

Economic Ideas in the Pauline Epistles of the New Testament

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Introduction

The economic thought of proto-Christianity has been under-researched, given its influence on subsequent economic philosophies and theories. This is perhaps particularly so for Pauline economic ideas. Even within theology, studies of Paul's economic ethics are few and far between. The aim of this paper is to fill a gap in the literature on earliest Christianity, by presenting a brief overview of Paul's economic ideas. The need for such a study is demonstrated, not least, by the importance of the Pauline movement and its works to the earliest Christians. This is perhaps best indicated by the fact that thirteen of the twenty-seven New Testament works are from the Pauline school (Chamblin 1993, p. 27), although only seven of these are widely recognised as being genuinely Pauline in nature, rather than emanating from his 'school' after his death¹. Equally, the material itself merits study, as Georgi (1992, p. 141) has indicated: 'Biblical studies, theology, and the church at large are unaware that the authentic writings of Paul contain some of the most elaborate literary reflections on the flow of money surviving from the ancient world'.

It is customary to divide the development of the earliest (New Testament) Christianity into three stages: the Jesus Movement, the Jerusalem Love Community, and the Pauline Mission. The Jesus Movement was an essentially rural charismatic grouping centred around the living Jesus, and presented in the Gospels. The Jerusalem Love Community was the first urban church group, who lived a quasi-communal life of prayer, until famine and then war reduced them. Their story is told in Luke, Acts and the so-called Catholic epistles². Overlapping with the Jerusalem phase is the mission of Paul to the cities of Asia Minor and Greece, which represented a major extension of the purview of Christianity. Paradoxically, the Pauline canon contains the earliest Christian documentation; 1 Thessalonians is generally held to have been written in about 51 / 52 AD, which predates the writing of the Gospels considerably. The Pauline Epistles, however, are not systematic and thorough-going treatises, but a rather more contingent form of literature dealing with the specific problems of various churches, providing advice and theological guidance to Paul's new Christian communities. Although they cannot be divorced from their cultural, historical, and literary context, they do reveal certain coherent views of the society they relate to, its institutions and structures. Some scholars have pointed out that, in any case, to search for well-articulated economic theory in ancient texts is anachronistic, since it is improbable in the extreme that contemporary thought included a category 'the economy' as distinct from the political (macro) sphere, and the domestic household, where the economic, social and religious were considered inseparable parts of a whole (e.g. Malina 2001b, p. 17). Thus any analysis of the economic strands of thought in the New Testament must be interpreted in terms of both the theological and social constructs of the day, if they are to be understood.

Paul's economic ideas, once identified, and set in their socio-cultural context, are found to be markedly different from those of the Jerusalem Love Community, and strikingly dissimilar to the Jesus Movement's perception (see Drakopoulou Dodd and Gotsis 2000). For example, the introduction of a proto-work ethic to Christianity is a Pauline innovation. New adherents to Christianity were required by Paul to remain in their specific calling (except where these entailed sinfulness), and no wholesale liquidation and disbursement of capital assets is recommended. Radical gospel precepts concerning property, poverty and wealth are thus partly compromised by a new theology more accommodating to the economic conditions of human co-existence. Paul's divergence from the two earlier phases of proto-Christianity, and the substantial subsequent influence of his view of an appropriately Christian economic behaviour, make him a worthy subject of examination. At least some of the differences between Paul and his precursors can be ascribed to the altered locus of proto-Christianity, as it grew beyond Palestine and through the Graeco-Roman world. This context must shape any discussion of Pauline economic thought, and will be introduced below, following a synoptic overview of some of the basic precepts of Pauline theology. It will then be possible to move on to a well-grounded review and analysis of economic ideas in the Pauline epistles.

The Nature and Orientation of Pauline Economic Theology

Pauline theology is a complex, interwoven set of beliefs, which cannot be done justice in a brief summary. However, some such contextualisation is required, and this will focus on the themes of Pauline universalism, eschatology, justification by faith, and the relationship of his work to Judaism.

Paul's apostolic self-conception reveals a universal missionary strategy, which may draw on well-established Old Testament models, like Moses (Hafemann 1995), or the Table of the Nations (Gen. 10, 1; Chr. 1:1-2:2; Scott 1995). Other writers have emphasised Paul's use of the image of the imperial emissary³ as conciliator (Basch 1997). Some scholars (e.g. Sandnes 1990) evaluate this aspect of Pauline ministry by drawing on the perspective of prophethood, noting that his call and vocation parallel those of Old Testament prophets, as a divine imperative. Paul counts himself amongst the prophetic community (1 Cor. 14:29-32), while his preaching develops the ideal of the adoption of true believers as sons (Eph. 1:5). In terms of the patron-client relation terminology, Paul is understood as the broker of God's patronage over the community of believers. Paul transmits to the community knowledge and realities, which he aims to describe in the context of prevailing institutions of kinship and politics. As broker, Paul seems to enjoy access – albeit limited access – to some of the first-order resources under the control of his heavenly 'patrons' (Joubert 1995, pp. 216-217; Malina 1996, pp. 147 ff).

He moves beyond the Old Testament however, in seeing himself as the bringer of the New Covenant, with the redefinition of personal and collective identity that this entails, and in believing that access was open to all equally (see Christiansen 1995; Neusner and Chilton 1997, pp. 26-46). Paul conceives of himself as an 'ambassador for Christ', while his mission combined supplication and persuasion as a mode of exercising spiritual authority over his audience. Paul is primarily an apostle of Jesus Christ; he experiences the life of the cross of Christ (Gal. 6:14) and thus he has moved into the age to come, the new creation inaugurated by Jesus (Gal. 6:15). Paul clearly believed that his universal missionary

role was an integral part of the messianic events set in train by Jesus. The special, propitious time, or *kairos*, inaugurated by Jesus's preaching, crucifixion and resurrection, will not come to an end until, at least, Paul's own mission has been completed. This is of critical importance in understanding the eschatology – theology of the end times – inherent in the Pauline and deuterio-Pauline works. During the *kairos*, the end-time has broken into the world in a special way, and the Kingdom of God is, to a certain degree, present in the here and now. The Kingdom cannot be fully realised, however, until the Day of Judgement, and the Second Coming of Christ (Matt. 24:3-4, 1 Cor. 15:23-26, 1 Thess. 2:19). The Second Coming/Day of Judgement (*Parousia*) were anticipated imminently by the Early Church, although Paul insists this cannot happen until his mission has been completed (1 Thess. 5:14). Nonetheless, the delay of the *Parousia* is already causing cognitive dissonance within the Church community, and upon Paul's death this will become more pronounced, as the *kairos* is no longer so vividly present in the person of the Apostle (Rowland 1988, pp. 41-45).

Paul's salvation theology (soteriology) is centred on the famous principle of justification by faith (Rom. 3:26, 5:1, Gal. 2:16), and by grace (*sola fide, sola gratia*) addressed to the individual believer. Put simply, it is through faith, not by good works, that a believer is saved, made just or righteous, through the grace of God, and the cross of Christ. Although behaviour is thus relegated to second place, behind faith, nevertheless it is important that good works conforming to faith should be enacted by the believer (Rom. 2:5-11, Gal. 5:21, 6:7-10, 1 Cor. 6:12). God reveals his saving righteousness to everyone, Jew or Greek, through the resurrection of Christ, and Pauline theology focusses on this christocentric universalism.

