to make a contribution to the projects in the city.

The local council (*curia*) consisted of former magistrates (*decuriones*), in analogy to the senate in Rome (Ferguson 1987:33). It is noteworthy, however, that the eastern Mediterranean cities showed much more variety in their local government than those in the west. The citizens of the colony were divided into constituencies (πολίτευματα) for voting purposes. The *decurions* could also be elected by the *πολίτευμα*. In the case of Alexandria such a division was made on the basis of culture or nationality, and that the Jews in Alexandria had their own *πολίτευμα*. In this case the Jews “as a large body of aliens”, were incorporated into the city “without making them full citizens” (Ferguson 1987:33-34). In the light of evidence for the presence of a relatively large Jewish community in Corinth<sup>22</sup>, there is a possibility that such a Jewish *πολίτευμα* existed in Corinth (Smallwood 1981:139).

In the light of the information above it is clear that the governmental structure of Corinth could be viewed as essentially of a Roman nature. Although evidence of allowance for governing systems that incorporated the Greek structures, the total rebuilding and re-population of the city by Caesar suggest a government with very strong ties with Rome (Button 2003:9; Thiselton 2000:4). The role of Corinth as a centre of *Romanitas* in the province is seen by the willingness of members of local elite from

<sup>21</sup> *Duovirs* translated literally from Latin means “two men”.

<sup>22</sup> The discovery of a synagogue as well as some inscriptions attest to the existence of a Diaspora community in Corinth (Martin 1986:xxix).

other cities to fulfil magistracies there and even become benefactors (Gill 1994a:449).

Last, but not least, it must be noted that an *agonothetes* (president) was appointed for the organization and administration of the Isthmian Games. This person was not only elected by the city council of Corinth (*curia*), and held in high regard in the governing of the city (Thiselton 2000:11), but even regarded as the “highest attainable” office that could be reached by a Corinthian citizen. This serves as an indication that the Isthmian Games were appreciated for their contribution to the culture and economy of Corinth (Button 2003:8).

Even though the administration of Corinth seems very organised and effective, it must not be forgotten that Corinth was most of the time under Roman rule, and that Corinth and the surrounding Corinthia was liable to pay tax to Rome. In his book *Ancient Economy* Finley (1973) views the economy to be a concentric expansion from household relationships, from master and slave, to landowner and peasant, to town and country, and eventually to the state and economy. As previously pointed out (cf. 3.2.1) Engels (1990) views the urban economy to be of a service nature, and questions the so called “exploitation” that took place in the system.

To my view Engels (1990:131-133) goes too far in arguing that the tax from Rome did not have a substantial impact upon Corinth or the peasants in the surrounding countryside, in the light of the fact that they could survive the “tripling of taxes” from the first to the sixth century AD, and that they therefore had a “surplus” to absorb these increases (Engels 1990:132). This is not coherent to the information that the farmers in Egypt had to flee their lands (referred to as ἀναχώρησις)<sup>23</sup> due to the high toll, pig and dyke tax. Winter (1992:89) and Engels (1990:63) admit that “throughout history” taxes reduced productivity.

In treating three important economic determinants in the First Century, Scheidel (2007:11) highlights the positive effect of taxes to the economic growth in Italy, as well as the grave effect of “predation” (derived from the concept of a predator consuming its prey) that this “redistribution” had on Roman colonies. Instead of just upward growth of the Roman

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<sup>23</sup> This term refers to retreating from one’s land or property

Empire during the first three centuries AD, the “downward mobility” and the resulting famines on the colonies must also receive attention.<sup>24</sup>

### 3.3.4 Layout and activities in the city

Some of the most valuable indicators of the activities and circumstances of first-century Corinth are originating from archaeological data. Interpreting archaeological data can give a better picture of First-Century life and culture in particular.

A clear landmark when approaching the city of Corinth is the “Acrocorinth”, a mountain, with the fortification walls and the temple of Aphrodite on top (Strabo, *Geographia* 8.6.21). Fig 3.4 and Fig 3.5 give an overview and layout of mid-First Century Corinth. Fig 3.4 has references to three temples, i.e. the temples of Demeter and Kore on the Northern slopes of the Acrocorinth, as well as the Asklepeion (temple of Asklepius), at the Northern boundary of the city. The Asklepeion was brought in soon after the rebuilding of the city by Nero (Engels 1990:94).

The transition from Greek to Roman rule did not change that much regarding idol worship and the temples involved. Mostly the Greek temples and gods were merely renamed to the Roman counterpart. Aphrodite (Goddess of love, beauty and fertility) became Venus, Demeter (Goddess of grain) changed to Ceres, and so forth.<sup>25</sup> The change that the Roman rule brought to the religion in Corinth, however, is evident in the information that around 25 of the dedications found on the inscriptions are dedicated to uniquely Roman gods (Engels 1990:101-102).

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<sup>24</sup> From a socio-scientific perspective Szesnat (1999:79) pleads for investigation into “downward mobility” in the sense of social status and economic standing of people in the First Century. Although generally regarded as “wealthy”, it must also be asked where Corinth would have been without the strict taxation policy of Rome.

<sup>25</sup> For a list of each Greek god/goddess and their Roman counterparts, see Ferguson (1987:115).

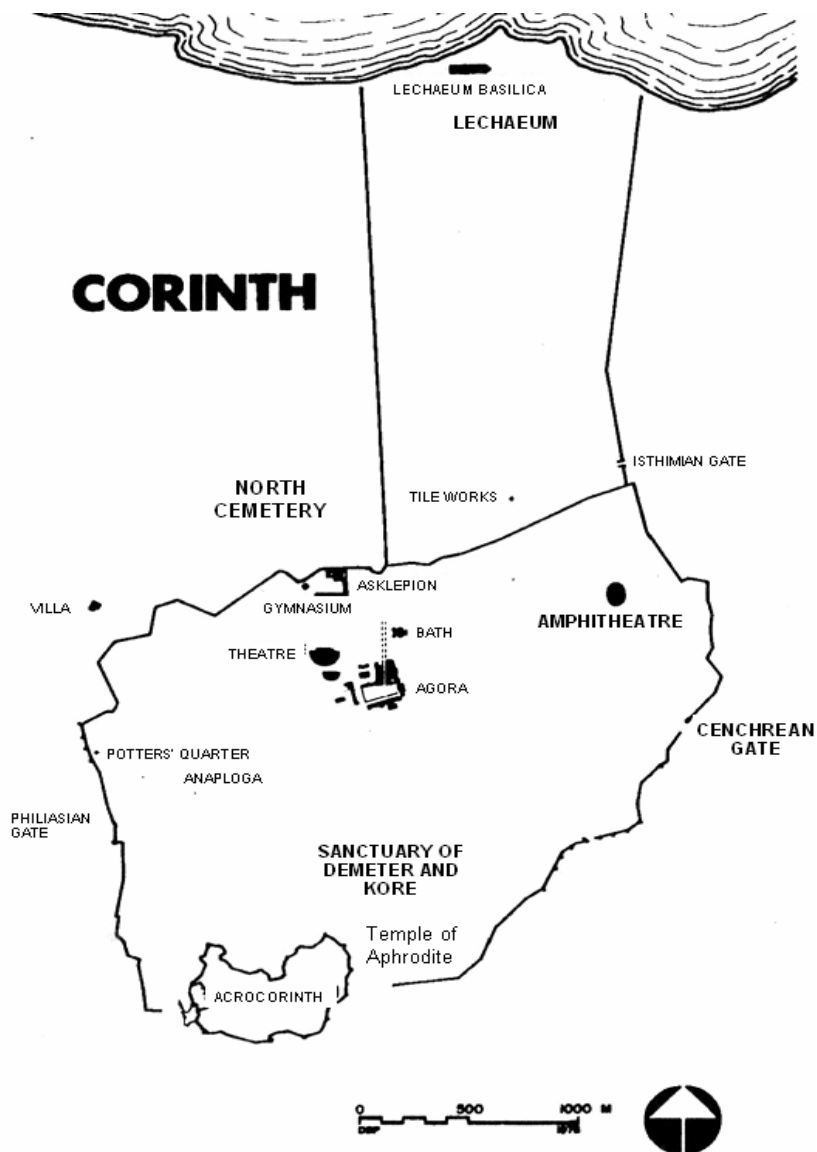


Figure 3.4 Map of the city area of Corinth. Source: Button (2003:9)



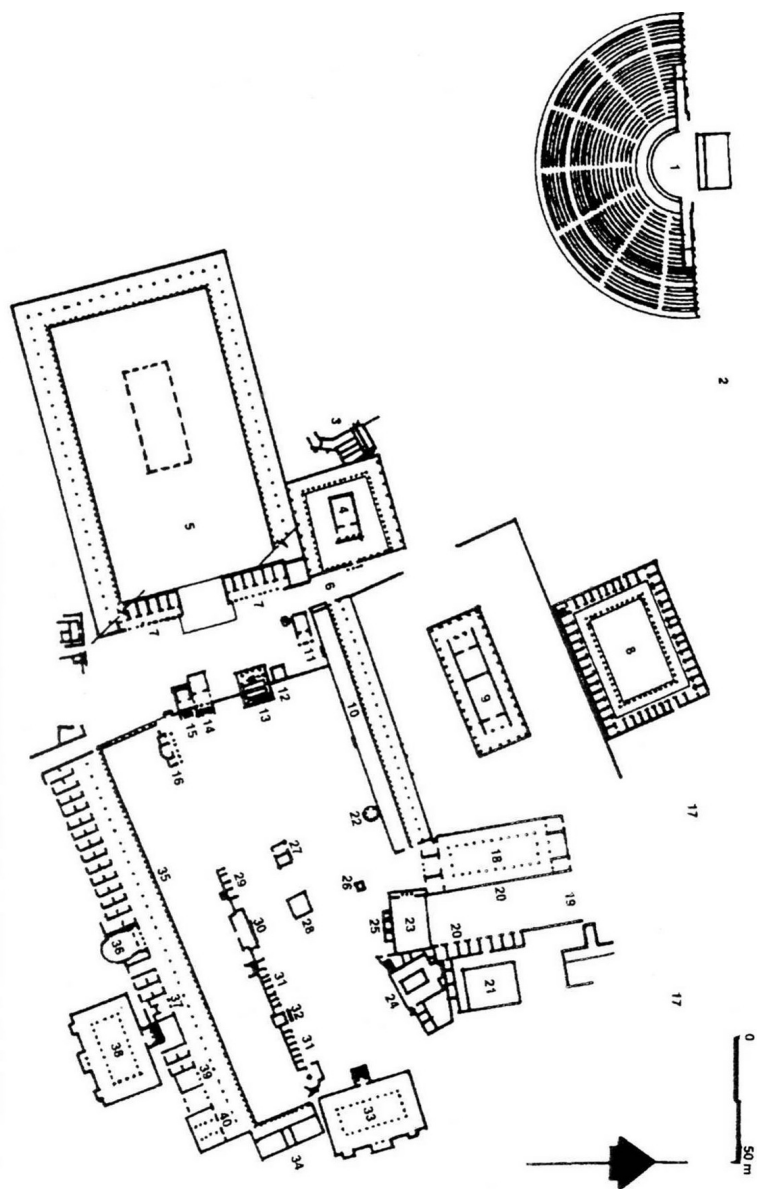


Figure 3.5 The Agora at Corinth, c. 50 AD. Source: Murphy O'Connor (1983:24-25).

Buildings are dated by the emperors Augustus (Aug.) (31BC – 14 AD), Tiberius (Tib.) (14-57 AD) and Claudius (Claud.) (41-54 AD).

- |                              |                                |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. Theatre (Aug.)            | 21. Market?                    |
| 2. Erastus Pavement          | 22. Sacred Spring              |
| 3. Well of Glauce            | 23. Ramp                       |
| 4. Temple of Hera Acraea     | 24. Peirene Fountain           |
| 5. Temple E                  | 25. Propylaea (Aug.)           |
| 6. Road to Sicyon            | 26. Statue of Athena.          |
| 7. Shops (Aug.)              | 27. Altar                      |
| 8. North Market (Tib.)       | 28. Stone platform             |
| 9. Temple of Athena          | 29. Shops (Claud.)             |
| 10. North-West Stoa (Aug.)   | 30. Berna (Aug. or Claud.)     |
| 11. Temple of Tyche (Aug.)   | 31. Shops (Claud.)             |
| 12. Babbius' Monument (Tib.) | 32. Artemis Ephesia?           |
| 13. Fountain (Tib.)          | 33. Julian Basilica (Tib.)     |
| 14. Temple of Appollo (Aug.) | 34. Record Office? (Tib.)      |
| 15. Aphrodite temple (Aug.)  | 35. South Stoa (pre-146 BC)    |
| 16. Identity uncertain       | 36. City Council chamber       |
| 17. Probable site of market  | 37. Fountain House             |
| 18. Basilica (Aug.)          | 38. South Basilica (Tib.)      |
| 19. Lechaenum road           | 39. Office of the Agonothes    |
| 20. Shops                    | 40. Office of the Hellanokidai |

The influence of the Aphroditian/Venetian cult on the community of Corinth must not be underestimated. Corinth was viewed as the home of this cult, and Myers (1987:235) states that the temple of Aphrodite hosted as much as a 1000 priestesses,<sup>1</sup> who “often engaged in religious prostitution with both locals and foreigners”. This is also seen as the origin of the term Κορινθίαν κόρνην, or “Corinthian girl” as denoting a prostitute, or κορινθιάζομαι or corinthianizing as referring to “practising immorality”.

Archaeology has also enriched the knowledge about the way that idol worship was entrenched in public life. In the temples of Demeter and Kore large dining halls were found. It is also interesting that the dining

<sup>1</sup> This number is probably exaggerated (Furnish 1988:25).

rooms of Lerna stood adjacent to the Sanctuary of Asklepius. The presence of water and sacred springs<sup>2</sup> are also an indication of the interwoven nature of religion and city life, and the origin of the “idol meat” – problem in 1 Cor 8:1-10:33 (Cheung 1999:28-29). An inscription containing a reference to a *macella*, or butchery, also gives an indication that meat were sold in Corinth, and serves as indication that meat offered to idols could be a serious issue in the Christian and Jewish religious communities there (Theissen 2003:384).

The different religious activities in Corinth had “a powerful influence on social, economic, and political institutions and values” (Engels 1990:92). The variety of religions, as well as the Isthmian Games, would surely have had an important influence upon tourism (Engels 1990:92).

Excavations also exposed a house from higher-class origin where the *triclinium* and *atrium* were shown to be sizable enough to host about 80 people together. This probably provides the setting for the problem evidenced in 1 Cor 11:17-34, where the Corinthians were accused by Paul of dining separately (Thiselton 2000:7). Murphy-O’Connor’s (1992:156) estimations differs from the above, stating that the *triclinium* could probably only take nine people when dining, and that the whole house (see Fig 3.6) could at the most accommodate thirty to forty people.

Even though the villa at Anaploga is taken as example above, it must be noted that the most excavations are focusing on the larger houses, and that the housing of the poor (actually: those among them who had houses at all) was often overlooked in archaeology (Meggitt 1998:62).<sup>3</sup>

A synagogue with certain inscriptions was also discovered in Corinth. This does not only have relevance for interpreting Jewish presence in Corinth, but also for the understanding of the existence and functioning of Jewish communities in the Diaspora in general.

The other places of note in the plan of the agora (Fig 2.3) are the many shops and markets in the city. This provides the present day interpreter with an indication of the importance of Corinth as an economic centre, where items from the two harbours as well as via the overland routes were frequently traded and exchanged. The referrals to the “potter’s quarter”, as well as the “tile works” serves as further indication that industries were prominent at Corinth. Paul’s supporting of himself by the

<sup>2</sup> Cf. the fountains, wells and springs referred to in Fig 2.3 with numbers 3,13,22,37.

<sup>3</sup> By own admittance Meggitt (1998:62) views the durability of housing for the poor as part of the reason for this deficiency in archaeology.

art of tent-making (Acts 18:3), especially joining an existing group of tent-makers which included Aquila and Priscilla, would make perfectly good sense in the light of the opportunities that Corinth provided for trade.

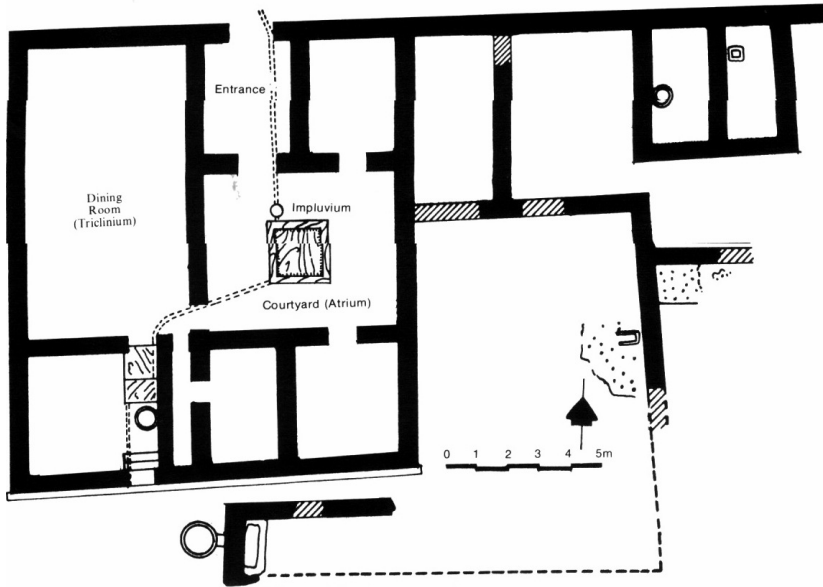


Fig 3.6 The Roman Villa at Anaploga (Murphy O'Connor 1992:154).

Other important activities that can also be inferred from archaeological data are the importance of cultural feasts, such as the Isthmian Games. The presence of the theatre, the Odeion, as well as the office of the Agonothetes indicates the importance of recreational activities in the city (Engels 1990:145). The presence of the *Bema* (where announcements were made and legal cases were heard) and the *basilica*, is a witness to the importance of oratory skills in First Century Corinth.

The archaeology provides the present day scholar with rich sources of information and knowledge about city life in the First Century. For the moment it is important to note that Corinth must have been a bee-hive of religious activities. Not only the fertility cults, but also the location of the city on major trade routes, contributed to the reputation of the city as a home for moral licentiousness. In the light of the importance for my

theme, it is necessary to have a closer look at trade and commerce in First Century Corinth.

### 3.3.5 Agriculture, manufacture, trade and commerce in Corinth

The total of the Corinthia had no more than a maximum area of about 207 square kilometres of arable land, but the neogenic soil that it contained was ideally suited for the Mediterranean climate (Engels 1990:10). The main products that originated from the Corinthia were cereals, barley, olives, wine and citrus (Salmon 1994:24-25). Furthermore there were also livestock in the form of cattle, horses, pigs, sheep, goats and bees, and a healthy fishing trade in the adjacent Gulf of Corinth and the Saronic Gulf (Engels 1990:32).

The views on First Century Corinth's location and soil as suitable for agricultural activity, must be tempered by the comment of Strabo (8.6.20-23), that

χώραν δ' ἔσχεν οὐκ εὐγεῶν σφόδρα, ἀλλὰ σκολιάν τε καὶ τραχεῖαν, ἀφ' οὗ πάντες ὀφρύνοντα Κόρινθον εἰρήκασι καὶ παροιμιάζονται Κόρινθος ὀφρυᾶ τε καὶ κοιλαίνεται.<sup>4</sup>

Corinth itself also produced pottery and it also had a tile factory (see Fig 3.4 above), but indications are that these only reached the height of their export in 2 AD. Furthermore Corinth had other raw materials to its availability, and the oolitic limestone was used in the construction of the city itself. The calcareous marl also served as a type of cement, which were exported to the Mediterranean, and as far as Spain to the west (Sanders 2005:12). Corinth was also well known for its Corinthian bronze, a specially coloured bronze (due to its tin content) unique to this city (Furnish 1988:18).

Corinth was well known for its flourishing trade in the First Century BC. As mentioned already in 3.3.1, Corinth was not only well situated between the harbours of Cenchreae and Lechaenum, but being on the southern end of the narrow Isthmus, it also connected the Greek mainland to the Peloponnesus, and all traffic by land, practically had to pass through Corinth (Fig 3.7).

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<sup>4</sup> "The soil was not very fertile; it is uneven and rugged, whence all writers describe Corinth as full of brows of hills, and apply the proverb, 'Corinth rises (with brows of hills), and sinks (into hollows)'."

In the trade and commerce the *diolkos* played an important part for transporting goods, and even light ships were transported over this paved road between the harbours of Lechaëum and Cenchreae, for the road around the Pollopenesus was treacherous due to the storms in wintertime (Strabo *Geographia* 8.6.20). According to Thiselton (2000:11) rooms to be rented, “taverns, the services of shops, entertainers, lawyers, laborers, dockers, warehousemen, leather workers, tentmakers, wagon repairers, pottery manufacturers, bankers and presumably prostitutes would be in high demand.

The building activity in Corinth is normally seen as an indication of economic prosperity,<sup>5</sup> but that seemingly was not always the case. The emperor Vespasian is recorded by Suetonius (*De Vita Caesarum, Vespasianus* 18.4) as refusing the offer to use a newly invented machine to transport columns into Rome at small cost, but responding that the *pebliculae* “poor people” would suffer if the work (and, of course, the pay) would be taken away from them. Building projects therefore function to provide an income for the poor, as the invention of Herod to pave Jerusalem, and simultaneously providing work for 18 000 labourers who were jobless after rebuilding the temple (Josephus, *Antiquitates Juidaicae* 20.219—222).

An interesting insight into the economic situation in First Century Corinth is supplied by the archaeological data provided by the coins found at excavations in the city. The coinage does not only provide information into the type of mercantile activity of the city (in looking at the origin of the coins), but the number of coins certainly gives an indication of the economic health in a certain era. In assessing the information provided by Engels (1990:167), it does seem likely that there was prosperity during the time of the emperor Augustus (27 AD – 14 BC), but that it declined until the reign of Vespasian, when it picked up rapidly again (69-81 AD). All indications are there that the period from Tiberius to Nero was certainly a downward curve in the economical situation in Corinth, which changed around during the time of Vespasian and Hadrian, when the rebuilding of the city after the earthquake in 77 BC commenced.

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<sup>5</sup> The building structures are viewed by Engels (1990:61) as a reflection of the economic health of the city’s elite and the growth of the city’s social, economic, and administrative needs.

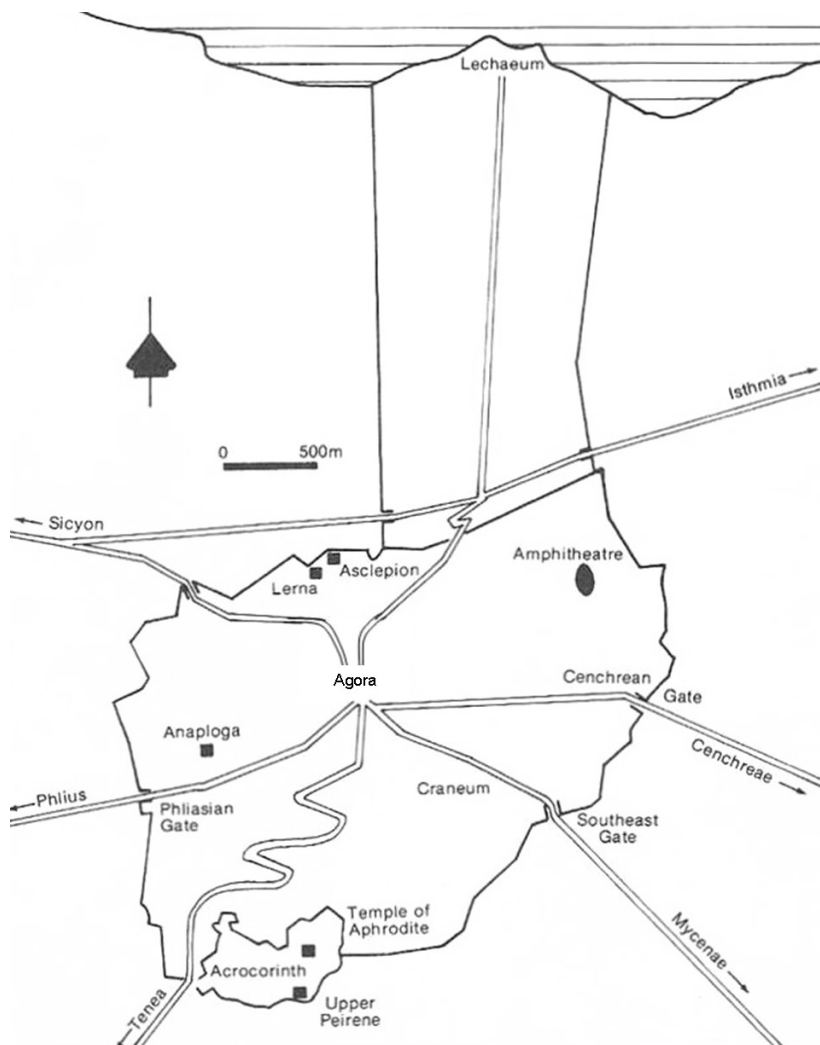


Fig 3.7 The road network through Corinth (Murphy O'Connor 1992:20).

Emperor	Reign	Municipal	Imperial
Augustus	27 BC–14 AD	14.66	.49
Tiberius	14–37	0	.17
Caligula	37–41	.25	1.0
Claudius	41–54	.15	1.0
Nero	54–68	.36	.36
Vespasian and Titus	69–81	.083	.58
Domitian	81–96	1.67	.60
Nerva and Trajan	96–117	.14	.62
Hadrian	117–138	1.33	1.24
Antoninus Pius	138–161	1.56	1.78
Marcus Aurelius	161–180	1.37	2.68
Commodus	180–192	1.33	2.42
Septimius Severus, Caracalla, and Geta	193–217	3.75	1.25
Heliogabalus	218–222	.50	1.25
Severus Alexander and Maximinus Thrax	222–238	0	3.25
Pupienus and Gordian III	238–244	1.167	4.83
Philip I and II	243–249	0	3.167
Decius	249–251	0	5.0
Trebonius Gallus and Volusian	251–253	0	4.5
Valerian and Gallienus	253–268	.20	9.67
Claudius II	268–270	0	13.0
Aurelian	270–275	0	18.80
Tacitus, Florus, and Probus	275–282	0	10.43
Carus, Carinus, and Numerian	282–284	0	9.5
Diocletian and Maximian	284–305	0	7.67
Constantius Chlorus, Galerius, Maximian II, Licinius, Constantine, and Family of Constantine	305–337	0	29.13
Constantius II and Family	337–361	0	105.0
Julian and Jovian	361–364	0	58.0
Valentinian I, Valens, Procopius, Gratian, Valentinian II, and Theodosius	364–395	0	84.39

Note:

Numbers are averages of the actual number of coins found divided by the number of years of reign.

*Table. 3.1 Number of coins found in Corinth per year of reign (Engels 1990:167).*

It is evident that Corinth was a city with enormous potential, but hampered by several events in history. Although the broad picture of Corinth as one of the larger ‘metropolises’ in its time is undisputed from all the data above, it is clear that due to several external crises, the city failed to live up to its expectations, especially during the time of Paul’s contact with Corinth in 50-57 AD.



### 3.3.6 Demography

Although demography plays a prominent role in studying present day economies, “population has been consistently neglected by ancient economic historians” (Scheidel 2007:1). There is a strong possibility that the little evidence available made the demography of an ancient city such a contentious issue, which was rather avoided. The estimates for Classical Corinth are calculated by Salmon (1984:168) to be around seventy thousand.

When Corinth was practically demolished in 146 BC by Lucius Mummius, all the men were killed, and the women and children, as well as the slaves who fought on the side of the Achaean league were sold (Pausanias *Description of Greece* 16.8). With Caesar’s rebuilding of the city in 44 BC, the city was replenished with freedmen,<sup>6</sup> described by Appian (*History* 8.136) as ἄπορος (poor),<sup>7</sup> which became too many for Rome. Strabo (Geogr. 8.6.23) confirm that these people were poor by relating that τοὺς τάφους συνανασκάπτοντες εὕρισκον ὀστρακίνων “they looted the graves to find pottery/ antiques”, and Crinagoras (*Greek Anthology* 9.284) referred to Corinth as τοίοις διὰ πᾶσα παλιμπρήτοισι δοθείσα (being wholly abandoned to disreputable slaves). This practice of relocating freedmen from Rome does pose questions to the thesis that an increase in population and size of a city is necessarily an indication of economic prosperity, as is sometimes assumed in dealing with Corinth as a “wealthy” city.<sup>8</sup>

The number of citizens during the First Century is considered by Engels (1990:84) as being around eighty thousand people in the city of Corinth, and twenty thousand living in the surrounding Corinthia. It must be realized, however, that the population of such a city was often subjected to famine and plagues, which was worse in the city than in the rural

<sup>6</sup> Strabo (*Geographia* 8.6.23; 17.3.15) recounts that this group belonged to τοῦ ἀπελευθερικοῦ γένους “the freedman class.”

<sup>7</sup> Although he uses the translation himself, Murphy-O’Connor (1983:113) questions Appian’s description of the freedmen (ἄπορος) as “poor”, and he states that the word can also mean “having no way out, or through”, or “hard to deal with”, and “unmanageable”. It seems that Murphy-O’Connor goes to great lengths in his publication to negate the view of Corinth’s population as “poor” (cf. the comment on Alciphron in 3.1). To my view even interpreting ἄπορος as “having now way out” would probably still depict the poor, and the poor was often also those who were “hard to deal with” in the cities (Garland 2003:2).

<sup>8</sup> Commentators such as Engels (1992:20) refer to Corinth as reaching the “apogee of its size and prosperity” in the second century AD.

areas. This had a serious impact upon the population of the city, and the places of those who died were often filled with just another wave of travellers and immigrants from the Corinthia and elsewhere (Engels 1990:74-75).

In a new approach to socio-economic research, Christine Thomas (2005:281-304) surveys the contents of existing graves (such as gifts buried with the deceased), and concludes that the citizens of Corinth being even less well off than the citizens of Ephesus, and for sure worse of than Rome. Also investigating the practice of corpse cremation, Thomas (2005:300) reports that “the cremation burials represented burials that were less lavish and less wealthy than other contemporary burials.

A useful structure for socio-economic composition of the cities in the First Century is provided by Friesen (2004:323-361), who divides citizens according to a poverty scale: the Imperial Elite, the regional or provincial Elites, the Municipal Elites, the Moderate Surplus Resources, the Near Subsistence Level, the Subsistence Level, and the Below Subsistence Level. These categories are defined as follow by Friesen (2004:347):

PS 1 Imperial Elite	imperial dynasty, Roman senatorial families, some retainers, local royalty, some freedpersons
PS 2 Regional or Provincial Elites	equestrian families, provincial officials, some retainers, some decurial families, some freedpersons, some retired military officers
PS 3 Municipal Elites	most decurial families, wealthy men and women who do not hold office, some freedpersons, some retainers, some veterans, some merchants
PS 4 Moderate Surplus Resources	some merchants, some traders, some freed- persons, some artisans (especially those who employ others), military veterans
PS 5 Near Subsistence Level	many merchants and traders, regular wage earners, artisans, large shop owners, freed persons, some farm families
PS 6 At Subsistence Level	small farm families, labourers (skilled and unskilled), artisans (especially those employed by others), wage earners, most merchants and traders, small shop/tavern owners
PS 7 Below Subsistence Level	some farm families, unattached widows, orphans, beggars, disabled persons, unskilled day labourers, prisoners

Friesen subsequently estimated which percentages of society were on which level of the scale (see Fig 3.8), and concluded that “most of the people in Paul’s congregations, including Paul himself, lived near subsistence levels”. According to this scale 90% of society lived near or below subsistence levels.

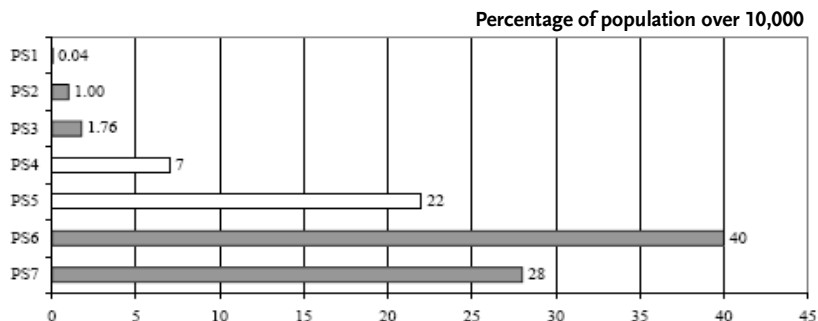


Figure 3.8. Economic profile for a Roman imperial urban center (Friesen 2004:347)<sup>9</sup>

The article, including this model was criticized by Barclay (2004:363-366), for comparing Deismann’s “impressionistic” views on Paul with scholarship in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. In this response article Barclay (2004:365) argues that all the scholars in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century would agree that Paul and his congregation lived in the bottom 97% of society, and that the uncertain areas in the column (PS 4 & 5), to which Friesen arbitrarily attached percentages, could make a considerable difference if interpreted differently.

Despite the criticism above, the response of Oakes (2004:367-371) to Friesen is encouraging further research into poverty. Oakes (2004:368) remarks that the “elite” in the first three categories of Friesen cannot be properly regarded as part of a “poverty scale”, but do also encourage a deeper look into the measurements of what the “poverty” and the “subsistence level” would comprise of.<sup>10</sup> In a more recent edition of his poverty scale, Friesen (2006:353) remarks that he “does not want to return to the older view of the “assemblies as the dregs of society”, but reiterates that “the consensus has tended to neglect the fact that nearly everyone in the Roman Empire was poor”.

<sup>9</sup> PS 4-5 are shaded differently because the proportions are speculative.

<sup>10</sup> In comparison to Friesen’s estimation of the ‘begging poor’ as 22% of the First Century population, Neyrey (2002:1) (earlier) estimated it as 15%.

Recent studies by Scheidel (2006:40-59) and Longenecker (2009:243-278) adjusted the percentages within the middle of Friesen scale, to be somewhat higher than Friesen's initial estimates. Scheidel initially viewed PS 4 to be around 20-25% instead of the 7% estimated by Friesen, whilst Longenecker (2009:264) estimated a more conservative 17% of the population in PS 4, and 25% instead of 22% in PS5. These estimates eventually result in PS6 being reduced to 30% of the population, instead of the initial 40% by Friesen.<sup>11</sup>

What would the relevance of Friesen's model be for the city of Corinth? In view of the absolute discontinuance of Corinth's governing structure between 146 and 44BC, with the replenishing of the city as described at the start of this section, the chances for the general population of Corinth to be better off than Rome or even any other large city in the Roman Empire seems rather slim. Even though the attendance to the detail of the different levels of Friesen's poverty scale was not attended to in this section, it receives attention in the next chapter, which deals specifically with wealth and poverty in the First Century.

### 3.4 Conclusion

In his recollection of Corinth in ruins (around 79-77 BC), Cicero (*Tusculan Disputations* 3.53) states that he saw natives of Corinth (who were probably slaves) at the ruins of the then demolished Corinth. He states that "*magisque me moverant Corinthi subito aspectae parietinae quam ipsos Corinthios,*" (the sudden sight of the ruins moved me more than those Corinthians), who were "*animis diuturna cogitatio callum vetustatis obduxerat*" (blurred in their souls due to the long exposure to the sight).

It clearly seemed to Cicero as if the ruins of Corinth were not as disturbing to him as to them, but that they became accustomed to it. In assessing Ancient Corinth from a socio-economic point of view, it seems as if the picture of 'wealth' and 'prosperity' mostly focuses on scenery, location, buildings, games, entertainment, religious sites and other tourist attractions, whilst the other picture often comes into view only when

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<sup>11</sup> The adjustments made by Longenecker (2009:264) are mainly done in criticism of the fact that Friesen (concurring with the Finleyan approach) still works with a binary paradigm (making a strong distinction between the rich and the poor, without room for a middle class).

looking at the lives of the real people inside of Corinth (cf. section 3.1). In a sense Corinth may have been beautiful from afar, but far from beautiful.

In reports about Corinth, historians and present day scholars alike have struggled to reconcile these two pictures. To my view Engels (1990) provides a good contribution to Corinthian research, but fails at times to really impress his view of Corinth as a wealthy, service city. The way that Engels (1990:59) argues that the task of “bridging the 120 meter long, 20 meter deep cut through the diolkos’ path”<sup>12</sup> would not be “an insurmountable obstacle for Roman engineering”, does show the great lengths to which one must go<sup>13</sup> in order to prove that everything was well with Corinth’s economy.

A further example of inconsistent argumentation is Engels’ (1990:20) report that the rebuilding of the city with marble instead of limestone in 77 BC, was “a testimony to Corinth’s importance as a focus of imperial patronage and to its economic revival during the First Century”. Although he stresses in a footnote that he does not know which one of the two to choose, he proceeds later on in the book to view the same event as “an indication of the city’s prosperity at the time” (1990:62).

The same inconsistency is visible in the commentary of Thiselton (2000:4), who (somewhat anachronistically) views the research of Winter (1989:88-106; 1994:53-57) on “the dangers of famine for the poor” as having been “well corroborated” by the work of Engels (1990) on market forces. A few pages further Thiselton (2000:8), who is clearly a supporter of the ‘new consensus on Paul’ (cf. 2.5.1),<sup>14</sup> does refer to the views of Meggitt, as deserving respect.

To my view the preceding investigation into First Century Corinth has proven that these two pictures is and will always be part of research into this intriguing city at the foot of the Acrocorinth. For the purpose of enlightening the theme of this thesis, chapter 4 will include a more detailed look into the less observed, but seriously important second picture.

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<sup>12</sup> To my view Nero and Vespasian actually impeded the Corinthian economy by leaving the canal through the Isthmus, which pierced the diolkos, unfinished.

<sup>13</sup> The fact that the diolkos was only five feet wide, does give some perspective into the problem that ‘Roman engineering’ created.

<sup>14</sup> In his commentary Thiselton (2005:4) does not only generally accept the views of Engels, but indiscriminately talks of “wealthy Corinth”.

## 4 POVERTY FROM A GRAECO-ROMAN PERSPECTIVE

### 4.1 *Introduction*

The nature of poverty and extent thereof in the First Century is still an area of contention in present-day scholarship. One of the provoking works in this regard is by Malina (1987:5), who contends that in the First Century Mediterranean ‘poor’ described “a person scarcely able to maintain one’s honour or dignity.” Others, such as Garnsey and Woolf (1990:153), still views the definition of the poor to be of a very concrete and material nature: “The poor are those living at or near subsistence level, whose primary concern it is to obtain the minimum food, shelter, and clothing necessary to sustain life, whose lives are dominated by the struggle for physical survival.”

Even though Meggitt<sup>1</sup> (1998:6) states that his focus on the poor “not in any way presumes ‘economic’ reality”, it is clear that he reintroduces the economical aspect into the question of the nature for poverty in the First Century. Meggitt (1998:7) defines the poor as an “absolute ... phenomenon” where “the basic essentials necessary for supporting human life are not taken for granted but are a continuous source of anxiety.”

Without putting aside other definitions of poverty, and angles thereto, this chapter will focus mostly on poverty as a phenomenon that indicates the shortage or absence of goods that are required for one’s physical survival. To achieve this goal, the concept of poverty in Graeco-Roman literature and philosophy will be assessed. Subsequently Graeco-Roman views on labour, the impact of poverty on households, and the role of the poor in the politics of the Mediterranean up to the First Century will be examined.

### 4.2 *Poverty in Graeco-Roman literature and philosophy*

In discussing poverty from a First Century perspective, I keep in mind that poverty as a theme must be placed within a certain time frame, and

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. section 1.2.

that the literature on poverty alone does not reflect an objective picture in this regard.

The economic history of Ancient Greece and Rome is divided in two sections, namely the ancient period from Hesiod to Aristotle, and the period of Hellenistic and Roman culture thereafter.

#### 4.2.1 From the Golden Age to Aristotle

##### The Golden Age and the Prometheus Myth

Greek mythology portrays a Golden Age at the beginning of time, where the gods had plenty and shared that with man at their own discretion. That original state of plenty and grace gradually degenerated, until “man fell into his present state of scarcity, of painful labour and discord” (Perrotta 2003:183).<sup>2</sup> In this myth the image of *cornucopia*<sup>3</sup> is foremost, derived from the image of the horn of the goat of Amalthea that suckled the infant Zeus, father of the gods. In his narration of the myth Hesiod (Works and Days 109-201) relates the gradual degradation of mankind in 5 generations: those of gold, silver, bronze, the demi-gods, and iron.

According to the myth this woeful situation was mainly caused by Pandora’s mistake of letting out the demons from Prometheus’ jar (Hesiod, Works and Days 85-95). Afterwards, mankind were no more ἄτερ τε κακῶν καὶ ἄτερ χαλεποῦ πόνου νούσων τ’ ἀργαλέων,<sup>4</sup> but the earth and the sea became full of all evils (Hesiod, Works and Days 90-100). In a second myth Prometheus tricked the gods, by only handing over to Zeus the bones of the sacrificial ox, and hiding the flesh for himself and his fellow human beings. In return Zeus withheld the gift of fire from mankind (Hesiod, Theogony 532-560).

Both the myths of the Golden Age and Prometheus, as well as the interpretation thereof, lead towards the appreciation as well as the renouncing of the quest for wealth (Perrotta 2003:185). In the instance of the Golden Age myth abundance was given unconditionally and unprovisionally, but lost by the wrongdoing of Pandora. In the second instance

<sup>2</sup> I view Cosimo Perrotta (2003) to be a important source for Section 4.2, and will make frequent reference to his views.

<sup>3</sup> Cornucopia is the classical symbol of plenty that “we beseech from the gods” (Perrotta 2003:183).

<sup>4</sup> “...far from disasters and far from arduous labour and far from terrible illnesses...”

abundance was achieved by Prometheus, but through actual wrongdoing and disobedience to the gods.

### Plato

Plato develops the idea of the Golden Age even further. To him men pass gradually from an “initial state of happiness, peace and plenty (the golden age or the happy age) to a state of progressive chaos, in which it becomes more and more arduous to procure the goods they need” (Perrotta 2003:186). In this version there is no real sense of fault or err on the human side. The gods are not opposed to humans having more than enough, but they even help humans to procure goods. Within the thoughts of Plato, however, the idea remains that scarcity and painful labour are caused by turning away from the divinity (Plato, *Politicus*, 269c–274e)

### Antisthenes and Aristophanes

One of Socrates’ students, Antisthenes, the founder of the Cynic School, developed the Prometheus myth, and interpreted it in terms of the fact that man must limit himself to his minimum needs and consumption. He viewed the reason for Zeus’ jealousy not to be the stealing of the fire itself, but the fact that the possession of fire derailed men into the evil of luxury (Trever 1916:131). This trend was followed later by Dicaearchus (Perrotta 2003:187).

Aristophanes in a certain sense also condemned the pursuit of riches. He argued that if everybody were rich, no one would work, and we would not have what we need (Aristophanes *Plutus* 507-516). On the other hand, he believes that it is διὰ τὴν χρείαν καὶ τὴν πενίαν (“through need and poverty”) that he is motivated to make a life (Aristophanes *Plutus* 532-534).

In accordance with the Cynics and their focus on ‘simplicity’, Aristophanes addressed issues of ‘want’ often in his plays. For example, Penia<sup>5</sup> (Aristophanes, *Plutus* 552-554) says that:

παυχοῦ μὲν γὰρ βίος, ὃν σὺ λέγεις, ζῆν ἔστιν μηδὲν ἔχοντα· τοῦ δὲ πένητος  
ζῆν φειδόμενον καὶ τοῖς ἔργοις πρὸς ἔχοντα, περιγίγνεσθαι δ’ αὐτῷ μηδέν,  
μὴ μέντοι μηδ’ ἐπιλείπειν.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Penia’s name literally means ‘poverty’, and is one of the main characters in Aristophanes’ play.



These words by Aristophanes have sparked an ongoing debate about the difference between a πτωχός (beggar) and a πένης (poor man). To my view Rosivach (1991:189) correctly points out that Penia is defending poverty here, and tries to sketch it as bearable as possible.

During the rest of the 5<sup>th</sup> century there is appreciation for economic development amongst writers such as Xenophanes, Thucydides and Sophocles. This was not without qualification, as even Sophocles (Antigone 222) states that ἄνδρας τὸ κέρδος πολλάκις διώλεσεν (“making money has often utterly destroyed men”).

### Thucydides and Xenophon

Together with a growing appreciation of economic development, one finds also a different view on the state of the first humans. Thucydides (Peloponnesian war 1), for instance, moved away from the idea of an initial Golden Era of abundance, and viewed the initial lack of organisation and co-operation between the Greeks as negative and detrimental. He argues that (Peloponnesian war 1:2-3):

“τὸ μὲν εὐθὺς, τὸ δὲ καὶ διανοοῦμενον. κίνησις γὰρ αὕτη μεγίστη δὴ τοῖς Ἕλλησιν ἐγένετο καὶ μέρει τινὶ τῶν βαρβάρων, ὥς δὲ εἰπεῖν καὶ ἐπὶ πλείστον ἀνθρώπων. τὰ γὰρ πρὸ αὐτῶν καὶ τὰ ἔτι παλαιότερα σαφῶς μὲν εὐρεῖν διὰ χρόνου πλῆθος ἀδύνατα ἦν, ἐκ δὲ τεκμηρίων ὧν ἐπὶ μακρότατον σκοποῦντί μοι πιστεῦσαι ξυμβαίνει οὐ μεγάλα νομίζω.”<sup>7</sup>

The supporters of development would therefore paint a dark picture of the beginning of mankind, in order to prove the need for development. Anaxagoras even listed four stages of development: the acquiring of language and knowledge, technical inventions and skills, the introduction of agriculture, and the introduction of laws (Perrotta 2003:186).

Xenophon (*Oeconomicus* II:1-9) moved away from linking poverty and wealth to material possessions. He valued the ability to limit one's needs and one's desires, and subsequently avoid poverty (i.e. the sense of priva-

<sup>6</sup> “For the life of a beggar, you say, is to live possessing nothing; that of a poor man is to live by scratching together and saving and keeping to one's tasks, and to have no excess, but no want either.”

<sup>7</sup> “This was, however, the greatest movement yet known from the beginning, not only of the Greeks, but especially of a part of the barbarians – one may say for the whole human race. For though the events of distant antiquity, and even those that more immediately precede the war, could not be clearly ascertained due to the length of time, although the evidences which an inquiry found as far back as was trustworthy to me, all lead to the conclusion that there was nothing on a major scale, neither in war, nor in other affairs.”

tion) and obtain wealth (i.e. to feel satisfied). This philosophy is summed up well by Democritus, who said: ἦν μὴ πολλῶν ἐπιθυμέηις, τὰ ὀλίγα τοι πολλὰ δόξει· σμικρὰ γὰρ ὄρεξις πενήνῃν ἰσοσθενέα πλούτῳ ποιέει.<sup>8</sup> Therefore Xenophon praised poverty and the rejection of possessions in *Oeconomicus*.

In his other work on economic principles, “*Ways and means* (199-223)”, Xenophon praises the efforts to enhance the Athenian economy. Furthermore, Xenophon contrasts the poverty that war brings with the prosperity originating from peace. The contradiction between the two works can probably be ascribed to Xenophon writing in a time of crisis, and defending the importance of the development of the market and trade, rather than conservative isolation, which to his view would have a negative effect on Athens (Perrotta 2003:192).

### Aristotle

In the works of Aristotle one finds the aspiration towards “self-sufficiency”. Aristotle argues that happiness is a man’s aim, and that it stems from the way man can overcome his circumstances in a reasonable manner. This is illustrated well in his treatise on Politics (7:1332a): “χρησαιο δ’ ἂν ὁ σπουδαῖος ἀνὴρ καὶ πενία καὶ νόσῳ καὶ ταῖς ἄλλαις τύχαις ταῖς φαύλαις καλῶς...”<sup>9</sup>

From a political perspective, Aristotle would view the stability of the *polis*<sup>10</sup> to be dependent on the relationships between different interest groups in the respective city-states. He coined a term “stasis” to denote a rising crisis in such a state. Aristotle reckoned that the differences between citizens, especially the tripartite distinction between the rich, the poor, and a group in the middle could be responsible for such crises (Fisher 1998:77). Aristotle viewed the political system to be correlated to the group in charge. Therefore he viewed it as oligarchy when the rich were in power and democracy when the poor were in control.

Aristotle also elaborates on Socrates’ disdain of manual labour artisanship. According to Socrates, noble labour can be found in agriculture, and then surely referring more to a supervisory role than to actual labour

<sup>8</sup> “If you do not desire much, a little will seem a lot. In fact, wishing for little makes poverty as strong as wealth.”

<sup>9</sup> “The noble man is able to use even pain and disease and other unfortunate catastrophes to good effect.”

<sup>10</sup> A *polis* constitutes a “small political community” (Fisher 1998:76).

(Xenophon *Oeconomicus* VI 2-4). Aristotle (Politics IV, 4:1291) theorises that there is an inverse relationship between necessity and value, and that less necessary duties are more honourable than everyday labour (Perrotta 2003:195).

Aristotle (Politics I:9:1257) even quotes the Midas myth in order to warn against the evils of pursuing money. He stated that a man with a lot of money can even die of hunger, like king Midas in the fairytale, whose insatiable prayer turned everything that was set before him into gold.

## Conclusion

Even though the myths of the Golden Era were interpreted differently, the values of contentment and the evils of luxury were deliberated on by philosophers of the day. Nevertheless, it is evident that general poverty, a scarcity of goods and painful labour were an integral part of everyday life. Through the centuries there is also a developing tendency to approve the acquiring of wealth and prosperity by the state, whilst individual wealth is often looked upon negatively. In the time of Aristotle there are definite signs of a more developed, structured and organised economy, but the prevailing negative attitude towards manual labour and artisanship seriously hampered technological progress.

The following section investigates this development and attitudes there-to closer.

### 4.2.2 Hellenistic and Roman economies after Aristotle

Between the fourth and first centuries BC there was not much stimulation of the development of trade and industry in Greece and Rome. The ancient world lacked the general concept of work in the sense of the significance thereof to the wealth of society. They viewed labour in terms of many diverse occupations, which differed in importance and significance. Not only the negative attitudes towards manual labour and artisanship, but also the monopoly of landowners contributed to the fact that the *status quo* basically remained (Perrotta 2003:201).

The society was therefore basically an agrarian society building its foundations on the basis of Plato and Aristotle's philosophy of self-sufficiency, rather than aspiring money through private enterprise and artisanship. This was not only true of Greece, but of Rome as well. In the works of Theophrastus and the *Oeconomica* the supremacy of agriculture were also promoted (Trever 1916:125-126).

### The *Oeconomica*

Although initially attributed to Aristotle, the *Oeconomica* was probably written by Aristotle's followers. In this work agriculture is referred to as a natural occupation, which gives sustenance to mankind through Mother Earth (Pseudo-Aristotle, *Oeconomica*, I, ii.2–3):<sup>11</sup>

Ἡ δὲ γεωργικὴ μάλιστα, ὅτι δικαία· οὐ γὰρ ἀπ' ἀνθρώπων, οὐθ' ἐκόνκῃ μάλιστα, ὅτι δικαία· οὐ γὰρ ἀπ' ἀνθρώπων, οὐθ' ἐκόντων, ὥσπερ καπηλεία καὶ αἱ μισθαρνικαί, οὐτ' ἀκόντων, ὥσπερ αἱ πολεμικαί. Ἔτι δὲ καὶ τῶν κατὰ φύσιν· φύσει γὰρ ἀπὸ τῆς μητρὸς ἡ τροφὴ πᾶσιν ἐστίν, ὥστε καὶ τοῖς ἀνθρώποις ἀπὸ τῆς γῆς.

The quotation above shows that the followers of Aristotle followed in his footsteps by showing their aversion towards trade, skills that are utilized to make money, and even arts connected to warfare. They view the agricultural life and work as being much more acceptable, since it is “natural” (a concept invented by Aristotle). Furthermore Aristotle's supporters go to great lengths in providing (somewhat ridiculous) proof or their argument (Pseudo-Aristotle, *Oeconomica* 4-5).

Πρὸς δὲ τοῦτοις καὶ πρὸς ἀνδρείαν συμβάλλεται μέγала· οὐ γὰρ ὥσπερ αἱ βάνανσοι τὰ σώματα ἀχρεῖα ποιοῦσιν, ἀλλὰ δυνάμενα θυραυλεῖν καὶ πονεῖν· ἔτι δὲ δυνάμενα κινδυνεύειν πρὸς τοὺς πολεμίους.<sup>12</sup>

This quotation makes it evident that there is not only an aversion to tradesmen and artisans within the city walls in comparison to “those working on the fields”, but it is also notable that agricultural labour is said to prepare one for the valour of war. The Greek emphasis on the physical body is also stressed here in opposition to economic skills.

### The Cynics and Utopians

Antisthenes (mentioned in 4.2.1) is commonly hailed as the father of the Cynics. His successors built upon the idea that a person must live within his or her minimum needs and consumption, and that luxury is not

<sup>11</sup> “Agriculture is of value, because of it being straightforward. For it does not take anything away from men, even with their consent, because it is honest. Yes, it does not take anything away from men, as trade or arts aimed at material gain, or against their will, as does the arts associated with war. Furthermore it is natural. For it is natural for all things to receive nourishment from its mother, like (food) from the earth is to humans”.

<sup>12</sup> “In addition to these things, it (agriculture) contributes significantly to manhood. For it does not make bodies useless as the liberal arts do, but it can guide them towards the outdoors and physical work. That will contribute to make them audacious against the enemy”.

acceptable. By promoting this view, Antisthenes also viewed communal life in the towns to be detrimental, and that a person's natural, agrarian state is much more beneficial (Xenophon *Symposium* 3:3).

According to Xenophon, Antisthenes held poverty also to be a state of mind, and the degree in which a person was satisfied with his circumstances or not. When being asked by Socrates how he can boast of wealth whilst having so little himself, Antisthenes answered (*Symposium* 4:34-35):<sup>13</sup>

ὅτι νομίζω, ὦ ἄνδρες, τοὺς ἀνθρώπους οὐκ ἐν τῷ οἴκῳ τὸν πλοῦτον καὶ τὴν πενίαν ἔχειν ἀλλ' ἐν ταῖς ψυχαῖς. [35] ὁρῶ γάρ πολλοὺς μὲν ιδιώτας, οἱ πάντοτε πολλὰ ἔχοντες χρήματα οὕτω πένεσθαι ἡγοῦνται ὥστε πάντα μὲν πόνον, πάντα δὲ κίνδυνον ὑποδύονται, ἐφ' ᾧ πλείω κτήσονται

In the same passage Antisthenes also shows a certain aversion to wealth and the pain it causes to the poor (*Symposium* 4:36):<sup>14</sup>

αἰσθάνομαι δὲ καὶ τυράννους τινάς, οἱ οὕτω πεινῶσι χρημάτων ὥστε ποιοῦσι πολὺ δεινότερα τῶν ἀπορωτάτων: δι' ἔνδειαν μὲν γὰρ δῆπου οἱ μὲν κλέπτουσιν, οἱ δὲ τοιχωρυχοῦσιν, οἱ δὲ ἀνδραποδίζονται: τύραννοι δ' εἰσὶ τινες οἱ ὅλους μὲν οἴκους ἀναιροῦσιν, ἀθρόους δ' ἀποκτείνουσι, πολλὰ καὶ ὅλας πόλεις χρημάτων ἕνεκα ἐξανδραποδίζονται.

Through the pen of Xenophon Antisthenes then continues to raise the issue of bare necessities for happiness: food, clothing, and shelter (*Symposium* 4:37-38):<sup>15</sup>

ἐγὼ δὲ οὕτω μὲν πολλὰ ἔχω ὥς μόλις αὐτὰ καὶ [ἐγὼ ἂν] αὐτὸς εὕρισκω: ὁμοῦ δὲ περισσὶ μοι καὶ ἐσθιοντι ἄχρι τοῦ μὴ πεινῆν ἀφικέσθαι καὶ πίνοντι

<sup>13</sup> "Because, gentlemen, I reckon that 'people do not have wealth and poverty in their real estate, but in their hearts. For I see many persons, not in office, who though possessors of large resources, yet look upon themselves as so poor that they bend their backs to any toil, any risk, if only they may increase their holdings..."

<sup>14</sup> "Again, I am informed about certain oppressors, also, who have such a insatiable desire for riches that they commit much more appalling crimes than they who are afflicted with the direst poverty. For it is of course their want that makes some people steal, others commit burglary, others follow the slave trade; but there are some despots who destroy whole families, kill men wholesale, oftentimes enslave even entire cities, for the sake of money."

<sup>15</sup> "For my own part, my possessions are so great that I can hardly find them myself; yet I have enough so that I can eat until I reach a point where I no longer feel hungry and drink until I do not feel thirsty and have enough clothing ... and when I get into the house I look on my walls as exceedingly warm tunics and the roofs as exceptionally thick mantles; and the bedding that I own is so satisfactory that it is actually a hard task to get me awake in the morning."

