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Philemon in Perspective

Interpreting a Pauline Letter

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Preface

On 19 and 20 August 2008 a group of thirty-six scholars gathered at the Faculty of Theology of the University of the Free State in Bloemfontein, South Africa, for the fifth meeting of the International Colloquium on the New Testament. For almost two full days all the attention of those present was focused on one issue only: the interpretation of Paul's Letter to Philemon. The discussions were intense and fruitful. Most of the papers read at that meeting are presented in revised form in this book, together with a few papers by scholars who would have liked to be present, but unfortunately could not make it.

Through the publication of this volume, we hope to make it possible for the scholarly community at large to benefit from a focused investigation of the letter — in the same way that this occurred during our meeting.

The colloquium was dedicated entirely to the interpretation of Paul's Letter to Philemon, and this is also reflected in this volume. The most important characteristic of this publication is thus the fact that the letter is approached from a very wide variety of perspectives, yielding several new insights into its interpretation:

The first essay by *Francois Tolmie* serves as a backdrop for the other contributions: He presents an overview of tendencies in the research on the Letter to Philemon since 1980. This is followed by three essays devoted to the epistolary and rhetorical analysis of the letter. In his contribution, *Jeffrey Weima* offers a thorough analysis from the perspective of epistolography. *Peter Lampe* reads the letter from a rhetorical-psychological perspective, and shows the importance of affects and emotions in this regard. The study of *Ernst Wendland* is dedicated to another aspect, namely the rhetorical function of stylistic form in the letter. This contribution is followed by two essays devoted to situating the letter in its ancient context: *Peter Arzt-Grabner* responds to the question of "How to deal with Onesimus?" by offering a perspective based on ancient legal and documentary sources. *Francois Wessels* highlights a further important element, namely that of slavery in early Christianity as a necessary background for an informed interpretation of the letter. Theological issues are next in line, with two essays devoted to this aspect. First *Michael Wolter* discusses the letter as an ethical counterpart of

Paul's doctrine of justification. This study is followed by *Pieter de Villiers'* essay, in which the important role of love in the letter is indicated clearly. Another group of three essays focuses on ideological issues: *Bob Atkins* provides an interesting overview of the way in which the Letter to Philemon was interpreted contextually in the United States in the past. *Jeremy Punt* offers a post-colonial reading of the letter, focusing in particular on the power relations reflected therein. *Pieter Botha* focuses on what he calls the "legacy" of the Letter to Philemon; in particular he asks the question in which way the letter has been used in the formation of certain social roles, social identities and hierarchies, and, most importantly, why scholars continue to engage in "criticism" of this text. Last but not least, the reception of the letter by the Church Fathers is addressed: *Paul Decock* discusses its interpretation by Origen, Jerome, Chrysostom and Augustine, *Alfred Friedl* presents an overview of Jerome's interpretation, *Chris de Wet* investigates the way in which honour discourse functions in John Chrysostom's exegesis of the letter, and *John Fitzgerald* completes the section on the Church Fathers by means of an investigation of Theodore of Mopsuestia's interpretation of the Letter to Philemon.

I am much obliged to the editorial staff of de Gruyter, especially to Ms Sabina Dabrowski, for their guidance and professional assistance.

I wish to express my sincere thanks to Mrs Marie-Therese Murray for the language editing of the articles and to Alfred Friedl for the vital role he played in the technical editing of the book.

Finally, a word of gratitude to the Research Office of the University of the Free State which provided financial assistance for the organisation of the conference.

May this book serve to further stimulate the interpretation of this brief, yet fascinating letter of Paul!

Francois Tolmie
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Bloemfontein, South Africa
January 2010

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Abbreviations

I. Journals and Series

are cited according to S.M. Schwertner, Internationales Abkürzungsverzeichnis für Theologie und Grenzgebiete: IATG; Zeitschriften, Serien, Lexika, Quellenwerke mit bibliographischen Angaben, Berlin/New York ^{2}1992.

Abbreviations which are not listed in Schwertner, IATG^{2}:

ACCS.NT	Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture – New Testament
AcTh.S	Acta Theologica Supplementa
AFil	Archiwum Filologiczne
AncBD	Anchor Bible Dictionary
ANTC	Abingdon New Testament Commentaries
ARSoc	Annual Review of Sociology
BiAC	The Bible in Ancient Christianity
BBHR	Blackwell Brief Histories of Religion
BBR	Bulletin for Biblical Research
BCRel	Blackwell Companions to Religion
BDAG	F.W. Danker (ed.), A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature, Chicago ^{3}2000
BDF	F.W. Blass/A. Debrunner, A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature: A Revision of F. Blass and A. Debrunner "Grammatik des neutestamentlichen Griechisch," Incorporating Supplementary Notes by A. Debrunner; Translated and Edited by R.W. Funk, Cambridge 1961.
BibAC	Bible in Ancient Christianity
BiLi	Biblical Limits
BNP	Brill's New Pauly: Encyclopaedia of the Ancient World (ed. by Manfred Landfester et al.)
BPCol	The Bible and Postcolonialism
BSIH	Brill's Studies in Intellectual History

BVB	Beiträge zum Verstehen der Bibel
CBibR	Currents in Biblical Research
CCivS	The Centers of Civilization Series
CGR	Conrad Grebel Review
Config.	Configurations
CSPESPT	Cambridge Studies in Population, Economy and Society in Past Time
D@S	Diritto @ Storia
DChA	W. Smith/S. Cheetham (eds.), A Dictionary of Christian Antiquities: Being a Continuation of "The Dictionary of the Bible" 1–2, London 1875–1880
ECC	The Eerdmans Critical Commentary
EChF	The Early Church Fathers
EChrS	Early Christian Studies
EEC	Encyclopedia of Early Christianity
EGGNT	Exegetical Guide to the Greek New Testament
EHS.Ph	Europäische Hochschulschriften, Reihe 20, Philosophie
EuJTh	European Journal of Theology / Journal Européen de Théologie / Europäische Theologische Zeitschrift
FASk.B	Forschungen zur antiken Sklaverei: Beiheft
FCNTECW	Feminist Companion to the New Testament and Early Christian Writings
FF.NT	Foundations and Facets: New Testament
FRAbh.NF	Freiburger rechtsgeschichtliche Abhandlungen, Neue Folge
FTB	Fischer Taschenbücher
HABES	Heidelberger althistorische Beiträge und epigraphische Studien
HumBiol	Human Biology
ICCONT	The International Critical Commentary on the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments
IESBS	N.J. Smelser/P.B. Baltes, International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences, Amsterdam etc. 2001
ʾIlu	ʾIlu: Revista de Ciencias de las Religiones
IThL	International Theological Library
IUPM	The Innsbruck University Press Monographs
IVPNTCS	The IVP New Testament Commentary Series
JOTT	Journal for Translation and Textlinguistics
JRev	Juridical Review
KTAH	Key Themes in Ancient History
Kerux	Kerux: A Journal of Biblical-Theological Preaching
KTAH	Key Themes in Ancient History

Lav.	Laverna: Beiträge zur Wirtschafts- und Sozialgeschichte der antiken Welt
LCBI	Literary Currents in Biblical Interpretation
LHRev	The Legal History Review
MAPhS	Memoirs of the American Philosophical Society
MAQ	Medical Anthropology Quarterly
MeMe	The Medieval Mediterranean
NAC	The New American Commentary
NTCt	The New Testament in Context
NTGs	New Testament Guides
NTTh	New Testament Theology
OECS	Oxford Early Christian Studies
PAST	Pauline Studies
PDDRSSR	Pubblicazioni del Dipartimento di Diritto Romano e Storia della Scienza Romanistica dell'Università degli Studi di Napoli "Federico II"
PFGUR	Pubblicazioni della Facoltà di Giurisprudenza dell'Università di Roma
PIDRDOM	Pubblicazioni dell'Istituto di Diritto Romano e dei Diritti dell'Oriente Mediterraneo, Milano
PKNT	Papyrologische Kommentare zum Neuen Testament
PRS	Perspectives in Religious Studies
PzB	Protokolle zur Bibel
RBL	Review of Biblical Literature
RHist	Rewriting Histories
RMCS	Routledge Monographs in Classical Studies
RMF	Religion, Marriage, and Family
RNBC	Readings: A New Biblical Commentary
RSPT	Readings in Social and Political Theory
SBL.BSNA	Society of Biblical Literature / Biblical Scholarship in North America
SBL.RBS	Society of Biblical Literature / Resources for Biblical Study
SEChrT	Sources of Early Christian Thought
SNTG	Studies in New Testament Greek
SNTW	Studies of the New Testament and its World
SPagS	Sacra Pagina Series
st	Suhrkamp Taschenbuch
SZ	Shigaku Zasshi
ThE	The Theological Educator
ThIn	Theological Inquiries
ThKNT	Theologischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testamen
THNTC	The Two Horizons New Testament Commentary

TTH	Translated Texts for Historians
TV.AA	Thyssen-Vorträge: Auseinandersetzungen mit der Antike
TynNTC	The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries
UWSLL	University of Wisconsin Studies in Language and Literature
VAFNRW.G	Veröffentlichungen der Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Forschung des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen: Geisteswissenschaften
VEccl	Verbum et Ecclesia
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WBSML	The W. B. Stanford Memorial Lectures
WGRW	Writings from the Greco-Roman World

II. Ancient Greek and Latin Authors and Works

Greek Authors

IAM (Interactive Ancient Mediterranean) project:
http://iam.classics.unc.edu/main/help/A.html [14/9/2009]

Latin Authors

Thesaurus Linguae Latinae (TLL) Online data base, © by Walter de Gruyter GmbH & Co. KG; Berlin 2009.

III. Papyri and Wax Tablets

J.F. Oates, R.S. Bagnall, S.J. Clackson, A.A. O'Brien, JD. Sosin, TG. Wilfong, KA. Worp, Checklist of Greek, Latin, Demotic and Coptic Papyri, Ostraca and Tablets:
http://scriptorium.lib.duke.edu/papyrus/texts/clist.html [October, 2009].

IV. Church Fathers

Greek Fathers

G.W.H. Lampe, A Patristic Greek Lexicon, Oxford 1995.

Latin Fathers

Thesaurus Linguae Latinae (TLL) Online data base, © by Walter de Gruyter GmbH & Co. KG; Berlin 2009.

Tendencies in the Research on the Letter to Philemon since 1980

D. FRANCOIS TOLMIE

The Letter to Philemon might be the briefest of Paul's extant letters, but scholarly interest in it is definitely not lacking. In relation to its length, this short letter receives a considerable amount of interest! For example, an electronic search on BILDI[1] yielded 111 hits for it. This compares very favourably with the number of hits for the other Captivity Letters — particularly if their length is borne in mind: 258 for Phil, 210 for Col and 312 for Eph. The length of some of the recently-published commentaries on Phlm serves as a further indication that one should not underestimate this little letter: Markus Barth and Helmut Blanke:[2] 561 pages; John G. Nordling:[3] 379 pages; Peter Arzt-Grabner:[4] 309 pages.

As the title indicates, the purpose of this study is to present an overview of the tendencies in the research on Phlm since 1980 — a task which is complicated by the large number of publications on it. Since it is impossible to refer to all the literature on the letter that has been published since 1980,[5] I have adopted the following approach in selecting themes for discussion: Broad areas in the research on the letter that have attracted the greatest amount of attention from scholars have been identified and studies that have been published in this regard are discussed. The studies that have been selected mainly represent new developments in our knowledge in respect of the letter, and/or reflect dif-

1 Electronic database (Documentation for Biblical Literature of the University of Innsbruck; http://www.uibk.ac.at/bildi/) [search performed on April 1, 2008].

2 M. Barth/H. Blanke, The Letter to Philemon: A New Translation with Notes and Commentary (ECC), Grand Rapids 2000.

3 J.G. Nordling, Philemon: A Theological Exposition of Sacred Scripture (ConCom), Saint Louis 2004.

4 P. Arzt-Grabner, Philemon (PKNT 1), Göttingen 2003.

5 For an earlier overview of research on Phlm, see W. Schenk, Art. Der Brief des Paulus an Philemon in der neueren Forschung (1945–1987), ANRW II.25.4 (1987) 3439–3495. It must be pointed out that the title of this article may create the impression that a systematic overview of research on Philemon conducted during the period from 1945 to 1987 is presented in it, but this is not the case (except perhaps in the first section). Rather, Schenk presents his own views on Phlm — with constant reference to the research of other scholars.

ferent views on a particular issue.[6] It should also be emphasised that the aim of this investigation is to present an *overview* of the research on Phlm. Evaluation of what is discussed is thus kept to a minimum; although in some instances, the reader is referred to the reactions of other scholars to a particular contribution in the footnotes.

I. The Status of Onesimus

30 years ago most scholars would not have spent too much time on Onesimus' status. In general, what could be called "the traditional view"[7] was accepted in this regard: Onesimus was a runaway slave who in some way had wronged his master, Philemon, and who, in fear, had fled to Paul, by whom he had been converted to Christianity. Paul then sent him back to Philemon. Of course, even in those days no consensus on this matter existed. For example, there was the ingenious suggestion by John Knox,[8] already proposed in 1935, that Onesimus was the slave, not of Philemon but of Archippus (mentioned in Phlm 2 as well as in Col 4,17). According to Knox, Philemon lived in Laodicea and was the overseer of the churches in the Lycus Valley. Onesimus and Tychikus were to stay over at his house, on their way to Colossae with the letter. Philemon had to be persuaded to use his influence on Archippus, so that Onesimus would be sent back to Paul to support him in his work as an apostle. Knox believed that Paul's letter achieved its goal, that Onesimus later became the bishop of Ephesus, and that he was eventually responsible for the collection of Paul's letters.[9] Knox's views were not accepted by many;[10] and one can safely assume that during the 1980s, most scholars would have settled for the traditional view.[11] 25 years later, the picture has changed. This happened as follows:

In 1985 the traditional view was challenged by *Peter Lampe*,[12] who drew attention to the fact that a runaway slave normally would have fled abroad or to a large city, or would have become a member of a group of robbers. Accordingly, if Onesimus was a runaway slave (*fugitivus*), his behaviour in fleeing to Paul is difficult to explain: "Hätte er untertauchen wollen, wären geeignetere Schlupfwinkel als die römische Gefängniszelle des Apostels Paulus zu finden gewesen."[13] On the basis of several examples from Roman legal texts, Lampe proposed that Onesimus would legally not have been considered a *fugitivus*, because, although he had left his master's house, he intended to return to his master. He had done something wrong, but like other slaves of his time, he went to a third party (in this instance, Paul), whom he wished to intercede on his behalf so that he could return to him.[14]

6 This also presupposes that this overview will mostly concentrate on research that has in some way been "absorbed" into the scholarly discussion — whether positively or negatively. In some instances, good research has been conducted, but has unfortunately not become part of the scholarly discussion. For example, a number of well-motivated analyses of the structure of the letter have been published, but not many other scholars seem to have taken much notice of them. Examples include the studies of A.H. Snyman, A Semantic Discourse Analysis of the Letter to Philemon, in: P.J. Hartin/P.J. Petzer (eds.), Text and Interpretation: New Approaches in the Criticism of the New Testament (NTTS 15), Leiden 1991, 83–99; J.H. Roberts, Die Brief aan Filemon (Kommentaar op die Nuwe Testament: Struktuur – Uitleg – Boodskap), Kaapstad 1992, (unfortunately only available in Afrikaans); S.E. Porter, Is Critical Discourse Analysis Critical? An Evaluation Using Philemon as a Test Case, in: S.E. Porter/J.T. Reed (eds.), Discourse Analysis and the New Testament: Approaches and Results (JSNT.S 170/SNTG 4), Sheffield 1999, 47–70; and J.P. Heil, The Chiastic Structure and Meaning of Paul's Letter to Philemon, Bib. 82 (2001) 178–206.

7 See M.M. Mitchell, John Chrysostom on Philemon: A Second Look, HThR 88 (1995) 135–148, for a discussion of the origin of this view — wrongly attributed to John Chrysostom by A.D. Callahan, Paul's Epistle to Philemon: Toward an Alternative *Argumentum*, HThR 86 (1993) 357–376.

8 J. Knox, Philemon among the Letters of Paul: A New View of Its Place and Importance, Chicago 1935. Revised edition: J. Knox, Philemon among the Letters of Paul, London 1960.

9 For criticism of Knox's view, see J.A. Fitzmyer, The Letter to Philemon: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary (AncB 34C), New York etc. 2000, 14–16, and Barth/Blanke, Philemon (see n. 2), 127f.

10 See L. Cope, On Rethinking the Philemon-Colossians Connection, BR 30 (1985) 45–50.

11 See, for example, F. Laub, Die Begegnung des frühen Christentums mit der antiken Sklaverei (SBS 107), Stuttgart 1982, 69; P. Stuhlmacher, Der Brief an Philemon (EKK 18), Zürich etc. 1975, 17; A. Suhl, Der Brief an Philemon (ZBK.NT 13), Zürich 1981, 21–24; and F. Hahn, Paulus und der Sklave Onesimus: Ein beachtenswerter Kommentar zum Philemonbrief, EvTh 37 (1977) 179–185.

12 P. Lampe, Keine "Sklavenflucht" des Onesimus, ZNW 76 (1985) 135–137; see also his commentary on Phlm in this regard, in N. Walter/E. Reinmuth/P. Lampe, Die Briefe an die Philipper, Thessalonicher und an Philemon (NTD 8/2), Göttingen 1998, 203–232, here: 205–207. B.M. Rapske, The Prisoner Paul in the Eyes of Onesimus, NTS 37 (1991) 187–203, here: 189, draws attention to the work of Buckland on the Roman law of slavery in this regard, according to which the intent of the slave was the all-important factor. See W.W. Buckland, The Roman Law of Slavery: The Condition of the Slave in Private Law from Augustus to Justinian, Cambridge 1908, 268. (See also J.D.G. Dunn, The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon: A Commentary on the Greek Text [NIGTC], Grand Rapids/Carlisle 1996, 304, and W. Eckey, Die Briefe des Paulus an die Philipper und an Philemon: Ein Kommentar, Neukirchen-Vluyn 2006, 150, in this regard.) P. Arzt-Grabner, Onesimus *erro*: Zur Vorgeschichte des Philemonbriefes, ZNW 95 (2004) 131–143, here: 133 n. 8, draws attention to the work of Heinz Bellen, who also believes that Onesimus cannot be classified as a *fugitivus* (see H. Bellen, Studien zur Sklavenflucht im römischen Kaiserreich [FASk 4], Wiesbaden 1971, 78f.). Note that Bellen expresses doubt as to whether Onesimus originally intended to return to Philemon.

13 Lampe, "Sklavenflucht" (see n. 12), 136.

14 Lampe's hypothesis was accepted by, inter alia, Rapske, Prisoner (see n. 12), 187–203; S.S. Bartchy, Art. Slavery: New Testament, AncBD 6 (1992) 65–73; M. Wolter, Der Brief an die Kolosser. Der Brief an Philemon (ÖTBK 12), Gütersloh/Würzburg 1993, 229–231 (note that Wolter does not believe that the primary purpose of the letter is to

Two years later, *Sara C. Winter*[15] proposed a quite different interpretation of the letter: (1) It was not a personal letter, but written to a congregation; (2) Onesimus was in prison with Paul, because he had been sent there (he thus did not run away) by (probably) Archippus, on behalf of the church in Colossae; (3) Paul wrote the letter to request that Onesimus should be released from his duties in Colossae, to assist him (Paul) in his Christian ministry; and (4) Paul indicated in the letter that Onesimus was no longer to be regarded as a slave and suggested that he should be manumitted. According to Winter, the first point is substantiated by the recipients indicated in the letter and the nature of the vocabulary in the letter; the second, by the fact that the letter does not indicate that Onesimus ran away, as well as the fact that the thanksgiving of the letter does not fit in with the runaway slave hypothesis; the third point is substantiated by a different interpretation of vv. 8–14; and the fourth, by v. 16, as well as vv. 17 and 21.[16]

In the same year, *Wolfgang Schenk*[17] proposed a somewhat different hypothesis, taking the fact that Onesimus was sent to Paul by Philemon as his point of departure. According to Schenk, the prehistory of the letter was as follows: Apphia, Archippus and others became Christians (the possible location of the congregation was Pergamum[18]); at that stage Philemon was not yet a Christian, and was also an enemy of the

persuade Philemon not to punish Onesimus, but rather to accept him as κοινωνός [v. 17]); H. Hübner, An Philemon. An die Kolosser. An die Epheser (HNT 12), Tübingen 1997, 33f.; Dunn, Philemon (see n. 12), 304; Fitzmyer, Philemon (see n. 9), 18; and Eckey, Philemon (see n. 12), 150. For criticism of Lampe's views, see J.G. Nordling, Onesimus Fugitivus: A Defense of the Runaway Slave Hypothesis in Philemon, JSNT 41 (1991) 97–119; S.R. Llewelyn, The Government's Pursuit of Slaves, NDIEC 8 (1998) 9–46, here: 41–45; J.A. Harrill, Using the Roman Jurists to Interpret Philemon: A Response to Peter Lampe, ZNW 90 (1999) 135–138; Barth/Blanke, Philemon (see n. 2), 228; J. Byron, Paul and the Background of Slavery: The Status Quaestionis in New Testament Scholarship, CBibR 3 (2004) 116–139, here: 128; and K. Wengst, Der Brief an Philemon (ThKNT 16), Stuttgart 2006, 31–33.

15 S.C. Winter, Paul's Letter to Philemon, NTS 33 (1987) 1–15; see also eadem, Methodological Observations on a New Interpretation of Paul's Letter to Philemon, USQR 39 (1984) 203–212. Winter's views were partially influenced by Knox, Philemon (see n. 8).

16 For criticism of Winter's views, see, inter alia, Rapske, Prisoner (see n. 12), 188f.; Wolter, Philemon (see n. 14), 229f.; Barth/Blanke, Philemon (see n. 2), 227f.; C. Osiek, Philippians. Philemon (ANTC), Nashville 2000, 129; and J.M. Ryan, Philemon, in: B.B. Thurston/J.M. Ryan, Philippians and Philemon (SPS 10), Collegeville 2005, 182, 253. See also C.S. Wansink, Chained in Christ: The Experience and Rhetoric of Paul's Imprisonments (JSNT.S 130), Sheffield 1996, 175–199, who believes that Onesimus was sent by Philemon to serve Paul in prison.

17 Schenk, Philemon (see n. 5), 3460f.; see also R. Glaze, Onesimus: Runaway or Emissary?, ThE 54 (1996) 3–11. For criticism of Schenk's views, see Dunn, Philemon (see n. 12), 300, and R.McL. Wilson, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Colossians and Philemon (ICCONT), London/New York 2005, 323f.