Jewish economic thought has always been strongly rooted in the special understanding of the mutual responsibilities the members of the faith and Nation have to one another (see Kleiman 1997, pp. 76-96, for an overview of Rabbinic economic thought). When faith and nationality become separated, as is necessitated by Paul's universality, new perspectives are required. Paul is especially keen to emphasise the move away from the letter of the Old Testament Law (where much of the Jewish economic ethic is laid out), and towards the spirit of Christ's law. This is less a rejection of Old Testament Law *per se*, and more a belief that Christ represents the fulfilment of the Old Covenant, its culmination and summation. Thus the New Covenant, and especially the universal aspect of the New Covenant, supercedes the details of Judaic ritual, particularly since salvation is now to be granted to believers because of their faith, and not because of their ritualised religious behaviour. One implication of this theology is Paul's overturning of traditional Jewish insistence on what is (ritually) clean and unclean, and of the separation of Israel from the 'nations', by the construction of an innovative identity for a new people, joining the previously separated, Jew and Gentile (1 Cor. 12:13, Gal. 3:28). Without going out of the world, like the Qumran community, this new people of believers have to behave in conformity to God's rule over all things, and all peoples (1 Cor. 5:10).

Paul's universalism, his understanding of the relevance of Christ as the embodiment of the New Covenant moving beyond Judaic theology, and his emphasis on justification by faith all shape his economic ideas, which must also be set in their geo-social and historic locus.

The Geo-Social and Historic Locus of Pauline Christianity

The Pauline movement soon spread proto-Christianity beyond the traditional geographic and cultic boundaries of Palestinian Judaism. Ten years after the crucifixion, early Christianity had extended its locus to the cities of the Eastern Mediterranean, often in conflict with the Judaic church of Jerusalem (Meeks 1983, p. 11; McDonald 1988).

Unlike the Jesus Movement, which had developed within a Jewish rural environment, the Pauline Movement emerged mostly in the celebrated urban centres of Graeco-Roman antiquity, which had a quite different type of intellectual life, of value-systems, and of socio-economic behaviour (Stambaugh and Balch 1986, p. 54). Paul himself was very familiar with such an environment, having grown up as a Jewish Roman citizen, in a highly Hellenised city (Witherington 1994, pp. 215-216; Wallace and Williams 1998). According to Wallace and Williams (1998, p. 95), 'Paul's mission is confined to the world of the polis', a clearly demarcated territory comprising 'Christian congregations in Greek poleis, or Latin colonies probably thoroughly hellenised' (*ibid.* p. 88). The economic divergence between such cities and contemporary rural Palestine is significant. 'Paul could assume a background of ongoing growth and development in the areas with which he was concerned, whereas Jesus was addressing a stagnant economy on the brink of extinction as an entity' (Gordon 1987, pp. 57-58).

Paul, however, shows no awareness of the possibility of economic *development*, which is doubly curious given his locale in the developing Mediterranean urban environment. In such an urban milieu, the economic problem had to be redefined and re-evaluated; the problem of scarcity emerged, not in the context of an agricultural population, as in the Gospels, but between urban Christians engaged in a variety of economic activities. This may be why the Pauline epistles do not reveal a profound hostility to economic processes, such as capital accumulation, investment, and ownership of wealth, as did the Synoptic Gospels, and especially Luke (see Drakopoulou Dodd and Gotsis 2000). (In the symbolic universe of the Gospel narratives, explicit reference is made to the aristocratic elite, which seems to control the factors of production, and the product of the land, using available resources for its own benefit.) Paul's multicultural and sophisticated urban environment was also more open to change and religious innovation than the conservative countryside (Meeks 1983, p. 10; see also Theissen 1982 and Petersen 1985).

In the economic theology of the Gospels, on the other hand, primary emphasis is attributed to a politics of liberation and compassion, in the sense that God's rule transforms the structures of dominant political economy into a new fictive family, exemplified in the seeking of the Kingdom. Only this seeking secures freedom for the burdens of economic necessity (Lk. 12:22-31, Mt. 6:25-33). In this perspective, economic attitudes and practices take place in the context of a generalised reciprocity, i.e., a form of interpersonal relations centred on altruistic giving, without any immediate expectation of possible return. Pauline economics, however, are embedded in large-scale economies of balanced reciprocities, based on a secure return, in the form of an exchange of money and grace, or honour, as we shall later demonstrate.

The extent of Paul's missionary work is well-illustrated by estimations that he covered over 10,000 miles in its pursuit (Meeks 1983, p. 16). Weber argues that

Paul affirms the radical universality of his own mission by establishing well-structured communities, autonomously of the synagogues, thus repudiating the previous institutional structure of Judaism. This was, of course, necessitated by the increasing inclusion of pagan or gentile converts in the nascent Christian churches, whose primary interest was in becoming Christians, rather than Jews. However, it is possible to exaggerate the move beyond Judaism; entry to a new city was followed by preaching initially to Jews, and many Jews formed the leadership of the Pauline churches. Paul's new type of religious organisation continues to follow Jesus's teachings, and thereby preserves the charismatic dimension of the Jesus Movement. But, as Troeltsch has pointed out, the originality and radicalism of the earlier movement is replaced in Paul with a far more conservative social, political and economic ethic, which does not, however, completely ignore the implications of socio-economic inequalities, as we shall see.

Although it is difficult to make a conclusive case, the consensus of opinion seems to be that the Pauline churches were composed of a cross-section of Hellenic urban social strata, with the possible exception of the elite aristocracy (1 Cor. 1:26; Stambaugh and Balch 1986, p. 54), and the destitute (Meeks 1983, p. 72). Some Christians were undoubtedly rich patrons, accommodating Paul in their homes (Rom. 16:5, 1 Cor. 16:19, Col. 4:15), or having homes large enough to act as gathering places for the whole community of the faithful (1 Cor. 16:19, Rom. 16:23). Others were in a position to travel (Rom. 16:1-2; 3-4, 1 Cor. 1:11), while still others were slaves in their masters' households (Philip. 4:22; Philem. 1:10-11), and several were engaged in work as artisans and day labourers (Eph. 4:28, 1 Thess. 4:11). Church leaders and patrons 'came from the upper level of Hellenistic Judaism' (Stambaugh and Balch 1986, p. 54), but 'the "typical" Christian, however, the one who most often signals his presence in the letters by one or other small clue, is a free artisan, or smaller trader' (Meeks 1983, p. 73).

The first urban Christians were increasingly aware that the expected second coming of Christ was delayed beyond the expectations of the earliest church. The Jerusalem Community had adopted a form of common living so as to cease working, and live a life of prayer and worship until the second coming (*Parousia*) took place. Whilst the later Pauline congregations continued to believe in the *Parousia*'s imminence, the need for them to work in order to feed themselves became clear and urgent. Hengel (1979, p. 183) points out that these larger and more disparate communities would have required far greater organisation if the initial communal model of the Jerusalem Love Community were to be enacted throughout Asia Minor. Paul himself firmly rejected the Jerusalem model, which had led eventually to terrible deprivation and poverty, and his solution to the problem of economic necessity was, possibly, an alternative option, or practical response, to the Jerusalem experiment. The Pauline epistles provide enough data for an attempt to construct a logically coherent model of Paul's solution to the economic problem.