μέχρι τοῦ μὴ διψῆν καὶ ἀμφιέννυσθαι ... ἐπειδάν γε μὴν ἐν τῇ οἰκίᾳ γένωμαι,  
 πάνυ μὲν ἄλεινοι χιτῶνες οἱ τοῖχοί μοι δοκοῦσιν εἶναι, πάνυ δὲ παχεῖαι  
 ἐφесτριδες οἱ ὄροφοι, στρωμνὴν γε μὴν οὕτως ἀρκοῦσαν ἔχω ὥστ' ἔργον  
 μέγ' ἐστὶ καὶ ἀνεγεῖραι.

These three quotations evidences to the fact that Antisthenes' lifestyle was a protest against the measure in which the wealthy of his time exploited the poor. He ironically illustrates real wealth as coming from the heart, and pleads for a modest lifestyle where the bare necessities are nothing more than food, clothes and shelter.

Diogenes followed in the footsteps of Antisthenes, and rejected all forms of luxury. Instead, in the analogy of a mouse running around without settling in a comfortable place, he wandered around, sleeping in his own cloak, carrying food in his wallet, and sleeping and eating wherever it was possible to do so (Diogenes Laertius, *De vita et moribus philosophorum* 3:1-5). After Diogenes his pupil Crates of Thebes gave away his possessions, claiming to free himself in such a way, Cercidas of Megalopolis warned the ruling class to give to the poor, and Cynics were often outspoken against slavery and in favour of manual labour (Perrotta 2003:207).

In the footsteps of the Cynics, the Utopians suggested an even more extreme course. In the *Sacred Cronicle* Euhemerus suggests a total egalitarian society without trade or money. In another work by a fictive Jambulus, *City of the Sun*, full-fledged communism is propagated, including families without any power structures.

### The Epicureans

Although the Epicureans are portrayed by Cicero to be “pleasure seeking” they actually aspired for a life lived in “moderation”. This would mean that the sage,<sup>16</sup> according to Epicurus (*Maxims* LVI, LVII), aspired “moderate” desires and wealth, because he believed that there is little superiority of wealth over poverty.

What the Epicureans therefore aspired was tranquillity, which promoted well-being. They were not in favour of limitless wealth, or acquiring it in an unjust manner. A student and contemporary of Epicurus, Metrodorus, argued that the pain and suffering wealth brings are still less than the suffering of poverty. He also argued that it is not unacceptable to

<sup>16</sup> The sage refers to the idealised wise man in Stoic Philosophy, who proved himself worthy by enduring certain hardships (Fitzgerald 1978:28).

make slaves and servants work in agriculture or in any other trade in order to get rich. In stark contrast to the Epicureans' approval of moderate wealth, was the Stoic's philosophy of detachment from all possessions.

### The Stoics

In comparison with the Epicureans, the Stoics were much more influential in their times. Especially as the power shifted from Athens to Rome, the Stoic philosophy gained more and more momentum. To the Stoic there was no difference between wealth and poverty; what was necessary is the ability to be content only with what was strictly necessary (Diogenes Laertius, *Lives* Book VI).

The first Stoics were radical in their approach, criticising slavery and even showing signs of Utopianism (Perrotta 2003:209). Even though this point of view was held by most of the early Stoics (Cleanthes, Posidonius, Hecataeus, Chrysippus and Diogenes from Seleucia) there were exceptions. Zeno, for instance, despite portraying a very poor and simple life in his ideal city, actually rejected poverty as a lifestyle (Diogenes Laertius, *Lives* 2:VII,87).

This movement towards wealth instead of poverty was given momentum by Chrysippus. He argued that wealth is acceptable, with the precondition that it has been justly acquired.<sup>17</sup> A wise man would therefore know better how to raise funds and administer them wisely. There is thus a clear progress from the Cynics which argued that the wise (poor) man is rich (internally), and the developing Stoic idea that the wise can acquire wealth by his superior wisdom (Perrotta 2003:210).

### The Roman Age

I have argued above that philosophic ideas resulted in a lack of industrial activity and commitment to the promotion of a united or general economy. The Roman era portrays a somewhat different picture, where theory and praxis were slowly but surely parting ways. Although acclaimed Stoic philosophers (like Cicero, Seneca, and Plutarch) promoted a sober lifestyle without a quest for wealth, all evidence points towards an increasing gorge between the extremely rich and the extremely poor (Perrotta 2003:104).

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<sup>17</sup> Within the Stoic philosophy self-sufficiency was an important goal (Malherbe 1996:125-139), and building up resources would also be defensible in the light of this virtue.

The most prominent philosophers in the Roman era were the two Stoics, Cicero and Seneca. Cicero (*Paradoxes* 1:264-265) criticises the desire for vast riches and for extreme luxuries and pleasure, because such a desire can become insatiable. In the footsteps of his Greek predecessors Cicero (*Offices* 73) also hails agricultural activity as the noblest form of labour, whilst disregarding other types of manual and industrial labour. Even though he criticised lavish spending and waste of money, he adopted the same moderate view attitude to wealth as the Epicureans, as long as it was not disadvantageous to somebody else (Cicero *Offices* 1:8:16).

In his work, Seneca has a much more conservative approach than Cicero. Coming from wealthy circumstances himself, his philosophy supports quite the opposite. He renounces wealth in his works and maxims, and promotes moderation. It is, however, also clear that he is not in favour of poverty either, which can be deducted from the following maxim: "...turpe est beatam vitam in auro et argento reponere, aequae turpe in aqua et polenta.".<sup>18</sup> (Seneca, *Epistularum moralium ad Lucilium* 19:60:18).

Seneca was also outspoken on practises such as slavery. Seneca rejected the Aristotelian notion that slavery was a natural practice, and focused on the moral aspect of slavery and the more humane treatment of slaves, as well as the verbal castigation instead of the physical option (Fitzgerald 2009:20-25).

Last but not least, we observe the comments of Plutarch (46-120 AD) on poverty and wealth. He (*De cupiditate divitiarum* 523:f) states that "ἐπεὶ τῶν γ' ἀρκούντων οὐδεὶς πένης ἐστίν."<sup>19</sup> From this quote it is evident that poverty was viewed as not having enough to survive, literally living in life-threatening circumstances due to serious want. But the statement also reflects the philosophical attitude that poverty lies in the mind. Poverty, according to Plutarch and most other philosophers, was not to be viewed in contrast with the wealthy and rich, but in the lack of life-sustaining goods. Together with his predecessors, he views wealth to be "splendid houses, jewels and great banquets" (Perrotta 2003:214).

## Conclusion

As argued in 3.2.1, researchers are still debating the nature of poverty amongst Greeks and Romans in the First-Century Mediterranean world.

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<sup>18</sup> "It is shameful to support oneself with gold and silver, and equally shameful to be upheld by water and barley".

<sup>19</sup> "On what is sufficient, no one is poor."



The consensus, however, tends to lean more towards accepting that the household economy prevailed against the move towards industrialisation.

Thus, as Finley (1973:109) has argued convincingly, the main basis of wealth in the ancient world was land ownership. In Roman history the wealthy land owners prospered. Even during serious famines, landowners were insured by the income from their land. In Greece and in Rome “the long and bitter struggle for the supremacy between artisan and mercantile classes on the one hand and landed aristocracy on the other was eventually won by the latter” (Perrotta 2003:201). This struggle drastically slowed the economic development of ancient society and established the prolonged domination of the agrarian economy.

In addition it is notable that poverty and wealth is not just perceived from a literal, material point of view, but that philosophers often used abstract references to these categories, and used them in a figurative sense. As shown in the introduction to this chapter, my concern is mainly with the material aspects of “being poor”, and I will therefore focus on the material rather than the figurative nature of being rich or poor, keeping in mind that it cannot easily be separated.

### 4.3 *Graeco-Roman views on labour*

From the previous section it is evident that the different views regarding poverty are quite interwoven with the views on labour, and especially manual labour. The aim of this section therefore, is to link onto the previous section, and highlight the resulting views by the different philosophical schools on work.

In section 4.2.1 it has been argued that Plato regarded work as a result of error or sin on the human side. The *cornucopia* dried up because of Pandora’s mistake, and the world was filled with evil, which partly resulted in painful labour. Even though most of the philosophical schools through the centuries before Christ rejected profuse and lop-sided wealth, almost none of them pursued and valued the manual labour of the artisan.

This tendency probably originated with Socrates hailing the agricultural labour as the most noble, especially in a supervisory capacity (cf. 4.2.1).

It was noted that Aristotle developed Socrates' thesis, stating that the less necessary duties are more valuable or noble than everyday labour.

There was surely a relation between the domination of the great land-owners and the contempt for work. The aristocratic culture in Ancient Greece imposed an aversion of manual work and in general for paid work. This aversion persisted in the classical period, and it spread to all the citizens. Eventually it was more important for them to fulfil their duties in society than to take care of their own interests. Subsequently there also arose a "disproportionate respect for sport, for intellectual education and for the value of war" (Perrotta 2003:202).

Plato (Republic 416-417) views both wealth and poverty as being disadvantageous to artisans. Whilst wealth on the one hand made artisans idle, restless and careless, poverty on the other made them incapable of producing good tools, oppressed and unproductive. In his treatise *Laws* (V, 742-746) Plato reiterates that excessive wealth and excessive poverty are both unacceptable. He clearly states that it is impossible to be excessively rich and virtuous at the same time. In Plato we therefore do find a movement towards a more positive evaluation of physical, manual labour as a means of avoiding poverty.

In the fourth century BC, the middle class in Greece started to decrease in numbers, and the social gap between the have's and the have not's became wider (Volschenk 2003:405). The negative philosophy regarding work and hard, physical labour as "unnatural", became firmly entrenched in the ancient mentality. Even as money-earning activities became more common, they were despised as 'dishonourable and depressing'. Meanwhile the riches founded upon vast areas of land – which were associated with political power – were highly valued as proof of stature (Perrotta 2003:202).

From the above we can derive that social distinction in fact was based on these two things: Firstly the difference between those who were prosperous enough to delegate others to do the work to satisfy their material needs and those who were not so fortunate. Automatically these kind of jobs fell below the dignity of the higher classes, and were therefore despised; and secondly the necessity of work for survival or wealth (Booth 1992:243-271).

In summary, the main division in the ancient economy was between self-sufficiency and economic dependence. This meant that agricultural rent enjoyed preference over and above commercial or entrepreneurial activity.

This, in turn, gave rise to the other contrast between pre-existing wealth and the pursuit of wealth. Connected with despising work was the fact that many ancient authors looked down on technical thinking and were convinced of the superiority of speculative thought. According to them, true science must not be involved with technical applications. Labourers were therefore rather seen as policemen that were expected to show honesty towards the landlord in the city, than technical entrepreneurs (Finley 1973:113-114).

This disdain for physical labour<sup>20</sup> was also repeated by Cicero in his *Offices* (72-73), where he states that manual work is wretched, and that retail traders can never succeed unless they lie horribly. He reiterates not only the superiority of agriculture, but adds that the types of work to condemn more than any other are those that serve sensual pleasures, from chefs and pastrycooks to perfumers, dancers and jugglers of all kinds. Instead, respect should go to the liberal professions, which require intelligence and are useful.

Despite the fact that most philosophers were in service of rich patrons, often deliberating about wealth and from the perspective of the landowner, there are several references to the labourers in society. Some of the philosophers, like Simon, Musonius Rufus, Dio Chrysostom, and Demetrius of Sunium were manual labourers themselves. Even Socrates, and Tryphon, who was a weaver, learned trades from their fathers (Hock 1980:17).

As mentioned in section 4.2, the Cynics, and later the Stoics were openly opposed to slavery, and the Utopians even advocated total egalitarianism. The Stoics also valued several “occupational hardships” in the forming of the sage. Amongst these hardships would count the farmer, the husbandman, the trader or travelling merchant, the sailor, the hunter, and the soldier (Fitzgerald 1978:48). The most gruelling and gruesome occupation of all, however, was the gladiator.

As the realisation of the necessity for manual labour to attain prosperity or wealth grew, the practise of slavery was also defended. Metrodorus (Philodemus, *Oeconomicus* 163-164) argued later that it is not unacceptable to make slaves and servants work in agriculture or in any other trade in order to get rich.

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<sup>20</sup> Despite the general scholarly opinion that there was a disdain for manual labour, there were slaves who worked hard to “provide for themselves and their families, and found happiness in doing so (De Villiers 1998:148).

In conclusion it is clear that physical work as such was not perceived positively through the eyes of the philosopher. The one exception may be the reference to the agricultural work in the open, and work that may prepare the workers for war. This occupation was still nobler than the work of a common artisan or trader (cf. section 4.2.2 above).

#### 4.4 *Survival and the household*

I have argued above (cf. 3.2.1) that there is an intriguing debate between scholars advocating for a First Century economy based on the household, and others that argue that the economy in the time of the New Testament showed definite signs of a developed industrial economy. On the basis of the economic situation in Corinth at the time of Paul's involvement there, the decision has been made to use the model of the household economy for the purposes of this thesis (cf. 3.2.1 above).

In assessing the household model, it is also necessary to realise that there were two different approaches amongst ancient philosophers. In his treatise *Oeconomicus* Xenophon viewed the household as the sum of all the possessions, including the persons within the household. The second position on the nature of the household is taken by Aristotle, in his treatise *Politics*, who considered the relations to persons within the household of primary importance, over and above the possessions belonging to it (Crosby 1988:28). I have argued in 4.2 that poverty was also relative to one's position in society, and the household. Therefore Aristotle's subsections<sup>21</sup> in his treatise on the household will be used in this section.

The different relationships within the household are depicted by *potestas*, describing the relationship between the father, the children and the grandchildren, as well as the slaves, and *manus*, referring to the relationship between the father (*paterfamilias*) and his wife, and *dominium*, referring to the relationship between the father and his possessions (Finley 1973:19).

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<sup>21</sup> The scope of this investigation does not allow for a detailed distinction between Greek and Roman households. This section will therefore mainly be done from a Roman perspective, with clear indication of situations where information is distinctly referring to another cultural system.

When assessing the different relationships in the household, the role of the *paterfamilias* in the society as a whole must not be underestimated. Therefore the patron-client relationship also deserves attention in this section.

#### 4.4.1 Potestas

The role of the traditional landowner was very dominant from ancient times, but the status of the husband gained momentum as the Roman military machine gained the upper hand in the Mediterranean. In the Greek household the husband practically only had power over his wife, whilst the *paterfamilias* in the Roman household had absolute power over his wife, children, slaves and belongings. The husband's sphere of power certainly diminished somewhat amongst the Greeks with the males being more involved in battle (Malan 2005:257-258), and even the Roman *paterfamilias* was not as powerful as is often assumed (Meggitt 1998: 27-28).

In assessing poverty from the household perspective, it is important to note that the household system at least insured a source of food and sustenance for the members attached to such a household. Even though very few households would have a rich landlord as their *paterfamilias*, commodities necessary for survival were shared within such a household (Malina 2001:83). Where slaves could not be afforded, the labour of friends and even neighbours were utilised to do the agricultural work in order to provide food for the household (Oliver 2006:286-287).

The father in the household stood in different relations to his children, to his servants, and to his slaves. These three relations will therefore receive attention in the following sub-sections.

#### Father of the house and his children

A child was first regarded as belonging to his father after his father picked him up during a special ceremony (Rose 1959:30-31,189-190). Due to economic circumstances most families only had one child. It was possible that a family would raise two sons in case one dies through sickness or war, but there were very seldom more than one girl<sup>22</sup> in a household. This resulted in many “undesired” babies being left at a

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<sup>22</sup> A girl was undesirable, due to the dowry that had to be paid when she married (Ferguson 1987:59).

rubbish dump, or in an isolated place to die. Abortions were also practised, but exposure was the order of the day. Sometimes exposed children were collected and raised for either slavery or prostitution (Ferguson 1987:59).

The attitude taken towards children is illustrated well by the letter of Hilarion to his wife Akis (P.Oxy 744:7-10): “ἔρωτῶ σε καὶ παρακαλῶ σε ἐπιμελήθητι τῷ παιδίῳ καὶ ἐὰν εὐθὺς ὀψώνιον λάβωμεν ἀποστελῶ σοὶ ἄνω. ἐὰν πολλὰ πολλῶν τέκης ἐὰν ᾗν ἄρσενον ἄφες, ἐὰν ᾗν θήλεα ἐκβαλε.”<sup>23</sup>

In general the quotation above and the name *pater potestas* (powerful father) might suggest that fatherhood in Graeco-Roman times was always of a harsh and dominating nature (Jones & Sidwell 1997:229). There is, however, evidence that also refers to fathers spoiling their young, as in the account of Pliny writing about Cicero spoiling his son Tullia (Jones & Sidwell 1997:230).

Recognising the lack of evidence of how children in impoverished situations were treated, it is clear from the above that poverty definitely had an impact on the size as well as the number of boys and girls in a household. Especially in times of crises, such as famines, the children would have surely suffered severely.

### Father of the house and his servants

The large pool of casual labour, consisting of semi-skilled and unskilled workers in and out of town, has often been overlooked. Apart from certain domestic jobs, a freeborn or a freed person filled the same non-elite occupations occupied by slaves. They were employed in a variety of jobs necessary for the day to day functioning of the household, the farm, or the town. They would function as servants, burden bearers, messengers, animal drivers and so forth (Meggitt 1998:56-57).

The economic position of the casual labourer was often so fragile, that he rarely risked a change. Even though he was not in the same position as a slave, and had the freedom to move between masters, the opportunities for permanent occupations were scarce, and a labourer in such a position rarely had the courage to move from one employer to another. Such a servant also accumulated a lot of debt towards his owner (Ar-

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<sup>23</sup> “I ask you and plead with you, look after the child, and should I receive my payment soon, I will send it to you again. Above all, if you bear a child and it is a male, let it be; but if it is a female, dispose of it.”

timidorus, *Oeneirocrita* 3:41), and even sold themselves as slaves in order to redeem their debt (1 Clemens 55:2).

Further evidence on the extent of poverty in the lives of servants is provided by Lucian<sup>24</sup> (*De Mercede Conductis* 5):<sup>25</sup>

πενία γὰρ εἰσαεὶ καὶ τὸ λαμβάνειν ἀναγκαῖον καὶ ἀπόθετον οὐδὲν οὐδὲ περιττὸν εἰς φυλακὴν, ἀλλὰ τὸ δοθέν, κἂν δοθῇ, κἂν ἀθρόως ληφθῇ, πᾶν ἀκριβῶς καὶ τῆς χρείας ἐνδεῶς καταναλίσκεται...εἰ δέ τις ἀεὶ πένης καὶ ἐνδεῆς καὶ ὑπόμισθος ὧν οἶεται πένιαν αὐτῷ τοῦτω διαπεφευγέναι, οὐκ οἶδα πῶς ὁ τοιοῦτος οὐκ ἂν δόξειεν ἑαυτὸν ἐξαπατᾶν.

It can be deduced from the above that the wage of a servant was often barely enough to sustain him and his family. In the same treatise Lucian (*De Mercede Conductis* 39) states that a servant was often worked out and unceremoniously sacked by his patron or landowner to be replaced by a younger worker as his energy dwindled with age.

Servants definitely had more freedom than the slave, and the eventual route for an unsuccessful servant was to be sold into slavery. It is clear, however, that the financial position of a servant was by no means much better than that of a slave.

### Father of the house and his slaves

There were several ways in which people became slaves in the First Century. The common way of enslavement was by being taken captive during wars and sold as slaves in Roman territory (Horsley 1998:29). Some people often sold their children or themselves to pay debts, and others were condemned to slavery by the courts. Others were born as slaves, and belonged as such to the master of their parents (Combes 1998:26;

<sup>24</sup> The use of this passage by Lucian to demonstrate poverty is contentious, as it is part of a satire to prove the uselessness of the patron-client relationship. Martin (2001:58) argues *contra* Meggit (1998) that this is inadmissible as evidence towards the dire situation of the clients in the First Century. Despite these objections this passage to my view does show that being part of a wealthy household did not always mean a fair share of the material prosperity of such a household.

<sup>25</sup> “For they are always poor, there is constantly the need to receive, and there is nothing accumulated, nothing left for saving, but what is granted, and even if it is granted, even if payment is received in full, it is often fully spent with the need not sufficiently fulfilled... If a man who is paid but is always poor and needy, thinks that he has escaped poverty in such a way, then I do not know how somebody can regard him to do anything else than fooling himself.”

Ferguson 1987:46). Some slaves were exposed babies that were collected and raised as slaves, as was pointed out in 4.3.1.

A slave in the Greco-Roman time could be used for almost any job that would be occupied by a free person (Martin 1990:11-15). Although being a slave was always viewed as the lowest social level in society,<sup>26</sup> Martin (1990) in his published doctoral thesis, *Slavery as salvation*, came to a different conclusion. Exploiting the different levels of slavery, he argues for the distinction of slaves being productional, non-productional, and managerial (which was the highest-ranked slave).

The slave in Luke 12:41-46, according to Martin (1990:53), probably constituted an *oikonomos* – slave, which fulfilled certain managerial functions within the household. All this leads to his conclusion (Martin 1990:56)<sup>27</sup> that slavery was not necessarily seen as an altogether negative concept in the First Century. Slavery was also seen and experienced as a vehicle for “upward mobility” in the social ranks, and even to *manumissio* (or: freedom) (which included Roman citizenship),<sup>28</sup> whilst a non-Roman free person would have a more difficult route to attain Roman citizenship (Martin 1990:32).

This positive evaluation of facets of First Century slavery has not gone unopposed. A strong critique on the work of Martin was posed by Harris (1999:18,129-131). The main problems with the views presented above are that the managerial slaves that Martin (1990:53) refers to were a very small elite group within the mass of production slaves. The inability of a slave to refuse something, no judicial rights, and the relative value of *manumissio*,<sup>29</sup> leads Harris (1999:45) to conclude that “if the language of slavery is offensive (to the present day reader), the offence would have been considerably greater for those who lived in societies where slavery was more intrinsic than for us for whom slavery is simply and unpleasant and embarrassing memory”.

In weighing the two views on First Century slavery against one another, it is important to keep the purpose of these authors in mind. On the one

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<sup>26</sup> The title of Patterson’s book, *Slavery and social death: a comparative study*, reflects this traditional position on slavery.

<sup>27</sup> “... in the patronal society of the Greco Roman city, slaves of lower class persons held little power or prestige, but the slave agent of an upper-class person was to be reckoned with” (Martin 1990:56).

<sup>28</sup> Roman citizenship was not necessarily granted with the manumission of a slave.

<sup>29</sup> The master still retained a position of patron over his “freed” slave, and *manumissio* could be revoked (Harris 1999:45).



hand Martin (1990:50) partly focuses on slavery to fellow men in 1 Cor 9:19, whilst Harris (1990:139) focuses on “slave of Christ” and would not refrain from a more radical interpretation of slavery.

Recent scholarship does, however, lean towards the interpretation of Harris. The notion that slavery was a harsh, and inhumane practise is supported by recent scholarship. In her work, *Slavery in early Christianity* Glancy (2002:3) argues that the way in which slaves were often referred to as “bodies”, revealed their lack of status in society. A slave was viewed as ‘human capital’, and part of the masters assets (Fitzgerald 2009:3). Slaves were also the target of frequent sexual abuse, even by the landlord himself (Wessels 2008:9-10).

Even though the scholars who regard slavery from a legal point of view portrays slavery as less harsh and more regulated, the laws that were put in place to regulate slavery were not always adhered to, and therefore was not a good representation of the real situation (Harril 1995:14). The representation of slavery from a legal perspective often resulted in a more hierarchical picture of slavery, where slavery provided the opportunity for upward mobility<sup>30</sup> to the position of managerial slave (Byron 2004:116-117).

In a study which focuses mainly on rewards and punishments, Fitzgerald (2009:2) argues that the treatment of slaves depended mostly on the kind of work they did, and which form of motivation was used by their masters. The degree of punishment that was exerted upon slaves was influenced by the asymmetrical relation between master and slave, the collective treatment of slaves, the dehumanisation of slaves, and the character of their masters (Fitzgerald 2009:8-12). The age of a slave also influenced the nature of the punishment, as it was not uncommon to use children as slaves (Fitzgerald 2009:12-15). Studies done in the field of marriage and informal slave unions between male and female slaves also confirm the notion that slavery was by no means a benign practice in the First Century. These unions probably served only as a means of preserving social and economic stability to the owner of the slave (Bradley 1987:51). Not only were the female slaves often sexually abused, but the partners were often separated by sale to another owner. Even the children were sold separate from their parents (Wessels 2008:5-6).

In conclusion the statement of Wessels (2008:6), that slavery was “indeed a ruthless system, geared to benefit slave owners”, summarises the

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<sup>30</sup> Cf. the view of Martin (1990) earlier in this section.

economic value of a slave rather well. The slave in the First Century AD was not much more than a commodity, a chattel, a thing, a socially dead person to its owner.

#### 4.4.2 The father of the house and his wife

In Greek Law a marriage required a betrothal agreement. During a formal meeting a father pledged his daughter to the prospective bridegroom, and in front of witnesses from both sides the dowry was agreed upon.

In Rome this formal system became looser towards the end of the Republic, and several forms of marriage were accepted, namely the *confarriatio* (a religious ceremony), the *coemptio* (a sale of the woman to her husband), and *usus* (in cases where the woman lived uninterruptedly in the man's house for more than one year). These marriages were all signifying the wife as being under the *manus* (hand/power) of her husband (Ferguson 1987:54).

But apart from the conjunctions above there was also a fourth modus of matrimony, which was even more informal. It became increasingly popular for the wife to remain a part of her father's family, and for the man and wife to have no legal agreement at all. This also meant that they had no joint property.<sup>31</sup> Within this system divorce took place so much easier, and neither the husband nor the wife had much leverage to prevent the partner from leaving him/her (Jones & Siddwell 1997:214-215).

The traditional stance concerning the position of husband and wife, and their different roles in the household also changed through time. In his treatise *Oeconomicus* (7:22) Xenophon states clearly that the place of the woman is indoors, whilst the husband is responsible for the tasks outside the house:

ἐπεὶ δ' ἀμφοτέρω ταῦτα καὶ ἔργων καὶ ἐπιμελείας δεῖται τὰ τε ἔνδον καὶ τὰ ἔξω, καὶ τὴν φύσιν, φάναι, εὐθὺς παρεσκεύασεν ὁ θεός, ὡς ἔμοι δοκεῖ, τὴν μὲν τῆς γυναικὸς ἐπὶ τὰ ἔνδον ἔργα καὶ ἐπιμελήματα, τὴν δὲ τοῦ ἀνδρὸς ἐπὶ τὰ ἔξω.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>31</sup> The husband did often provide his wife with maintenance and certain other expenses, but most of these were reclaimable in case of a divorce (Jones & Sidwell 1997:214).

<sup>32</sup> "Because both the indoor and the outdoor tasks require work and concern," he said, "I think that god, from the earliest times designed the nature of a woman for the indoor work, and formed the nature of the man for outdoor work".

The husband (being the *paterfamilias*) certainly enjoyed a higher status than his wife. The dominance of male over female is illustrated well by Thales of Miletus, who thanked the goddess Fortune for *πρῶτον μὲν ὅτι ἄνθρωπος ἐγενόμην καὶ οὐ θηρίον, εἶτα ὅτι ἀνὴρ καὶ οὐ γυνή, τρίτον ὅτι Ἕλληνα καὶ οὐ βάρβαρον*<sup>33</sup> (Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of the Philosophers* 1.1.33).<sup>34</sup>

Just as the *manus* of the husband gradually faded in Roman marriage, the sphere of influence of women also gradually broadened through time. Political power remained the domain of the husband, but women gradually increased their influence in the religious, and - pertinent to my present study - the economical spheres of the First Century society.

Even though it was regarded unbecoming for a young person to be seen in the marketplace, or for a woman to keep a shop or do any other business in the market, there were exceptions. Aristotle, for instance, remarked that it is not possible to *κωλύειν ἐξιέναι τὰς τῶν ἀπόρων* ("to prevent the [wives] of the poor [men] from going outside").<sup>35</sup> In Katz's (1998:117) view almost 96 percent of the inhabitants of a city were poor,<sup>36</sup> which make it probable that there probably were quite a number of women in the *agora*.

These women, however, mostly functioned on the bottom end of the economic scale, and they engaged in petty trade, such as selling food-stuffs, or perfumes and garlands. Others were tavern-keepers and wool-workers. They were, however, excluded from those occupations that had a much higher profit, like crafts, manufacture, money-lending, slave-farming, and other similar businesses (Katz 1998:117).

Despite having a low-key access to the *agora*, and gaining marital independence towards the end of the Republic, women in the First Century were clearly also reckoned under the "poor", and were mostly dependant upon their husbands or fathers for their needs.

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<sup>33</sup> "... firstly being born a human and not a beast, further as a man and not a woman, and thirdly as a Greek and not a non-Greek".

<sup>34</sup> This quotation (although dating from the 2nd century AD) reflects the attitudes that led to Paul's denouncing of status groups in Gal 3:28.

<sup>35</sup> The reference to the women of the poor men that needs to go outside most probably refers to the necessity for them to be at the marketplace and sell goods there, since the poor husband could not afford slaves or servants to this end.

<sup>36</sup> It is notable that, although less scientific, this estimate is much higher than the estimate made by Friesen (2003) in 3.3.6 above.

#### 4.4.3 The father and the *dominium*

Initially the *paterfamilias* was clearly the sole holder of legal and social power over wife, children, slaves and property in all known Mediterranean societies (Volschenk 2003:407). It was possible for a father to relinquish his paternal authority to a son in Greek law, but that was unheard of in Roman society. The term *patria potestas* expressed this unique degree of legal power. Those under the legal authority of the *paterfamilias* had practically “no property of their own during the father’s lifetime” (Balch & Osiek 1997:57).

The only limited “possessions” that wives (under *manus*), children and slaves had, were regulated under the practice of *peculium*. Because the law stipulated that only the *paterfamilias* could own any property, the *peculium* functioned as a type of ‘savings account’ under jurisdiction of the *paterfamilias*. The *peculium* was “property (in whatever form) assigned for use, management, and, within limits, disposal to someone who in law lacked the right of property, either a slave or someone in *patria potestas*” (Finley 1973:64).

The *peculium* was a voluntary grant by the master. The family member or slave was free to withdraw it at any time. In practice, however, the master normally had a free hand in the management, and still controlled the possessions of the other members of the household. In case of the death of the father, the sons became financially independent, but the women were given to a *tutor*, who took power over them (Balch & Osiek 1997:56-57).

Due to the cost of slaves, the labour was often maximised in the case of subsistence farmers, with even relatives and neighbours assisting instead of slaves. As the family increased, however, the division of inheritance between several families arose as the population grew. Rome solved this problem by conquests, and proclaimed conquered land as *ager publicus*, providing extra land for their citizens (Jones & Sidwell 1997:188). Young people often went to the city to look for work, due to the fact that they could earn an income and enjoy the leisure in the city, rather than merely working on the farm without monetary compensation (Sallust, *Cataline* 37.7).

From the above it is clear that the degree of poverty of the household in the First Century was very closely related to the financial position and attitude of the *paterfamilias*. Even the mother not married under *manus* was still dependent on her own father, or a tutor, for financial security, and had limited avenues to promote her own financial position. As has

been pointed out above, young men increasingly resorted to finding work on their own, rather than remaining part of the household and working without a fixed or guaranteed income.

The worst impact of poverty was among casual workers, and especially on slaves. It has already been argued (cf. 1.2) that using a slave saved the employer the money that he would have had to pay to a casual labourer. Despite the practises of *peculium* and *manumissio*, slaves had very little to no income, and slavery was a *cul-de-sac* with no real prospects of future redemption.

## 4.5 *Rich, poor and power*

In discussion of the household as the core structure in Graeco-Roman society, it is necessary to investigate the way that the principles of this dependence on the *paterfamilias* was translated to the larger First Century society. In this section the customs of patronage and benefaction are briefly assessed in terms of their contribution to the alleviation or aggravation of poverty.

### 4.5.1 Patronage

Amidst criticism that patronage did not play as significant a role in the Christian congregation of First Century Corinth and in Paul's philosophy as is commonly believed (cf. section 1.2 above), patronage cannot be ignored when discussing poverty in the First Century. In an increasingly uprooted society in the urban areas, the patron-client relationship functioned as an extended household.

The patron-client relationship was guided by a code of etiquette, called the *obsequium*.<sup>37</sup> By being attached to a patron the 'client' not only received an occasional meal or small handouts, and even money on a daily basis, but had someone to approach in times of serious need. A patron could also sometimes function as a *mediator* (broker) to another patron, and thus provide the necessary contact for a client with somebody who can meet his needs (DeSilva 2004:97).

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<sup>37</sup> The practise of patronage was not always stipulated by written laws, but the honour or shame of the patron and the client rested largely on their mutual adherence to the custom of reciprocity (DeSilva 2004:97).

The patron in turn received political support from his clients, and the patron's status was often attached to the number of clients turning up at the daily *salutation* (morning gathering) in front of a patron's house (Ferguson 1987:45). It must be understood that patronage was not charity at all. In many instances the patron allowed the poor or the clients to use land or housing at a daily or monthly rent. In cases where the client lacked any money to pay, the client's labour was used by the patron instead (Jones & Sidwell 1997:148).

Even though the patron-client system probably appeased the poor to a certain extent, it must still be asked who the main beneficiary of this relationship really was. This practise did not really eradicate or alleviate poverty, but contributed to the First Century as a hierarchical society with a few rich men at the top, and the great majority of citizens experiencing severe need. Balch & Osiek (1997:49) even states that "the patronage system is therefore a good way to keep social inferiors dependent on their superiors, unable and unwilling to establish horizontal social solidarity".

#### 4.5.2 Benefaction

Besides personal patronage another method of acquiring honour in the First Century was by public benefaction. Wealthy benefactors often sponsored religious feasts or festivals or local celebrations or athletic competitions. Civic improvements to temples, theatres, pavements, etc. were often funded by these benefactors, with according inscriptions testifying to their contribution (DeSilva 2004:100), and in this way adding to their "honour". It is of special importance for the theme of this study that the benefactors also assisted a city in a time of crisis, such as drought and famine. The appointment of Tiberius Claudius Dinippus as *curator annonae* during 51AD is an example of such a benefactor coming to the aid of Corinth.

As pointed out in section 1.2, there is still considerable difference in scholarly opinion on viewing patronage and benefaction as separate categories within the Graeco-Roman social kinship system. Joubert (2000:67) views the difference to be on the levels of *structure and content*, *form and content*, as well as the *social nature* of the respective categories. He argues that being 'patron' is a specific title in the Roman culture, and that this patronage were guided by certain laws, and that patronage functioned within an hierarchical framework, where the 'patron' had higher

status than the ‘client’, and where the exchanges were of a reciprocal nature.

Benefaction is viewed by Joubert (2000:68) as a Greek system, which entails a “gift” to a larger, inclusive group of people like a city, whilst patronage is normally practised within a smaller, more personal context. Furthermore, benefaction took place on a more face-to-face and equal setting than patronage, where the difference in status were heavily accentuated. Joubert (2000:69) also argues that the generalisation of patronage under the Roman system only took place towards the end of the Roman principate.

In her criticism of Joubert’s differentiation, Crook (2004:65) argues that the main differences between patronage and benefaction are that patronage tends to be more political, exploitative, and elitist than benefaction. Otherwise she views both to be highly reciprocal in nature, and that no real distinctions can be made between the “patron” and “benefactor”, or between the clients in the two systems. She (2004:66) stresses the point that although the clients might have been an individual, a collective, or even a whole city, the aspect of ‘obligation’ is always part of the exchange.

In my view Crook is not able to successfully negate the difference between patronage and benefaction, and in her criticism of Joubert she still acknowledges that differences between the two systems do exist. The advantage of Crook’s treatment of the issue, however, is the focus on the asymmetrical nature of reciprocity in the First Century Mediterranean world, in comparison to the present Western world (cf. 1.2).

Despite Joubert’s description of benefaction as a system that valued equality higher than patronage did, it is clear that both these systems thrived on (and even sometimes advanced) economical inequalities and different status levels. This becomes even more evident when looking into the way in which the Roman government, and especially the *Caesar*, became an extension of the patronage system.

#### 4.5.3 The government and the poor

The initial authority in Greek rule was mainly vested in the monarchs, and thereafter in the aristocracy. In 508/7 BC Cleisthenes, an aristocrat himself, introduced several reforms in favour of the rule by the people (*demos*), which became known as democracy. Even though this system meant equality for all citizens, including the “masses, the majority, the

poor, the common people the mob”, the will of the people was still represented by a “small elite group” who were eloquent enough to state their case (Cartledge 1998:145-148). This form of government prevailed despite being overthrown at times, and it was the rule more than the exception until the second century BC, when more hierarchical forms of government took over. Greece was eventually defeated by the Roman armies under military rule, where the emperor increasingly accumulated authority by promoting the model of patronage with him as supreme *patria potestas* of the state (cf. 4.5.2 above).

It has already been argued in chapter 3 that the Greek city-states under Roman government suffered real predation due to severe taxation,<sup>38</sup> inequality before the law, and the lack of political self-determination.<sup>39</sup> Jones & Sidwell (1997:145) persuasively state that “shortage and hardship were ... normal occurrences in a society in which many people were dependent on others...”.

It has been noted that the emperors also acted as benefactors towards a city such as Corinth in times of crises (cf. above). But even in respect to the minimum contribution expected from the Roman government: provision of foodstuffs, education, and medical attention (Hands 1974:14), the government often only responded to a crisis rather than having measures of relief in place. In times of crises the inhabitants called for a “subscription fund”, contributed to by the rich, to alleviate the situation (Hands 1974:39).

However, even the subscription funds did not provide a long term solution. There are examples of situations where the rulers in a city would prefer to keep their subordinates busy with work instead of promoting development such as Vespasian’s remark to the engineer that he could not accept his better patent, because he had to feed the *plebs* (cf. 3.3.5 above).

From whichever angle one looks at it, the vast majority of people in the First Century became increasingly dependent on the government and their patrons. In weighing the evidence at hand one tends to agree all the more with Highet (1954:7): “Sometimes it seems, as though nine out of

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<sup>38</sup> The Roman government held censuses in its provinces to ensure that taxes were paid by all liable individuals (Lohse 1974:211).

<sup>39</sup> Even though the local authorities had a certain amount of independence the Roman authority reserved itself the right to interfere whenever it deemed it necessary to do so (Lohse 1974:211).



ten Romans were living on charity this time, five of them on welfare schemes run by the government, and the other four as dependants of the tenth.”

## 4.6 Conclusion

Studying First Century poverty from a Greco-Roman perspective leaves one with an impression of the immense distance between the elite and the poor. From the wide range of views of the philosophers on this issue, it can be deduced that the philosophers couldn’t do anything else than to position themselves in respect to their support of either the rich or the poor, even if it meant sitting on the fence between the two extremes.

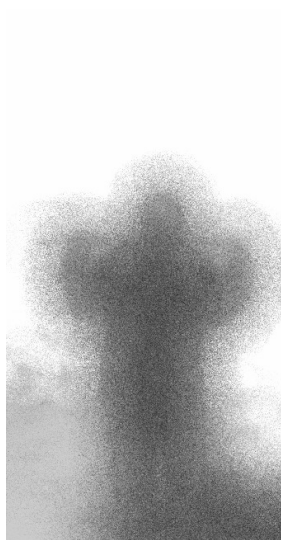
Notable is also several attempts by philosophers to apply a sort of ‘rational emotive therapy’, by emphasising the need for ‘figurative wealth’ in opposition to ‘material wealth’, and the ‘poverty’ that can result from a selfish, stingy life. The Cynic view (cf. 4.2.2) that the bare necessities was viewed as having basic food, clothing, and shelter may give some indication as to what the “bare necessities” were viewed to be in the First Century.

It has also been argued that the views on physical labour and the compensation thereof actually hampered productivity, and was part of the eventual downfall of the Roman government. The capturing and abuse of slaves, the ever increasing taxes and accumulation of wealth by rich landlords, all contributed to urbanisation of the poor, and the eventual demise of the Roman Principate.

Investigating the economic dynamics of the First Century household also placed more and more questions to the view that the landlord’s whole family, and even his slaves, were better off than the rest. The *potestas* of the father was often misused by receiving co-operation from household members without proper compensation, hence the tendency for young people to prefer city life, independent from the household (cf. 4.4.3).

It became clear that the basic household structure was used as a basis for other relationships in society, such as patronage, benefaction, and governance. There seems to be very little evidence of a substantial middle class. In such a strong hierarchical structure one would have expected some kind of fill-in in the middle, between rich and poor. Instead, to-

wards the end of the Roman rule it seems that the top of the hierarchical pyramid just became narrower, whilst the bottom grew wider. In other words, the rich became fewer, and the poor increased in numbers.



## 5 POVERTY, ALTRUISM AND LABOUR IN THE BIBLE

### 5.1 Introduction

In the past there was a tendency to keep a strict division between issues of economic nature and the Bible, almost as if it belonged to two worlds. Typical of this approach is the remark of Ferguson (1987:60) that the subject of economics does not “enter directly into the understanding of early Christianity”, “although obviously providing an important part of the larger background”.

It has been shown already in 3.2.2 that the socio-historic approach views the ancient economy and related fields of study as of primary importance for understanding and interpreting the Bible. The concept of history as being “woven” into the Biblical text (Van Rensburg 2000:567), is emphasized by Wright (2004:156) who argues that “economics is written into the very fabric of Israel’s redemption history.” In this chapter I argue that ancient economics has direct implications for understanding the Bible, especially where it concerns poverty.

In the first subsection the Old Testament data in relation to poverty and labour are explored, and thereafter the relevant data from the New Testament, especially from the gospels.<sup>1</sup> As stated previously in section 1.5.4, this will mainly be done within a revelation-historical framework. Thirdly attention will be given to issues central to the level of practical implementation of Biblical values concerning the practice of altruism in the Bible and concluding with the remuneration of religious workers. Through this investigation the desired outcome would be a better understanding of the relevant Biblical context within which Paul’s mission and his labour functioned.

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<sup>1</sup> The previous chapter concerned the Graeco-Roman attitudes to the poor, which has more relevance for the Book of Acts and the rest of the Books of the New Testament. Even though the relevant Scripture portions will receive attention, an overview of the Jewish context of poverty is the main aim of the next two subsections.

## 5.2 *Poverty in the Bible*

Despite the major emphasis of the Graeco-Roman influence upon the context and the actual writings in the New Testament, the Jewish and Old Testament backgrounds of the writers and readers in the New Testament have not yet been fully unearthed in terms of its socio-historic value. In assessing poverty in the Old Testament, Wright (2004:126) states that “The Old Testament, with its rich theology of the land ... is ... bound to have plenty to contribute to Christian economic ethics”.

In accordance with the previous chapter attention will also be given to the household system, and kinship in the Old Testament will be addressed separately. Subsequently the New Testament will be assessed from a revelation-historical point of view, specifically looking at the way in which certain Old Testament themes were continued in the ministries of Jesus and the apostles.

### 5.2.1 Old Testament poverty from a revelation-historical perspective

In this subsection attention will be given to the poor and labour as it presents itself in the Pentateuch and the historical books, the books of Wisdom, and the Prophets.<sup>2</sup> In line with the previous chapter on Graeco-Roman context, the household and related systems also receive attention. In conclusion the reasons for poverty in Israel, as well as the different responses thereto are discussed.

#### Creation and fall

At the start of the creation narratives<sup>3</sup> the fact that God created everything well (Gen 1:4,10,12,18,21,25), and allowed man to enjoy from everything (except the tree of the “knowledge of good and evil in the middle of the garden” (Gen 2:17)), is all-important for understanding God’s

<sup>2</sup> I do take into account that there is an ongoing debate about the age and chronology of the Old Testament writings (Blomberg 1999:50; Deist 2000:55). Irrespective of the age and dating of these books, they (to my view) still reflect a discernable picture as to the nature of poverty in the mind of the Jew and the gradual abolition of God’s commands in this regard. I therefore see it fit to use the unfolding history markers in terms of God’s revelation as subsections here.

<sup>3</sup> In his book *Work, toil, and sustenance*, Agrell (1976:7-15) takes the creation narrative in Genesis 2 as point of departure concerning God’s creation and the implications thereof for labour today.

generosity in creation. God also gave man and woman the task to “be fruitful and increase in number” and to “fill the earth and subdue it (Gen 1:27)”. This task is interpreted by Wright (2004:147) as containing not only the basic instruction to multiply, work, and rule within paradise, but as reflecting Gods model for kingship, as well as availing man with all the resources on the planet earth.

Despite the common opinion that Hellenistic thought<sup>4</sup> viewed creation to be “corrupt from its inception” (Wright 2004:181-187; Blomberg 1999: 34), it has been shown in section 4.1.1 that the Golden Age myth portrayed the initial state of creation as good, with gradual degeneration thereafter.

The fall of humanity into sin (Gen 3), the murder of Abel (Gen 4),<sup>5</sup> the destruction of the human race in the flood (Gen 6-8), all demonstrate the quick degeneration of mankind. The effects of sin on mankind and God’s curse on the land was so prominent on the first peoples’ mind that Lamech connected his son’s name to God’s curse on Adam and Eve: “He will comfort us in the labour and painful toil of our hands caused by the ground the LORD has cursed” (Gen 5:28-29).

This yearning of Lamech was fulfilled in God’s covenant with Noah according to Genesis 9:1-17. God makes a covenant between Himself and Noah, the earth and all life on the earth (Wright 2004:154). God not only echoes the words of Genesis 1:27, but gives Noah “everything” including meat to eat and promises not to bring a similar flood again. Despite this dire situation, God’s covenant with Noah (Gen 9:5-6)<sup>6</sup> maintains the image of God in fallen humanity (Blomberg 1999:34).

### The Patriarchs

After God stopped mankind “to make a name for himself” (Gen 11:4) in Babel, God keeps his covenant in mind. He calls Abraham from Ur, and promises him not only land, but also numerous descendants, fame and his blessing (Gen 12:1-3). Significant in this call is the promise of land,

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<sup>4</sup> Cf. the view of Thucydides in 4.2.1 above, that creation was at first characterised by a lack of organisation and co-operation between the Greeks.

<sup>5</sup> The problem between Cain and Abel was significantly connected to the land, and to the attitudes of their hearts in presenting their offerings.

<sup>6</sup> Genesis 9:5-6: “<sup>5</sup>And for your lifeblood I will surely demand an accounting. I will demand an accounting from every animal. And from each man, too, I will demand an accounting for the life of his fellow man. <sup>6</sup>Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God has God made man.”

which was (and currently certainly still is!) central to Jewish economic thought (Deist 2000:143).

The riches amassed by Abraham, his son Isaac, and grandson Jacob are reported several times in Genesis (Gen 20:14-16, 24:35, 26:13, 30:43, 47:27), but it was by no means a smooth road for Abraham. In what Deist (2000:168) describes as negative reciprocity,<sup>7</sup> Abraham was forced to intervene when his shepherds clashed with those of Lot, and to choose the less fertile soil (Gen 13). He also had to bargain with God concerning his offspring (Gen 15:1-4; 18:23-33), and with Ephron in Genesis 23 to secure a piece of land with a cave to bury his wife. Even Jacob secured his inheritance through a cunning scheme (Gen 30:37-43), and later tricked his father-in-law Laban (Gen 30:37-43), in order to get a proper share of his profit.

But throughout the dealings of the patriarchs we consistently find their generosity and beneficence. Abraham gives a tithe of his spoil to Melchizedek, the king of Salem, and refuses to accept any possessions that would give the King of Sodom the opportunity to boast that he had made Abraham rich (Gen 14:23). Jacob gives Esau a great number of gifts after his return to him as his estranged brother (Gen 32:13-16)<sup>8</sup>, and attributes his wealth to God's provision (Gen 33:11).<sup>9</sup>

Despite the rosy picture of the wealthy Patriarchs above, their history does not only portray moonshine and roses. In the time of Joseph's imprisonment God reveals to him the seven years of drought that were imminent after seven prosperous years. Drought normally occurred as much as three out of ten years (Deist 2000:147), and seven years of continuous drought would surely bring even the wealthy Jacob's sons on their knees.<sup>10</sup> One visit to their estranged brother Joseph, Pharaoh's

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<sup>7</sup> The term 'negative reciprocity' is explained by Deist (2008:166-168), who distinguishes between 'generalised reciprocity' (the frequent exchange of gifts between neighbours and friends), 'balanced reciprocity', where a certain gift is given with the expectancy of certain favours, and 'negative reciprocity' (where a possession of someone else is acquired through bargaining).

<sup>8</sup> The proportion of Jacob's gift was not necessarily a token of generalised reciprocity, but as Blomberg (1999:36) reflects thereupon, rather a case of balanced reciprocity. Jacob probably wanted to assure his brother's goodwill after his trickery of Esau and the separation thereafter.

<sup>9</sup> Genesis 33:11: "... for God has been gracious to me and I have all I need."

<sup>10</sup> The poor in the land would not have the option of going to buy provisions from a neighbouring country, and would therefore suffer severely in such times (Birch 1975:593).

second in command, was not enough, and they even had to go back to Egypt to acquire grain for a second time (Gen 42,43). God intervened and used Joseph to supply the countries of the world with grain (Gen 41:57), and thereby partially fulfilled his promise that Israel will be a blessing to all the nations (Blomberg 1999:37).

### **The land promised**

After Joseph's death the Israelites were submitted into slavery and made to work very hard. The Egyptians even killed all the male babies of the Israelites (Ex 1:10-16). The rest of Exodus proceeds with the liberation of Israel under Moses, who did not only escape death as a poor baby boy, but was brought up in the luxury of Pharaoh's palace.<sup>11</sup>

According to Wright (2004:156) the liberation of God's people from Egypt had a fourfold meaning: the liberation from 1) foreign political power, 2) from interference in their family life, 3) from the burden of slavery, and 4) from the realm of foreign gods. God hears the cry of the Israelites (Gen 2:23-25), and gives them a land of their own (Gen 3:7-8; 6:4-8). Wright (2004:156) goes so far as to say that the exodus as "paramount salvation event in the whole Old Testament ... has economic oppression as one of its key motivational triggers, and economic freedom as one of its primary intentional objectives."

The plagues which the Lord sent over Egypt (Exodus 7-12) were interpreted by the Psalmist in Psalm 105 as creation-in-reverse (Lee 1990:257-263). After the death of the Egyptian firstborn the Lord commanded the consecration of the Israelite firstborn (Ex 13:1-16), symbolising that the honour and recognition for Israel's prosperity should always be given to the Lord. Unfortunately the Israelites did exactly the opposite. The self-same goods that they took from the Egyptians on the Lord's command (Ex 11:2-3; 12:35-36) were used to build the golden calf (Ex 32:1-6).

During Israel's journey through the desert the Lord constantly provided for them, and through the daily provision of manna everybody had enough food to satisfy his/her needs (Ex 16:19-30). In this way God gave them the important principle that He will ensure that no-one has too much or too little. God also laid down the general principle that "hoard-

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<sup>11</sup> The Exodus narrative plays an important part in modern Liberation Theology, but Strauss (1984) shows that the liberation of Israel had a clear spiritual component, and that the points of comparison are less than are often conceived (cf. Blomberg 1999:37-38; Loader 2006:708).



ing” is not allowed, as greediness simply spoiled the manna (Ex 16:19-21).

In the Ten Commandments, there are many more economic aspects than initially meet the eye. Deist (2000:160) points to the fourth commandment as providing the necessary rest not to the master alone, but to all the servants, slaves, foreigners and animals in a household (Ex 20:9-11). This commandment not only shows the importance of working for six days, but also the necessity of rest for both the employer and labourer. Furthermore the promise of the land given by God in the fifth commandment (Ex 20:12), the prohibition of theft in the eighth (Ex 20:15), and the prohibition to covet in the final commandment (Ex 20:17) are all commandments with very obvious economic implications.<sup>12</sup>

The last of these commandments (Ex 20:17) does, however, deserve special attention in the light of poverty in Israel. Even though the Lord promises the land of milk and honey to the Israelites, He also shows them the importance of being satisfied with what they have, and not to covet anything of their neighbour (Malina 2001:129). Eventually a lack of contentment proved the downfall to so many in the Old Testament, such as Achan, (Jos 7:20-26), David (2 Sam 11), and Ahab and Jezebel (1 Kings 21).

### Entering the Promised Land

In Deuteronomy 8:7-20 Israel is told that they will enter a land of plenty. They are told that the Lord is bringing them into a “good land” (v. 7), and that they “will lack nothing” (v. 9). But they are explicitly warned that they should not “forget the Lord” who “brought them out of the land of slavery” (v. 14). As Israel entered the land, the land was divided in equal portions relative to the size of each tribe (Num 26:54; Jos 11:23), in order that each tribe would have “sufficient land according to its size and needs” (Wright 2004:157).<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> For the sake of balance little attention is given here to the other aspects of the Deuteronomistic laws, but it will receive attention later in this chapter.

<sup>13</sup> Israel’s people were also reminded that they should not forget that they were slaves in Egypt (Deut 15:12-15). To prevent somebody from falling in debt permanently, the law called for the remission of all debts every seventh year (Deut 15:1-2; Lev 25). If a poor man had sold himself into slavery because of debts, he was supposed to receive freedom in the seventh year (Lev 25:39-55), and he should also be given provision from the flocks

The land of a household was determined by the lot, and was marked out by boundary stones, that could not be moved (Deut 19:14; 27:17). The land was never privately owned until Persian-Hellenistic times, and was viewed as Gods gift, and owned by Israel collectively (Deut 9:23). The survival and “sustenance” of a household depended on their land or inheritance (Deist 2000:145).

No land was allotted to the Levites (Num 18:1-32), but the text mentions explicitly that the Lord would be their inheritance (v. 20). Not only the Levites, but the poor, the widows orphans and foreigners, as well as the Hebrew slaves were entitled to sharing in the tenth or the surplus from the tribes who were entitled to land (Deut 14:28,29;<sup>14</sup> 15:14-18). The Israelites were to realise that everything belonged to the Lord, and that they were merely stewards of God (Lev 25:23).<sup>15</sup>

The Israelite economy was a mixed economy of reciprocity and redistribution (Deist 2000:179). Taxes, tithes and offerings played an important part in this economy of redistribution, and would later prove to increase the distance between the “haves” and the “have nots”.

Attention was given in particular to the provision of food for those in need (Birch 1975:596). The poor were allowed to harvest grain or rice when passing a field (Deut 23:25). They were also granted the opportunity to gather the leftovers in the fields and vineyards and to take any sheaves that were left behind. Owners were reminded to leave something behind for the poor (Deut 24:19; Lev 19:9-10; 23:22; Ruth 2:1-3), and anything that grew up in the fields not ploughed belonged to the poor (Ex 23:10-11). Over and above the previous arrangements, the poor were to receive the tithe of every third year (Deut 14:28-29; 26:12).

Despite having received this land of milk and honey it was not long before Israel became discontent with serving God, and started worshipping Baal and the other fertility idols that promised wealth and prosperity. This led to God threatening to sell his Israel, his inheritance (Ps 44:13,

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and the harvest (Deut 15:12-15). In this way the prosperous were reminded that they were not always affluent (Birch 1975:595).

<sup>14</sup> Deut 14:28-29: “28At the end of every three years, bring all the tithes of that year’s produce and store it in your towns, <sup>29</sup>so that the Levites who have no allotment or inheritance of their own and the aliens, the fatherless and the widows who live in your towns may come and eat and be satisfied, and so that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hands.

<sup>15</sup> Lev 25:23: “The land must not be sold permanently, because the land is mine and you are but aliens and my tenants.”

Ezek 30:12), something that would be shocking to the Israelites in the light of the inalienable nature of the land (Deist 2000:145).

Due to their continued disobedience Israel also went through cycles of prosperity and poverty (Blomberg 1999:50-51). The case of Ruth and her family, that had to look for food in Moab during a famine in Israel, is one such an example (Ruth 1:1). In her praise to God after Samuel's birth Hanna acknowledges that the Lord "sends poverty and wealth", and that he "raises the poor from the dust, and lifts the needy from the ash heap." (1 Sam 2:7-8).

### **The monarchy**

The perversion of justice in taking bribes (probably from the rich) by the Levites (in this case the sons of Samuel) eventually led to Israel requesting a king (1 Sam 8:2-4). Samuel warned the Israelites about the personal and economic consequences such a king would have to them (1 Sam 8:10-22). He warned them that a monarchy would not only mean practical slavery to their sons and daughters (v. 11-13), but also several forms of taxation and aid to government (v. 14-17). Samuel even warned them that they may cry for relief from such a king, but that the Lord would not answer.

As Israel stubbornly proceeded to choose a king, the first kings, especially David and Solomon, became very wealthy. But their wealth was not always looked upon favourably, especially by God himself as reported in the books of the Bible. When Nathan approaches David on his murder of Uriah (2 Sam 12:1-4), he uses the example of a rich man and a poor man. David's sin in this case was not only seen as of moral or spiritual character, but it was also viewed as an economic transgression against the poor (Birch 1975:599).