18 See Schenk, Philemon (see n. 5), 3483.

Christians in Pergamum — Archippus, in particular, suffered much at his hands; Philemon later became a Christian and his house was subsequently used as a meeting place by the Christians; at a later stage Philemon sent Onesimus (who was not yet a Christian) to Paul with news of a particular good deed; Onesimus then became a Christian through the efforts of Paul. Schenk's suggestion is based on his analysis of the syntactical-semantic textual structures of vv. 4–7, in particular, as well as of their pragmatic function.

Six years later, an interpretation of Phlm first proposed by antebellum abolitionists in the first half of the nineteenth century was revived by *Allen Callahan*.[19] Whereas Lampe, Winter and Schenk still subscribed to the view that Onesimus was a slave, Callahan believed that Onesimus was not a slave, but rather Philemon's physical brother. He pointed out that the notion that Onesimus was a slave was based primarily on v. 16a (οὐκέτι ὡς δοῦλον ἀλλ' ὑπὲρ δοῦλον), and argued that the key word in this verse was not δοῦλον, but ὡς which indicated "a virtual, not an actual, state of affairs."[20] Thus, Paul was not referring to Onesimus' status as a slave, but rather to Philemon's attitude to his (physical) brother, merely using the figure of a slave as "the antitype of a blood relative."[21] The letter was thus not about the relationship between a slave and his master, but about the relationship between two brothers.

The last contribution that should be pointed out in this section is that of *Peter Arzt-Grabner*.[22] He argues that, strictly speaking, we have only three direct indications of the prehistory of Phlm: (1) In v. 11 Onesimus' relationship to Philemon is described as τόν ποτέ σοι ἄχρηστον; (2) According to v. 18, Paul takes account of the possibility that Onesimus may have done something wrong, or that he may owe Philemon something (εἰ δέ τι ἠδίκησέν σε ἢ ὀφείλει); and (3) In v. 15 Paul refers to Onesimus as follows: ἐχωρίσθη πρὸς ὥραν — which is traditionally translated as "he was separated from you for a while" and then interpreted as a *passivum divinum*. Arzt-Grabner's own interpretation of the above

19 Callahan, Epistle (see n. 7), 357–376; see also A.D. Callahan, Embassy of Onesimus: The Letter of Paul to Philemon (NTCt), Valley Forge 1997. According to J.A. Harrill, Slaves in the New Testament: Literary, Social and Moral Dimensions, Minneapolis 2006, 168, Albert Barnes (see A. Barnes, An Inquiry into the Scriptural Views of Slavery, Philadelphia 1846, 318–331) was the first person to propagate the idea that Onesimus was not a slave; and therefore this view is called the Barnes Hypothesis. For criticism of Callahan's views, see Dunn, Philemon (see n. 12), 335; Fitzmyer, Philemon (see n. 9), 19; and Ryan, Philemon (see n. 16), 246.

20 Callahan, Epistle (see n. 7), 362.

21 Ibid., 370.

22 Arzt-Grabner, Onesimus (see n. 12), 131–143; see also idem, Philemon (see n. 4), 101–108.

is as follows: (1) He highlights the ποτέ ("once") in the expression τόν ποτέ σοι ἄχρηστον and argues that this opinion of Philemon must refer to previous transgressions of Onesimus — and not to his flight to Paul.[23] (2) From v. 18, it is clear that Onesimus must have definitely wronged Philemon in some way; this is not mere speculation on Paul's part. (3) In literary and documentary sources, ἐχωρίσθη is often used in a passive form to refer to persons, but in all such instances, an active meaning is implied ("go away") — which implies that Onesimus has left his master. Furthermore, πρὸς ὥραν indicates that this happened only for a specified time. Arzt-Grabner's conclusion: Lampe is correct; Onesimus cannot be described as a *fugitivus*. However, it is doubtful that he fled to Paul on purpose. He could more probably be described as an *erro* ("Herumtreiber"/absconder) who had left his master at least once before the situation arose which gave rise to Phlm.

Indeed a confusing state of affairs! Nevertheless, it is clear that scholarship on Phlm has moved a step forward. What has become clear, in general, is that, to outsiders — like us — who read Paul's correspondence to Philemon, the letter yields *an incomplete picture* regarding Onesimus' status. The few "facts" provided in the letter need to be interpreted; and the way in which different scholars fill in the "gaps" between these "facts" may result in different pictures. In particular, it has become clear that the way in which the traditional view on Onesimus' status fills in the gaps, leaves us with the problem that Onesimus' behaviour as a runaway slave is difficult to explain. In this regard, of all the proposals discussed above, those of Lampe and Arzt-Grabner are the most feasible, and, to my mind, will stand the test of time.

II. Papyrological Evidence

Papyrological evidence has been part and parcel of New Testament scholarship for more than a century. For example, the first edition of Adolf Deissmann's[24] highly influential *Licht vom Osten* was already published in 1908. Since then, papyri have been discovered repeatedly, so that nowadays we have seven times as many papyri available, compared to the number that pioneers such as Deissmann, James Hope Moulton and George Milligan had at their disposal.[25]

In 1989, a research project was initiated at the Institute for New Testament Studies of the University of Salzburg. The project focuses on the analysis of the Pauline letters against the background of documentary papyri, and aims to investigate all published papyri and ostraca "to illumine the text, language, society and thought of the New Testament."[26] Phlm was the first to fall under the spotlight in this investigation and Peter Arzt-Grabner's papyrological commentary on this letter was published in 2003. The aim of the series is not to present an alternative to current traditional scholarly commentaries, but to function as an important addition to current scholarship.[27] The guiding question is: "Wie könnten die durchschnittlichen Leserinnen und Leser zur Zeit eines ntl. Autors dessen Schrift(en) verstanden haben?"[28] As the commentary moves through the letter verse by verse, and in some instances, almost word by word, a wealth of information is unlocked. Some examples of this interpretation can be highlighted at this point: Paul uses several terms in Phlm that were typically used in apprenticeship contracts in New Testament times;[29] the expression παρακαλῶ περί is always used in papyri to indicate "I ask on behalf of" and never "I ask for" (as Knox and Winter[30] argue);[31] Paul's use of ἀγαπητός represents some of the earliest occurrences of this term;[32] the word that Paul uses in v. 10 to refer to Onesimus (τέκνον) was never used to denote a slave (as in the case of παῖς);[33] the words ἄχρηστος and εὔχρηστος cannot be viewed as instances of word play on Χριστός;[34] and the word ἀπέχω (used in v. 15) is used often in papyri, in particular in receipts, to indicate that something has been received.[35]

23 In a footnote, Arzt-Grabner, Onesimus (see n. 12), 137 n. 20, concedes that this verse does not necessarily reflect Philemon's view of Onesimus, since it may be the case that Paul is attempting to bring Philemon to such a view by means of the letter. However, he believes that the overall view of the letter ("Gesamtduktus") makes his interpretation more feasible.

24 A. Deissmann, Licht vom Osten: Das Neue Testament und die neuentdeckten Texte der hellenistisch-römischen Welt, Tübingen 1908. The fourth completely revised edition was published in 1923.

25 See Arzt-Grabner, Philemon (see n. 4), 308.

26 Ibid.

27 See ibid., 38.

28 Ibid., 43.

29 See ibid., 66–70. See also the discussion by T. Nicklas, The Letter to Philemon: A Discussion with J. Albert Harrill, in: S.E. Porter (ed.), Paul's World (PAST 4), Leiden 2008, 201–220, who argues that Paul does not only take over the language and attitudes associated with apprenticeship contracts of his time, but also transforms them.

30 See the discussion of Knox's and Winter's views in the previous section. See also the discussion by B.W.R. Pearson, Assumptions in the Criticism and Translation of Philemon, in: S.E. Porter/R.S. Hess (eds.), Translating the Bible: Problems and Prospects (JSNT.S 173), Sheffield 1999, 253–280, here: 256–263.

31 See Arzt-Grabner, Philemon (see n. 4), 101f; see also idem, "Bitten für" oder "bitten um"? Zur Problematik des Textvergleichs am Beispiel von Phlm 10, PzB 13 (2004) 49–55.

32 See idem, Philemon (see n. 4), 157–159.

33 See ibid., 202–204.

34 See ibid., 206–214.

35 See ibid., 222–224.

Although minor reservations have been raised by some scholars, the response to the commentary, on the whole, has been positive.[36] For scholarship on Phlm this investigation of papyrological evidence is indeed an important development. Although scholars might differ in respect of the interpretation and relevance of some of the data, this first systematic collection of papyrological material relevant to Phlm should be applauded.

III. Epistolographic Analysis

To a certain extent, the issue discussed in this section overlaps with the topics that have been discussed in the previous section; but since not all the research on which the epistolographic analysis of Phlm is based is restricted to papyri, a separate section is devoted to it.

In the previous century, epistolary analysis received a fair amount of interest, with important contributions being made before 1980. With regard to non-biblical studies, the research of scholars such as Heikki Koskenniemi, William Doty, Klaus Thraede and John White can be singled out; while in the case of biblical studies, research that warrants mention includes that of scholars such as Adolf Deissmann, Otto Roller, Paul Schubert, Peter O'Brien, the members of the Pauline Research Group of the SBL 1970–1975 (Project: "The Form and Function of the Pauline Letters"), and the members of the Ancient Epistolary Group of the SBL 1975–1979.[37] During the time span considered in this article, the interest in epistolary analysis continued, culminating in several important contributions that should be noted:

Franz Schnider and *Werner Stenger*[38] analyse *the epistolary elements* (letter beginning: prescript, thanksgiving, self-recommendation; and letter closing: paraenesis, postscript) of all New Testament letters. For each epistolary element, all the instances — including those in Phlm — are listed and discussed.

36 See the reviews by T.J. Kraus, [Review of] Peter Arzt-Grabner, Philemon: Papyrologische Koimmentare (sic!) zum Neuen Testament: Band 1, RBL 7 (2004) (http://www.bookreviews.org [retrieved: 1/4/2008]); H.D. Betz, [Review of] Arzt-Grabner, Peter. Philemon. Papyrologische Kommentare zum Neuen Testament, vol. 1, JR 84 (2004) 458f.; and S. Llewelyn, Paul's Letter to Philemon in the Light of the Documentary Papyri: The Pioneer Work in a New Project, BZ 49 (2005) 262f.

37 J.A.D. Weima, Neglected Endings: The Significance of the Pauline Letter Closings (JSNT.S 101), Sheffield 1994, 12–23, presents a brief but thorough overview of the history of this research. See also A.J. Malherbe, Ancient Epistolary Theorists (SBibSt 19), Atlanta 1988, 1–3.

38 F. Schnider/W. Stenger, Studien zum neutestamentlichen Briefformular (NTTS 11), Leiden etc. 1987.

With regard to the *letter opening* (vv. 1–6), the most detailed research has been undertaken by *Peter Arzt-Grabner*,[39] who thoroughly compares the prescript (or "introductory greeting" — "Eingangsgruß", as he prefers to call it), motif of remembrance ("Erinnerungsmotiv") and note of prayer, as well as the transition from the prescript to the letter body of Phlm, with those encountered in the papyri. Of particular note is his argument that what has often been identified as a typical "introductory thanksgiving" in Phlm and the other Pauline letters, is actually not found in contemporary papyri as an epistolographic element.[40] According to Arzt-Grabner, the corresponding elements encountered in papyri comprise expressions of thanks (such as Phlm 4) and references to good news received (such as Phlm 5–6) — but these elements are part of the introduction to the letter body, and are usually worded quite freely. Accordingly, in his view, the particular syntactic combination of a reference to (a) prayer(s), a motif of remembrance and an expression of thanks found in Pauline letters must have been a typical Pauline characteristic.

Johnny Roberts[41] discusses the *transitional techniques to the letter body* used in the Pauline corpus. He identifies 31 of these, which he classifies into five groups: (1) Expressions of a personal nature (used 14 times); (2) Credal statements (used five times); (3) Doxologies or doxological expressions (used five times); (4) Eschatological references (used four times); and (5) Statements of request (used three times). In the case of Phlm, he identifies three instances of the use of two of these techniques, namely the expression of a personal feeling of joy in v. 7 and two request statements, one in vv. 8–9 and another one in v. 10.

With regard to *letter closings*, the important contribution of *Jeffrey Weima*[42] should be mentioned. He analyses the Pauline letter closings against the background of ancient Hellenistic and Semitic letters and shows that "Paul has carefully adapted his regular closing conventions ... in order that the letter closing better echoes and reinforces the ap-

39 Arzt-Grabner, Philemon (see n. 4), 109–142; see also P. Arzt, The "Epistolary Introductory Thanksgiving" in the Papyri and in Paul, NT 36 (1994) 29–46. Take note that J.T. Reed, Are Paul's Thanksgivings 'Epistolary'?, JSNT 61 (1996) 87–99, disagrees with Arzt-Grabner. For a comparison of the content of the thanksgivings of Phlm and Col, see T.Y. Mullins, The Thanksgivings of Philemon and Colossians, NTS 30 (1984) 288–293.

40 See Arzt-Grabner, Philemon (see n. 4), 123, 135–142. Take note that many papyrus letters have a reference to prayer ("Gebetsbericht") (see pp. 132f.).

41 J.H. Roberts, Transitional Techniques to the Letter Body in the *Corpus Paulinum*, in: J.H. Petzer/P.J. Hartin (eds.), A South African Perspective on the New Testament: Essays by South African New Testament Scholars Presented to Bruce Manning Metzger During His Visit to South Africa in 1985, Leiden 1986, 187–201.

42 See Weima, Endings (see n. 37), 230–236.

peal made in the letter."[43] In the case of the letter closing of Phlm, he identifies and thoroughly discusses the following letter elements:

v. 19a: Autograph formula
v. 19b: Parenthetical comment
v. 20: Hortatory section
v. 21: Confidence formula[44]
v. 22: Apostolic *parousia*
vv. 23f.: Greetings
v. 25: Grace benediction

With regard to *particular elements in the letter closing* of Phlm, the research of two scholars should be noted. *Peter Arzt-Grabner*[45] presents a good comparison of the *autograph formula* in Phlm 19a (ἐγὼ Παῦλος ἔγραψα τῇ ἐμῇ χειρί) and the use of similar expressions in papyri. Noting that in contemporary papyri the use of such an expression is not normally accompanied by a change in handwriting, he points out that one cannot automatically assume that, in the case of Phlm, Paul used a secretary for the first part of the letter and then wrote this last part himself; the evidence is not conclusive. Rather, the primary function of this expression in Phlm is forensic: "... sein Zugeständnis an Philemon gleichsam vertragsmäßig zu unterfertigen."[46] *Stanley Olson*[47] examines Pauline expressions of confidence in his addressees. He prefers not to speak of "formulas" of confidence, but indicates that the language is sometimes stereotyped and seems formulaic. According to him, the primary function of expressions such as the one used in Phlm 21 is persuasive; and this expression should thus be interpreted in terms of this function, rather than as a reflection of what Paul thought or of how he expected the addressees to respond.

Lastly, with regard to the classification of Phlm in terms of the *type of letter* that it comprises, some scholars[48] still follow Terence Mullins[49] in regarding it as a petition, whereas others[50] agree with Chan-Hie Kim,[51] who regards it as a letter of recommendation, "the only independent Pauline letter of commendation that has not been included in a larger letter."[52] During the time span considered in this article, this choice has been accepted by many scholars.[53] According to other suggestions, Phlm can be regarded as a letter of mediation,[54] or as a combination of a private and an official letter.[55] Perhaps Judith Ryan[56] is correct in pointing out that, in the end, any such classification of the letter only covers certain aspects of it; and that the letter seeks to accomplish far more than can be indicated by means of one or two terms.

From the above overview, it is clear that the research conducted on Phlm from an epistolographic perspective since 1980 has added important insights to our knowledge of the letter. In general, one could also say that the analysis and description of the individual letter elements have become much more sophisticated.

IV. Rhetorical Analysis

As a result of the work of Hans Dieter Betz[57] on Gal, there was also a renewed interest in the rhetorical analysis of Phlm. The first study that warrants mention, is that of *Forrester Church*.[58] Although this study falls outside the time span considered in this article, it should be discussed, because it represents the first study focusing on rhetorical issues in Phlm that appeared after Betz's study on Gal. Church views Phlm as an example of deliberative rhetoric and divides it into three sections, namely vv. 4–7 (*exordium*), 8–16 (proof) and 17–22 (peroration). He discusses issues such as the way in which vv. 4–7 exemplify the typical

43 Ibid., 236.
44 See also the detailed discussion of this issue by S.N. Olson, Pauline Expressions of Confidence in His Addressees, CBQ 47 (1985) 282–295.
45 See Arzt-Grabner, Philemon (see n. 4), 240–243.
46 Ibid., 243. For a discussion of the autograph and its functions in ancient Hellenistic letters, see also Weima, Endings (see n. 37), 45–49.
47 Olson, Expressions (see n. 44), 282–295. For information on the function of such expressions, see the summary on p. 295.
48 See C.J. Bjerkelund, Parakalô: Form, Funktion und Sinn der parakalô-Sätze in den paulinischen Briefen (BTN 1), Oslo 1967, and Wolter, Philemon (see n. 14), 236. H.-J. Klauck, Ancient Letters and the New Testament: A Guide to Context and Exegesis, Waco 2006, 329, regards it primarily as a letter of request, with some characteristics of a letter of recommendation.
49 T.Y. Mullins, Petition as a Literary Form, NT 5 (1962) 46–54.
50 For example, Arzt-Grabner, Philemon (see n. 4), 59, 190f.
51 C.-H. Kim, Form and Structure of the Familiar Greek Letter of Recommendation (SBL.DS 4), Missoula 1972.
52 Ibid., 123.
53 For example, J. Roberts, Filemon in Diskussie: Enkele Hoogtepunte in die Stand van Sake, Scriptura 21 (1987) 27–33; Dunn, Philemon (see n. 12), 309; and Arzt-Grabner, Philemon (see n. 4), 59, esp. n. 10, as well as pp. 190f. See also Harrill, Slaves (see n. 19), 14f.
54 S.K. Stowers, Letter Writing in Greco-Roman Antiquity (LEC 5), Philadelphia 1986, 155, regards Phlm as a letter of mediation, and more specifically as an intercessory letter.
55 Thus, Barth/Blanke, Philemon (see n. 2), 115, who also refer to it as "a model of non-directive eye-to-eye pastoral counselling" (p. 113). With regard to the classification of Phlm as a private letter, see also H. Binder (unter Mitarbeit von Joachim Rohde), Der Brief des Paulus an Philemon (ThHK XI/2), Berlin 1990, 20f.
56 See Ryan, Philemon (see n. 16), 194.
57 See H.D. Betz, The Literary Composition and Function of Paul's Letter to the Galatians, NTS 21 (1975) 353–379, as well as idem, Galatians: A Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Churches in Galatia (Hermeneia), Philadelphia 1979.
58 F.F. Church, Rhetorical Structure and Design in Paul's Letter to Philemon, HTR 71 (1978) 17–33.

function of *exordia* in deliberative rhetoric; Paul's use of *ethos* and *pathos* in the proof section;[59] and how the peroration in Phlm fulfils the four requirements of a typical rhetorical peroration.

Interestingly enough, with the exception of the study of Christopher Kumitz (referred to later on in this section), further research on the rhetorical nature of Phlm did not focus on the letter's classification in terms of the rhetorical species[60] — an issue that dominated the research on Gal, the letter on which Betz focused, for a long time.[61] In fact, the research on Phlm from a rhetorical perspective was somewhat varied in nature.

Clarice Martin,[62] who agrees with Church that Phlm is an example of deliberative rhetoric, examines the rhetorical function of the commercial language used by Paul in Phlm 18. He disagrees with scholars who believe that Paul's use of commercial language confirms Onesimus' status as a runaway slave — both on syntactical and rhetorical grounds. On syntactical grounds, he argues that it cannot be assumed, with certainty, that Onesimus had indeed harmed Philemon, although this might have been the case. On rhetorical grounds, he argues that, if one assumes that Paul refers to a possible injury or economic loss merely for the sake of argument, the commercial language in v. 18 (ὀφείλει, ἐλλόγα) functions as the "capstone" of Paul's argument on behalf of Onesimus: "It provides the *coup de maître* fully and finally to remove the remaining objections to the granting of Paul's request."[63]

Whereas Church and Martin base their analyses of Phlm on ancient rhetorical categories, *Andrew Wilson*[64] opts for a modern approach, namely pragmatics, and in particular the theoretical framework of Geoffrey Leech. This framework focuses on interpersonal rhetoric, i.e.,

59 See also Ryan, Philemon (see n. 16), 194, on Paul's use of *ethos*, *pathos* and *logos* in Phlm.

60 Hübner, Philemon (see n. 14), 24f., claims that Phlm cannot be analysed rhetorically, but this assertion seems to be based on a very narrow definition of rhetoric, namely the application of ancient rhetorical categories.

61 See the overview in D.F. Tolmie, Persuading the Galatians: A Text-Centred Rhetorical Analysis of a Pauline Letter (WUNT 2, 190), Tübingen 2005, 20–24, as well as idem, The Rhetorical Analysis of the Letter to the Galatians: 1995–2005, in: idem (ed.), Exploring New Rhetorical Approaches to Galatians: Papers Presented at an International Conference, University of the Free State, Bloemfontein, March 13–14, 2006 (AcTh.S 9), Bloemfontein 2007, 1–28.

62 C.J. Martin, The Rhetorical Function of Commercial Language in Paul's Letter to Philemon (Verse 18), in: D.F. Watson (ed.), Persuasive Artistry: Studies in New Testament Rhetoric in Honor of George A. Kennedy (JSNT.S 50), Sheffield 1991, 321–337.

63 Ibid., 337. For criticism of Martin's views, see Dunn, Philemon (see n. 12), 338 n. 334, and Fitzmyer, Philemon (see n. 9), 117f.

64 A. Wilson, The Pragmatics of Politeness and Pauline Epistolography: A Case Study of the Letter to Philemon, JSNT 48 (1992) 107–119.

"the constraints of the social situation upon linguistic expression"[65], and is concerned with two major principles, namely the co-operative principle and the politeness principle. Of these, Wilson singles out the latter, and shows how Paul utilises typical politeness strategies in Phlm. This not only reveals the universality of such strategies, but also the complex relationship between Paul and Philemon.

The contribution of *Ronald Hock*[66] focuses on the word πρεσβύτης in v. 9 from the perspective of rhetorical and social conventions in New Testament times. Rejecting Bentley's conjecture[67] (πρεσβευτής; "ambassador") and the translation of πρεσβύτης as "ambassador", he argues that the use of "old man" makes perfect sense in terms of the social conventions of Paul's time: Within the "rhetorical situation of a quasi-public ἐκκλησία"[68], Philemon's response to Paul's plea would be witnessed by fellow Christians, who would judge it against the honour Philemon had gained by means of his love toward them. By identifying himself as an old man and a prisoner, and Onesimus as his child, Paul presents himself in the role of an aged parent needing support from his children (thus creating πάθος), a well-known convention of his time. Furthermore, Paul's reference to age and familial relationships reflects the contemporary use of such relationships in master-slave deliberations: Whereas harsh treatment of slaves was accepted as normal in the master-slave relationship, recasting the relationship in terms of familial ties would help to tone down any anger that Philemon may have harboured against Onesimus.