Whilst Paul was carrying out his missionary work, the church in Jerusalem fell into particularly dire financial straits, due in no small part to the famine of 46AD. Paul spent a great deal of time and effort co-ordinating a relief effort, and this fundraising also gave shape to his theology, as we shall demonstrate.

Paul's Social Precepts

The setting within which Paul is writing, then, is one where the example of Jerusalem's Love Community has led to acute suffering, and where the growing church is becoming heterogeneous in composition, although it is essentially urban and Hellenised in nature. What social precepts does Paul adduce for his new converts?

Remaining in One's Station

Firstly, Paul urges Christians to 'stay as they were before God at the time of their call' (1 Cor. 7:24). In contrast to the Essenes, for example, Paul does not feel it is appropriate to classify some areas of work as theologically appropriate, and others as impure (Beardsee 1961, p. 64). Meeks ascribes this to 'the brilliant discovery that Jewish-Christian monotheism has the potential to desacralise the everyday world', and notes that this may well have benefited the wealthy and well-positioned few in the church 'by allowing them to ignore the religious dimensions of civic life' (Meeks 1987, p. 136). Meeks notes, in particular, the case of an Erastus (Rom. 16:23), who was the city treasurer, although, as we have seen, relatively few of the new Christians were members of the elite. Witherington (1994, p. 321) supports this argument, indicating that it is no longer possible for the believer to be contaminated by contact with the outside world, so that 'Christians do not have to sever relationships with the world to be Christians, to be sanctified and acceptable to God'. This last statement is corroborated by the evidence of Col. 2:16-23, where Paul enters into conflict with his opponents who prohibit certain foods and drinks, claiming that spiritual perfection could be attained only through ascetic practices, observance of festival days, and devotion to angels (Col. 2:18).

Paul therefore is able to encourage new converts to remain in whatever form of economic activity they have carried out thus far (barring idolatry, etc). Furnish (1999, pp. 62-3) explains that 'believers are conditioned but not claimed by their particular circumstances...As a result, there is no uniform way for believers to lead their lives according to God's call. Because their gifts and their circumstances are different, so are their opportunities and responsibilities'⁴.

Laws and precepts about specific types of work, and about ritual, are explicitly rejected by Paul, whose new believers will continue to be embedded in their previous social and economic context. Nonetheless, they are also part of a transcendent community of faith, and thus their behaviour, including their economic behaviour, must be able to stand up to divine scrutiny.

Drawing on the tradition of Stoicism, Paul associates human conscience with primary moral responsibilities in such a way that every believer will have to account for his behaviour in life (Rom. 2:1-16). Paul warns against those who consider Christian freedom as a means of satisfying worldly desires (Phil. 3:19), instead of living free from anxiety about economic affairs (Phil. 4:6). Paul perceives the new community in a process of transformation, according to the heavenly archetype (Phil. 3:20-21), in the sense of otherworldliness (Col. 3:2, 7, 10). Yet this is combined with an emphasis on individual's behaviour within the surrounding society and on the experience of Christian virtues, since all are accountable for their deeds (2 Cor. 6:4-7; Gal. 5:22-23; Eph. 4:32; Phil. 4:8; Col. 3:12).

This central Pauline ordinance implies some affirmation of the existing institutional structure, and does not reject outright contemporary economic

engagements, which, contrary to the Weberian thesis (Weber 1968, p. 634), must not be equated to a simple indifference to worldly affairs. Christian economic behaviour cannot any longer be considered in terms of a patient awaiting of the Lord's grace, (as in the Jerusalem case). Though worldly activities cannot help bring about individual salvation (as in seventeenth-century Protestantism) they nonetheless have their own distinct ethic.

This can be partly explained by the fact that in Roman antiquity all behaviour (including economic behaviour) was subject to public scrutiny, which led people to strive to fit into the social situation, (rather than trying to master the environment). It was important to please significant others in their group, to be attuned to the wishes of significant others, to avoid in-group conflict and competition, and to comply with in-group values, goals, and strategies (Malina 2000, p. 388). In this context, economic behaviour was evaluated in terms of its compliance to social norms and rewarded through a grant of honour. Individual activities aiming at self-enrichment or aggrandisement, without requisite attention to the development and utilisation of appropriate social capital, were considered deviant and unacceptable.

Malina has argued that, within first century Mediterranean culture, goods were understood to be limited in nature, finite in scope. Thus 'any disruption of the social equilibrium can only be detrimental to community survival...most people would be interested in keeping things just the way they are' (2001a, pp. 112-13). Paul's injunction to his community members to remain in their station should also be understood within the general social injunctions on disruption of the status quo.

The Ideal of Self-Sufficiency

An additional reason for remaining within their 'station' is so that the new converts may continue to be economically self-sufficient. By continuing to 'labour', Christians can ensure that they are not a burden on others, and that they do not give cause for complaint to those outside the church (1 Thess. 4:11-12). It should be recalled that the alternatives to Paul's approach - liquidating capital and abandoning productive labour, both of which had been tried by the Jerusalem church - were not a sound basis upon which new communities around the Mediterranean could be sustained.

The delay in the Second Coming, the *Parousia*, has been argued to be a further reason necessitating self-sufficiency. The *Parousia* signifies the coming of Christ in triumph at the end of the present age (Matt. 24:3-4; 1 Cor. 15:23-26; 1 Thess. 2:19) and inaugurates the vindication of the faithful community, the manifestation of the Lord's day (cf. Zech. 1:18-21; 14:3-12; Joel 3:2; Isaiah 25:8; Amos 2:3). These events were initially expected to take place within the life-time of the first generation of Jesus's followers (Mk. 9:1; 1 Thess. 4:15; Rom. 13:11). The delayed *Parousia* created some confusion for the new believers (1 Thess. 4:13), but Paul attributes the delay in God's judgement to forbearance towards the sinner (Rom. 3:26).

Wallis has drawn our attention to the general point that 'it was inevitable that the delay of the *Parousia* would require church leaders sooner or later to focus not simply on the means of salvation, but also on...how believers should behave' (1995, p. 140). Paul teaches that the date of the *Parousia* is unknowable, cannot be anticipated (1 Thess. 5:1), so that Christians must avoid adjusting their short-run patterns of economic behaviour to meet expectations of the final abolition of scarcity with the *Parousia*. Christians must have the ability to make their own

livelihood, just as Paul continues to engage, from time to time, in his own trade, (probably) tent-making (Acts 18:3), and does not make financial demands of his new churches (1 Thess 2: 8-9). This passage indicates, for Barry Gordon (1989, p. 53) ‘the extraordinarily heavy emphasis which Paul placed on self-sufficiency as a primary goal of economic activity at the micro-level’. As well as setting the example of material self-sufficiency, Paul also refuses to obtain a fair price for his preaching, taken as a commodity among other similar competitive spiritual goods (Peterman 1997): the gospel of salvation ought to be preached free of any economic charge.