It is significant the Solomon sought wisdom instead of wealth (2 Chr 1). Even though this wealth can largely be explained by the splendour of the temple (2 Chr 4), Solomon was still described as "greater in riches and wisdom than all the other kings of the earth" (2 Chr 9:22).<sup>16</sup>

Before long of Samuel's prophecy was gradually fulfilled, especially in the time of Solomon. Solomon's wealth did not only lead him into idolatry in his old age (1 Kings 11), but he also enslaved the non-Israelites areas surrounding Israel, and taxed the Israelites themselves, making

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<sup>16</sup> 1 Kings 9:21: "... their descendants remaining in the land, whom the Israelites could not exterminate - these Solomon conscripted for his slave labour force, as it is to this day."

them complain of the yoke that he put on them (1 Kings 12:4).<sup>17</sup> This burden was not to be lifted by Rehoboam, but he decided to make the yoke even heavier. Rehoboam uses slavery language<sup>18</sup>, and tells them that his father “scourged” them with “whips”; and that he would “scourge” them “with scorpions” (1 Kings 12:14). The king of the ten tribes, Jeroboam, led the people into idolatry by making two golden calves (1 Kings 12:25-33).

From these two kings onward the monarchy deteriorated further. The draught in the land due to his worship of Baal (1 Kings 17-18), and King Ahab’s and his wife Jezebel’s murder of Naboth (1 Kings 21) were visible signs of the gradual failure of the monarchy in Israel. King Jehoahas was accused later of not paying his workers for building his palaces (Jer 22:13).<sup>19</sup>

In the time of the monarchy we find gruesome tales about famines. In 1 Kings 6:25-33 there is an account of the siege of Ben-Hadad against the city of Samaria. A donkey’s head sold for eighty shekels of silver (v. 25), which was at a stage about 3 times the price of a slave (Ex 21:32), and it records how a mother even ate her own child due to utter desperation (v. 29).

Before long the kingdom of Israel in the north and Israel in the south would fall at the hands of Assyria and Babylon, and Israel were in exile until the fifth or the sixth centuries BC when they were allowed by the Persian empire to return to their homeland (Blomberg 1999:54).

### **Israel and Judah sent into exile**

One of the main reasons for Israel’s exile is described by Blomberg (1990:71) as the “extorting, robbing and oppressing to gain more land”. Micah 2:2<sup>20</sup> and Amos 5:11-12<sup>21</sup> are just two of numerous passages that witness to the rich in Israel trying to get richer at expense of the poor.

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<sup>17</sup> 1 Kings 12:4: “Your father put a heavy yoke on us...”

<sup>18</sup> Ironically Israel’s slavery under the Egyptians has been referred to as a “yoke” (Ex 6:6-7; Lev 26:13).

<sup>19</sup> Jer 22:13: “Woe to him who builds his palace by unrighteousness, his upper rooms by injustice, making his countrymen work for nothing, not paying them for their labour.”

<sup>20</sup> Mic 2:2: “They covet fields and seize them, and houses, and take them. They defraud a man of his home, a fellow-man of his inheritance.”

<sup>21</sup> Am 5:11-12: “<sup>11</sup>You trample on the poor and force him to give you grain. Therefore, though you have built stone mansions, you will not live in them; though you have planted lush vineyards, you will not drink their wine. <sup>12</sup>For I know how many are your

Instead of honouring the inalienability of the land according to the Torah, the wealthy further enriched themselves with numerous “illegal and unethical manoeuvres” (Blomberg 1999:73). Three specific ways in which the poor were exploited were the use of dishonest scales and prices in the market-place (Ezek 45:10-12, Hos 12:7), the foreclosing of unpaid debts (Am 2:6-8),<sup>22</sup> and withholding labourers’ wages (Mal 3:5).

In Jeremiah 40:1-12 there is an account of the exiles, with Jeremiah amongst them, in chains on their way to Babylon. Jeremiah receives a present from king Nebuzaradan, and is allowed to go back to Judah, where the poorest of the men, women and children were left behind under Gedaliah as governor. They were allowed to settle in Judah again and harvest the wine and fruit, and to put them in storage jars. In reaction to this many of the fugitives in the surrounding countries returned to Judah and made good harvests (Jer 40:10-12).

The books Daniel and Esther, written during the exile, provide a picture of the situation and position of the Israelites in exile. These books do portray interesting similarities. In both books the heroes were taken into exile. The young man Daniel was totally separated from his family, and Esther came to Susa as an orphan with her uncle Mordecai. The main characters have found favour with the rulers of their respective countries, and shared in the wealthy lives of the monarchs.

On the other hand both books reflect the pressure on the Israelites to worship humans and idols (Dan 3,6; Esth 3:2), with the constant threat of death on those who refused. Both the books sketch the negative image of debauchery and licentious feasts of the kings of Babel and Persia (Dan 5; Esth 1), and God’s punishment of arrogance in the lives of Nebuchadnezzar (Dan 4) and Haman (Esth 7). Noteworthy is the promise in the last verse of the book (Dan 12:13) that Daniel will “rise to receive his allotted inheritance”. In the celebration of the Purim even the Jews in exile were admonished by Mordecai to give “presents to one another, and gifts to the poor” (Esth 9:22).

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offences and how great your sins. You oppress the righteous and take bribes and you deprive the poor of justice in the courts.”

<sup>22</sup> Am 2:6-8: “<sup>6</sup>This is what the LORD says: “For three sins of Israel, even for four, I will not turn back my wrath. They sell the righteous for silver, and the needy for a pair of sandals.

<sup>7</sup>They trample on the heads of the poor as upon the dust of the ground and deny justice to the oppressed. Father and son use the same girl and so profane my holy name. <sup>8</sup>They lie down beside every altar on garments taken in pledge. In the house of their god they drink wine taken as fines.”

In the book of Habakkuk (1:14-17) the “wicked” (referring to the Babylonians) are compared to fishermen catching men and exploiting them, whilst “living in luxury and enjoying the choicest food.” Blomberg (1999:75) is of the opinion that these words could just as well be made applied to the wealthy Israelites before the exile as well. Eventually the Lord brings remnants of Israel and Judah back from the dispersion around 600-500 BC.

### **Return from exile and rebuilding of the temple**

Although the process of rebuilding under Ezra and Nehemiah started again with great material wealth (Ezra 1-2), the temple was not restored to the same size and splendour as in the time of Solomon (Blomberg 1999:54). This was probably due to serious opposition to the rebuilding process (Neh 4,6). Nehemiah also took the plight of the poor at heart, and openly rebuked those who still exploited the poor in Judah (Neh 5:1-10). He ordered the retribution of the poor, refused to tax the people for his own personal luxury, and daily hosted the poor at his table (Neh 5:10-19).

After the completion of the wall around Jerusalem the Israelites gathered and confessed their sins (Neh 9) and made a binding agreement together with the leaders, the Levites, and the priests. In this agreement they promised to follow God’s law, to abstain from marriages with women from neighbouring countries, and to observe the Sabbath by not selling grain on that day. They also vowed to let the land rest, and to cancel all debts every seventh year (Neh 9:29-31). They also vowed to give the necessary tithings and offerings (Neh 10:32-39), and not to “neglect the house of the Lord” (10:39).

### **The Intertestamental period**

Persian dominance subsided in the wake of Alexander the Great, (*circa* 300 BC), and he literally took the world by storm. Greek rule was marked by urbanisation, as well as Hellenisation, but also meant increased taxation to many provinces, including Palestine (De Villiers 1998:147). After the death of Alexander, the Ptolemies used the high priest, and the Sanhedrin (consisting of priests and elders from influential families in Jerusalem) to govern Jerusalem on local level (Lohse 1974:22), and collect the taxes. The Ptolemies did, however, increase taxes on the Jews, which contributed to increased poverty.

*Circa* 200 BC the Seleucids under Antiochus III took control of Palestine, and temporary relief from tax was granted to elders and scribes connected to the temple (Lohse 1974:23). The Seleucids were also actively promoting Hellenisation, and used the high priest to gather and forward taxes to them. According to Blomberg (1999:88) the practice of latifundism<sup>23</sup> originated here, and resulted eventually in the animosity between the typical peasant and the “tax collector” or “publican”.

Under Antiochus III’s successor, Antiochus IV, the high priest Onias (a devout observer of the law) was ousted by Jason. Jason bribed the Syrians with the promise of increased income from the Jews, and accelerated Hellenisation (Ferguson 1987:322). Not long after Jason he was replaced by Menelaus, who offered an even bigger sum of money to the Syrians. The office of high priest became a political entity which could be “bought and sold” (Lohse 1974:24).

In Palestine the corruption of Onias, Jason and Menelaus eventually led to the successful Maccabean revolt against Antiochus IV in 167 BC, and the Jews gained temporal independence, despite being outnumbered by the Seleucid army. The Jews gained some economic prosperity under Hasmonean rule, with the tribute lifted from the Jews in 142 BC (Lohse 1974:28; Ferguson 1987:325).

In the following years increasing internal tension developed between the Pharisees and the Hasmonean rulers (Lohse 1974:31; Ferguson 1987:326). During this time (133-128 BC) the Seleucid ruler Antiochus VII regained control over Judea, but after his death Syria’s power declined rapidly, and the Hasmonean ruler John Hyrcanus took the reins again. After John Hyrcanus’ death the Hasmonean kingdom gradually weakened.

In 76 BC Salome Alexandra came into power after the death of her husband, Alexander Janneus, and ruled with “prudence and wisdom”. She succeeds in the reconciling of the clashing factions of the Hasmoneans and the Pharisees, and contributed to a time of economic prosperity, with good harvests (Lohse 1974:33). After the death of Salome the factions amongst the Jews started quarrelling again, and both factions approached the Romans to assist them. Pompey responded in 63 BC, and that lead to Roman domination and heavy taxation of Palestine (Blomberg 1999:88).

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<sup>23</sup> ‘Latifundism’ refers to the centralisation of land under landlords, and the management of this land by agents or managerial slaves.

The constant state of warfare had serious consequences for Jewish religion. The Jews were stateless and lived in self-governed communities.<sup>24</sup> The position of the priests has literally disappeared, and they were replaced by rabbis. The nature of the foreigners also radically changed. Instead of the poor foreigner that looked for refuge and alms in Old Israel, the foreigners now consisted of rich inhabitants of Palestine that came to settle there during the time of the exile (Lohse 1974:17). These changes explain the lack of evidence of continuous support for rabbis and foreigners from the tithes (Bird 1975:151).

With the advent of the *Pax Romana* under Caesar and Augustus in particular, trade was stimulated further, and Rome's power gradually increased, especially in Asia. This era was also marked by an increase in slavery, and latifundism, where agricultural property was divided into large estates (Blomberg 1999:87). These estates were later given to army veterans, who appointed slaves as managers. The peasants that were driven from the land increasingly flogged to Rome and the other cities, which only increased poverty (De Villiers 1998:187).

## Conclusion

Looking at the Old Testament from a revelation-historical point of view, aids one in understanding the different reasons for increased levels of poverty, especially by the time of Jesus Christ's earthly ministry. There were natural causes of poverty, such as famines and plagues, but one of the major causes listed by Wright (2004:170-171) is oppression of those who were weak on a social, economical and ethical level. This oppression took place at the root-level of society, and was especially driven by the insatiable greed of the monarchy, with kings like Ahab even perverting justice and committing murder in order to attain land.

Poverty of this nature was met with a constant opposition from at least some spiritual leaders, judges, and prophets, as well as reformers after the exile. They pleaded for upholding kinship values, looking after the landless, as well as fairness in the judicial system. These leaders boldly addressed those who caused poverty through oppression, and demanded a new social and economical ethos from them (Wright 2004:170-174).

One aspect that is almost interwoven like a golden thread through the Old Testament is God's ownership of everything, and man's responsibil-

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<sup>24</sup> These self-governed communities were, needless to say, under strict control of the government of the day.



ity as a steward of God's possessions. Every time that man ignored the all important value of contentment, it resulted in oppression and subsequent poverty. Israel also failed to learn from the past. They quickly forgot their own experience of slavery in Egypt, and enslaved the poor, the widow, the orphan and the foreigner alike. Time was ripe for the advent of Jesus Christ to intervene, and proclaim God's freedom in all areas of life, including the economic.

### 5.2.2 Poverty in the New Testament

As already shown in sections 1.1-2 and 2.5.1 of this thesis the focus falls mainly on poverty as a phenomenon involving material want rather than social status.

In the light of the fact that the economic nature of the *πτωχός* cannot be denied, the New Testament views on 'the poor' as an economic entity will subsequently be investigated from a revelational – historical perspective. The poor and the ministry of Jesus and the early church will be receiving the attention in this regard. At this stage poverty in the Pauline material is excluded, as this will be the theme of the next chapter.

#### Poverty and the ministry of Jesus

According to Luke Jesus begins his ministry (Lk 4:18-19) by reading the prophecy by Isaiah (61:1-2),<sup>25</sup> and thereby introduces the plight of the poor as one of the main reasons for his mission on earth (Birch 1975:499). In his answer to John the Baptist the fulfilling of this ministry is found again (Mt 11:5; Lk 7:22).<sup>26</sup> Jesus often associated with the poor in society, as in the case of the banquet (Lk 14:15-24) and the poor widow (Lk 21:2-3), and he also instructed the rich to give to the poor. He told the Pharisees (Lk 11:39-42)<sup>27</sup> to empty their 'cups and dishes' to the

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<sup>25</sup> Is 61:1-2: "The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour and the day of vengeance of our God..."

<sup>26</sup> Lk 7:22: "So he replied to the messengers, "Go back and report to John what you have seen and heard: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor."

<sup>27</sup> Lk 11:39-42: "<sup>39</sup>Then the Lord said to him, "Now then, you Pharisees clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside you are full of greed and wickedness. <sup>40</sup>You foolish people! Did not the one who made the outside make the inside also? <sup>42</sup>But give what is inside the dish to the poor, and everything will be clean for you."

poor, and rich young man to sell all his belongings and give it to the poor (Mt 19:21; Mk 10:21; Lk 12:33).

There are literal examples of the ‘begging poor’ in the Gospels, amongst which one can count the parable<sup>28</sup> of the beggar Lazarus (Lk 16:20) and the blind man (Jn 9:8).<sup>29</sup> Furthermore the prevalence of the ‘begging poor’ in the New Testament is also supported by parables such as the widow begging for justice with the unjust judge (Lk 18:7-8). The exploitation of widows was a serious problem in Old Testament times (5.2.1), and it did not seem to change in First Century AD.

The gradual deterioration of Israel’s economic situation gained momentum under Roman rule (Oakman 2004:1). Even though Nissen (1984:11) has added a strong social component to his view of the poor,<sup>30</sup> he describes the “largely agrarian” community as getting “poorer and poorer”, lacking any notion of a “middle class”.<sup>31</sup>

In what he calls “economic alienation”, Nissen (1984:11) reckons that the “average freeman had little and sometimes less prosperity than the slave”, and that an “increasing number of the population were day labourers who often suffered from unemployment”. The parable of the workers in the vineyard (Mt 20:1-16), provides some evidence towards the prevalence of unemployment in First Century Palestine.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> There is always a danger in using parables to form explicit economic theory. The meaning of a passage should not be deliberately stretched (without considering its context) towards an economic interpretation (Blomberg 1999:112). On the other hand, it must be taken into account that parables were also taken as examples from every day life, and can surely assist in the understanding of the First Century socio-economic context.

<sup>29</sup> Jn 9:8: “His neighbours and those who had formerly seen him begging asked, “Isn’t this the same man who used to sit and beg?”

<sup>30</sup> In discussing the poor, Nissen (1984:12), divides the poor into three groups, namely the economically poor, the physically and mentally ill, handicapped, captives and widows, and lastly the marginalised persons, being the “tax collectors, sinners and prostitutes.

<sup>31</sup> Most exponents of ‘new consensus’ on (cf. 2.5.1) or the more “social” interpretation of the poor, support the existence of a ‘middle class’ and a smaller ‘lower class’. It must be conceded, however, that the ‘new consensus’ focuses mainly on Christianity in the congregations in the early church, rather than the situation in Palestine. Regarding the identity of the poor and the sinners in Palestine, there is ample support for these references to refer to the “peasants” (Wessels 2006:198).

<sup>32</sup> I view Nissen’s contribution (although somewhat dated) on the exploitation of the Pharisees, as a very important contribution to support my approach (of interpreting Paul from the angle of the poor) in this thesis.

Amongst the ‘begging poor’ Neyrey (2002:1) also rightly counts the “poor which had the good news preached to them” (Mt 11:5; Lk 7:22), and ‘the poor’ which we will always have with us (Mt 26:11; Mk 14:7; John 12:8). In the parable of the shrewd manager recorded in Luke 16 the manager devises a plan to make sure that he does not have to dig or to beg (v. 3).<sup>33</sup> Belonging to the ‘begging poor’, and in this case even the ‘working poor’ was therefore a dreaded prospect.

Jesus and his disciples also ‘adopted’ the lifestyle of the poor (Birch 1975:500), and their harvesting of grain in the fields (Mt 12:1-8; Mk 2:23-28; Lk 6:1-5) resembled the allowance granted to the poor in the Old Testament. Furthermore Jesus’ disciples are required to go into “extreme poverty” (Birch 1975:500), when sent out to the surrounding communities (Mt 12:1-8; Mk 2:23-28; Lk 6:1-5).

Before the inception of his ministry, Jesus and the disciples were ‘working poor’. They were attached to their families, and they had a daily occupation (Neyrey 2002:1). Following Jesus to them meant that they had to leave their nets (Mt 4:20; Mk 1:18), as well as their families (Mt 19:27-29).<sup>34</sup> This actually meant that they degraded themselves to “the begging poor”, which meant that they had no-one to fall back on, and support them in times of need.<sup>35</sup> They had to fully rely on Jesus’ provision.

Even though the fact and existence of “working poor” and “begging poor”, which jointly comprised of at least 90% of society (Friesen 2004:347; Neyrey 2002:1),<sup>36</sup> is clear, the origin of poverty in the First Century is also an aspect of considerable debate. The obvious reason would be the utter predation (cf. 3.3.3) under the Roman rule and taxation system. Neyrey (2002:1) states that an ordinary peasant or fisherman could pay as much as 30-40 percent of their harvest or catch to the

<sup>33</sup> Lk 16:3: “The manager said to himself, ‘What shall I do now? My master is taking away my job. I’m not strong enough to dig, and I’m ashamed to beg.’”

<sup>34</sup> Mt 19:27-29: “<sup>27</sup>Peter answered him, “We have left everything to follow you! What then will there be for us?” <sup>28</sup>Jesus said to them, “I tell you the truth, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. <sup>29</sup>And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life.”

<sup>35</sup> The parable of the pearl (Mt 13:44-46) is to my view correctly interpreted by Blomberg (1999:115) as the insistence of Jesus that his disciples had to be prepared to leave everything behind if they truly wanted to follow Him.

<sup>36</sup> Whilst differing on the percentage of “begging poor”, Friesen and Neyrey correspond in their estimation of the joint figure of “working poor” and “begging poor”.

Roman government. It is therefore not strange that Tacitus (*Annales* 2.42) records in the time of Tiberius that “*et provinciae Syria atque Iudaea, fessae oneribus, deminutionem tributi orabant.*”<sup>37</sup>

An interesting theory is proposed by Nissen (1984:16), who argues that the Pharisees actually largely contributed to poverty in Israel. In his treatment of “the poor in the context of Jesus’ ministry”, he argues that the Pharisees<sup>38</sup> used their exegetical authority<sup>39</sup> on the law to marginalize the peasants to their own advantage. In what was previously described as ‘economical alienation’, John (7:47-49)<sup>40</sup> provides the evidence that the peasants, who were the outcasts of the established culture of their days, clashed with the Pharisees.

According to Nissen (1984:11-12) “Jewish society rested on a religious ideology, according to which all those who were not true Israelites... were despised, rejected and marginalised.” I do believe that Nissen (1984:12) takes this too far<sup>41</sup> when arguing that “the political reality that really controlled the religious, social and economic life of the people was an oppressive Jewish theocracy rather than the Roman Empire”, but he does shed some valuable light on Jesus’ behaviour towards the Pharisees.<sup>42</sup>

Nissen’s theory does not only put the instruction of Jesus to the Pharisees in Luke 11:42, to “give what is inside the dish to the poor” into perspective, but provides a different perspective on Jesus’ vehement judge-

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<sup>37</sup> “The provinces of Syria and Judea also, exhausted by their liabilities, pleaded for a reduction in their excise.”

<sup>38</sup> Traditionally the Pharisees were viewed (cf. Blomberg 1999:101) as being closer to the Peasants, whilst the Sadducees were the ‘rich’, seeking the favour of the government. Though I do not deny the existence of a rich faction of Sadducees, the Pharisees’ power struggle during the Intertestamental period in Palestine is testimony to the position of power that at least some factions within the Pharisees aspired to attain.

<sup>39</sup> The presence of power structures in the oppression of the peasants is also articulated by Volschenk (2003:422).

<sup>40</sup> Jn 9:47-49: “<sup>47</sup>You mean he has deceived you also?” the Pharisees retorted. <sup>48</sup>Has any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed in him? <sup>49</sup>No! But this mob that knows nothing of the law - there is a curse on them.”

<sup>41</sup> The aim of Nissen’s theory is (amongst others) to describe the missionary character and goals of Jesus in Palestine, and would probably explain this excessive judgement.

<sup>42</sup> There are scholars who view the role of the Pharisees in the First Century in a positive light (Culbertson 1982:539-561; Sanders (1992), but I still hold the traditional view (cf. Nissen 1984:18-19) of the Pharisees as being a sect which proved burdensome in many aspects to the masses (cf. 5.2.1).

ment on the oppression and lack of justice in his time. In a sense the ‘Sermon on the plain’ (Lk 6:20-26), which has been the object of much scholarly debate (Ling 2006:123-131), makes much more sense, when partially directed at the ‘economical alienation’ of the Pharisees:

Mt 6:20-26: <sup>20</sup> “Looking at his disciples, he said: “Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. <sup>21</sup>Blessed are you who hunger now, for you will be satisfied. Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh. <sup>22</sup>Blessed are you when men hate you, when they exclude you and insult you and reject your name as evil, because of the Son of Man. <sup>23</sup>Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, because great is your reward in heaven. For that is how their fathers treated the prophets. <sup>24</sup>But woe to you who are rich, for you have already received your comfort. <sup>25</sup>Woe to you who are well fed now, for you will go hungry. Woe to you who laugh now, for you will mourn and weep. <sup>26</sup>Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for that is how their fathers treated the false prophets.”

The ‘Beatitudes’ and the ‘woes’ in the ‘Sermon on the plain’ (Lk 6:20-26), was directed at the larger circle of disciples, with the great multitude of people overhearing (Kim 1998:26; Nolland 1989:281).<sup>43</sup> Read from a perspective of the ‘poor peasants’, they could surely associate with being poor, hungry, sad and hated, by the Pharisees. The feeling of being marginalised, i.e. “excluded”, would not have been foreign to them (Neyrey 2002:1). The qualification “because of the Son of Man” (v. 22) surely adds a new dimension (and in a sense a prerequisite) to the blessings, but the reality of oppression would not have been foreign to them.

On the other hand the Pharisees would probably recognise being called “rich”, “well fed” and honoured in the public opinion. To my view the continuation between the Post-exilic times and the behaviour of the Pharisees are strengthened by the reference to “fathers” and “false prophets”. Jesus is here in a sense “radicalising the tradition” (Birch 1975:599), and questioning the ‘norm’ (Hollenbach 1987:61), by proclaiming a reversal of circumstances for both these groups. This view is strongly affirmed by K gler (2012:12), who argues that the sermon on the plain has radical implications for the vast differences between rich and poor in current day society.

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<sup>43</sup> There is also a view by Schottroff & Stegemann (1986:71) that the first part was addressed to the disciples only, and the ‘woes’ to the larger crowd, but this is successfully repudiated by Kim (1998:26).

Further evidence for Jesus' association with the peasants or poor of his day (*contra* the Pharisees), is the passage on the great judgement in Matthew 25:31-46. There Jesus not only identifies with the poor, but actually equates acceptance of him with ministering to the needs of the poor (Birch 1975:599), as verse 45 clearly shows.<sup>44</sup> Other clear indications of the economical nature of Jesus' criticism of the Pharisees, are his command to exercise additionally "justice, mercy and faithfulness" (Mt 23:23; Lk 11:24) on top of their tithing, and his cleansing of the tables in the temple (Mt 21:12-17, Mk 11:15-19; Lk 19:45-48; Jn 2:13-22). Jesus also directs an unmistakable accusation at the teachers of the law, who devoured the houses of the widows (Lk 20:46-47),<sup>45</sup> echoing the accusation of Micah (2:1-2).

In line with the principle of contentment expressed by the Tenth Commandment (cf. 5.2.1), Jesus also tells his disciples that one cannot serve God and Mammon (Mt 6:24; Lk 16:13),<sup>46</sup> and that gathering grain in excess is the mark of a 'rich fool' (Lk 12:16-21).

In the light of the above it must be asked whether Jesus chose the 'option for the poor', and alienated the rich and wealthy of his time. Nissen (1984:16-18) is right in pointing out that he visited and assisted the rich, amongst whom one may count Jairus (Mt 9:18-26), Nicodemus (Jn 3:1-21), Joseph of Arimathea (Mt 27:57-61), and Zacchaeus (Lk 19:1-10), although he did not refrain from proclaiming the implications of the gospel, especially the need for 'giving to the poor', whenever it was required.

In retrospect it is evident that widespread poverty was a reality in the time of Jesus, and that he addressed it in numerous instances. He reprimanded the oppressors and the greedy, but also associated with the poor of his day, being one of the poorest himself. The worst, however, was yet to come. In the following years the economic situation in Jerusalem deteriorated drastically.

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<sup>44</sup> Mt 25:45: "He will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.'"

<sup>45</sup> Lk 20:46-47: "<sup>46</sup>Beware of the teachers of the law. They like to walk around in flowing robes and love to be greeted in the market-places and have the most important seats in the synagogues and the places of honour at banquets. <sup>47</sup>They devour widows' houses and for a show make lengthy prayers. Such men will be punished most severely."

<sup>46</sup> For a more detailed explanation on the economical implications, see Oakman (2004:1)

### Poverty and the early church in Jerusalem and Caesarea

In the twenty years after Jesus' death, especially approaching the year 50 AD, the situation in Palestine became almost unbearable for the 'begging poor'.<sup>47</sup> Not only was there no relief from the harsh Roman government, but several famines (Gapp 1935:260-261) in the Mediterranean contributed to a dire need for assistance in the early church.

In accordance with the approach taken in this chapter, the focus is to look at the development of poverty along the lines of historical markers, rather than a 'book by book' approach. Since the Pauline material concerning the early church will be covered in the next chapter, the main focus of this section will be on the inception of the church in Jerusalem, and its development until 50 AD.

Immediately after Pentecost, and the inception of the early church, the practise of love "communism",<sup>48</sup> or rather "communalism" (Blomberg 1999:163) is recorded in Acts 2:44-45,<sup>49</sup> and in Acts 4:32.<sup>50</sup> This sharing of goods is often contributed to the hypothesis that the apostles and new believers placed the emphasis on the 'spiritual' rather than the material, in expecting Christ's return (Bird 1982:155; Nissen 1984:88). Harrison (1986:98-99) assumes that this sharing of goods eventually "drained" the resources of the believers, which resulted in poverty amongst Christians in Jerusalem, and the subsequent plea from their leaders to Paul to "remember the poor" (Gal 2:10) (cf. 1.2, 2.5.2).

Despite the claims above there is enough reason to believe that the selling of goods by believers took into account everyone's needs (Acts 2:45), and it is stated specifically that the sale of land and houses took place from "time to time" (Acts 4:34).<sup>51</sup> It is therefore improbable that there

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<sup>47</sup> The dire situation in Jerusalem around 50 AD is well documented in the works of *inter alia* Gapp (1935).

<sup>48</sup> The term "love Communism" is often used to describe the way in which the first Christians sold their possessions and shared everything with one another (Birch 1975:601; Nissen 1984:86). Blomberg (1999:163) points to the fact that there are actually very little correspondence between First Century "communalism" and Communism as presented by Marx. Marx forced communism by legislation, and in Communism not only the consumption, but the production was shared as well.

<sup>49</sup> Acts 2:44-45: "44 All the believers were together and had everything in common. 45 Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need."

<sup>50</sup> Acts 4:32: "All the believers were one in heart and mind. No-one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had."

<sup>51</sup> The participle here, *πωλοῦντες* indicates an event over time, and not a once-off or purely historical event.

was a total ‘shedding’ of all goods by the wealthier members (Blomberg 1999:162).

In the rest of Acts the attitude of the believers is apparent, especially in the healing of the crippled beggar at the temple gate (Acts 3:1-10). Peter and John’s answer in verse 6 might raise eyebrows, as it could be argued that there had to be money after everything was sold. It must be remembered, however, that there were no real excess, as the first believers were very poor despite the contributions of their wealthier members, and therefore not much was left for charity (Bird 1975:157).

After relating the joyful occasion of Barnabas’ gift, Luke also provides us with the painful event of Ananias and Sapphira’s treachery (Acts 5:1-11). Even though this may seem an improper punishment, it must be noted that there is a certain correspondence with the crime of Achan here, (cf. 5.2.1): the inception of a new era for God’s people, as well as the sin of covetousness (Haenchen 1971:237).

Not long after this tragic incident, tensions between the Greeks and the Jews developed due to discrimination towards the Greek widows (Acts 6:1-7). In the Old Testament the widows were regarded as the responsibility of the people, and even received part of the tithe (cf. 5.2.1). This issue, which had the potential to create a schism in the church, was solved by appointing seven deacons, and (as in the case with Ananias and Sapphira) eventually contributed to the growth of the church, and the number of priests that adhered to Christian faith is mentioned specifically (Acts 6:7).<sup>52</sup>

The attempt of Simon the Sorcerer to buy the gift of the Spirit (Acts 8:9-25), and Dorcas’ (9:36) as well as Cornelius’ (Acts 10:2,4,31) almsgiving are examples of the way that the economic aspect was an inseparable part of the early church. There are also regular references to rich persons, for example the owner of the house where 120 people were able to gather in the upper room during Pentecost (Acts 2:1) and Cornelius (Acts 10:1). Even though the rest of Acts contains several references to poverty and related aspects, this will be discussed in the next chapter, as these portions are strongly connected to Paul’s ministry.

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<sup>52</sup> Acts 6:7: “So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith.”



### Poverty amongst Jewish believers in the Diaspora

The Letter of James, written to “the twelve tribes in the Diaspora” (Jas. 1:1),<sup>53</sup> provides good contextual evidence regarding poverty in the time of Paul’s Letter to Corinth. In the opening chapter (1:9-11)<sup>54</sup> there are references to the “humble” believer in contrast with rich. Almost in the same style as in Matthew 9:13 and 23:23, religion without mercy is regarded as worthless in James 1:26-27.<sup>55</sup> These verses underline “the importance of caring for orphans and widows, two of the four cardinal categories of poor in the Hebrew Scriptures” (Davids 2005:355).

In pointing out the religious background of the next passage of note, being James 2:1-13, Ling (2006:133) draws certain parallels to the parable of the rich man and Lazarus (Lk 16:19-31) and Jesus’ accusation (Lk 20:46-47) of the “teachers of the Law” as “devouring the widows”. Ling (2006:133) points to the religious setting of both James 2 (the temple) and Luke 20 (the synagogue), as well as the reference to clothes, which is present in all three passages, as well as the position of honour that the teachers of the Law, or the rich man takes. This kind of discrimination was not acceptable amongst the believers (Davids 2005:355).

In discussing this passage Ling (2006:133) concludes that “we find the πτωχοί contrasted with the ‘rich’ in terms of their religious social practice”, and that there is “no simple social or economic opposition” present in this text. Even if we should ignore the “shabby clothes” of the ‘poor man’, the last part of this passage shows some clear economic markers, especially if viewed in terms of economic marginalisation by Jewish religious leaders.

In James 2:6 there is mention of exploitation, and even perjury of justice (as in Ahab *versus* Naboth), a referral to “murder” in 2:11 (as in David

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<sup>53</sup> The nature of James’ addressees is disputed, but the proposal of Martin (1988:11), calling them “... compatriots of the messianic faith whom he regards also as one in kinship with ethnic Israel in the international arena” will suffice here.

<sup>54</sup> Js 1:9-11: “<sup>9</sup>The brother in humble circumstances ought to take pride in his high position. <sup>10</sup>But the one who is rich should take pride in his low position, because he will pass away like a wild flower. <sup>11</sup>For the sun rises with scorching heat and withers the plant; its blossom falls and its beauty is destroyed. In the same way, the rich man will fade away even while he goes about his business.”

<sup>55</sup> Js 1:26-27: “<sup>26</sup>If anyone considers himself religious and yet does not keep a tight rein on his tongue, he deceives himself and his religion is worthless. <sup>27</sup>Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.”

with Uriah), and to mercy triumphing over judgement in 2:13. Whether James has a particular ‘rich man’ in Jerusalem, or a rich man amongst his addressees in mind, or whether he is just at random giving an example, the possibility of such an occurrence would not be far fetched at all with the socio-historic picture that has already been painted up to now.

Even though keeping in mind that, as in the previous passage this is only an example, this is a clear reference to the ‘begging poor’, not having clothes or daily food<sup>56</sup> in James 2 verses 15 and 16.<sup>57</sup> The believer is called upon to assist the beggar in hard material terms, rather than just providing him with a spiritual blessing.

Later in the Letter of James there are further indications that the poor was a concrete issue at the time, for instance James 4:1-4, which reiterates the value of contentment, and renounces coveting and friendship to the world, and James 4:13-17, which warns against bragging and boasting of one’s plans to “make money” without consulting the Lord, or constantly taking in consideration that humans are but mere “mist” (v. 14).

In conclusion one has to comment on James 5:1-11, as directly touching on the aspect of the “economic alienation”. Verses 5-11 does not only resemble a funeral rite of the rich (Batten 2007:22), but verse 1-6, and 7-11 forms in a sense a “reversed sermon on the plain”, where the judgment is delivered before the blessing is bestowed upon the oppressed. The agricultural setting of this passage is noteworthy, as well as the frequently recurrent themes of “clothes, hoarding, the last days, oppression and exploitation, murder, and abuse of power.” Eventually it is not the call of the wealthy Pharisee that reaches heaven (Lk 18:10-14), but the cry of the oppressed (v. 4).<sup>58</sup>

Although James 5:1-6 is viewed as addressed to the poor as encouragement, there is mention of explicit blessings of the Lord for those who can wait “patiently”, and “stand firm” (v. 8) in times of suffering. Despite

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<sup>56</sup> As shown above, the begging poor lacked “daily bread”, and were struggling for survival. It is against this background that the Lord’s prayer (Mt 6:11; Lk 11:3), when Jesus asks for his daily bread, is understood better, since He and his disciples often did not have food at hand.

<sup>57</sup> Js 2:15-16: “<sup>15</sup>Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. <sup>16</sup>If one of you says to him, “Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed,” but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it?”

<sup>58</sup> Js 5:4: “Look! The wages you failed to pay the workmen who mowed your fields are crying out against you. The cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord Almighty.”

current famines and oppression, the Lord promises that the land<sup>59</sup> will “yield its valuable crop”, and that the “autumn and spring rains” will come (v. 7). The believers are encouraged to show the same perseverance as the genuine prophets (*contra* the false prophets that oppressed them), and Job in the time of his trials. They will be able to overcome through the Lord’s compassion and mercy in their situation (v. 10-11).

Despite the difference in scholarly opinion regarding the exact addressees of this book, it is evident that ‘the poor’ in the context of James still suffered oppression and exploitation, whether from Jewish religious leaders and elite, or from Roman officials. This is *inter alia* supported by the analysis of Davids (2005:355), who argues that if “47 verses out of 105 in the Letter, or close to 45%, have an economic theme”, this was clearly “important to James” (Davids 2005:355).

## Conclusion

From Adam and Eve, through the Old Testament, and the New Testament, the lack of contentment is visible amongst God’s people. This attitude is especially visible during Israel’s time in the desert, and gradually gains momentum, even in Palestine, the Promised Land, the Land of milk and honey. The monarchy was partly a result of greed and exploitation by the priests, and this tendency continued through the exile, gaining momentum in Post-Exilic and in the New Testament. It is within such a tradition that Paul had to define and defend his ministry.

To my view the data from the New Testament has significantly shown that extreme poverty, and becoming part of the ‘begging poor’ (which constituted around 15% already) was definitely a threat in the lives of up to 65% of the population in Palestine.

Even though using the revelation-historical approach as a worthwhile structuring principle in determining the above, there are still a few loose threads. In the last three sections of this chapter the relationship between kinship and poverty, poverty and religious leaders, and poverty and altruism will be discussed, in order to view this important issue from different angles.

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<sup>59</sup> ‘The land’ has been shown to be one of the most important concepts in Old Testament economics (cf. 5.2.1)

### 5.3 *Poverty and altruism*

The function of economy as an embedded entity in the ancient world has already been discussed in 3.2.1. The notion of kinship as the most important aspect of ancient society, and politics as the other determining category is introduced by Malina (2001:82). Although related to the household system of the Graeco-Roman culture, the Jewish kinship system is suggested as an alternative framework for understanding Paul's offering of the gospel as "free of charge" (cf. 1.2).<sup>60</sup> Since kinship (or the lack thereof) concerns relations towards the "other" in society, relevant biblical passages regarding altruism will be dealt with in the last part of this section.

#### 5.3.1 *Kinship and altruism*

The aim of this section is give a broad overview of the kinship structure, and to consider the location of the different categories of the poor: the widow, the orphan, the slave and the alien within this system. This will serve as a basis from which the prevalence of altruism in the New Testament can be assessed, in the light of the fact that altruism refers to the way that 'the other' is considered, by both the individual and the group.

#### **The patriarch and the family<sup>61</sup>**

The patriarch in the family and the ancestral lineage<sup>62</sup> played a major role in Semitic culture in the Old Testament, and later in the New Testament. To use the words of Malina (2001:29), "the family is everything". The two major features in the Semitic family life were the "bonds of kinship and the obligations" attached to it,<sup>63</sup> as well as the sacredness of

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<sup>60</sup> This approach is also taken by Birge (2002:73), in focusing on Jewish kinship language as a background to the kinship language in Paul's first letter to the Corinthians.

<sup>61</sup> Ethnographers identify three types of family, being the patriarchal (where the father is the head, and where the blood line runs along the father's family), the matriarchate (where the child belongs to the mother's family and social group), and the fratriarchate (where the eldest brother is the head of the family) (De Vaux 1973:19).

<sup>62</sup> In both Matthew (1:1-17) and Luke (3:23-48) the lineage of Jesus is described in terms of the fathers, although the contents differ. In Matthew the genealogy is taken back to Abraham in three times 14 generations, whilst Luke takes the genealogy back to Adam and to God himself, indicating that Jesus and mankind also stems from God himself. Furthermore it was most unusual that five woman were included in Matthew's genealogy. This served to show the status of a woman to Matthew, and hinted to the unusual birth of Jesus as well (DeSilva 2004:159-160).

family land. Israel's kinship structure also had three tiers: the father's house,<sup>64</sup> the clan, and the tribe (Wright 2004:338).<sup>65</sup>

The formation of Israel's kinship structure dates back to the patriarchs, when Israel's lifestyle was nomadic or at least semi-nomadic. In the desert no one could survive on his/her own, and they were dependent on one another (Von Waldow 1970:185).<sup>66</sup> In order for the family to function in an effective manner "each one was assigned his own function" (Deist 2000:244).

Even though the patriarch was the leader of the household,<sup>67</sup> the relationship was definitely not the same as was the case with the *paterfamilias* in the Graeco-Roman household system. In fact, there was "no organized form of authority", and the patriarch was no more than a "*primus inter pares*", who could not "give orders" and only lead by example and advice (Von Waldow 1970:185).

As Israel settled in Canaan, the change from a nomadic to an agrarian lifestyle also had a serious impact upon family life. As individuals were not as dependent on one another for survival, the family structure started to disintegrate, and was in a sense replaced by the neighbourhood in a specific town. The economic gravity gradually shifted to the cities, and the wealthy landlords acquired power over the patriarchs (Von Waldow 1970:196-197).

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<sup>63</sup> Kinship had a horizontal and a vertical dimension. On the one side there was the love and relationships to one's next of kin on a horizontal level, i.e. one's brothers and sisters. On the other hand one was expected to respect parents, children and ancestors, and to hold the family name in esteem (Wright 2004:338).

<sup>64</sup> The father's house(hold) consisted of the single living male ancestor, his wife/wives, their married sons and their wives, their grandchildren, and even sometimes their great-grandchildren.

<sup>65</sup> The clan would normally refer to all the descendants of one of the grandsons of Jacob, whilst the tribe would refer to the descendants of Jacob's own sons (Wright 2004:339).

<sup>66</sup> The family functioned as a social unit, but also fulfilled an important religious function. The Passover meal was kept in every home (Ex 23:3-4, 46), and Elkanah took his family to Shiloh every year (1 Sam 1:3-7). On entering Canaan Joshua stated clearly: "But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD."

<sup>67</sup> The patriarchs' lives were not always exemplary especially in religious spheres. Noah became drunk (Gen 9:21), Jacob spoiled Joseph (Gen 37:2-5), Moses neglected the circumcision of his sons (Ex 4:24-26), and Eli and Samuel did not take strong measures against their children when they failed in their offices as priests (1 Sam 3:13; 8:1-3).

### The position of the wife in the family

Even though Von Waldow (1970:185) states that there was “no organised form of authority” in the patriarchal family, there was a difference between the actual and legal status of women in Semitic families. On the legal side a woman practically had no powers.<sup>68</sup> She was under perpetual wardship, either by her own father, or her husband, or another responsible male. She could not divorce her husband, and was also excluded in some areas of public, religious, and judicial life (Isserlin 2001:102).<sup>69</sup>

Being a mother in Ancient Israel implied a series of social duties, i.e. bearing children, suckling them, preparing food, caring for and educating the young. But despite her legal status, a Hebrew wife surely had dignity and influence (Deist 2000:263,264). A child is not instructed to honour his father and mother in the Fourth Commandment (Ex 20:12), but the wife of noble character<sup>70</sup> is highly praised in Proverbs 31:10-31.

The women in families without status and wealth played a major role in the survival of their households in times of famine and poverty. In what Deist (2000:193-195) calls the “technology of subsistence”, he shows how women daily prepared the dough, and baked bread as the only food available for the family.

Polygamy also had an important influence on the household. Sometimes a woman offering her slaves to her husband as a way of insuring that a man has offspring added to tensions in the household, as in the famous case of Sarah and Hagar (Gen 16:1-2). Though the numbers of wives increased gradually until the time of Solomon (who had about seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines), polygamy was only reserved for the rich, and the poor could not afford more than one wife (De Vaux 1970:25; Wright 2004:330-331).

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<sup>68</sup> The weak legal position of a woman in the Jewish culture is viewed by Deist (2000:263) as result of the curse upon Adam and Eve in Genesis 3:16.

<sup>69</sup> The wife could also not inherit anything, and therefore own something. The social position of a wife was surely inferior to the positions of her counterparts in neighbouring countries (De Vaux 1973:40).

<sup>70</sup> In the Old Testament there is evidence of numerous women of character, such as the judge Deborah and the heroine Jael (Judg. 4-5), Athaliah who reigned over Judah for 11 years, (1 Kings 11), Hulda the prophetess (2 Kings 22:14), and Esther and Judith.

### Children in the family

In the Semitic family “... many children was a coveted honour,<sup>71</sup> and the wedding guests” often expressed the “wish that the couple would be blessed with a large family” (De Vaux 1973:41).<sup>72</sup> In the first instance children, especially sons, were the guarantee for the survival of one’s lineage, and the continuation of the ancestral heritage (DeSilva 2004:159). The death of the ‘Servant of the Lord’ as a childless man (Isaiah 53:8)<sup>73</sup> and the interest of the eunuch of Ethiopia in this specific passage (Acts 8:33-34)<sup>74</sup> testifies hereto.

Children were also needed for work in and around the house, as well as the field. Often children were sent to gather wood for the all important fire and water for the cooking needs, and as in David’s case (1 Sam 16:11) they were used to look after the livestock. The workload and nature of the work that children do, are often evidence of severe poverty and famine, as we read in Jeremiah’s time that “young men toil at the millstones; boys stagger under loads of wood” (Lam 5:13).<sup>75</sup>

The Old Testament places a great accent on the family as the basis for a child’s education and religious foundation (Deut 6:6-7).<sup>76</sup> Despite the wonderful ideal of raising a child in the ways of the Lord, evidence from the Old and the New Testaments testifies towards the failure of so many

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<sup>71</sup> Especially in the initial nomadic and semi-nomadic children were viewed very positively, as Psalm 127:3-5 and Psalm 128:3 testify.

<sup>72</sup> The chant “children by the dozens” is still heard at many ‘Western’ marriages in the Southern African context.

<sup>73</sup> Is 53:8: “By oppression and judgment he was taken away. And who can speak of his descendants? For he was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of my people he was stricken.”

<sup>74</sup> Acts 8:33-34: “<sup>33</sup>In his humiliation he was deprived of justice. Who can speak of his descendants? For his life was taken from the earth. <sup>34</sup>The eunuch asked Philip, ‘Tell me, please, who is the prophet talking about, himself or someone else?’”

<sup>75</sup> The fact that boys are doing the work of women and children here, is noteworthy (Deist 2000:262).

<sup>76</sup> Not only the circumcision, but also the consecration of the firstborn (Ex 13:1-6), and the commandments in the Decalogue (Ex 20; Deut 5) formed the basis of a child’s upbringing. Jesus’ contact with the temple at the early age of twelve years was brought about by the yearly pilgrimage to Jerusalem and the joint celebration of the Passover there (Lk 2:41-50) by the family as the kernel unit of Jewish society.

children, often ascribed to the lack of discipline showed by their parents.<sup>77</sup>

In reaction to these and many other examples of failing patriarchy in Biblical times, Bartchy (2003:3) points to what he views as Jesus' re-interpretation of the Fourth Commandment in terms of reverence to God the Father alone, as reaction to the failure of Jewish patriarchy. He argues that Jesus advocated an order where children must be prepared to leave their families, and their fathers (Mt 10:37;<sup>78</sup> Lk 14:26),<sup>79</sup> and be prepared to use the name 'father' for God alone (Mt 23:9).<sup>80</sup>

### **Kinship and status groups amongst the poor**

Apart from age and gender, certain status groups were defined on their economic and legal position. Amongst these groups counted the widows, the orphans, the slaves and the foreigners (Deist 2000:266; Wright 2004:158), also called the *personae miserabiles*<sup>81</sup> by Von Waldow (1970:182). Despite several texts which mention widows and orphans together, we find numerous texts naming all four these groups together.<sup>82</sup> As these groups are of particular interest in terms of poverty, they are addressed under separate sections here.

### ***Widows and orphans***

The weak legal position of the wife in the family (cf. 5.3.2) is accentuated when her husband dies, and she becomes a widow. Because of the *mo-*

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<sup>77</sup> Some examples mentioned by Bakon (2005:215-223) are Gideon and Abimelech, Saul and Jonathan, and David and Absalom. In what he calls a "fiasco of patriarchy, Frolov (2000:41-59) elaborates on the shameful behaviour by Jacob in Genesis 32, sending his wives and children ahead as 'human shields' in case of an attack by his estranged brother Esau.

<sup>78</sup> Mt 10:37: "Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me."

<sup>79</sup> Lk 14:26: "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters – yes, even his own life – he cannot be my disciple."

<sup>80</sup> Mt 23:9: "And do not call anyone on earth 'father', for you have one Father, and he is in heaven."

<sup>81</sup> To Von Waldow (1970:182) people with physical disability, such as the crippled, the lame and the blind also belong to this class.

<sup>82</sup> Scripture portions listing these four categories together are listed by Deist (2000:266) as: Deut 10:18; 14:29; 16:14; 24:17; 19-21; 27:19; 26:11,13, Ps 94:6, 146:9, Jer 7:6, 22:3, Ezek 22:7, Zech 7:10, Mal 3:5.



*har* (dowry) that was paid for her at marriage,<sup>83</sup> she could not go back to her father's family without compensation to the family of the deceased. On the other hand, she was not blood family of the deceased, but was still dependent on the deceased's family to look after her (which was often neglected).<sup>84</sup>

As the bulk of the possessions were normally inherited by the firstborn male after a father's death, or the closest male heir, a widow was often left without any support. Especially when such a woman had children, her situation could deteriorate rapidly, as the book *Ruth* illustrates.<sup>85</sup> The constant reminder to society that they had to look after their widows and orphans,<sup>86</sup> is a clear indication that widows and orphans were suffering due to being disconnected from the kinship system (Deist 2000:266).

As already mentioned above the position of women in general, and therefore also widows were worse amongst the Israelites than in neighbouring countries. That also meant that there is evidence of a few wealthy widows in the Diaspora, who were allowed to own property. The information from the Deutero-canonical book *Judith* provides evidence of a widow that acquired considerable wealth through inheritance after her husband's death (*Judith* 8:7).<sup>87</sup>

The orphan was closely associated with the widow,<sup>88</sup> as the child of a widow was partly an orphan, especially in a patriarchal kinship system.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> The husband's bride was inherited by his next of kin together with her belongings.

<sup>84</sup> The levirate marriage was instituted particularly to prevent the total desolation of a widow, but it eventually meant that such a widow was placed under the auspices of another 'master'. But the mere institution of this law indicates that the deceased husband's family sometimes refused to take in the widow, and that she was often left in a precarious position (*Deut* 25:5-10), such as the situation with Tamar in *Genesis* 38:6-30.

<sup>85</sup> Even when a woman's child was the firstborn, he could be denied his inheritance, as in the case of Ishmael (*Gen* 21:10). An interesting precedent is set when the daughters of Zelophehad, claimed their inheritance, and was granted to them by the Lord (*Num* 27:1-11).

<sup>86</sup> The dire position of widows is illustrated by the references in the Old Testament to the vulnerability of widows (*Job* 24:3; *Isa* 1:23). The neglect of the widow's case in the eyes of the law is illustrated by the parable told by Jesus in *Luke* 18:1-8, where the "unjust judge" initially refuses to hear the widow's case. Widows were not only disgraced (*Isa* 54:4), but the utter desolation of widowhood was even used in curses (*Pss* 109:9, *Isa* 47:9).

<sup>87</sup> *Judith* 8:7: "... and her husband Manasseh had left her gold and silver, and men and women slaves, and cattle, and fields; and she maintained this estate."

<sup>88</sup> Widows and orphans are frequently mentioned together, as seen above. Additional examples are *Job* 22:9, *Pss* 68:5; *Isa* 1:17, 9:17, 10:2; *Jer* 49:11, and *Lam* 5:3). The orphans

The household of a deceased relative, including children, would normally be inherited by his next of kin, and evidence of adoption or any related practice is scarce in the Bible.<sup>90</sup>

The exile resulted in an increasing isolation of children from their families, whether the family members were dead or alive. The cases of the little slave girl working in the household of Naaman (2 Kings 5:2), and Daniel being taken with several young men to Babylonia (Dan 1), suggest the widespread existence of this phenomenon. This leads to the next section concerning the position of a slave in the Jewish kinship system.

### **Slaves**

The Ancient Near Eastern concept of slavery should not be understood in terms of the Greek and Roman system, as the Hebrew root עבד is used mainly for what we would understand today as ‘servant’ (Deist 2000:266-267). The same term is also used in referring to the king’s subjects, or being servants of Jahweh (De Vaux 1973:80).

There are references to household slavery, such as the cases with Joseph in Potiphar’s house (Gen 39:1-19), and the little girl in Naaman’s household. Both of these cases are examples of foreigners having Israelites as slaves in foreign countries, and the Israelites themselves having household slaves, are not very common, except in the times of the rich patriarchs and the monarchy.

The most common form of slavery in Israel’s time was debt slavery, where somebody was enslaved to somebody else due to his inability to pay back his debts. This form of slavery only lasted until the debt was payed off, and would not necessarily entail a full-time slavery, but sometimes only meant that such a person would work at times of the week when the creditor was in need of his labour (Deist 2000:267).

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have also been referred to as the ‘fatherless’ (Deut 24:19), referring directly to the death of their father.

<sup>89</sup> The reluctance of Onan according to Gen 38:9 to produce offspring with Tamar that would belong to his deceased brother anyway, illustrates the desperate situation of a widow’s children.

<sup>90</sup> Except for the case of David taking care of the family of Saul (1 Sam 24:21-22; 2 Sam 9:1-13), and Esther (cf. 5.2.1) being taken care of by her uncle Mordecai in exile, no references to adoption are found in the Old Testament. References to adoption is also scarce in the New Testament, and all of them have a figurative meaning (Rom 8:23, 9:4; Eph 1:5).

Israel's stewardship as God's people entailed amongst others that they had to look after the poor and debt slaves in a special way. In case of a pledge, they were not to take the upper milling stone, which was crucial in processing food, they were not supposed to go into someone's house to take a pledge, or take a cloak without returning it for the debtor to sleep in at night (Deut 24:10-13). This also entailed that the Israelites were forbidden to charge interest (Ex 22:25; Lev 25:36-37; Deut 23:19-20), and that their debts were to be written of after seven years (Ex 21:2). This meant that a debt slave was not supposed to serve longer than six years.

The bulk of slaves were under the yoke of the state, where annual tax payers were to render certain services to the crown, reminding us of the warning of Samuel to the people when they wanted a king. Even though captives of war were often used as slaves, the cost of keeping such slaves was just not feasible, and we read of David selecting the captives that he wanted to use as slaves and killing the rest (2 Sam 2:8). These slaves were reasonably treated (unlike their counterparts in the Graeco-Roman states), and that they were "semi-freed and deployed" in capacities such as labour force on state farms or as soldiers (Deist 2000:268).

Whilst Hebrew uses the same root for 'servant' and 'slave', the Greek term δίακονος is used for servant, and the term δοῦλος for slave (Wessels 2006:3). It becomes increasingly difficult to distinguish between Jewish and Graeco-Roman customs in the research on slaves in the New Testament, especially taking into account that the Israelites in the Diaspora functioned under the laws of their oppressors. Fitzgerald (2009), however, compares Christian treatment of slaves to that evident from the Stoic philosophy.

After describing attitudes towards slavery amongst the Stoics, Fitzgerald (2009:32) focuses upon rewards and punishments for slaves in the Bible. He uses the parables of the three slaves and the talents (Mt 25:14-30), as well as the parable of the two slaves (Mt 24:45-51), where the slave misuses his position, as illustrations. The result for the bad slaves in both these parables is to be cast out into the darkness, and even to be "cut in half" (Fitzgerald 2009:32). From these and similar examples Fitzgerald (2006:35) concludes that the Christians condoned such extreme punishment of slaves and endorsed "by divine analogy precisely those abusive aspects of slave management that the Stoics sharply criticised".<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> I differ from this point of view, as the most of these parables has the rewards rather than the punishment as their focus. Furthermore, Fitzgerald's attempt at equating God's

It has been shown that the harshness and implications of slavery worsened towards the First Century, and that it surely was much worse in the time of Paul than during the patriarchal times in the Old Testament.

### **Strangers**

Closely connected to the slaves in Israel were the strangers.<sup>92</sup> In a sense a 'stranger' was regarded as someone passing through a village or town, being an Israelite, but not belonging to that specific tribe or town.<sup>93</sup>

The collective aspect of the 'stranger' or 'sojourner' is also not to be overlooked. Saul's family fled to Gittaim where they lived as strangers (2 Sam 4:3).<sup>94</sup> Saul's family were not within their kinship structure, and were vulnerable to exploitation from others, in the same way as the Levite in Judges 19. When Deuteronomy 24:19<sup>95</sup> allows for an "alien" to reap a sheaf in the field, it must have been instructed with people like the family of Saul in mind (Deist 2000:270).

In the most areas other than his home town and surrounding areas, Jesus and his disciples were probably regarded as 'aliens'. They were Israelites who lived detached from their kinship of family structure. This would explain Jesus' words to the Pharisees when they complained about Jesus and his disciples gleaning the fields on the Sabbath in Mat-

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eternal punishment on a life full of sin to the justification of a harsh slave owner acting out of frustration towards a slave seems to me incoherent, and inclining towards the allegorisation of what was meant to be a parable.

<sup>92</sup> There were two types of foreigners, namely the 'strangers' or 'sojourners', and the 'foreigners' (Deist 2000:269). Examples of people regarded as foreigners would be the queen of Sheba in 1 Kings 10:1. Foreigners would often be treated with distrust rather than hospitality. The Samaritans and foreigners that settled in Palestine during the exile, and especially the officials from Roman origin, were not regarded as 'strangers', but as foreigners.