Craig Wansink[69] discusses the experience and rhetoric of Paul's imprisonments as reflected in Phil and Phlm. In the latter case, he draws attention to the large number of self-appellations that are used by Paul. Of these, he singles out δέσμιος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ, πρεσβύτης, συστρατιώτης and συναιχμάλωτος, arguing that they are used in a very subtle way by Paul to remind Philemon that he is in prison because of his dedication to Christ, and that he thus needs Philemon's support.[70]

65 Ibid., 110.

66 R.F. Hock, A Support for His Old Age: Paul's Plea on Behalf of Onesimus, in: L.M. White/O.L. Yarbrough (eds.), The Social World of the First Christians: Essays in Honor of Wayne A. Meeks, Minneapolis 1995, 67–81.

67 In this regard, see also J. Birdsall, ΠΡΕΣΒΥΤΗΣ in Philemon 9: A Study in Conjectural Emendation, NTS 39 (1993) 625–630.

68 Hock, Support (see n. 66), 81.

69 Wansink, Chained (see n. 16). For another interpretation of Phlm against the background of Roman imprisonment, see R.J. Cassidy, Paul in Chains: Roman Imprisonment and the Letters of St. Paul, New York 2001, 68–84. Cassidy argues that a dramatic shift occurred in Paul's views of Roman rule between Rom and Phil.

70 See Wansink, Chained (see n. 16), 141–174, esp. 171–173.

In his discussion of Paul's strategy in Phlm, *John Barclay*[71] begins by pointing out some of the persuasive techniques used in the letter: the "holy flattery" (Luther) used by Paul in the address and thanksgiving of the letter; the fact that the whole house church is addressed; Paul's use of an appeal rather than a command on two occasions (vv. 8–9 and 14); and the way in which he first takes Onesimus' wrongdoing (as a debt) upon himself, only to overturn it by alluding to the debt owed to him by Philemon. Furthermore, Barclay draws attention to a curious factor in the letter, namely the fact that Paul does not refer to Onesimus' remorse. According to Barclay, it would have been natural to do so, as can be seen from two letters written in a comparable situation by Pliny to Sabinianus on behalf of a freedman who had come to him for assistance. Barclay then compares these letters with Phlm in terms of three aspects: (1) Stance towards the aggrieved party (similar to a great extent); (2) Stance towards the miscreant (Pliny's attitude is aloof whereas Paul identifies himself with Onesimus); and (3) The grounds for the expected reconciliation (Pliny emphasises the circumstances of the offence, Sabinianus' character and the fact that the freedman has remorse, whereas Paul emphasises the fact that Onesimus had become a new person when he was converted to Christianity).

In his analysis of the strategy in Phlm as an example of a first-century "appeals letter", *David Russell*[72] utilises the methodology proposed by Richard Longacre. He argues that, although the letter only contains four imperatives, the way in which Paul argues clearly indicates the hortatory nature of the text. Russell[73] summarises Paul's strategy as follows:

> v. 1 provides the authority/credibility; vv. 4–7 supply a general introduction that later becomes a further basis for Paul's motivated appeal; vv. 8–13 present the problem or situation; vv. 14–17 constitute the command and vv. 18–22 contain a motivated appeal and thus involve both motivation and command as well as appeal to authority ... It appears that the majority of the text is concerned with overcoming possible objections to a positive reception of Onesimus.

After a macro- and microsegmentation of the text, Russell identifies v. 17 as the thematic peak ("pivot") and concludes that Phlm illustrates the "subtle art of manipulation in behavioural texts"[74] well: Because a frontal attack might offend Philemon, Paul chooses an indirect approach, appealing to fundamental issues such as love and fellowship in

71 J.M.G. Barclay, Colossians and Philemon (NTGs), Sheffield 1997, 103–111.
72 D.M. Russell, The Strategy of a First-Century Appeals Letter: A Discourse Reading of Paul's Epistle to Philemon, JOTT 11 (1998) 1–25.
73 Ibid., 11.
74 Ibid., 21.

Christ. According to Russell, the type of exhortation that is used in Phlm could be called "redemptive or Christian diplomacy"[75].

In his rhetorical analysis of Phlm, *Christopher Kumitz*[76] identifies the *causa* of Phlm as "Wie soll mit dem Sklaven Onesimus in Zukunft verfahren werden?", and summarises Paul's position as follows: "Onesimus soll von Philemon als geliebter Bruder akzeptiert werden." Kumitz argues that the letter can be classified neither as a private nor as an official letter, but that it should rather be viewed as a "situationsgebundener Gemeindebrief"[77]. More specifically, its genre is described as a combination of elements from various types of letters: family letters, friendship letters and letters of recommendation. Kumitz then provides a detailed rhetorical analysis of the letter in terms of ancient rhetorical categories:[78]

Prescript	vv. 1–3
Exordium	vv. 4–7
Narratio	vv. 8–12
Propositio	vv. 13ff.
Argumentatio	vv. 15–19
Peroratio	vv. 20–22
Eschatokoll	vv. 23–25

Josef Zmijewski[79] describes Phlm as "[e]in Plädoyer für die christliche Brüderlichkeit". With regard to Paul's argumentative strategy, he points out three characteristics. First, Paul takes basic Christian values (such as faith and love) as his point of departure. These values are then used to motivate Philemon in respect of a particular case. Secondly, his argumentative strategy can be described as "open". There is only one concrete request, namely that Philemon should welcome Onesimus as he would welcome Paul. This corresponds with the open and voluntary nature of Christian brotherly love. Thirdly, several layers can be distinguished in Paul's argumentation: In the first place, he argues both on a human and a religious-moral level. On a human level, he appeals to both reason and emotion. On a religious-moral level he appeals to the fact that he is a prisoner of Christ, that Onesimus could be of service to the gospel, and that Onesimus should be welcomed as a beloved brother. Furthermore, Paul argues both on a personal level and on a worldly level ("sachlich"). The personal level comes to the fore in the

75 Ibid.
76 See C. Kumitz, Der Brief als Medium der ἀγάπη: Eine Untersuchung zur rhetorischen und epistolographischen Gestalt des Philemonbriefes (EHS.T 787), Frankfurt am Main etc. 2004, 87.
77 See ibid., 92–99.
78 See ibid., 113–203.
79 J. Zmijewski, Der Philemonbrief: Ein Plädoyer für die christliche Brüderlichkeit, TThZ 114 (2005) 222–242, esp. 238–241.

way in which he repeatedly refers to the relationships between himself, Philemon and Onesimus. The worldly level becomes apparent in v. 18, in which Paul promises to make good any losses that Philemon might have suffered. This reflects the notion of κοινωνία — "Ausdruck eines Verhältnisses von Verdanktheit, das im Kern ein Schuldverhältnis einschließt."[80]

As I have pointed out above, quite a diversity of approaches underlie the rhetorical analyses of Phlm that have been discussed. Most of the studies focus on what I would like to call Paul's overall rhetorical strategy in the letter. One can see clearly how different approaches may be utilised; and the diverse nature of the results produced by the respective approaches is also evident: Wilson — typical politeness strategies; Wansink — a focus on Paul's self-appellations; Barclay — the absence of any reference to Onesimus' remorse and how this differs from the strategy used in Pliny's letters to Sabinianus; Russell — the indirect approach of what he calls "Christian diplomacy"; Kumitz — the utilisation of ancient rhetorical categories; and Zmijewski — the deeper underlying factors in Paul's rhetorical strategy. A good in-depth comparison of the various approaches and their results may be beneficial for the purposes of future rhetorical analyses of the letter, and may indicate avenues still to be investigated. The question should also be raised as to whether other modern rhetorical approaches should not also be tested.

V. Sociological Analysis

In this category, the study of *Norman R. Petersen* on the "sociology of Paul's narrative world"[81] springs to mind. Petersen presents a comprehensive analysis from a sociological perspective: In a first step,[82] he transforms the letter into a story, considers the referential and poetic sequence of the events (i.e., the original order of the events and the way in which they are presented in the letter respectively) and discusses the significance of the differences between the two. For Petersen, it is important that Philemon's debt to Paul heads the referential sequence and that Paul's anticipated visit calls for a positive action on Philemon's part. In a second step,[83] Petersen considers the sociology of the narrative world. Worldly roles (such as those of master and slave), churchly

80 Ibid., 241. The quote is from J. Hainz, Koinonia: "Kirche" als Gemeinschaft bei Paulus (BU 16), Regensburg 1982, 113.
81 N.R. Petersen, Rediscovering Paul: Philemon and the Sociology of Paul's Narrative World, Philadelphia 1985.
82 See ibid., 43–88.
83 See ibid., 89–199.

roles (fellow worker and partner) and Paul's roles (such as his roles as a prisoner and father) are outlined, after which a description is given of the structures of the world and the anti-structures of the church, as well as of the structure and anti-structure in the anti-structural church. In a last step,[84] the shared symbolic universe is investigated. In this regard, Petersen indicates the important role fulfilled by the kinship system in the symbolic world (with the master-slave system playing a vital, though subordinate role). Petersen believes that the only way in which Philemon could respond to Paul's letter was to manumit Onesimus. In spite of criticism that could be raised in respect of aspects of Petersen's work,[85] there can be no doubt that it represents a significant development in the research on Phlm. It is still the most thorough sociological analysis of this letter, and constitutes a good example of the skilful combination of literary, sociological and (what are normally referred to as) theological issues.

Several other contributions from a sociological perspective should also be mentioned:

Wendy Cotter[86] investigates the authority roles of six women (including Apphia) as reflected in the Pauline letters, against the background of the Roman wife's roles in the home, society and politics. She argues that the roles of the women as reflected in the Pauline letters fit in with the cultural norms that were acceptable in Roman culture, which implies that, in this sense, there was nothing countercultural in women's roles. However, according to her, there was something else that made these roles different: The *reality* of the women's involvement in the Christian congregation and the fact that they fulfilled leadership roles, signified a countercultural equality of women in relation to the

84 See ibid., 200–286.
85 Reviewers of Petersen's work generally applauded the novelty of his approach in spite of points of criticism that were raised. Examples of the latter include the following: C.J. Roetzel, [Review of] Rediscovering Paul: Philemon and the Sociology of Paul's Narrative World. By Norman Petersen, ThTo 43 (1986) 139–142: Petersen repeats stereotypes (for example, that the law is unfulfillable) and wrongly insists that Paul wanted Philemon to manumit Onesimus; J.A. Darr, [Review of] "Rediscovering Paul: Philemon and the Sociology of Paul's Narrative World" by Norman Petersen, RStR 14 (1988) 118–121: Petersen's notion of the reader and his assumptions regarding the extra-textual knowledge of the reader, are unclear; R.B. Hays, [Review of] Rediscovering Paul: Philemon and the Sociology of Paul's Narrative World. By Norman R. Petersen, JAAR 55 (1987) 173–175: Petersen's distinction between narrative world and history is too narrow; and W.A. Meeks, [Review of] "Rediscovering Paul: Philemon and the Sociology of Paul's Narrative World" by Norman Petersen, JBL 106 (1987) 556–558: Petersen's "ambivalence" regarding history should be pointed out.
86 W. Cotter, Women's Authority Roles in Paul's Churches: Countercultural or Conventional?, NT 36 (1994) 350–372. Apart from Apphia, Cotter also investigates the roles of Chloe, Prisca, Euodia, Syntyche and Phoebe.

male members of the congregation. This characteristic was a result of the nature of the Christian congregation.

Perry Kea[87] asks the question as to whether Paul's rhetoric in Phlm is sub-cultural or counter-cultural, and then argues that it is based on several cultural values that were very important in the contemporary Greco-Roman world, namely "honor/shame; obedience; ordering (respect for hierarchy); patron/client; debt of gratitude"[88], and that the letter thus contains little that is in conflict with the prevailing culture. However, he hastens to add that this does not mean that scholars such as Margaret MacDonald[89] (who describes Pauline Christianity as a conversionist sect) are necessarily wrong, but that a concrete example such as Phlm helps one to add "thickness"[90] to abstract sociological descriptions of early Christianity.

Richard Horsley[91] criticises Norman Petersen[92] for continuing to rely on standard assumptions in Pauline studies and for presenting a very conservative picture of Paul's views on slavery. He also criticises the underlying model of Berger and Luckmann relating to the sociology of knowledge.[93] According to Horsley, Paul did not help to legitimise the Roman institutional order: "Insofar as Paul knew the symbolic universe of Roman imperial society, he appears to have been using it in order to subvert and replace the institutions it legitimated."[94] Horsley then considers two texts to determine Paul's attitude towards slaves in the congregation: Phlm and 1Cor 7,21. In the case of Phlm, Horsley accepts Callahan's[95] view that Onesimus was not a slave, but Philemon's brother. Accordingly, in his opinion, this text does not have anything to say on Paul's views on slavery. He then turns to 1Cor 7,21, which he interprets as indicating that Paul encouraged slaves to use the opportunity to become free. His conclusion: "Paul was clearly not a 'conservative' advocating acceptance of slavery."[96]

87 P.V. Kea, Paul's Letter to Philemon: A Short Analysis of Its Values, PRS 23 (1996) 223–234.
88 Ibid., 230.
89 M.Y. MacDonald, The Pauline Churches: A Socio-Historical Study of Institutionalization in the Pauline and Deutero-Pauline Writings (MSSNTS 60), Cambridge/New York 1988, 33–42.
90 Kea borrows this concept from C. Geertz, The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays (HTB 5043), New York 1973, 3–30.
91 R.A. Horsley, Paul and Slavery: A Critical Alternative to Recent Readings, Semeia 83/84 (1998) 153–200.
92 Petersen, Paul (see n. 81).
93 P.L. Berger/T. Luckmann, The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge, Garden City 1966.
94 Horsley, Paul (see n. 91), 165.
95 Callahan, Epistle (see n. 7).
96 Horsley, Paul (see n. 91), 195.

Chris Frilongos[97] investigates domestic power in Phlm by considering the use of family metaphors in the letter. He argues that the family language is used to construct a "rhetorical household" that challenges the set of relations in Philemon's household. According to him, Paul employs a "τέκνο(ν)-ology of power"[98]: In the rhetorical household that Paul creates in the letter, he replaces Philemon as *paterfamilias*. Furthermore, the parent-child relationship depicted in the letter establishes a bond between Paul and Onesimus that Philemon cannot surpass. Thus Onesimus becomes a tool whereby the structure of Philemon's authority is dismantled. In the end, both Onesimus and Philemon are τέκνα, with Paul as the *paterfamilias*.

Kirk Lyons[99] offers a reading of Phlm as "counter-hegemonic discourse." This means that Lyons does not believe that Paul used the letter to return a runaway slave to his rightful owner. Furthermore, he contests the notion that this is to be regarded as the primary message of the letter. He prefers to focus not on Paul's request, but on his act of requesting. He reads the letter as autobiographical narrative (placing particular emphasis on the way in which certain characters are represented in the letter) and follows Alvin Gouldner's reflexive sociology theory. He concludes that Paul was aware of the divisive hierarchical structures of his day and that he attempted to break through and transcend such structures by means of the language and character representations in the letter.

The benefit of the studies outlined above is that they have made scholars aware of the sociological complexities that underlie the letter. Furthermore, the different and quite often conflicting analyses that have been proposed present a formidable challenge to all who study this letter to make critical choices with regard to how they view these matters.

VI. Hermeneutical Issues

One of the important insights that gained momentum during the time span considered in this article, is that texts are written *and* interpreted within ideological contexts.[100] This insight also had an effect in respect

97 C. Frilingos, "For My Child, Onesimus": Paul and Domestic Power in Philemon, JBL 119 (2000) 91–104.
98 Ibid., 98.
99 K.D. Lyons, Paul's Confrontation with Class: The Letter to Philemon as Counter-Hegemonic Discourse, CrossCur 55 (2005) 322–339.
100 W.R. Tate, Interpreting the Bible: A Handbook of Terms and Methods, Peabody 2006, 163.

of the scholarship on Phlm, and gave rise to a (small) number of publications:

Lloyd A. Lewis[101] offers an African American appraisal of Phlm. He begins his discussion by pointing out that Paul presents a particular challenge to African American biblical interpretation; but, according to Lewis, this is not solely the result of what Paul has written; many layers of interpretation have to be stripped away so that Paul himself can speak. Instead of linking Phlm to Col, as is normally done, he links it to Gal.[102] Against this background, Paul's use of familial language in Phlm – in particular the fact that he calls Onesimus "brother" – becomes important. Although Paul does not overtly ask for Onesimus' manumission, his request that Philemon should receive him as a beloved brother would achieve what Paul wanted. According to Lewis, Paul does not suggest that, for slaves, conversion to Christianity is equivalent to manumission from slavery or that Philemon's household should have two standards – one for the household and one for the house church. Instead, he indicates the implications of Onesimus' status as a child of God and then "leaves it to Philemon to decide what understanding of Onesimus within his household would best reflect this reality."[103] For African Americans, what Paul does in Phlm thus offers a "window of hope":

> Careful examination of his language shows that his ambiguity may not be so much a matter of his indecision as his unwillingness to canonize the social roles found in his environment. Rather, he invites the black church into new nonstatic configurations.[104]

Soro Soungalo[105] was responsible for the commentary on Phlm in the Africa Bible commentary. The focus of his comments regarding this letter is on slavery – still a cause of suffering in Africa. Soungalo points out that what Paul asks of Philemon (to pardon Onesimus and to accept

101 L.A. Lewis, An African American Appraisal of the Philemon-Paul-Onesimus Triangle, in: C.H. Felder (ed.), Stony the Road We Trod: African American Biblical Interpretation, Minneapolis 1991, 232–246.

102 C.H. Cosgrove, Paul and Peoplehood in African American Perspective, in: C.H. Cosgrove/H. Weiss/K.-K. Yeo (eds.), Cross-Cultural Paul: Journeys to Others, Journeys to Ourselves, Grand Rapids 2007, 141–178, here: 155f., correctly points out that this hermeneutical choice has a decisive impact on one's interpretation of the ambiguity in Phlm with regard to Onesimus' manumission. If one interprets Phlm from the perspective of Col and Eph, such an interpretation does not lead to an emancipatory reading of the gospel. If one interprets it from the perspective of Gal, one tends to come to an opposite conclusion. This shows that "a reader's choice" is involved "in the construction of the meaning of the text, not a mere discovery of what is demonstrably the correct original meaning of the text" (p. 156).

103 Lewis, Appraisal (see n. 101), 246.

104 Ibid.

105 S. Soungalo, Philemon, in: T. Adeyemo (ed.), Africa Bible Commentary, Nairobi 2006, 1487f.

him as a brother in the Lord) was something revolutionary for his time, and actually goes far beyond mere manumission. V. 21 is interpreted as indicating that Paul is asking Philemon to free Onesimus, although this request is not made directly. Soungalo realises that African readers may be offended by the fact that Paul does not ask for Onesimus to be manumitted immediately, or for the termination of slavery; but points out that this would have brought Christianity into conflict with the Roman Empire. Therefore, Paul did not condemn slavery directly, but provided principles that eventually undermined slavery. Thus,

> [T]he letter to Philemon is truly a treatise on the abolition of slavery. It should be a source of hope for Africa, that, according to tradition, Onesimus was not only freed but later became a bishop in the church of Jesus Christ.[106]

Allen Callahan,[107] whose views on Onesimus' status were discussed in Section 1 above, offers a postcolonial interpretation of Phlm in which he highlights "anti-colonial values and practices"[108], which essentially means that agency is promoted without the exploitation that characterises white-settler colonialism. According to Callahan, this happens as follows in Phlm:

> In this short, diplomatic letter we find an appeal to solidarity instead of *apologiae* for alterity, a rhetoric of indebtedness instead of pretensions to entitlement, a discourse of what is right instead of claims to rights, and persuasion instead of coercion.[109]

From a *feminist perspective* the contributions of three scholars should be noted:

Pheme Perkins[110] draws attention to the fact that Paul uses new designations in describing Onesimus (such as "my child", "once useless, now useful" and "my own heart"). She then argues that this "appeal demonstrates the significance of publicly shared language"[111], which shows "the need for new patterns of naming as the basis for changing deeply ingrained patterns of domination"[112] (such as sexism and racism). Unfortunately, according to Perkins, the renaming of Onesimus did not lead Paul and other Christians to strive towards the liberation of slaves.

106 Ibid., 1488.

107 A.D. Callahan, The Letter to Philemon, in: F.F. Segovia/R.S. Sugirtharajah (eds.), A Postcolonial Commentary on the New Testament Writings (BPCol 13), London 2007, 329–337.

108 Ibid., 333.

109 Ibid.

110 P. Perkins, Philemon, in: C.A. Newsom/S.H. Ringe (eds.), The Women's Bible Commentary, London 1992, 362f.

111 Ibid., 363.

112 Ibid.

Sabine Bieberstein[113] offers a feminist reading of Phlm, based on the following four points of departure:[114] (1) The abandonment of the historical perspective as portrayed by "Christian victors" so that "the history of injustice" becomes visible; (2) A distinction between the *Wirkungsgeschichte* of the letter and the interpretation of the letter within the system of the Pax Romana, focusing on the visions that are contained in it (Paul's perspective represents a struggle to find spheres of independent action within the dominating system of the Pax Romana); (3) The perception of the case of Onesimus as an "extreme case" (as defined by Walter Benjamin[115]) which brought about a "disruption" in the normal reality of slavery, thus challenging a Christian community to "redefine" the liberating message of the gospel; (4) Acknowledgement of the significance of the fact that Apphia was called as a "witness" in this "test case of liberating praxis", thus breaking the "exclusive antithesis of two men" (Philemon and Paul) reflected in the letter. Because the letter was read out aloud, it had to meet Apphia's critical judgement. According to Bieberstein,[116] a feminist interpretation implies that one should read history from the perspective of the victim. In this instance, this implies realising that Paul did not abandon the "logic of slavery" in the letter (for example, he did not condemn it and did not portray Onesimus as an autonomous person); but it was exactly at this point that Apphia was summoned as a witness, who "brings before our eyes the relational structure of the early communities of believers in Christ, where a new relationship to the slave Onesimus is now being sought"[117] — a relational network in which Paul trusted so much that he used it to attain his goal and to evoke a new reality.