In 2 Corinthians (9:8), Paul also, whilst soliciting funds for the Jerusalem collection, wishes *αὐταρκεῖα* for his readers. Given the context, it seem likely that this means *material sufficiency*, but the word can also mean the quiescent inner aloofness of the Stoics and Cynics, a kind of self-sufficient philosophical detachment and resignation to the status quo. The latter meaning is usually taken to be inappropriate within an overall Pauline philosophy of dependence on God (Bultmann 1985, p. 257; Danker 1983, p. 140; Witherington 1995, p. 427).

For Paul, *autarkeia* must be experienced as an additional consequence of the divine grace which provides for all Christians. However, Paul’s description of his own *autarkeia*, in fullness and hunger, in abundance and want, carries Stoic overtones of detachment from the vagaries of his circumstances and fortunes (Philip. 4:11-12). On the other hand, this self-sufficiency is not due to his own efforts, but to God who gives him strength (4:13). Paul draws an analogy with the community: God’s grace is inexhaustible and abundant, thus enabling the believers not only to meet their own material and spiritual needs, but also to excel in every good work, or charity (2 Cor. 9:8). Self-sufficiency, or *autarkeia*, cannot therefore be dissociated from the precept of benevolence (9:9), from the ordinance of using material goods to the advantage of others. In the perspective, it does not lead to a mode of living independently of others’ needs. Mostly, this precept is a necessary means to overcome scarcity, the inadequacy of resources, underlying the numerous food crises and shortages of goods that affected many Roman territories during 44-49 AD, Jerusalem included.

Paul’s seemingly paradoxical theology of self-sufficiency perhaps needs to be understood in terms of the many dimensions and levels at which it operates. Firstly, in the spiritual realm, believers abandon anxiety about wealth and resources, entrusting themselves to God’s grace. This results in a (Stoic-like) detachment from the things of this world. Because the material world is lessened in importance, ritual sinfulness is not so important, and believers are free to continue their previous employment. This will have the additional benefit, through God’s grace, of allowing them material self-sufficiency. As members of the family of the Church, furthermore, generous sharing of resources will allow the needy in the family to also meet their material needs. Here, self-sufficiency at the level of the religious community has more in common with Jewish traditions of the duty of care for the poor. Self-sufficiency is thus temporal and spiritual, individual and communal, and it means slightly different things in each context, although a coherent overall scheme can be perceived. This ideal of self-sufficiency culminates in 2 Thess. 3:11-12, where Paul commands those who neglect their duties to attend quietly to their own work and to earn their own living.

Malina has argued persuasively that the main motivation of Mediterranean peoples of the first century was the maintenance of honour, the avoidance of shame. Economic achievement was, as we shall see, indeed frowned upon, and the notion

of a loosely affiliated group of individuals each pursuing utility-maximisation through rational economic activity is inappropriate within this context (Malina 2001a, p. 38). Highly collectivist, and strongly bound by kinship, family honour was enacted through, among other things, living self-sufficiently in a manner according to one's station. Not achieving economic self-sufficiency, and therefore not being able to live an appropriately honourable life, resulted in shame for the family unit: 'Honourable persons...feel that they are entitled to fulfill their inherited roles and are hence entitled to economic and social subsistence' (Malina 2001a, p. 91).

Since the Pauline communities adopted the form of fictive kin groups, the shame and honour of these groups within the larger community became an important issue. This demanded economic self-sufficiency, but also that the group behave in a way that would not result in shame in relation to outsiders, a theme to which Paul returns frequently (Malina 2001a, p. 66; 1 Thess. 4:12; 1 Cor. 6:6; 10:32-33, 14:23; Rom. 12:17-18; Col. 4:5; 1 Tim. 3:7).

Autarkeia, or self-sufficiency, was to be a major theme of the Church Fathers, and one of the principles upon which many Monastic orders were to be founded. Its Christian origins, as we have shown, are Pauline, rather than being an original edict of the Jesus Movement⁵.

The Household

The ideal of Christian self-sufficiency cannot be detached from its logical context, the concept of the household. The *Haustafeln*, or household codes, found in Ephesians and Colossians, set out a micro-economic logical unity adapted to the social conditions of the ancient world, where the institution of slavery constitutes a primary dimension of the household code (see, on these issues, Verner 1983 and White 1987). These two epistles come from the Pauline school, and are usually dated at 10-20 years after Paul's death. The writer/s try to make clear that the patterns of Christian socio-economic behaviour correspond to the internal structure of family relations, depicted within the house (*oikos*) metaphor.

The later Pauline epistles seem to be influenced by a large tradition of ethical discussions in household management in the Graeco-Roman world. The *oikos* and its management (*oiko-nomia*) as economic model, are also to be found in Aristotle, amongst other ancient writers, and, of course, give the modern discipline its name. Aristotle introduces household relationships in terms of the authority relations between the male householder and other respective groups within a household, thus adopting the famous three-fold distinction of wives, children and slaves, and inferring social from domestic order (*Politics* I 5, 3-4, 1259b). Since household codes and social norms affected one another, Aristotle associates household management with advice on the city's economic affairs (*Pol.* I. 2,1, 1253b). The term household occupies a central place in subsequent Roman moral thought, being inserted into the larger framework of social relations (cf. Cicero, *On Duties*, 1:53-54). Households included not only the relations of kinship, but also of bondage, of patronage, dependence and subordination, and other links or relationships which often entailed obligations and expectations (Meeks 1983, pp. 29-30).

This institution was considered to be the most significant social influence on the patterns adopted by the first urban Christian groups (Meeks 1983, pp. 75-77; Meeks 1986, pp. 110-13), especially in the deuterio-Pauline tradition, where the structure of the Christian community corresponded to that of an hierarchically

ordered household, so familiar in Hellenistic-Roman societies. These later Pauline writings try to adapt the content of the household-code to the new faith, but still retain the initial household structure (esp. Col 3:18-4:1). Paul's own Corinthian correspondence also informs us that the early Christian groups' organization was based on this model, with the more powerful and wealthy members to exercise more influence on this broader kinship assembly, the *ekklesia* (1 Cor. 16:15-16, 19; cf. Philem. 1:2). Meeks has also argued that there is a special tendency for Pauline church members to refer to each other as brother or sister, reinforcing the suggestion that the metaphor of the church community as family / household unit is an early and original one (1983, p. 87).

The implication of these community structures and symbols can be presented as follows: the ideal of perfection is not achieved by total withdrawal from the surrounding social reality, but by living with a sense of responsibility in the world, within the ordinary structures of human life, such as the household⁶ (Eph. 5:21 - 6:9). As such, it is consistent with the ideal of remaining in one's station, of self-sufficiency within the household unit (understood both in literal terms, and as the church community), and of hierarchies of authority based on paternalistic and patronistic power. Political economy is thus transformed into a specific case of domestic economy, a view consonant with the existing traditions of Israel (Lev. 25:35-46).