<sup>93</sup> The tragic treatment of the Levite and his concubine in the last three chapters of Judges is an example of how a 'stranger' should not be treated. This Levite was passing through, and qualified as a 'stranger'. Repeatedly the lack of hospitality shown to him is repeatedly ascribed to the fact that Israel lacked proper leadership at the time (Judg 17:6, 18:1, 19:1, 21:25). The tragic treatment of the Levite and his concubine in the last three chapters of Judges is an example of how a 'stranger' should not be treated.

<sup>94</sup> 2 Sam 4:3: "... because the people of Beeroth fled to Gittaim and have lived there as aliens to this day."

<sup>95</sup> Deut 24:19: "When you are harvesting in your field and you overlook a sheaf, do not go back to get it. Leave it for the alien, the fatherless and the widow, so that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work of your hands."

thew 12.<sup>96</sup> Jesus does not only refer back to David and his men, who were also ‘aliens’ at that point of time (Mt 12:3-5), but also to the Pharisees’ neglect of the ‘aliens’ and their lack of mercy.

### Responses to poverty in the Bible

From the preceding sections it is clear that subsistence was a reality in the Old Testament communities, and amongst New Testament congregations. The special status groups, who were exposed to deprivation, were part and parcel of the New Testament congregations, even more so due to the destruction of Jerusalem and the Diaspora.

The question, however, still remains: How did people survive in such dreadful circumstances? What measures were put in place to prevent people from starving to death? Wright (2004:158) summarises the different measures put in place in the Old Testament times to prevent outright deprivation and death. He argues that the question of the reality of poverty in the Old Testament remains despite efforts to claim that status and honour was the real concern of the community in Ancient Israel (Wright 2004:158).

The five aspects of Israelite law which specifically addressed issues of poverty, was 1) the role of the kinship structure, 2) an impressive welfare programme and judicial equality for all,<sup>97</sup> 3) the wielding of social and economic power by the wealthy, 4) the establishment of a moral and economical ethos, and 5) the care for the poor as true sign of covenant obedience (Wright 2004:173).

The care for the poor was also stressed in the Intertestamental times. Sirach (4:10)<sup>98</sup> encourages his students to become involved in the protection of the poor, the widows, and the orphans by imitating a ‘father’. From the existing relationship between believers and the Lord, Sirach attempts to persuade his students “into kinship with the unprotected” (Birge 2002:77).

In the book Tobit (4:8-11) almsgiving is mentioned as a key virtue, and even functions as a means of atonement (Blomberg 1999:94):

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<sup>96</sup> Mt 12:7: “If you had known what these words mean, ‘I desire mercy, not sacrifice,’ you would not have condemned the innocent.”

<sup>97</sup> Aid to the poor was not just aimed at relieving the immediate crisis of poverty, but also creating a sustainable life on the long term (Lötter 2008:112).

<sup>98</sup> Sir 4:10: “Be like a father to orphans, and instead of a husband to their mother; you will then be like a son of the Most High, and he will love you more than does your mother.”

<sup>7</sup> ἐκ τῶν ὑπαρχόντων σοι ποίει ἐλεημοσύνην, καὶ μὴ φθονεσάτω σου ὁ ὀφθαλμός ἐν τῷ ποιεῖν σε ἐλεημοσύνην· μὴ ἀποστρέψῃς τὸ πρόσωπόν σου ἀπὸ παντός πτωχοῦ, καὶ ἀπὸ σοῦ οὐ μὴ ἀποστραφῇ τὸ πρόσωπον τοῦ Θεοῦ.  
<sup>8</sup> ὥς σοι ὑπάρχει κατὰ τὸ πλῆθος, ποιήσον ἐξ αὐτῶν ἐλεημοσύνην· ἐὰν ὀλίγον σοι ὑπάρχῃ, κατὰ τὸ ὀλίγον μὴ φοβοῦ ποιεῖν ἐλεημοσύνην· <sup>9</sup> θέμα γὰρ ἀγαθὸν θησαυρίζεις σεαυτῷ εἰς ἡμέραν ἀνάγκης· <sup>10</sup> διότι ἐλεημοσύνη ἐκ θανάτου ρύεται καὶ οὐκ ἐὰν εἰσελθεῖν εἰς τὸ σκότος· <sup>11</sup> δῶρον γὰρ ἀγαθὸν ἐστὶν ἐλεημοσύνη πᾶσι τοῖς ποιοῦσιν αὐτὴν ἐνώπιον τοῦ Ὑψίστου.<sup>99</sup>

In the First Century the situation of the poor in Jerusalem certainly deteriorated, and Joubert (2000:107-113) is of the opinion that the assistance requested from Paul in Gal 2:10 originated from a real situation of poverty. To my view Joubert (2000:112) correctly states that “poverty was not idealised in the Jerusalem community”, but that it was a “daily reality that stared believers in the face.”<sup>100</sup>

The answer to this situation is viewed by Meggitt (1998:173-175) as “Christian communalism”. Eventually not even the Jewish support system for the widows sufficed anymore, and the election of deacons in Acts 6 and the request from the Jerusalem leaders in Gal 2:10 to “remember the poor” (cf. 1.2), aimed to improving the situation of the poor in Jerusalem (Joubert 2000:113).

This section has illustrated that one’s place in the kinship system definitely had economic implications. Not only Jesus and his disciples, but especially Paul and his fellow apostles, needed this ‘communalism’, and needed to sustain it for the survival of the Christian community. This provides the context for 1 Cor 9, and Paul’s relation to the Corinthians.

<sup>99</sup> Tobit 4:7-11: <sup>7</sup>Give alms from your possessions to all who live uprightly, and do not let your eye begrudge the gift when you make it. Do not turn your face away from any poor man, and the face of God will not be turned away from you. <sup>8</sup>If you have many possessions, make your gift from them in proportion; if few, do not be afraid to give according to the little you have. <sup>9</sup>So you will be laying up a good treasure for yourself against the day of necessity. <sup>10</sup>For charity delivers from death and keeps you from entering the darkness; <sup>11</sup>and for all who practice it charity is an excellent offering in the presence of the Most High.”

<sup>100</sup> Congruent with the approach I have in this study Joubert (2000:112) continues to state that “When one does not know where one’s next meal would come from or where one’s family would find clothes or shelter, a term such as *πτωχός* quickly loses its connotations as an honorary title or a reference to the community’s exalted position within the early Christian movement.” This stance (taken also in this thesis) is supported by Lötter (2008:113), who argues that “being poor is hard and involves a constant struggle. Poor people are often exploited, oppressed, unjustly treated, and treated with contempt.”

### 5.3.2 The Bible on altruism

As the Christian communalism has been shown above to be of utmost importance for the survival of the bulk of the population in a subsistence economy, it is important to assess the level of altruism in Biblical times.

In studying altruism I will proceed by focusing on Biblical data in general, whilst addressing Paul's references regarding the theme (altruism) in the next chapter. The three basic forms of altruism used by Engberg-Pedersen<sup>101</sup> will be used as the main categorising principle. Under these three headings the references will be divided under altruism irrespective of person, altruism towards the poor, and altruism with explicit spiritual gain for the receiver in mind. Because of the wide range of references to altruism in the Bible, I narrow the study down to the passages that refer to religious leaders.

#### Altruism with a concern for the self

##### *Giving to others irrespective of person*

**Luke 15:1-7** <sup>1</sup> Now the tax collectors and "sinners" were all gathering around to hear him. <sup>2</sup> But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them." <sup>3</sup> Then Jesus told them this parable: <sup>4</sup> "Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Does he not leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? <sup>5</sup> And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders <sup>6</sup> and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.' <sup>7</sup> I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.

**Relevance:** Jesus is depicted here as dining with the tax collectors and sinners. In answering the criticism of the Pharisees, he refers to the parable of the shepherd looking for the lost sheep. In this parable it can be argued that the shepherd went to find a sheep that belonged to him, and it therefore being altruism with personal gain in mind. It must be noted, however, that Jesus' public outreach to the tax collectors and sinners proves that he showed his love irrespective of person.

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<sup>101</sup> The topic of selflessness, or altruism, as some would call it, is taken up by Engberg-Pedersen (2003:197-214). In his article Engberg-Pedersen discusses "Radical altruism in Php 2:4". He discusses three basic forms of altruism: 1) Altruism with a concern for the self before assisting others (Sampley 2000:223-238), 2) Altruism viewing oneself as a person amongst "others", and 3) Abject altruism.

**Place in revelation-history:** In opposition to the Pharisees, who were not genuinely concerned for the lost, Jesus comes to earth as the Good Shepherd, and reaches out to the sinners and tax collectors.

**Luke 22:24-30** <sup>24</sup> Also a dispute arose among them as to which of them was considered to be greatest. <sup>25</sup> Jesus said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who exercise authority over them call themselves Benefactors. <sup>26</sup> But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves. <sup>27</sup> For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves. <sup>28</sup> You are those who have stood by me in my trials. <sup>29</sup> And I confer on you a kingdom, just as my Father conferred one on me, <sup>30</sup> so that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

**Relevance:** This passage is referring to the practice of benefaction in the Graeco-Roman world. Although kings and rulers often handed out benefactions to cities and large groups of people, they definitely had their own personal gain in mind. Jesus reverses the picture and instructs the disciples, who were arguing about who the greatest amongst them were, to be servants of one another. In this passage the idea of God as benefactor (Neyrey 2005) is also prominent.

**Place in revelation-history:** Jesus portrays himself in verse 27 as being the servant, and tells the disciples that they, having stood by him through his trials and suffering, will inherit his Kingdom, and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. Being a humble servant of the Lord is therefore also shown to have personal reward in God's Kingdom.

**John 13:12-17** <sup>12</sup> When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. "Do you understand what I have done for you?" he asked them. <sup>13</sup> "You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. <sup>14</sup> Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. <sup>15</sup> I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. <sup>16</sup> I tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. <sup>17</sup> Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.

**Relevance:** In this classical example of Jesus washing the feet of the disciples, he promises them in verse 17 that they will be blessed if they



follow his example. Washing one another's feet therefore does contain an element of spiritual gain for the servant.

**Place in revelation-history:** Jesus approaches the Last Supper before his death by showing the disciples how he wants them to act after his ascension.

### ***Giving to the poor and oppressed***

**Psalm 112:1-9**<sup>1</sup> Praise the Lord. Blessed is the man who fears the Lord, who finds great delight in his commands.<sup>2</sup> His children will be mighty in the land; the generation of the upright will be blessed.<sup>3</sup> wealth and riches are in his house, and his righteousness endures forever.<sup>4</sup> Even in darkness light dawns for the upright, for the gracious and compassionate and righteous man.<sup>5</sup> Good will come to him who is generous and lends freely, who conducts his affairs with justice.<sup>6</sup> Surely he will never be shaken; a righteous man will be remembered forever.<sup>7</sup> He will have no fear of bad news; his heart is steadfast, trusting in the Lord.<sup>8</sup> His heart is secure, he will have no fear; in the end he will look in triumph on his foes.<sup>9</sup> He has scattered abroad his gifts to the poor, his righteousness endures forever; his horn will be lifted high in honor.

**Relevance:** In this Psalm also quoted by Paul (2 Cor 9:9), we find the example of the upright man who fears the lord, who shows graciousness and compassion, who is generous and lends freely (vs. 4,5). Verse 9 is especially important in the excessive generosity it portrays towards the poor. Throughout the Psalm, however, we find elements of personal gain for such a person. He is blessed (v. 1), his children are mighty in the land (v. 2), wealth and riches are in his house (v. 3), and good will come to him (v.5). He will never be shaken, he will be remembered forever (v. 6), he doesn't fear bad news (v. 7), he is secure (v. 8), his horn will be lifted high in honor (v. 9).

**Place in revelation-history:** This Psalm is an encouragement written also with an exhortation to find delight in the Lords commands. It is sad, however, that with all these wonderful promises Israel still chose to reject the Lord and serve other gods.

**Hebrews 11:23-26**<sup>23</sup> By faith Moses' parents hid him for three months after he was born, because they saw he was no ordinary child, and they were not afraid of the king's edict.<sup>24</sup> By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter.<sup>25</sup> He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time.<sup>26</sup> He regarded disgrace for the sake of

Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward.

**Relevance:** Moses is portrayed here as choosing to be mistreated with the Israelites rather than to have the honour to grow up in a palace and to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter, and have all the pleasures of a king at his disposal. The writer of Hebrews views this expression of altruism (regarding disgrace for the sake of Christ) by Moses in the light of the fact that he was looking ahead to his "reward" being the life in God's city (Heb 11:16).

**Place of revelation-history:** Although Moses' regarding the disgrace for the sake of Christ seems like somewhat of an anachronism, it must be realised that the writer of Hebrews is also showing the continuity between Old and New Testament, and the perseverance of Biblical figures having relevance for his day.

#### ***Altruism with explicit spiritual gain for the receiver in mind***

**John 12:23-26** <sup>23</sup> Jesus replied, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. <sup>24</sup>I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. <sup>25</sup>The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. <sup>26</sup> Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me.

**Relevance:** The disciples are urged to crucify their own interests, and die in following the example of Jesus. The result of their sacrifice will be a rich spiritual harvest of people being saved. There is, however, mention of spiritual gain for those who are prepared to lose their life. They will not only receive eternal life, but be honoured by the Father. The reference to the one "loving" his life, versus the one "hating" his life, does surely contain elements of self-love versus abject altruism.

**Place in revelation-history:** This passage depicts the time just before the death of Jesus. He is laying down his life on behalf of the disciples, and he prepares them to follow him and imitate him after his ascension.

#### **Altruism viewing oneself as a person "amongst others"**

##### ***Giving to others irrespective of person***

**Matthews 5:38-48** <sup>38</sup> "You have heard that it was said, 'Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.' <sup>39</sup> But I tell you, Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also <sup>40</sup> And if some-

one wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well.

<sup>41</sup> If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. <sup>42</sup> Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you. <sup>43</sup> "You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' <sup>44</sup> But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, <sup>45</sup> that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. <sup>46</sup> If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? <sup>47</sup> And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? <sup>48</sup> Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

**Relevance:** Jesus commands the disciples not to retaliate, malice, but to give the cloak and the tunic, walk the extra mile, and give and borrow, even to your enemy (v. 40-42). Furthermore, the disciples are called to love their enemies, because there is no reward in only loving those who love you, or greeting only your brothers. In their different relationships, Jesus requires a kind of altruism that goes further than just balanced reciprocity. Being sons of the Father, or "amongst others" in the household of God, means that they functioned with a new set of rules. They had to adapt to the ways of their Father in heaven, being prepared to give irrespective of person.

**Place in revelation-history:** Here we find a practical example of the way that Jesus' new commandment should influence relations between Christians and "others" in the First Century AD and beyond. The "eye for an eye and tooth for a tooth" rule makes room for the realization of what it really means to be children of a caring, loving father.

**John 13:31-35** <sup>31</sup> When he was gone, Jesus said, "Now is the Son of Man glorified and God is glorified in him. <sup>32</sup> If God is glorified in him, God will glorify the Son in himself, and will glorify him at once. <sup>33</sup> "My children, I will be with you only a little longer. You will look for me, and just as I told the Jews, so I tell you now: Where I am going, you cannot come. <sup>34</sup> "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. <sup>35</sup> By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

**Relevance:** In addition to the passage above, the qualification of Jesus' love with the referring to "as I have loved you" (v. 34) makes all the difference. The reciprocal nature of loving "one another" is important here, as well as the world seeing this special love, and knowing that they are

the disciples of Jesus. The love of Jesus was a love irrespective of cultural, social or economic standing (Gal 3:28),

**Place in revelation-history:** Jesus is on the brink of being glorified through his victory over death. By loving one another in his absence, the disciples will also glorify Jesus.

***Giving to the poor and oppressed***

**Esther 4:12-16** <sup>12</sup> When Esther's words were reported to Mordecai, <sup>13</sup> he sent back this answer: "Do not think that because you are in the king's house you alone of all the Jews will escape. <sup>14</sup> For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father's family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to royal position for such a time as this?" <sup>15</sup> Then Esther sent this reply to Mordecai: <sup>16</sup> "Go, gather together all the Jews who are in Susa, and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my maids will fast as you do. When this is done, I will go to the king, even though it is against the law. And if I perish, I perish."

**Relevance:** Esther risked her life as a leader in approaching the king. She herself was a Jew, and would have been in danger in the long run if she failed to act.

**Place in revelation-history:** This passage concerns the Jews in exile. Although the name of the Lord is nowhere mentioned in this book, we do find that the Jews kept religious rituals, such as fasting on Esther's behalf. Mordecai also pointed out that she may be part of God's<sup>102</sup> divine plan to save the Jews.

**Zechariah 7:5-10** <sup>5</sup> "Ask all the people of the land and the priests, `When you fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh months for the past seventy years, was it really for me that you fasted?' <sup>6</sup> And when you were eating and drinking, were you not just feasting for yourselves? <sup>7</sup> Are these not the words the Lord proclaimed through the earlier prophets when Jerusalem and its surrounding towns were at rest and prosperous, and the Negev and the western foothills were settled?" <sup>8</sup> And the word of the Lord came again to Zechariah: <sup>9</sup> "This is what the Lord Almighty says: `Administer true justice; show mercy and compassion to one another. <sup>10</sup> Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the alien or the poor. In your hearts do not think evil of each other.'

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<sup>102</sup> Even though God is not named here explicitly, the cultic act of fasting in this passage, associated with the Jews, surely implies God's hand in the life of Esther.

**Relevance:** We find here the commandment of the Lord to administer justice, showing mercy and compassion to *one another*. The reciprocal nature of altruism as “one amongst others” is also found in the reference to one another. This is elaborated further in the next verse, where they are called not to oppress the widow or fatherless, the alien or the poor, as well as not thinking evil of *each other*. Here the four groups in Israel that were viewed as needing special care, viz. the widows, the orphans, the alien and the poor, are also mentioned explicitly.

**Place in revelation-history:** The Israelites were commanded to look after these four groups, and they neglected them during the time of the monarchy. This was part of the reason for them being sent into exile. When Jesus announced himself in the synagogue he declared his mission as a special care for the poor and oppressed (Lk 4:18-21).

**Acts 20:32-35** <sup>32</sup> “Now I commit you to God and to the word of his grace, which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified. <sup>33</sup>I have not coveted anyone's silver or gold or clothing. <sup>34</sup> You yourselves know that these hands of mine have supplied my own needs and the needs of my companions. <sup>35</sup> In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’”

**Relevance:** Paul is quoted as supporting himself, his companions, and the weak by his manual labour as a tentmaker. He relates his support of the weak as an example to be followed (v. 35).

**Place in revelation-history:** Paul have laboured in these congregations, laying the foundation of Jesus Christ on which they can now build further. Besides his example, he reminds them of Christ's words (which are not recorded in the gospels), that it is better “to give than to receive.”

### ***Altruism with explicit spiritual gain for the receiver in mind***

**Isaiah 53:1-12** <sup>1</sup> Who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? <sup>2</sup> He grew up before him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground. He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. <sup>3</sup> He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. <sup>4</sup> Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. <sup>5</sup> But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for

our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. <sup>6</sup> We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. <sup>7</sup> He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth. <sup>8</sup> By oppression and judgment he was taken away. And who can speak of his descendants? For he was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of my people he was stricken. <sup>9</sup> He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth. <sup>10</sup> Yet it was the Lord's will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the Lord makes his life a guilt offering, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the Lord will prosper in his hand. <sup>11</sup> After the suffering of his soul, he will see the light of life and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities. <sup>12</sup> Therefore I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong, because he poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

**Relevance:** The servant of the Lord is shown to suffer on behalf of our iniquities and sorrows, our punishment and wounds. The altruism “amongst others” is explicitly mentioned in verse 12 where he is referred to as being numbered with the transgressors, and that our wounds are healed “by his wounds”. It is clear that all the suffering that the servant of the Lord experienced, was on our behalf.

**Place in revelation-history:** This picture of the Servant of the Lord, bearing their iniquities, portrayed to the Jews in exile, has been fulfilled in the coming of Jesus Christ and his servanthood on earth. As in the time of Isaiah (v. 1), however, the message was rejected by many.

## **Abject altruism**

### ***Giving to others irrespective of person***

**Genesis 13:8-11** <sup>8</sup> So Abram said to Lot, "Let's not have any quarreling between you and me, or between your herdsmen and mine, for we are brothers. <sup>9</sup> Is not the whole land before you? Let's part company. If you go to the left, I'll go to the right; if you go to the right, I'll go to the left." <sup>10</sup> Lot looked up and saw that the whole plain of the Jordan was well watered, like the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt, toward Zoar. (This was before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah.) <sup>11</sup> So Lot

chose for himself the whole plain of the Jordan and set out toward the east. The two men parted company:

**Relevance:** We find Abraham giving the best part of the grazing to his nephew Lot, without any advantage to himself. Abraham shows maturity and altruism as a worthy father of the nations, being prepared to make sacrifices on behalf of others.

**Place in revelation-history:** As already shown above, Abraham is setting the example as unselfish patriarch for future generations.

**Genesis 50:19-21** <sup>19</sup> But Joseph said to them, "Don't be afraid. Am I in the place of God? <sup>20</sup> You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives. <sup>21</sup> So then, don't be afraid. I will provide for you and your children." And he reassured them and spoke kindly to them.

**Relevance:** Joseph is shown here as not holding against them everything his brothers did, but promise to provide for them and their children.

**Place in revelation-history:** Through the life of Joseph, God protected the future of Israel in the patriarchal times, and saved many lives through putting him (Joseph) in a position of power in Egypt.

**Luke 10:25-37** <sup>25</sup> On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" <sup>26</sup> "What is written in the Law?" he replied. "How do you read it?" <sup>27</sup> He answered: " ` Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind'; and, ` Love your neighbor as yourself.'" <sup>28</sup> "You have answered correctly," Jesus replied. "Do this and you will live." <sup>29</sup> But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" <sup>30</sup> In reply Jesus said: "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. <sup>31</sup> A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. <sup>32</sup> So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. <sup>33</sup> But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. <sup>34</sup> He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, took him to an inn and took care of him. <sup>35</sup> The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper. ` Look after him,' he said, ` and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.'" <sup>36</sup> "Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the

man who fell into the hands of robbers?" <sup>37</sup> The expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him." Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise."

**Relevance:** In this well known parable of Jesus we find a good example of abject altruism. The question of the expert in the law (v. 25) is relevant here. It was a religious leader who asked the question, and Jesus uses the example of the religious leaders, i.e. the priest and the Levite, to show that they did not even have mercy on their own people who were suffering. Jesus shows him that true faith does not only have a vertical dimension, but love and mercy for your neighbour and the suffering is supposed to be a natural result of the vertical dimension: our love for God and his love for us. The Priest and the Levite were probably afraid of touching this man and becoming unclean through their contact with blood. The Samaritan, however, being in no way connected with this man, looks after his wounds, pouring out his oil and wine, and gave his money to the innkeeper to look after him.

**Place in revelation-history:** Jesus came to give a new perspective on the law and the implications thereof. In this new dispensation he did not refrain from criticising the Pharisees and the 'experts in the Law' for their lack of compassion.

### ***Giving to the poor and oppressed***

**Luke 4:18-21** <sup>18</sup> "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, <sup>19</sup> to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." <sup>20</sup> Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him, <sup>21</sup> and he began by saying to them, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."

**Relevance:** In announcing his purpose for coming to earth, Jesus states that he came for the poor, the prisoners, the blind, and the oppressed. As a religious leader Jesus came to preach to the poor, not only about them.

**Place in revelation-history:** Jesus proclaims the year of the Lord's favour, and how he is fulfilling the prophesy of Isaiah. He is bringing the good news of redemption from sin and the everlasting life.

**Titus 3:13-14** <sup>13</sup> Do everything you can to help Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their way and see that they have everything they need. <sup>14</sup> Our people must learn to devote themselves to doing what is good, in order that they may provide for daily necessities and not live unproductive lives.



**Relevance:** Titus is asked to help Zenas and Apollos on their way, and that they have everything they need. People's daily labour is put in the perspective of enabling them to help others.

**Place in revelation-history:** In a time where the early churches lost some of their vigour in expectancy of the return of Christ, people are reminded to work, and not live idle, unproductive lives.

**Acts 9:36-43** <sup>6</sup> In Joppa there was a disciple named Tabitha (which, when translated, is Dorcas), who was always doing good and helping the poor. <sup>37</sup> About that time she became sick and died, and her body was washed and placed in an upstairs room. <sup>38</sup> Lydda was near Joppa; so when the disciples heard that Peter was in Lydda, they sent two men to him and urged him, "Please come at once!" <sup>39</sup> Peter went with them, and when he arrived he was taken upstairs to the room. All the widows stood around him, crying and showing him the robes and other clothing that Dorcas had made while she was still with them. <sup>40</sup> Peter sent them all out of the room; then he got down on his knees and prayed. Turning toward the dead woman, he said, "Tabitha, get up." She opened her eyes, and seeing Peter she sat up. <sup>41</sup> He took her by the hand and helped her to her feet. Then he called the believers and the widows and presented her to them alive. <sup>42</sup> This became known all over Joppa, and many people believed in the Lord. <sup>43</sup> Peter stayed in Joppa for some time with a tanner named Simon.

**Relevance:** The way that the people of Joppa reacted when Tabitha died, is a testimony to her care for those around her, always doing good and helping the poor (v. 36). They cried around her bed, and showed Jesus the robes that she made for them. Tabitha is referred to here as a disciple (v. 6), and her good deeds and helping of the poor were therefore also an example to others from her as a female servant-leader.

**Place in revelation-history:** Not only the apostles themselves, but also the disciples amongst the believers participated in good works and helping the poor. Being known well for her generosity and mercy upon the poor, the resurrection of Tabitha resulted in many people believing in the Lord due to this miracle. The early church was therefore not only dependent on the apostles anymore, but new leaders developed rapidly.

### ***Giving with explicit spiritual gain for the receiver in mind***

**Ezekiel 22:27-31** <sup>27</sup> Her officials within her are like wolves tearing their prey; they shed blood and kill people to make unjust gain. <sup>28</sup> Her prophets whitewash these deeds for them by false visions and lying divinations.

They say, 'This is what the Sovereign Lord says' - when the Lord has not spoken.<sup>29</sup> The people of the land practice extortion and commit robbery; they oppress the poor and needy and mistreat the alien, denying them justice.<sup>30</sup> "I looked for a man among them who would build up the wall and stand before me in the gap on behalf of the land so I would not have to destroy it, but I found none.<sup>31</sup> So I will pour out my wrath on them and consume them with my fiery anger, bringing down on their own heads all they have done, declares the Sovereign Lord."

**Relevance:** Ezekiel is looking for somebody to build a wall and stand in the gap, but he found nobody. Oppression in the land has reached such proportions that nobody is prepared to build up the wall and stand in the gap. No leader was prepared to stand up against those that made unjust gain, to speak up for the poor and the needy and the alien.

**Place in revelation-history:** Israel was clearly in need for someone to show concern for the poor, the needy and the oppressed. Someone had to absorb the Lord's anger... In 1.2.3 I have discussed how the servant of the Lord eventually stood in this gap, and how Jesus came to bring the good news to all that were suffering (Lk 4:18-21).

**John 10:11-18**<sup>11</sup> "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.<sup>12</sup> The hired hand is not the shepherd who owns the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it.<sup>13</sup> The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.<sup>14</sup> "I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me -<sup>15</sup> just as the Father knows me and I know the Father - and I lay down my life for the sheep.<sup>16</sup> I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd.<sup>17</sup> The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life - only to take it up again.<sup>18</sup> No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father."

**Relevance:** Jesus presents himself as the good shepherd laying down his life for the sheep. As the true example of a religious leader, he is concerned for the well being of the sheep, whilst a hired hand does not care for the sheep, and easily abandons them. This shepherd is also concerned for the other sheep from another pen, which must be brought into this pen also. The shepherd is therefore devoted to unity amongst his sheep. An important aspect of the shepherd's caring for the sheep is

the fact that he is not forced to lay down his life, but that he is doing it voluntarily.

**Place in revelation-history:** This passage is laden with the mission of Jesus Christ on earth – not only to lie down his life on behalf of the sheep, and voluntarily giving his life on behalf of mankind, but also to unite believers from different pens. He is obedient to the Father in laying down his life and dying on the cross, although not being forced to do so.

**Acts 20:18-24** <sup>18</sup> When they arrived, he said to them: "You know how I lived the whole time I was with you, from the first day I came into the province of Asia. <sup>19</sup> I served the Lord with great humility and with tears, although I was severely tested by the plots of the Jews. <sup>20</sup> You know that I have not hesitated to preach anything that would be helpful to you but have taught you publicly and from house to house. <sup>21</sup> I have declared to both Jews and Greeks that they must turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus. <sup>22</sup> "And now, compelled by the Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there. <sup>23</sup> I only know that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me. <sup>24</sup> However, I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me - the task of testifying to the gospel of God's grace.

**Relevance:** Luke portrays Paul as a leader so committed to his mission that he was willingly walking right into the lion's mouth. Paul had to hand over the collection for the poor that he promised in Gal 2:10 to the leaders of the church in Jerusalem. Even though the prophet Agabus prophesied that he will be imprisoned in Jerusalem (Acts 21:10-14), and the people pleaded with Paul not to go to Jerusalem (Acts 21:12), Paul did not turn back, but was considering his life "worth nothing to him".

**Place in revelation-history:** Despite opposition Paul was committed to preach the gospel in all circumstances. He valued the task that Jesus has given to him, i.e. to testify the gospel of God's grace, above all. Paul's efforts and vision as a leader undoubtedly contributed largely to the rapid growth in the early church.

**2 Thessalonians 3:7-10** <sup>7</sup> For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example. We were not idle when we were with you, <sup>8</sup> nor did we eat anyone's food without paying for it. On the contrary, we worked night and day, laboring and toiling so that we would not be a burden to any of you. <sup>9</sup> We did this, not because we do not have the right to such help, but

in order to make ourselves a model for you to follow.<sup>10</sup> For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: "If a man will not work, he shall not eat."

**Relevance:** Paul's example as a leader is one of the main themes in this passage (v. 7,9). He gave himself to the congregation, not only in working night and day, labouring and toiling, but also buying food from congregation members rather than seeming to be a burden to them.<sup>103</sup>

**Place in revelation-history:** The congregation in Thessalonica expected the second coming of the Lord to be around the turn of the century, and therefore some probably propagated that it is not necessary to work anymore, because of the Lord Jesus' imminent return.

### **Insights drawn from Biblical references to altruism and religious leadership**

From the relevant passages above it is clear that the concept altruism is not foreign to the Bible, but that it can be found in various contexts in the Old and New Testament. The aim of this study is not to make a decision of which of the three categories identified by Engberg-Pedersen is the most prominent, but to look into the way that Paul interpreted and practised altruism (cf. Chapter 6). From the preceding section it is evident that such a dividing principle can be very useful in further research in this regard.

In looking at the results of this section in terms of its contents, it is clear that leaders are the ones that not only took initiative in acts of altruism, but that the sacrificial death of a leader is regarded positively in terms of the fruit that it produces.

Strongly connected to the sacrificing character of the leader is the theme of the leader as mediator, visible in the actions of Esther, the servant of the Lord, the apostle Paul, and especially Jesus Christ.

## **5.4 Biblical views on labour and compensation**

In the preceding section the (5.3) focus was primarily on poverty and altruism, and issues of labour did not receive specific attention. To understand Paul's views on labour and compensation, it is necessary to

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<sup>103</sup> Paul offering his life as a mother in I Thess 2:6-9 is also relevant here (cf. 1.2 and 2.5.4).

have an overview of the compensation of religious leaders<sup>104</sup> as it is portrayed through the two Testaments. This section attempts to give an overview and interpretation of the most relevant Biblical information on the subject and the different views on labour and the compensation thereof.

#### 5.4.1 Categorisation of relevant Scripture portions

As stated in the introduction, this section is structured according to the method suggested by De Klerk & Van Rensburg (2005:77-86). The data suggests the following categorisation:<sup>105</sup>

1. Labourers claiming more than deserved
2. Prophets and evangelists not satisfied with their labour and its rewards
3. Labour lacking integrity and loyalty
4. Labourers receiving more than deserved
5. Labourers receiving less than deserved (in human terms)
6. Working for free
7. Working out of gratitude
8. Receiving a worthy reward
9. Receiving a spiritual reward

The categorisation is following a negative attitude towards work unto a positive attitude, number 1 being the most negative and number 9 the most positive.

#### 5.4.2 Religious leaders, labour and compensation in the Bible (Pauline Letters excluded)

##### Leaders claiming more than they deserve

1 Samuel 2:12-17 <sup>12</sup> Eli's sons were wicked men; they had no regard for the Lord. <sup>13</sup> Now it was the practice of the priests with the people that whenever anyone offered a sacrifice and while the meat was being boiled, the servant of the priest would come with a three-pronged fork in his

<sup>104</sup> In 1 Cor 9 the remuneration of religious leaders is a key issue, and the topic is accordingly narrowed down here.

<sup>105</sup> This categorisation will first be utilized in terms of the broad Biblical theme, i.e. religious leaders, labour and compensation, and thereafter used to specifically study Pauline literature in this regard.

hand.<sup>14</sup> He would plunge it into the pan or kettle or caldron or pot, and the priest would take for himself whatever the fork brought up. This is how they treated all the Israelites who came to Shiloh.<sup>15</sup> But even before the fat was burned, the servant of the priest would come and say to the man who was sacrificing, "Give the priest some meat to roast; he won't accept boiled meat from you, but only raw."<sup>16</sup> If the man said to him, "Let the fat be burned up first, and then take whatever you want," the servant would then answer, "No, hand it over now; if you don't, I'll take it by force."<sup>17</sup> This sin of the young men was very great in the Lord's sight, for they were treating the Lord's offering with contempt.

**Relevance:** In this reference we find an illustration of malpractices in the office of the priest. Not satisfied by what the Lord promises them, they are taking the law regarding their earnings into their own hands, claiming food not offered properly from the person that was sacrificing. This was not how the Lord meant it to be. Besides the clear prescriptions regarding the practice given in verse 13 and 14, we read in Lev. 22:10 clearly that not even outsiders are supposed to eat of the priests' share of the offering, because it is holy. Here we clearly see that the sons of Eli treated the Lord's offering "with contempt".

**Place in revelation-history:** These transgressions took place at the time in the Old Testament monarchy where the sacrifice embodied the reconciliation that took place between God and man. Disrespect towards this practice necessarily results in this sin being "very great in the Lord's sight."

**1 Timothy 6:9-10**<sup>9</sup> People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction.<sup>10</sup> For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.

**Relevance:** In the early church it is clear that some who ministered the word became greedy and developed a love for money. This corrupted their judgement and loyalty to the Word of God.

**Place in revelation-history:** This passage records the practise of spiritual labourers in the early Christian Church. The desire of living in luxury was certainly out of step with the *Naherwartung* of Christ.

**Titus 1:10-16**<sup>10</sup> For there are many rebellious people, mere talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision group.<sup>11</sup> They must be silenced, because they are ruining whole households by teaching things

they ought not to teach--and that for the sake of dishonest gain.<sup>12</sup> Even one of their own prophets has said, "Cretans are always liars, evil brutes, lazy gluttons."<sup>13</sup> This testimony is true. Therefore, rebuke them sharply, so that they will be sound in the faith<sup>14</sup> and will pay no attention to Jewish myths or to the commands of those who reject the truth.<sup>15</sup> To the pure, all things are pure, but to those who are corrupted and do not believe, nothing is pure. In fact, both their minds and consciences are corrupted.<sup>16</sup> They claim to know God, but by their actions they deny him. They are detestable, disobedient and unfit for doing anything good.

**Relevance:** It is clear that there was quite a sizeable group (many rebellious people) in the early church that travelled from one congregation to another, teaching new teachings and corrupting new members from the truth. In that way they also tried to secure the financial contributions of such members.

**Place in revelation-history:** It is particularly noteworthy that some of these "rebels" are referred to as coming from the "circumcision group". Paul was given permission to take the gospel to the Gentiles (Gal 2:1-10) and to baptise members without necessarily circumcising them (Acts 15). It is, however, clear that there was still an active movement towards enforcing the Jewish way of life onto the new converts from non-Jewish origins, such as can be seen in Gal 2:11-14, and Acts 21:20-26. In this process they again nullified the "justification by faith" in Christ Jesus (Gal 2:16).

**Jude 10-16**<sup>10</sup> Yet these men speak abusively against whatever they do not understand; and what things they do understand by instinct, like unreasoning animals--these are the very things that destroy them.<sup>11</sup> Woe to them! They have taken the way of Cain; they have rushed for profit into Balaam's error; they have been destroyed in Korah's rebellion.<sup>12</sup> These men are blemishes at your love feasts, eating with you without the slightest qualm - shepherds who feed only themselves. They are clouds without rain, blown along by the wind; autumn trees, without fruit and uprooted--twice dead.<sup>13</sup> They are wild waves of the sea, foaming up their shame; wandering stars, for whom blackest darkness has been reserved forever.<sup>14</sup> Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men: "See, the Lord is coming with thousands upon thousands of his holy ones<sup>15</sup> to judge everyone, and to convict all the ungodly of all the ungodly acts they have done in the ungodly way, and of all the harsh words ungodly sinners have spoken against him."<sup>16</sup> These men are grumblers and faultfinders; they follow their own evil desires; they boast about themselves and flatter others for their own advantage.

**Relevance:** Jude refers to these false prophets as “eating you without the slightest qualm” at what was supposed to be love-feasts. This is reminiscent of the division at the love-feast recorded in 1 Cor 11:17-22, where the division was between the “haves” and the “have-nots”. The referral to “shepherds” as feeding only themselves is a common term to refer to religious leaders in the Old Testament, and is used amongst others by Ezekiel (Ezek 34) to proclaim the Lord’s wrath upon the religious leaders who use their office for their own gain. In verse 16 we find some traces of the practice of patronage, where a patron is “flattered” by the client to gain financial advantage.

**Place in revelation-history:** Although a passage originating from the early church, we see that several Old Testament references are present here. Jude is referring to false prophets, and there is a noteworthy reference to Balaam here, who accepted bribes to curse Israel during their journey through the desert. That this also refers to the Judaisers in Jude’s time is not impossible. The love-feasts were a feature of the new dispensation under Christ Jesus, where meetings and eating at houses were not uncommon.

### **Leaders not satisfied with their labour or its rewards**

**Luke 5:4-11** <sup>4</sup> When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch." <sup>5</sup> Simon answered, "Master, we've worked hard all night and haven't caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets." <sup>6</sup> When they had done so, they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break. <sup>7</sup> So they signalled their partners in the other boat to come and help them, and they came and filled both boats so full that they began to sink. <sup>8</sup> When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus' knees and said, "Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!" <sup>9</sup> For he and all his companions were astonished at the catch of fish they had taken, <sup>10</sup> and so were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, Simon's partners. Then Jesus said to Simon, "Don't be afraid; from now on you will catch men." <sup>11</sup> So they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed him.

**Relevance:** The relevance for the passage being placed under this heading, is how Jesus calls the disciples in a situation where they toiled for the whole night, without catching any fish. When Jesus demands them to let down the nets, we immediately find a protest from Simon. The chance of catching something in daylight was probably less than in the night. But Jesus proves to them that he is almighty, and even more so, that he is able to provide for them. It must be noted that they left every-



thing and followed him, in the endeavour to “catch men”. Although it seems as though they temporarily reverted to their trade after Jesus’ death (Jn 21:1-6), they were called to be his full-time students in this passage.

**Place in revelation-history:** Jesus uses this miracle to draw disciples unto Him, who would become his apostles after his death and resurrection. His referral to “being fishers of men” is actually a humble start to an office that would take the message of the risen Christ far and wide.

**2 Timothy 4:9-13** <sup>9</sup> Do your best to come to me quickly, <sup>10</sup> for Demas, because he loved this world, has deserted me and has gone to Thessalonica. Crescens has gone to Galatia, and Titus to Dalmatia. <sup>11</sup> Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, because he is helpful to me in my ministry. <sup>12</sup> I sent Tychicus to Ephesus. <sup>13</sup> When you come, bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas, and my scrolls, especially the parchments.

**Relevance:** It is clear from this passage that not all the evangelists were able to keep up with the conditions (and perhaps also with the driving zeal of the apostle Paul). The Demas-case is noteworthy, however, in the light of the phrase: “because he loved this world”. This must also be understood that his destination, Thessalonica was a thriving harbour city with many work opportunities. Residing there rather than travelling would be much more comfortable and probably financially rewarding. The specific request to remember his cloak, may also be an indication of Paul’s lack of commodities.

**Place of revelation-history:** It is clear that the life of a Christian, and even more so an evangelist in the Early Church was not easy. Loyalty to Christ as Saviour implied persecution as well as commitment in the face of difficult financial circumstances.

**Acts 15:37-38** <sup>37</sup> Barnabas wanted to take John, also called Mark, with them, <sup>38</sup> but Paul did not think it wise to take him, because he had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not continued with them in the work.

**Relevance:** Other than in the case of Demas, the journey in Pamphylia became too difficult for John, also called Mark, but he did not desert his calling altogether. Here we find a direct reference to Paul focusing so much on his zeal for bringing the gospel far and wide, that he sometimes lacked good personnel relationships.

**Place in revelation-history:** This refers to the time in the Early Church where it was an absolute mission for Paul to spread the gospel. Barnabas, however, displayed more of the attitude of Christ in giving John Mark a second chance.

**2 Timothy 1:15** You know that everyone in the province of Asia has deserted me, including Phygelus and Hermogenes.

**Relevance:** Together with Demas Hermogenes is also mentioned in the Apocryphal work, *The apostle Paul and Thecla* as being uncommitted to the mission of Paul. In the tradition they were definitely looked onto negatively because of their lack of perseverance and commitment.

**Place in revelation-history:** This is also referring to the missionary period in the Early Church.

### **Labour lacking integrity and loyalty**

**Ezekiel 34:1-6** <sup>1</sup> The word of the Lord came to me: <sup>2</sup> "Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel; prophesy and say to them: `This is what the Sovereign Lord says: Woe to the shepherds of Israel who only take care of themselves! Should not shepherds take care of the flock?' <sup>3</sup> You eat the curds, clothe yourselves with the wool and slaughter the choice animals, but you do not take care of the flock. <sup>4</sup> You have not strengthened the weak or healed the sick or bound up the injured. You have not brought back the strays or searched for the lost. You have ruled them harshly and brutally. <sup>5</sup> So they were scattered because there was no shepherd, and when they were scattered they became food for all the wild animals. <sup>6</sup> My sheep wandered over all the mountains and on every high hill. They were scattered over the whole earth, and no one searched or looked for them.

**Relevance:** Ezekiel prophesizes against the religious leaders in Israel who only looked at their own interests, and do not look after the flock. They only want the rewards from the flock, without doing the necessary labour that is expected of them. These leaders were supposed to look after the weak and the sick, and look for the searched or the lost. This resulted in the scattering of the sheep, referring to the Jews in the Diaspora.

**Place in revelation-history:** Ezekiel refers to a time not long before the coming of Christ, when many Jews lived in exile, because the Lord punished the tribes of Israel and Judah repeatedly for their disobedience. It

is noteworthy that Jesus is later referred to in John 10 as the Good Shepherd.

**Luke 12:45-48** <sup>45</sup> But suppose the servant says to himself, 'My master is taking a long time in coming,' and he then begins to beat the menservants and maidservants and to eat and drink and get drunk. <sup>46</sup> The master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he is not aware of. He will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the unbelievers. <sup>47</sup> "That servant who knows his master's will and does not get ready or does not do what his master wants will be beaten with many blows. <sup>48</sup> But the one who does not know and does things deserving punishment will be beaten with few blows. From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked.

**Relevance:** Here in Matthew we find a reference to a servant, who was appointed to watch over other servants in the household. This seems to be directed to the disciples of Jesus. In his absence, they are supposed to look after those that they were entrusted with. They must fulfil their office with integrity and loyalty towards the "Son of Man".

**Place in revelation-history:** This passage is part of Jesus' instruction during his life on earth, but is also referring to the time between his ascension and his second coming.

**2 Timothy 4:14-18** <sup>14</sup> Alexander the metalworker did me a great deal of harm. The Lord will repay him for what he has done. <sup>15</sup> You too should be on your guard against him, because he strongly opposed our message. <sup>16</sup> At my first defense, no one came to my support, but everyone deserted me. May it not be held against them. <sup>17</sup> But the Lord stood at my side and gave me strength, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. And I was delivered from the lion's mouth. <sup>18</sup> The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom. To him be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

**Relevance:** Although from the disputed Letters of Paul, this portion reflects a tradition where Paul was regarded as a "difficult person to keep up with", probably due to his hard labour and zeal for taking the message to all nations, including Rome.

**Place in history of revelation:** The picture of a Christian community working together in love (portrayed in Acts 2:42-47) soon changed as the realities of the persecution in Jerusalem, as well as the laborious work of

missionaries increased. Together with the three preceding passages above, it signals that there was dissention amongst the evangelists themselves, and not everybody portrayed integrity and loyalty.

### Labourers receiving more than deserved

**Matthews 25:14-30** <sup>14</sup> "Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his property to them. <sup>15</sup> To one he gave five talents of money, to another two talents, and to another one talent, each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey. <sup>16</sup> The man who had received the five talents went at once and put his money to work and gained five more. <sup>17</sup> So also, the one with the two talents gained two more. <sup>18</sup> But the man who had received the one talent went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money. <sup>19</sup> "After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them. <sup>20</sup> The man who had received the five talents brought the other five. 'Master,' he said, 'you entrusted me with five talents. See, I have gained five more.' <sup>21</sup> "His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!' <sup>22</sup> "The man with the two talents also came. 'Master,' he said, 'you entrusted me with two talents; see, I have gained two more.' <sup>23</sup> "His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!' <sup>24</sup> "Then the man who had received the one talent came. 'Master,' he said, 'I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. <sup>25</sup> So I was afraid and went out and hid your talent in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.' <sup>26</sup> "His master replied, 'You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed? <sup>27</sup> Well then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest. <sup>28</sup> Take the talent from him and give it to the one who has the ten talents. <sup>29</sup> For everyone who has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him. <sup>30</sup> And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

**Relevance:** It is almost unthinkable to discuss the labour and compensation of religious leaders without looking at some implications of this passage. This passage is surely not only referring to a work ethic in a general sense, but especially to the calling and ministry of the disciples, and in a broader sense religious leaders in general. In the New Testa-

ment we find a clear distinction between the various gifts and ability of religious leaders (Rom 12, 1 Cor 12, etc). They were not to compare their gifts to others, or bury their gifts, but they were called to develop and multiply their gifts and their ministries. As a result they would receive much more afterwards, having been faithful in the little things. The eventual reward of the faithful servants is not comparable in measure to the “little” that they have been faithful over. They will be provided for in “abundance”. But even more rewarding than the “abundance” waiting for them, is the sharing in the master’s happiness. Furthermore we must also refer to the worker who buried his talent. In God’s ministry there is no room for envy and jealousy, but everyone is to use his gifts, how disproportionate it may seem, in God’s Kingdom. Eventually those religious leaders who work hard and stay faithful in the Lord’s absence, will receive God’s gift, much more than they could ever earn, viz his abundance in eternity. Those who deserts God’s flock, however, will be punished with eternal death.

**Place in revelation-history:** Like in the passage of the manservant in Luke 12, these verses refer to the period between the ascension of Jesus and his second coming. Religious leaders ought to work as his servants, and use the talents they were given. The referral to “in abundance”, which does not point to our reward in heaven as a reward equal to the labour that we have done (like the Papist and “excessive works”), but rather to receiving much more that we deserve from God’s grace.

**2 Thessalonians 3:10-12** <sup>10</sup> For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: “If a man will not work, he shall not eat.”<sup>11</sup> We hear that some among you are idle. They are not busy; they are busybodies. <sup>12</sup> Such people we command and urge in the Lord Jesus Christ to settle down and earn the bread they eat.

**Relevance:** In contrast to the previous passage, this passage refers to people being parasites, i.e. relying on others to provide for them whilst they are not working. This was especially true of some false prophets who relied on the goodwill of congregants alone, without looking after the flock properly.

**Place in revelation-history:** This Letter was written around the end of the First Century, and people probably expected the immanent second coming of Jesus Christ. Therefore many people probably stopped working due to lack of perspective for the future.

### Labourers receiving less than deserved, in human terms

**2 Kings 4:1-7** <sup>1</sup> The wife of a man from the company of the prophets cried out to Elisha, "Your servant my husband is dead, and you know that he revered the Lord. But now his creditor is coming to take my two boys as his slaves." <sup>2</sup> Elisha replied to her, "How can I help you? Tell me, what do you have in your house?" "Your servant has nothing there at all," she said, "except a little oil."<sup>3</sup> Elisha said, "Go around and ask all your neighbors for empty jars. Don't ask for just a few." <sup>4</sup> Then go inside and shut the door behind you and your sons. Pour oil into all the jars, and as each is filled, put it to one side." <sup>5</sup> She left him and afterward shut the door behind her and her sons. They brought the jars to her and she kept pouring. <sup>6</sup> When all the jars were full, she said to her son, "Bring me another one." But he replied, "There is not a jar left." Then the oil stopped flowing. <sup>7</sup> She went and told the man of God, and he said, "Go, sell the oil and pay your debts. You and your sons can live on what is left."

**Relevance:** The reference here is to the wife of a prophet who died. The prophet not only forfeited any pension, but due to his economical situation, he probably incurred considerable debt during his life. The result is that the creditor wants to take here sons as his slaves. From this passage it is clear that there were hard-working prophets in Biblical times that sacrificed their remuneration in strict human economical terms. God does, however, provide for her and her sons through the prophet Elisha. Not only by having enough to pay the debt, but also being able to look after her two sons for days to come.

**Place in revelation-history:** This event takes place in the time of the prophets. It is remarkable that the financial position of devout religious leaders and their families have been difficult through the ages. This is a good example of how the measures in place to secure the survival of widows have often been neglected.

**Zechariah 11:**<sup>10</sup>Then I took my staff called Favour and broke it, revoking the covenant I had made with all the nations. <sup>11</sup>It was revoked on that day, and so the afflicted of the flock who were watching me knew it was the word of the Lord. <sup>12</sup>I told them, "If you think it best, give me my pay; but if not, keep it." So they paid me thirty pieces of silver. <sup>13</sup>And the Lord said to me, "Throw it to the potter" – the handsome price at which they priced me! So I took the thirty pieces of silver and threw them into the house of the Lord to the potter. <sup>13</sup>Then I broke my second staff called Union, breaking the brotherhood between Judah and Israel.

**Relevance:** Zechariah is instructed by the Lord himself to break the staff called Favour and the staff called Union. This showed the Lord's wrath upon the fact that the flock did not give a proper salary to the Levites, the prophets and the priests of their day. The priest was to take the money and throw it "to the potter", meaning literally "in the melter". This would mean that it could just as well be added to the kings taxes (Deist 2000:171).

**Place in revelation-history:** This event takes place in the time of the prophets before the coming of Jesus Christ. There are some striking similarities here between the price paid to Judas for his betrayal of Jesus (Mt 27:3).

**Luke 10:1-12** <sup>1</sup> After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go. <sup>2</sup> He told them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field. <sup>3</sup> Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves. <sup>4</sup> Do not take a purse or bag or sandals; and do not greet anyone on the road. <sup>5</sup> "When you enter a house, first say, 'Peace to this house.' <sup>6</sup> If a man of peace is there, your peace will rest on him; if not, it will return to you. <sup>7</sup> Stay in that house, eating and drinking whatever they give you, for the worker deserves his wages. Do not move around from house to house. <sup>8</sup> "When you enter a town and are welcomed, eat what is set before you. <sup>9</sup> Heal the sick who are there and tell them, 'The kingdom of God is near you.' <sup>10</sup> But when you enter a town and are not welcomed, go into its streets and say, <sup>11</sup> Even the dust of your town that sticks to our feet we wipe off against you. Yet be sure of this: The kingdom of God is near.' <sup>12</sup> I tell you, it will be more bearable on that day for Sodom than for that town.

**Relevance:** Although this passage is often referred to as evidence that "the worker deserves his wages", and therefore points to the view of the seventy-two receiving proper wages for their work. It is, however, a question where they got food and a place to sleep when not accepted at a town. Going in as "lambs among wolves", without a purse or bag or sandals, was definitely not a comfortable way of living. As mentioned in 5.3.4 this fits well within the category of being 'strangers' or 'aliens' in this world. In a sense Jesus builds upon the Old Testament's commandment to look after the strangers. This would explain the reminder to people who refuse hospitality that the kingdom of God is near, and the accompanying judgement. For the purpose of this investigation I

therefore categorise it under “receiving less than deserved in human terms”.

**Place in revelation-history:** The message that was laid into the messengers’ mouths, i.e. “The kingdom of God is near you,” is recogniscent of the message of John the Baptist. Although the Kingdom could be seen in the teachings and the miracles of Jesus, the Kingdom would also refer to his approaching death on the cross and his resurrection.

### 5.4.3 Working for free

**Mark 8:34-38** <sup>34</sup> Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. <sup>35</sup> For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it. <sup>36</sup> What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul? <sup>37</sup> Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul? <sup>38</sup> If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his Father’s glory with the holy angels.”

**Relevance:** In contrast with the previous passage, this passage indicates that being a disciple of the Lord, meant total separation from one’s worldly office and aspirations, looking only to the Lord for daily bread. It practically meant working for free, but receiving salvation in heaven. Jesus contrasts a life of worldly pleasure to the knowledge that one’s soul is safe with Him.

**Place in revelation-history:** Although still before Jesus’ death, resurrection and ascension, we again find reference to the second coming of “the Son of Man” to earth. Jesus also prepares the disciples that their true loyalty to him is to be tested soon.

**Acts 18:1-3** <sup>1</sup> After this, Paul left Athens and went to Corinth. <sup>2</sup> There he met a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had ordered all the Jews to leave Rome. Paul went to see them, <sup>3</sup> and because he was a tent-maker as they were, he stayed and worked with them.

**Relevance:** Although Paul’s occupation as a tentmaker does not fall under the category “working for free” (as he received compensation for it), it enabled him to provide the gospel “free of charge” (1 Cor. 9:18). From the context it is clear that Aquila and Priscilla recently came from Rome, and therefore they probably could not afford a luxurious house.



**Place in revelation-history:** This probably refers to Paul's second missionary journey. Here it is clear that not only the Christians, but also the Jews were persecuted under the reign of Claudius.

**Acts 20:34-35** <sup>34</sup> You yourselves know that these hands of mine have supplied my own needs and the needs of my companions. <sup>35</sup> In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.' "

**Relevance:** Paul offered the gospel "free of charge", and he went even further by also contributing to the needs of his companions. He also referred to helping the weak. Although this is only a rendering of Paul's speech by Luke, this passage illustrates the heavy pressure Paul must have felt, in the light of his manual labour, fulfilling such a central role in the ministry.

**Place in revelation-history:** In contrast to Paul's rendering in 1 Cor 9:15 that his manual labour is not in line with the commandments of Jesus (see discussion in Luke 10:1-12, Luke is actually supporting Paul on this issue with a saying that is not written in the gospels as we know it. It just confirms the importance of being able to relate actions to something Jesus said, i.e. the importance of the *Naherwartung* of Jesus in the early church.

**2 Thessalonians 3:6-9** <sup>6</sup> In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we command you, brothers, to keep away from every brother who is idle and does not live according to the teaching you received from us. <sup>7</sup>For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example. We were not idle when we were with you, <sup>8</sup>nor did we eat anyone's food without paying for it. On the contrary, we worked night and day, laboring and toiling so that we would not be a burden to any of you. <sup>9</sup>We did this, not because we do not have the right to such help, but in order to make ourselves a model for you to follow.

**Relevance:** In this disputed letter of Paul, Paul's self-support and manual labour is interpreted in radical terms. Paul not only declined financial assistance, but he also refused to take food "free of charge", and insisted on paying for it. Paul rather assisted members financially by buying his own food, than making it difficult for them having to provide food for him on a daily basis.

**Place in revelation-history:** In the discussion in 1.2.4 above the eschatological situation of the congregation in Thessalonica has been discussed.

### Working out of gratitude

**Luke 17:7-10** <sup>7</sup> "Suppose one of you had a servant plowing or looking after the sheep. Would he say to the servant when he comes in from the field, 'Come along now and sit down to eat'? <sup>8</sup> Would he not rather say, 'Prepare my supper, get yourself ready and wait on me while I eat and drink; after that you may eat and drink'? <sup>9</sup> Would he thank the servant because he did what he was told to do? <sup>10</sup> So you also, when you have done everything you were told to do, should say, 'We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty.' "

**Relevance:** The reference to a shepherd is again notable here, as well as the recurring theme of servanthood. Eating with the master is not allowed for the servant, but he may have the leftovers. He also must not expect to be thanked, but acknowledge his labour as a duty. This is in stark contrast with Matthew 24:14-30 where the servant receives a reward (cf. 5.2.3).