113 S. Bieberstein, Disrupting the Normal Reality of Slavery: A Feminist Reading of the Letter to Philemon, JSNT 79 (2000) 105–116. German version: S. Bieberstein, Brüche in der Alltäglichkeit der Sklaverei: Eine feministische Lektüre des Philemonbriefs, in: C. Janssen/L. Schottroff/B. Wehn (eds.), Paulus: Umstrittene Traditionen – lebendige Theologie. Eine feministische Lektüre, Gütersloh 2001, 116–128.

114 For more details on what follows, see, in particular, Bieberstein, Reality (see n. 113), 105f.

115 See W. Benjamin, Ausgewählte Schriften 1: Illuminationen (st 345), Frankfurt 1977, 255–261.

116 See Bieberstein, Reality (see n. 113), 114. On the role of Apphia, see S.H. Polaski, A Feminist Introduction to Paul, St. Louis 2005, 43–45. Polaski also believes that Apphia was a leader in the church to which the letter was addressed.

117 Bieberstein, Reality (see n. 113), 115. In this regard, see also another article of Bieberstein, published earlier: eadem, Der Brief an Philemon: Brieflektüre unter den kritischen Augen Aphias, in: L. Schottroff/M.-T. Wacker (eds.), Kompendium Feministische Bibelauslegung, Gütersloh 1998, 676–682. In this article, she emphasises three aspects: (1) The oppression of women cannot be separated from other forms of oppression; (2) The critical voice of women must be heard in this regard; (3) Power relations — including those campaigning for a good cause — must be exposed.

Sara Winter,[118] whose reading of the "patriarchal Paul" in Phlm is based on choices made in her earlier work,[119] presents a picture of Paul that differs from that of Perkins and Bieberstein. In her feministic reading of Phlm, two issues are important: First, Paul did not write the letter from a position of authority, but from a position of weakness. His request for Onesimus' manumission is based upon the following conviction: "[A] baptized person cannot 'own' another baptized person; a baptized person cannot be the slave of another baptized person."[120] Secondly, she emphasises the use of νυνὶ δέ in vv. 9 and 11, as well as the occurrence of many opposites in the letter — all of which, in her view, indicate that Paul's request functions against an apocalyptic background. For Paul, the distinction between slave and brother is a symptom of the present evil age; and thus Paul's request for the manumission of Onesimus may be linked to Gal 3,28. Her conclusion: Although we do not have a single piece of Pauline writing that argues for the equality of women and men, the important role that women played in the Pauline congregations "puts the burden of proof on those who would argue Paul was indifferent to or opposed to equality of women within the churches."[121]

A last contribution that should be mentioned is that of *Gerhard Jankowski*,[122] who offers a reading of the letter from the perspective of intercultural co-operation. He reads the letter "against the grain" ("gegen den Strich"[123]) so that it can function in a liberating way for the practical situation. He argues that Paul expects Philemon (who is not a Jew) to treat Onesimus as a Hebrew slave, which, for all practical purposes, would entail that Philemon should manumit him.

The studies mentioned in this section show significant variation in terms of approach; but are all presented from a perspective that is deliberately different from the perspectives that have been accepted for a long time as being more or less neutral readings of the text. The studies discussed thus present an important challenge to such readings. In some cases, one has the uneasy feeling that the Paul who is presented is too modern or even politically too correct; but even this serves as a challenge to one's own hermeneutical framework.

118 S.B.C. Winter, Philemon and the Patriarchal Paul, in: A.-J. Levine (ed.), A Feminist Companion to Paul (FCNTECW 6), London/New York 2004, 122–136.

119 See the discussion in Section 1 of this article.

120 Winter, Paul (see n. 118), 123.

121 Ibid., 135.

122 G. Jankowski, An Philemon, in: S. Wagner/G. Nützel/M. Kuck (eds.), (Anti-)Rassistische Irritationen: Biblische Texte und interkulturelle Zusammenarbeit, Berlin 1994, 93–107.

123 Ibid., 97.

One of the issues in respect of which scholars differed in the studies discussed in this section, concerns the question as to what Paul expected Philemon to do about Onesimus — specifically, did he want him to be manumitted or not?[124] The same issue is also very important in the next section.

VII. Theological Issues

Marianne Meye Thompson writes: "[T]he most pressing theological issue raised by the epistle to Philemon for modern readers, although likely not for ancient readers, is that of the relationship of the gospel to slavery."[125] That this is indeed the case, can be seen when one surveys contributions on the theology of Phlm. With one or two exceptions (see further on in this section), such discussions focus on the issue of slavery.[126] This is complicated by the fact that scholars disagree on Paul's attitude in Phlm towards slavery and the possible manumission of Onesimus. A wide variety of positions can be identified, with clearly no likelihood that any consensus will be reached. These positions may briefly be summarised as follows:

124 Different opinions have been voiced on this issue for a long time. One of the interesting debates in this regard (falling outside the time span considered by this article) is the debate between Olaudah Equiano, who himself was a slave, and who was manumitted and later wrote his autobiography, and Rev. Raymund Harris, who justified slavery on biblical grounds, inter alia on the basis of the argument that Paul returned Onesimus to his master. In a letter to the Public Advertiser on April 27, 1788, Equiano responded, arguing that the "whole tenor" of Phlm was on behalf of the slave, that slavery was inconsistent with Christianity, and that Paul did not declare the iniquity of slavery openly because this would have caused too much tumult in the Roman Empire, since many slaves would have become Christians merely to gain their freedom. However, if Christianity had already been established as it was in modern times, he would surely have done so. See O. Equiano, The Interesting Narrative and Other Writings, New York 1995 (first published in 1789), 335f. For a good overview of the use of Phlm in the fight for abolition of slavery, see L.J. Kreitzer, Philemon (RNBC), Sheffield 2008, 107–148.

125 M.M. Thompson, Colossians and Philemon (THNTC), Grand Rapids/Cambridge 2005, 198.

126 For a good overview of tendencies in the research on slavery and the New Testament, see Byron, Background (see n. 14), 116–139.

- Paul wants Philemon to manumit Onesimus;[127]
- Paul does not request manumission, but implies it;[128]
- Because of the *Naherwartung* Paul does not deal with slavery as an institution, but tries to transform it by emphasising the importance of Christian love;[129]
- Since Onesimus was not a slave, the letter is not about slavery;[130]
- Paul's position is unclear;[131]
- The letter is deliberately ambiguous, because Paul does not know what to recommend;[132]
- Paul does not ask for manumission, because it would not change the situation between Philemon and Onesimus much; instead, he asks for something much more radical: that Philemon should treat his slave as a brother.[133]

When the theology is considered from the perspective of the role that slavery plays in the letter, scholars generally use (a) key concept(s) from the letter to characterise its theology.[134] The following three examples illustrate this:

The contribution of *Howard Marshall*[135] on the theology of Phlm is entitled "The gospel and slavery". After a discussion of the argument of the letter, and after pointing out important concepts in the letter, such

127 See Petersen, Paul (see n. 81), 200–286; R.B. Hays, Crucified with Christ: A Synthesis of the Theology of 1 and 2 Thessalonians, Philemon, Philippians, and Galatians, in: J.M. Bassler (ed.), Pauline Theology 1: Thessalonians, Philippians, Galatians, Philemon, Minneapolis 1994, 243; L.L. Sanders, Equality and a Request for the Manumission of Onesimus, RestQ 46 (2004) 109–114; and I.J. du Plessis, How Christians Can Survive in a Hostile Social-Economic Environment: Paul's Mind Concerning Difficult Social Conditions in the Letter to Philemon, in: J.G. van der Watt (ed.), Identity, Ethics, and Ethos in the New Testament (BZNW 141), Berlin/New York 2006, 387–413, here: 408–411.

128 See Fitzmyer, Philemon (see n. 9), 115.

129 See, for example, Suhl, Philemon (see n. 11), 39, and Binder, Philemon (see n. 55), 39.

130 See Horsley, Paul (see n. 91), 183, and also N. Baumert, Ein Freundesbrief an einen Sklavenhalter? Der Brief des Paulus an Philemon, in: idem, Studien zu den Paulusbriefen (SBAB 32), Stuttgart 2001, 131–160, here: 147.

131 See Dunn, Philemon (see n. 12), 334, and Osiek, Philemon (see n. 16), 139.

132 See J.M.G. Barclay, Paul, Philemon and the Dilemma of Christian Slave-Ownership, NTS 37 (1991) 161–186.

133 See C.S. de Vos, Once a Slave, Always a Slave? Slavery, Manumission and Relational Patterns in Paul's Letter to Philemon, JSNT 82 (2001) 89–105. For more or less similar views, see Wolter, Philemon (see n. 14), 233–235; Arzt-Grabner, Philemon (see n. 4), 237; and M.H. Turner, Human Reconciliation in the New Testament with Special Reference to Philemon, Colossians and Ephesians, EuJTh 16 (2007) 37–48. G. Feeley-Harnik, Is Historical Anthropology Possible? The Case of a Runaway Slave, in: G.M. Tucker/D.A. Knight (eds.), Humanizing America's Iconic Book: Society of Biblical Literature Centennial Addresses 1980 (SBL.BSNA 6), Chico 1982, 95–126, here: 116f., advances exactly the opposite argument: Paul takes slavery for granted and does not use the letter to create a community based on love; rather, he uses Onesimus to force Philemon to obey him (= Paul).

134 In some instances scholars use concepts that are not mentioned explicitly in Phlm, but which are used elsewhere by Paul, for example "new creation". See J.T. Denison, Paul, Philemon, Onesimus and the New Creation in Christ Jesus, Kerux 6/3 (1991) 38–45, and Kumitz, Medium (see n. 76), 214–219.

135 I.H. Marshall, The Theology of Philemon, in: K.P. Donfried/I.H. Marshall, The Theology of the Shorter Pauline Letters (NTTh), Cambridge 1993, 175–191.

as love, faith, κοινωνία and obedience, Marshall relates the letter to Pauline theology in general:

> [T]he theological position of this letter is the same as that of Paul's other letters. The same fundamental understanding of the Christian life as one of faith and love 'in Christ', binding believers together, is to be found in all of them.[136]

According to *N.T. Wright*,[137] v. 6 is the "driving heart"[138] of the letter, and the theology of the letter as a whole is a development of the nature of κοινωνία: the unity which the church must display because it is one in Christ already, thus constituting the true humanity that transcends all barriers between humans. Furthermore, Wright argues that Paul's apostolic ministry is the means through which God expands this true humanity.

Johnny Roberts[139] identifies two underlying theological motifs in Phlm: firstly, κοινωνία, and, secondly, the interaction between the theological indicative and imperative in the letter. The first of these motifs is developed further in terms of the following aspects: love as a signal of κοινωνία, missionary effort as a mode of generating κοινωνία, hospitality as an expression of κοινωνία and respect as a symbol of κοινωνία.

A small number of scholars attempt to describe the theology of Phlm in terms of a broader framework. The most notable example is the contribution of *Marion Soards*,[140] who investigates theological dimensions in the letter which are usually disregarded by other scholars – in particular, the activity of God as portrayed or implied in the letter. He goes about this step by step: identifying Paul's statements about God's activity in the letter; listing them in the order of their occurrence; rearranging them in chronological order; and analysing and summarising the findings. His general conclusion is that God is active in the human social world and that God's activity has a describable character. This conclusion is further spelled out as follows:

136 Ibid., 186.

137 N.T. Wright, Putting Paul Together Again: Toward a Synthesis of Pauline Theology (1 and 2 Thessalonians, Philippians, and Philemon), in: Bassler, Theology (see n. 127), 183–211, here: 203–205.

138 Ibid., 203.

139 J.H. Roberts, Vryheid, Gelykheid en Broederskap in die Brief aan Filemon: die Evangelie as Maatskappy-Omvormende Krag, in: C. Breytenbach/B.C. Lategan (eds.), Geloof en Opdrag: Perspektiewe op die Etiek van die Nuwe Testament (Scriptura S9a), Stellenbosch 1992, 259–274.

140 M.L. Soards, Some Neglected Theological Dimensions of Paul's Letter to Philemon, PRS 17 (1990) 209–219. See also Fitzmyer, Philemon (see n. 9), 37–40, and T.D. Still, Philemon among the Letters of Paul: Theological and Canonical Considerations, RestQ 47 (2005) 133–142.

> First, God takes initiative ... Second, God intervenes in the course of normal human affairs ... Third, God transforms persons, as individuals, but particularly in the context of relationships ... Fourth, God redirects those in whose lives God works.[141]

From the survey above, it is clear that no consensus exists on Paul's views on slavery in Phlm; and it is highly unlikely that such consensus will ever develop. It has also been shown that most scholars almost intuitively take this issue as a point of departure when they attempt to describe the theology of the letter. This logically leads them to emphasise the centrality of the notion of κοινωνία in gaining an understanding of Paul's theology in the letter; one can even discern a type of broad consensus in this regard. It is against this background that Soards' attempt to investigate neglected issues in the letter is so refreshing. Perhaps more research could be conducted in terms of this approach.

VIII. Conclusion

If this overview comprises a more or less fair reflection of research published on Phlm since 1980, it is indeed the case that significant developments have been made in many instances. The areas that have attracted the most attention and in which important developments have occurred, include the issue of the status of Onesimus; the contribution of papyrological evidence; epistolographic, rhetorical, sociological and hermeneutical approaches; as well as theological issues. The differences of opinion that still exist in many instances, and the remaining gaps in our knowledge, serve as a reminder to us all that much still has to be done.

141 Soards, Dimensions (see n. 140), 219.

Paul's Persuasive Prose: An Epistolary Analysis of the Letter to Philemon

JEFFREY A.D. WEIMA

I. Introduction

The proper interpretation of any Pauline letter must involve an analysis of the letter's structure and its epistolary conventions. As Robert Funk already observed over three decades ago:

> The first order of business [in the study of Paul's letters] is to learn to read the letter as a letter. This means above all to learn to read its structure.[1]

This concern with the structure or form of a letter lies at the heart of an interpretative approach commonly referred to as "epistolary analysis".[2] In contrast to the traditional thematic approach to Paul's letters that focuses only on the *content* of the text, epistolary analysis emphasizes the *form* of the text. To put it differently, while a thematic approach asks the question: "*What* did Paul say?," epistolary analysis goes beyond this to ask also the formal question: "*How* does Paul say it?" The proper interpretation of Paul's letters requires that this latter question be asked. For as Leland Rykan notes: "We cannot fully comprehend the 'what' of New Testament writings (their religious content) without first paying attention to the 'how' (the literary modes in which the content is embodied)."[3]

In this essay I ask the "how" question of Paul's compact and cleverly crafted Letter to Philemon. My goal is to illustrate what an epistolary analysis of a letter involves as well as the exegetical benefits that such a form-critical approach can yield in understanding not just this letter, the briefest of the extant Pauline correspondence, but the potential that this method has for interpreting the remaining Pauline letters

1 R. Funk, The Form and Function of the Pauline Letter (SBL.SP), Missoula 1970, 8.

2 The names "letter structure approach" and "form critical approach" are also often used to refer to this interpretative method. For a historical survey of the rise of epistolary analysis as a discipline in biblical and non-biblical studies, see J.A.D. Weima, Neglected Endings: The Significance of the Pauline Letter Closings (JSNT.S 101), Sheffield 1994, 12–23; also J.D. Harvey, Listening to the Text: Oral Patterning in Paul's Letters (ETS Studies 1), Grand Rapids 1998, 16–22.

3 L. Ryken, The Literature of the New Testament, in: L. Ryken/T. Longman (eds.), A Complete Literary Guide to the Bible, Grand Rapids 1993, 367.

as well. It will become clear from our study that Paul has skillfully adapted every major unit of this letter — the opening, thanksgiving, body and closing — so that the persuasive force of his argument is greatly enhanced and powerful pressure is placed upon Philemon to agree to the apostle's explicit and implicit requests.

II. The Letter Opening (vv. 1–3)

1. The Form and Function of the Pauline Letter Opening

The letter opening is the most formally consistent section of Paul's letters, being made up of three epistolary conventions. In keeping with the pattern found in letters of that day, the first convention of the apostle's correspondence is the *sender* formula.[4] This formula typically consists of four elements:

(a) the name of Paul, always given in the nominative;
(b) a title, most commonly "apostle" (1Cor 1,1; 2Cor 1,1; Gal 1,1; Eph 1,1; Col 1,1; 1Tim 1,1; 2Tim 1,1; Tit 1,1) but sometimes also "servant" (Rom 1,1; Phil 1,1; Tit 1,1);
(c) a short descriptive phrase, indicating the source of his apostleship or servanthood: "of Christ Jesus" (missing only in 1Thess 1,1 and 2Thess 1,1); and
(d) the mention of co-senders (1Cor 1,1; 2Cor 1,1; Gal 1,2; Phil 1,1; Col 1,1; 1Thess 1,1; 2Thess 1,1; Phlm 1).

It is worth noting that the final fourth element is atypical of letters of Paul's day and that the apostle usually identifies his co-senders as "brother(s)" in distinction from the more authoritative title of "apostle" used to identify himself.

The second epistolary convention in Paul's letter openings is the *recipient* formula. This formula consists of two elements:

(a) the designation of the recipient by means of the dative case, either the noun "church" or "saints" along with the name of the city or region where the congregation is located (1Cor 1,2; 2Cor 1,1; Gal 1,2; Eph 1,1; Phil 1,1; Col 1,2; 1Thess 1,1; 2Thess 1,1); and
(b) a brief descriptive phrase that positively describes the readers' relationship to God and/or Christ, e.g., "in God (our) Father and the Lord Jesus Christ" (1Thess 1,1; 2Thess 1,1); "in Christ Jesus" (1Cor 1,2; Phil 1,1).

The third and final epistolary convention of the Pauline letter openings is the *greeting* formula. This convention contains three formal elements:

(a) the greeting: "grace and peace";
(b) the recipient: "to you"; and
(c) the divine source: "from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ".

The fact that these same three formulas (although in a much more simplified form) were typically included in the openings of secular letters

4 The only letters that do not follow this pattern and instead place the name of the recipient before that of the sender are letters of petition where the sender is appealing for help to a person of higher rank.

of Paul's day[5] shows that the apostle is not the creator of this epistolary format but borrows from the letter-writing practices of his day. Nevertheless, Paul does not slavishly follow these practices but adapts them to suit his particular audience and specific needs, as seen, for example, in the way he "Christianizes" the third formula — the greeting. The apostle takes the typical Greek greeting χαιρεῖν (literally "rejoice" but colloquially "greeting") and replaces it with the similar sounding word χάρις ("grace"). Paul also adds to this greeting the typical Jewish welcome of "peace", thereby creating a distinctly Christian greeting ("Grace and peace to you") that honors both Gentile and Jewish believer alike.

The typical or expected form of the Pauline letter opening is thus as follows:

(1) Sender formula
  (a) Name of sender
  (b) Title
  (c) Short descriptive phrase, indicating source of title
  (d) Co-sender(s)
(2) Recipient formula
  (a) Identification of recipient
  (b) Short phrase, positively describing the recipients' relationship to God
(3) Greeting formula
  (a) Greeting
  (b) Recipient
  (c) Divine source

The primary function of the letter opening in secular letters is to establish or enhance personal contact with the letter recipient (what Heikki Koskenniemi called "philophronesis", the expression of friendly relationship).[6] Many commentators downplay the importance of this philophronetic function in Paul's letter opening and view this section (along with the letter closing) as being entirely conventional in nature in contrast to the thanksgiving and body sections of the letter which are judged to be more important, since here the apostle takes up the specific issues that he wishes to address. In colloquial terms, the opening and closing are viewed only as an "appetizer" and "light dessert" in contrast to the letter body which provides the weightier "main course".

The letter opening (and letter closing) sections, however, are not without rhetorical or persuasive impact. As Robert Wall observes:

> The significance of epistolary greetings goes beyond identifying author and audience; it is more than saying hello. The author's salutation, however conventional and

5 See the letter openings in F.X.J. Exler, The Form of the Ancient Greek Letter: A Study in Greek Epistolography, Washington 1923, 24–60; O. Roller, Das Formular der paulinischen Briefe: ein Beitrag zur Lehre vom antiken Briefe (BWANT 58), Stuttgart 1933, 57–62; J.L. White, Light from Ancient Letters (FF.NT), Philadelphia 1986.

6 H. Koskenniemi, Studien zur Idee und Phraseologie des griechischen Briefes bis 400 n. Chr. (STAT 102,2), Helsinki 1956.

> formal, specifies the nature of the relationship between author and audience and even draws lines around the conversation being carried on by the letter in hand. Meanings are more readily and rightly determined in terms of this "rhetorical relationship" formulated by the letter's opening word.[7]

Furthermore, as Calvin Roetzel asserts: "Once the letter-writing conventions which Paul used are understood, the alert reader will also find clues to Paul's intent in his creative use of those conventions as well."[8] This statement is just as true for the epistolary conventions found in the opening as it is in the other sections of the apostle's letters. Thus, rather than being insignificant, the letter opening serves an important function in the overall argument of the letter. For, as can be demonstrated in other Pauline letters[9] as well as here in Phlm, Paul skillfully uses these opening sections to place himself and his readers in such a relationship to one another that his purposes in the letter are furthered.

2. The Letter Opening of Phlm

When the letter opening of Phlm is compared with the rather consistent pattern of epistolary conventions found in the opening sections of Paul's other letters as outlined above, the distinctive character of Phlm 1–3 becomes readily apparent. Although the greeting formula is relatively consistent with Paul's practice elsewhere, the sender formula and the recipient formula both contain unique formal features.

2.1. The Sender Formula (v. 1a)

The sender formula is distinctive in the title that Paul uses to identify himself: Instead of the expected designation "apostle", the appellation "prisoner" (δέσμιος) is found. Nowhere else does Paul open a letter by referring to himself as a "prisoner".[10] Two questions naturally arise: (1) Why did Paul drop his customary title "apostle"? (2) Why did he substitute it with "prisoner" rather than "servant" (as in Phil 1,1; Rom 1,1; Tit 1,1) or some other designation?

7 R.W. Wall, Colossians & Philemon (IVPNTCS 12), Downers Grove 1993, 193.

8 C.J. Roetzel, The Letters of Paul: Conversations in Context, Atlanta ²1982, 30.

9 On Paul's skillful adaptation and expansion of the letter opening of Romans, see J.A.D. Weima, Preaching the Gospel in Rome: A Study of the Epistolary Framework of Romans, in: L.A. Jervis/P. Richardson (eds.), Gospel in Paul: Studies on Corinthians, Galatians and Romans for Richard N. Longenecker (JSNT.S 108), Sheffield 1994, 337–366, here: 339–344.

10 The uniqueness of this title was not lost on certain copyists who attempted to "correct" the text and so bring it into line with the customary Pauline letter openings: ἀπόστολος is read in D* and δοῦλος occurs in 323, 945 and a few other minuscules.