In this perspective, furthermore, the introduction of such a code of living possibly aims to help Christians to assimilate to life in society, partly adjusting their behaviour to hellenistic-roman patterns, while preserving their distinctive identity (cf. 1 Cor.9:19-23), in the same way the Jewish diaspora tried to respond to the prevailing values of the dominant culture.

Assimilation and participation have not been preached by either the Jesus Movement, or the Jerusalem Love Community, but Paul's far-flung nascent communities are encouraged to practice discretion and prudence in these matters. Paul also urges the Thessalonians to support one another, as well as to engage in labour, because of *outsiders' opinions* (1 Thess. 4:9-12). The Church must, according to Paul, offer pagan society an alternative intellectual, or ethical, option, and his exhortations aim to provoke the respect of its members outside the community of faith. In pursuing such an aim, the Deutero-Pauline tradition notes that Christians should not neglect the primary matter of care for the poor and needy (Eph. 4:28). Christians are thus admonished to extend their beneficence to the outside world (1 Thess. 5:15), proving their status as honourable persons able to contribute to the common good, and to the welfare of all.

Economic Activity and Labour

Paul's theology of labour follows logically on from the need for economic self-sufficiency of individual Christian households, and of the nascent Christian communities. As has already been indicated, new converts were to remain in whatever form of economic activity they had previously carried out. Members who had ceased to practice their trading activities were advised to return to their previous working and earning state, so as to provide for their needs (2 Thess. 3:6-10; Gordon 1987, p. 57). Voluntary unemployment is not tolerated, and even Paul himself engages in work. This prohibition fits well with the non-introspective, collectivistic dimension of ancient Roman culture, where behavioural controls were not internalised as individualistic, but mostly external and social, deriving from a set of social structures in which all persons were expected to participate (Malina

2000, pp. 387-88). In this context, voluntary unemployment was not understood as a choice or decision at the level of the individual conscience, but as a deviant form of behaviour yielding shame and public rejection, undermining social cohesion.

Paul often uses the word *κοπος* to describe work, which is perhaps better translated as toil, exhaustion, or exhausting labour, and 'suggests something that a man does vigorously, putting all that he has into it, and getting results' (2 Cor. 11:27; 2 Thess. 3:8; cf. 1 Cor 9:12; Beardsee 1951, p. 47). This position is some way removed from that of the Synoptic Gospels, and, although still some considerable way from, for example, subsequent Christian work ethics of the following centuries, sets in train a mode of thought which will allow such ideas to develop. The moral value of work, then, has been introduced, has not yet reached the point of glorifying work per se, as was to happen in the later centuries, but rather 'because work may express the motive of love, because it may prevent one's becoming a burden to others, because in it one may dispel misapprehensions of non-Christians, work is necessary and meaningful' (Beardsee 1961, p. 62).

As we have seen, Paul himself carried out his profession of tent-maker temporarily in order to support himself, working with his own hands (1 Thess. 2:9, 2 Thess 3:7-8, 1 Cor. 4:12). There was no shame attached to daily work amongst the bulk of the Pauline congregations, 'manual workers and craftsmen, small businessmen and workers on the land, all of whom had a great respect for honest labour' (Hengel 1974). However, the idea of the necessity of work was a major pastoral problem for the instruction of some new converts, especially those of Graeco-Roman or pagan origins, and from higher social strata. This was due to the widely held view in such circles that manual labour was a degrading feature of human life, unworthy of free human beings (Stambaugh and Balch 1986, p. 116; Cicero, *De Officiis*, 1:150-1; Vivenza 1998, pp. 294-300). It is worth noting, nevertheless, that some kind of artisanal activity was indeed practised by a minority of pagan intellectuals, who worked for their living so as to maintain their independence, much like Paul. Downing (1998, pp. 189-94) provides examples of such self-sufficient thinkers, who included Stoics (e.g. Musonius Rufus), and Cynics (e.g. Dio of Prusa, or Demetrius of Sunium).

It is evident that Paul strongly rejected an aristocratic conception of working relations, as he did not exclude eminent families from his injunctions to labour (see, for example, Donfried and Marshall 1993, p. 100). In the Pastoral Epistles, for example, the deutero-Pauline authors assert that those who labour are worthy of their wage (1 Tim. 5:18), which explicitly refers to a Judaic view of work (Deut. 25:4). Judaic ethics urged men to continuous work in order to sustain themselves⁷, and the rewards from such work were seen as God's blessing (Ohrenstein 1998, pp. 239-44). However, in Judaic economic thought, what Gordon has called the 'solution by mediation' entails the economic problem being solved by God's bounty to the whole nation. The prosperity of the nation is God's reward, so that the economic problem is considered at a macro-level (Gordon 1989, pp. 21-32). Paul generally focusses on the individual, or household, micro-level as that where the economic problem should be tackled by hard work and self-sufficiency. By analogous extension, the household model comes to include the local church, and then the whole proto-Christian community, so that some clear idea of the self-sufficiency of the Church as a unit is also promulgated, akin to that of Judaism.

The converts who violate this precept are even considered to lead ill-ordered lives, not attending to their own business, but living in idleness, removed from the Christian pattern of daily behaviour. These problems emerge in the

context of 2 Thess. 3:6-12, where the text informs us that some members of the church were idle and lazy, partly due to the belief in the impending end of history. Paul once again clarifies that the *Parousia* has not yet occurred (2 Thess. 2:1-12), because the mission to the nations is not complete. He refutes an over-realised eschatological position, based by the idle converts upon a misinterpretation of current afflictions and persecutions (1 Thess. 5:14). Loafers are considered as public charges, and the famous Pauline rule 'anyone who will not work shall not eat' (2 Thess. 3:10), not unknown in pagan circles, takes the form of an ethical imperative addressed to such attitudes.

Paul also states emphatically that he did not depend on others for material support, not because he lacked the right to do so, but so as to behave in way that others could imitate (2 Thess. 3 8-9). Paul neither intends to burden his converts (2 Cor. 12:14-15), nor to establish rewards for his services (2 Cor. 11:8-9). He thus delineates his ministry from that of his adversaries in Corinth who demanded payment as apostolic messengers (2 Cor. 11:13, 12:16-17). No-one, not even Paul, has the right to be supported by others in the congregation on the grounds of a self-claimed authority (2 Thess. 3:11), otherwise the community becomes disrupted and falls into disarray, as Paul suggests (2 Thess. 3:11). Even in the cases where Paul was obliged to make some sort of compromise accepting money for survival (as in Philippians 4:15-19), he declares that this financial assistance resulted in self-sufficiency, or even an abundance of goods (Phil. 4:18).

True Christians do not act in ways open to condemnation; following Pauline principles and tradition, everyone in the community was expected to make a contribution to its total output in general, or to the common meal in particular. Here, then, is an incontrovertible Pauline innovation: work is necessary for each and every member of the congregation. Note again, however, that the need for honour, derived, in part, from economic self-sufficiency, is also a factor in shaping Paul's view of work. This is not a wholesale theology of work, then, but rather a pragmatic and socially-governed injunction aimed at preserving the honour and harmony of the Pauline fictive kin groups.