**Place in revelation-history:** Even in Jesus' own life He refers to his coming to earth as fulfilling "a duty" laid upon him (Lk 19:10, Jh 4:34).

### Receiving a worthy reward

**Numbers 18:8-19** <sup>8</sup> Then the Lord said to Aaron, "I myself have put you in charge of the offerings presented to me; all the holy offerings the Israelites give me I give to you and your sons as your portion and regular share. <sup>9</sup> You are to have the part of the most holy offerings that is kept from the fire. From all the gifts they bring me as most holy offerings, whether grain or sin or guilt offerings, that part belongs to you and your sons. <sup>10</sup> Eat it as something most holy; every male shall eat it. You must regard it as holy. <sup>11</sup> "This also is yours: whatever is set aside from the gifts of all the wave offerings of the Israelites. I give this to you and your sons and daughters as your regular share. Everyone in your household who is ceremonially clean may eat it. <sup>12</sup> "I give you all the finest olive oil and all the finest new wine and grain they give the Lord as the firstfruits of their harvest. <sup>13</sup> All the land's firstfruits that they bring to the Lord will be yours. Everyone in your household who is ceremonially clean may eat it. <sup>14</sup> "Everything in Israel that is devoted to the Lord is yours. <sup>15</sup> The first offspring of every womb, both man and animal, that is offered to the Lord is yours. But you must redeem every firstborn son and every firstborn male of unclean animals. <sup>16</sup> When they are a month old, you must redeem them at the redemption price set at five shekels of silver, accord-

ing to the sanctuary shekel, which weighs twenty gerahs.<sup>17</sup> "But you must not redeem the firstborn of an ox, a sheep or a goat; they are holy. Sprinkle their blood on the altar and burn their fat as an offering made by fire, an aroma pleasing to the Lord.<sup>18</sup> Their meat is to be yours, just as the breast of the wave offering and the right thigh are yours.<sup>19</sup> Whatever is set aside from the holy offerings the Israelites present to the Lord I give to you and your sons and daughters as your regular share. It is an everlasting covenant of salt before the Lord for both you and your offspring."

**Relevance:** To understand the background of all Paul's references to the Jewish tradition in 1 Cor 9, it is important to look at Numbers 18 and the remuneration of priests in the Old Testament. It is clear that the remuneration of priests was very closely connected to the offerings brought to God. As mentioned already in 5.4.2, the priest was only allowed from the meat and other offerings *after* it has been sacrificed. Therefore there is also the stipulation that everyone who eats from these offerings must be ceremonially clean (v. 14). Noteworthy is the stipulation that the first-born children also belonged to the Lord, and therefore to the priests, but had to be redeemed when they were a month old. This meant that the parents had to redeem these children with money, of which a tenth would have been available to the priests to acquire whatever they needed besides their portion of the offerings.

**Relevance in revelation-history:** These prescriptions indicate the formalising of religion in the Old Testament. Not only has God been present in a special way through the cloud, the tabernacle and the arc of the covenant, but we find here the induction of the priestly order. The function of these priests as mediators between Israel and the Lord is accentuated by all the prescriptions regarding their separateness and holiness, as well as the fact that they were allowed their portions only after it has been sacrificed to the Lord. Eventually this form of religion did not contribute to real reverence and repentance towards the Lord, but the Israelites wandered off to other gods in Palestine. The book of Hebrews illustrates Jesus' coming to earth as the Perfect Priest, who is able to be a true mediator between God and man.

**Numbers 18:20-31**<sup>20</sup> The Lord said to Aaron, "You will have no inheritance in their land, nor will you have any share among them; I am your share and your inheritance among the Israelites."<sup>21</sup> "I give to the Levites all the tithes in Israel as their inheritance in return for the work they do while serving at the Tent of Meeting."<sup>22</sup> From now on the Israelites must

not go near the Tent of Meeting, or they will bear the consequences of their sin and will die.<sup>23</sup> It is the Levites who are to do the work at the Tent of Meeting and bear the responsibility for offences against it. This is a lasting ordinance for the generations to come. They will receive no inheritance among the Israelites.<sup>24</sup> Instead, I give to the Levites as their inheritance the tithes that the Israelites present as an offering to the Lord. That is why I said concerning them: 'They will have no inheritance among the Israelites.'<sup>25</sup> The Lord said to Moses,<sup>26</sup> "Speak to the Levites and say to them: 'When you receive from the Israelites the tithe I give you as your inheritance, you must present a tenth of that tithe as the Lord's offering.'<sup>27</sup> Your offering will be reckoned to you as grain from the threshing floor or juice from the winepress.<sup>28</sup> In this way you also will present an offering to the Lord from all the tithes you receive from the Israelites. From these tithes you must give the Lord's portion to Aaron the priest.<sup>29</sup> You must present as the Lord's portion the best and holiest part of everything given to you.<sup>30</sup> "Say to the Levites: 'When you present the best part, it will be reckoned to you as the product of the threshing floor or the winepress.'<sup>31</sup> You and your households may eat the rest of it anywhere, for it is your wages for your work at the Tent of Meeting

**Relevance:** The Lord stipulated that the Levites are not to receive any portion of the land<sup>106</sup>, but that they must receive a tenth of the offerings and tithes of the Israelites as a living wage. The reason for not receiving an inheritance, is the Lord's promise that he will be their inheritance. This probably referred not only to the fact that the Levites were to focus on their communion with God and not on earthly belongings. God would also provide for their families in future. It must also be noted that they were also required to give a tenth of the tenth they received back to the Lord as a tithe (v. 26). This reiterates to my view the role of the priests as mediators in Jewish religion. On the one side they receive their share of the offering after it has been offered to God, but on the other side they also have the responsibility of giving back to the Lord as mere humans. Lastly, in this regard to priestly compensation, the issue of inheritance must not be overlooked. Rather than receiving a piece of land as inheritance from the Lord, the Levites received their daily share of the offering. Jesus' commandment to the evangelists to leave their own belongings, i.e. their purse, bag and sandals (Lk 10:1-12) probably originates from this practice.

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<sup>106</sup> The Levites did, however, have towns of their own, as well as a demarcated area around the town to use for the grazing of their cattle (Num 35:1-8).

**Place in revelation-history:** This passage refers to the entering of the land, and the laws ensuring sustenance to the Levites. During the Post-Exilic times, the priests also invented ways of increasing their allowance. This probably led to Jesus overturning the tables in the temple (Mt 21:12-13).

**Deuteronomy 18:1-8** <sup>1</sup> The priests, who are Levites--indeed the whole tribe of Levi - are to have no allotment or inheritance with Israel. They shall live on the offerings made to the Lord by fire, for that is their inheritance. <sup>2</sup> They shall have no inheritance among their brothers; the Lord is their inheritance, as he promised them. <sup>3</sup> This is the share due the priests from the people who sacrifice a bull or a sheep: the shoulder, the jowls and the inner parts. <sup>4</sup> You are to give them the firstfruits of your grain, new wine and oil, and the first wool from the shearing of your sheep, <sup>5</sup> for the Lord your God has chosen them and their descendants out of all your tribes to stand and minister in the Lord's name always. <sup>6</sup> If a Levite moves from one of your towns anywhere in Israel where he is living, and comes in all earnestness to the place the Lord will choose, <sup>7</sup> he may minister in the name of the Lord his God like all his fellow Levites who serve there in the presence of the Lord. <sup>8</sup> He is to share equally in their benefits, even though he has received money from the sale of family possessions.

**Relevance:** Although the information provided here is more or less the same as the previous passage, we do find two interesting references here: first the reference to the Lord as being the inheritance of the Levites. The Levites had a special place in the Lord's dealings with Israel, and they were also not to be given only the crumbs from the table, but the "firstfruits of grain, new wine and oil, and the first wool from the shearing" of the sheep (vs. 4). Providing the Levite with a respectful maintenance was an indication of reverence and respect to the Lord also. Doing the work of the Lord and being in "his company" day after day are regarded here as even more rewarding than the inheritance of land that a member of the tribe of Israel received. The second reference, referring to the situation of a zealous Levite moving from a town to come and serve the Lord in the temple, is interesting in the light of dealing with the belongings of such a Levite prior to his coming to work in the temple (v. 6-8). Could it be that the Lord in his wisdom has already foreseen possible quarrels regarding possessions by the Levites? In the light of practises such as those of Hofni and Pineas (cf. 5.4.2) this was not out of the question at all.

**Place in revelation-history:** The calling of the Levites as a tribe in order to serve the Lord in the temple during the monarchy and beyond must be noted here (v. 5).

#### **5.4.4 Insights drawn from the investigation into religious leaders, labour and compensation in the Bible**

From the few Scripture portions quoted above, it is clear that attitudes towards labour, even when restricted to those of religious leaders, were vast and very different. What becomes evident, however, is that in no instance the labour of a religious leader seems measurable (and refundable) in earthly terms. The only way to regard compensation is to share in the happiness of the master (Mt 25:21,23), and joy of the angels over every lost sheep that is found (Lk 15:1-7).

A second comment in this regard is the wide-ranging attitudes towards work that is evident throughout the passages in question. Not only the motivation to work hard, but commitment and perseverance, as well as integrity were not to be taken for granted in the First Century Church. Both the Graeco-Roman disdain for manual labour, as well as the positive work ethics of the Old Testament is present in New Testament attitudes towards labour.

### **5.5 Conclusion**

Providing a balanced picture on the Biblical data on the poverty, labour and altruism has proven to be a daunting task within the limited space of this study. In assessing the bulk of data on poverty it is strange that these themes do not get more attention on the pulpits of the 'Western' churches of our time (cf. 2.5). Using the revelation-historical framework for the purpose of structuring this volume of data produced several insights.

In the first instance it is clear that Israel's entry into Canaan and their deviation from the theocracy and request for the monarchy poverty gradually increased amongst God's people. In the subsequent wars, exiles and oppression from foreign rulers this situation further deteriorated. Even though some Jews prospered in the Diaspora, poverty in Palestine and surrounding areas was a stark reality, especially with the taxes enforced on the foreign subjects of the Roman Republic.

To my view the most prominent of the insights that this approach yielded, is the increasing monopoly of power that the Pharisees acquired in their time. This was not just visible in their manipulation of Pilate and Herod to allow the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, but also in their continuous struggle to win over the favour of governing agents in Palestine, especially in the Intertestamental period and the First Century AD. Reading New Testament passages evidencing the economic exploitation of the Pharisees, can surely open new insights into Jesus' relationship with (or rather judgement of) the Pharisees, or at least some factions in the Pharisees.

Even though an analysis of the Jewish kinship system may initially seem somewhat superfluous in a thesis with an economic focus, the harsh economic consequences of being detached from a family were amply illustrated. In many instances it has been shown that Jesus and his disciples viewing themselves as 'strangers'. So much more would this be relevant for Paul, who was probably less connected to his family in Tarsus than Jesus was with his family in Nazareth and surroundings, and travelled long distances for the sake of the gospel.

By including some references from disputed Pauline material in the sections concerning the work and remuneration of religious leaders and altruism, the way is paved to really address Paul's attitude towards poverty in the next section. What is clear, however, is that the work and remuneration of religious leaders were burning issues in the Bible and in the time of Paul, and that the unique nature of the Christian faith in its children's shoes, was surely its practising of 'altruism' beyond known boundaries.

## 6 PAUL'S VOCATION, HIS LABOUR, AND PERSONAL FINANCES

### 6.1 *Introduction*

Up to this point the main focus was upon the contexts of the congregation of Corinth, as well as the Biblical backgrounds to Paul and poverty. The direct economic situation of the most members in the congregants in Corinth, and also the general economic struggle in the New Testament and the responses thereto still deserves attention.

The first section in this chapter will deal with Paul's personal history and context, whilst the subsequent chapters will deal with Paul's labour, his functioning within the kinship structures of society, and the way that Paul dealt with poverty in the congregations and his surroundings. This chapter also explores the dynamic interaction between Paul and this congregation, and the economic subtexts in the Pauline letters, especially the Letter to Corinth.

### 6.2 *A biography of Paul*

When studying Paul, the way that personalities were viewed by First Century generations has to be taken into account. To understand people and their living standards in the First Century, they must be assessed in terms of "dyadic" personality.<sup>1</sup>

In discussing the background of Paul and his financial situation, it is necessary to first analyse his descent and his geographical background. As the "analogy of faith" is not paramount in this search for biographical information on Paul's life, it is mostly the "analogy of Scripture" that is

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<sup>1</sup> The focus is not primarily upon who a person is, but where he comes from, and where he belongs (Witherington 1998:31). The outward appearance of a person was also very important in the first century AD (Witherington 1988:40). This would mean that a first century person was mainly measured according to descent, gender and geography (Malina & Neyrey 1996:153-174).



attended to.<sup>2</sup> Biblical passages are established and discussed for their relevance to Paul’s background.

6.2.1 Chronology of Paul’s life and work

To understand the vocation of Paul, as well as his relation to different congregations, it is helpful to keep the chronology of his work in mind. Therefore a chronology of Paul’s life and mission, and some relevant Bible portions are constructed. Of course the dates are only by approximation, and the differences in the research tradition on the matter need not be reflected here.<sup>3</sup>

<i>Occasion</i>	<i>Date</i>
Birth	6 BC
Persecution of the church	32-33 AD
Conversion near Damascus	33 AD
Arabia	34 AD
Return to Damascus	34 AD
Flight from Damascus	37 AD
First visit to Jerusalem as Christian	37 AD
Syria and Cilicia	37-40 AD
Antioch	40 AD
Second visit to Jerusalem	43-44 AD

*First missionary journey*

Antioch, Galatia, Macedonia,	
Corinth, Jerusalem	45-51 AD
Apostolic convention in Jerusalem	49/51 AD
Return to Antioch	50/51 AD

<sup>2</sup> In approaching the information that the Bible renders on this topic, the distinction between the “analogy of faith” and the “analogy of Scripture” (Kaiser 2007:71-73; 193-198) is kept in mind. The “analogy of Scripture” refers to the additional socio-historical and informational data becoming available from earlier in formation in the Bible, assisting us in determining the historical context of the text. The “analogy of faith” refers to spiritual Biblical truths deducted from the whole Bible as a canonical corpus, which are used to determine the theological contexts of a text.

<sup>3</sup> Due to the lack of consensus and the lack of uniformity in the presentation of chronologies presented by scholars, this broad chronology has been drawn up using the work of Bruce (1977:475), Hengel & Schwemer (1998:473-475), Murphy O’Connor (1996:31) and Witherington (1998:327) critically.

***Second missionary journey***

Cilicia, South-Galatia, Galatic, Phrygia,	
Mysia, Troas, Philippi, Amphipolis,	
Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, Corinth,	
Ephesus, Caesarea, Jerusalem	51-55 AD

***Third missionary journey***

Antioch, Galatia, Phrygia, Ephesus, Corinth,	
Troas, Macedonia, Illicium, Corinth, Miletus,	
Tyre, Lysia, Ptolomais, Caesarea, Jerusalem	55-57 AD
Imprisonment in Caesarea	57-59 AD
Journey to Rome	59-60 AD

**6.2.2 A physical description of Paul**

Paul's physical appearance may seem irrelevant in the context of this thesis, but in terms of his leadership role in the congregation, his appearance and the acceptance and rejection thereof must have been crucial. Paul himself, as well as Luke in Acts reveals little on his physical appearance. The closest we come to a description, is speculation concerning Paul's poor sight. The "thorn in the flesh" that Paul refers to in 2 Cor 12:7<sup>4</sup> has often been interpreted as an allusion to an ailment Paul had. In Gal 4:13-14<sup>5</sup> and 2 Cor 10:10<sup>6</sup> there are references to Paul being sick and not having a "physical presence". These references lead scholars to believe that he probably had a problem with his eyesight<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> 2 Cor 12:7: "To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me."

<sup>5</sup> Gal 4:13-14: "<sup>13</sup>As you know, it was because of an illness that I first preached the gospel to you. <sup>14</sup>Even though my illness was a trial to you, you did not treat me with contempt or scorn."

<sup>6</sup> 2 Cor 10:10: "For some say, "His letters are weighty and forceful, but in person he is unimpressive and his speaking amounts to nothing."

<sup>7</sup> Paul's statement that the Galatians would have plucked out their eyes and given it to him if they could (Gal 4:15), his writing in big letters (Gal 6:11), and his inability to recognize the high priest (Acts 23:5) have been given as reasons to support the theory of Paul's "thorn in the flesh" being a problem with poor sight. This theory has received little support in recent times (Winter 1986:414).

We do, however, find a more detailed description of Paul in the account of Paul's physical appearance from the non-canonical *Acts of the Apostle Paul*, in the chapter concerning the virgin Thecla:

“And he saw Paul coming, a man small of stature,<sup>8</sup> with a bald head and crooked legs, in a good state of body, with eyebrows meeting and nose somewhat hooked, full of friendliness, for now he appeared like a man, and now he had the face of an angel.”

Although this description may seem disturbing to the present day observer,<sup>9</sup> attempts have been made to view this description as a positive portrayal of Paul (Witherington 1998:42-44).<sup>10</sup> The baldness of Paul can be explained by him shaving his hair because of a religious vow that Paul had taken<sup>11</sup>, or his compliance with Jewish requirements for converts that accompanied him<sup>12</sup>. Paul's crooked stance is unconvincing compared to the stance of a man in battle (Witherington 1998:44). The lack of reference to Paul's eyes may be a confirmation that there was definitely something wrong with his eyes, but this remains pure speculation.

Considering the absence of any other description of Paul, this reference to Paul in *The Acts of Paul* (although dated very late)<sup>13</sup>, must be taken into consideration. On the other hand Paul compares himself in the

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<sup>8</sup> The meaning of *paulos* in Latin is “small”, and the reference to Paul as “small in stature” may be a mere deduction from his name.

<sup>9</sup> The possibility of Paul being unattractive is strengthened by the reaction of the crowd in Acts 14:12, naming Barnabas “Zeus” and Paul “Hermes”. This is interpreted by some as an indication that Barnabas was more attractive than Paul, and therefore named after the main deity (Van der Watt & Tolmie 2005:566). The one problem with such an interpretation is that the writer of Acts provides us with the reason for the naming: Paul is the chief speaker, or “messenger”, which was the office of Hermes.

<sup>10</sup> This description of Paul has even been compared to Suetonius' (*De Vita Caesarum, Augustus* 2.79:1-2) description of Caesar Augustus. According to Suetonius, Caesar Augustus had clear bright eyes, with eyebrows that met. His nose projected a little at the top, and then bent slightly inward. He was also short of stature.

<sup>11</sup> Acts 18:18b: “Before he sailed, he had his hair cut off at Cenchrea because of a vow he had taken.”

<sup>12</sup> Acts 21:24a: “Take these men, join in their purification rites and pay their expenses, so that they can have their heads shaved.”

<sup>13</sup> The authenticity of this book is seriously and validly questioned by Van der Watt and Tolmie (2005:561-562), and therefore the usefulness of the book for constructing an image of Paul, is very limited.

figurative sense to an athlete in 1 Cor 9:27<sup>14</sup>, and therefore we cannot really deduct anything from this reference. In conclusion it must be noted that the evidence for Paul as a person without a strong physical presence, outweighs evidence for the opposite. It must also be mentioned that Paul was often abused and flogged (2 Cor 11:24-25)<sup>15</sup>, and that must have left some scars on his body, especially later in his ministry.

### 6.2.3 Paul as citizen of Tarsus and Rome

Although one would find very few scholars, if any, who would argue for the primacy of his Hellenistic or Roman background over his Jewish or Hebrew roots, Hellenistic and Roman influences were clearly visible in Paul's life.<sup>16</sup>

The first two sections below examine the Greek and Roman influences on Paul (the fact that he originated from Tarsus and had Roman citizenship), whilst the third section is devoted to the rhetorical background and skills of the apostle Paul, with special reference to the composition of his letters, and in particular, 1 & 2 Corinthians.

#### Born in Tarsus

The great city of Tarsus,<sup>17</sup> the capital of Cilicia, was probably Paul's (or actually his father's) passport to Roman citizenship. Although Paul never mentions in his letters that he was a citizen of Tarsus or Rome, it is

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<sup>14</sup> 1 Cor 9:27: "No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize."

<sup>15</sup> 1 Cor 11:24-25: "<sup>24</sup>Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. <sup>25</sup>Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea..."

<sup>16</sup> Den Heyer's (2000) work on the person of Paul carries the title *Paul: A man of two worlds*, as describing Paul's Jewish and Greco-Roman origin. In line with the (somewhat artificial) separation between Greek and Roman culture made by Den Heyer (2000) (cf. section 3.4. above), Wallace & Williams (1998) separated the Roman and Greek worlds in Paul's life by naming their work *The three worlds of Paul of Tarsus*.

<sup>17</sup> After Antiochus Epiphanes IV declared Tarsus a polis in 171 BC, Greek and Jewish colonists were brought in to increase the productivity of the oriental population (Murphy O'Connor 1996:33). In 66 BC it was incorporated into the Roman system by Pompey. Mark Anthony rewarded the city for opposing Cassius, the murderer of Julius Caesar, by giving the city its freedom. This honour was renewed by Caesar Augustus in 31 BC, and probably paved the way for a group of citizens to be awarded citizenship of Rome (Murphy O'Connor 1996:33).

highly unlikely that the numerous references to Paul's citizenship of Tarsus and of Rome in Acts were merely construed by Luke.<sup>18</sup>

It would not make sense for Luke to add fictional information (such as Paul's citizenship of Tarsus and Rome) in Acts which would actually "demote" Paul as an authority from the perspective of the Jewish Christians. The tendency to question Paul's education in Jerusalem from a young age did have the advantage that ample research is available on Tarsus, especially from scholars such as Murphy O'Connor (1996:32-51), who argues that Paul received the bulk of his education (if not all of it) in Tarsus of Cilicia.

The city of Tarsus was described as being "μεγάλην καὶ εὐδαίμονα" (great and prosperous) already by Xenophon (*Anabasis* 1.2.23). Later<sup>19</sup> Dio Chrysostom (*Orationes* 33.17) praised the city of Tarsus as the capitol of Cilicia:

ἡγεῖσθε μὲν γάρ, ὦ ἄνδρες, εὐδαίμονας ἑαυτοὺς καὶ μακαρίους, ἐπειδὴ πόλιν τε μεγάλην οἰκεῖτε καὶ χώραν ἀγαθὴν νέμεσθε καὶ πλεῖστα δὴ καὶ ἀφθονώτατα παρ' αὐτοῖς ὁράτε τὰ ἐπιτήδεια, καὶ ποταμὸς ὑμῖν οὗτος διὰ μέσης διαρρεῖ τῆς πόλεως, πρὸς τούτοις δὲ μητρόπολις ἡ Ταρσὸς τῶν κατὰ Κιλικίαν.<sup>20</sup>

The city also harboured onto a river which contributed to the economic well-being of the city. The flood plains around Tarsus were very fertile, and produced not only several cereals and grapes, but also flax for the linen. Tarsus was not only a well known trade centre, but also a city known for its education, and instruction in rhetoric (Murphy O'Connor 1996:49). Strabo (*Geographia* 14.5.13) reports on the zeal for education present amongst the Tarsians:

Τοσαύτη δὲ τοῖς ἐνθάδε ἀνθρώποις σπουδὴ πρὸς τε φιλοσοφίαν καὶ τὴν ἄλλην παιδείαν ἐγκύκλιον ἅπασαν γέγονεν ὥσθ' ὑπερβέβληνται καὶ Αθήνας

<sup>18</sup> In cases where the historicity of Acts is doubted, it is mostly ascribed to the tendency to make the text more Jewish, such as Paul's education in Jerusalem and his use of the synagogue as a starting point for the gospel in foreign cities (Sanders 1990:8-9).

<sup>19</sup> The five centuries that lies between Xenophon (444-357 BC), and Dio Chrysostom (40-115 AD) is noteworthy. As illustrated in the case of Corinth in chapter three of this thesis, a more detailed analysis is needed to ascertain Tarsus' economic position in the first century.

<sup>20</sup> "For, men, you are considered rich yourselves and blessed, for you stay in this big city, you received fertile land, and you found the greatest and most abundant necessities in these areas. There is also a river that flows for you through the middle of the city, and in addition to thereto, Tarsus is the capital city amongst the Cilician cities."

καὶ Ἀλεξάνδρειαν καὶ εἴ τινα ἄλλον τόπον δυνατὸν εἰπεῖν, ἐν ᾧ σχολαὶ καὶ διατριβαὶ φιλοσόφων γέγονασι. διαφέρει δὲ τοσοῦτον ὅτι ἐνταῦθα μὲν οἱ φιλομαθοῦντες ἐπιχώριοι πάντες εἰσὶ, ξένοι δ' οὐκ ἐπιδημοῦσι ῥαδίως· οὐδ' αὐτοὶ οὗτοι μένουσιν αὐτόθι, ἀλλὰ καὶ τελειοῦνται ἐκδημήσαντες καὶ τελειωθέντες ξενιτεύουσιν ἡδέως, κατέρχονται δ' ὀλίγοι.<sup>21</sup>

Whilst it is disputed that Paul's family originated from Tarsus, Wallace & Williams (1998:180) in turn question Paul's birth in Tarsus and his childhood there. According to them Paul need not have been born physically in Tarsus to be regarded as a citizen of Tarsus (or of Rome), and that Paul had "obvious" connections in Jerusalem<sup>22</sup> (Wallace & Williams 1998:180). Their thesis, however, lacks an explanation for such an addition by Luke.<sup>23</sup>

The author of Acts not only refers to Paul as coming from Tarsus (Acts 9:11), but he also relates Paul himself declaring in Acts 21:39 that he was a citizen from Tarsus. The economical position of Tarsus persuades a scholar like Best (1988:10) to conclude that Paul was born with the proverbial "silver spoon" in his mouth. Hock (1978:562) even viewed Paul as a descendant of the "provincial aristocracy". This view is, however, contested by scholars such as Stegemann (1987:200-229), and Engels (1990:114) who compares Paul's economic situation with Christ, in arguing in his book *Roman Corinth* that "Both Christ and Paul were workingmen, a carpenter and a tentmaker, the kind of people numerous in the city."

The notion that Paul was "only a cloth worker", but "possessed citizenship of both Tarsus and Rome", leads Theissen (1982:32) to believe that Paul "enjoyed an unusual, privileged status". Dio Chrysostom conveys in his *Orationes* (34:21-23) that citizenship of Tarsus could be bought at 500 drachma, which was certainly not within the ordinary man's budget.

<sup>21</sup> "Such fervor developed amongst the people here towards philosophy and the other learning circle that they have surpassed both Athens and Alexandria, and if any other place can be named, where there have been schools and activities of philosophers. It differs to such an extent that the students here are all local people, and that the foreigners do not settle easily. Even these few foreigners do not remain there, but after they moved abroad whilst they complete their studies and having completed their studies, they often reside in the foreign countries, whilst only few return."

<sup>22</sup> The connections in Jerusalem refers to possible contacts that Paul built up during his education, as well as his aunt and her son, who lived in Jerusalem (Acts 23:16).

<sup>23</sup> In view of the lack of additional extra-Biblical evidence, as well as substantial evidence for the opposite, the information rendered to us in the gospel of Luke concerning Paul's citizenship of Tarsus and Rome is accepted for the purpose of this study.

There were, however, several artisan members in the ἐκκλησία, who did not necessarily pay the fee for being a citizen of Tarsus (Meggitt 1998: 83).

In Acts 22:3<sup>24</sup>, where Paul defends himself in front of the Jews in Jerusalem, he refers to himself as being born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in Jerusalem. Accepting Acts' account of Paul's early years as historically correct, i.e. that Paul must have spent most of his education as a child and as a young man in Jerusalem, Paul's eloquence in *Koine* Greek, as well as his rhetorical capabilities still need explanation. This component of Paul's background is easily answered by the advocates that contend that Paul's childhood education was in Tarsus.<sup>25</sup>

The sending of Paul to Jerusalem was probably due to the fact that his father was a Pharisee (Acts 23:6). For his father it must have been important that Paul is educated in the Jewish law. The existence of a gymnasium in Jerusalem (2 Macc 4:10) as well as the presence of a group of Greek Jews (Acts 6:1 and Acts 9:29<sup>26</sup>) provide enough reason to believe that Greek was not only spoken in Jerusalem, but that there were ample opportunities to be schooled in rhetoric.

Paul's contact with Tarsus did not end after his childhood years. Although clashing with information in Paul's letters, the author of Acts relates Paul being sent to Tarsus for his safety after his conversion (Acts 9:30). Although this narrative from Luke is not deemed historically sound, it is generally accepted that Paul spent about 11 years (35-46 AD) in Cilicia and Syria afterwards (Bruce 1977:275; Witherington 1998: 328).<sup>27</sup>

In summary it is clear that Tarsus equipped Paul well for his mission activities. Not only did he grow up in a sophisticated city with plenty opportunities for a proper education, but Tarsus was also economically better off than most of the other cities in its time. It is therefore quite

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<sup>24</sup> Acts 22:3: "I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city."

<sup>25</sup> Paul's parents probably had Greek as their mother tongue. Even in the synagogue the Septuagint was used, and the Jews conducted their business in Greek. Greek was therefore the *lingua franca*, also for the Jews.

<sup>26</sup> Acts 9:29: "He talked and debated with the Grecian Jews, but they tried to kill him."

<sup>27</sup> It would be highly unlikely that he did not spend some time in his place of birth, and had some kind of contact with rhetoric there. Being outside Jerusalem and Palestine in this time, would also have given Paul (who was evidently highly intelligent), ample time to become fluent in Greek.

possible that Paul also acquired his trade from his father or another relative in the city of Tarsus.

### **Paul as a Roman citizen**

Although not uncommon in the Mediterranean world of the first century AD, Paul's dual citizenship of both Rome and Tarsus is also doubted by scholars despite clear references to Paul's citizenship as a citizenship by birth in Acts 22:28<sup>28</sup>, as well as the numerous references to Paul's citizenship saving him from difficult situations (Acts 22:25<sup>29</sup>; 23:27<sup>30</sup>; 25:11<sup>31</sup>). Although Paul had received three beatings (2 Cor 11:25), which was not befitting of a Roman citizen, and it would be difficult for him to escape the emperor cult and other religious activities related to the Roman Government, there is relative consensus that Paul was indeed a Roman citizen (Horrel 2000:25).

Paul's citizenship of Rome did not only save him from the chains, or from being beaten by soldiers without a proper hearing; it also granted him the opportunity to appeal to the Caesar of the day, and therefore it also granted him a passage to Rome, where he really wanted to preach the gospel (Acts 19:21<sup>32</sup>, Rom 1:14-15<sup>33</sup>). His positive interaction with the Praetorian Guard while under house arrest (see Php 1) was in part because the guard may not ignore or despise a Roman citizen.

Paul's Roman citizenship also provided him with advantages that would have aided him in his work as a traveling evangelist and tentmaker. Besides having the Roman judicial system at his disposal, he would be allowed entry into any city in the Empire, especially cities of the Roman colonies like Corinth and Philippi. He would have ready access to Ro-

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<sup>28</sup> Acts 22:28: "Then the commander said, I had to pay a big price for my citizenship". "But I was born a citizen," Paul replied.

<sup>29</sup> Acts 22:25: "As they stretched him out to flog him, Paul said to the centurion standing there, Is it legal for you to flog a Roman citizen who hasn't even been found guilty?"

<sup>30</sup> Acts 23:27: "This man was seized by the Jews and they were about to kill him, but I came with my troops and rescued him, for I had learned that he is a Roman citizen".

<sup>31</sup> Acts 25:11: "If, however, I am guilty of doing anything deserving death, I do not refuse to die. But if the charges brought against me by these Jews are not true, no one has the right to hand me over to them. I appeal to Caesar!"

<sup>32</sup> Acts 19:21: "After all this had happened, Paul decided to go to Jerusalem, passing through Macedonia and Achaia. "After I have been there," he said, "I must visit Rome also."

<sup>33</sup> Rom 1:14-15: "<sup>14</sup>I am obligated both to Greeks and non-Greeks, both to the wise and the foolish. <sup>15</sup>That is why I am so eager to preach the gospel also to you who are at Rome."



man roads as well. Paul could also travel with parties other than Roman citizens or even with Roman soldiers on a mission if need be (Witherington 1998:73).

Paul's citizenship has also been used by scholars, such as Bruce (1993:682) to conclude that he was viewed part of the "municipal aristocracy" in every town or city that he visited. The citizens outside Rome, however, were mostly slaves who were manumitted themselves, or the children of manumitted slaves (Meggitt 1998:82). If this was the case with Paul, he could have been poorer than many of the non-citizens in his time.

In conclusion, the question regarding Paul's silence on his citizenship in his letters remains. Paul's silence about his Roman citizenship probably lies on the same level as his scarce references to his Jewish heritage. Paul did in the first place not see his citizenship and his heritage in a *dyadic* sense. He primarily focused on his citizenship in heaven, and his relationship with Christ, as Php 3:20-21<sup>34</sup> witnesses.

### Paul's rhetorical background<sup>35</sup>

To arrive at a holistic understanding of Paul's intentions in 1 Cor 9, it is important to take into account his rhetorical approach, especially in the context of his Graeco-Roman background. Although Paul himself denies the ability to "speak well" in 2 Cor 11:6<sup>36</sup>, this is probably an understatement that must be seen as a rhetorical ploy in itself. It is part of the "power through weakness"<sup>37</sup> approach that Paul follows in 1 & 2 Corinthians.

Paul's statement of being ἰδιώτης τῷ λόγῳ (untrained in speaking) must also be seen at the backdrop of the boasting opponents of Paul in the Corinthian letters. Paul is actually not referring to his own inability to speak, but he is mocking his opponents, as elsewhere in the letter, for reckoning themselves to be rhetorically skilled.<sup>38</sup> In fact, a study of

<sup>34</sup> Php 3:20-21: <sup>20</sup>"But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>21</sup>who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body."

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Wessels (2006:74-75) for a more detailed discussion of Paul's rhetorical background.

<sup>36</sup> 2 Cor 11:6: "I may not be a trained speaker, but I do have knowledge. We have made this perfectly clear to you in every way."

<sup>37</sup> Cf. the work of Savage (1996) on 2 Corinthians with a similar title.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. 1 Cor 1:17, 2:4,13; 2 Cor 1:12; 10:12,18.

Paul's letters reveals that he is well skilled in rhetoric (Murphy O'Connor 1996:51).

As argued above: Paul was no ἰδιώτης τῷ λόγῳ, and his rhetorical style reflects extensive training in a gymnasium. Paul did not in my view, use "legalistic aggressivity", as Murphy O'Connor (1996:206) reckons, but he rather preferred to persuade (Witherington 2003:264).

Besides several models of interpretation, rhetorical *topoi* can be used as interpretative models for the first letter to the Corinthians (Martin 1990:87-116). The rhetorical *topos* of the "enslaved leader" is used expertly to analyze Paul's approach in 1 Cor 9. The *topos* of the "populist leader", striving for power within the patron-client system, is played down against the "enslaved leader" or demagogue, who becomes a slave for the benefit of his followers (Martin 1990:116).

The use of rhetoric was not just a very productive tool in Paul's time, but is clearly also powerful to explore and analyze Paul's letters today. There are, however, instances where rhetorical analysis may fall short in recognizing the underlying themes in the text (Winter 2003:154), or where a certain text just do not make sense in the light of rhetorical strategies (Tolmie 2004b:487-502). Therefore a holistic way of approaching the text, also accounting for other socio-historical components is vital for the understanding of the New Testament letters.

## 6.2.4 Paul as a Jew

Paul identifies himself as a Jew in Php 3:4b-5<sup>39</sup>, and the narrative in Acts 21:29<sup>40</sup> points in the same direction. Paul's reference to his Jewish background in Php 3 is indeed laden with status. He was circumcised on the eighth day according to Jewish convention<sup>41</sup>, and therefore complied with one of the most important symbols of Jewish culture (see above).

He was also part of God's separate nation, Israel. Paul's focus on his genealogy, as being born from the tribe of Benjamin should not be underestimated. Paul was not only from the seed of the first king of Israel,

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<sup>39</sup> Php 3:4b-5: "If anyone else thinks he has reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: <sup>5</sup> circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee..."

<sup>40</sup> Acts 21:39: "Paul answered, "I am a Jew, from Tarsus in Cilicia, a citizen of no ordinary city. Please let me speak to the people."

<sup>41</sup> In effect Paul is also distinguishing him here from the Proselytes, who were circumcised as adults.

but bore his Hebrew name, i.e. Saul. The last reference in this verse, i.e. to Paul as a strict observer of the Law, a Pharisee, would not only recall the virtue of observing the Torah as God's code of conduct for his children, but would also place Paul in a certain position of power amongst the Jews.

Paul's financial position has often been linked to his Pharisaic background (Belo 1981:74), and Sanders (1991:11) even claimed that Paul's letters reflect training for "ownership and management". However, the identity of the Pharisees in First Century Palestine is still so vague (Meggitt 1998:95) that no definite conclusions can be made in this regard.<sup>42</sup>

Considering the above, it is understandable that Paul's Jewish background was never disputed by New Testament scholars. However, the kind of Jew (and Pharisee) that Paul was is still under contention. This burning issue in New Testament research is even contested up to the point where the "search for the historical Paul" (in analogy with the search for the historical Jesus) is postulated as a field of research.<sup>43</sup>

One of the main differences remains the extent of Paul's involvement with the Pharisees. Although scholars like Murphy O'Connor (1996:52-62) and Sanders (1991:8-9) doubt the historicity of Acts 22:3<sup>44</sup> (placing Paul's education in Jerusalem<sup>45</sup> under Gamaliel), the current consensus is that this information is historically sound (Haacker 2003:21-22; Horrel 2000:25; Witherington 1998:59).

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<sup>42</sup> To really weigh the socio-historic evidence in favour or against Paul being financially independent before his conversion is very difficult. The arguments by Meggitt, however, are often aimed at creating uncertainty, rather than offering concrete evidence of Paul really being poor in his earlier years.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. the title of Witherington's work, *The Paul Quest: A renewed search for the Jew of Tarsus*, as well as the chapter on the "historical" Paul by Den Heyer (2000:8-22).

<sup>44</sup> Acts 22:3: "I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city. Under Gamaliel I was thoroughly trained in the law of our fathers and was just as zealous for God as any of you are today."

<sup>45</sup> Paul did have close ties with Jerusalem. He tells the Jews in Jerusalem that he was brought up there (Acts 22:3). The word ἀνατεθραμμένος that he uses in this context refers not only to growing up in his later years in Jerusalem, but also to his early childhood (Haacker 2003:21). Paul also had family there. When there was a plot against him, a son of his sister, who lived in Jerusalem, helped to rescue Paul from the plot against his life (Acts 23:16). According to Acts 21:40-22:2, Paul was also fluent in Aramaic, which increases the probability of an education in Jerusalem.

Paul's reference to being a zealous Pharisee not only in his faultless observance of the Law, but also in persecuting the church, is probably an indication that Paul was not only an ordinary Pharisee, but that he was an "extremist Pharisee", intent on "stamping out" those who disagreed with him (Segal 2003:170).

Many scholars find Paul's previous behaviour as an extremist Pharisee incompatible with the moderate behaviour of Gamaliel in treating the Christian apostles in Acts 5:38-39<sup>46</sup>. The education Paul had under Gamaliel, was not necessarily by Gamaliel in person, and not with a specialised future as teacher of the law in mind (Haacker 2003:21-22).

The theory that Haacker relates is not really compatible with the reference to Paul's education in the law in Acts 22:3 as *κατά ἀκρίβειαν* (thoroughly). If Paul's education was so "thorough", and if he refers to himself in Gal 1:13-14<sup>47</sup> as "advancing in Judaism beyond many Jews of my age" and "being extremely zealous for the traditions of my forefathers", it does not make sense that he had no personal contact with Gamaliel, or that his education there was of a secondary nature. If one just compare the way the Corinthian congregation deviated from Paul's initial teaching, it is quite possible that Paul could have taken a different course than his teacher.

The dyadic personality of Paul becomes visible in Gal 1:13-14 where he refers to his Jewish heritage. Paul is not necessarily ashamed of his Jewish heritage. He refers to his Jewish fathers and to himself as a previous Judaizer. But this is precisely where the dyadic personality of Paul is also overturned. Read carefully, this passage clearly refers to Paul's previous life. From a Jewish point of view Paul would have been regarded as an "apostate" from Judaism.

The manner in which Paul argues about the position of Israel in Romans 9:1-11:36 has often been viewed as a positive attitude to Israel, but these three chapters can also be seen as a radical critique of Judaism in the First Century. This passage does contain the hope of salvation for

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<sup>46</sup> Acts 5:38-39: <sup>38</sup>Therefore, in the present case I advise you: Leave these men alone! Let them go! For if their purpose or activity is of human origin, it will fail. <sup>39</sup>But if it is from God, you will not be able to stop these men; you will only find yourselves fighting against God."

<sup>47</sup> Gal 1:13-14: <sup>13</sup>For you have heard of my previous way of life in Judaism, how intensely I persecuted the church of God and tried to destroy it. <sup>14</sup>I was advancing in Judaism beyond many Jews of my own age and was extremely zealous for the traditions of my fathers."

Israel, but actually declares that Israel in its current situation of unbelief is doomed.

Paul's distance from his "Jewish" heritage is also brought to the surface by his statement in 1 Cor 9:20 that he becomes a "Jew to the Jews". Although ironic that somebody who is a Jew can become a Jew to the Jews, this probably refers to "orthopraxy" rather than "orthodoxy" (Witherington 1998:64).

Despite Paul being circumcised himself, and circumcising Timothy according to Acts 16:3, his view concerning circumcision in Gal 6:15<sup>48</sup> reveals his true sentiments. In his conclusion on the Jewish identity of Paul, Witherington (1998:64) evades the dichotomy between Paul being a Diaspora or a Palestine Jew, but describes him as an apocalyptic or messianic Jew. In realizing the identity of Jesus as the true Messiah, Paul now obeyed the new duties of the new creation.<sup>49</sup>

Although Paul regretted his persecution of Christians in his previous life as Pharisee, he was proud of the fact that he did everything with the utmost zeal. Having found the true Messiah, this zeal of Paul was now focused on winning everybody for Christ, and opening their eyes to the identity of the true Messiah.

## 6.2.5 Paul the Christian

Paul's conversion experience on the Damascus road in Acts 9:1-6 is prominent in one's mind in relation to Paul as a Christian, Paul's own reflection on his conversion is used as departure point in this section, with particular reference to Gal 1:15-16<sup>50</sup>.

Paul structures the account of his conversion with a specific purpose in mind. Describing conversion as a "sudden change" from his previous life would not be accepted easily within Stoic philosophy (Malina &

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<sup>48</sup> Gal 6:15: "Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; what counts is a new creation."

<sup>49</sup> Paul as a missionary to the gentiles did not focus on his Jewish heritage in dyadic fashion; he was quite comfortable with his Jewish background. He only fell back on his Jewish background in polemic situations with Hebrew opponents. This careful referral to his Jewish background would probably explain why the Jews in Acts 21:40 were surprised when they heard Paul speak Aramaic.

<sup>50</sup> Gal 1:15-17: "<sup>15</sup>But when God, who set me apart from birth and called me by his grace, was pleased <sup>16</sup>to reveal his Son in me so that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not consult any man, <sup>17</sup>nor did I go up to Jerusalem to see those who were apostles before I was, but I went immediately into Arabia and later returned to Damascus."

Neyrey 1996:39), or in terms of a *dyadic* personality. He therefore refers to his conversion as being a calling that already originated at his birth. His calling is also connected to the Jewish background. Not only the expression ἐκ κοιλίας μητρός (“from the womb of my mother”), but also the rest of Gal 1:15 and 16 have very strong resemblances to the calling of Isaiah and Jeremiah in the Septuagint<sup>51</sup> (Malina & Neyrey 1996:41, Tolmie 2004a:62-63).

Paul is furthermore referring to the event on the road to Damascus in prophetic terms. The reference ἀποκαλύψαι τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ ἐν ἐμοί (to reveal his Son in me) is not only witness to this conversion, but carries the notion that the event of the conversion meant more to Paul than just being a “turning point” in his life. The linking of the terms in verse 16 referring to a “revelation” that took place in Paul himself, refers to Paul receiving a divine revelation (Witherington 1998:75).

This theory is supported by Paul's referral in 1 Cor 9:1 that he has “seen” Jesus the Lord, and in Gal 2:20 that Jesus lives in him. A further reference to the difference that this vision made in his life, is found in Gal 4:6, which refers to the “Spirit of the Son” whom God sent into the hearts of the believers. From the information above it is evident that Paul's Christology is central to his theology<sup>52</sup>.

Paul's baptism after his conversion (Acts 9:18), also contributed to his separation from the Jewish community, and initiation into the Christian community. This contributed to Paul being viewed as a renegade or apostate by the Jews of his time (Witherington 1998:76),<sup>53</sup> and even received “forty lashes minus one” from the Jews (2 Cor 11:23). Although Paul seems rather indifferent towards baptism in his initial reference to this sacrament in 1 Cor 1:7-13, it is evident from 1 Cor 12:13<sup>54</sup> that Paul views baptism as having an important function of bringing people from different cultures together in one new community.

Taking into account the “revelation” he received in Gal 1:16, and the visions he refers to in 2 Cor 12:1, it seems that Paul received the Chris-

<sup>51</sup> Cf. Isa 49:1,6 (LXX), Jer 1:5,6 (LXX).

<sup>52</sup> The centrality of Christ in Paul's theology is widely accepted (cf. for example Horrel 2000:56; Hurtado 2000:185; Witherington 1998:296).

<sup>53</sup> Paul would have been separated from all financial assistance and support from his Jewish family after his conversion to Christianity.

<sup>54</sup> 1 Cor 12:13: “For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body-whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free-and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.”

tian message through revelation. He never refers to any contact with a “teacher” in the same sense in which he refers to Gamaliel as his Pharisaic teacher in Acts 22:3 (Malina & Neyrey 1996:41). In summary, the origin of Paul’s Christian education can be deducted as not originating from human beings, but being a revelation from God (Gal 1:12<sup>55</sup>).

The issue of Paul’s “revelation” from God and his subsequent conversion is also taken up by Crook (2004:156-157), who refers to three important verses in 1 Corinthians concerning Paul’s motivation for his missionary activities. Drawing an analogy from the patronage system, Crook (2004:255) argues that Paul feels indebted towards God for the “revelation” that he received in seeing God (1 Cor 9:1),<sup>56</sup> and therefore feels that he must “repay” God through loyalty in his ministry (1 Cor 9:17).<sup>57</sup> Eventually the fact that Paul laboured so hard is a sign of his remorse over his persecution of the Christians, and his realisation of how big God’s grace is in his life (1 Cor 15:8-10).<sup>58</sup>

The same line of argument is present in the work of Neyrey (2002:465) who shows some similarities between viewing the Graeco-Roman gods as patrons, and the “praise” that should be given to the God as father. He furthermore quotes Romans 4:4-5<sup>59</sup> to show that we cannot earn God’s rewards as benefactor, but that we can only thank him for his grace in our lives. Even though I am reluctant to interpret God in terms of the Graeco-Roman beneficence system,<sup>60</sup> an understanding of Paul’s

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<sup>55</sup> Gal 1:11-12: “<sup>11</sup>I want you to know, brothers, that the gospel I preached is not something that man made up. <sup>12</sup>I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather, I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ.”

<sup>56</sup> 1 Cor 9:1: “Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are you not the result of my work in the Lord?”

<sup>57</sup> 1 Cor 9:17: “If I preach voluntarily, I have a reward; if not voluntarily, I am simply discharging the trust committed to me.”

<sup>58</sup> 1 Cor 15:8-10: “<sup>8</sup>and last of all, as it were to one untimely born, He appeared to me also. <sup>9</sup>For I am the least of the apostles, who am not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. <sup>10</sup>But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain; but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me.”

<sup>59</sup> Rom 4:4-5: “<sup>4</sup>Now when a man works, his wages are not credited to him as a gift, but as an obligation. <sup>5</sup>However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness.”

<sup>60</sup> To my view Paul often portrays God (1 Cor 10:20-22,26) in term of his “otherness” in the Old Testament (Ps 86:8; 89:6; Is 40:18,25; 46:5).

labour and mission as fulfilling his indebtedness towards God certainly helps us to understand Paul's "free offering of the gospel".

Lastly Paul's spiritual experiences during his early years as a Christian are significant, especially in relation to the Corinthian letters. He did use glossolalia (1 Cor 14:14-15, 18) and also had visions (2 Cor 12:1-6)<sup>61</sup>. There are ample references to Paul as a miracle worker<sup>62</sup>, and Paul also had the gift of prophecy (1 Cor 14:5). All this shows that Paul is not sarcastic when he thanks God for the spiritual gifts of the Corinthians in 1 Cor 1:4-7, but that he "was indeed much more like the Corinthians than many modern commentators like to think" (Witherington 1998:82).

Reviewing Paul's early years as a Christian certainly helps in the assessment of his theology. Not only the central place of Christ in his theology, but also his view on the One God of Israel, his views on the Law, and his doctrine on the Spirit were seriously influenced in this time.

## 6.2.6 Conclusion

In this section it was established that Paul was firmly rooted in three different worlds, let alone the cultural and economic worlds of his audiences and readers. Although Paul was mainly Jewish, his geographical origin, as well as the language- and rhetorical trends of the day played a major role in his life and ministry.

It goes without saying that although Paul did not only retain his zeal after his conversion to Christianity, but even pursued the proclaiming of the gospel with more enthusiasm. His priorities changed dramatically, and he could not be viewed as a true example of a *dyadic* personality anymore.

Paul's ability to overcome so many hurdles in his life, i.e. his physical appearance, the "thorn in the flesh", opposition from almost every culture around him, can only be a testimony of the Lord's grace, as the Lord himself answered Paul in 2 Cor 12:9: "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness."

The three worlds of Paul should not only be seen as a stumbling block to him, but his broad background and experience also equipped him for his

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<sup>61</sup> There is growing consensus amongst scholars that the "man" that Paul "knows" in 2 Cor 12:2 is referring to himself, and that he refers to himself in the third person as a rhetorical strategy (Thrall 2000b: 772).

<sup>62</sup> Cf. Acts 13:1; 14:10; 16:18; 19:11; 28:3-6.



ministry amongst non-Jews and Jews, for refuting ferocious opposition, and to reach Rome as his ultimate missionary goal. Paul's conversion on the road to Damascus certainly had a big influence upon his life, and especially in his zeal for bringing the true gospel to people at all cost.

### 6.3 Paul, suffering, and self-enslavement

In the *Wirkungsgeschichte* (cf. 2.5.5) it has been shown that Paul's suffering (whether voluntarily or not) and the *kenosis* concept are objects of renewed study. Especially the degradational concept of class, i.e. becoming a slave, is within the current focus in Pauline studies. An overview over the exegetical sources in general points to the conclusion that 1 Cor 9:19-23<sup>63</sup> as *locus classicus* in Missiology was somewhat neglected in the Biblical Studies, as is 1 Corinthians in general.<sup>64</sup>

Furthermore, this section is not elaborating on Paul's theology in general, but it especially attends to Paul's treatment of the themes of suffering and slavery. This would assist in providing a context for Paul's reasoning and actions in offering the gospel ἈΔΑΠΑΝΩΣ. As explained in the introduction to this chapter, special emphasis is placed upon Paul's views on Christology and suffering, as well as the theme of self-enslavement.

#### 6.3.1 Paul's Christology

It has already been stated in 6.2.1 that Paul's primary emphasis in his theology is on Christ. The main Scripture portions from which the importance of Christ is deducted, are Php 3:8<sup>65</sup> and 1 Cor 15:3-4<sup>66</sup>. Paul

<sup>63</sup> Even though the theme in this thesis is 1 Cor 9:18, I view the connection between this verse and 1 Cor 9:19-23 to be very close (cf. 1.2).

<sup>64</sup> The oversight of a renowned scholar such as Thrall (1994a:314) by discussing Paul as slave to the Corinthians in 2 Cor 4:5 without any reference to 1 Cor 9:19, and mentioning that 2 Cor 4:5 is the only reference of Paul as a slave to human beings, attests to such a conclusion. In her rhetorical analysis of the first letter to the Corinthians, Mitchell (1991:249) treats the whole section in 1 Cor 9 as a digression, and does not really comment on its rhetorical function.

<sup>65</sup> Php 3:8: "What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ"

does not only refer regularly to Christ in Messianic terms as “the anointed One” or *the* Χριστός, but also in terms of Κύριος (“Lord”). Whilst the reference to Christ as “Messiah” or Χριστός could still be accepted by the Jews, the reference to Jesus as Κύριος, was seen as blasphemy, and probably contributed to their animosity towards Paul (Horrel 2000:57).

This discontinuation of Jewish faith is explored by Dunn (1998:110) with reference to the narrative approach to Paul's theology<sup>67</sup>. The “story of Israel” in Paul's Jewish background is weighed against the “story of Christ”, which started with Paul's conversion on the Damascus road (see 6.1 above). This leads Dunn (1998:110) to use a quite controversial scheme of Paul's theology. Not Christ, but the “God of Israel” is viewed as central to Paul's theology. Furthermore, the “incarnational aspect of Christ” in Paul's theology is not recognised by Dunn (1998:182-206), who initially refers to Christ as: “Jesus the man”.

This view that argues that Jesus was “man” first and elevated to Lord after his resurrection, is generally referred to as the “low” view of Paul's Christology, whilst the traditional and widely accepted model is the “high” theology, stating that Jesus was pre-existent as God before he “emptied” himself from his heavenly glory to become a human being. The “low” view of Paul's Christology is mostly motivated from Romans 1:1-6, where reference is only made to Jesus as born from the seed of David, whilst the “high” view refers mainly to Php 2:6-11, where reference is made to Christ “being in the very nature of God”, before he became a human being (Sanders 1991:81).

To my view the arguments of those who hold the “high” view of Paul's Christology are much more feasible than those of their opponents. Already the use of ἐκένωσεν (emptying himself) in Php 2:7 creates the probability of Paul thinking of Jesus as being of “Godly nature/form” in the same way as Adam<sup>68</sup> highly unlikely. The reference κατὰ σάρκα (according to the flesh) in Rom 6:3, also leaves the question open as to the seed of whom Jesus would be κατὰ πνεῦμα (according to the Spirit), and does not directly support a “low” view of Paul's Christology.

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<sup>66</sup> 1 Cor 15:3-4: “<sup>3</sup>For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, <sup>4</sup>that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures,...

<sup>67</sup> The narrative approach interprets the theology of Paul through the (hi)story of Israel (Horrel 2000:57).

<sup>68</sup> The advocates for the “low” Christology of Paul argue that Christ is compared to Adam in Php 2:6-7, and therefore this verse does not reveal anything about Christ's pre-existence.

Another question within the field of Pauline Christology, is whether the death of Jesus is “sacrificial”<sup>69</sup>, or that the believer is saved by “participation”<sup>70</sup> in the death and resurrection of Christ (Horrel 2000: 57-59). In this difference of opinion the ever-recurring theme of continuation versus discontinuation of the stories of Israel and Christ is repeating. Whilst the “sacrificial” view of redemption would refer mostly to the “Israel story”, the view of redemption by “participation” would be more relevant in terms of the “Christ story”.

### 6.3.2 Paul on self-enslavement and suffering

Christ’s suffering and self-giving plays a major role in Paul’s letters. Paul often uses “the mediating symbol of Christ Jesus crucified, to signify a way in which the persons who occupied the (opposing) positions could understand their engagement with one another.” (Meeks (1986:136).

In discussing Paul’s Christology (6.3.1 above) reference was made of Php 2:6-11 as a central theme in deciding on the “high view” or the “low view” of Christ’s Lordship. Although the exact reference and theological implications of this early Christian hymn is seriously debated amongst scholars, the existence of the *kenosis* model, which refers to the self-emptying act of Christ as pre-existent God, is a witness to the strong following that the “high view” still enjoys.

There is, however, another difference of opinion amongst scholars concerning this hymn in Philippians. The problem is related to the introductory verse to this hymn, namely Php 2:5<sup>71</sup>. Whilst scholars normally accepted that the example to be followed by Christians should be to “empty themselves”, in analogy to Christ, others argue that the emphasis should be on following Christ’s example of suffering and obedience<sup>72</sup>.

The following of this self-emptying act of Christ is debated by other scholars, like Van Zyl (1989:52) and Martin (1983:xxxviii). The main

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<sup>69</sup> Jesus’ sacrificial death points to his death as being the reconciliation for our sin (Sanders 1990:82).

<sup>70</sup> The view of redemption by “participation” is due to Paul’s frequent use of the phrase “in Christ”.

<sup>71</sup> Php 2:5: “Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus.”

<sup>72</sup> See the treatment of this verse by Martin (1990:132), who accepts that the “example” to be followed is that of self-enslavement: “By following Christ down, they will also eventually follow him up”.

difficulty they perceive is that an ordinary Christian does not have a heavenly body/form, and could therefore not imitate Christ to the full. They rather proposed the example to be followed, as being the examples in “suffering” and “obedience”.