In response to the first question, some claim that Paul is asking Philemon for a favor and so is hesitant to assert his apostolic status for fear of being too heavy-handed. Peter O'Brien, for example, states:

> The authoritative title of "apostle" is dropped, not because Paul has suddenly ceased to be an apostle, but because he has no intention of appealing to his apostolic authority. He desires to entreat Philemon (vv 8, 9) rather than command, and substitutes for the term "apostle" a "designation which would touch his friend's heart" (Lightfoot, 331, ...).[11]

This explanation, however, is only half correct. It is true that the sensitive nature of the letter's request requires that Paul not approach Philemon in an outwardly heavy-handed manner and so the title "apostle" is dropped in the letter opening. It is not true, however, that Paul is reluctant to exert his apostolic authority over Philemon. For if, as O'Brien asserts, Paul has "no intention of appealing to his apostolic authority", why does the apostle a few verses later mention that he "has much freedom in Christ to command you to do the thing that is necessary" (v. 8)? Furthermore, the mention of Timothy as a co-sender indirectly points to Paul's authoritative status, since Philemon is reminded that the apostle has others who labor with and under him in the work of the gospel.[12] Subtle hints of Paul's authority are also found in later references to the good that Philemon might do "under pressure" (κατὰ ἀνάγκην [v. 14]) and his expected "obedience" (τῇ ὑπακοῇ σου [v. 21a]). Finally, the fact that Paul identifies himself not merely as a "prisoner" but a "prisoner *of Christ Jesus*" alludes to his apostolic authority and "obligates" Philemon "to obey the apostolic word"[13] contained in this letter. Therefore, even though Paul does not want in this delicate situation to be heavy-handed in an outward and offensive manner, there are several ways in which he clearly and cleverly alludes to his apostolic authority.

In response to the second question, some commentators have been reluctant to see in the substituted title "prisoner" any deliberate attempt by Paul to use this designation to further his central purpose in the letter. Richard Melick, for example, rejects this idea and claims instead that "the best understanding is that Paul used the words [i.e., "prisoner of Christ

11 P.T. O'Brien, Colossians, Philemon (WBC 44), Waco 1982, 272. At the end of this citation, O'Brien quotes from J.B. Lightfoot, Saint Paul's Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon: A Revised Text with Introductions, Notes, and Dissertations, London ⁹1890, 331.

12 See E. Lohse, Colossians and Philemon: A Commentary on the Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon (Hermeneia), Philadelphia 1971, 189: "The fact that an associate is mentioned also calls attention to the authoritative character of the letter."

13 Ibid. See also U. Wickert, Der Philemonbrief — Privatbrief oder apostolisches Schreiben?, ZNW 52 (1961) 230–238.

Jesus"] to speak of his location when writing."[14] But Paul was also a prisoner when he wrote Phil, Col, Eph and 2Tim, and yet the title "prisoner" does not occur in the openings of any of these letters. The use of this designation, therefore, must be something other than to convey Paul's location or historical situation.

A better explanation is that the title "prisoner" was chosen because of its "emotive and persuasive power"[15] as well as its direct connection to the implied request of the letter. The theme of Paul's imprisonment serves as an important backdrop to the letter as a whole: Paul opens the correspondence by identifying himself as a "prisoner of Christ Jesus" (v. 1); he begins the letter body with the same designation "prisoner of Christ Jesus" (v. 9); he identifies Onesimus as one to whom he has given birth "in prison" (v. 10); he wants to keep Onesimus with him so that the runaway slave may continue to serve the apostle during his "imprisonment for the gospel" (v. 13); and he closes the letter with greetings in which the first-named person, Epaphras, is identified as "my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus" (v. 23), thereby drawing attention for the fifth time in this brief letter to his own position of imprisonment. Paul's present sufferings in prison for the sake of his Lord "allow him to speak to the community with greater authority."[16] For the degree to which the apostle is willing to suffer for Christ adds pressure on Philemon to be similarly willing to suffer for Christ in the matter of Onesimus. William Hendriksen captures the implied contrast that Paul makes between himself and Philemon with the rhetorical question: "In comparison with the *sacrifice* that I am making, is not the *favor* which I am asking you to grant a rather easy matter?"[17]

The term "prisoner", however, in addition to its emotive and persuasive power, also foreshadows the letter's *implied* request. The existence of an implied request is suggested by the confidence formula found in the letter closing where Paul states: "... even beyond the things that I am saying you will do" (v. 21b). The "things that I am saying" likely refers to the *explicit* request of the letter, given near the end of the letter body (vv. 8–18), in v. 16, namely, that Philemon welcome Onesimus back "no longer as a slave but more than a slave, a beloved brother." But to what is the apostle referring with the words "even beyond the things that I am saying"? A strong candidate is v. 13 where Paul states his strong desire to have Onesimus remain with him and help him carry on his gospel ministry while under house arrest: "... whom I was wanting to keep for myself in order that on behalf of you he might serve me in my imprisonment for the gospel." This verse in Greek is intensified by both the addition of the personal pronoun "I" and the use of the imperfect tense. In fact, F.F. Bruce does not find Paul's intentions in this verse at all subtle, stating that "Paul now makes it very clear what he is asking Philemon to do."[18] The letter's implied request, therefore, is that Philemon, after forgiving[19] his runaway slave, send him immediately back to Paul to assist the apostle in his "prison" ministry.[20] The substitution of the expected title "apostle" with the designation "prisoner" highlights at the very opening of the letter Paul's imprisonment — an imprisonment that he repeatedly refers to throughout the rest of the letter (vv. 9.10.13.23) — in order to foreshadow the implicit request to have the slave owner send Onesimus back to serve as the apostle's helper.

14 R.R. Melick, Jr., Philippians, Colossians, Philemon (NAC 32), Nashville 1991, 349. See also O'Brien, Philemon (see n. 11), 271, who states that in the title prisoner "reference is made to the apostle's situation".

15 J.D.G. Dunn, The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon: A Commentary on the Greek Text (NIGTC), Grand Rapids 1996, 311.

16 Lohse, Philemon (see n. 12), 189; so also Wall, Philemon (see n. 7), 194.

17 W. Hendriksen, Exposition of Colossians and Philemon (NTC 9), Grand Rapids 1964, 209.

18 F.F. Bruce, The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians (NIC), Grand Rapids 1984, 214. The implicit request in v. 13 is also recognized by others. G.P. Wiles, Paul's Intercessory Prayers: The Significance of the Intercessory Prayer Passages in the Letters of St Paul (MSSNTS 24), Cambridge 1974, 216, states: "[M]ore urgently he [Paul] wants Onesimus released from household service and sent back to him for the service of the gospel (vv. 13f., 21)"; J.M.G. Barclay, Paul, Philemon and the Dilemma of Christian Slave-Ownership, NTS 37 (1991) 161–186, here: 172, asserts that "The main point of vv. 13–14, the implied request that Philemon send Onesimus back to Paul, is tolerably clear"; D.L. Allen, The Discourse Structure of Philemon: A Study in Textlinguistics, in: D.A. Black (ed.), Scribes and Scripture: New Testament Essays in Honor of J. Harold Greenlee, Winona Lake 1992, 77–96, here: 89, writes: "Verse 13 may be interpreted as a covert request on Paul's part that Philemon allow Onesimus to remain with him as his assistant in the gospel"; J.A. Fitzmyer, The Letter to Philemon: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary (AncB 34C), New York/London 2000, 102: "... indirectly suggesting that Philemon might not only forgive Onesimus but also release him so that he might return to work with Paul in his evangelization"; B. Witherington III, The Letters to Philemon, the Colossians, and the Ephesians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Captivity Epistles, Grand Rapids 2007, 86 n. 18, also states that Paul wants "that he [Onesimus] be sent back to Paul so that Paul may be assisted by him, courtesy of Philemon."

19 There is much debate among commentators whether the explicit request is for Philemon to *forgive* Onesimus (what might be called the "minimalist" position) or more than this to *free* Onesimus (the "maximalist" interpretation). For a helpful overview of the arguments both for and against the fact that Paul was asking for Onesimus' manumission, see the excursus in M. Barth/H. Blanke, The Letter to Philemon: A New Translation with Notes and Commentary (ECC), Grand Rapids 2000, 412–415.

20 J. Knox, Philemon among the Letters of Paul: A New View of its Place and Importance, Chicago 1935, and S.C. Winter, Paul's Letter to Philemon, NTS 33 (1987) 1–15, interpret the construction παρακαλῶ περί in v. 10 not as "I appeal *on behalf of* someone" but instead "I appeal *for* someone", thereby turning the implicit request into an explicit one. The normal use of the preposition περί, however, does not justify this reading.

2.2. The Recipient Formula (vv. 1b–2)

The recipient formula also appears to be deliberately expanded in three subtle but significant ways so as to strengthen the persuasive force of the letter. First, there is the description of Philemon as "beloved" (ἀγαπητός). Although Paul uses the word "beloved" in two other letter openings (Rom 1,7; 2Tim 1,2) and in the body sections of other letters to characterize his recipients,[21] here the term has special significance. For this is the first of five references in this brief letter to the concept of mutual love — love extended from one Christian to another. The first reference here in v. 1b reminds Philemon right at the outset that he belongs to a community of mutual love in which he enjoys the affection extended to him by both Paul and his co-sender Timothy. The second and third references both occur in the thanksgiving section where Paul chooses to give thanks to God for Philemon's "*love* for all the saints" (v. 5b) and "your *love*" which refreshed the hearts of the saints (v. 7). The fourth reference to mutual love occurs in the appeal formula that opens the body of the letter where Paul calls upon Philemon to act according to the principle of mutual love (emphasized by the word order) for which he had just twice praised him: "more on the basis of *love* I appeal to you" (v. 9). Thus, the stage has been well set for the explicit request that finally is made near the end of the letter body, namely, that Philemon welcome Onesimus back "no longer as a slave, but more than a slave, a *beloved* brother" (v. 16). The designation of Philemon in the letter opening as "beloved", therefore, can hardly be an innocent accident but rather deliberately picked to anticipate the key appeal in v. 16: that the slave owner accept Onesimus back in the same loving manner that he (Philemon) has been accepted by Paul and that he (Philemon) has extended to other believers.[22]

The second description of Philemon as "our fellow worker" is also significant, since it places Philemon in an elite group: Prisca and Aquila (Rom 16,3), Urbanus (Rom 16,9), Timothy (Rom 16,21; 2Cor 1,19.24; 1Thess 3,2), Apollos (1Cor 3,9), Silvanus (2Cor 1,19.24), Titus (2Cor 8,23), Epaphroditus (Phil 2,25), Euodia, Syntyche, and Clement (Phil 4,2–3), Aristarchus and Mark (Col 4,10; Phlm 24), Jesus Justus (Col 4,11), and

21 See Rom 11,28; 12,19; 16,5.8.9.12; 1Cor 4,14.17; 10,14; 15,58; 2Cor 7,1; 12,19; Eph 5,1; 6,21; Phil 2,12; 4,1; Col 1,7; 4,7.9.14; 1Thess 2,8; 1Tim 6,2.

22 R.P. Martin, Colossians and Philemon (NCBC), Grand Rapids 1973, 158: "Right at the outset Philemon is reminded that he belongs to a community of mutual love. Paul is paving the way for a later description of Onesimus as he should be treated in that community (v. 16 'a beloved brother')"; Dunn, Philemon (see n. 15), 311: "Philemon is called 'the beloved one', preparing in effect for the appeal in v. 16 that he should be willing to accept Onesimus in like manner."

Demas and Luke (Phlm 24). By equating Philemon's status to that of these key figures in the apostle's missionary activity, Paul at minimum elevates the status of the slave owner and so makes him more open to the letter's request. More than that, the title "our fellow worker" highlights the bond that exists between Paul and Philemon: They are involved together in a common ministry where the needs and desires of the one partner are shared by the other — an intimate interrelationship that Paul will appeal to later in the body of the letter. Just as the first descriptor of Philemon as "beloved" foreshadows the later appeal that he welcome Onesimus back as "a beloved brother" (v. 16), so also the second descriptor of Philemon as "our fellow worker" looks ahead to the later appeal that "If, therefore, you have fellowship with me, receive him as you would receive me!" (v. 17).[23]

The third way that the recipient formula has been expanded so as to intensify the persuasive force of the letter is through the inclusion of other recipients: In addition to Philemon the letter is also addressed "to Apphia our sister, to Archippus our fellow soldier, and to the church that meets at your house" (v. 2). Some commentators refuse to recognize any persuasive force at work in the inclusion of these additional recipients, attributing their presence to epistolary courtesy. O'Brien, for example, rejects the seemingly obvious fact that Apphia, Archippus and the house church are even included as letter recipients:

> They are not named along with Philemon as recipients of the letter. The matter Paul is dealing with is a personal affair which concerns Philemon alone and the decision to be arrived at is not a concern of the entire community. The inclusion of other Christians' names in this salutation and the benedictions (vv 3, 25 where the plural "you," ... occurs) is due to the apostle's courtesy.[24]

23 Barth/Blanke, Philemon (see n. 19), 233, observe that by using the two terms "beloved" and "our fellow worker" to describe Philemon,

> Paul lays on the man a hand that is warm and heavy at the same time. Its warmth will be felt when it turns out that love is the main theme of the epistle; its pressure when Paul appeals to Philemon.

24 O'Brien, Philemon (see n. 11), 273. He similarly states on p. 268: "... the inclusion of other Christians' names in the salutation (vv 1, 2) and benedictions (vv 3, 25) is due to Paul's courtesy."

Melick similarly states:

> The text appears to address four readers. The letter makes clear, however, that Paul directed his comments to Philemon alone ... Most likely, Paul included the others because they were part of Philemon's family and courtesy demanded it.[25]

But while Apphia may well have been Philemon's wife, there is no conclusive evidence that Archippus was his son and it can hardly be the case that everyone in the church that met in his house was related to him such that "courtesy demanded" their inclusion among the letter recipients. The more plausible explanation for Paul including all these people in the recipient formula is that he deliberately makes the letter's request a public matter, thereby giving his correspondence greater persuasive power. As any recruiter or fundraiser today knows full well: A request made in public is much harder to turn down than one made in private. Thus, Norman Petersen is closer to the truth than O'Brien and Melick in observing:

> Social pressure on Philemon is secured most conspicuously by Paul's addressing his letter not only to Philemon but also to Apphia, Archippus, and the entire church that meets in Philemon's house.[26]

The same point is recognized by other commentators,[27] including Barth and Blanke:

> All those worshipping together, men and women, the rich and the poor, those more and those less educated, including slaves and children, are charged and enabled to exert some pressure on the slave owner, if ever he would prove reluctant to fulfill Paul's expectations.[28]

2.3. Co-Sender (v. 1a)

The persuasive pressure exacted by the mention of additional letter recipients suggests that the same purpose may also lie behind the mention of Timothy as a co-sender of the letter. As Joseph Fitzmyer notes: "This also means that Timothy is aware of the issue about Paul writes in this

25 Melick, Philemon (see n. 14), 349. Note also the comment of Bruce, Philemon (see n. 18), 206f.:

> While they [Apphia, Archippus and the house church] are greeted thus in the prescript, they are in no sense included along the addressees of the letter: the letter is a private one, intended for Philemon alone.

26 N.R. Petersen, Rediscovering Paul: Philemon and the Sociology of Paul's Narrative World, Philadelphia 1985, 99.

27 Dunn, Philemon (see n. 15), 313, for example, observes: "Of course, this [the addition of other recipients] was a not altogether subtle way of bringing pressure on Philemon." Witherington, Philemon (see n. 18), 56, comments:

> The eyes of his church will be on him, watching how he responds to Paul's appeal. There may also be the effect of putting pressure on the community in regard to their Christian commitment so that they will not simply side with Philemon, who is their friend and high status host.

28 Barth/Blanke, Philemon (see n. 19), 263.

letter, and he lends supports to Paul's appeal."[29] Paul further draws the attention of Philemon to Timothy's role as co-sender and thus co-supporter of the apostle's request in his description of the slave owner not with the singular "*my* co-worker" but the plural "*our* co-worker."

That this strategy of making the letter's request a public matter so as to exert further pressure is, in fact, a deliberate one is strengthened by Paul's similar practice both later in this letter and in his other correspondence. At the end of this brief letter the apostle sends greetings from five other of his fellow workers: Epaphras, Mark, Aristarchus, Demas and Luke (vv. 23–24). Thus, in addition to Timothy, there are at least five other Christian leaders who not only are aware of Paul's request to Philemon but also implicitly support the apostle in his request. This persuasive strategy of Paul in letting his letter recipients know that others are aware of the request that he is making of them is also found in his correspondence with the Corinthians. Paul cleverly shares with the Corinthians the fact that he has been "boasting" (2Cor 8,24; 9,2f.) to the churches of Macedonia about their (the Corinthians') "readiness" and "zeal" (2Cor 9,2) to support his "offering for the saints" as a persuasive means of getting these reluctant believers in Achaia to contribute to his relief-collection.

Our epistolary analysis of the letter opening of Phlm, therefore, has demonstrated not only the great care with which Paul has written this seemingly simple letter but also his powerfully persuasive prose. For in the space of a few brief verses he has adapted and expanded the epistolary conventions found in the opening section of this letter in such a way that not only foreshadows the explicit and implicit requests of the letter but also exerts great pressure on Philemon to acquiesce to these requests.

III. The Thanksgiving (vv. 4–7)

1. The Form and Function of the Pauline Thanksgiving

The second major section constituting the epistolary framework of Paul's letters is the thanksgiving. A formal analysis of the Pauline thanksgiving was first undertaken by Paul Schubert, one of the earliest scholars to engage in a letter structure or form-critical approach to Paul's letters.[30] Schubert's comparative analysis led him to conclude that there are two basic types of thanksgiving, one being formally more complex than the other.[31] Schubert's identification of the formal ele-

29 Fitzmyer, Philemon (see n. 18), 85.

30 P. Schubert, Form and Function of the Pauline Thanksgivings (BZNW 20), Berlin 1939.

31 These two types may be best presented in the following schematic fashion:
Type 1a: Complex (1Thess; Phil; Col; Phlm)

ments of the Pauline thanksgiving has been followed by many biblical scholars, including Peter O'Brien in his monograph study of this epistolary unit.[32]

Despite the importance of Schubert's ground-breaking work and its wide-spread acceptance, his formal analysis contains a couple of weaknesses. First, the two proposed formal types do not account for the structure of *all* the Pauline thanksgivings. For although the complex type is found in 1Thess, Phil, Phlm and Col and the simple type in 2Thess and 1Cor, neither type accounts for the thanksgiving in Romans, thereby requiring Schubert to identify yet a third ("mixed") type. A second deficiency with Schubert's formal analysis was his focus only on the initial parts of the thanksgiving section (the principle clause and the participial/causal clause), ignoring to a large extent the relatively consistent structure and function of the concluding part (the final/consecutive clause).

An attempt to address both of these concerns has been undertaken by Ann Jervis.[33] By restating and realigning the formal elements of the thanksgiving section along more functional categories, Jervis proposes that there is only one type of Pauline thanksgiving within which there may occur five distinct units:[34]

(1) Principle verb: Verb εὐχαριστῶ and its personal object τῷ θεῷ (μου);
(2) Manner of thanksgiving: Adverbial and/or participial constructions that serve to indicate the manner in which Paul gives thanks; the pronominal object phrase περὶ (ὑπὲρ) πάντων ὑμῶν typically occurs (except in Philemon);
(3) Cause of thanksgiving: Causal constructions in the form of phrases using ἐπί or ὅτι and/or participial clauses (usually verbs of learning or hearing) that give the reason for Paul's thanksgiving;
(4) Explanation: This section, begun either with καθώς, γάρ or ὥστε, usually modifies the preceding causal unit and so serves to elaborate on the cause for Paul's thanksgiving;
(5) Prayer report: A report of what Paul prays for regarding his addressees, involving the verb προσεύχομαι and a ἵνα, ὅπως or εἴ πως construction that gives the content of the prayer.

(1) Principal clause: εὐχαριστῶ/εὐχαριστοῦμεν τῷ θεῷ.
(2) Participial clause(s): one, two or three participles that modify the subject (Paul and his co-writers, if any) of the principal verb; typically, the first of the participial clauses indicates time; the second indicates cause; and the third also indicates cause; the final participle typically involves a verb of hearing or of learning (ἀκούειν, μνημονεύειν, εἰδέναι, πείθεσθαι).
(3) Final clause: a closing ἵνα-clause, ὅπως-clause or εἰς τό with the infinitive.

Type 1b: Simple (2Thess; 1Cor)
(1) Principal clause: εὐχαριστῶ/εὐχαριστοῦμεν τῷ θεῷ.
(2) Causal clause: introduced by ὅτι.
(3) Consecutive clause: introduced by ὥστε.

32 P.T. O'Brien, Introductory Thanksgivings in the Letters of Paul (NT.S 49), Leiden, 1977.
33 L.A. Jervis, The Purpose of Romans: A Comparative Letter Structure Investigation (JSNT.S 55), Sheffield 1991, 86–109.
34 See ibid., 89f.

Although some modification of Schubert's proposal over the formal structure of the thanksgiving section was needed, his observations about the *function* of this epistolary unit have been confirmed by subsequent studies. Schubert observed that this epistolary unit foreshadows the central themes and issues to be developed in the body of the letter, as well the letter's style and character:

> Each thanksgiving not only announces clearly the subject matter of the letter, but also foreshadows unmistakably its stylistic qualities, the degree of intimacy and other important characteristics.[35]

O'Brien likewise states: "We note in these periods [i.e., the thanksgiving sections] an epistolary function, i.e., to introduce and indicate the main theme(s) of the letters."[36] This foreshadowing function of the Pauline thanksgivings accentuates the importance of the thanksgiving section in Phlm. For in light of the skill with which Paul has adapted the letter opening of this brief letter, we can justly expect the apostle similarly to shape the thanksgiving so that it not only anticipates both the explicit and implicit requests raised in the letter body but also strengthens the letter's overall persuasive character.