Charity and Almsgiving

An additional benefit of labour was the production of surpluses that could be used to support almsgiving. In the epistle to the Ephesians (4:28), the deutero-Pauline writer combines the instruction for labour with the matter of care for the poor and needy. This precept appears also clearly in the second letter to the Thessalonians (3:6-10). The model of the family/household was extended metaphorically to the new churches, where self-sufficiency was also to be achieved by mutual support.

The Pauline movement was associated, as noted above, with a progressive increase in the number of wealthy and upper class members of the church. The importance of alms-giving and other charitable practices, always considered as a key tenet of early Christianity, started to be advocated regularly as the vehicle for including these property owners into what had been largely a bourgeois salvation movement (Hengel 1979, pp. 183-93). Maintaining personal wealth modestly became acceptable, so long as one took care of the needy and was aware of the dangers posed by such wealth. Attachment to possessions placed above God, and the subsequent selfish pursuit of wealth, were not tolerated (Hengel 1979, p. 200), and selfishness, or individualism, was not compatible with membership of the Pauline church communities (Chamblin 1993, p. 107). This can be explained by the Pauline injunction for re-ordering of economic activities away from competitive

behaviour in favour of self-sufficiency, and enhanced sacrificial giving in an unsupportive society. The economic model introduced by Paul rests on the eschatological conviction of the new life through resurrection, because only this kind of experience provides a pledge that human labour will not be in vain, and renders the believers able to excel in good works (1 Cor. 15:58), thus shaping a new economy of hope and mercy.

An economic surplus in excess of the needs of the Christian should be distributed to the poor and the needy. This is suggested by the urging of the Jerusalem community that Paul should remember the poor (Gal.2:10). Active concern for the poor was a distinctive feature of the Jewish tradition, whilst almsgiving was considered as an essential obligation of membership to the covenant people (Dunn 1993, p. 71). Judaism, and Proto-Christianity, encouraged charitable practices that appear progressive when compared with similar Graeco-Roman attitudes. This can be explained by the fact that the Judaeo-Christian tradition saw poverty as a phenomenon of injustice, as a serious challenge to societal order. Almsgiving helped to remedy this, although wholesale redistribution was only rarely recommended, as in the Synoptic Gospels and Jerusalem Church (Hamel 1990; Pastor 1997, pp. 136-59; Malina 1995). Paul, in fact, urges the Corinthian believers to contribute to the Jerusalem collection, by saving up a proportion of money proportionate to the level of their income. He also proposes a way of administering these holdings which secures proper financial accountability (1 Cor. 16:2-24).

Poor, and *poverty*, do not always retain their contemporary significance, when these terms emerge in different cultural and social environments. The terms obtain distinct and differing meanings in Graeco-Roman and Jewish worlds, both of which Paul, as a hellenised Jew, would have been amply familiar with. In Graeco-Roman culture, poor, *ptochos*, was someone deprived of all resources for living, one who lacked self-sufficiency, social status, or honour (Aristophanes, *Plutus*, pp. 535ff; Plutarch, *On Love of Wealth*, pp. 523 f). Charity was recognised as a social imperative to address the needs of those in a state of misfortune (Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1120a 25, Cicero, *Do Officiis*, 2,18.61-2). The ideal of sharing a surplus could in fact fit into this Graeco-Roman conception of charity, though the latter was founded on the precept of social exhibition of wealth, and conspicuous patronage (Plutarch, *op cit*, 528 A).

According to Jewish cultural patterns, the term poor is invested with a multiplicity of meanings: it signifies not only those who lack money and possessions, but, in a more comprehensive manner, it denotes any needy, indigent, destitute or socially outcast – those in a state of social, economic, political or patrimonial inferiority. Loss of land, loss of resources to meet one's obligations, and debt-bondage bring about poverty (Leviticus 25:25-39), a social perversion which needs to be effaced in the Jubilee year of redemption. In the prophetic tradition of Judaism, in particular, poverty was often attributed to the deprivations of the rich, and was understood as a structural sin. The poor were seen to have a special theological and moral value. Judaic charity is thus a moral obligation aimed to overcome this distributive injustice, which stands some way removed from the Graeco-Roman framework of patronage, largesse and conspicuous benefaction (Joubert 2000, pp. 97-98). In the Hellenistic world, charity was a means for generating honour, and fitted squarely into the tradition of patron-client relationships.

Paul's own views on charity borrow from both cultures. He uses poverty as a metaphor for lack of concern with worldly goods, but also never attacks property and wealth directly (1 Cor. 13:3), nor the structures which might cause poverty to occur. Paul asserts to the new converts, for example, that he embodies Jesus's life (2 Cor. 4:10-11) who became poor for man's cause, so that by his poverty you might become rich (*ibid.*, 8:9). Accepting such a humiliating death, Christ impoverished himself, so that everything was taken away from him. Pauline presentation of the ministry of Christ in terms of 'riches' and 'poverty' constitutes a symbolic metaphor, unique in New Testament thought (Phil. 2:6-8).

The term 'poor' occupies a central position in Pauline thought and terminology. Paul speaks of his financial collection for the Jerusalem community as for the benefit of the poor among the saints there (Rom. 15:25-28). A redistribution of surplus should be judged necessary for the aid of those who lived a precarious existence on the level of bare subsistence, awaiting organised relief or individual alms. Paul mostly refers to 'poor' and 'poverty' in their natural material sense, attributing emphasis to the economic dimension of the term (2 Cor. 6:10, 8:2). Nonetheless, some of the Old Testament and Gospel theological connotation of the word remains, with the spiritual wealth of the poor, dependent upon God, contrasted with the worldly wealthy, dependent upon riches (e.g. Romans 15:27).

Gordon (1987, p. 57) notes that charity in the Pauline canon must not extend to the degree that those who offer exhaust and impoverish themselves (2 Cor. 8:12-14). For Paul, material prosperity is a divine gift, a result of God's grace (2 Cor. 9:10-11). These gifts, however, are associated with an ultimate spiritual purpose; Christians are enriched in every way, for all kinds of generosity. Paul refers explicitly to the behaviour of the Macedonian believers, who offered not only their money, but also themselves (2 Cor. 8:5). For the same God who praises cheerful givers (cf. Proverbs 22:8), is also he who can richly endow the Christian with the plenitude of his grace, under the conditions that the act of giving must be dictated by pure motives, by a genuine inner commitment of the human heart (2 Cor. 9:7, cf Gal. 6:9, Rom. 5:5).

Almsgiving cannot be considered a matter of human choice, but a primary human obligation. It is the believer who is charged with the primary task of overcoming economic necessity: the solution to the economic problems of poverty and unequal distribution of wealth is opened to chosen human intermediaries of God's generosity (1 Cor. 3:8-9). Selfish charity is an insult for the recipient, while true generosity relieves the poor (2 Cor. 8:7). In the deutero-Pauline material we find the concept that God offers material goods with abundance under the condition that this surplus is transmitted to meet the needs of those who suffer (1 Tim. 6:17-18). A close relationship between spiritual wealth and the principle of sharing material possessions with the needy becomes a distinct feature of the Pauline tradition.