By implication the second interpretation is not that far removed from the first, because suffering and obedience are also central to self-enslavement. The difference lies perhaps in the metaphorical limitations that were put in place, i.e. that the nature of Christ's self-enslavement can never be completely imitated.

If Php 2:5 is interpreted with Php 2:1-4 in mind, rather than focusing more on the subsequent hymn, then there is a distinct possibility, that in the light of Php 2:3-4<sup>73</sup>, the focus upon “lowering” oneself can refer to “humbling oneself to a person of lower position”. In discussing *kenosis*, Bosch (1991:513) also refers to John 20:21<sup>74</sup>, where Jesus is sending the disciples in the same way in which the Father has sent him. Despite the questioning of the nature of the example to be followed, there is enough evidence to interpret the example to be followed as *kenosis*, or self-emptying.

The referral made to “suffering” by Van Zyl (1989:52) and Martin (1983:xxxviii) must not be totally discarded. Jesus' life on earth is a perfect example of the close relation between self-emptying and suffering. In 2 Corinthians we find Paul often relating to his suffering. Paul's major comments on suffering are found in 2 Cor 4:8-5:10, 11:23-29 and 11:30-33.

An investigation into the passages in question reveals that Paul's suffering can be attributed to the following reasons: suffering from hardships during his travel and ministry and deprivation as result of his ministry, (2 Cor 4:8; 11:25-27), attitudes from “false brothers and sisters” (2 Cor 11:26) as well as anxiety for all the churches (2 Cor 4:15, 11:28), and physical pain and suffering at the hands of his enemies, such as the incidents referred to in 2 Cor 4:9, 11:23-26 and 11:30-33.

Paul's approach to suffering could be summarized by the word ὑποφέρω (to endure, stand up under) (Davids 2005:445), which is found in 1 Cor

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<sup>73</sup> Php 2:3-4: “<sup>3</sup>Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. <sup>4</sup>Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.”

<sup>74</sup> Jn 20:21: “Again Jesus said, “Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.”

10:13<sup>75</sup>, 2 Timothy 3:11<sup>76</sup> and 1 Peter 2:19<sup>77</sup>. This same theme of endurance comes to mind in 1 Cor 9:24-27, where Paul compares himself with an athlete prepared to run in such a way that he does get the everlasting crown as prize.

In line with the *kenosis* theme, Paul uses the juxtapositioning of the “emptying or enslaving process” from human perspective in comparison with the inner renewal of man through the spiritual perspective<sup>78</sup>. These paradoxes are the expression of the “paradox of the cross” worked out in the life of the ministry (Hanson 1987:39). Even though Jesus Christ suffered on the cross, it did not take away the “suffering of the apostles”. In the same way, Hanson (1987:53) argues that the suffering that the apostles endure is serving as an example, and cannot be a “substitute” for the suffering that the Christians will endure in general. But in all suffering for Christ, it is done with the eschatological faith and hope in the second coming of Christ (Horrel 2003:68; Davids 2005:451).

From the different types of suffering described earlier in this section, it is clear that Paul’s concern or anxiety for the well-being of the congregation is of utmost importance. This is proven by referring so often to his suffering in 2 Corinthians, to persuade them that he has their best interests at heart.

### 6.3.3 Paul and the metaphor of slavery

The subject of slavery in the Bible has almost been overexploited through the years. Especially within the socio-historical context it has received ample attention. This study focuses more on the metaphorical<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> 1 Cor 10:13: “No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.”

<sup>76</sup> 2 Tim 3:11: “... persecutions, sufferings - what kinds of things happened to me in Antioch, Iconium and Lystra, the persecutions I endured. Yet the Lord rescued me from all of them.

<sup>77</sup> 1 Peter 2:19: “For it is commendable if a man bears up under the pain of unjust suffering because he is conscious of God.”

<sup>78</sup> The juxtaposition is clear in the outer “wasting away” and inner renewal in 2 Cor 4:16-18, and the metaphor of the earthly and heavenly tents (2 Cor 5:1-5), and in being “at home” and “away” (being present in the body, or with God in his Kingdom) in 2 Cor 5:6-10 (Davids 2005:449).

<sup>79</sup> In a metaphor one entity or realm of experience is being described in terms borrowed from another (entity). It also “incorporates features that may be recognised as apt in

use of slavery in the New Testament, and the understanding of Paul's use of δούλος and related words. A short overview of slavery in its literal sense is necessary to distinguish the shared meaning between the literal and the metaphorical sense (Combes 1998:14).

Although δούλος Χριστοῦ is not within the main metaphorical use (being self-enslavement to fellow human beings) it is important not only to contrast and compare Paul's view on enslavement to fellow Christians and non-Christians, but also his view on being "slave of Christ" as well as a "slave of fellow men".

Paul qualifies the equality between free and slave with the supposition ἐν Χριστῷ. Not viewing the believers from a natural point of view (2 Cor 5:16<sup>80</sup>), but a spiritual (2 Cor 5:17<sup>81</sup>), Paul replaces the natural slave-free antithesis by the contrast between being "in Christ" or "separated from Christ" (Ep 2:12-13<sup>82</sup>; Rom 9:3<sup>83</sup>).

Despite several recent attempts to question Paul's attitude towards slavery,<sup>84</sup> I still view 1 Cor 7:21-22<sup>85</sup> and Gal 3:28<sup>86</sup> as the *prima facie* evidence for Paul's approach. These passages (together with 1 Cor 12:13 and Col 3:11), is a clear indication that slavery or freedom made no difference in the context of the church (Conzelmann 1975:127). Even though Fitzgerald (2009:37) argues that Paul in a sense approved the

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reference to the entity being described and other features that are clearly inapplicable" (Harris 1999:19).

<sup>80</sup> 2 Cor 5:16: "So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view."

<sup>81</sup> 2 Cor 5:17: "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!"

<sup>82</sup> Ep 2:12-13: "<sup>12</sup>remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. <sup>13</sup>But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ."

<sup>83</sup> Rom 9:3: "For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, those of my own race,..."

<sup>84</sup> Recent criticisms of Paul's attitude towards slavery include Fitzgerald (2009:1-46) and Punt (2008:1-24).

<sup>85</sup> 1 Cor 7:20-22: "<sup>20</sup>Each one should remain in the situation which he was in when God called him. <sup>21</sup>Were you a slave when you were called? Don't let it trouble you - although if you can gain your freedom, do so. <sup>22</sup>For he who was a slave when he was called by the Lord is the Lord's freedman; similarly, he who was a free man when he was called is Christ's slave."

<sup>86</sup> Gal 3:28: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus."

*status quo* of slave treatment by instructing them to obey their masters with “fear and trembling” (Eph 6:5), he also states that Paul instructs masters to dispense with the use of “threats”.

Paul allows for slaves who have built up their *peculium* to achieve freedom by *manumissio* to strive for freedom, but he rather advocates acceptance of the *status quo* than achieving “structural change” in society concerning slavery practices.

In verse 22 it is noteworthy that Paul in effect takes the notion of equality “in Christ” a step further. Proceeding to “slavery” and “being free” in the metaphorical sense, he states that a slave is the Lord’s freedman, and a free man is now Christ’s slave. Paul therefore almost advocates for a reversal of cognitive concepts regarding slavery in the minds of the Corinthian believers.

The way that Paul employs this metaphor now comes into focus. The most prominent of the combinations in which Paul uses the metaphor of slavery is the portraying of himself as δοῦλος Χριστοῦ (slave of Christ). The title “slave of Christ”, can either refer to a sense of the Old Testament prophets being called God’s slaves or servants, or to Martin’s (1990:50-60) view of Paul as “managerial slave of Christ”. According to the second view, it mattered less that one was a slave than whose slave one was (Martin 1990:35).

Although the descriptions above are not to be ignored totally, “slave of Christ” must actually encompass more than just being an archaic title or managerial position.<sup>87</sup> Detaching it from its use in a more abstract sense above, Harris (1999:143) reiterates the severity of a slave’s situation, and refers to the focal points in the “slave of Christ”-metaphor as (1) “humble submission to the person of Christ”, (2) “unquestioning obedience to the Masters will”, and (3) an “exclusive preoccupation with pleasing Christ” (2 Cor 5:9<sup>88</sup>).

The view of Harris above is persuasive. The existence of the first two explanations can largely be attributed to an effort of reconciling the

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<sup>87</sup> As argued in 2.5.4 above there is an increasing tendency amongst scholars to view Paul as “oppressor”. Punt (2008:18) goes so far as to argue that Paul’s use of this term is an indication of “Paul’s hybridity”, and that Paul is using this designation for himself as a rhetorical means of acquiring power in the communities he addressed as apostle. I sense that there is enough evidence for the opposite, and that Paul indeed aspired to be a humble ‘slave for all.’

<sup>88</sup> 2 Cor 5:9: “So we make it our goal to please him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it.

“slave of Christ” concept with Paul’s claim to apostolic authority from a rhetorical angle.

Although Paul refers often to his own role as “slave of Christ” he focuses even more on metaphorical use of slavery in his description of the believer. The δοῦλος-concept also has a negative use in Paul’s letters. Not only are the readers portrayed as previously being slaves of sin (Rom 6:20<sup>89</sup>), and slaves of worldly practices (Gal 4:3<sup>90</sup>), but Paul fears that the Christians might again become slaves of men (1 Cor 7:23<sup>91</sup>, Gal 5:1<sup>92</sup>). By giving in to circumcision and Jewish law, Paul warns the believers that they will just fall back into spiritual slavery, being slaves of Jewish laws and not of Christ.

Although Paul does highlight some negative aspects of his addressees’ lives, the meanings of slavery that he assigns to the members are generally positive. Paul uses the *manumissio* concept, where a slave acquired freedom with his death, to show that Christians are redeemed from their sin (Rom 6:6-7<sup>93</sup>). Therefore the believers are seen to be free from sin, and slaves to righteousness (Rom 6:18<sup>94</sup>). The Christians are not only called to serve Christ as slaves (Rom 14:18<sup>95</sup>), but they are also encouraged to become slaves to one another (Gal 5:13<sup>96</sup>).

Last, but not least, it is essential for my study to investigate the *kenotic* pattern of slavery in the Pauline letters. It has already been argued (6.2.4) that the rhetoric of self-enslavement was not foreign to the demagogue leaders in the time of Paul. Paul’s metaphorical use of slavery eventually

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<sup>89</sup> Rom 6:20: “When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the control of righteousness.”

<sup>90</sup> Gal 4:3: “So also, when we were children, we were in slavery under the basic principles of the world.” The Greek τὰ στοιχεῖα can be best translated by “elementary and restrictive practices” (Tolmie 2004:137-138).

<sup>91</sup> 1 Cor 7:23: “You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of men.”

<sup>92</sup> Gal 5:1: “It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.”

<sup>93</sup> Rom 6:6-7: “For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin - <sup>7</sup>because anyone who has died has been freed from sin.”

<sup>94</sup> Rom 6:18: “You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness.”

<sup>95</sup> Rom 14:18: “... because anyone who serves Christ in this way is pleasing to God and approved by men.”

<sup>96</sup> Gal 5:13: “You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love.”



extends past himself and his readers to Christ becoming a slave (Martin 1990:87-116).

Paul's own enslavement is presented as an example to those who follow him, and is "modelled on the kenosis of Christ himself" (Combes 1998:77). Despite attempts to levitate the despicable nature of a slave in the First Century, it still stands that Christ's self-enslavement led him to the cross, where he died the death of a slave (Php 2:7-8).

But Paul also yearns for this kenotic pattern becoming part of the lives of his fellow Christians (Harris 1999:103). The apostles also commend themselves and their lifestyle to "every man's conscience in the sight of God" (2 Cor 4:3). They followed Christ's example of self-enslavement, to become an example of serving the believers as slaves (2 Cor 4:5).<sup>97</sup> Paul thus also links the metaphor of slavery to the suffering and the cross of Jesus Christ. Without this in mind the metaphor of slavery in the Pauline letters cannot be fully understood.

### 6.3.4 Conclusion

The preceding section provides to my view enough evidence that suffering and self-enslavement was much more than superfluous rhetorical devices to Paul, but that it was part and parcel of his theology, his practical life, and his mission to the gentiles. He did not only follow in Christ's footsteps, but also did so with a self-emptying attitude.

I furthermore contend that the emphasis on Paul's *kenosis*, humility, and self sacrifice has not been adequately researched, especially in the wake of growing criticism of Paul and his attitude. Despite the fact that we have very little of Paul other than a few manuscripts in the New Testament, I fail to see the ambiguousness, the domineering figure of the *pater familias*, or the mysonogist that he is often made out to be.

This approach of Paul's self-emptying suffering and self-enslavement, also had definite economic implications for his ministry. In the following section Paul's Collection will be discussed, which I hold to be no more than an extension of his approach and attitude described above.

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<sup>97</sup> 2 Cor 4:5: "For we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake."

## 6.4 Paul, poverty and the Collection

Though a plethora of research has been published about the collection for Jerusalem, the connection between the Collection and Paul's tent-making have often been neglected (cf. 2.5.2), and deserves space in this pivotal chapter of the thesis.

Even though the request to "remember the poor" in Gal 2:10 almost serves as a footnote to Paul's consultation with the leaders in Jerusalem, this 'passing remark' has indeed much more to it than meets the eye. It has already been shown from *The Shepherd of Hermas* (cf. 2.2) that the money collected in the church was to go to a 'true prophet', and that it may have had some bearing on Paul's Collection. By collecting money for the poor in Jerusalem, Paul and his converts showed allegiance to the covenant of Abraham and the Jewish origin of the church, by even paying the equivalent of 'temple tax' (Punt 2004a:257).

To my view the message from the Jerusalem leaders was that Paul's ultimate loyalty to the church in Jerusalem was eventually not measured in terms of the contents and aim of the message (which he went to convey to these leaders), but in the measure of financial assistance that he could provide to Jerusalem and the poor there.

Even though the initial request of the Jewish leaders made perfect sense at face value,<sup>98</sup> it must be asked whether their intentions were sincere. Paul's severe criticism of Peter in the subsequent verses (Gal 2:11-14), indicates that the initial accord did not last long. Paul laboured and toiled for 6-8 years to gather funds for the poor in Jerusalem, but the question remains whether Paul's hard efforts to secure the Collection was not eventually in vain.

Paul's ensuing references<sup>99</sup> to the Collection all indicate that it was by no means a quick and easy task. In 1 Cor 16:1-4 Paul is carefully instructing<sup>100</sup> the congregation on saving up for the collection for the poor in

<sup>98</sup> It has already been shown that during the visit to Jerusalem in 49/51 AD a worldwide famine existed, which was especially severe in the city and its surroundings, and that the request to help the poor was by no means ungrounded in terms of the financial situation of certain groups within the early church.

<sup>99</sup> The main references to the collection by Paul himself are Rom 15:25-30, 1 Cor 16:1-4, 2 Cor 8-9.

<sup>100</sup> Paul's instructions in this passage is described by Joubert (2002:679-670) as highly autocratic in comparison with his treatment of collection in 2 Cor 8-9. I contend that Joubert is perhaps overexploiting this passage in terms of Paul's "autocratic leadership".

Jerusalem in the same manner as the Galatian churches did. The believers had to save up their contributions on a weekly basis, indicating that none or very few of them had the finances to donate a large sum of money at once.<sup>101</sup> Paul's suggested *modus operandi* (to send the delegates separately with the money of the Corinthian church), also draws a question mark behind all the speculation concerning the acceptance of the Collection.<sup>102</sup>

Chapter 8 and 9 of 2 Corinthians does not only provide ample information on the Collection itself, but also valuable information on the Corinthian congregation. The three main themes in these two chapters are identified by Punt (2004a:261) as righteousness, fellowship and sharing.<sup>103</sup> As these three themes are also recurrent from the Old Testament treatment of poverty, I contend that they can serve as a worthwhile framework for analysing 2 Cor 8-9.

Paul commences his request to the Corinthians on the grounds that God gave to the Macedonian churches, which did not refer to material blessing as such, but the gift of generosity (9:15) amidst "severe" trials and "extreme poverty" (8:1,2). God's righteousness therefore is closely linked to his generosity.<sup>104</sup> Paul not only uses a quote from Psalm 112:9, but he also promises a "harvest of ... righteousness" (9:10).<sup>105</sup> He was more

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His interpretation of (1 Cor 16:4) as referring to Paul's accompaniment as dependent on the size of the collection does not persuade.

<sup>101</sup> The notion that the weekly savings indicated a low income amongst the Corinthians was postulated amongst others by Murphy O'Connor (1991:17), but it should be taken into account that the Galatians (who received the same instruction) were described as poor anyway (2 Cor 8:2), and that not too much must be deducted from the copying of these instructions to the Corinthians.

<sup>102</sup> As Paul was giving this instruction in the same way to the Galatian congregations, it might have been that Paul did not take the whole collection after 6-8 years, but that he sent some of the collections to Jerusalem upfront via members of the congregations themselves. That would mean that Paul did not have to transport with him a large amount of money. The reference to the collection of the previous year in Paul's Second letter to the Corinthians also creates the impression that the collection was sent to Jerusalem regularly (2 Cor 8:10).

<sup>103</sup> I view these concepts of righteousness, fellowship and sharing not only important for the Collection, but also for Paul's address on his self-support in 1 Corinthians 9.

<sup>104</sup> God's justice is closely linked with his generosity in the parable of the unjust judge in Luke 18:6-7 (cf. 5.3.1). This righteousness certainly played a role towards Jerusalem, where the care for the widows was also a problem (Acts 6:1).

<sup>105</sup> *Contra* the claims of prosperity theology, the "blessing of giving" is not always refunded in receiving material blessings, but being rich in terms of spiritual blessings.

than the 'wealthy patron' of the Graeco-Roman era, but the God of Israel who also revealed himself in his 'otherness' (cf. 6.2.6). This is all the more evident in the way Paul describes God in 9:6-15 as the one who gives what he asks, and who supplies those who are prepared to share with others.

Having grown up as a Jew and a Pharisee himself, and having a special burden for the salvation of the Jews (cf. 6.2.5), the fellowship<sup>106</sup> between the Jerusalem church and the daughter churches was of special concern to Paul. This is especially true when he motivates the Collection in 2 Cor 8-9. Paul not only focuses on the attitude of the Collection (8:5,<sup>107</sup> 9:7),<sup>108</sup> but builds upon the existing relations between himself, his co-workers and the churches (8:16-9:12-14), and stresses the importance of *ἰσότης* (equality)<sup>109</sup> in the Collection (8:13-15).

Last, but definitely not least is the financial side of *κοινωνία* (sharing). This concept of sharing mentioned in 9:13,<sup>110</sup> has a lot in common with fellowship and equality, but it is at the roots of the collection itself. It is about being able to discern between "nice to have" and "cannot be without". It is about being able to give "according to what one has" (8:12) without being "hard pressed" (8:13). It is the ability to sense the need of others and to share with them, even being in "extreme poverty" oneself (8:2).

Paul's last explicit reference to the collection is found in Romans 15:25-33. It is striking how the themes of righteousness, fellowship and sharing are visible in this passage. The assistance to Jerusalem is not only something that is "owed" (a judicial term) to the church in Jerusalem

<sup>106</sup> Paul also often used *κοινωνία* (Php 1:5; Phlm 6), in the sense of fellowship, to express "generosity or liberality in financial terms" (Punt 2004a:261).

<sup>107</sup> 2 Cor 8:5b "... Then it will be ready as a generous gift, not as one grudgingly given."

<sup>108</sup> 2 Cor 8:7 "Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver."

<sup>109</sup> This fellowship as based on a relationship of equality does need more attention here. The relationship between the churches is (to my view) specifically disengaged from the 'patron-client' context. The principles of sustenance and contentment, as well as the importance of an "equal portion" described in the previous chapter, is evident here. It must, however, be noted that the equality is qualified by Paul, in terms of the givers not having "too much" and the recipients not having "too little" (8:15). It does therefore not mean that everybody will have precisely the same.

<sup>110</sup> 2 Cor 9:13: "Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, men will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else."

(15:27), but the notion of the sharing of spiritual as well as material blessings is very prominent in the passage.

From the above it is evident that the Collection gave a purpose and a focus to the church in the Diaspora, and in a sense shaped Paul's message and ministry. From whichever angle one may look at Paul's motives, the Collection did not make his life easier.<sup>111</sup> Taking the gospel across known boundaries, planting and nourishing new churches (as a previous opponent of Christianity), and simultaneously collecting money for the Jerusalem poor during a worldwide famine, must have been, to say the least, daily draining Paul's physical, material and spiritual resources.<sup>112</sup>

The lack of a documented conclusion to the Collection (cf. 2.5.2) does suggest that the poor did not receive at least the "full benefit" of the Collection,<sup>113</sup> as Paul had to pay for the purification rites (Num 6:1-21) for him and his four Greek travel companions, which added up to a considerable amount (Joubert 2000:214). Despite several warnings by the Holy Spirit (Acts 20:23), and Agabus (Acts 21:10,11), Paul went to Jerusalem, and delivered the Collection (or at least the final payment thereof), where he was enticed into the temple, and eventually arrested.

Assessing the Collection effort may lead one to jump to conclusion that Paul was made a "spectacle" and being held for a "fool" (1 Cor 4:9-10) by the Jewish leaders, and that he was sent on a futile mission, ending in jail, on the road to nowhere else than a *cul-de-sac*. The conclusion of the Collection in Acts (21:26-40) may create the impression that Paul was accepted warmly, but forced to enter the temple, and subsequently being left to 'hang and dry' by the leaders of the Jerusalem church.

Even though they certainly had difference of opinion, the main aim of this thesis is not to criticise or victimise the Jerusalem leaders, but rather to focus on Paul's efforts to preserve and strengthen the unity between the believers as the body of Christ over all cultural and economic boundaries. I do not concur with the notion cited by Wedderburn (2001:141) that the Collection eventually resulted in a breakdown between the Jude-

<sup>111</sup> In the *Wirkungsgeschichte* (2.5.2) it has been argued that Paul's intentions with the collection are doubted by some scholars.

<sup>112</sup> Not only the peristasis-lists in 2 Corinthians, but also Luke's recording of Paul's approach to Jerusalem in Acts 19-20 reflects the personal suffering and want that Paul endured during his ministry.

<sup>113</sup> In Acts 24:17 Paul does give the impression that he brought his people "gifts to the poor, as well as offerings".

an churches and Paul. His serving attitude in this instance rather sets the standard for personal sacrifice (also in terms of his personal income) on behalf of Christ and the righteousness, fellowship and sharing of his church.

## 6.5 *Paul's vocation and compensation*

The vital role of Paul's labour as a tentmaker or leather-worker in his offering of the gospel as free of charge has been reiterated often through the thesis, especially in the Introduction (1.1-2) and the *Wirkungsgeschichte* in Chapter 2. In this section a brief introduction on the nature of Paul's physical labour in the congregations will be given, followed by a detailed consideration of the function of labour and remuneration in his ministry.

### 6.5.1 Introduction

Even though artisans were categorized together with the workers that received part of the taxes as payment from the king (Walton *et. al.* 2000:185), as described in 1 Samuel 8:10-17, this changed during the exile, especially with the destruction of the temple and the gradual decline in organised religion. These events not only contributed to the birth and growth of Rabbinic Judaism, but also to the need for funding.

Shemaiah, one of Hillel's teachers instructed the rabbis to love labour, and to evade enslavement by somebody else, as well as ties with the ruling power (Agrell 1976:47). In the context of the Intertestamental power struggles, Shemaiah encourages a trade, in order to make sure that the Pharisee can stay loyal to his calling, rather than being entangled in political power struggles.

The teaching of a trade was a *sine qua non* in the Rabbinic life, and the rabbinic maxim, "whoever does not teach his son a craft, teaches him to be a robber" is well known (Hock 1978:22). Whether Paul learned his trade from his father, or from Gamaliel or another teacher with his studies as a Pharisee, is uncertain. The more important for this thesis, however, is the assumption that "many rabbis practised a trade," and that Paul "maintained this tradition as a Christian preacher" (Hock 1978:22).

Even though much has been said about the acceptability of Paul's trade as a tentmaker in the Graeco-Roman world (cf. also 4.3), it is clear that

Paul's trade would in a sense be more acceptable amongst the Jewish Christians of his time. It must be noted, however, that not all the Jewish groups in the First Century approved of this kind of practise.

The Qumran community, for instance, required of converts to sell their belongings and donate it to the community within the first year. The aversion of worldly occupations was not only seen in their withdrawal from the secular world, but their writings also include several judgements upon the priests and the temple in Israel that have become corrupt through wealth (Blomberg 1999:98-99).

In the *Wirkungsgeschichte* (cf. 2.7) sixteen possible reasons for Paul 'plying a trade' and not accepting a salary from the Corinthians have already been identified. The limited space of this thesis does not allow much more elaboration on the background of Paul's trade. What is required, however, is a re-reading of texts and focusing in on the most important of these reasons. Using the same method as in Chapter 5, this analysis will be done from a revelation historical perspective. For the sake of continuity the same headings will be used as in 5.4 above.

## 6.5.2 Paul's attitude towards apostles, evangelists, labour and compensation

### Religious leaders, labour and compensation in Paul

#### *Labourers claiming more than deserved*

2 Cor 2:14-3:3 <sup>14</sup> But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ and through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of him. <sup>15</sup> For we are to God the aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing. <sup>16</sup> To the one we are the smell of death; to the other, the fragrance of life. And who is equal to such a task? <sup>17</sup> Unlike so many, we do not peddle the word of God for profit. On the contrary, in Christ we speak before God with sincerity, like men sent from God.<sup>3:1</sup> Are we beginning to commend ourselves again? Or do we need, like some people, letters of recommendation to you or from you? <sup>2</sup> You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, known and read by everybody. <sup>3</sup> You show that you are a letter from Christ, the result of our ministry, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.

**Relevance:** Paul compares their own ministry to the ministry of those in verse 17 that "peddle" the word of God for profit. This would certainly

refer to the same kind of ministers<sup>114</sup> that is referred to in the letters to Timothy and Titus, and also mentioned in Jude (cf. 1.2.1). From the description of his own ministry it can be deducted that they were insincere in their motives, not being “sent from God”. Instead of being in the “triumphal procession in Christ”, they probably boasted about themselves in the congregation in the hope of receiving money, which they did not really deserve. This passage is not only used *contra* those how peddle for the word (cf. 2.7.7), but against preachers taking “profit” in a poor community.

**Place in revelation-history:** Paul's referral to the “triumphal procession in Christ” refers to the plight of true servants of God as being degraded in the same way as Christ were, but with the hope of being in this same procession of glory when Christ returns.

### ***Leaders not satisfied with their rewards***

2 Cor 11:16-22 <sup>16</sup> I repeat: Let no one take me for a fool. But if you do, then receive me just as you would a fool, so that I may do a little boasting. <sup>17</sup> In this self-confident boasting I am not talking as the Lord would, but as a fool. <sup>18</sup> Since many are boasting in the way the world does, I too will boast. <sup>19</sup> You gladly put up with fools since you are so wise! <sup>20</sup> In fact, you even put up with anyone who enslaves you or exploits you or takes advantage of you or pushes himself forward or slaps you in the face. <sup>21</sup> To my shame I admit that we were too weak for that! What anyone else dares to boast about - I am speaking as a fool - I also dare to boast about. <sup>22</sup> Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they Abraham's descendants? So am I.

**Relevance:** The Hebrews in the congregation of Corinth were not content to accept the normal privileges that accompanied the office of evangelist. Their actions are expressed here in severe terms, i.e. they enslaved the congregants, exploited them, took advantage of them, and even slapped them in the face (v. 20). Paul admits in verse 21 that he and his companions were “to weak”<sup>115</sup> to be assertive and state their case whenever they were exploited.

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<sup>114</sup> This probably refers to the “Judaizers” mentioned in 2 Cor 11:20-22, who had their own agenda. The possibility is there that they could have continued the economic exploitation typical of the Pharisees on another level.

<sup>115</sup> The ‘weakness’ of Paul, often (to my view incorrectly) seen as no more than a rhetorical device, is quite significant here. Paul also describes his coming to the congregation as “in weakness” (1 Cor 2:3, 4:10). I therefore do not view Paul's approach to the congregation in the First and Second Letter to the Corinthians as radically different from one another



**Place in revelation-history:** These leaders in the early church proceeded in the same way as the Pharisees, and Sadducees, by thinking that that they can rely on their being “Hebrews” to gain power and profit.

### ***Leaders lacking integrity and loyalty***

1 Cor 3:10-15 <sup>10</sup>By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as an expert builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should be careful how he builds. <sup>11</sup>For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. <sup>12</sup>If any man builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, <sup>13</sup>his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man's work. <sup>14</sup>If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward. <sup>15</sup>If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames.

**Relevance:** Paul compares the labour in the congregation to a building. Although the flaws are not immediately visible, the test comes when it is exposed to the elements. In the same way the attitude and the result of Paul's opposition will be exposed when the Lord comes to test everyone's work. Paul qualifies his own building work as “by grace”, and therefore not as something for him to boast about. The receiving of a reward<sup>116</sup> is also mentioned here.

**Place in revelation-history:** The reference to Jesus Christ being the cornerstone (Eph 2:20, 1 Pt 2:6), is important in the light of Paul stating the basis of faith that he proclaimed. It is noteworthy that the link between labour and Jesus' second coming is not only clear here, but in the rest of the Bible as well (cf. 1.2).

### ***Paul receiving more than he deserved***

Php 4:14-19 <sup>14</sup>Yet it was good of you to share in my troubles. <sup>15</sup>Moreover, as you Philippians know, in the early days of your acquaintance with the gospel, when I set out from Macedonia, not one church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving, except you only; <sup>16</sup>for even when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me aid again and again when I was

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(*contra* Joubert 2002:678-688). The language used here by Paul also portrays the subjects of exploitation in the congregation as ‘weak’. Even though I do acknowledge that the concept ‘weak’ appears within different semantic fields in the letters to the Corinthians, I hold that there are definite economic underlays to the use of ἀσθενεία in 1 Cor 1:25, and in 1 Cor 9:22.

<sup>116</sup> It has been argued in the New Perspective on Paul that in the Reformation the theme of a ‘reward’ was neglected because of the focus on grace (cf. 2.5.6).

in need.<sup>17</sup> Not that I am looking for a gift, but I am looking for what may be credited to your account.<sup>18</sup> I have received full payment and even more; I am amply supplied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent. They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God.<sup>19</sup> And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.

**Relevance:** In contrast to Paul's working "free of charge" in the congregation of Corinth (1 Cor 9:18), it is noteworthy that the Philippians are praised in this instance for their assistance to Paul. Paul is not only singling them out as the only church that contributed to his work, but he states that he received "full payment and even more" from them, and that he is "fully supplied". In verse 17 contains an interesting interjection, where Paul explicitly states that he is not looking for a gift by thanking them, but "for what may be credited to their account." This would probably indicate that Paul does not view this as a continuous reciprocity in a patron-client relationship, but that his gratitude in a sense concluded "the deal".

**Place in revelation-history:** The contribution from the Philippians to Paul can be viewed in the light of the progressive institutionalisation of the church, and their ability to support missionaries (which the church in Jerusalem was not able to do, according to Gal 2:10). Even though Paul "settles the account" by thanking them, he adds that God provides to them through Christ's riches. They will therefore, although Paul cannot really reimburse them, receive from God much more than they spent.

### ***Paul receiving less than he deserved***

1 Cor 9:3-9<sup>3</sup> This is my defense to those who sit in judgment on me.<sup>4</sup> Don't we have the right to food and drink?<sup>5</sup> Don't we have the right to take a believing wife along with us, as do the other apostles and the Lord's brothers and Cephas?<sup>6</sup> Or is it only I and Barnabas who must work for a living?<sup>7</sup> Who serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat of its grapes? Who tends a flock and does not drink of the milk?<sup>8</sup> Do I say this merely from a human point of view? Doesn't the Law say the same thing?<sup>9</sup> For it is written in the Law of Moses: "Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain." Is it about oxen that God is concerned?

**Relevance:** Paul clearly refers to the rights of the apostles in terms of Old Testament terms. Just as in the case of the Levites, they had the right to

be supported by the congregation.<sup>117</sup> On the other hand, the manner of compensation to the apostles was by no means fixed by regulations, and even although communities such as the one in Corinth consisted of many Jews that knew the background concerning Levites and prophets, they quickly realised that Paul was bringing a new gospel, which many of them rejected (Acts 18:12-22).

**Place in revelation-history:** Although Jesus had more than once sent out evangelists in the gospel, and had given them exact instructions on how to approach the Jewish communities, this became more complicated in the spreading of the gospel to the nations.

### *Working for free*

**1 Cor 9:11-12** <sup>11</sup> If we have sown spiritual seed among you, is it too much if we reap a material harvest from you? <sup>12</sup> If others have this right of support from you, shouldn't we have it all the more? But we did not use this right. On the contrary, we put up with anything rather than hinder the gospel of Christ.

**Relevance:** Paul is using the agricultural metaphor of sowing seed and the harvesting here. This is exactly illustrating the point made in 6.5.2 above, that there is no comparable measure concerning precise material compensation for spiritual work done. Paul's motive for not using "that right" was not to hinder the gospel. To see the gospel spread successfully was clearly Paul's all surpassing motive (2.7.16).

**Place in revelation-history:** Paul's burden for the salvation of souls, and the zeal with which he pursued it, is probably due to his experience of the saving power of the gospel of Christ. Therefore he gave his all to promote the spreading of the gospel.

**1 Cor 9:15-18** <sup>15</sup> But I have not used any of these rights. And I am not writing this in the hope that you will do such things for me. I would rather die than have anyone deprive me of this boast. <sup>16</sup> Yet when I preach the gospel, I cannot boast, for I am compelled to preach. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel! <sup>17</sup> If I preach voluntarily, I have a reward; if not voluntarily, I am simply discharging the trust committed to me. <sup>18</sup> What then is my reward? Just this: that in preaching the gospel I may offer it free of charge, and so not make use of my rights in preaching it.

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<sup>117</sup> Whether Paul never made the congregation aware of their duty, or whether Paul denied assistance offered to him, is not quite clear. What is clear, however, was that he received a lot of criticism for somebody that only wanted to bring the gospel of salvation with all his energy and strength.

**Relevance:** Like in Php 4:17 we see that Paul is continually struggling to let the congregations realise that he does not want something from them by addressing this issue (v. 15). Paul views his reward as being able to give (Acts 20:35), and therefore he brings the gospel voluntarily.<sup>118</sup>

**Place in revelation-history:** Paul experiences a trust from the Lord on him to bring the gospel as effective as possible. The calling of the Lord to bring the gospel to all nations is compelling Paul to preach, regardless of material compensation.

**2 Cor 11:7-13** <sup>7</sup> Was it a sin for me to lower myself in order to elevate you by preaching the gospel of God to you free of charge? <sup>8</sup> I robbed other churches by receiving support from them so as to serve you. <sup>9</sup> And when I was with you and needed something, I was not a burden to anyone, for the brothers who came from Macedonia supplied what I needed. I have kept myself from being a burden to you in any way, and will continue to do so. <sup>10</sup> As surely as the truth of Christ is in me, nobody in the regions of Achaia will stop this boasting of mine. <sup>11</sup> Why? Because I do not love you? God knows I do! <sup>12</sup> And I will keep on doing what I am doing in order to cut the ground from under those who want an opportunity to be considered equal with us in the things they boast about. <sup>13</sup> For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, masquerading as apostles of Christ.

**Relevance:** Paul viewing his offering of the gospel as “free of charge” as a lowering of himself is of cardinal importance here. In his answer to the unhappiness regarding his refusal of financial support, he suddenly refers to “robbing” other churches, as if it was not the “right” thing to do, especially in the light of them assisting Paul to manage in Corinth. Paul illustrates his support from Macedonia as “negative reciprocity”, in terms of using it on behalf of the Corinthians. Again we find Paul’s intention never to receive anything from the Corinthians. Paul’s repeated insistence that he “does not want to be a burden” is connected with his aversion of the behaviour of his opponents (2.7.7).

**Place in revelation-history:** In the early church there were many false apostles, and Paul refers to a true apostle as taking the needs of the congregation at heart, without burdening them (2.7.15).

**2 Cor 12:11-18**<sup>11</sup> I have made a fool of myself, but you drove me to it. I ought to have been commended by you, for I am not in the least inferior

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<sup>118</sup> Paul’s comment in verse 15 that he would rather die than “have anyone deprive me from this boast”, does indicate that there was continuous pressure on Paul to receive money from the congregation, and that he persistently refused to do so.

to the "super-apostles," even though I am nothing. <sup>12</sup>The things that mark an apostle - signs, wonders and miracles - were done among you with great perseverance. <sup>13</sup> How were you inferior to the other churches, except that I was never a burden to you? Forgive me this wrong! <sup>14</sup> Now I am ready to visit you for the third time, and I will not be a burden to you, because what I want is not your possessions but you. After all, children should not have to save up for their parents, but parents for their children. <sup>15</sup> So I will very gladly spend for you everything I have and expend myself as well. If I love you more, will you love me less? <sup>16</sup> Be that as it may, I have not been a burden to you. Yet, crafty fellow that I am, I caught you by trickery! <sup>17</sup> Did I exploit you through any of the men I sent you? <sup>18</sup> I urged Titus to go to you and I sent our brother with him. Titus did not exploit you, did he? Did we not act in the same spirit and follow the same course?

**Relevance:** By arguing that he caught them by trickery, Paul is referring to never insisting on material assistance, and therefore not only removing from them a financial burden (2.7.15), but also removing stones from his opponent's hands (2.7.7). Again we read in verse 14 that Paul explicitly states that he does not want the Corinthians' possessions by addressing this issue. Paul here also explains his "working for free" in terms of being a parent of the congregation who feels the responsibility to do everything on their behalf without expecting compensation (2.7.12).

**Place in revelation-history:** The Corinthians has seen all the signs and wonders of a New Testament congregation, but they view the issue of Paul's remuneration from a worldly, material perspective. To them their status amongst other congregations of the early church is at stake, and the possibility of being seen as inferior blinds them for the love Paul has towards them.

**1 Thessalonians 2:5-10** <sup>5</sup> You know we never used flattery, nor did we put on a mask to cover up greed - God is our witness. <sup>6</sup> We were not looking for praise from men, not from you or anyone else. As apostles of Christ we could have been a burden to you, <sup>7</sup> but we were babies among you,<sup>119</sup> like a mother caring for her little children. <sup>8</sup> We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us. <sup>9</sup> Surely you remember, brothers, our toil and hardship; we worked night and day in order not to be a burden to anyone while we preached the gospel of God to you.

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<sup>119</sup> The text of the UBS 4 is preferred here to the NIV translation reading "babies", instead of gentle.

<sup>10</sup> You are witnesses, and so is God, of how holy, righteous and blameless we were among you who believed. <sup>11</sup> For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, <sup>12</sup> encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory.

**Relevance:** Paul refers again here to working with his hands in order not to be a burden (2.7.9) to the Thessalonians. He motivates this approach from his love for the Thessalonians, wanting to share with them the gospel and his life (2.7.12). Paul is motivating his care for the Thessalonians from the viewpoint of a household perspective (cf. 1 Cor 12:14 above). He mentions that they have become dear to them (v. 8), and that they were gentle like a mother caring for her children (v. 7) and dealt with them as a father deals with his own children (v. 11). In the altruistic love of a parent they worked day and night not to be a burden to the Thessalonians. Lastly he again contrasts their motives with those of their opponents, not using flattery, and not covering up greed.

**Place in revelation-history:** Paul is actually showing the Thessalonians in verse 12 how he is thrusting them towards the kingdom and glory of God. His wish for them and his labours are all directed to the Thessalonians' salvation and their partaking in everlasting life.

### ***Working out of gratitude***

1 Cor 15:7-10 <sup>7</sup> Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, <sup>8</sup>and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born. <sup>9</sup> For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. <sup>10</sup> But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them - yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me.

**Relevance:** Paul motivates the fact that he “worked harder than all” by the fact that he was the least of the apostles, but received God's grace in abundance, in spite of being a persecutor of the church. Realising that he will never be able to repay the Lord, he thanked him by working as hard as possible. God made him what he is; not through works, but through grace alone.

**Place in revelation-history:** Paul uses the message of Jesus Christ's death and the reconciliation brought by him, as testimony of a life worthy to God.

### ***Receiving a spiritual reward***

1 Cor 9:19-27 <sup>19</sup> Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. <sup>20</sup> To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. <sup>21</sup> To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. <sup>22</sup> To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. <sup>23</sup> I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings. <sup>24</sup> Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. <sup>27</sup> No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.

**Relevance:** This well known passage seems fitting as the final reference to Paul's self-support. Through working hard and offering the gospel free of charge, Paul presented himself, being a free Roman citizen, as a slave to the weak. Furthermore he showed how he adopted manual labour and became weak to the weak. He also ran the race to the end, and beat his body to make it his slave, in order not to become a slave of his belly.

**Place in revelation-history:** Paul did all of this to be able to share in the blessing of other believers accepting the Lord (v. 23), and with the knowledge that the prize of the "Lord's abundance" awaits him at the finishing line, when Jesus Christ returns (cf. 2.7.16).

Php 2:14-17 <sup>14</sup> Do everything without complaining or arguing, <sup>15</sup> so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe <sup>16</sup> as you hold out the word of life - in order that I may boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or labour for nothing. <sup>17</sup> But even if I am being poured out like a drink offering on the sacrifice and service coming from your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you.

**Relevance:** Paul sees the compensation in his running (cf. 1 Cor 9:26) and labour as the salvation of the Philippians. The important part of the reward for what he does is certainly not in his material remuneration, but in the salvation of their souls. The terms sacrifice, offering and service all point to the self enslavement and sacrifices made by Paul.

**Place in revelation-history:** Paul places his labour within the congregations into the perspective of eternity.

### ***Receiving a worthy reward***

**1 Cor 9:7-10, 13-14** <sup>7</sup>Who serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat of its grapes? Who tends a flock and does not drink of the milk? <sup>8</sup>Do I say this merely from a human point of view? Doesn't the Law say the same thing? <sup>9</sup>For it is written in the Law of Moses: "Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain." Is it about oxen that God is concerned? <sup>10</sup>Surely he says this for us, doesn't he? Yes, this was written for us, because when the plowman plows and the thresher threshes, they ought to do so in the hope of sharing in the harvest.

<sup>13</sup>Don't you know that those who work in the temple get their food from the temple, and those who serve at the altar share in what is offered on the altar? <sup>14</sup>In the same way, the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel.

**Relevance:** Despite insisting upon offering the gospel free of charge, Paul does not hold it as an example for all to follow. By even referring to Jesus' commandment, as well as the practice concerning the Levites, he is stating clearly that his behaviour is not the rule, but the exception to the rule. Although it is difficult to measure sowing of spiritual seed with material reward, it is clear that the leader in the Christian Church should not experience want, and that it is the responsibility of an established congregation to look after his needs.

**Place in revelation-history:** The relevance of the Old Testament as well as some of the traditions for the New Testament is evident here. Paul is even proving that Jesus is commanding the continuation of an Old Testament tradition in this respect.

**Gal 6:6-10** <sup>6</sup>Anyone who receives instruction in the word must share all good things with his instructor. <sup>7</sup>Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. <sup>8</sup>The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. <sup>9</sup>Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. <sup>10</sup>Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.

**Relevance:** In addition to the passages above, Paul gives this instruction in Galatians, totally separate from his own practice, where he instructs the congregation to look after the needs of the instructor, or religious leader. Verse 10 might also be a reference to the collection for the poor in Jerusalem.



**Place in revelation-history:** This command reflects an established situation in the early church, where the instructor probably stayed longer than an itinerant apostle like Paul.

### 6.5.3 Conclusion

Although not mentioned in one secular historical source of his time, it is clear that the apostle Paul did set a standard and an example of work ethics that few Christians in his time could equal, or even approximate. In assessing the results of this research, the first impression that comes to mind is the fact that the labour of a spiritual leader is not something that can be measured accurately in order to calculate a reward.

Contrary to popular belief, although constantly encouraging others to follow his example, Paul did not expect every apostle and evangelist to go to the same extremes that he did. He did, however, not only encourage leaders continually to stay faithful in their labour for the Lord, but also encouraged congregations not to neglect their obligations regarding the care for their leaders in the Lord.

In the Scripture portions quoted above the overall impression is that Paul offers the gospel free of charge in opposition to those “apostles” and leaders who exploit the believers, being a burden to their churches. He himself does not want to be a burden at all, and rather adopted a slave position,<sup>120</sup> shaming himself by plying a trade, and working long hours with his hands. Paul does not only state that his labour and sacrifice are done to demonstrate his love towards the believers, but he also refers to accepting responsibility for them as a parent, a father and/or a mother.

Therefore the overall attitude of integrity, loyalty and commitment is needed for leaders to know that their building work will pass the test. Paul often received much less than he deserved, and sometimes even received more than he deserved. But through everything Paul gave his all to the spreading of the life-giving message of Jesus Christ. Therefore Paul eventually also had the assurance that he would qualify for the reward, the prize at the finishing line, comprising of an abundant life in heaven.

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<sup>120</sup> In line with the findings of Meggitt (1998:155-156), the preceding passages showed very little of Paul’s use of his tentmaking as a means of displaying self-sufficiency. He also frequently makes reference to those who did support him financially.

## 6.6 *Paul and altruism*

Amongst the issues raised in the introduction of this thesis was Paul's attitude towards the believers, whether he was assertively cementing a position of power as far as he went, or whether his actions of self-sacrifice were indeed beneficial to the believers in the churches.

In order to determine the practical extent of Paul's altruism, the first section focuses on the nature of Paul's ties with the churches from the angle of kinship. In the second section the extent of Paul's altruism or lack thereof towards the believers and non-believers is established through a revelation-historical analysis of relevant Biblical data in this regard.

### 6.6.1 *Paul and the family*

How did the churches in Paul's time survive? The option of mutualism (*contra* self-sufficiency, almsgiving and hospitality) as a survival strategy within the churches in the First Century (Meggitt 1998:163) does lead one to a new appreciation of the kinship roles within the churches in the First Century.

Not only have the Jews experienced some level of persecution under Claudius as emperor, but the same Jews persisted in their persecution of Christians, which started *circa* 33 AD. Except where whole households accepted the Christian faith, individuals would often be cut off from their households when believing in Christ, especially those who came from Jewish families.

Given his estrangement from Judaism after his conversion, support from his relatives would be highly unlikely. Except for his brothers' son assisting him to escape the planned ambush by the Jews (Acts 23:12-22),<sup>121</sup> Paul mentions Rufus' mother being also his mother (Rom 16:13), and some relatives (Rom 13:7,11). The references to the mother of Rufus, and other Christians as his relatives, probably described a style that Paul used to refer to Christians in terms of family roles, without necessarily having any blood-ties with them (Murphy O'Connor 1996:45-46).

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<sup>121</sup> The son of Paul's sister was probably still of Jewish faith, and overheard the plot whilst still 'an insider' in the Jewish faith (Acts 23:12-22).

A further important aspect in the area of kinship is Paul's celibacy.<sup>122</sup> In his article on the famines in Corinth Winter (1989:86-406) argues that the questions that Paul answered in 1 Cor 7 related to a reluctance to have offspring (and therefore intercourse)<sup>123</sup> in difficult financial times. This theory seems implausible, but it must be realised that Paul's celibacy had everything to do with his ministry and his vocation to bring the message as sufficiently and affordable as possible.

The fact that Paul did not have any responsibilities towards a wife and children,<sup>124</sup> provided him with the time to not only offer himself fully to God in his ministry, but it also had financial advantages. Paul was able to devote his time and efforts to his ministry, and his tentmaking, providing for his fellow workers and for the poor in the process.<sup>125</sup> Paul also specifically mentions apostles that took their wives with them (1 Cor 9:5), with the implication that these churches had to support those wives as well.

Earlier in this chapter (In the debate about Paul's use of the father concept as *pater familias*, or even worse, *pater potestas* (cf. 1.2, 6.3.3), assuming a position of power, Paul's meekness in assuming not only the position of a mother, a son or a servant, but also a slave is often either overlooked, or explained from rhetorical theory. Not only do I view Paul's assuming the role of father<sup>126</sup> rather in the Jewish context than that of the Graeco-Roman *pater familias*, but agree with Blomberg (1999:180) that Paul consistently challenged "the conventional system of patronage throughout his epistles" (Blomberg 1999:180).

Paul's referral to himself as a 'mother' (cf. 5.2.4) would be strange within the Graeco-Roman household, and probably even more peculiar in the Hebrew caste system, as a Jewish mother traditionally had no legal rights (cf. 4.4.2). The reference to the Corinthians as the apostle's children (2 Cor 6:12), as well as Paul and his fellow-workers as their parents,

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<sup>122</sup> Even though Murphy O'Connor (1996:62-65) argues that Paul may have been married, I do not find the evidence he presents sufficient at all.

<sup>123</sup> There were probably no successful contraception methods in Paul's time.

<sup>124</sup> Paul's celibacy also meant that he had no children of his own, which was regarded as a shame in the First Century, and surely hampered one's acceptance into a community.

<sup>125</sup> It must be noted that Paul did not practise tentmaking or leatherworking everywhere. His physical labour, however, is especially prevalent in his letters to the Corinthians and Thessalonians.

<sup>126</sup> Cf. Phm 10, 1 Cor 4:15, Php 2:22 and 1 Thess 2:11-12.

(2 Cor 12:14), are both put within the context of their concern and sacrifice towards the Corinthians.

It has already been shown that buying a slave was often a good investment to the household, since slave labour saved the owner much, being a once-off investment. In presenting himself as a slave, working for free, Paul also reiterates the fact that his tentmaking is important for winning the souls of the poor,<sup>127</sup> since it would be easier for them to belong to the church, not being burdened to pay the salary of the apostle also.

Paul had a lot that counted against him in terms of acceptance by the believers. Not only was he initially not trusted as a previous persecutor of the church, but in terms of his personal situation he was even worse off, being without a wife or children, and coming from a foreign country. I believe that the numerous referrals to kinship-related concepts in his letters is proof that he struggled to keep strong personal ties with a congregation such as Corinth, especially in the light of the damage done by his Hebrew opponents.

### 6.6.2 Paul, altruism and the Bible

Having looked at Paul's kinship ties, this section investigates biblical data on Paul and altruism.<sup>128</sup> Although we unfortunately do not have any documents from the side of the Corinthians to investigate their problems with the apostle Paul, all indications from Lucan, and all (disputed and undisputed) Pauline literature are that Paul gave himself fully to the mission of spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ, in not only toiling hard to provide it free of charge, but also, putting away his pride, persisting in winning back those who degraded and dishonoured him for the purpose of the gospel.

The main aim with this section is to determine as far as possible what interests were at stake in Paul's care for the "other", and to which extent we find abject altruism with Paul.

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<sup>127</sup> Paul's offering of the gospel as free of charge, would certainly be an inviting aspect to the poor, rather than the few people of moderate surplus in the congregation.

<sup>128</sup> This is a continuation from discussion on altruism in general (5.3.2), applied to the life and work of Paul himself.

## Altruism with a concern for the “self”

### *Giving to others irrespective of person*

1 Cor 13:1-7 <sup>1</sup> If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. <sup>2</sup> If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. <sup>3</sup> If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing. <sup>4</sup> Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. <sup>5</sup> It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. <sup>6</sup> Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. <sup>7</sup> It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

**Relevance:** The reference to the gifts of the Spirit: prophecy and knowledge in (v. 2), and to boasting in v. 4, does point to this chapter at least indirectly alluding to religious leaders in the congregation. In this passage some striking indicators to altruism - as discussed in 1.2 above - can be found. The common practice in the early church to sell everything and give it to the poor (cf. Mt 19:29), is also evident here. Furthermore there are the references to selflessness (v. 5), and protecting (v. 7). If giving to the poor is not exercised with true intentions, it means nothing.

**Place in revelation-history:** This passage reflects a situation in the early church where all the gifts of the Spirit were experienced, but where the initial unity of the church in Jerusalem faded, and congregations like Corinth experienced serious relational problems. Paul therefore exhorts them to true altruism, altruism with the right motives.

Php 2:5-11 <sup>5</sup> Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:<sup>6</sup> Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped,<sup>7</sup> but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.<sup>8</sup> And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross!<sup>9</sup> Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name,<sup>10</sup> that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,<sup>11</sup> and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

**Relevance:** In this *locus classicus* where the *kenosis* of Jesus Christ, becoming a human being is described, the recurring theme of the leader as

a servant is easily recognizable. Jesus' altruism takes him to the cross, in laying down his life for us. Although this reference would fit easily under all three the headings, Christ's exaltation in the second part of the hymn does imply a measure of spiritual gain by his act of sacrifice.

**Place in revelation-history:** The crucifixion, Jesus' act of sacrifice and his glorification thereafter can be viewed as the axle around which our faith revolves. Therefore this ultimate act of altruism is being presented as an example to imitate (v. 5)<sup>129</sup>.

### ***Giving to the poor and the oppressed***

**2 Cor 9:10-15** <sup>10</sup> Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. <sup>11</sup> You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God. <sup>12</sup> This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of God's people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God. <sup>13</sup> Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, men will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else. <sup>14</sup> And in their prayers for you their hearts will go out to you, because of the surpassing grace God has given you. <sup>15</sup> Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!

**Relevance:** In Paul's motivation of the Corinthians to contribute to the collection for Jerusalem (v. 12), Paul refers to the benefits that the congregation will experience by contributing. Not only will their harvest of righteousness be enlarged (v. 11), but men will praise God for their obedience (v. 13), and the congregation in Jerusalem will also pray for the congregation in Corinth (v. 14). Paul is also functioning here as a mediator or "broker" between the congregations of Corinth and Jerusalem.

**Place in revelation-history:** With the growth of the early church it implied that not only congregants shared their possessions with one another (Acts 2:42), but congregations would also be able to contribute regarding one another's needs.

### ***Giving with explicit spiritual gain for the receiver in mind***

**2 Cor 4:5-12** <sup>5</sup> For we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. <sup>6</sup> For God, who said, "Let

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<sup>129</sup> It is noted, however, that several objections against the possibility to imitate the once-off act of Christ have been raised. I do view the focus of this imitation to be the reference of becoming a slave to others, and respecting one another (Php 2:1-4)

light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ. <sup>7</sup> But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. <sup>8</sup> We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; <sup>9</sup> persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. <sup>10</sup> We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body. <sup>11</sup> For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that his life may be revealed in our mortal body. <sup>12</sup> So then, death is at work in us, but life is at work in you.

**Relevance:** Paul and his companions became servants to the congregation, enduring pressure from every side, being perplexed, persecuted and struck down. In coherence with the themes highlighted in 1.3, the death of Jesus that they carry around in their bodies accentuates the life of Jesus in their bodies. Furthermore they function as mediators by presenting the life to the Corinthians (v. 12) whilst the death is at work in them.

**Place in revelation-history:** The primary theme of Paul's message was declaring Jesus Christ as Lord after his resurrection and ascension. Furthermore the message of Jesus dying on behalf of humankind was not just preached in words, but the apostles preached it to the early church through their daily suffering as well.

**2 Cor 12:14-15** <sup>14</sup> Now I am ready to visit you for the third time, and I will not be a burden to you, because what I want is not your possessions but you. After all, children should not have to save up for their parents, but parents for their children. <sup>15</sup> So I will very gladly spend for you everything I have and expend myself as well. If I love you more, will you love me less?

**Relevance:** Paul's being prepared to "gladly spend ...everything ... and expend" himself on be behalf of the Corinthians can be viewed as very explicit altruism language. There are, however, hints that he does not want possessions, but the Corinthians themselves. Paul only wants the best for the Corinthians and will do anything possible for them to surrender themselves in full to God.

**Place in revelation-history:** The sacrificial and mediatory role of the religious leader in the early church is again featuring strongly.

**Php 2:14-18** <sup>14</sup> Do everything without complaining or arguing, <sup>15</sup> so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe <sup>16</sup> as you hold out the word of life--in order that I may boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or labor for nothing. <sup>17</sup> But even if I am being poured out like a drink offering on the sacrifice and service coming from your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you. <sup>18</sup> So you too should be glad and rejoice with me.

**Relevance:** Paul was being poured out like a drink offering on behalf of the Corinthians. This was beneficial for them as they became more blameless and pure through the word of life that was ministered to them by Paul. Paul himself had the reward of experiencing their faith as a service to God.

**Place in revelation-history:** Paul's reference to the day of Christ and being able to boast shows that the early church expected Christ's second coming to be imminent.

**Php 4:14-19** <sup>14</sup> Yet it was good of you to share in my troubles. <sup>15</sup> Moreover, as you Philippians know, in the early days of your acquaintance with the gospel, when I set out from Macedonia, not one church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving, except you only; <sup>16</sup> for even when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me aid again and again when I was in need. <sup>17</sup> Not that I am looking for a gift, but I am looking for what may be credited to your account. <sup>18</sup> I have received full payment and even more; I am amply supplied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent. They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God. <sup>19</sup> And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.