2. The Thanksgiving of Phlm

A formal analysis of the thanksgiving section of Phlm (vv. 4–6) indicates that it follows closely the typical structure of this epistolary unit, containing four of the expected five elements:

Principle verb: εὐχαριστῶ τῷ θεῷ μου πάντοτε ("I give thanks to my God always")
Manner of thanksgiving: μνείαν σου ποιούμενος ἐπὶ τῶν προσευχῶν μου ("by making remembrance of you in my prayers")
Cause of thanksgiving: ἀκούων σου τὴν ἀγάπην καὶ τὴν πίστιν, ἣν ἔχεις πρὸς τὸν κύριον Ἰησοῦν καὶ εἰς πάντας τοὺς ἁγίους ("because I hear of your love and faith, which you have toward the Lord Jesus and for all the saints")
Prayer report: ὅπως ἡ κοινωνία τῆς πίστεώς σου ἐνεργὴς γένηται ἐν ἐπιγνώσει παντὸς ἀγαθοῦ τοῦ ἐν ἡμῖν εἰς Χριστόν ("[I pray] that the sharing of your faith may become active in the knowledge of everything good among us for Christ").[37]

This formal analysis reveals a fact overlooked by most commentators, namely, that v. 7 does not formally belong to the thanksgiving which comes to a climatic close with the prayer report of v. 6.[38] Even less rec-

35 Schubert, Thanksgivings (see n. 30), 77.
36 O'Brien, Thanksgivings (see n. 32), 15.
37 The precise meaning of this verse is not at all clear and this uncertainty has led to a wide variety of different proposed translations. The words "I pray" are added here (as they are in many translations) to clarify the slightly awkward connection of the ὅπως clause of v. 6 with the earlier subordinate clause of v. 4 ("by making remembrance of you in my prayers").
38 Those who rightly limit the thanksgiving proper to vv. 4–6 include Schubert, Thanksgivings (see n. 30), 44, 64; E. Lohmeyer, Die Briefe an die Philipper, an die Kolosser und an Philemon: übersetzt und erklärt (KEK 9), Göttingen [13]1964, 179; A. Suhl, Der Philemonbrief als Beispiel paulinischer Paränese, Kairos NF 15 (1973) 267–

ognize that v. 7 involves an epistolary convention common in Greco-Roman letters: the "joy expression".[39] The Greek papyri contain numerous examples of stereotyped expressions of joy that typically consist of three elements: (1) the main verb, either χαίρω or ἔχω χαράν, given in the first-person indicative; (2) an adverb of magnitude (e.g., μεγάλως, λίαν, πολλά) and (3) a causal clause giving the reason for joy, introduced either with the conjunction ὅτι or the preposition ἐπί and the dative (see, e.g., BGU I 332,6–7; II 632,9–10; P.Eleph. 13,2–3; P.Giss. 21,3–4; P.Lond. 42,7–9; 43,3–4; P.Mert. 12,3–6; P.Mich. 483,3–5; P.Yale 28,10–11). These same three formal elements occur not only in Paul's use of the joy expression in Phlm 7 but also in his employment of this epistolary convention elsewhere in his letters (Rom 16,19a; 1Cor 16,17; Phil 4,10–20).

It is clear from several factors that the joy expression of v. 7, though formally distinct from the thanksgiving section, nevertheless belongs to this epistolary unit rather than marks the beginning of the letter body. First, the explanatory γάρ that opens the joy formula connects this verse with the immediately preceding thanksgiving. Second, the body of the letter is signaled grammatically with the inferential conjunction διό that opens v. 8. Third, the start of the letter body is also indicated literarily with the two-fold occurrence (vv. 9.10) of the appeal formula — an epistolary convention that typically has a transitional function, either from one major topic to another within the letter body, or, as is the case here and elsewhere (1Cor 1,10), from the thanksgiving to the letter body. Fourth, 2John 4 and 3John 3 provide two important parallels for the location of a joy formula as part of the introductory thanksgiving and immediately prior to the start of the letter body.[40] Finally, the joy expression of v. 7 does not present the main request of the letter, as might be expected if it were part of the letter body, but rather, like the thanksgiving section to which it belongs, foreshadows in a preparatory way the main request of the letter. As O'Brien observes: "The paragraph (if v. 7 be included) is

279, here: 271; O'Brien, Thanksgivings, (see n. 32), 48f.; also idem, Philemon (see n. 11), 276.

39 For a discussion of the joy expression in Greco-Roman letters, see Koskenniemi, Studien (see n. 6), 75–77; J.L. White, Introductory Formulae in the Body of the Pauline Letters, JBL 90 (1971) 91–97, here: 95f.; idem, The Form and Function of the Body of the Greek Letter: A Study of the Letter-Body in the Non-Literary Papyri and in Paul the Apostle (SBL.DS 2), Missoula 1972, 39f.; idem, Light (see n. 5), 201; S.K. Stowers, Letter Writing in Greco-Roman Antiquity (LEC 5), Philadelphia 1986, 186; Weima, Endings (see n. 2), 149f.

40 A Pauline parallel can be found in 1Cor 1,4–9. Though Paul does not here use the joy expression, he does include after the thanksgiving proper (1,4–8) and immediately prior to the beginning of the letter body (the appeal formula in 1,10) an expression of confidence (1,9 "Faithful is God, through whom you were called into the fellowship of his son, Jesus Christ, our Lord") that, like the joy expression in Phlm 7, both foreshadows and transitions to the theme of unity taken up in the letter body (1,10–4,21).

designed to prepare the way for the specific matter with which the letter is primarily concerned."[41]

2.1. "Love"

The thanksgiving continues to emphasize a theme introduced and stressed in the letter opening: mutual love. But whereas the letter opening highlights the love that Philemon *receives* from Paul and Timothy ("to our beloved Philemon") in anticipation of the later request that he extend this same love to Onesimus ("that you have him back ... as a beloved brother"), the thanksgiving focuses on the love that the slave owner *gives* to other believers.

The apostle stresses Philemon's love for others in at least three ways. First, he reverses his typical word order: Instead of the expected "faith and love" (Col 1,4; 1Thess 1,3; 2Thess 1,3; Eph 1,15; 1Tim 1,14; see also 1Cor 13,13; 1Tim 6,11) Paul gives thanks to God for Philemon's "love and faith" (v. 5). Lohse correctly notes that the noun "love" is placed "in an accentuated position", that "in this way the reference to 'love' gains special emphasis" and that "'love' is at the front and center of the stage."[42]

Second, Paul refers yet a second time to Philemon's love for others: "For I have much joy and comfort because of your love" (v. 7a). If one were to think of the situation as a banking transaction, this marks the second time that Paul has deposited praise for Philemon's love, thereby creating a greater reserve of good will from which the apostle may confidently expect to extract a withdrawal in the appeal of the letter body (v. 9: "more on the basis of love I appeal").[43]

Third, both references to Philemon's love have in view his love directed not to God and/or Christ but to fellow believers: It is a love that is "for all the saints" (v. 5) and through which "the hearts of the saints have been refreshed" (v. 7). Rhetorically, this places additional pressure on Philemon to live up to the praise that Paul has given him, namely, to extend the same love to the new saint, Onesimus, that he has shown "to all the saints". Even the adjective "all" here may be related to the overall persuasive prose of the letter. For instead of viewing "all" as a Pauline exaggeration or hyperbole, it may well have in view the love that Paul hopes Philemon will have not only for him and his future visit but even more so for the returning Onesimus. As Barth and Blanke note:

> In addition, the term "all the saints" may be used to prepare the way and the reception not only of Paul, if the Lord wills that he comes around (v. 22), but even more of

41 O'Brien, Thanksgivings (see n. 32), 58.

42 Lohse, Philemon (see n. 12), 193.

43 Fitzmyer, Philemon (see n. 18), 94: "Paul himself will exploit this reference to Philemon's love when he appeals to him in v 9 'out of love'."

an earlier arrival: Paul's alter ego, Onesimus (v. 12, 16–17). Certainly the fugitive slave is an ugly bird when he attempts to find a nest in Philemon's house and to be included in his love.[44]

2.2. "Refresh the Hearts"

A second way in which the thanksgiving both foreshadows the explicit request of the letter and also increases the document's persuasive power is found in the unique[45] phrase "the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you" (v. 7). Instead of the much more common term καρδία (52 occurrences in the Pauline letters), the apostle uses the rarer word σπλάγχνα (only 8 occurrences, three of which are in this letter). The reason for this word choice stems from the fact that the latter term, which literally refers to human entrails where it was believed that the deepest feelings were located, is a more emotive term than the common καρδία. As Dunn notes,

> [T]he emotional bonds between Philemon and "the saints" were strong. No doubt Paul hoped that this would be a factor in his favor when he came to make his appeal to Philemon in the next paragraph.[46]

That Paul's word choice can hardly be fortuitous is clear from the way that he echoes this term in the rest of the letter. In the body of the letter the apostle deliberatively describes Onesimus with the clause: "This one is my very heart" (τοῦτ' ἔστιν τὰ ἐμὰ σπλάγχνα [v. 12b]). Paul then picks up this key term yet again in the letter closing with the command: "Refresh my heart in Christ" (ἀνάπαυσόν μου τὰ σπλάγχνα ἐν Χριστῷ [v. 20b]). As Forrester Church observes, this three-fold repetition of the rarer term σπλάγχνα involves advancing a persuasive argument whose implications for Philemon's conduct are quite clear:

> Taken together they constitute a syllogism that is itself the touchstone of Paul's argument: if Philemon refreshes the hearts of the saints (v 7); and, if Onesimus is Saint Paul's very heart (v 12); then, to refresh Paul's very heart, Philemon must refresh Onesimus (v 20).[47]

2.3. "Sharing/Fellowship" (κοινωνία) and "the Good" (ἀγαθοῦ)

Paul's careful selection of the term "love" and the expression "refresh the hearts" in the thanksgiving in order to anticipate the main request of the letter suggests that other words or phrases found in this epistolary unit may similarly be preparing the ground for the request to follow in the

44 Barth/Blanke, Philemon (see n. 19), 280.

45 A.D. Clarke, 'Refresh the Hearts of the Saints': A Unique Pauline Context?, TynB 47 (1996) 277–300, here: 300, argues that the phrase "refresh the hearts of the saints" is unparalleled in texts of Paul's day and thus "appears to be a phrase which Paul may well have coined".

46 Dunn, Philemon (see n. 15), 321.

47 F.F. Church, Rhetorical Structure and Design in Paul's Letter to Philemon, HTR 71 (1978) 17–33, here: 24.

letter body. This possibility exists for the terms κοινωνία and ἀγαθοῦ in the prayer report of v. 6. The precise meaning of this verse is unfortunately not at all obvious, a fact that has led Harald Riesenfeld to observe: "Few passages in the New Testament have been interpreted and translated in so many different ways."[48] Nevertheless, a good case can be made that Paul in the sentence ὅπως ἡ κοινωνία τῆς πίστεώς σου ἐνεργὴς γένηται ἐν ἐπιγνώσει παντὸς ἀγαθοῦ τοῦ ἐν ἡμῖν εἰς Χριστόν is praying for Philemon's faith — that is, the outward manifestation of his faith in specific deeds of charity[49] — to be at work for the good of fellow believers. By letting the slave-owner know specifically what he is praying will happen in his life, Paul places pressure on Philemon to continue to demonstrate his faith in concrete acts of goodness towards other believers — including a new believer such as the about-to-be-mentioned Onesimus.

It may also be the case that the reference to the term κοινωνία has in view more specifically the implicit request of the letter, namely, that Philemon return the forgiven Onesimus to Paul where the slave can resume helping the apostle to carry on his ministry while under house arrest. In support of this interpretation, Gordon Wiles sees Paul here making an oblique reference similar to that made in the thanksgiving section of Phil where the apostle also uses the word κοινωνία to refer to that church's gift of both finances and the sending of Epaphroditus to help the apostle during his prison ministry. Wiles states:

> Judging by the careful selection of terms throughout the present thanksgiving as he prepares for the details of his request, we may take κοινωνία as prefiguring the business language of verse 17, "So if you consider me your partner (κοινωνόν), receive him as you would receive me." Here [in v. 6], then, he is making his first allusion to the actual subject matter of the appeal — generous sharing on the part of Philemon.[50]

If, as has been argued above, the term κοινωνία in the prayer report of v. 6 looks ahead to the letter's implicit request, this increases the likelihood that the same subject is in view with the verse's reference to ἀγαθοῦ. That Paul has here a specific "good" deed in mind is suggested by the clarifying phrase τοῦ ἐν ἡμῖν, which locates Philemon's good action to that which is done either in the midst of or for fellow Christians. That Paul is thinking particularly about the implicit request that Philemon send Onesimus back to assist him in his gospel ministry is suggested by his later description in v. 14 concerning his desire to keep the

48 H. Riesenfeld, Faith and Love Promoting Hope: An Interpretation of Philemon v 6, in: M.D. Hooker/S.G. Wilson (eds.), Paul and Paulinism: Essays in Honour of C.K. Barrett, London 1982, 251–257, here: 251.

49 Lightfoot, Philemon (see n. 11), 333, offers this paraphrase: "Your friendly offices and sympathies, your kindly deeds of charity, which spring from your faith." See Rom 15,26 and Phil 1,5 for a similar meaning of κοινωνία.

50 Wiles, Prayers (see n. 18), 223.

runaway slave with the identical term: "your good thing" (τὸ ἀγαθόν σου). Paul's word-choice of the term ἀγαθός in both the thanksgiving and again in the implicit request of the letter body, therefore, does not appear to be accidental. Rather, as Witherington notes in v. 14: "The reference to Philemon's 'good deed' picks up on what was said in v. 6."[51]

Our epistolary analysis of the thanksgiving of Phlm has demonstrated that this epistolary unit, like the letter opening, has been constructed with great skill so as to foreshadow the explicit and implicit requests of the letter and also to increase the document's persuasive power. The assertion of John Knox already some time ago about the thanksgiving of Phlm, therefore, has been shown to be entirely justified:

> The paragraph is clearly designed to prepare the way for the specific matter with which the rest of the letter is to be largely concerned. It [the thanksgiving] is the overture in which each of the themes, to be later heard in a different, perhaps more specific, context, is given an anticipatory hearing.[52]

IV. The Letter Body (vv. 8–18)

1. The Form and Function of the Pauline Letter Body

The body of the letter is, formally speaking, the least structured of the four major sections of a Pauline letter. This is to be expected, as each letter body varies considerably based on the specific set of issues at work in a particular congregation. The method of epistolary analysis, therefore, involves for the letter body less the kind of comparative analysis carried out in the epistolary framework — the opening, thanksgiving, and closing sections — where the form and structure is relatively consistent and thus deviations or expansions in the expected form are significant. The focus in the letter body is instead on the identification of various stereotyped formulas and especially the function that such fixed expressions have in advancing the apostle's argument in his respective letters.

2. The Letter Body of Phlm

2.1. The Appeal Formula (vv. 8–10)

The appeal formula is a common epistolary convention in both private and official letters that makes use of the verb παρακαλέω or its synonym ἐρωτάω in the first person for requesting the recipients to carry out some specific action. The primary function that this formula plays in Paul's letters is to indicate a major transition in the text, either from the end of the thanksgiving to the beginning of the letter body as is the case

51 Witherington, Philemon (see n. 18), 77.
52 Knox, Philemon (see n. 20), 21f.

here in Phlm 8–10 (see also 1Cor 1,10) or, as more typically happens, a transition within the body of a letter (Rom 12,1; 15,30; 16,17; 1Cor 16,15; 2Cor 10,1; Phil 4,2; 1Thess 4,1; Eph 4,1). Carl Bjerkelund, who was the first to subject this formula to a formal analysis,[53] suggests that the appeal formula has an additional function. He observed in official correspondence that, when a ruler or government official had a good relationship with the letter recipients and could confidently expect the reader(s) to obey the correspondence's request, they would not be heavy-handed and "command" the recipients but instead use the softer "appeal".

That Paul is familiar with the softer tone expressed in the appeal formula is clear from the fact that he opens the letter body of Phlm by explicitly contrasting his right to "command" the slave owner with his preferred choice to "appeal" to him: "Therefore, although in Christ I could be bold and *command* you to do what you ought to do, more on the basis of love *I appeal* — I, Paul, an old man and now also a prisoner of Christ Jesus — *I appeal* to you concerning my child, to whom I gave birth in prison, Onesimus ..." (vv. 8–10). On the one hand, the softer, less heavy-handed side of Paul is expressed by the two-fold occurrence of the appeal formula. As Church notes: "By doubling the verb παρακαλέω, Paul pulls Philemon's heart-strings not once, but twice."[54] What is more, Paul bases his double appeal "more on the basis of love": Paul is now withdrawing or cashing in on the double praise of Philemon's love that he deposited in the thanksgiving section (vv. 5.7a). Pressure is thus applied to Philemon to act according to the principle of love that the apostle twice praised him for in the preceding epistolary unit.

On the other hand, the harder, more authoritarian side of Paul reveals itself in his not very subtle reminder that he could, if he wanted, instead "command" (the verb ἐπιτάσσειν is a strong term describing the authority a higher rank person has to command someone of lower position) Philemon to do "what you ought to do" (the participle ἀνῆκον is another strong term denoting that which is one's duty).[55] While it would be going too far to conclude that Paul's "strategy is little more than blackmail",[56] it would be a mistake not to see how Paul adds pressure on Philemon to accede to his yet-to-be-mentioned request by reminding the slave-owner of his own apostolic authority. John Barclay is more correct to find "evi-

53 C.J. Bjerkelund, Parakalô: Form, Funktion und Sinn der parakalô-Sätze in den paulinischen Briefen (BTN 1), Oslo 1967.
54 Church, Structure (see n. 47), 26.
55 H. Schlier, Art. ἀνήκει, TDNT 1 (1983) 360, explains ἀνῆκον as "not merely what is fitting but that which is almost legally obligatory."
56 See A. Wilson, The Pragmatics of Politeness and Pauline Epistolography: A Case Study of the Letter to Philemon, JSNT 48 (1992) 107–119, here: 115.

dence here of Paul's diplomatic skill, exerting authority while appearing to leave the matter entirely in Philemon's hands."[57]

2.2. Appeal to Paul's Old Age (v. 9b)

The letter body of Phlm does not contain any additional letter-writing conventions (beyond the appeal formula) that are distinctively epistolary, that is, stereotyped expressions that originate from or are unique to the genre of letters. Nevertheless, Paul in this section of the letter is still very much concerned with persuading Philemon and thus employs a number of rhetorical techniques to bring about the slave-owner's compliance with the letter's explicit and implicit requests. It is important, therefore, to include in my epistolary analysis of this brief letter a recognition of how these rhetorical techniques supplement Paul's skillful adaptation of the opening, thanksgiving and closing sections so as to enhance the letter's overall persuasive power. Space constraints permit me to highlight just three of these rhetorical techniques.

The first involves the apostle's appeal to his old age in v. 9b: "... being such a person as Paul, an old man" (τοιοῦτος ὢν ὡς Παῦλος πρεσβύτης).[58] Some commentators see here the use of pathos — Paul's attempt to create sympathy for himself (and thus also for his requests) by evoking the image of himself as an old man who is suffering in prison.[59] Although this interpretation is possible, it is more likely that Paul's appeal to his old age is intended to induce respect and obedience.[60] Although such an argument does not carry much weight in our contemporary Western culture, it did in the ancient Mediterranean world (Lev 19,32; Sir 8,6; see also Prov 23,22; 1Tim 5,1) and continues to do so in many parts of the world today. The authority that accompanied old age explains how the word for an elderly person, πρεσβύτης, and especially its synonym πρεσβύτερος evolved from its literal meaning of "old(er) person" and took on in both the synagogue and church communities the technical meaning of "leader, elder".[61]

57 Barclay, Paul (see n. 18), 171.

58 Several commentators prefer to take the noun πρεσβύτης as meaning not "old man, aged man" (BDAG 863) but "envoy, ambassador", even though this latter meaning is normally expressed by the similar yet differently spelled noun πρεσβευτής. If this reading were correct, then Paul would be appealing to the authority he has as an ambassador of Christ. This understanding, however, conflicts with Paul's just stated claim that, though he did have the authority to command Philemon, he instead preferred to "appeal" to him and to do so "more because of love". The alternate reading of "ambassador" also suffers from two further problems: First, why did not Paul use the term πρεσβευτής, if this is what he intended, especially since he is familiar with the verbal form of this word (2Cor 5,20; Eph 6,20); Second, if he were appealing to his authority, why didn't he use his more customary title of "apostle"?

59 Witherington, Philemon (see n. 18), 67, for example, states: "Paul calls himself an old man to provoke sympathy in Philemon and the rest of the audience."

60 So Lohse, Philemon (see n. 12), 199; Dunn, Philemon (see n. 15), 327. The persuasive force of Paul's appeal to his old age is also recognized by R.F. Hock, A Support for His Old Age: Paul's Plea on Behalf of Onesimus, in: L.M. White/O.L. Yarbrough (eds.), The Social World of the First Christians: Essays in Honor of Wayne A. Meeks, Minneapolis 1995, 67–81. Hock argues that the apostle, by identifying himself as an old man and prisoner and Onesimus as his child casts himself "in the role of an old father who is in need of his child's support — an accepted convention of children toward their aged parents" (p. 81). This would strengthen the implicit request of the letter, namely, that Philemon send Paul's child, Onesimus, back to his parent, Paul, in prison to assist the apostle in his ministry there.

2.3. Appeal to Onesimus' Former Uselessness and Current Usefulness (v. 11)

A second persuasive technique employed by Paul in the letter body involves in v. 11 a pun on Onesimus' name meaning "profitable, useful": "Formerly he was useless (ἄχρηστον) to you, but now he has become useful (εὔχρηστον) both to you and to me."[62] The pun itself has some persuasive force, as it either amuses or impresses Philemon and the other readers of the letter such that they are more positively disposed to Paul and his request. As Quintilian observes:

> Rhetorical ornament contributes not a little to the furtherance of our case. For when our audience finds it a pleasure to listen, their attention and their readiness to believe what they hear are both alike increased, while they are generally filled with delight, and sometimes even transported by admiration.[63]

More importantly, however, the pun cleverly draws attention to the contrast between Onesimus' former value of being "useless" and his current value of being "useful." This highlighted contrast in turn strengthens both the explicit and implicit requests of the letter. By reminding Philemon of his slave's former uselessness, Paul minimizes the loss that that slave-owner has suffered ("If he has wronged you or owes

61 Dunn, Philemon (see n. 15), 327, who refers to G. Bornkamm, Art. πρέσβυς κτλ., TDNT 6 (1983) 651–680, and R.A. Campbell, The Elders: Seniority within Earliest Christianity (SNTW), Edinburgh 1994.

62 Many have seen here a double pun on Onesimus' name: not only the word play "useless/useful", a widely known pun dating back to the time of Plato (Resp. 411A) to the later Christian writer Hermas (Herm[v] 3.6.7), but also a word play on the name of Christ, since Χριστός would have been pronounced in a way that sounded very similar to χρηστός. The second pun, therefore, would be that Onesimus was formerly ἄχρηστος, that is, "without Christ", but now is εὔχρηστος, that is, "with Christ". So, e.g., Just., Apol. 1.4.1; Lohse, Philemon (see n. 12), 200; Winter, Philemon (see n. 20), 4f.; N.T. Wright, Putting Paul Together Again: Toward a Synthesis of Pauline Theology (1 and 2 Thessalonians, Philippians, and Philemon), in: J.M. Bassler (ed.), Pauline Theology 1: Thessalonians, Philippians, Galatians, Philemon, Minneapolis 1994, 183–211, here: 182; Dunn, Philemon (see n. 15), 329; Wall, Philemon (see n. 7), 206. For a contrary position, see Fitzmyer, Philemon (see n. 18), 109.