Possession of Wealth

It becomes clear, from the on-going analysis, that Paul does not impose a unified and rigid pattern of social and economic behaviour to the members of Christian communities. Renunciation of property and abandonment of riches as a divine precept do not reflect the spirit of Pauline admonitions to the Christians. Christian communities do not have to adapt their economic conduct to an ideal of voluntary poverty, thus combining their faith with experimentation in economic relations, as in the Jerusalem case: 'Not only are their members to maintain steady and devoted

application to work, but also they are not to engage in any dramatic liquidation of capital. Nowhere does Paul even suggest common ownership or pooling of possessions' (Gordon 1989, p. 78).

The Corinthian correspondence informs us that the Christian community there was divided by existing social inequities of power, property and wealth (1 Cor. 11:21), thus having to face the problem of conspicuous consumption of the wealthy members (11:22). In this context, the conflict between groups with different consumption patterns may be ascribed to differences of wealth, status and honour (1 Cor. 8:9-13), or even to patronage relations, implicit in the agape-feast which allowed food distribution according to one's place in the social strata – the best for the rich, the worst for the poor (1 Cor. 11:33-34). For consumption is encouraged (and abstinence from food is condemned outright), if not dissociated from an expression of gratitude to God (Rom. 14:6; 1 Tim. 4:3-4)

This is not to suggest that individual behaviour is not important to Paul. Indeed, individual salvation is a prime theological concern of the Pauline School, and, as we have seen, general guidelines on a Christian's economic activities and relations have been developed. Nonetheless, the Pauline School's acceptance of wealthy Christians has been contrasted with the position of the Jesus Movement: 'In the light of the harsh words directed towards the wealthy that are reported in the synoptic tradition, it is striking to find an accommodation of the rich within the New Testament...in 1 Tim 6. 17-19 where giving to the poor justifies the possession of wealth' (Garrison 1993, pp. 70-71).

Justification of property seems to stem from a conviction that a modest level of material wealth is produced by individual working capacities. Paul seems to acknowledge, albeit implicitly, the idea of a labour-motivated concentration of wealth⁸. Paul disassociates Christian living from an obligation to an immediate and urgent need for decapitalisation, evaluating the quality of economic activities in terms of his hard-work ethic. Property and poverty cannot be considered, therefore, as two diametrically opposed structures which incorporate incompatible individual stances with regard to economic affairs. True wealth in this perspective was held as a means to maintain humanity in a contented way of life, in terms of the self-sufficiency ideal (Philip. 4:11; 1 Thess. 4:12; 1 Tim. 6:6). It is this pattern of true piety (ευσεβεία), so familiar in Graeco-Roman culture, that is promoted here in terms of sincerity of faith and good conscience (1 Tim. 1:5, 4:8; 2 Tim. 1:3-5), applicable to both the pious wealthy (1 Tim. 6:18) and the slaves (Titus 2:9-10).

Theissen explains the shift from the Jesus Movement's economic ethic to that of the Hellenistic city churches as being bound up in a role change in the spiritual leadership away from Wandering Charismatics and towards local church communities (Theissen 1978, p. 115). This can be explained by the assumption that symbolic individuals, the Jesus Movement's wandering charismatics, could act out the repudiation of wealth on behalf of the rural communities they both ministered to and depended on. But, as their ministering and evangelical role was subsumed into the (Pauline) urban community itself, such complete rejection of property seemed unfeasible, if not inappropriate. Such an evolution took place as people of considerable wealth joined the church.

Concentration of riches, nonetheless, should be judged as a dangerous occupation, if it brings about distraction from spiritual life; such conduct is guided by sinful desires and is negatively evaluated, for it is contrary to man's ultimate goal, eternal salvation (1 Tim. 6:9-10). At this point, if only here, the Pauline school seems to converge with the Synoptic Gospels, and the more radical epistle

of James, where capital accumulation implies a degree of uncertainty, of falsified expectations, if disassociated from the perspective of eternity (1 Tim. 6:17 and 19; James 4:14). Materialism and the dedicated pursuit of wealth are not countenanced: 'faithfulness to the Creator prohibits worshipping and serving created things, and bondage to Christ leaves no room for slavery to money and to the things money can buy' (Chamblin 1993, p. 166).

The pre-eminence of honour over wealth *per se*, and the view of economic resources as finite, in any case made the whole-hearted pursuit of wealth a suspicious activity in the Ancient Mediterranean. Malina has gone so far as to suggest that honourable people would actually 'strive to avoid and prevent the accumulation of capital, since they would see it a threat to the community balance, rather than a precondition to economic and social improvement' (Malina 2001a, p. 97). Thus Paul is representing the views of his time when he withholds his support for greed, the pursuit of wealth, and purely economic motivation in general. The same greed, arrogance and envy are typical individual stances of those false preachers who, exactly as the selfish rich, trust nothing else but perishable possessions, thus revealing their corrupted teaching (1 Tim. 6:3-5; 2 Tim. 3:1-9).

Money and Money Flows

Although we have seen thus far that Paul develops a moderate view concerning crucial economic phenomena, including money and capital, it should not be forgotten that it is the (deutero-)Pauline canon which contains the warning 'the love of money is the root of all evil' (1 Tim. 6:10). Similar warnings against monetary and capital accumulation are familiar in both Old Testament and pagan literature (Eccles. 5:10; Prov. 23:4; Stobaeus, Anth. 3:417).

His attitude towards money seems ambivalent if judged externally, without reference to its internal logical consistency. Paul refused to accept monetary support for himself (1 Cor. 9:6-18), although he did solicit funds from his new churches for, in particular, the desperately needy Jerusalem church. It should also be noted that redistribution of funds within the international community was explicitly stated by Paul to bring about the additional benefit of economic equality (2 Cor. 8:13-15). A further upshot of the Jerusalem collection is that it is through the funds sent to the first Church that the new, more diverse, international community will become one. This conception of solidarity as a means of effecting salvation was already anticipated in prophetic traditions (e.g. Isaiah 45:22-25). Thus Paul's collection was conceived as a particular form of redistributive tax, in some way analogous to the temple tax sent to Jerusalem by the Jewish diaspora during the first century.

The collection for supporting the Jerusalem church reveals that benevolence and charity cannot happen without existing amount of money funds. Capital and money can, from this point of view, be the only means of effecting a transfer of economic surplus to those in need. Paul deals with this problem of administration of economic resources in purely commercial terminology (1 Cor. 16:1-2). Paul not only provides detailed organisational instructions for money collection, but he also insists on the reciprocity of such a transaction (2 Cor. 8:14), through returns in prayer and grace from recipients, so as an equitable balance could be maintained. Possession of capital and wealth means nothing if not transmuted into socially useful practices by its distribution. Paul adduces the evidence drawn by the Israelites gathering of the manna in the desert (2 Cor. 8:15), governed by the principle of equal distribution in such a way that the excess of

some ministered to the deficiency of others (Exod. 16:18). This is not a zero-sum approach to economic exchanges, since Paul seems to oppose the idea that relief from the burdens of scarcity in some places should be effected only through afflictions and loss of prosperity elsewhere. Paul's view at this point is inimical to the limited-good conceptions of the ancient world.