**Relevance:** In this passage the reference is to the gift of the Philippians to Paul as leader, and the way that he was "amply supplied". The gift of the Philippians to Paul is viewed as a "fragrant offering, and an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God". By caring for God's apostle the Philippians did not only please God, but also has the promise of God meeting their needs. Paul does not only thank them, but promises them that God will meet all their needs "according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus".

**Place in revelation-history:** This passage portrays the formation of the early church, and the recognition from churches that they were to care for the ministers in the Word.



## Altruism viewing oneself as a person amongst others

### *Giving to others irrespective of person*

**Romans 12:9-21** <sup>9</sup> Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. <sup>10</sup> Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves. <sup>11</sup> Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. <sup>12</sup> Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. <sup>13</sup> Share with God's people who are in need. Practice hospitality. <sup>14</sup> Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. <sup>15</sup> Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. <sup>16</sup> Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited. <sup>17</sup> Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. <sup>18</sup> If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. <sup>19</sup> Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord. <sup>20</sup> On the contrary: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head." <sup>21</sup> Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

**Relevance:** There are numerous references in this passage to altruism. One must honor one another above oneself (v. 10), share with God's people who are in need, and practice hospitality (v. 13). Believers are also called to share laughter and tears (v. 15), and to kneel down to those of low position (v. 16). Paul's admonition to be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody (v. 17) is a further indication of "concern for others". By doing all of this, they may share in the brotherly love to one another in verse 10, and the harmony created by showing mutual respect (v. 16).

**Place in revelation-history:** With the eyes on God's eschatological punishment of the evildoers, Christians are exhorted not to take revenge, but to "overcome evil with good."

### *Giving to the poor and oppressed*

**Romans 12:1-8** <sup>1</sup> Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God - this is your spiritual act of worship. <sup>2</sup> Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is - his good, pleasing and perfect will. <sup>3</sup> For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith

God has given you. <sup>4</sup> Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, <sup>5</sup> so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. <sup>6</sup> We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. <sup>7</sup> If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; <sup>8</sup> if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully.

**Relevance:** The call to religious leaders to minister to the body as a unity is prevalent here. If people have given themselves as sacrifices to God, they will be able to give themselves to the needy, the oppressed, and even the depressed. Then everyone will find his/her calling whether it is to serve, teach, encourage, contribute to others' needs, to lead, or to administer (v. 7-8). The view of believers as being a body with many members, therefore being "one amongst others" is accentuated in this context.

**Place in revelation-history:** As seen in many of the previous passages, the sacrificial service of the religious leader in the early church is placed in paramount position. This sacrifice must not be seen as a means to a reward, but as the answer to God's mercy in the life of the believer (v.1). The view on Christ's church functioning as a body, with each member having a unique gift, is also an inspiring insight from Paul, present in 1 Cor 12.

### ***Giving with explicit spiritual gain for the receiver in mind***

**Romans 15:1-6** We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves. <sup>2</sup> Each of us should please his neighbor for his good, to build him up. <sup>3</sup> For even Christ did not please himself but, as it is written: "The insults of those who insult you have fallen on me." <sup>4</sup> For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. <sup>5</sup> May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup> so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

**Relevance:** The aim here is to build a loving Christian community, where the leaders, who probably will be amongst the "strong", also allow for the "weak" amongst them. In the Christian community one should

not look to please oneself, but to what can build up one's neighbour. That would also imply that we ought to bear with their failings.

**Place in revelation-history:** Christ is presented here as the leader who did not please himself, but “stood in the gap” on our behalf, so that the insults fell on him. This passage also reflects the importance of unity in the early church. God the Father should be glorified with one heart and one mouth.

## Abject altruism

### *Giving to others irrespective of person*

**1 Cor 4:9-16** <sup>9</sup> For it seems to me that God has put us apostles on display at the end of the procession, like men condemned to die in the arena. We have been made a spectacle to the whole universe, to angels as well as to men. <sup>10</sup> We are fools for Christ, but you are so wise in Christ! We are weak, but you are strong! You are honored, we are dishonored! <sup>11</sup> To this very hour we go hungry and thirsty, we are in rags, we are brutally treated, we are homeless. <sup>12</sup> We work hard with our own hands. When we are cursed, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure it; <sup>13</sup> when we are slandered, we answer kindly. Up to this moment we have become the scum of the earth, the refuse of the world. <sup>14</sup> I am not writing this to shame you, but to warn you, as my dear children. <sup>15</sup> Even though you have ten thousand guardians in Christ, you do not have many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel. <sup>16</sup> Therefore I urge you to imitate me.

**Relevance:** Paul and his companions have been completely spent on behalf of the Corinthians. They became weak, hungry and thirsty. Furthermore they were in rags, brutally treated, and homeless, doing manual labour to support themselves. But instead of thanking them, the Corinthians made a spectacle of them, following the advice of the “super-apostles”. And therefore Paul and his companions were made a spectacle despite all their efforts. What hurt them the most was not their physical sufferings, but being dishonoured, cursed, slandered, and regarded as the scum of the earth and the refuse of the world.

**Place in revelation-history:** Paul reminds them that he was their father in Christ, referring to the fact that they accepted the Lord through his message. Despite being thoroughly disappointed, Paul endured everything on behalf of guiding them back on their way as their spiritual father.

### ***Giving to the poor and oppressed***

**Philemon 1:17-18**<sup>17</sup> So if you consider me a partner, welcome him as you would welcome me. <sup>18</sup> If he has done you any wrong or owes you anything, charge it to me.

**Relevance:** Although Paul himself was not in the best of financial positions, he promises Philemon to pay anything that Onesimus might still owe him. Paul's mediatory role is again emphasized here, begging Philemon to accept Onesimus on the ground of their partnership.

**Place in revelation-history:** The Letter to Philemon provides a good example of the challenges that the early church faced.

### ***Giving with explicit spiritual gain for the receiver in mind***

**1 Cor 9:16-27** <sup>16</sup> Yet when I preach the gospel, I cannot boast, for I am compelled to preach. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel! <sup>17</sup> I preach voluntarily, I have a reward; if not voluntarily, I am simply discharging the trust committed to me. <sup>18</sup> What then is my reward? Just this: that in preaching the gospel I may offer it free of charge, and so not make use of my rights in preaching it. <sup>19</sup> Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. <sup>20</sup> To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. <sup>21</sup> To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. <sup>22</sup> To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. <sup>23</sup> I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings. <sup>24</sup> Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. <sup>25</sup> Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. <sup>26</sup> Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air. <sup>27</sup> No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.

**Relevance:** Paul views the ability to preach the gospel “free of charge” as a reward. For him it is the ultimate goal to become a slave to everyone (v. 19), so that he can share in the blessings of the gospel when some are won for Christ (v. 23). He continually has others and their needs in mind, i.e. the Jews, those under the law, those not having the law, and especially the weak. He goes to extremities to “train” in order for them to compete successfully in the spiritual race. Proclaiming the gospel of

Jesus Christ in the multi-cultural and diverse socio economical context of the first century Mediterranean, amongst persecution and backstabbers in the congregation, could not have been easy. Furthermore the issues concerning Jewish law were not yet resolved.

**Place in revelation-history:** As one of the primary missionaries in the early church, Paul stayed focus on the goal of winning as many as possible for Christ, in order to inherit eternal life with them.

**1 Thessalonians 2:7-12** <sup>7</sup> but we were babies<sup>130</sup> among you, like a mother caring for her little children. <sup>8</sup> We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us. <sup>9</sup> Surely you remember, brothers, our toil and hardship; we worked night and day in order not to be a burden to anyone while we preached the gospel of God to you. <sup>10</sup> You are witnesses, and so is God, of how holy, righteous and blameless we were among you who believed. <sup>11</sup> For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, <sup>12</sup> encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory.

**Relevance:** Paul did not only share the gospel with the Thessalonians, but he and his companions shared their own lives as well. They did not maintain a professional pastoral distance, but went to great lengths to build relationships in the new household of Christ. They gave their time, energy, sweat, and pride to remove any burden from their beloved congregants. Therefore they could with honesty and sincerity refer to themselves as “mother” and “father”, and “babies” of the believers.

**Place in revelation-history:** The purpose of Paul’s altruism is summarised in verse 12, i.e. to see them living lives worthy of God, and entering God’s eternal kingdom and glory.

### 6.6.3 Conclusion

The Biblical evidence weighed in this study, and especially the information from Paul’s letters, have to my view proven that selfless giving was possible in the First Century Mediterranean society, and that it was frequently presented as example to Christians. Although it may be argued that some kind of personal gain is always present in any giving, the textual evidence available gives another picture.

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<sup>130</sup> Cf 6.5.2 above.

This study also found the categories employed by Engberg-Pedersen (2003:197-214) to be very useful in assessing the prevalence of altruism in a given context. That there are ample passages referring to personal spiritual gain, is true, and perhaps even more (not considered in this study) explicitly mentioning material gain.

## **6.7 The financial situation of Paul and the early church**

Last, but surely not least, is the assessment of Paul and his congregations (with special reference to the Corinthian congregation). To properly establish the context of 1 Cor 9, and especially verse 18, it is necessary to determine some departure points in terms of the financial position of both Paul and the churches he ministered to. As the quality of church financial life would surely have influenced Paul's personal finances, it will be addressed first, before I move on to Paul's individual situation.

### **6.7.1 The financial situation of Christian churches in the First Century**

The previous chapters included an overview of the situation in the city of Corinth (chapter 3), as well as a look into poverty in the Judean church, and the situation of some surrounding churches which were predominantly Jewish. In this section consideration will be given to the overall financial situations of the Christian churches in the big cities of the Mediterranean in the second half of the First Century AD.

One of the main issues in this thesis (cf. 1.2, 2.5) is the question whether a substantial middle class existed or not. The title of a recent article by Longenecker (2009), *Exposing the Economic Middle*, suggests that this battle is far from over. The focus of this section, however, is the economic location of the Pauline churches. Even though Meggitt (1998) to my view successfully challenged the existence of a substantial middle class in the cities of the First Century, his binary approach and his subsequent conclusion that 99% of the people in the First Century lived in *abject* poverty have not been accepted well.

New analyses such as the model of Friezen (2004) and the adjustments suggested thereto by Longenecker (2009), does surely provide a better

framework for assessing the composition of Christians in the congregations as well.

For the purpose of this thesis, however, I hold that the financial position of the congregations was certainly worse than accepted by the “New Consensus” (cf. 2.5), and even if a middle class existed in society at large, there was little or no possibility of a “middle class” in the congregations, given the small numbers of believers in the congregations in comparison with the general public.

A base figure for the congregation Corinth, for instance, would be fifty people (Murphy O’ Connor 1983:183). Even raising the figure to about 80, it would mean that, even according to the most recent analysis of Longenecker (2009:264), assuming that the situation in the Corinthian congregation was a mirror image of society at large,<sup>131</sup> there would be 20 out of 80 (25%) of the believers in the congregation that lived in abject poverty.<sup>132</sup>

If one, however, takes into account that the composition of the church in Corinth did not reflect society in general (1 Cor 1:26-28),<sup>133</sup> and that there was a severe famine at the time of Paul’s stay in Corinth, these figures look quite different.<sup>134</sup> If one assumes that these complicating

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<sup>131</sup> It must also be taken into account that the likelihood for the economic composition of the churches to have been better than society at large would have been highly unlikely, as rich persons with a high public profile would certainly be less enthusiastic to become a Christian, for example king Herod and Pontius Pilate, and also king Agrippa (Acts 26:28). Even though there may be many other reasons for the reluctance to accept Jesus publicly, King Agrippa’s statement shows that following Jesus would often mean losing an occupation, and even adapting to lower living standards.

<sup>132</sup> Using Longenecker’s estimations (Cf proportionately would mean that out of 80 believers in the church at Corinth in Paul’s time, 2 would be from the elite (PS 1-3), 14 from the moderate surplus group (PS 4), 20 from the above sustenance level (PS 5), 24 on the level of bare sustenance (PS 6), and 20 amongst the poorest of the poor (PS 7).

<sup>133</sup> As argued in 2.5, it is acknowledged that the meaning of the referral to not many of the Corinthians being “wise by human standards”, or “influential”, or of “noble birth” has been widely debated. It must be noted, however, that Luke mentions specific instances where a “a large number of God-fearing Greeks and not a few prominent women” joined the church in Thessalonica (Acts 17:4) and a “number of prominent Greek women and many Greek men” joined the church in Berea (Acts 17:12). The fact that Luke made no such mention of Corinth, taken together with Paul’s statement, does give the indication that the financial composition of the church in Corinth was different from the composition of society at large.

<sup>134</sup> It must also be accounted for that Christianity was often accepted at great personal financial sacrifice. Such were the burning of the scrolls of the sorcerers (that was in the

factors moved everybody down with half a level on this scale, it would mean that there would be 32 members (40%) in abject poverty (PS 7), 22 members on subsistence level (PS 6), and 17 members on near-subsistence level (PS 5), with only 8 members being part of the moderate surplus level (PS 4).

Where would Corinth eventually find itself in respect of a general poverty scale of the Christian churches in the First Century AD? It has already been shown that the Jerusalem church was very poor, and that the collection was indeed justified (cf. 6.4). Furthermore, it must be remembered that Paul explicitly referred in 2 Cor 8:2 to the Macedonian churches as living in “extreme poverty”.

This to my view would place Corinth above the congregation in Jerusalem, as well as the Macedonian churches, with the definite possibility that other churches, even the congregations in Thessalonians and Berea, could be better off than the congregation in Corinth. To my view the possibility of the Corinthians finding themselves in a situation where other congregations would be needed to help in a crisis (2 Cor 8:14) was surely not out of the question.

### 6.7.2 Paul's financial situation

Whilst determining the financial situation of Paul through assessing the nature of the congregations may prove a difficult task given the limited information at our disposal, the personal financial situation of the apostle Paul might prove to be a more difficult and speculative task. I do, however, believe that there are certain markers to provide at least a good idea of what Paul's financial situation looked like.

It has already been stated (cf. 6.4.2) that Meggit's criticism of the *communis opinio* regarding Paul's relatively well – to – do upbringing is of a relativising nature without real concrete evidence. In the light of this, as well as Paul's own references to “enslaving himself” (1 Cor 9:19; 2 Cor 4:5), “lowering himself” (2 Cor 11:7), and being a sacrifice on behalf of the congregations (Php 2:17), it must be acknowledged that Paul was

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possession of the converts) to the value of fifty thousand drachma in Ephesus (Acts 19:19), and the practise of selling one's goods and sharing the income thereof with the poor. According to Luke Paul also preached to the believers to help the “weak” through working hard, and stressed the principle (according to Luke Paul attributes it to Jesus himself) that “it was more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35).



probably of a higher socio-economic status than most of his peers in Corinth.

After the lifechanging revelation that Paul experienced on the road to Damascus, Paul's life and his financial situation changed radically.<sup>135</sup> From having Jerusalem as a basis, being a respected Pharisee, Paul left for Arabia; he had to flee from Damascus after a stay of three years (cf. 6.2.1), practically becoming an itinerant missionary, without his own residence until he rented a house during his last years in Rome (Acts 28:30).

I doubt whether the present day exegete can begin to understand the accumulative bearing that Paul's total ministry had on him. Although much evidence can be cited in this regard, I reckon that Paul's introduction in 2 Cor 1:1-11, especially 1:9-10,<sup>136</sup> as well as 2 Cor 7:5,<sup>137</sup> and in Luke's account of Paul's speech in Acts 19:19,<sup>138</sup> serve as evidence of Paul's intense suffering on behalf of the Good News.

Despite the 'catalogues of hardship' being largely explained as rhetorical devices in line with the 'sage' in the Stoic Philosophy (Fitzgerald 1978), I reckon that the strong correlation between these catalogues and Paul's suffering described by Luke in Acts, testifies not only to the authenticity of these hardships, but also their effect on Paul's life. When Paul states that they commended themselves in "in troubles, hardships and distresses" (2 Cor 6:4) as well as in "beatings, imprisonments and riots", and "hard work, sleepless nights and hunger" (2 Cor 6:5), it has to be accepted as sufferings which also testified towards his financial situation as apostle.

As already mentioned Paul also could not come and go as he wanted to, but had to rely on the congregations to assist him on the way forward (cf. 2.5.1). This not only serves as an indication that Paul and Timothy re-

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<sup>135</sup> It was also argued above that mainstream Pharisaism in the New Testament was relatively wealthy due to their exploitation of the peasants, and their relationship with the Roman government.

<sup>136</sup> 2 Cor 1:9-10: "9 Indeed, in our hearts we felt the sentence of death. But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead. <sup>10</sup> He has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us..."

<sup>137</sup> 2 Cor 7:5: "For when we came into Macedonia, this body of ours had no rest, but we were harassed at every turn - conflicts on the outside, fears within."

<sup>138</sup> Acts 20:19: "I served the Lord with great humility and with tears, although I was severely tested by the plots of the Jews."

quired some help from the Corinthians (1 Cor 16:6-11; 2 Cor 1:16), but it also serve as an indication that Paul was often not able to just proceed to another city and pay for his own fares (cf. Acts 15:3, Rom 15:24).

As already shown in 6.5, Paul's main sources of income known to us was his tentmaking or leatherwork, as well as the assistance being granted to Paul from time to time by the churches in Macedonia, as well as the church in Filippi and Thessalonica. Depending on the situation, Paul stayed with members in the congregations, such as Philemon (Philemon 22).<sup>139</sup> It is only in the last two years of Paul's life known to us, that he rented his own home (Acts 28:30).

In the light of the above I view that Paul definitely knew what it was to be "in need", "be hungry", and experience "want", and that his experiences of having plenty and being "well fed" probably related more to his upbringing and Pharisaic background than to his life as a missionary (Php 4:12).<sup>140</sup> It is interesting to note that Paul's contentment here does not relate as much to Stoic notions of self-sufficiency, but is mentioned within the context of friendship (Malherbe 1996:137-139).

It has already been argued in 6.7.1 that the majority of Paul's fellow believers in the church of Corinth probably lived on or below levels of subsistence. This would mean that even where Paul received assistance or lodging, his living standards would surely not be much higher than that of the average member of the local church.

## 6.8 Conclusion

The plethora of information that was excavated almost solely from Biblical data on Paul is astounding, to say the least. Despite the many unrecorded periods in the life of the apostle Paul, I contend that the overall picture of the apostle and his approach is one of humble sincerity, despite having many enemies, from outside, and even from within Christianity.

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<sup>139</sup> Philemon 22: "And one thing more: Prepare a guest room for me, because I hope to be restored to you in answer to your prayers."

<sup>140</sup> Php 4:11-12: "<sup>11</sup>I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. <sup>12</sup>I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want."

It is evident from Paul's biographical information that his financial situation was surely negatively affected by his conversion to Christianity, and that he almost had no choice but to use a secular occupation to provide for himself, his co-workers and the poor in a missionary situation.

I contend that the focus upon Paul's theological and practical treatment of suffering and self-enslavement is essential before progressing to the central disposition of Paul, labour and altruism. I have argued that Paul 'practised what he preached' in this regard. Even though used figuratively, this section has certainly shed light on the understanding of Paul's self-enslavement in 1 Cor 9:19.

Despite surely not being the last word regarding the connection between the Collection and Paul's tentmakership, it has been shown that Paul approached the financial outlays of the churches in his time from a holistic point of view, and that he was very conscious of which church would be better disposed to contribute to a specific cause, though not totally negating others.

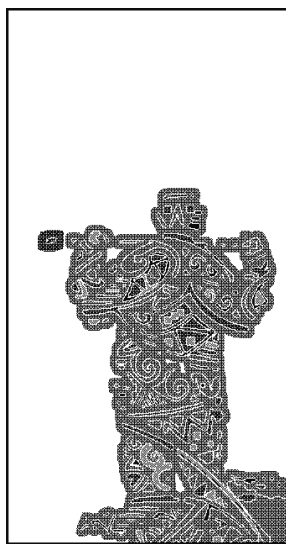
To my view it is partly for this reason that he chose to focus on the Corinthian congregation to largely contribute towards the Collection, forfeiting his own allotment in terms of salary, assuring that the poor had access to the "Good News", and that Paul would at least share in the priceless profit of the gospel. It has also been shown that Paul's trade as tentmaker (or leather worker) did not only serve as a means of sustenance for Paul, but also provided a tangible example of the importance of working hard, not being idle.

Even though Paul may be viewed as a headstrong individual, I have argued that Paul surely focused in many ways on 'the other' in his life, especially on the poor in his time. From the Biblical data discussed it became clear that Paul's motives for this focus could in some instances even qualify as abject altruism. It must be reiterated, however, that this approach by Paul is frequently connected to Jesus Christ as the suffering servant.

In the last instance the financial make-up of Paul and the churches where he ministered were viewed from an economic angle. Despite the highly speculative nature of all research and findings in this regard, I reckon that the pendulum is slowly but surely swinging back to the appreciation of the dire circumstances under which believers as well as citizens of Corinth lived during the famines in the time of Paul, and that

Paul's living standards would be very much dependent upon the society in which he functioned.

I view the above to provide enough of a foundation to proceed to a detailed exegesis of 1 Cor 9:18 in the following chapter. The socio – historical approach does to my view have a substantial contribution to make towards a new interpretation and application of this verse.



## 7 THE GOSPEL AS ἀδάπανον

### 7.1 Introduction

After having determined the context of Paul and his churches from different angles in the previous chapter, this chapter wants to establish Paul's motivation and intentions in his ministry. After determining the socio-historic context of Paul's ministry, the relevant data must also be compared to exegetical and grammatical insights from 1 Cor 9. As indicated in the introductory chapter (1.5.6), facets of the method proposed by De Klerk & Van Rensburg (2005), specifically steps 2-15 (De Klerk & Van Rensburg 2005:14-96), are used for this part of the study.

The chapter is divided into three parts, dealing with the textual and grammatical considerations first. This includes the wider context of the pericope within the Bible, textual criticism of the relevant pericope, as well as the structure and discourse analysis, concluding with a discussion on the translation of the pericope and important themes in the text. The next section deals with the socio- and revelation-historical aspects of the pericope, whilst the last section looks into the theological considerations in the chosen text, discussing the revelation about God in the pericope as well as the exhortations based on the facts of salvation in the text.

### 7.2 An exegesis of 1 Corinthians 9:15-18

#### 7.2.1 Grammatical considerations

##### Selection of a pericope

Amongst the Scripture portions identified above as the central theme of the study, 1 Cor 9<sup>1</sup> is viewed as *locus classicus* in the field of Missiology where it concerns Paul's missionary approach (Bosch 1991:135-138). Whereas Paul focuses in 9:1-14 on the rights of other apostles to receive

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor 9:19: "Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible."

a salary, he discusses his own approach to offering the gospel “free of charge” in 9:15-18.<sup>2</sup>

The next pericope (9:19-23) is connected closely to 9:15-18, the passage central to this study.<sup>3</sup> Towards 9:19 there is a clear continuation in the line of thought,<sup>4</sup> but the γάρ is a clear marker of a new topic being introduced, to my view connecting specifically to 9:18. Not only is the spiritual nature of the “reward” (9:18) further elaborated on in 9:23-25 and 9:27, but Paul explicitly uses slavery language in the whole of 9:15-27 (Garland 2003:418-419).<sup>5</sup> I therefore view 9:15-18 to be part of the larger section putting forth Paul’s own stance (9:15-27), whilst forming a close unit with the rest of 1 Cor 9 where Paul puts his apostleship in perspective, contrasting it with the general practice in his time.

### Placing the pericope in the book and in the Bible

Although 1 Cor 9 seems to be an excursus, it does have a proper rhetorical function within 1 Cor 8:1-11:1 (Mitchell 1991:243-247). The rest of the letter is more or less structured by Paul’s response to oral reports and questions on issues that were sent to him in writing.

The fact that the report to Paul – at least in part – is a reply to the questions of the household of Chloe (1 Cor 1:11),<sup>6</sup> may also indicate the possibility that the composition of the congregation had a considerable number of poor people amongst its numbers.

Despite the lack of a central theme in 1 Corinthians, there are also several other indicators in the Letter of the economic differences between church members, as playing a major part in the problems in the congregation. This includes the indication of different groups in the congrega-

<sup>2</sup> It is notable that the UBS text (4<sup>th</sup> revised ed.) commences a new sub-pericope at 9:12b, extending to 9:18. This is probably prompted by two interjections with the same meaning in 9:12b and 9:15a. Since 9:13-14 does continue on the right of the apostles in general, and 9:14 provides a summary of 9:1-14, an end to the sub-pericope at 9:14 is justifiable.

<sup>3</sup> For a detailed exegesis on 9:19-23, see Wessels (2006:90-108).

<sup>4</sup> In my interpretation of the thought structure of chapter 9 it becomes clear that I view the whole of 9:15-27 to be devoted to motivating Paul’s choice to refuse remuneration from the Corinthians.

<sup>5</sup> The strong connection between 9:15-18 and 9:19-23 is also confirmed by Garland (2003: 415), who groups these two pericopes together in his treatment on 1 Cor 9.

<sup>6</sup> It is nowhere stated that Chloe was part of the congregation, but the reference to her “household” would mean that they were probably slaves and of lesser economic stance (Meeks 1983:59).

tion (6.7.1) in 1 Cor 1:11-12, 26-28, where Paul contrasts the lifestyle of the Christian leaders in Corinth with his own (1 Cor 4:8-13), as well as the problem of lawsuits amongst believers in 1 Cor 6:12-20 (Mitchell 1992:562-586). Paul's instruction to live moderately in 7:29-31, the problems with celebrating the Lord's Supper (1 Cor 11:17-34), and Paul's instructions on saving for the collection in 16:1-4, are also strong indicators of such a conflict.

The Second Letter to Corinthians reveals more about Paul and his companions' economical situation and their suffering, especially through the different "catalogues of hardship", viz 2 Cor 4:8-9; 6:4-10; 11:23-28; and 12:10. This is also supported by other references to his hardship in the mission field, viz 2 Cor 1:8-10; 7:5-7; and Paul's request for a worthwhile contribution to the collection in 2 Cor 8-9.

Given the adequate discussions on poverty in the Bible and the rest of the Pauline corpus in the previous two chapters, no further space is dedicated here to the fact that poverty is an important theme, not only addressed by Paul, but also in the Bible as a whole.

### The discourse structure of 1 Corinthians<sup>7</sup>

The letter is framed within the normal epistolographic and rhetoric greetings. Due to the diverse nature of the questions forwarded to Paul, 1 Corinthians does not seem to have a single clear argument, as becomes clear from the following representation of the thought structure of the letter.

<b>LETTER HEADING</b>	
1 Cor 1:1-3 Author, addressees and greeting	
<b>LETTER OPENING</b>	
1 Cor 1:4-9 Thanksgiving	
<b>LETTER BODY</b> (Deliberative)	
<b>Responses to oral information</b>	<b>Responses to letter received</b>
1. Church divisions (1:10 – 4:17)	
2. Fornication (4:18-6:20)	
	3. Marriage (7:1-40)

<sup>7</sup> The framework of this discourse structure is taken from the model supplied by Terry (1996:43).



	4. Idol food (8:1-8:13)
5. Paul's apostolic authority (9:1-27)	
5.1 Freedom and rights of the apostle (9:1-14)	
5.2 Paul's apostolic independence (9:15-27)	
5.2.1 Paul's free proclamation of the gospel (9:15-18)	
5.2.2 Paul's self-enslavement (9:19-23)	
5.2.3 Paul's perseverance (9:24-27)	
	4. (contd.) Idol food (10:1-11:1)
6. Head coverings (11:2-16)	
7. The Lord's Supper (11:17-34)	
	8. Spiritual gifts (12:1-31)
9. Love (13:1-13)	
	10. (contd.) Spiritual gifts (14:1-40)
11. The resurrection (15:1-58)	
	12. Contribution (16:1-11)
	13. Apollos (16:12)
<b>CONCLUSION</b>	
16:13-24 Recapitulation of argument, epistolary greetings, final curse and prayer for unity in love and in Jesus Christ.	

From my interpretation of the discourse structure it is evident that the pericope in question has a central location in the book. Although not wholly compatible with the preceding and following sections, it is evident that Paul makes some important statements here, pertaining to his whole ministry.

### Genre of the pericope

The genre of the pericope can be described as deliberative discourse within a rhetorical context. It must be noted that the frequent break in sentence structure is not unusual in the letters of Paul (1 Cor 15:1-2, Rom 5:12, Rom 9:22-24, 2 Cor 12:6-7, Gal 2:3-6). This pericope exhibits a strong thematic unity, with several words and ideas recurring, contributing to the view of this pericope as a separate unit.

### The Greek text of the pericope

In the selected pericope there are only 1 textual variant, found in verse 15. Although both readings carry an {B} degree of certainty, the examin-

ing of textual variants is important in the light of the importance of this pericope for the study.

***Determining and characterising the text reading and the variant reading***

UBS<sup>4</sup> mentions four variant text readings in 1 Cor 9:15, of which only readings 1 and 4 are supported by substantial manuscripts. Only these two readings are therefore discussed.

	Text reading (UBS)	Variant reading (UBS footnotes)
<b>Greek</b>	ἢ τὸ καύχημά μου οὐδεὶς κενώσει	ἢ τὸ καύχημά μου ἵνα τις κενώσει
<b>English translation</b>	...than have anyone deprive me of this boast.	...than have my boast so that anyone may take it.
<b>Characterizing the reading</b>	The double negative in οὐδεὶς κενώσει is kept.	The τις is inserted to prevent a double negative.

***Determining the dating of the reading***

Table A: Date

	Reading 1	Reading 4
3 <sup>rd</sup> century	P <sup>46</sup>	
4 <sup>th</sup> century	ℵ <sup>*</sup> , B	ℵ <sup>2</sup>
5 <sup>th</sup> century	D <sup>2</sup> , it <sup>b,d</sup>	C, D

Table A confirms that the first reading is supported by the oldest manuscripts. Especially p<sup>46</sup> is a strong witness due to its early dating.

***Determining the type and distribution of the reading***

Table B: Text type and distribution:

	Reading 1	Reading 4
Early text	P <sup>46</sup>	
Alexandrian	ℵ <sup>*</sup> , B, D <sup>2</sup>	ℵ <sup>2</sup>
Caesarean	Arm	
Western	it <sup>b,d</sup>	D
Byzantine		C, Ψ

Table B confirms that the first reading is not only supported by a papyrus (P<sup>46</sup>), but also by sources from Alexandrian origin, which is the more accurate tradition. Reading 4 lacks any evidence from the papyri, and is of Byzantine origin (Orr & Walther 1979:239). On the basis of text type and distribution the first reading is preferred.

### ***Rating the intrinsic evidence***

#### **The structure of the pericope**

Although not problematic, the first reading does contain a lectio difcilior in having the double negative.

#### **The style of the author**

The way that ἵνα is employed in Reading 4 does create some problems in terms of the pairing with ἥ as another conjunction, and I would judge the first reading to be stylistically more in line with the style of the author.

#### **Revelation-history**

To my view none of the readings has any bearing on the revelation history.

#### **Conclusion on the intrinsic evidence**

On the basis of the intrinsic evidence reading 1 is preferred.

#### **Preliminary reading choice**

On the basis of the external and intrinsic evidence the preliminary choice is reading 1 (the reading of the UBS text).

### ***Rating the transcriptional evidence***

To my view the alternative reading is typical of an effort to correct a perceived grammatical error in the text, being the double negative.

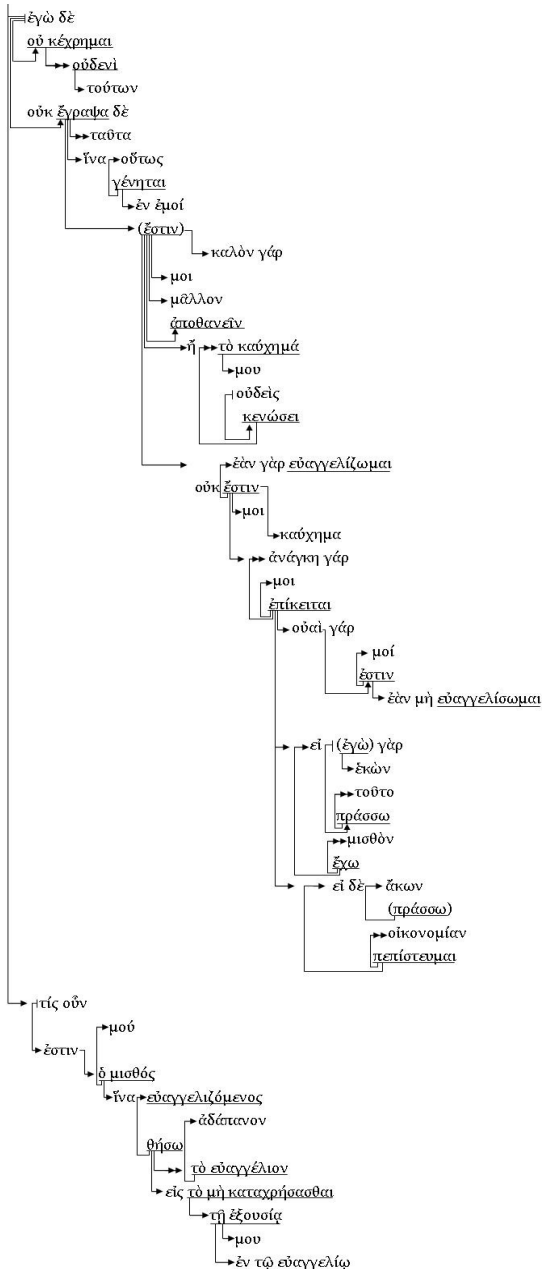
### ***Conclusion and final reading choice***

Having completed the examination of the available textual evidence, reading 1 is chosen as the most probable reading. The UBS text is therefore kept unchanged.

## **Analysing the discourse structure of 1 Corinthians 9:15-18**

### ***Analysis of the thought structure of the pericope on a micro level***

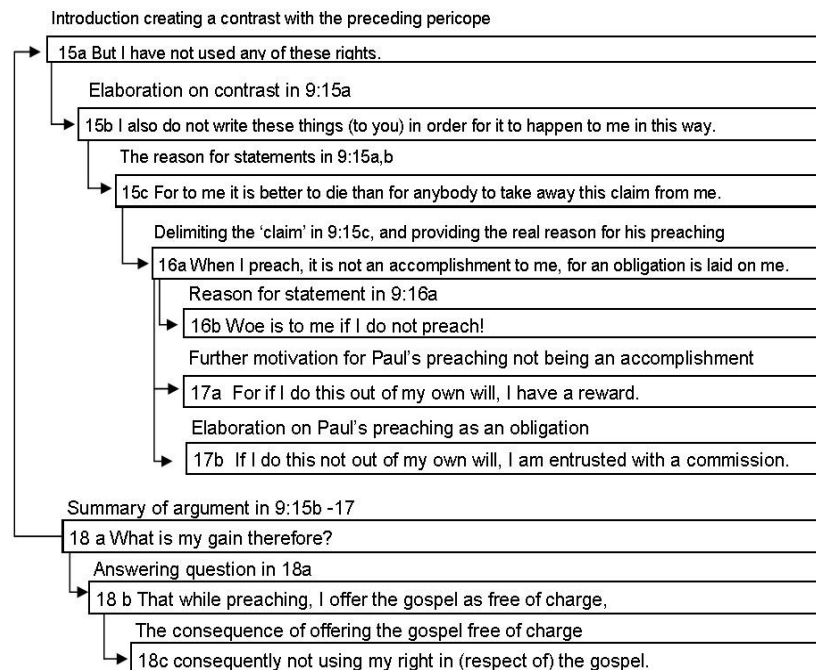
## 7- The gospel as ἀδάπανον



15. But I  
have not made use  
of any  
of these (rights)  
I also do not write  
these things  
in order that in this way  
it will happen  
with me  
(It is)  
therefore better  
for me  
rather  
to die  
than this claim  
from me  
anybody  
take away
16. When I preach the gospel  
it is not  
to me  
an accomplishment  
Therefore an obligation  
me  
is laid  
For woe  
to me  
is  
when I don't preach the gospel
17. If I therefore  
voluntarily  
this  
do  
a reward  
I have  
If out of my own will  
I do this  
a commission  
I am entrusted with
18. What therefore  
my  
is  
gain?  
That while preaching the gospel  
free of charge  
I offer  
the gospel  
so as to use  
right  
my  
in (respect of) the gospel

### Analysis of Paul's thought structure on macro level

1 Cor 9:15-23: First discourse on why Paul has not made use of his rights as an apostle, set out in 1 Cor 9:1-14



This interpretation of the thought structure of this pericope highlights the following: In the first instance the five γάρ clauses in 9:15-17 is to my view indicating a strong argumentative section, where Paul is supplying his motivations for his actions in a very emotional (Garland 2003:416) manner. Paul almost “indulges in streaks of word use” including conjunctions and participles (Orr & Walther 1976:239). Paul’s style in this pericope is lacking grammatical consistency, and instances of *anacolouthon*, *aposiopesis*, and *oratio variata* can be found in this passage.

From the analysis on a macro level the sharp contrast with 9:1-14 is evident, as well as the strong argumentative character of this pericope. It is clear that Paul is careful to put his *modus operandi* in not accepting remuneration as a general norm, and that he carefully explains why he has refused this right. The strong emotional character evident in 9:15-18

shows Paul's insistence that his proclaiming of the gospel was an instruction from God, and that he therefore decided to refuse remuneration.<sup>8</sup>

### **Translation of the pericope**

The main issue here is the translation of καταχρήσασθαι in verse 18. Even though being translated in 1 Cor 9:18 to refer to Paul not making “use” of his rights in preaching the gospel, it is suggested by Garland (2003:421) that the reading should rather be “full use”, stressing the function of the preposition κατα-. To my view this suggestion is valid, especially in the light of the fact that Paul did use some of his rights as an apostle, by receiving accommodation from Aquila and Priscilla (Acts 18:3), by asking for the Corinthians' assistance to ‘send him forward’ (2.5.1, 6.7.2), and that he did receive assistance from other congregations.

### **Determining the key verse**

The macro- and micro analysis of the discourse in 1 Cor 9:15-18 pointed to two important verses as being central to the pericope. 1 Cor 9:15 functions as an introduction, whilst 9:18 functions as a summary and highlights the main reason for Paul's refusal to accept assistance from the Corinthians. To my view 9:18 is chosen, however, because it is the closing statement of the first section of Paul's argument in 9:15-27.

### **Word study of important concepts in the key verse**

In the key verse (1 Cor 9:18) the two key words to study are μισθός and ἀδάπανος. Although the socio-historical context of both has been extensively discussed previously in this thesis, a semantic study of these concepts will contribute to the understanding of their function in the text.

#### ***A semantic study of μισθός***

In Volume 2 of Louw & Nida (1988b:81), the meanings of μισθός<sup>9</sup> are rendered as (a) “pay/wages” (57.173) or (b) “reward” (38.14). This word occurs in only one of the four principal semantic domains. Both of the meanings are interpreted as events. The listings by Louw & Nida (1988b:164) here are somewhat problematic. In most translations (NIV,

<sup>8</sup> This insistence has a strong correlation with 1 Cor 15:8-10, where Paul refers to his calling and his subsequent labour as a sign of gratitude for the grace of God in his life.

<sup>9</sup> This word study especially concerns the use of the term μισθός in 1 Cor 9:18.

AV, YLT) μισθός is rendered with reward, but Louw & Nida's (1988a:491) describes it as a "recompence based upon what a person has earned and thus deserves".

Even though the use of μισθός in 9:17 would fit this description perfectly, this use of μισθός in 9:18 would not fit in. Specifically because of the delimitation found in the previous verse, that Paul cannot expect a reward, because of him being compelled to the ministry, the translation of μισθός as 'reward', in a sense of something 'deserved', is not suitable here.<sup>10</sup>

In the light of the above, and also in the light of the slavery language in this pericope (cf. 7.2.1), I would rather argue for an interpretation as "pay/wages", rather than the notion of a "reward". The notion of "pay" or "wages" (as rendered in the GNT), however, is still something that is "deserved". Therefore I would rather argue for the translation of μισθός in this verse as "gain/profit".

Even though this rendering of μισθός is not included in Louw & Nida (1988b:164), the translation of "gain" is mentioned by (Arndt & Gingrich 1957:525) as a possible translation for μισθός in Acts 1:18, and Jude 11. To my view a possible translation of verse 17 and 18 should therefore read:

<sup>17</sup>If I preach voluntarily, I have a reward; if not voluntarily, I am simply discharging the trust committed to me. <sup>18</sup>*What then is my profit (for working with my hands and refusing to accept money from the congregation)?* Just this: that in preaching the gospel I may offer it free of charge, and so not make use of my rights in preaching it."

An additional placement of μισθός under the domain P (Earn, Gain, Do Business) in sub-domain 57 is therefore proposed. The phrase in question would fit in well between fields 57.191; προσεργάζομαι - to earn or to gain something in addition) and 57.192 (κέρδος, οὐς n.- to earn, to gain). For the purposes of the analysis μισθός fits under field 57.192a, and κέρδος under 57.192b.

The suggested entry is as follows:

μισθός, οὐ m. : that which is gained in addition – "gain, profit". τίς οὖν μού ἐστιν ὁ μισθός "What then is my profit?" 1 Cor 9:18.

<sup>10</sup> Paul makes a distinction between one's accomplishment and one's salvation (I Cor 3:10-15) and can tell his readers that their "labor is not in vain" (I Cor 15:58), acknowledging the "real and permanent results" of human activity.

The word μισθός would therefore fall under domain 57 (‘posess, transfer, exchange’). The domain carries a strong economic character, which is in line with the approach taken to this pericope. The preceding domains are 54 (‘Maritime activities’), 55 (‘Military activities’) and 56 (‘Courts and legal procedures’). It is being followed by domains 58 (‘Nature, class and example’), 59 (‘Quantity’) and 60 (‘Number’).

The proximity of domain 57 (‘Posess, transfer, exchange’) to 56 (‘Courts and legal procedures’), is an indication that there is a legal element connected to μισθός. Furthermore the subsequent domains indicate proportion (‘Quantity’ and ‘number’), as well as relation and status (‘Nature, class, example’).

Twenty-one Subdomains are found under domain 57, amongst which only the themes of the adjacent Subdomains (M to S) are listed, i.e. M (‘hire, rent out’), N (‘tax, tribute’), O (‘High status or rank’), P (‘earn, gain, do business’), Q (‘lend, loan, interest, borrow, bank’), R (owe, debt, cancel) and S (‘be a financial burden’). The positioning of the Subdomain in question, i.e. P, communicates a very strong transactional component. Not only is one of the other references to μισθός present in subdomain M under the heading *hire/rent out*, but in the adjacent semantic fields there are several references to people being hired, or working for somebody else, being μισθιος (57.174), designating a hired worker, ἀνδραποδιστής (57.187), referring to a slave dealer, and ὀφειλέτης (57.222), signifying someone in debt.

In Subdomain P there are 20 entries, of which 57.189 – 57.194 will be discussed in order to come to a better definition of μισθός.

The entries used for this analysis will be 57.189 κερδαίνω, 57.190 τόν ἑαυτοῦ ἄρτον ἐσθίω, 57.191 προσεργάζομαι, 57.192 κέρδος, 57.193 ἐργασία, 57.194 πορισμός.

	57.189	57.190	57.191	57.192a	57.192b	57.193	57.194
1 To gain by activ-	+	±	±			±	
2 To earn a living by own	+	+	±			+	
3 To earn something in	+	+	+			±	
4 That which is gained in				+	±		
5 That which is gained				±	+		
6 To make profit from a	±	±	±			+	
7 A means of gaining profit							+

In the semantic analysis done above, it is clear that μισθός is used here almost as a synonym of κέρδος, except for the possibility that μισθός in



this context may refer more to a kind of bonus, than just a gain in terms of a calculated business deal. It is notable that Louw & Nida (1988b:580) also refers to κέρδος as not being restricted to “monetary gain or profit”, for example Paul’s usage of this noun in Php 1:21<sup>11</sup> to denote death as a “gain” in Christ.

Furthermore it is clear that the meanings of all the semantic fields above are quite interwoven, and that the concept of gain and profit was well defined in the time of the New Testament. It is also interesting to note that gaining something was often connected to a certain activity or task that was done either very well, or over and above what was required initially. In 1 Cor 9:15-18 there is clearly a paradox between the concept of Paul offering the gospel as “free of charge”, or without asking any compensation, but on the other hand working day and night in order to secure the “gain” of the gospel: the saved lives in the congregation of Corinth.

Paul’s usage of μισθός in this passage is on the one hand embedded in the competitive labour system of the First Century Corinth, but on the other hand portraying a strange logic, that the gain he is aiming at is surpassing any imaginable form of monetary compensation by far.

The analysis above has certainly shown that there is room for translating μισθός as “gain” or “profit in addition”. The strong economic nature of the words in this passage is also evident, which necessitates the study of the meaning of the *hapax legomena* ἀδάπανος in its semantic environment.

### **A semantic study of ἀδάπανος**

The word ἀδάπανος is categorised in Volume 2 of Louw & Nida (1988b:576), as an event under Domain 57 (Possess, Transfer, Exchange), and the meaning is defined as “pertaining to there being no charge or expenditure”. The English translations proposed are: “free of charge, without cost.” Louw & Nida (1988b:576) also render the pivotal verse in this study (1 Cor 9:18) under 57.164 as follows: “that in preaching the good news I may offer the gospel ‘free of charge’, or ‘... without charging for it.’”

As with μισθός above (cf 7.1.9), the domain for this concept is domain 57 (Possess, Transfer, Exchange). As in the case of μισθός, ἀδάπανος is categorized in a domain with a very strong economic character. In examin-

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<sup>11</sup> Php 1:21: “For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.”

ing its adjacent Subdomains, it is noteworthy that Subdomains A-D<sup>12</sup> refer to possessions and wealth, whilst Subdomains E-F<sup>13</sup> refer to situations of need and poverty. Subdomains G (Take, Obtain, Gain, Lose), H (Give), I (Receive), J (Exchange) are all of a strong transactional nature. Subdomain L (Pay, Price, Cost), containing ἀδάπανος, is preceded by Subdomain K (Spend, Waste) indicating the outflow of assets, and succeeded by Subdomains M (Hire, Rent Out) and N (Tax, Tribute), both indicating transactional events.

From the analysis above it is clear that ἀδάπανος has strong connections with the key concepts of riches, poverty, exchange, earning and expenditure, all of which has received ample attention in the previous chapters of this study. This paves the way for scrutinising the semantic fields in proximity to ἀδάπανος: 57.159 ἀφυστερέω, 57.160 δαπάνη, 57.161 τιμή, 57.162 κεφάλαιον, 57.163 ἐκ, 57.165 τιμάω, 57.166 ὀψώνιον, 57.167 τιμή, 57.168 ἀμοιβή.

	57.159	57.160	57.161	57.162	57.163	57.164	57.165	57.166	57.167	57.168
1 Withhold payment	+									
2 Cost, expense	-	+	±	±				±	±	±
3 Amount, price		±	+	±				±	±	±
4 Sum of money		±	±	+				±	±	±
5 Free of charge		-	-	-		+		-	-	-
6 Determine cost		+	+	+		-	+	±	±	±
7 Soldier's payment		±	±	±		-		+	-	±
8 Honorarium		±	±	±		-		-	+	±
9 Recompense	-	±	±	±		-		±	±	+

From the analysis of the semantic fields above it is evident that the concept of compensation is prominent in these semantic fields. Instead of listing ἀδάπανος together with other synonyms, like δωρεάν (57.85), Louw & Nida (1988b:576) have deliberately chosen the semantic environment which deals with labour and cost for this entry.

<sup>12</sup> Subdomains A-D are listed by Louw & Nida (1988b:558) as A:Have, Possess, Property, Owner; B:Have sufficient; C:Be Rich, Be Wealthy; D:Treasure.

<sup>13</sup> In Subdomains E (Need, Lack) and F (Be poor, Be needy, Poverty) the lack of possessions and assets is evident.

In the analysis above it is noteworthy that the themes of withholding payment, as well as the payment of a soldier, which is presented by Paul in 1 Cor 9:7-14, are part and parcel of this Subdomain. It is furthermore noteworthy that John the Baptist also encouraged soldiers to be content with their pay,<sup>14</sup> using the Greek word ὁψώνιον that is listed in 57.166. In the context of these semantic fields it is clear that Paul contrasts his approach with the demand for adequate compensation for services.

In assessing Paul's use of the terms μισθός and ἀδάπανος it becomes clear that Paul regards his ability to offer the gospel free of charge as a gain (or: a bonus) over and above his fellow apostles. Having the luxury (if one may call it that) to offer the gospel without asking for compensation, is not affordable for everyone. Paul did not only have the skills to do tentmaking (or: leather-work), but his celibacy, as well as the sporadic support from the other congregations enabled him to do so.

From the conclusion of 1 Cor 9, however, it is evident that Paul views his μισθός (gain) primarily in the non-monetary "blessings" of the gospel (v 23), and the "crown that will last forever" (v 25). This enables him to sacrifice his salary and remuneration, to become a slave, in order "to win as many as possible" (v 19).

## 7.2.2 Socio-historic and revelation-historic considerations in 1 Corinthians 9:15-18

### Determining the socio-historic context of the pericope

The socio-historic context of the Corinthian correspondence has been dealt with extensively in Chapters 3-6 above. Viewing the pericope in the light of socio-historic evidence, the economic underlays to Paul's refusal must be accounted for.

It has been suggested in Chapter 3 that the economic situation in Corinth was probably worse than the estimates proposed by the New Consensus, and that the church in Corinth was generally poor, consisting of members living on or below the level of basic subsistence (6.7.1). Furthermore, the writing of 1 Corinthians was partly prompted by reports, or questions from the congregation (7.2.2).

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<sup>14</sup> Luke 3:14: "Then some soldiers asked him, "And what should we do?" He replied, "Don't extort money and don't accuse people falsely - be content with your pay."

The inherent tensions in the church of Corinth are highlighted by the different issues in the congregation, which even remained after Paul's ministry there, as Clement's First Letter to the Corinthians demonstrates (cf. 2.2). These tensions created all the potential to draw Paul into this polemic situation, as 1 Cor 9 shows.

Paul's own introduction to I Corinthians 9 depicts this chapter as a "defense to those who sit in judgement" on him (9:3). Even though the 'enemies' of Paul in Corinth remains mostly *incognito*, Paul hints in 2 Cor 11:22 that they may be Judaisers, who tried to win over the congregation against Paul (Wessels 2006:11-12). As the example of Favorinus proves (Winter 2003:291-306),<sup>15</sup> the inhabitants of the city were very susceptible to influences from newcomers, easily turning their backs on their absent heroes.

In the light of the above, it is quite possible that itinerant Judaisers visited the Corinthians after Paul's departure from there. They did not only exploit the Corinthians, looking to take advantage of the Corinthians, but probably also questioned Paul for not accepting a salary as apostle in the Corinthian church, but rather providing for himself as a tentmaker. Even though they were Hebrews themselves they probably questioned Paul's refusal in the light of the negative Graeco-Roman disdain for manual labour (4.3), and the notion that Paul shamed them by not accepting their offer of assistance.

My hypothesis is that Paul partly refused salary on behalf of the poor (cf 1.2). This means that Paul must have been very cautious not to outrightly 'choose for the poor' and strengthen the already existing tensions between rich and poor in the Corinthian church.<sup>16</sup> Even though Paul in a sense postpones the real reason for his 'offering the gospel free of charge', there are several indicators in this chapter that economic considerations played a major part in Paul's decision.

Not only does Paul refer to accepting a salary as ἐγκοπὴν ... τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ τοῦ Χριστοῦ (hindrance for the gospel of Christ), in 9:12, but he also

<sup>15</sup> The philosopher Favorinus wrote a letter to the Corinthians lamenting their attitude after they toppled his newly erected statue during his absence from Corinth. This letter contains several similarities with Paul's correspondence to the Corinthians (Winter 2003:291-306).

<sup>16</sup> A good example of Paul's 'preference for the poor' is his subtle siding with the poor in 1 Cor 6:1-11 (Mitchell 1993:583-584).

stresses that not accepting a salary and becoming a slave (9:19) may assist him in winning at least also some of τοὺς ἄσθενεῖς (the weak).<sup>17</sup>

Paul's use of the word ἐδούλωσα (to make myself a slave) in this context must have had an effect on the Greco-Roman elite, and the Hebrew super-apostles in the congregation. This action of Paul was contrary to the practice within the patron-client relationship, where the accumulation of status was important. Paul's denouncing of his status in this way must have raised a few eyebrows. Paul's self-enslavement was indeed a "challenge to the popular notions of status and authority" within his own world (Combes 1998:77).

As mentioned previously (1.2, 2.5), Paul's actions are not to be viewed as a mere reaction to the system of patronage. Paul is not arguing with his opponents to attain ascendancy, or even in order to establish himself as their patron, but he is doing the opposite. In reaction to those who criticized his refusal of remuneration or assistance, he now states his intention not to accept any salary in future also (9:15).<sup>18</sup>

Paul is therefore intent on maintaining a positive relationship with both the economically dominant and the economically "dominated" groups in Corinth. To my view Paul is in a sense engaging in this discourse with his opposition, without attracting too much attention to the poor themselves, and polarising the situation further. By accepting a salary, I believe that Paul would prove to be a hindrance to the poor in their acceptance of the gospel, and that he would definitely have been more of a burden to the poor, in comparison to what he was to those in the moderate surplus group.

Reviewing this pericope in its socio-economic context definitely has produced interesting results, and contributed to an understanding of Paul's refusal of remuneration in Corinth. It becomes all the more clear that Paul presents an innovative way to approach the economic differences in the context of the congregation, and of the church as a whole.

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<sup>17</sup> Whilst it is generally accepted in scholarship that the "weak" (9:22) does not fall into a socio-cultural category, Martin (1990:124), in the footsteps of Theissen (1982:121-143) interprets "the weak" convincingly to refer to a socio-economic lower-class. This means that the elite in the congregation are called upon to follow Paul's example in attending to the plight of the poor and deprived in the congregation (Martin 1990:148).

<sup>18</sup> Paul also makes it very clear in the Second Letter to the Corinthians that raising the issue made him now more persistent in not accepting any salary (2 Cor 11:9; 12:14).

### **The free offering of the gospel in revelation-historical perspective**

The revelational theme in 1 Cor 9:15-18 to be researched is Paul's free offering of the gospel. Paul's approach to offering the Gospel ἀδάπανον in Corinth is explored in terms of the other Biblical references to the "Gospel as being a free gift" i.e. Matthew 10:7-11, Isaiah 55:1-2, Romans 3:20-26, 2 Cor 11:23-30 and Revelation 21:4-7, 22:12-17.

In the light of the research already done in this regard (cf. chapters 4 - 7.2), this section focuses only on the remaining key Scripture portions regarding the offering of the gospel as 'free of charge'. This section aims at giving a comprehensive overview of the relevance of these other Scripture portions for understanding and interpreting Paul's free offering of the gospel.

### ***The gospel as a free gift***

**Isaiah 55:1-2** <sup>1</sup>"Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost. <sup>2</sup>Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labour on what does not satisfy? Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and your soul will delight in the richest of fare."

**Relevance to the theme:** In a time where the monarchy was failing, and the poor was suffering, Isaiah announces the Word of God as without cost, especially to those who have no money.

**Place in revelation-history:** Already in the Old Testament there are several references to the promise of God's redemption as including those who have no money. To those who listen to his Word, the riches of eternity are promised.

**Matthew 10:7-11** <sup>7</sup>"As you go, preach this message: 'The kingdom of heaven is near. <sup>8</sup>Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received, freely give. <sup>9</sup>Do not take along any gold or silver or copper in your belts; <sup>10</sup>take no bag for the journey, or extra tunic, or sandals or a staff; for the worker is worth his keep. <sup>11</sup>Whatever town or village you enter, search for some worthy person there and stay at his house until you leave."

**Relevance:** Jesus did not only announce his purpose as preaching the Gospel to the poor (Lk 4:18). He also sends his disciples with the instruction to give the Gospel to the poor as they received it – free of charge. In

the same breath, however, he expects of the host to look after these disciples in a respectful and hospitable way.

**Place in revelation-history:** The coming of the kingdom of God is closely associated here with the free ministry to the ‘weak’. Jesus delivered his message ‘free of charge’ to his disciples, and he expected them to minister in the same way to the poor.

### *The Gospel as inherently free*

**Romans 3:20-26:** <sup>20</sup>Therefore no-one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin. <sup>21</sup>But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. <sup>22</sup>This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, <sup>23</sup>for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, <sup>24</sup>and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. <sup>25</sup>God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished. <sup>26</sup>he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.”

**Relevance to the theme:** It has already been argued that one of the reasons for Paul writing the letter to the Romans was to gain their support for his mission to ‘the barbarians in Spain’ (2.5.6). It is noteworthy that he also uses economic language in referring to all believers as being “justified freely (δωρεάν) by his grace”. This pericope also portrays a transactional character in the reference to Jesus as the “sacrifice” in the place of the sinner, satisfying God’s justice over sin.