63 Inst. 8.3.5; cited by P. Lampe, Affects and Emotions in the Rhetoric of Paul's Letter to Philemon: A Rhetorical-Psychological Interpretation, pp. 61–77, here: 74, in this volume.

you anything ..." [v. 18]) and so makes it easier for him to forgive his slave and welcome him back as a "beloved brother" (explicit request). By reminding Philemon further of the contrast between his slave's former and current value, Paul also minimizes the cost for the owner to send his slave back to Paul to help the apostle in his prison ministry (implicit request). Philemon would not really be losing anything by sending Onesimus back to Paul, since his slave, while working in his household, was "useless" to him anyway. In fact, Philemon would actually be gaining a greater profit by acceding to the implicit request, since then at least his slave would be living up to his name of "useful" as he serves Paul on his master's behalf ("in order that he might serve me on behalf of you" [v. 13]).

2.4. Appeal to Providence (v. 15)

A third way that Paul seeks to induce Philemon's obedience involves an appeal to providence in v. 15: "Perhaps this is why he was separated from you for a little while in order that you might have him back forever." Rather than explicitly referring to the illegal escape of Onesimus and so risk raising the rage of the slave-owner, the apostle instead alludes to the crime by means of the euphemistic expression "he was separated (ἐχωρίσθη) from you." This verb choice likely involves the use of the "theological passive" — the use of the passive voice where the unspoken agent of the action is assumed to be God.[64] As Lohse notes: "The passive verb 'he was separated from' (ἐχωρίσθη) plainly intimates that God's hidden purpose may have been behind this incident which has caused Philemon so much annoyance."[65] Paul, therefore, is reframing the action of the runaway slave as something that is part of God's providential plan. Such a view of the situation would be understandable for the apostle who knew well the words of Joseph to his brothers (Gen 50,20 [NIV]: "You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good ...") and who comforted his readers with the assertion that "We know that God works all things for the good of those who love him" (Rom 8,28). The persuasive force of recasting Onesimus' flight as part of God's providential plan is great, since it suggests that any rejection by Philemon of the apostle's requests would involve a rejection not merely of the human Paul but of the divine God and his sovereign purpose.[66]

64 This interpretation of v. 15 goes back at least to the time of Chrys., Hom. in Philm. 2.

65 Lohse, Philemon (see n. 12), 202f.

66 Church, Structure (see n. 47), 28, refers to Paul's appeal to providence as "the capstone of Paul's proof ... by receiving Onesimus back as a beloved brother, he [Philemon] is completing God's designs."

V. The Letter Closing (vv. 19–25)

1. The Form and Function of the Pauline Letter Closing

At first glance Paul's letter closings may appear to have a rather simple form and structure, consisting of some final remarks thrown together in a loose and disorderly fashion. Such a view of the final sections of the apostle's letters, however, is quickly dispelled on closer analysis. For a detailed study reveals that Paul's letter closings consist of several epistolary conventions, all of which exhibit a high degree of formal and structural consistency, thereby testifying to the care with which these final sections have been constructed.[67]

The most common and uniform closing convention is the *grace benediction* (Rom 16,20; 1Cor 16,23; 2Cor 13,13; Gal 6,18; Eph 6,24; Phil 4,23; Col 4,18b; 1Thess 5,28; 2Thess 3,18; 1Tim 6,21b; 2Tim 4,22b; Tit 3,15b; Phlm 25; see also Heb 13,25; Rev 22,21). It is found in all of Paul's letter closings and, with one exception, always occupies the final position in keeping with its principal function of bringing a letter to a definitive close. A second convention typically present in a Pauline letter closing is the *peace benediction* (Rom 15,33; 16,20a; 2Cor 13,11; Gal 6,16; Phil 4,9b; 1Thess 5,23; 2Thess 3,16). This epistolary convention is distinguishable — not only from the grace benediction, but also from other benedictions or wishes found in the bodies of Paul's letters (Rom 15,5f.13; 1Thess 3,11–13; 2Thess 2,16f.; 3,5) — in terms of its content, stylistic uniformity, and location. For the peace benediction holds an earlier position in a letter closing and forms an *inclusio* with the opening salutation: The "grace to you and peace" uttered in the letter opening is echoed in chiastic fashion in the letter closing, first by the peace benediction and then by the grace benediction. Thus these two benedictions not only convey Paul's concern for the spiritual welfare of his readers but also serve to mark the boundaries of Paul's letter closings.

Between these two closing benedictions, a number of other epistolary conventions can be found. The most common of these is that of *final greetings* with such greetings serving the important function of maintaining and developing ties between Paul and the various churches as well as promoting unity and fellowship among and within congregations. The exhortation to "Greet one another with a holy kiss" (Rom 16,16a; 1Cor 16,20b; 2Cor 13,12a; 1Thess 5,26) is best understood as a sub-category of the greeting formula, which identifies the manner in which the greeting is to be given. The kiss greeting occurs in letters that reflect some degree of conflict existing within a congregation. This fact supports the notion

67 See esp. Weima, Endings (see n. 2), 77–155.

that the command of Paul for his readers to greet one another with a holy kiss served as a challenge to remove all feelings of hostility and to exhibit the unity that believers share as fellow members of the body of Christ.

Paul's letter closings also contain an *autograph* section (1Cor 16,21; Gal 6,11; Col 4,18a; 2Thess 3,17; Phlm 19) where the apostle takes over from his secretary and writes some final remarks in his own hand. Although there are only five explicit references to such autograph material, it may be postulated with confidence that Paul regularly penned part of his own letter closings himself – keeping with then-current epistolary practice. Paul uses his closing autographs to serve a variety of functions, such as stressing the authority of his words, validating in a legal fashion a promise of payment, or expressing a warmer, more personal tone. Since the autograph does not regularly begin at any given point, it cannot be assigned to any constant place within the Pauline letter closings.

Although final exhortations and warnings do not exhibit a fixed form as is characteristic of other closing conventions, *hortatory remarks* (Rom 16,17f.19b; 1Cor 16,13–22; 2Cor 13,11a; Gal 6,17; Phil 4,8–9a; 1Thess 5,25–27; Phlm 20–22) are also a regular feature of Paul's letter closings. The exhortations occur at various places in the closing sections, but typically are to be found between the greetings and the peace benediction. The closings of Paul's letters also contain other epistolary conventions, such as a doxology (Rom 16,25–27; Phil 4,20), joy expression (Rom 16,19a; 1Cor 16,17; Phil 4,10–20), a letter of commendation (Rom 16,1f.) and a postscript (1Cor 16,24). But these items do not constitute a regular feature of his letter closings.

In light of these observations, the following sequence or pattern of a typical Pauline letter closing comes into view:

(1) Peace benediction
(2) Hortatory section
(3) Greetings
  (3a) Greetings
  (3b) Kiss greeting
  (3c) Autograph greeting
(4) Grace benediction

There has been a wide-spread tendency among scholars to treat the Pauline letter closings as a mere formal abstraction, functioning simply as a means for Paul to maintain contact with the recipients of the letter. Although this is surely part of its intended purpose, it misses the more important role that the closing section plays in relation to the rest of the letter. For a careful study of the letter closings reveals that Paul commonly shapes and adapts this epistolary unit in such a way that it relates directly to – sometimes, in fact, even summarizes – the major concerns and themes taken up in the bodies of their respective letters. The letter closing, therefore, functions a lot like the thanksgiving, but in

reverse. For as the thanksgiving foreshadows the major concerns to be addressed in the body of the letter, so the closing serves to highlight and encapsulate the main points previously taken up in the body.[68] This recapitulating function of Paul's letter closings suggests that the final epistolary unit of Phlm is likewise significant for revealing the central concern(s) of Paul at work in the rest of the letter.

2. The Letter Closing of Phlm

There is little agreement among commentators as to the extent of the letter closing in Phlm. This is surprising in light of the strong evidence that this final section of the letter begins with the autograph formula in v. 19 ("I, Paul, write this with my own hand"). Every other autograph formula in Paul's letters belongs not to the body but the closing (1Cor 16,21; Gal 6,11; 2Thess 3,17; Col 4,18a) in agreement with the practice followed in the Greek papyri. It would seem most probable, therefore, that the letter closing of Phlm begins with the autograph statement of v. 19, just as in Gal where Paul takes over from his secretary to begin the closing of that letter (Gal 6,11–18). Furthermore, a hortatory section introduced by the vocative ἀδελφέ, such as is found in v. 20, is an epistolary convention that typically appears in Paul's other letter closings (Rom 16,17; 1Cor 16,15; 2Cor 13,11a; Phil 4,8–9a; 1Thess 5,25).

Still additional support for beginning the letter closing of Phlm at v. 19 comes from the fact that the letter body reaches a certain climax in vv. 17–18, where Paul moves beyond the thinly disguised request of the previous verses and explicitly challenges Philemon to receive Onesimus as he would receive the apostle himself. As Petersen notes: "He [Paul] had brought Onesimus' story to a close when he offered to repay Onesimus' debt in v. 18."[69] That Paul in this verse is reaching the end of the body section of the letter is also suggested by the presence of the concluding particle οὖν ("therefore") in v. 17 and the presence of the first imperatives in vv. 17–18, despite his professed reluctance at the beginning of the letter body to command Philemon (v. 8). Thus, even though there is little scholarly consensus on the extant of this letter's final section, there

68 In addition to Weima, Endings (see n. 2), 156–236, see also the following publications, all by the same author: Gal. 6:11–18: A Hermeneutical Key to the Galatian Letter, CTJ 28 (1993) 90–107; The Pauline Letter Closings: Analysis and Hermeneutical Significance, BBR 5 (1995) 177–198; and Sincerely Paul: The Significance of the Pauline Letter Closing, in: S.E. Porter/S.A. Adams (eds.), Paul and the Ancient Letter Form (PAST 6), Leiden 2010, 307–345.

69 Petersen, Paul (see n. 26), 75.

exists strong epistolary evidence that the letter closing of Phlm consists of vv. 19–25.[70]

A formal analysis of Phlm 19–25 reveals that this letter closing consists of the following elements:

v. 19a	Autograph formula
v. 19b	Parenthetical comment
v. 20	Hortatory section
v. 21	Confidence formula
v. 22	Apostolic *parousia*
vv. 23–24	Greetings
v. 25	Grace benediction

Paul's practice in other letter closings is also evident here, namely, the apostle skillfully shapes and adapts this epistolary unit in such a way that it recalls in various ways the key issue dealt with in the body of the letter, thereby enhancing the document's persuasive power.

2.1. Autograph Formula (v. 19a)

After making use of a secretary in the writing of the letter opening, thanksgiving and body, Paul takes over at the beginning of the letter closing at v. 19a[71] to write a personal promise of payment: "I, Paul, write this with my own hand. I will repay it." This autograph promise of repayment, therefore, echoes in an official or legally binding manner Paul's promise made at the close of the letter body (v. 18) to reimburse Philemon for any losses he may have incurred because of Onesimus' actions.

2.2. Parenthetical Comment (v. 19b)

The parenthetical comment in v. 19b involves the use of *paralipsis*,[72] a rhetorical device that allows speakers or writers to address a subject that they outwardly claim does not need to be addressed: "I do not want to mention to you that you, in fact, owe me your very self." Paul is

70 So also G.J. Bahr, Paul and Letter Writing in the First Century, CBQ 28 (1966) 465-477, here: 467f., who argues that vv. 19–25 is a summary subscription written in Paul's own hand, and E.R. Richards, The Secretary in the Letters of Paul (WUNT 2,42) Tübingen 1991, 173, 178f. This conclusion is also seriously considered by Dunn, Philemon (see n. 15), 324.

71 Some scholars view Paul as having written the whole letter by himself (so, e.g., Lightfoot, Philemon [see n. 11], 342; Roller, Formular [see n. 5], 592; J.J. Muller, The Epistles of Paul to the Philippians and to Philemon: The English Text with Introduction, Exposition and Notes (NICNT), Grand Rapids 1955, 199). There is overwhelming evidence, however, that the formula "in my own hand" marks the beginning of an autograph section (see Weima, Endings [see n. 2], 21f.). There is much less certainty on whether Paul writes just the promise of payment in his own hand or the rest of the letter closing, although parallels with Greco-Roman letters suggest that the latter is more likely.

72 See BDF § 495,1.

being heavy-handed here.[73] In gambling terms, the apostle is "cashing in his marker," namely, reminding Philemon of the huge spiritual debt that he owes the apostle such that great pressure is placed upon the slave-owner to acquiesce to the request extended to him in the body of the letter. As Barclay puts it, this rhetorical device "is here used to transform Philemon's position from creditor to debtor and so to put him under a limitless moral obligation to comply with Paul's requests."[74]

2.3. Hortatory Section (v. 20)

The hortatory section in v. 20 also recalls the main theme of the letter. The first command of v. 20a contains a volitive optative (ὀναίμην) that involves a play on Onesimus' name that is nicely captured in the translation: "Yes, brother, may I have some 'Onesimus' from you in the Lord."[75] This command, therefore, echoes in a general way the primary issue of the letter body and indeed of the letter as a whole, namely, Paul's appeal for the runaway slave, Onesimus. This command also looks back in a more specific way to the word play of v. 11, which likewise involves a pun on Onesimus' name.

The second command of v. 20b also recalls two key words employed earlier in the letter: the verb "refresh" (ἀναπαύω) and the noun "hearts" (the rarer term σπλάγχνα). In the thanksgiving section, Paul commends Philemon for being the kind of person through whom "the hearts of the saints have been refreshed" (v. 7b: τὰ σπλάγχνα τῶν ἁγίων ἀναπέπαυται). In the body of the letter, Paul not so innocently identifies the slave Onesimus with the expression "This one is my very heart" (v. 12b: τοῦτ' ἔστιν τὰ ἐμὰ σπλάγχνα). Therefore, when Paul closes the letter with the

73 Contra Wright, Paul (see n. 62), 188, who claims "There is nothing heavy-handed about it", and Dunn, Philemon (see n. 15), 340, who finds here "a certain hesitation on Paul's part to lean on Philemon too heavily."

74 Barclay, Paul (see n. 18), 171f.

75 Some have questioned the word play on Onesimus' name in v. 20a because the expression ὀναίμην was so frequently used in other literature of the day (so BDF § 488,1b; Lohse, Philemon [see n. 12], 205; Martin, Philemon [see n. 22], 167; O'Brien, Thanksgivings [see n. 32], 302; Fitzmyer, Philemon [see n. 18], 119). The fact that this expression was well known, however, in no way precludes the possibility that Paul is using it as a deliberate pun. Rather, the additional facts that (1) this word is used nowhere else in Paul's writings, (2) there are other Greek verbs that Paul could have used to express the same idea, (3) Paul creates a deliberate word play on Onesimus' name in v. 11, and (4) the whole letter exhibits a highly skillful argumentation, all suggest that the pun in v. 20a was intended (so Lightfoot, Philemon [see n. 11], 345; M.R. Vincent, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles to the Philippians and to Philemon [ICC 37], Edinburgh 1897, 191; Church, Structure [see n. 47], 30; Bruce, Philemon [see n. 18], 221; Wright, Paul [see n. 62], 189; Dunn, Philemon [see n. 15], 341; Barth/Blanke, Philemon [see n. 19], 486; J.G. Nordling, Philemon: A Theological Exposition of Sacred Scripture [ConCom], St. Louis 2004, 277).

command "Refresh my heart," he clearly is intending to echo his previous use of these key terms. The not-so-subtle fuller meaning of the elliptical command "Refresh my heart" is "Obey my appeal in the body of the letter for the one who is my heart, Onesimus."

Finally, Paul's introduction of the hortatory section with the identification of Philemon in v. 20 as "brother" may also be significant. Even though this use of the vocative is a regular feature of Paul's closing hortatory sections, it nevertheless recalls both the apostle's identification of Philemon in v. 7 as "brother" and also the key request in v. 16 that this Christian slave-owner welcome Onesimus back no longer as a slave but as a beloved "brother."

2.4. Confidence Formula (v. 21)

The confidence formula in v. 21 is yet another epistolary convention in the closing section that both recalls earlier material in the letter body and also possesses a persuasive function. Paul's confidence that Philemon will do "even beyond the things that I am saying" refers back to the implicit request made in v. 13 that Philemon send the forgiven Onesimus back to Paul to assist the apostle in carrying out his apostolic ministry while under house arrest. Paul also uses the confidence formula to exert further pressure on Philemon to agree to his implicit and explicit requests by praising him in advance for his expected obedience. As Stanley Olson observes more generally about the function of such expressions of confidence in Paul's letters:

> The evidence of a variety of parallels suggests that such expressions [of confidence] are usually included to serve a persuasive purpose. Whatever the emotion behind the expression, the function is to undergird the letter's request or admonitions by creating a sense of obligation through praise.[76]

More simply put, the confidence formula involves persuasion through praise, as positive pressure is placed upon Philemon to live up to the confidence that Paul has in him to carry out his request.

2.5. Apostolic *parousia* (v. 22)

If the confidence formula exerts positive pressure on Philemon, then the apostolic *parousia* places upon him negative pressure: "And one more thing: Prepare a guest room for me, because I hope to be restored to you in answer to your prayers" (v. 22). This statement is hardly a "throwaway remark" given "in the more relaxed mood of the conclusion."[77] Rather, as Robert Funk observed more generally about those

76 S.N. Olson, Pauline Expressions of Confidence in His Addressees, CBQ 47 (1985) 282–295, here: 289.

77 Dunn, Philemon (see n. 15), 345, 347.

places in the letter where Paul attempts to make his apostolic *parousia* or "presence" more powerfully felt by means of referring to either his future visit, the future visit of his emissary or the act of letter writing,

> ... all these [three means] are media by which Paul makes his *apostolic authority* effective in the churches. The underlying theme is therefore apostolic *parousia* — the presence of apostolic authority and power.[78]

In the context of the letter closing of Phlm, Paul's statement about an upcoming visit functions as an indirect threat:[79] The apostle will be coming to the Lycus valley and see first-hand whether Philemon has obeyed his request.[80]

2.6. Greetings (vv. 23–24)

Paul exerts still further pressure on Philemon by bringing this brief letter to a close with a greeting that mentions five people: "Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, sends greetings to you, and so do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke, my fellow workers." Even though this is a private letter in which Paul has couched both the thanksgiving and body sections in the singular, the apostle has deliberately made the situation addressed in the letter a public matter by broadening the audience in both the opening and closing sections, likely under the conviction that a request made in public is harder to turn down than one made in private. Just as Paul opens the letter by addressing it not merely to the slave-owner, Philemon, but also to Apphia, Archippus and the whole Colossian congregation (v. 2), so he also closes the letter by including the greetings of five people who, in addition to the apostle and Timothy (v. 1), know about the letter's request to Philemon and await his response. A modern analogy would be to request in a written letter a favor from someone and then include at the bottom of the correspondence "CC:", listing the names and perhaps even the official titles of other individuals to whom you have copied this request. The recipient of such a letter is fully aware of the public nature of this request and would no doubt feel the pressure that this wider knowledge brings.

The issue of Onesimus' return, therefore, is not a private matter limited to Paul and Philemon alone. Instead, it appears that Paul has delib-

78 R.W. Funk, The Apostolic *Parousia*: Form and Significance, in: W.R. Farmer/C.F.D. Moule/R.R. Niebuhr (eds.), Christian History and Interpretation: Studies Presented to John Knox, Cambridge 1967, 249–268, here: 249.

79 Contra Nordling, Philemon (see n. 75), 293, who, after examining whether Paul's anticipated visit in v. 22a is a threat or promise, concludes: "The prospect of Paul's visit, then, was not intending to be threatening to Philemon and the household."

80 Despite the threatening undertone, Paul's apostolic *parousia* here involves a more "gentle compulsion" (Lightfoot, Philemon [see n. 11], 345) than some of his other apostolic *parousias*, e.g., "What would you prefer? Shall I come to you with a rod or with love in a spirit of gentleness?" (1Cor 4,21).

erately made it a public matter so as to exert further pressure on Philemon and those with him to agree to the request of his letter. As Petersen notes:

> With this wider public cognizant of the local problem, the pressure on both Philemon and his church is magnified. The problem is not his or theirs alone. Others know about it and await its resolution.[81]

The order of the names and their accompanying titles may also be significant for increasing the persuasive force of this letter. The name of Epaphras, the pastor of the Colossian church and thus the spiritual leader over Philemon, is mentioned first in the greeting list in contrast to the closing of Col — a letter almost certainly written and delivered at the same time as Phlm — where he is mentioned fourth. Also, the title given to Epaphras — "fellow prisoner" — brings to Philemon's attention yet again the imprisoned state of Paul that the apostle has been stressing throughout the letter (vv. 1.9.10.13). Finally, the use of the title "fellow workers" to describe the remaining four people who send their greetings recalls Paul's opening identification of Philemon as one of his "fellow workers" (v. 1) and so emphasizes the solidarity and common mission that exists between the slave-owner and the rest of the apostle's co-missionaries.

VI. Conclusion

Ralph Martin, in his commentary on Phlm, states: "In a letter which is so full of nuances and hidden meanings it may well be believed that Paul's expressions are carefully contrived."[82] This tentative and understated conclusion has been amply proven to be true by the epistolary analysis carried out in this essay. Paul has skillfully adapted every major unit of this letter — the opening, thanksgiving, body and closing – so that the persuasive force of his correspondence is greatly enhanced and powerful pressure is placed upon Philemon to agree to both the explicit and implicit requests. In fact, Paul's arguments in this brief letter are at times so strong that some might be tempted to accuse the apostle of moving beyond persuasion to manipulation.

This charge, however, is unjustified for at least three reasons. First, Paul does not compromise his integrity by resorting to false praise or feigned emotions: The apostle really does give thanks to God for Philemon's love and his ability to refresh the hearts of the saints; he really is confident that Philemon will do even beyond the things that he is explicitly saying in the letter; he really does believe that this situation falls under the providence of God. Second, we ought to judge Paul's actions not by our modern, western standards but by the social norms of his day. As Dunn points out:

> We should hesitate to judge Paul harshly for lowering the tone of the appeal, as if it were emotional blackmail; on the contrary, appeal to the emotions was standard practice in Greek rhetoric.[83]

That the apostle is, in fact, employing the kind of persuasive techniques typical of that day can be seen from parallels with the often cited letter of Pliny the Younger in which he skillfully writes on behalf of a former slave who wants to be reconciled to his master.[84] Third, it must be remembered that Paul writes from a powerless position of being in prison and at a great distance away and with no legal authority to compel Philemon to act. How else can the apostle bring about what he believes to be God's will in this difficult situation other than by making use of all the persuasive means available to him? What options did he have other than "pulling out all the stops, including combining references to persuasion and command and playing the emotion card repeatedly, to give [his] discourse the necessary weight to achieve its goal"?[85]

81 Petersen, Paul (see n. 26), 100 (also p. 87 n. 85); see also Wickert, Philemonbrief (see n. 13), 230–238.

82 Martin, Philemon (see n. 22), 165f.

83 Dunn, Philemon (see n. 15), 327. So also Witherington, Philemon (see n. 18), 87, who comments:

> If this [Paul's techniques of persuasion] makes us uncomfortable because it seems manipulative by modern standards, it is because we do not live in the kind of social and rhetorical environment where Paul did, where this kind of discourse was not only commonplace but actually relished and applauded ...