Georgi (1992, pp. 141ff) has argued extensively that Paul's language, and the structure of some of his exhortations concerning the Collection for Jerusalem, show that he is attempting to use the international flows of money thus organised (and the gratitude and love they will generate in recipients), as a sort of theological political economy: 'In the collection, a cycle of grace occurs in which money is the expression and means of a process that moves human hearts and draws people together....The ideas of the circulation of money and of economic growth have been exchanged for the circulation and growth of the grace of God among people' (Georgi 1992, p. 154).

In the second letter to the Corinthians, Georgi argues, Paul's use of notions drawn from contemporary understandings of market economies extends beyond metaphor, into the creation of a new system, which incorporates economic concepts as a way of understanding relationships between different branches of the new international Church. Paul explicitly states that surplus and wealth in some parts of the world are God's way of dealing with poverty and misery elsewhere (2 Cor. 8:13), in an echo of elementary trade theories⁹. Paul's collection was thus embedded within the framework of Graeco-Roman benefit exchange and patronage, but typical pagan attitudes were modified in that Paul's primary aim was to alleviate the wants of others, and abolish scarcity. The flows of monies from areas of surplus, to areas of need, will generate returns of grace from the Jerusalem 'saints' to their benefactors, and will be a way for the Gentiles to 'pay' for their inclusion in the Jewish family of Abraham (Garrison 1993, p. 69; Rom. 15:25-27): 'Concepts of personal potential and action, of interest and of profit and of a worldwide net of markets have been absorbed by this greatly enlarged picture' (Georgi 1992, p. 154).

This approach seems quite different from that of the gospels, where no exchange metaphor is used to justify almsgiving (c.f. Mt. 18:23-34, Lk. 14:12-14). For the evangelists, alms-giving is simply the right thing to do, according to generalised reciprocity. The gospels' model of altruistic benefactory giving, without immediate or direct reciprocity, hardly applies to Paul's collection. This is due to the underlying conviction in Pauline moral thought that receiving a gift, such as monetary aid, entails gratitude and obligation (cf. Rom. 1:21; 1 Cor. 4:7, 6:20). For Paul the collection functioned ultimately as a repayment of a moral debt, along patronage lines, which Pauline communities owed to the mother church in Jerusalem. The idea underlying the whole effort is that of a balanced reciprocity, or immediate mutual exchange - of the exchange of economic support for grace. Albeit at least partly symbolic in nature, this kind of reciprocity is inserted into a system of mutual obligations, thus referring to the distinct responsibilities of the Christian communities (Joubert 2000, pp. 140-144).

It is symptomatic of the socio-cultural context of his work that, even in his most 'economic' writing, Paul places community needs at the heart of his thought. Malina has pointed out that it would not have made sense, within the given context, for economic philosophy and analysis *per se* to have been developed. Economics could not be conceptually separated from its basis in the family unit, or, in this case, the international community of early Christian fictive-kin groups. Equally,

some element of the patron-client relationship seems obvious here, where, in return for financial support to the economically weaker group, the richer church communities receive spiritual honour and grace (Malina 2001b, p. 17-20).

Conclusion

This study has attempted to present a consistent and coherent model of Pauline economic ethics. Moving from his underpinning paradigm of the household unit supporting itself through hard work, we have seen that the surpluses thereby produced permit a solution to the economic problem through almsgiving. No wholesale distributions of capital are recommended, although generosity in almsgiving is encouraged. Productive capital, in particular, is protected by the Pauline ethic of hard work and self-sufficiency. International charity amongst the new Christian churches is understood as representative of a new theological system of international flows of money and grace. The whole-hearted pursuit of wealth is explicitly condemned, nevertheless, and the 'poor' retain a special theological distinction.

These economic precepts are substantially different from both the general antipathy towards the pursuit and retention of wealth evident in the gospels, and the de-capitalised, non-working, communitarian pattern of the Jerusalem Community. Paul represents the first tentative accommodation of the Christian church to the realities of economic activity, and the introduction to Christianity of the ethic of hard work which would become such a feature of Reformation and post-Reformation thought. Without Paul, it is difficult to see how any subsequent Christian work ethic could have been developed, or how proto-Christianity could have become assimilated into mainstream socio-economic ways of life. His importance as a link in the chain of gradual theological acceptance of economic activities, culminating perhaps in modern theologies of enterprise, cannot be overstated. It should not be forgotten, equally, how far Paul has already moved from the views of the Jesus Movement and the Jerusalem Love Community.

We have ascribed these changes to several relevant factors, which include the problems caused within Jerusalem by the Love Community's economic behaviour, the delayed *Parousia*, and over-riding socio-cultural norms, such as the need for honour, and the importance of the family (or quasi-family) group. We have attempted to analyse the impact of these factors upon Paul's theology, thereby setting his pronouncements on matters economic into their theological and cultural context. These contexts are critical for any understanding of New Testament writings which touch on economics, and remind us of the dangers of selecting apparently-appropriate New Testament passages to support modern economic work without paying due regard to context. Ultimately, such an approach has no place in the modern social sciences.

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Notes

1 'Seven are generally considered "undisputed", although a few scholars accept fewer than seven, and a good number accept more than seven' (Sanders 1996, p. 112). The undisputed epistles are Romans, 1 & 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, 1 Thessalonians and Philemon. The status of 2 Thessalonians and Colossians is contentious, but they are probably early works from the Pauline School. Ephesians and the Pastoral Epistles (Timothy 1 and 2, and Titus) are deutero-Pauline.

2 These teachings exerted a considerable influence on later Christian social and economic thought, through medieval monasticism. See, for example, Ganz (1995, pp. 17-30).

3 In the two explicit allusions to embassies (2 Cor. 5:20, and Eph. 6:20), the references are to the reconciliative, and not the coercive, powers of an imperial emissary.

4 This precept illustrates a general Pauline tendency not to challenge institutional structures - except those of Judaism - but to recommend acceptance of the status quo, including respect of the Roman Empire, and payment of taxes (Rom. 13:1-7; Brox 1994, p. 31).

5 Any suggestion that self-sufficiency is an appropriate economic aim is, at best, implicit in the Synoptic Gospels, for example. See Drakopoulou Dodd and Gotsis (2000).

6 These passages also promote the ideal of stewardship, familiar to us from the Synoptic Gospels, especially Luke (e.g. 12:35-48) (Pohlmann 1993; Drakopoulou Dodd and Gotsis 2000), and discuss the centrality of women in the household (Wagener 1994).

7 See, for example, Gen. 2:15, 3:23; Ex. 34:21; Num. 3:7; De. 5:13; 1 Chr. 25:1, 27:26; 2 Chr. 2:10; Pr. 12:11, 28:19, 31:18; ben Sira 20:28; Za. 13:5; Is. 23:10, 28:24.

8 This idea will become familiar among some of the most eminent medieval schoolmen (especially John of Paris), and, in the seventeenth century, will be incorporated in the political thought of John Locke, with regard to the right to private property.

9 However, the general aim of facilitating *equality* in a time of crisis, *καίρος*, can also be found in, *inter alia*, Philo, Polbius and Aristotle (Danker 1983, p. 128).

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