**Place in revelation history:** God’s righteousness in revelation history is attained through faith in Jesus Christ as the “sacrifice of atonement” (v 25). God was patient, and left the “sins committed beforehand unpunished” until the coming of Jesus Christ. Due to the blood of the Lamb who purchased men for God (Rev 5:9), even the poorest of the poor can be declared righteous, and experience the glory of God in eternity.

### *Eternity for free*

**Revelation 21:4-7:** <sup>4</sup>He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away. <sup>5</sup>He who was seated on the throne said, “I am making

everything new!" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true."<sup>6</sup> He said to me: "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To him who is thirsty I will give to drink without cost from the spring of the water of life."<sup>7</sup> He who overcomes will inherit all this, and I will be his God and he will be my son."

**Relevance:** Even in the apocalyptic literature it is clear that the freedom from the current oppressive economic order is accentuated in eternity. This passage not only promises the freedom from death, mourning, crying or pain (v 4), but also the free living water from the spring of the water of life. This is a clear continuation of the theme announced in Isaiah 55:1-2 referred to earlier in this section. The inheritance as a promise for those who overcome, also has very strong economic implication.

**Place in revelation-history:** The overarching presence of Jesus as the Alpha and the Omega, the Redeemer, is emphasised here. He promises us the inheritance of all of the new kingdom, as well as the complete adoption as his children.

**Revelation 22:12-17** "<sup>12</sup>Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done. <sup>13</sup>I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End. <sup>14</sup>Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city. <sup>15</sup>Outside are the dogs, those who practise magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and practises falsehood. <sup>16</sup>I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you this testimony for the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, and the bright Morning Star. <sup>17</sup>The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life.

**Relevance to the theme:** This passage in the last chapter of Revelation again reiterates the theme of a μισθός (reward)<sup>19</sup> for those who overcome. The same reversal of roles present in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus (5.2.3), is also seen here. The murderers and immoral people who practised falsehood, are remaining outside the gate, whilst those who stayed faithful are invited to drink from the free gift of the water of

<sup>19</sup> I concede that use of μισθός here does not fall in the same semantic field as its counterpart in 1 Cor 9:17, but there are surely overlapping semantic components in their different applications.



life. During his life on earth Jesus often invited those at the bottom of society. Those who are weary (Matt 11:28) and the children (Matt 19:14, Mark 10:14, Lk 18:16) are invited to enter the Gates of the city.

**Place in revelation-history:** At the climax of God's revelation the theme of a new economic dispensation is reiterated. At the end of the current dispensation on the 'old earth' the Holy Spirit and the bride, the church of Christ extends an open invitation unto everybody to come and share in God's free gift. This should still be the invitation of the present day church to all mankind.

### ***Paul in solidarity with the 'weak'***

2 Cor 11:23-30 <sup>23</sup>"Are they servants of Christ? I am out of my mind to talk like this. I am more. I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again. <sup>24</sup>Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. <sup>25</sup>Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, <sup>26</sup>I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my own countrymen, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false brothers. <sup>27</sup>I have laboured and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. <sup>28</sup>Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches. <sup>29</sup>Who is weak, and I do not feel weak? Who is led into sin, and I do not inwardly burn? <sup>30</sup>If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness.

**Relevance:** To which lengths did Paul go to offer the gospel 'free of charge'? In contrast to his opponents, who often exploited the believers (1 Cor 11:20), Paul portrays himself as someone who has given his all on behalf of the believers, especially the weak. In this peristasis list he not only relates his punishment and persecution as a prisoner, but also his 'being on the move' towards new frontiers (for which he often had to collect money), and his suffering under opposing fellow apostles. But Paul refers to himself as weak, with a definite notion of poverty. He laboured and toiled, and has often gone without sleep, food, and even clothes<sup>20</sup> (v 27). To my view Paul's expression of his concern for all the churches, and especially for the weak (v 29) is a sign of authentic solidarity, rather than just a rhetorical gimmick.

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<sup>20</sup> Paul's reference to being "cold and naked" in verse 27 is supported by his request to Timothy not to forget his cloak and his scrolls (2 Tim 4:13).

**Place in revelation-history:** In accordance with Jesus' sending of the twelve in Matthew 28:19-20, Paul has been constantly on the move in order to make disciples of those at the ends of the earth as it was known in the first century Mediterranean. By making numerous personal sacrifices, he followed in the footsteps of Christ. He was clearly deeply concerned with the spiritual health of Christ's body, in order to present his disciples as blameless and pure on the day of final judgement (Php 2:15-17).<sup>21</sup>

In the analysis of the Scripture portions above new perspectives on the nature of Paul's free offering of the Gospel came to light, especially the way in which the Gospel is shaped as a message of hope for the poor. Furthermore it is noteworthy to see that Paul also carries the Gospel forward in a 'free' package, not making it available to those at the 'ends of the earth', but especially to the weak at the bottom of the social and economic ladder in society. Paul's personal background and experiences aided him in showing solidarity with the poorest of the poor.

From the analysis of the Scripture portions and their revelation-historical meaning, it is clear that God intended his message as destined for all mankind from the Old Testament times and the Prophets. Interestingly even the message of Christ's grace is described as being given freely in Romans 3:23-26. As shown from the passages in Revelation 21-22, the second coming of Christ holds a special promise for those suffering and for the poor. If everything in eternity is 'free of charge', it must be asked whether anyone should be prevented in the current dispensation from receiving the Good News just because he cannot pay for it.

## 7.2.3 Theological considerations

### The revelation about God in the pericope

In the key pericope (1 Cor 9:15-18) the main revelation about God concerns the fact that he has called and has sent Paul to preach the Gospel

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<sup>21</sup> Php 2:15-17: <sup>15</sup>... so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe <sup>16</sup>as you hold out the word of life—in order that I may boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or labour for nothing. <sup>17</sup>But even if I am being poured out like a drink offering on the sacrifice and service coming from your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you."

to the nations. Paul himself makes it very clear that he is compelled<sup>22</sup> by God to bring the Gospel. Paul's exclamation οὐαί γάρ μοί (woe to me!) in verse 17 must be seen against the background of his experience related in Acts 9, where he was confronted by God on the road to Damascus. Paul knew what it was to be disobedient towards the Lord, and (in almost the same way as Jonah) be overwhelmed by the Lord's blinding glory. He did not want to go there again!

It is also important to note that Paul is not at all implicating here that he is not preaching the gospel ἑκῶν (voluntarily) (v 17). Paul's immense gratitude for what the Lord has done for him as the "abnormally born" is quite evident in 1 Cor 15:8-10. Paul's argument is that his appointment by the Lord is so overwhelming, that it almost usurps his own choice in proclaiming the gospel or not.

Last but not least, is the notion of Paul's appointment over the οἰκονομίαν (household) of God. Horsley (1998:129-130)<sup>23</sup> correctly prefers the concept of Paul being assigned as a slave in charge of the household, rather than an administrator. Paul therefore honours God's calling and his plight for the unsaved above the issues that his opponents might have regarding his *modus operandi*.

### **The facts about salvation in the pericope, and the exhortations based upon it**

In the pericope under scrutiny the salvation of all mankind plays a very important role. God has assigned the preaching of the Gospel to Paul. To Paul his conversion experience on the road to Damascus was not only a turn towards God, but in the same time a turn towards the unsaved. Paul's salvation and calling took place almost simultaneously (cf 6.2.6), and this event had an enormous influence upon his life and his ministry.

As stated above, Paul's salvation also meant that he was appointed as a manager (as slave) over the household of God. His salvation made such

<sup>22</sup> The Greek phrase here (ἀνάγκη γάρ μοι ἐπίκειται) is not indicating the agent, but from the context within the pericope it is clear that Paul refers to God 'entrusting (περίστευμαι)' him with the Gospel (Trail 1995:387).

<sup>23</sup> In line with the argumentative plot taken throughout this study, Horsley (1998:129) prefers the immanent background of Paul becoming a slave in verse 19 (cf 7.2.1) to rhetorical analyses which would argue that Paul was elevating himself through his apostolic authority. This is supported further by Prior (1983:158) even quoting the example of the servant in Lk 17:7-10 (cf. 5.4.2).

an impact on Paul that the preaching of the Gospel and the spreading of the Good News is paramount in his ministry. This is also made very clear in the subsequent pericopes, where he states that he strives “to win as many as possible”, and that he wants to “share in its (the gospels) blessings” (1 Cor 9:23), and that he himself won’t be disqualified after he has “preached to others” (1 Cor 9:27).

### **The communicational goal of the pericope**

The communicational goal of this pericope has often been described as part of the defence for Paul’s apostolicity, grouping it together with the previous verses. As pointed out more than once in this chapter, the connection of this pericope with the subsequent verses, especially with Paul’s self-enslavement, has received growing acceptance amongst scholars.

As argued above, Paul most probably has the poor in mind when offering the gospel ‘free of charge’. He is not willing to yield to pressure in this regard, and later, in 2 Cor 11:7-9, repeats his intentions to not receive any monetary compensation. If Paul’s intentions by this action were nothing more than a statement of apostolic independence, I doubt whether he would have repeated so vehemently his policy in this regard.

When viewed as a transitional passage to 1 Cor 9:19-27, the communicational goal of this pericope becomes much clearer. Not only is Paul communicating the all-encompassing *Missio Dei* as the driving force behind his behaviour, but he is also showing how his approach in offering the gospel ‘free of charge’ functions as a ‘lowering of himself’, being the proper behaviour of a slave over the household which is unworthy of any remuneration.

This means that Paul’s refusal to receive a salary and his tentmaking are only tools in his endeavour to remove all stumbling blocks to the Gospel, making it also accessible to the poor and the weak in the city of Corinth - and wherever Paul ministered.

## **7.3 Conclusion**

Paul wants to convince the Corinthians of his sincere involvement in and commitment to the congregation. Paul wants to prove to them that

his intentions have been pure, and that he has done all within his power to work towards their salvation.

In the key pericope (1 Cor 9:15-18) Paul expresses the extent of his commitment to them in the strongest terms. He goes so far as to preach the gospel free of charge, to remove any stumbling block in the way of the Gospel. He sincerely wanted everybody to be saved.

To my view the grammatical, socio-historical and theological analysis of the text confirms the above. The grammatico-historical approach has in this instance yielded adequate confirmation that an economical reading of the portion in question is viable.

This approach does not only provide a new light on Paul's motives in his refusal of payment from the Corinthians, but also paves the way for assessing the economic composition of Paul's congregations from new angles. Although being a *hapax legomenon* in the New Testament, it has become clear that the concept of offering the Gospel 'free of charge', especially to the poor, is not foreign to the rest of the Bible at all.

Up to this point in the study it has been shown that Paul's arguments in 1 Cor 9 was more than just "small talk", but that it was part and parcel of his ministry. In the next chapter attention will be given to the possibility to apply Paul's approach to a practical situation, i.e. the situation of the ministers in Botswana.

## 8 PAUL OFFERING THE GOSPEL ἀδάπανον, AND THE MINISTRY IN BOTSWANA

### 8.1 Introduction

It has already been stated that the scope of this study does not include a detailed description into the context of the Dutch Reformed Church in Botswana (DRCB) (cf. 1.1 above). Therefore the aim of this chapter is not to attempt any concrete applications for the pastor and his ministry in the church<sup>1</sup>. The intention of this chapter is rather to hint at relevant insights emanating from Paul's approach of offering the Gospel 'free of charge' in Corinth.

There is always a danger involved in the application of the Bible to contemporary context. The past interpretations of certain portions in Corinthians led to "discrimination of whole classes" of churches' members (Crocker 2004:4), not even to mention the discrimination of people outside the church. The pericopes 1 Cor 11:2-16 and 14:33b-36 have always been in contention regarding women in the church, whilst 1 Cor 7:17-24 was used to justify slavery.

Despite all the complicated pitfalls involved in the application of 1 Cor 9:18 to the twenty-first century context, the applicational value of 1 Corinthians for our current context is evident (cf. Thiselton 2001:17)<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> To transfer Biblical values to a modern context, an interpretation has to present a) clarity concerning the nature of relevance to contemporary situations, b) an accountable view concerning the meaning that present-day hearers/communities attaches to texts, and c) an account of the Mediterranean culture in the first century, together with the present day situations within which these messages must be communicated (Joubert 1994:62). Viewing the fact that this thesis focuses primarily on the first Century Mediterranean culture, it is not possible to give detailed and elaborate applications.

<sup>2</sup> Even without reference to multicultural contexts, Thiselton (2000:17) is of the opinion that the first letter to Corinth has a distinct applicational value in the present-day context: "With today's 'post-Modern' mood we may compare the self-sufficient, self congratulatory culture of Corinth coupled with an obsession about peer-group prestige, success in competition, their devaluing of tradition and universals, and near contempt for those without standing in some chosen value system. All this provides an embarrassingly close model of a postmodern context for the gospel in our own times, even given the huge historical differences and distances in so many other respects. Quite apart from its rich theology of grace, the cross, the Holy Spirit, the ministry, love and the resurrection

Therefore it is viable to proceed in highlighting certain obvious themes from this thesis, which may be valuable starting points and/or guidelines for the pastors and congregations in the DRCB.

The study of the congregations in Botswana will be preceded with a summary of important presuppositions in the study of present day congregations. The analysis will commence with a brief overview of the members and pastors in the church. For this purpose two of the denominations, the Spiritual Healing Church and the Dutch Reformed Church (DRCB) will be studied. Subsequently the political and economic situation of Botswana will be discussed in general. The chapter will conclude with some applications of Paul's ministry and his example to the *status quo* in Botswana.

## 8.2 Studying the Church and its Ministry in Botswana

### 8.2.1 Theoretical presuppositions

In order to provide a meaningful comparison between the context of Paul and the present-day churches, it is necessary to align oneself in terms of the purpose and identity of the church. As proposed in 1.5 above, the models provided by Nel (2004) and Hendriks (2004) are used to study the relevance of the church in 21<sup>st</sup> century Africa, with specific reference to the economic situation of the congregations and their pastors in Botswana.

#### The central focus of the church

From his book, *Who are we: Understanding and finding identity in the local church*, the long involvement of Malan Nel with the DRCSA is clearly visible. The most of his examples and applications are drawn from his experiences in this denomination (Nel 2004:149-158),<sup>3</sup> and referring to

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as an example of communicative action between the gospel and the world of given time, 1 Corinthians stands in a distinctive position of relevance to our own times”.

<sup>3</sup> Another recent publication of Nel, *Stories van hoop*, mainly deals with the established, predominantly white DRCSA, with a single case study from the (equally established) Reformed (Hervormde) Church in South Africa. To Nel's credit it must be noted that he identifies several weaknesses in what he describes as the *volkskerke* (a church serving a certain race or tribe). One of the serious weaknesses is found in the tendency of the *volkskerke* to be focused inwardly, rather than towards the world (Nel 2004:27).

experiences of large churches in America. In the application of his theory the issues of poverty and suffering in Southern Africa are to my view not addressed substantially.<sup>4</sup>

Despite these reservations, I still regard this work of Nel to be very valuable in terms of the framework that it provides for research in congregations, especially his treatise on the theological and ecclesiological principles at the basis of understanding and finding identity in the local church. It must be noted that the DRCSA (especially the Northern Cape Synod) and the DRCB have long-standing ties with one another, and the DRCB congregations of Maun, Ghanzi, Lobatse, Tlokwen (Afrikaans service) are mostly built on the DRCSA model. The work of Nel (2004) therefore also provides an invaluable resource in terms of insight into motivating congregations to assist one another.

Recognising the lack of a wider scope, however, it is notable that the book is filled with numerous references to the centrality of the local congregation's calling to servanthood and mission. In agreement with Hendriks (2004:25), Nel (2004:18) singles out the concept of *Missio Dei*<sup>5</sup> as the focus point of the church and its activities. The focus of the church as being sent to the world, and the members as a group of sent people is to my view applied in a new, exiting way to a much broader context by Hendriks (2004:57), who includes a wide range of case studies from several denominations, cultures and countries in Africa.

Another very important shift indicated by Hendriks (2004:33) is transformative action as an integral part of theology. Here Hendriks stresses the importance for theology to achieve transformation on different levels, but especially on the level of secular society.

In chapters 1 and 2 of this thesis I have argued that the poor, the sick and the women have often been disregarded in Practical Theology, and even in Missiology. In evaluating the work of David Bosch (cf 2.5.5), Mofokeng (1990:172) reckons that those who study African studies from "a detached position", will not be able to "penetrate the heart of the con-

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<sup>4</sup> In his application on the renewal of structures, Nel (2004:149-158) is clearly more concerned about the adaption or renewal of church structures to solve the growing number of "alienated" and "estranged" people in the church (Nel 2004:158). The renewal of structures to be more open towards the poor and the unreached is to my view not receiving enough attention in his study.

<sup>5</sup> Bosch (1991:392) qualifies his understanding of this concept as follows: "Mission has its origin in the heart of God. God is the fountain of sending love. This is the deepest source of mission."



temporary social struggles in which African workers and peasants are involved.” He is of the opinion that such scholars will never be successful in reaching African workers and peasants with “the heart of the Biblical message of liberation.”

The objections of Mofokeng are noted, but one should realise that my study is not just about “siding with the downtrodden of Africa in their contemporary struggles” (Mofokeng 1990:172). It also concerns the process of aid and the most productive way in which any given person, church or organisation can contribute towards those living in situations of poverty. *Albeit* this thesis is deeply concerned about the disrupted social structures and relations with the people of Sub-Saharan Africa, I am convinced that Christian leaders are called to reconcile and facilitate, to unite churches that have drifted apart through the past two centuries (Wessels 2006:100-101).

### **Servant leadership**

To my view one of the strengths of Nel’s work is the focus on servant leadership (2004:19-33). In continuation of the self-sacrificing death of Jesus Christ, as well as Paul’s sufferings (6.3.2), the leaders in congregations are called to be real imitators of Christ and Paul in this regard.

Even though one could argue that servant leadership is part and parcel of the Christian approach, both Nel (2004:132) and Hendricks (2004:201) point to the sad fact that the Reformation only gave birth to another type of institutionalism. In the immediate wake of the Reformation there was a brief time where the leadership was congruent with Biblical principles, but as soon as the church regained favour with the government of the day, institutionalism appeared in another form, and is still visible in many of the Reformed church structures today.

This phenomenon leads Snyder (1975:37-52) to the conclusion that the real reformation is taking place in the current era, with believers in third world countries struggling to be a true church. The issues of the day, being the “poor, the oppressed, the law and the voiceless multitudes”, draw the church anew unto its true purpose.

The true church, therefore becomes a servant church, advancing the Kingdom with humility and respect towards fellow humans. This is illustrated by the title of the book by Armstrong (1979), *Service evangelism*. In this approach Armstrong (1979:47) calls upon the church to:

- be an instrument of reconciliation where there is conflict and hate,

- stand for reform where there is injustice,
- be a community of compassion where there is suffering and need,
- be a symbol of God's judgement where there is corruption,
- be a demonstration of God's love and of our oneness in Jesus Christ where people are divided from other people, groups from other groups, races from races, and nations from nations.

Last but not least is the shift from a leader as an “enabler to an equipper” (Callahan 1983:129-130; Nel 2004:40-41).<sup>6</sup> One of the primary roles of a leader in a congregation is that of ‘equipper’. Callahan (1990:44-49) goes so far as to say that there needs to be one trained leader for every fifteen members in the congregation. This training should still, like every aspect of leadership, be done in “service clothes” (Callahan 1983:130).

### **Components of a ministry analysis**

Even the researcher should take note of the incarnational approach in the study of congregations (Hendriks 2004:217). He states that the “incarnational approach must be anointed with the attitude of a servant, with love and humility, with the ability to be one with the people, to hear them and help them discern God's will in their contextual situation”. He also stresses the fact that the researcher should be careful not to attempt a mechanical investigation, but to aim at observing the ongoing process(es) in a certain congregation or denomination (Hendriks 2004:145).

In what he calls a congregational analysis, Nel (2004:89-91) suggests three basic steps: the congregational profile, the situational and societal diagnosis, and the congregational diagnosis. In studying the congregations and their ministry, Hendriks (2004:31-210) provides an elaborate detailed set of determinants in order to arrive at a thorough understanding of a particular congregation/ministry and its dynamics. Only the relevant components of the analysis are discussed briefly under the structure provided by Nel.

The most basic components of a congregational profile are the denomination a specific congregation belongs to, its size, and its resources.

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<sup>6</sup> The positive contribution of the enabler-approach is described well by Callahan (1983:129-130) as follows: “The ‘enabler’ worked over against a dictatorial, benevolent authoritarian style of leadership. It was a useful counterpoint.” In the long run, however, this “responsive, process-centered style of leadership contributed to congregations being weak, declining or dying” (Callahan 1983:130).

Hendriks (2004:39-42) identifies four different sizes of congregations: the family-sized, pastoral-sized, program-sized, and corporate-sized congregations. Furthermore, the social location of a congregation (from small rural congregations to apartment-congregations in the inner city area), is to be assessed.

After having collected the basic administrative data, the focus will shift to the different models that a congregation may follow (often determined by the traditions within the denomination), as well as the different systems within a congregation (Hendricks 2004:45-51).<sup>7</sup> The enquiry also needs to take into account the life-cycle in which the congregation finds itself (Hendriks 2004:164-165) and whether the congregation is in a transitional phase (Hendriks 2004:197-200).

In conclusion to such an analysis it is paramount to look at the synergy between the components of the analysis, and to come to conclusions concerning the needs and direction of a certain congregation/denomination. Such a synergy will aim at specifically assessing the church's handling of burning issues such as poverty, HIV/Aids, gender equality, and tentmakership.

## **8.2.2 Ministry in the Spiritual Healing Church and the DRCB**

Congruant with the proposal in 1.5, an analysis of the Dutch Reformed Church in Botswana (DRCB), as well as the Spiritual Healing Church in Botswana (SHC) is now done. The primary focus of this analysis is on the DRCB, largely using the Spiritual Healing Church for the purpose of comparison. Acknowledging the limited space available for describing the rich history and context of the two churches in question, this enquiry will only provide a basic outline of the relevant events and information.

### **The context of the church in Botswana**

Botswana has a very interesting history. Notable is the role of the San people, as well as the involvement of missionaries in its history. Botswana was initially inhabited by the San people, which were later joined by the Hottentots, and the Shona, who settled in North-East Botswana around the 10<sup>th</sup> century. The first Batswana only entered the region in

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<sup>7</sup> Congregations normally portray one of the worldviews of utter survival, adherence to a supernatural force, fierce competition, and timeless principles (Hendricks 2004:55-67). There are also four different models of ministry, being the institutional, proclamational, body of Christ, and transformational models (Hendriks 2004:44-55).

the 12<sup>th</sup> Century. In the 1800's these Batswana were well established in the country (Tlou & Campbell 1984:57-100).

Between 1820 and 1830, in the time of Difaqane ('scattering') in Southern Africa, Botswana functioned as a refuge centre for those who fled from the Zulu King, Shaka, and the devastation that he caused in establishing a secure Kingdom for the Zulus in the present-day Kwazulu-Natal. During this time several tribes found refuge and protection in Botswana, where they remained after the death of King Shaka. This process stimulated militarization and autocracy amongst the Batswana (Morton 2003:268).

The era 1830's-1880's was marked by several attempts from the Boers as well as the Ndebeles to invade Botswana. These attempts were successfully stopped, but not without assistance from the British missionaries, who pleaded on behalf of the Batswana with England to assist in defending their land (Acemoglu *et al* 2001:13).

This assistance was eventually formalised in the formation of the Bechuanaland Protectorate in 1885 (Acemoglu *et al* 2001:13). Even though the proclamation of the Protectorate meant that England protected the Batswana from the surrounding threats, especially from the capitalist Cecil John Rhodes, it did sacrifice their independence to a large extent. The role that the London Missionary Society (LMS) played in the preservation of the Protectorate is noteworthy (Tlou & Campbell 1984:133-134). One of the LMS missionaries, WC Willoughby accompanied the three main Chiefs of the Batswana, Khama III, Bathoen I and Sebele I, to successfully negotiate the preservation of the Protectorate with the British Government.

The first half of the Twentieth Century was a tough time for the Batswana. They did, however, not only proceed in developing the country, but also participated in the Second World War on the side of the Allied Forces. All of this contributed to Botswana eventually receiving Independence in 1966, with Sir Seretse Khama as the first president of the country (Acemoglu *et al* 2001:13-16). Shortly after independence, large diamond deposits were discovered in Botswana, which turned the economic situation of the country around. Having been one of the poorest countries in Africa, it currently rates under the 30 richest countries in Africa, and have the fastest growing economy on the continent.

Even though the country has a relatively stable economy, the country is still in a developmental phase, and those in the remote areas often do

not benefit from the economic stability of the country at large. One such an example is the San people and the Bakgalagadi in the Kalahari, who still live in situations of extreme poverty (Good 1999:188-189). Not only the distances these people live from the two major cities in Botswana (Gaborone and Francistown), but also their social disposition amongst the tribes in the country, and their relocation from game conservation areas contribute to this situation (Good 1999:190-191).

The Coloured People in the South-Western Kgalagadi share much of the same fate. Not only are many of them descendants of the San people, but their language (mostly Afrikaans) and culture, as well as their remoteness from civilization, are definite obstacles in their ability to appropriate their share of the larger economy. It must also be realised that the country has become an attractive shelter for the poor from neighbouring countries, such as Zimbabwe.

One of the main negative factors in the country is HIV/Aids. With an infection rate of 24%, Botswana is currently the country with the second highest HIV infection rate in the world (UNAIDS 2009:27). This has a serious impact on poverty levels, family structures, productivity, medical care facilities and the spiritual well-being of people in general (Dube 2002:535-536).

Studies have shown that the problem in Botswana is not only related to risky sexual behaviour, but also to alcohol consumption (UNAIDS 2009:32). It is noteworthy that the current president, Ian Khama, is doing all in his power to fight alcohol abuse in the country (Endal 2008:1). The addressing of poverty and HIV/Aids also enjoys a prominent place in the ruling party's mission statement, called Vision 2016 (Botswana Vision 2016 Council 2004:1).

It is evident that Botswana is a country with a solid foundation for material and spiritual development. The question remains, however, how the church and its leaders can utilize these opportunities while they last.

## Congregational profile

### *The Lobatse congregation of the DRCB<sup>8</sup>*

The DRCB mainly originated from the mission work of the DRCSA. In 1857 the Cape Synod of the DRCSA decided to establish a “foreign mission” somewhere beyond the borders of the Cape Colony. In 1864 Rev MacKidd started work amongst the Bakgatla tribe at Saulspoort. In 1870 Chief Kgamanyana of the Bakgatla moved to Mochudi in Bechuanaland (the present-day Botswana), where he established a new village at Mochudi on the banks of the Notwane River. From 1874 Rev Pieter Brink ministered to the chief and his successor, Chief Linchwe. The year 1877 marks the inception of the denomination, and a church and a school were built in this year (Maree 1977:2).

From being a church within the Bakgatla tribe, the Dutch Reformed mission has since blossomed into a church within the entire Botswana, with congregations from as far South as Lobatse and as far North as Makaleng (Francistown) and Maun. The expansion gained momentum since the independence of Botswana in 1966. At that stage the Mission Church functioned as the Circuit of Mochudi. The Mission in Botswana intensified evangelisation, and started theological training for the Batswana in Botswana.

At this time there were also a few branches of the Dutch Reformed Family, in Lobatse and Ghanzi. After successful negotiations, with the aid of the Liaison Committee for Dutch Reformed Churches in Botswana over a period of some years, the Dutch Reformed Church in Botswana was established as a fully autonomous Church on the 20th November 1979 at Mochudi.

The church currently consists of two circuits: the Mochudi and the Sikwane Circuit. The congregations of Mochudi Bogare (central), Mochudi Bophirima (Mochudi East), Phaapane, Selebi Phikwe, and Makaleng are part of the Mochudi Circuit, whilst the Sikwane Circuit consists of Sikwane, Mochudi-West, Gaborone, Tlokweng, Lobatse, Kgalagadi, Ghanzi, and Maun.

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<sup>8</sup> Although not well documented, the majority of the information on this congregation, and of the Spiritual Healing Church in Lobatse comes from my personal experience as a pastor of the DRCB in Lobatse from 2001-2009, as well as being chairperson of the Sikwane Circuit for a period of three years, and Actuary of the moderamen of the Dutch Reformed Church of Botswana Synod from 2002-2006.

The Congregations of Maun, Phaapaane, and Tlokweneng are the youngest congregations in the church. The Dutch Reformed Church in Botswana also liaises with the Synod, Circuits and congregations of the Dutch Reformed Church in Northern Cape.

The Synod also comprises of several cultural groups: Batswana, Coloured People and Afrikaners, as well as immigrants from South Africa, Zimbabwe, Zambia and Malawi. The current membership of the church is around 11 000 people, with 12 ordained pastors. Pastors of the DRCB are trained at Kgolagano College in Gaborone.

The DRCB does not only have several church buildings in their respective wards, but they have a well established central office in Mochudi. They also own and jointly manage several institutions in Mochudi: the Mochudi Resource Centre for the Disabled, Phudologong Centre for the Blind, and the Mochudi Home Craft Centre.

Despite having a long and rich history, the DRCB is still struggling financially. The Government has taken over the Debora Retief Memorial Hospital in Mochudi, and the Chief of the Bakgatla is claiming the reimbursement of the hospital, since the tribe helped to build the hospital. In the last four years the church was hampered by several internal struggles amongst which the ordination of the first female pastor, Mmoni Kgosiemang, was one of the central issues (Dube 2007:219-220). Rev Kgosiemang was ordained in 2004, but after problems in the congregation she was ousted from the church, and started her own denomination.

The Dutch Reformed Church in Lobatse became independent in 1944, and since then it has also become an intercultural congregation, having members originating from Botswana, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Malawi and Namibia. The languages spoken in the congregation are Setswana, Afrikaans, and English.

The congregation is covering an area of almost 160km in diameter, and the 220 members are coming from different cultures and backgrounds. There is the additional dilemma of a growing number of jobless people, HIV/aids patients, and aids orphans within the boundaries of the congregation.

The inability of the family- and pastoral-sized congregation to adequately provide for their own pastor (Hendriks (2004:41))<sup>9</sup> is clearly evident in this congregation. They have been without a pastor from 1998-2000, and for the last two years due to financial constraints. They only received a full-time minister in this year, due to a congregation in South-Africa's sponsorship. In terms of their social location, this congregation ranges from a rural to a town congregation.

Due to the size of the congregation, this congregation finds it very difficult to transform their community (Hendriks 2004:41). Due to the long periods that they have spent without a minister, much of the Body-of-Christ model has been established in the congregation. Elders, deacons and members are prepared to assist and manage any given aspect of congregational life.

In terms of the systems-theory proposed by Hendriks (2004:58), this congregation mostly hovers between systems one and three, and even four, depending on the economic climate. They are often just focused on survival, whilst the dependency on God's saving power in spiritual and material crises are a reality in their lives. In terms of the third system of Hendriks (2004:58) they are even in strong competition with other denominations in terms of membership. The different languages in the congregation pose a real challenge to the ministry. Members often battle with the governing bodies of the church to have services provided to them in their mother tongue.

All in all, the Lobatse congregation of the DRCB has members from all social, economic, cultural and political spheres within their denomination. Such congregations often find it difficult to move forward because they tend to confuse their material poverty with spiritual poverty, and hence don't feel able to move forward (Hendriks 2004:109).

### ***The Lobatse congregation of the Spiritual Healing Church***

The largest denomination in Botswana is the SHC, with a membership of almost 30 000. That means that it is almost double the size of any other denomination in Botswana. Even though the SHC's early leader, Jacob Mokalleng Motswasele, initially belonged to the Methodist Church, the current church has very little to no remains of the Methodists as a

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<sup>9</sup> The nature of this congregation is summarized well by Hendriks (2004:41): "Small congregations usually have fewer resources that drastically affect the way they function. The pastor must be like a tribal chief. One who knows and cares for everybody."



mainline denomination, and can be described as an African Independent Church (AIC).<sup>10</sup>

The SHC had its origin in Thaba Nchu, near Lesotho.<sup>11</sup> Initially some members of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society started missionary work amongst the Barolong with Moroka II as their chief. After the death of chief Moroka II a leadership rivalry developed, and Samuel Moroka fled to Bechuanaland, eventually settling at Matsiloje, near the present-day Francistown in dire circumstances. In this time (1923) it is reported that Prophet Harry Morolong visited the people in their difficult circumstances, and hosted successful healing services there, which had a positive effect on the whole atmosphere in the community (Friesen 1994:40). For three years after Morolong left the youth prayed and worshipped together, and had several charismatic experiences, such as speaking in tongues and praying in the Spirit.

When most of these young men went to work in South Africa the services ceased altogether, until Prophet Mokaleeng got the calling in 1949 to return to Botswana, continuing the earlier ministry of Prophet Morolong. It is also in this time that the church “separated from the Methodist Church and the St. John Apostolic Faith Mission, in which it had been nurtured” (Friesen 1994:43).

In October 1952 Prophet Mokaleeng and his followers decided to establish an independent church. This church was founded under the name “Apostolic United Faith Coloured Church”. But the development of the church was not without serious obstacles. The application for registration of the church was turned down by the local tribal government under Chief Tshekedi Khama.<sup>12</sup> It also happened at regular intervals that preachers and members of the church were arrested during their ser-

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<sup>10</sup> The acronym AIC may also stand for African Initiatives in Christianity, African Indigenous churches or African Instituted Churches. The main trademarks of these churches are that they were founded by Africans for Africans, and that they normally accept African Traditional Religion. For a detailed definition of AIC's, and their differences with the ecumenical movement the work of Pobee & Ositelu II (1998:1-6) can be consulted.

<sup>11</sup> Information on the history of the SHC is scarce, but Amanze (1994:250-253) as well as Friezen (1994:40-41) provides some information on the history of this denomination.

<sup>12</sup> Tshekedi Khama was the uncle of Seretse Khama, the first president of Botswana after independence.

vices, jailed, and subjected to flogging and abuse (Rantsudu 1994:51-54).<sup>13</sup>

These actions are ascribed to the influence of the leaders of the missionary churches, who not only accused the independent churches of ‘sheep stealing’ but also complained about the healing practices which resulted in people being prevented from seeing a medical doctor.<sup>14</sup> But this persecution, which lasted until the independence of Botswana in 1966, was not successful. Prophet Mokalleng grew in stature. He was widely acclaimed for his healing practises, and he was also a gifted preacher. He later began travelling to other parts of Botswana, as well as to Namibia (Friesen 1994:44).

In 1966 a congregation had been established in Gaborone, and on 10 April 1973 the church was registered officially with the government with the name Spiritual Healing Church (Amanze 1994:251). Even though it suffered a number of splits, the church has grown dramatically in the last 60 years, despite an initial period of persecution. The two sons of Prophet Mokalleng, Israel and Joseph Motswaosele, took over the leadership of the church after his death in 1980. Joseph functions as the preacher, whilst Israel is the administrator of the church with the title of archbishop (Amanze 1994:252). The headquarters of the church is in Matsiloje, and the Passover is celebrated there annually (Dude & Mosikare 2009:292).

Bishop Motswaosele took a pragmatic approach in structuring the ministry, by adopting useful structures from other churches (Friesen 1994:47). The different levels of pastoral leadership are 1) preacher, 2) deacon, 3) evangelist, and 4) minister. It is noteworthy that women are allowed to preach, but has not been allowed as ministers of the church. For that one must be a mature man of preferably thirty-five years old, and one must be married (Friesen 1994:47).

It is important to note that a minimal monthly stipend is collected from each member to pay the ministers, but that the pastors are not paid (Amanze 1994:252). The erection of a building at the church premise is of prime importance to the central body of the church, and they will also

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<sup>13</sup> Prophet Mokalleng himself was taken in for questioning several times, but was never flogged or abused (Friesen 1994:43).

<sup>14</sup> Prophet Mokalleng never refused to refer persons to a doctor. The constitution of the Spiritual Healing Church anyway stated that several illnesses like tuberculosis, asthma, common flu, etc. should be referred to a doctor (Rantsudu 1994:54).

contribute to it, but the daily running of the congregation and the expenses thereof is the sole responsibility of the local congregation (Amanze 1994:251; Friesen 1994:45).

The congregation in Lobatse is one of the younger congregations in the church, as the church has started its work around Francistown in the North-Eastern Part of Botswana. The Spiritual Healing Church in Lobatse has its own church building, and the residing pastor is Rev Otladisa. The congregation consists of around 400 members, which is quite large if one takes into account that surrounding villages such as Digawana, Pitsane and Molapowabojang all have congregations of their own.<sup>15</sup>

In the approach of the church to society, it is clear that the Spiritual Healing Church is not only attractive to the non-literate and the poor (Friesen 1994:49), but that it projects a strong evangelistic and outward movement. Notable is its availability to work with government towards the general welfare of the people (Amanze 1994:251). Despite having been connected closely to a tribe originating from South Africa, the Spiritual Healing Church has to my view succeeded in freeing itself from being a *Volkskirche*.<sup>16</sup>

The general impression of the Spiritual Healing Church in Lobatse is that of a pastoral sized church (Hendriks 2004:40). The tendency of this size of congregation to survive against all odds (Hendriks 2004:41), is probably true of this congregation, as with the large denomination, even during the years of persecution.

To interpret the nature of the Spiritual Healing Church in Lobatse in terms of a model, is not as easy. It would probably lean towards the transformational model, but the question remains if the church has really been able to achieve transformation amongst their members, and the country at large. One of the main reasons for this is probably a continuous search for indentity within the church, a facet that is connected to its training. Even though the denomination's intentions to establish a

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<sup>15</sup> It is noteworthy that the Archbishop of the SHC studied at the University of Botswana, and that several other ministers have qualifications from the University (Amanze 1994:525). The pastor of Lobatse is currently enrolled at the Botswana Bible Institute.

<sup>16</sup> It must be conceded, however, that this church is not appealing to Coloureds and more Western-orientated believers within Botswana.

theological training facility at Matsiloje has been realised in the Kgo-lagano Bible School, this facility is presently nowhere accredited.<sup>17</sup>

The social location of the Lobatse congregation can be typified as a larger town congregation, even though the congregation would also have several members who are working on nearby farms and villages. The worldview systems that characterise the ministry, life and worship of the congregation surely fall under system two. The strong influence of African traditional religion and supernatural healing surely testify to the role of the supernatural in the church.

Assessing the life-cycle of the church, the lack of a well-formed identity and a central focus in the ministry (apart from healing) probably testifies to the church still being in its adolescence, busy building a place and engaging in new activities. This may be questioned in the light of the church being relatively middle-aged, but it has to be realised that the ageing of churches are probably slower in the SHC of Botswana than in the more western-oriented DRCSA.

Without giving too much attention to the synergy of systems at this stage, I could not help to notice that the SHC has grown much more rapidly than the DRCB, even (or perhaps especially?) during a time of persecution.

### **Analysing the ministries in the DRCB and the SHC within their context**

It has already been pointed out that the SHC seemed to grow during the time of persecution by the government, and especially after independence. The SHC has in a sense shown that inculturation of the gospel yielded better growth in numbers. Furthermore the SHC has shown ability to bring about a clear leadership structure, and to be much more at home in their surroundings, especially by using the tentmaker ministry in an effective way.

The SHC does not partake the same large-scale involvement in public health and welfare societies as the DRCB, but it is closely involved in several root-level activities, and therefore often makes a serious impact on diseases such as HIV/Aids in their local community (8.2.2). Especially in the case of Lobatse almost all the members of the SHC are Batswana, whilst the DRCB portrays a much more diverse picture. It also

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<sup>17</sup> Even the institution that the DRCB trains its pastors, the Kgo-lagano College in Gaborone, is struggling with accreditation, which normally requires a considerable financial expense towards lecturers and library facilities.

seems as if the general per capita income of the DRCB is higher than that of the SHC, especially because of its large Afrikaner contingent in Lobatse.

Even though the yearly income of the DRCB Lobatse is probably much higher than that of the SHC in the same town, it seems that the SHC is much more aligned to sustain a spiritual leader in their midst. This is probably due to the living costs of a pastor being less, and the fact that the DRCB allows only ministers trained at a tertiary institution to the office of a Minister of the Word.

The inability of the SHC and the DRCB to supply adequate training to their members is also noteworthy. In both cases a link to a proper tertiary institution is sought. Affiliation to a tertiary institution, however, is becoming more and more costly. The area of training is and remains a facet where financial aid is needed, especially in Third World countries.

Last, but not least, it must be noted that the DRCB is surely much more open to ordaining female ministers as pastors. The requirement that a pastor in the SHC must be a male, and must be married, may be a cultural arrangement, but poses several questions to the practice of tent-making. Having to sustain a family, as well as practising a full-time occupation, and the added responsibilities of a ministry may be very strenuous for a pastor.

### ***8.3 Application of Paul's 'free offering of the gospel' to the ministry in Botswana***

Even though the comparison between Paul's context and the context of the 21<sup>st</sup> century pastor may be highly speculative and open to criticism, such an endeavour is unavoidable in the quest for the sound application of the Biblical message in today's life.<sup>18</sup>

From socio-historic studies done on the first century it is clear that at least two thirds of the population, therefore the majority of people in the first century, lived at or below the subsistence level. The current situation in Africa is certainly not much better, and it is estimated that up to

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<sup>18</sup> Cf Wessels (2006) for a similar attempt to look into the implications for modern Botswana of the conflict in Corinth and Paul's approach to this conflict.

half of the inhabitants of Sub-Saharan Africa are living below the subsistence level.

Just as in Biblical times, the church often neglects its poorer and weaker members in favour of the rich,<sup>19</sup> which leads to the formation of factions and pressure groups within the church, as has also happened in New Testament times, especially in the congregation of Corinth. Paul has often spoken on behalf of those being looked down upon, as his open criticism of Peter's behaviour (Gal 2:11-14) shows.

The criticism that Paul endured for offering the gospel "free of charge", is also not foreign to present day church politics. But those criticising the present day practise of tentmaking often lacks an alternative, and refuses to sponsor the pastors who cannot survive on the small salaries they receive from suffering congregations.

Last but not least, is Paul's primary motive – to win persons for the Lord. The motives of tentmakers are often questioned. Even though they earn next to nothing from their labour in the congregation, the congregation has many expectations from the pastor and his ministry. Pastors in the tentmaking ministry are often questioned for the amount of time that they spend on their secular job, and their sacrifices are not acknowledged.

In the following subsections the major issues in approaching the congregation as well as the calling and the profession of the pastor are being dealt with. Present-day approaches in Botswana are weighed and discussed in the light of Paul's attitude towards the poor.

### **8.3.1 Administering aid and effort towards assisting the poor in an effective way**

If congregations and ministers in Africa sense their duty to mutual assistance and to servant leadership, the question on the form and nature of assistance is of the utmost importance. In an enlightening article Murray (2007:52-54)<sup>20</sup> stresses the importance of taking into account

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<sup>19</sup> In his analysis of the prosperity theology in the fast-growing New Pentecostal churches in Africa, Gifford (2007:20-24) effectively highlights the materialistic focus in these churches.

<sup>20</sup> Amongst the most important cultural factors to be taken into account, Murray (2007:52-55) refers to family demands on pastors, the African concepts of time and dishonesty, as well as dealing with African Traditional Religion and Western cultural imperialism.

several cultural factors when administering aid to congregations and to the poor in Africa.

In the history of missions in Botswana it was made clear that the main-line churches had an initial hold and influence on the government of the day, especially in the time of the Protectorate. Even in these times, however, local chiefs such as Sekgoma often clashed with the missionaries because of their Western imperialistic approach to the local culture (Nkomazana 2007:52-92, Tlou & Campbell 1984:129-133).

In his solution to the problem of external funding and aid to congregations, Murray (2007:55-56) lists nine key principles: grace, interdependence, ownership, family, divine mandate, local church, mutual accountability, tithing, and partnering. For the purposes of this study, especially regarding Paul's approach, the approaches of grace, family, divine mandate, and the local church are important. Giving should always be an act of grace, without strings attached to it. Aid should always take place in the context of congregations, denominations and their pastors being part of one family. Assistance should be given as part and parcel of the *Missio Dei*, and the local church should always be consulted and respected.

Amongst several attempts to reconcile Paul's missionary approach and intentions with present day practise in poverty stricken regions, a noteworthy article by McQuilkin (1999:57-59), *Stop sending money*, offers an interesting perspective. McQuilkin does not only point out several pitfalls in aiding the local church with money from abroad, but offers interesting solutions, which he draws from Paul's own ministry. He concludes (using the example of Paul) that missionaries from abroad are still needed to evangelise the unreached, and that money donated to indigenous churches must be for the sole purpose of assisting the poor.<sup>21</sup> The local churches, however, are supposed to look after themselves in terms of the daily running of the congregation and the stipend of a local pastor (MacQuilkin 1999:58-59).

Even though the main focus of this thesis is the functioning of Paul's ministry towards the poor, it is clear that some of the dilemmas that Paul experienced in his time, still recur regularly in the present day con-

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<sup>21</sup> To my view McQuilkin (1999:57-59) contributes greatly to the debate, in posing several questions to the practice of sending money indiscriminately to poor congregations. It must be asked whether the question whether the money really assists these churches in winning the poor and encouraging true discipleship. The frequent dishonouring of the local church, and the fact that such donations only stimulate dependency, must be taken into account as well.

text in Africa. Subsequently two case studies are presented in order to ascertain the sacrifices that pastors in poor congregations need to make.

### 8.3.2 Two case studies

The complexities of the tentmaking-practise are illustrated well by two very recent case studies in Botswana. Pastor A is a local indigenous pastor, who was called to a village with the purpose of establishing a congregation there. This pastor has a full time occupation, and it was expected of him to manage the congregation in conjunction with his full time occupation, without a substantial contribution to his salary from the church. In terms of the definition provided earlier (1.1) he qualifies as a tentmaker *par excellence*.

But Pastor A has multiple problems. His secular job is 200km from his congregation. His wife is working 150km in another direction. All of this means that he is never present in his congregation during the week, and that he cannot visit his family and congregation in the same weekend. The result is that his congregation is diminishing, and that he has marital and financial problems. Even though several other factors may be involved, it is clear that tentmaker ministry is complicated when a pastor has a family, and his secular job is not located in the same area as his flock.

Pastor B has been ministering in affluent White Afrikaner congregations in South Africa for almost 30 years, before moving with his wife and youngest daughter to a poor, remote village in the Botswana desert (about 630km from the capitol, Gaborone). Pastor B is currently sponsored by his previous congregation in South-Africa, and may soon lose his medical and pension benefits. Despite his sacrifice, he is viewed upon negatively by his local colleagues (who also have a much lower level of training), due to the fact that he is sponsored from abroad.

I believe that numerous accounts of clergy offering the gospel free of charge can be listed here. For the purpose of this thesis, it is of importance to note that, as in Paul's case, the free offering of the gospel often provokes unexpected responses. Even though Paul's celibacy, training and versatility aided him in making this sacrifice, he nevertheless experienced unimaginable physical and emotional strain during his ministry.

Subsequently some suggestions towards the application of Paul's approach are given.



### 8.3.3 Practical suggestions towards a “free offering of the gospel” in Botswana

To what extent may Paul’s attitude and approach benefit and guide the present day pastor in Botswana? It has already been established that Paul’s free offering of the gospel did not mean an outright refusal of any remuneration or money from the congregations, but that he did all in his power to alleviate the burden on his congregants, assist his fellow workers, and collect money for suffering congregations.

To my view this example of self-enslavement and humility still motivates many pastors and missionaries in the present era. In his concluding chapter of a book with a notable title, “Sticking around”, Spong (2006: 370-371)<sup>22</sup> reiterates the importance of focusing on the benefit and development of the members of the church, rather than one’s own interests. This is especially important when one is working amongst poor communities.

As shown in the situational analysis and the two case studies above, the focus, implementation and structuring of a self-sacrificing ministry has often been neglected in the past. With this in mind, I propose the following key elements for meaningful and effective pastoral labour within the Botswana context.

One of the most essential aspects of present day and post-colonial ministry is mutuality (Meggett 1999:173). A pastor of a congregation should be prepared to live and labour amongst his congregation members. Even if that is not possible, especially in outstretched areas such as the Lobatse congregation of the DRCB, a pastor’s living standards should be on par with that of the average income of congregation members. Acquiring the languages and understanding the culture of the different interest groups in the congregation is of primary importance in this regard.

A second important value in the twentieth century ministry in Africa is the value of servanthood and *kenosis*. The apostle Paul’s relentless burden for the salvation of the congregation and the collection for the poor, as well as his preparedness to work hard with his hands (or brains) in order to sustain the ministry, should serve as an example to every pre-

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<sup>22</sup> To my view Spong (2006:370-371) reiterates the importance of emptying oneself on behalf of others: “I have discovered the wonderful way of following Jesus who came to give us life to the full, in trying to help others to find what that means for their life, not mine... Any sense from being engaged in mission has come for me when others grow in their own spirituality, development of skills, and self worth.”

sent-day pastor and missionary. In this instance it should be noted that Paul's tentmaking was often connected to his personal circumstances and external opportunities, and that every pastor should be aware that having a family and other responsibilities often limits the extent to which he can benefit the congregation in this regard.

One of the more achievable goals in the ministry of every pastor, regardless of his location and the nature of his ministry, is advocacy.<sup>23</sup> As Paul has done extensively in his letters, the Twenty-first Century pastor in Africa is obliged to put his own pastoral position and favour with some of his own members or the government of the day on the line where there is concrete evidence of practices that are of an abusive nature.<sup>24</sup>

A fourth unavoidable function of a pastor with a plight for the poor and the weak, is that of being a fundraiser. As in the case of Paul's effort in the collection (cf 6.4), this plea for financial assistance was also directed towards the poor themselves. Instead of "pebbling" with the Word of God, and asking money for his own cause, a pastor should constantly awaken the congregation to the needs of other Christians, and of the world in general.

In the times that we live, especially of the universal challenges of global warming and food shortages, the demands for living and spending moderately, and preserving our God-given creation, must be emphasised at all levels of society. Not only the basic principles of giving and tithing, but the dangers of idealising the rich and the famous, as well as worldly success, must be stressed in preaching and teaching (Grant 2008:184-199).

From the congregational analysis it is clear that the role of the pastor as equipper, as trainer and teacher are priorities in the ministry of every pastor, especially those in Third World Countries. Good academic qualification does not only benefit one's own ministry, but may open the doors for assisting in theological education at various levels. In a time where the cost of tertiary education is rapidly rising, lecturers offering their services 'free of charge', or at minimal costs, are invaluable. Fur-

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<sup>23</sup> As with *kenosis* (Frederiks 2005:211-222), advocacy is one of the emerging fields of study in Missiology (Dube 2002:547-548; Grant 2008:117-130; Hunter 2010:16-17).

<sup>24</sup> Advocacy does not seem as important in Botswana, but the articles of Dube (2002) and Good (1999) do point towards the definite need for advocacy, especially regarding the treatment of and approach to HIV/Aids, the abuse of woman in church and in society, and the treatment of certain cultural groups.

thermore, the growing academic networks across the globe open up the possibilities of using academic outputs and the income derived thereof as a way of 'tentmaking'.

Last, but definitely not the least, is the absolute necessity that all of these should be done with the goal in mind of "saving everybody for the Lord". Paul's ministry, letters and sermons were never aimed at only humanitarian assistance to the poor. He always had the material as well as the spiritual gain of his hearers in mind. Without the focus of doing everything out of gratitude to God, and with the motivation of the eternal harvest of believers in mind, no leader in the church will be able to persevere in his calling and ministry in Botswana.

From 1 Cor 9 it is evident that the quest for offering the gospel is not in vain. Not only does it stand as a way of expressing gratitude and sacrifice to the Lord, but it is also the key to saving people that live in dire economical circumstances. From the case studies presented, it is also clear that the spiritual, emotional and physical needs of a tentmaker must be closely attended to. When not properly planned and managed by the governing structures of the church, the initial sacrifice that a pastor makes, may have detrimental effects on his ministry as a whole.

## **8.4 Conclusion**

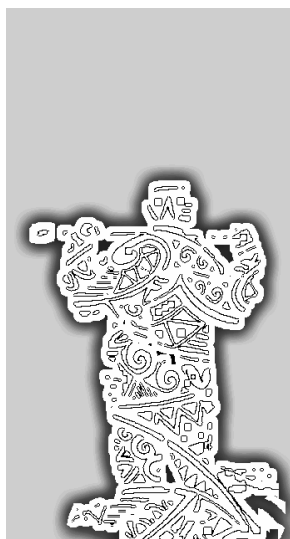
In the current Botswana context, it is clear that the pastor is called not only to be a champion for the context of those members who do not have the capacity to speak up, but that he must also be a neighbour and a friend to his congregants. Although the general analysis of the Botswana context portrays a healthy picture, the reality is surely not as bright.

This chapter aimed at providing a present day application to 1 Cor 9:18, especially to Paul's ministry and the personal sacrifices he made towards his congregations. The context analysis, focused on the two congregations in question as well as two case studies, proved beyond doubt that poverty is still a reality in Botswana, and that it surely has an impact on the ability of congregations to call and provide meaningful support to a full-time pastor.

As solutions to the current situation, several suggestions were made, including the way in which funds are channelled to suffering congregations, as well as the manner in which such funds are spent. It has also

been argued to be of the utmost importance to approach the culture, language and history of a congregation with sensitivity. To form a close family or partnership in all forms of aid is surely beneficial in many ways.

In conclusion I have argued that there are several areas in which Paul's approach of 'offering the gospel free of charge' can be applied in Botswana today. It does, however, become more and more important to proclaim the gospel and all its implications in the current Southern African context. Foreign and local church leaders alike are called to make sacrifices, in the order to make the ministry more focused on the weak, more affordable to the poor, and more accessible to the non-believers.



## 9 CONCLUSION

The acknowledgement and description of our own *Dasein* may often be a threatening experience to the reader, because the discontinuity of ancient texts as well the dialectical character of exegesis are often punctuated by such an acknowledgement and description (Crocker 2004:41). This thesis does, however, present a case where approach to the text from within the present-day context opened new (and in some ways forgotten) horizons to the interpretation of Paul's 'free offering of the gospel' in 1 Cor 9.

The interpretation of 1 Corinthians from within an African context did show the influence of poverty in the Pauline literature to be more prevalent than the current scholarly opinion acknowledges (cf. 2.5.1 above). The study has also pointed out that there is substantial evidence that even the inhabitants of the famous Corinth might have been much poorer than the current scholarly opinion postulates, especially in the light of a possible famine at the time of Paul's ministry there.

Approaching 1 Cor 9 from an economical angle, has yielded several results. The study did not only establish a connection between the collection for Jerusalem and Paul's refusal to accept a salary from the Corinthians (6.4), but also highlighted the strong connection between 1 Cor 9:18 and 19. Paul surely links his non-acceptance of salary in Corinth to his becoming a slave to all, especially to the weak.

The thesis also highlighted some methodological matters:

- The significance of utilising archaeological evidence such as inscriptions and the contents of graves towards a better understanding of the socio-economic profile of a specific city.
- The importance of recognizing that a certain branch in Pharisaism played a role in the economic injustices in Palestine by exploiting the peasants in Judea with heavy taxation. This not only opens up the field for Jesus' criticism against the Pharisees, but also the possibility that Paul's non-acceptance of salary was a reaction against practices by Judaisers who exploited the Corinthians and the believers in other congregations.
- The exegetical method proposed by De Klerk & Van Rensburg (2005), although focused on exegesis for the making of a sermon, is useful (with some adaptations) for structured exegesis towards scholarly research.

- There is a need for an extension/revision of the dictionary of Nida & Louw (1988), as has been suggested due to the unsatisfactory rendering of *μισθός*.

Through the comparison of different portions in the Corinthian letters, and implementing insights from socio-historical studies in this regard (cf. 6.5 above), it became clear that Paul had a very definite mission and that his actions were not contradictory. Paul's self-enslavement and his accompanying refusal to accept remuneration may seem to contradict his defending of his apostolic authority, but his actions in this regard were central to his theology and to his approach to his ministry in general. This study shows that it is necessary to describe Paul's apostolic authority not in opposition to his theorizing on self-enslavement, but in apposition to it<sup>1</sup>.

Paul's strategy of following this example of Christ is not just a rhetorical technique to "disarm" those who questioned his refusal of accepting remuneration, but also an important example to be followed by congregation members in the prevailing economical situation in the congregation.

To summarize the conclusion: Paul's approach to the different expectations of the Christians in Corinth is one of humility and service. Paul sacrificed all he had, and committed all his strength to following in word and deed the example of Christ's *kenosis*, thus presenting himself as an example to be followed by the congregation. The important implications this has for the ministers and congregants of the Dutch Reformed Church in Botswana (and of course all present day churches) have been hinted at in Chapter 8.

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<sup>1</sup> The traditional way of different themes being regarded in terms of "paradoxes" and "dialectical aspects" is challenged by the new "aporetic" approach, which aims at narrating such tensions within the framework of "being on the way but not knowing the way ahead", without necessarily finding solutions (Crocker 2004:40,41).

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