84 Ep. 9.21:

> C. Pliny to Sabinianus, Greetings. Your freedman, whom you had mentioned as having displeased you, has come to me; he threw himself at my feet and clung to them as he could have to yours. He cried much, begged constantly, even with much silence; in short, he has convinced me that he repents of what he did. I truly believe that he is reformed, because he recognizes that he has been delinquent. You are angry, I know, and rightly so, as I also recognize; but clemency wins the highest praise when the reason for anger is more righteous. You once had affection for (this) human being, and, I hope, you will have it again. Meanwhile it suffices that you let me prevail upon you. Should he again incur your displeasure, you will have so much more reason to be angry, as you give in now. Allow somewhat for his youth, for his tears, and for your own indulgent conduct. Do not antagonize him, lest you antagonize yourself at the same time; for when a man of your mildness is angry, you will be antagonizing yourself. I fear that, in joining my entreaties to his, I may seem rather to compel than to request (you to forgive him). Nevertheless, I shall join them so much more fully and unreservedly, because I have sharply and severely reproved him, positively threatening never to entreat again on his behalf. Although I said this to him, who should become more fearful (of offending), I do not say it to you. I may perhaps have occasion to entreat you again and obtain your forgiveness, but may it be such that it will be proper for me to intercede and you to pardon. Farewell. (Translation by Fitzmyer, Philemon [see n. 18], 21f.)

85 Witherington, Philemon (see n. 18), 87.

Our epistolary analysis of Phlm has clearly demonstrated the great care and impressive skill with which Paul has constructed this letter so as to enhance the document's overall persuasive power. As such, this essay has illustrated the exegetical benefits that an epistolary analysis approach has in understanding not just this brief letter but the potential this form-critical method has for understanding the remaining Pauline letters as well. Modern interpreters of the apostle's correspondence need to take much more seriously the truth that the rhetoric-loving Corinthians grudgingly admitted about Paul, namely, "His letters are weighty and strong" (2Cor 10,10).[86]

86 I want to thank Todd D. Still for his careful reading and helpful response to an earlier draft of this essay.

Affects and Emotions in the Rhetoric of Paul's Letter to Philemon: A Rhetorical-Psychological Interpretation

PETER LAMPE

I. Introduction

Quintilian calls the method of emotionalising the most effective means of conquering an audience.[1]

> There is some advantage to be gained by pleasing our audience and a great deal by stirring their emotions (Inst. 5.8.3).
> As soon as they begin to be angry, to feel favourably disposed, to hate or to pity, they begin to take a personal interest in the case ...; the judge, when overcome by his emotions, abandons all attempt to enquire into the truth of the arguments, is swept along by the tide of passion and yields himself unquestioning to the torrent (6.2.6; see 6.2.3; 12.10.62).
> Pity (*miseratio*) alone may move even a strict judge (4.1.14).[2]

1 Inst. 6.2.2,5f.; 5.8.3; 4.1.14; 3.5.2; etc. (The English translations of Quintilian are based on the Latin text according to H. Rahn [ed.], M. Fabii Quintiliani Institutionis Oratoriae Libri XII — Ausbildung des Redners: 12 Bücher [TzF 2–3], Darmstadt 1972.)

2 Quintilian's treatment of the affects is representative of contemporary rhetoric: Affects are used to influence the audience. Aristotle's teaching, however, was more ambitious. He integrated the affects into an overarching anthropological construct, in which they are connected with both the non-rational sector of willpower, of wanting and aspiring, and with the sector of the intellect. They bridge both sectors and thus unify the human being (Rh. 2.1–11). Furthermore, Aristotle analyzed the different ways in which the affects work in the context of various age groups, as well as in different social groups. See also E. Papadimitriou, Ethische und psychologische Grundlagen der aristotelischen Rhetorik (EHS.Ph 43), Frankfurt etc. 1977, 195–229. For a discussion of psychological insights found in Quintilian's Institutio, see P. Lampe, Psychologische Einsichten Quintilians in der Institutio Oratoria, NTS 52 (2006) 533–554; reprinted in: G. Theißen/P. v. Gemünden (eds.), Erkennen und Erleben: Beiträge zur psychologischen Erforschung des frühen Christentums, Gütersloh 2007, 209–230, and the English version entitled "Quintilian's Psychological Insights in His *Institutio Oratoria*" in: P. Sampley/P. Lampe (eds.), Paul and Rhetoric, London 2010, 180–199. With regard to the affects found in ancient Jewish and early Christian literature, see, e.g., P. v. Gemünden, Die urchristliche Taufe und der Umgang mit den Affekten, in: J. Assmann/G.G. Stroumsa (eds.), Transformations of the Inner Self in Ancient Religions (SHR 83), Leiden 1999, 115–136; eadem, Einsicht, Affekt und Verhalten: Überlegungen zur Anthropologie des Jakobusbriefes, in: P. v. Gemünden/M. Konradt/G. Theißen (eds.), Der Jakobusbrief: Beiträge zur Rehabilitierung der "strohernen Epistel" (BVB 3), Münster 2003, 83–96; eadem, Die Wertung des Zorns im Jakobusbrief auf dem Hintergrund des antiken Kontexts und seine Einordnung, in: ibid., 97–119;

By using the word τὰ σπλάγχνα three times in Phlm (vv. 7.12.20) – on two occasions in prominent places, namely at the beginning and at the end of the letter – Paul directly refers to his and other Christians' innermost feelings. Indeed, the situation underlying the letter is loaded with conflicting emotions that Paul can exploit, or which he at least needs to bear in mind in the writing of his letter.

(a) First of all, there is Philemon's *anger*. He is angry with his slave, who has been "useless" to him (v. 11) because of some wrongdoing and damage that needs to be compensated for (ἀδικεῖν, ὀφείλειν, ἀποτίνειν [vv. 18–19]). We do not know precisely what this damage was.

(1.) The damage probably did not only lie in the fact that Onesimus, "for a short time" (πρὸς ὥραν [v. 15]), had left the house without Philemon's consent, and had therefore missed work or possibly even incurred expenses resulting from a search.

(1.1.) Neither Paul nor Onesimus himself considered the latter's status to be that of a runaway slave. This was not the nature of his wrongdoing. As a runaway slave, Onesimus would have been hunted down; for a pagan slave, the prison of a Christian friend of the master would have been a terrible hiding place. Secondly, returning a runaway slave was a public act; Paul did not have the authority to simply send back such a slave. Fugitives had to be handed over to public officials, who kept them under guard before they were returned to their masters.[3]

(1.2.) P. Arzt-Grabner[4] has taken the wordplay implicit in the use of the term "useless", which refers to Onesimus' name ("useful") in v. 11, as the basis for reconstructing the damage caused by Onesimus' misbehaviour. According to Arzt-Grabner, Onesimus was a "useless" stray slave, an *erro*, who merely wished to take a short vacation from work before returning home. However, a rhetorical wordplay, based on the

eadem, La gestion de la colère et de l'agression dans l'Antiquité et dans le sermon sur la montagne, Henoch 25 (2003) 19–45; eadem, Der Affekt der ἐπιθυμία und der νόμος: Affektkontrolle und soziale Identitätsbildung im 4. Makkabäerbuch mit einem Ausblick auf den Römerbrief, in: D. Sänger/M. Konradt (eds.), Das Gesetz im frühen Judentum und im Neuen Testament: Festschrift für Christoph Burchard zum 75. Geburtstag (NTOA 57), Göttingen/Fribourg 2006, 55–74; eadem, Affekte und Affektkontrolle im antiken Judentum und Urchristentum, in: G. Theißen/P. v. Gemünden (eds.), Erkennen und Erleben: Beiträge zur psychologischen Erforschung des frühen Christentums, Gütersloh 2007, 249–270; eadem, La culture des passions à l'époque du Nouveau Testament: une contribution théologique et psychologique, ETR 70 (1995) 335–348; eadem, La femme passionnelle et l'homme rationnel? Une chapître de psychologique historique, Bib. 78 (1997) 457–480; eadem, Methodische Überlegungen zur historischen Psychologie exemplifiziert am Themenkomplex der Trauer, EvTh 65 (2005) 86–102.

3 See P. Arzt-Grabner, Onesimus *erro*: Zur Vorgeschichte des Philemonbriefes, ZNW 95 (2004) 131–143, here: 140f.; idem, Philemon (PKNT 1), Göttingen 2003, 105–108, and Dig. 11.4.1.1–8.

4 See Arzt-Grabner, Onesimus (see n. 3), 141–143.

term "useless", should not comprise the main basis for reconstructing Onesimus' misbehaviour. Moreover, why would a pagan slave enjoying vagrancy decide to visit a Christian friend of his master in a prison? Arzt-Grabner[5] speculates that a member of the Christian community in the city of Paul's imprisonment must have taken Onesimus to visit Paul in jail. But why would a pagan vagabond consent to this? *The erro theory does not adequately explain why Onesimus met up with Paul.*[6] Did the slave suddenly experience pangs of *remorse* about missing work and *fear* of his master, and therefore decide that he needed help from this Christian apostle? What would have triggered such a sudden turnaround? A concrete cause would have to be postulated. The text does not indicate one.

(2.) I myself have proposed a different solution.[7] Some unknown material damage (ἀδικεῖν, ὀφείλειν, ἀποτίνειν [vv. 18–19]) *in addition to* the absence without leave, had triggered Philemon's anger (possibly the slave had broken something). When Onesimus left the house, he already knew that he needed an intercessor; in fact, he only left the house in order to find such an advocate. Roman legal texts dating back to the first and second centuries, as well as a text by Pliny (Epist. 9.21,24), depict a scenario that exactly matches the situation underlying the Letter to Philemon: A slave who had a conflict with his master could go to a third person, ideally a friend of his master, in order to win this person over as a mediator and intercessor in the conflict. Nobody considered such slaves to be runaway or stray slaves. This scenario offers a plausible explanation as to why the pagan Onesimus met up with the Christian apostle in prison.

The relevant first- and second-century juridical texts are quoted in Dig. 21.1.17.4 (Proculus, the legal scholar, a contemporary of the apostle Paul); Dig. 21.1.17.5 (Pliny's contemporary Vivianus); Dig. 21.1.43.1 (the

5 See P. Arzt-Grabner, How to Deal with Onesimus? Paul's Solution within the Frame of Ancient Legal and Documentary Sources, pp. 113–142, here: 134f., in this volume.

6 R.P. Martin, Colossians and Philemon (NCeB), London 1974, 145, speculates that Onesimus might have come on an errand to Paul and simply overstayed his time. But why did Paul not mention this? Such a circumstance would have added weight to his argument. Especially at the end of v. 18, a statement pointing out that "it is exclusively my fault; I converted him and therefore he stayed longer" would have been most helpful in furthering Paul's argument. As an *argumentum e silentio*, however, this objection against Martin is less significant than the following: The opposition of ποτέ and νυνί in v. 11 disproves that Onesimus' wrongdoing comprises a current ("now") "overstaying" in Paul's prison. The transgression is ποτέ and not νυνί.

7 P. Lampe, Keine "Sklavenflucht" des Onesimus, ZNW 76 (1985) 135–137; idem, Der Brief an Philemon, in: N. Walter/E. Reinmuth/P. Lampe, Die Briefe an die Philipper, Thessalonicher und an Philemon (NTD 8/2), Göttingen 1998, 203–232.

legal scholar Paulus, 2nd/3rd cent. CE); see also Dig. 21.1.17.12 (Labeo and Caelius, 1st cent. CE).

J.A. Harrill objected that these texts reflect only academic discussions among jurists in far-way Rome, and that these discussions did not have any impact on the provinces. Pliny's text, and also several provincial papyri and wax tablets dating back to the first century and first half of the second century, however, disprove the theory that these Roman jurists merely played academic games.[8] Dig. 21.1, in which these legal authors are quoted, focuses on the Edict of the Curule Aediles, which dates back to Republican times, and which stipulated that slave traders had to provide information about the slaves' past on the market, and specifically, inter alia, whether they had ever run away or strayed before. This rule was followed in the practice of the markets during imperial times, as demonstrated expressis verbis in the following eleven texts, both Latin and Greek, dating back to the time period of 38–154 CE: in the first-century (38 CE) wax tablet T.Sulpicii 43 from Italy ("not a *fugitive, erro* et cetera according to the Edict of the Curule Aediles"); similarly the first-century (before 63/64 CE; 47 CE) tablets T.Hercul. 60 and 62 from Italy; the second-century (139 CE; 142 CE) wax tablets T. Dacia 6–7 from Dacia; the second-century (142 CE; 151 CE) papyri P. Turner 22 and BGU III 887 from Pamphylia; the second-century (154 CE) papyrus SB III 6016 from Egypt; as well as Gell. 4.2.1; Hor., Epist. 2.2.1–19; and Dig. 21.1.48.3f. (Pomponius 23 ad Sabinum; 2nd cent.). Thus, the legal authors quoted above did not play hair-splitting academic games. Their discussions about the regulations of the aediles were of consequence for the markets all over the empire. Slave traders had to know exactly who needed to be marked as a former fugitive or an *erro*. This directly impacted on the market value of the slaves; traders were pleased about every slave that they did not have to label as a "fugitive".

Concerning my analysis of the social and legal situation behind Phlm, Arzt-Grabner[9] objects that Paul, similarly to Pliny in Epist. 9.21, 24, would have expressly mentioned that Onesimus had come to him to ask for intercession. According to Arzt-Grabner, this would have been a strong argument. But does the obvious need to be pointed out? If Onesimus had caused some damage in Philemon's household and subsequently left, then returning with a placating and pleading letter from Paul, it would have been crystal clear to Philemon that Onesimus had

8 Contra J.A. Harrill, Using the Roman Jurists to Interpret Philemon: A Response to Peter Lampe, ZNW 90 (1999) 135–138. The papyri listed below in this paragraph are helpfully discussed in more detail by Arzt-Grabner elsewhere in this volume.

9 See Arzt-Grabner, Solution (see n. 5), 134.

asked for intercession, just as other slaves did in such a situation. There was no need to mention this. *Argumenta e silentio* do not go far.

To sum up, Onesimus, in all likelihood, had caused some material damage, and anticipated a burst of anger by his master. He therefore went to the apostle, a friend of Philemon (Phlm 1.6.17), in order to win Paul over as an advocate and mediator in the conflict. Instead of running away, he wanted to return home and restore peace.

In which ever way the specifics of the social and legal situation are reconstructed, it remains true that the psychological situation is loaded with

(a) *anger* on Philemon's part, and correspondingly with

(b) *fear* of the master on the slave's part.

(c) At the same time, Onesimus has *trust* in the apostle that he will be a good mediator in the conflict. Otherwise he would not have tried to find Paul or consented to the writing of a mediating letter.

(d) Fourthly, Paul *loves* Philemon (ἀγάπη [vv. 1.9]) and feels *thankfulness* (εὐχαριστῶ [v. 4]), "much *joy*" (χαρά), "*comfort and encouragement*" (παράκλησις) because of him (vv. 5.7). Philemon, as Paul emphasises in the *captatio benevolentiae* at the beginning (vv. 4–7, *prooemium*), has shown so much "love" (ἀγάπη [twice]) and "faithfulness" (πίστις) toward Christ and "all the saints" that the word has spread and Paul has heard all about it (vv. 5.7). Because of Philemon, the "innermost selves and feelings" (τὰ σπλάγχνα) of "the saints" are refreshed (v. 7). The hyperbolic use of παντ-, three times in vv. 4–6, indicates the intensity of Paul's positive feelings towards Philemon.

(e) Fifthly, Paul is in prison (vv. 1.9.10.13.22[10].23), and is therefore a possible object of *pity*. The mentioning of his old age (v. 9) is to be read along the same lines.[11]

10 χαρίζομαι implies his release from prison.

11 There is no indication that the mentioning of Paul's old age was meant as a reminder of his authority. In v. 9b, "old" is positioned in a parallelism to "prisoner" ("Although I have all fearlessness in Christ to command you to do what is right, I rather, for the sake of love, ask you, because I am such a person as Paul, an old man, but now also a prisoner of Christ Jesus"). Syntactically, both old age and imprisonment are connected with the self-humbling gesture expressed in παρακαλεῖν, in v. 9a, and not with παρρησίαν ἔχων ἐπιτάσσειν in v. 8, which itself, as an adversative participial phrase, is only subordinate to παρακαλῶ (with regard to παρακαλῶ, see n. 26, below). Whenever Paul wishes to highlight his authority, he never points to his old age, but to his apostleship, his Damascus experience, his union with Christ (1Cor 9,1f.; 5,4), etc.; at the time of the writing of 1Cor, he was not much older than when he wrote Phlm. Contra G.J. Steyn, Some Figures of Style in the Epistle to Philemon: Their Contribution towards the Persuasive Nature of the Epistle, EkklPh 77 (1995) 64–80, here: 72, who takes both imprisonment for Christ and old age as authority attributes.

(f) Sixthly, Philemon presumably feels *respect*, if not *admiration* for Paul. Paul is the apostle and founder of Christian congregations and also converted Philemon himself to Christianity (v. 19b).

(g) Therefore, seventhly, Philemon owes something to Paul (vv. 19b and 13[12]) and most probably feels *indebtedness*, if not *thankfulness*, towards Paul. Before Paul begins to write the letter, their relationship is clearly hierarchical, as vv. 13[10].8–9[13].19b.21[14].22[15] demonstrate. It is the relationship of a patron to his dependant, in which the dependant is indebted to the patron and is expected to show obedience (v. 21) and respect, if not admiration and thankfulness. Paul's authority over Philemon is even guaranteed by Christ himself, as v. 8a subtly implies.

(h) Eighthly, Philemon's *honour and shame* will play a role in the epistolary communication between Paul, Timothy, Onesimus, Epaphras, Mark, Aristarchos, Demas, and Luke on the senders' side, and Philemon, Apphia, Archippos, and Philemon's whole house church in Colossae on the recipients' side.

(i) Thus — ninthly — there are at least a dozen people involved in this communication, who know about it and who are *curious* about its outcome. The letter is not a private matter between Paul, Onesimus, and Philemon. In other words, as soon as a group of people are involved,[16] who feel curiosity and suspense with regard to the conflict's ending, the honour and shame of the person who is expected to alter his behaviour or attitude are at stake.

II. Rhetorical Aggression Management

All of the above mentioned feelings are "in the air", as it were, at the onset of the communication. How does Paul navigate them in the letter? His main rhetorical task is to calm Philemon's reactive aggression toward Onesimus and to prevent him from seeking revenge for his pagan slave's misbehaviour. Instead, Philemon must be persuaded to welcome Onesimus back as a Christian brother and to receive him with love; Philemon needs to "swallow" his anger. Not an easy task!

As Paul sits down to write, the psychological constellation is as follows: As other slaves of the time do when they are in severe conflict

12 ὑπὲρ σοῦ μοι διακονῇ ("service to me in your place"). Philemon is morally obligated to "serve" Paul.

13 πολλὴν ἐν Χριστῷ παρρησίαν ἔχων ἐπιτάσσειν σοι.

14 ὑπακοῇ σου.

15 An unabashed imperative! See also the imperatives in vv. 17.18.20.

16 Not to mention Christ himself, who is a witness of Philemon's behaviour as well. Philemon has to act in the presence of Christ: vv. 6.20.25.

with their masters,[17] Onesimus has sought refuge with a friend of his master. In this way, slaves place an efficient protective wall between themselves and the anger of their masters. Onesimus, the object of Philemon's reactive aggression, is shielded by Paul, an object of Philemon's positive feelings. Having converted Onesimus in the meantime, Paul gladly takes on the role of mediator. In his letter, he rhetorically presents us with a classic example of the restraint of aggression by diverting Philemon's reactive aggression towards replacement objects. The change of objects is proposed in two steps.

(1.) First, in Phlm 12.16–18, Paul rhetorically steers Philemon's aggression away from Onesimus — toward himself. "I am sending him back to you, *him*, that is, *my* inmost self" (αὐτόν, τοῦτ' ἔστιν τὰ ἐμὰ σπλάγχνα [v. 12]).[18] "Receive *him* like *me*" (αὐτὸν ὡς ἐμέ [v. 17]). What *he* owes you, "charge it to *my* account" (εἰ δέ τι ἠδίκησέν σε ἢ ὀφείλει, τοῦτο ἐμοὶ ἐλλόγα [v. 18]). By stepping in front of the slave, as it were, Paul closely identifies with him.[19] Paul and Onesimus are "beloved brothers" now (v. 16); that is, what affects one of them touches the other as well. The message is clear: If you, Philemon, choose to vent your anger on Onesimus, you will be venting it on me. I offer myself as the replacement object for your avenging aggression. In v. 19, Paul, with his own hand, writes a legally binding note taking over Onesimus' debt. Philemon technically could take this paper to court and force Paul to pay.

However, all this is merely rhetorical. Now that Paul has offered himself as a replacement object, Philemon still cannot vent his anger. Paul, of course, is the last person onto whom he could unload aggression — for several reasons that Paul makes sure to mention. Already at the end of v. 19, he reminds Philemon that he is in debt to Paul, and not vice versa. Philemon even owes Paul service (v. 13), since the apostle converted him to Christ. Furthermore, Paul is an apostle. In the light of vv. 8–9.13.19b.21.22, we have already seen that their relationship so far has clearly been hierarchical and that Philemon has friendly (v. 17) feelings toward Paul (see [f]–[g] above). Paul deploys these emotions artfully. It is more than clear that Philemon could never vent aggression onto Paul — all the more since the apostle is an old man and has already been humbled by being imprisoned and suffering for Christ's sake.

17 See the juridical texts referred to above.

18 τοῦτ' ἔστιν = "id est/that is". See, e.g., Rom 7,18; 9,8; 10,6–8; Acts 1,19; 19,4; Matt 27,46; Mark 7,2.

19 See also Paul's emphasis on his imprisonment (see above): He is not free, just like the slave Onesimus. More importantly, in v. 20, Philemon's envisaged loving reacceptance of *Onesimus* will be a "benefit" for *Paul* and a "refreshment" for *Paul's* "innermost self". In v. 10, finally, Onesimus is called a "child" of Paul.

(2.) What is the solution? Paul asks Philemon to renounce any compensation for the material loss that he has suffered through Onesimus' wrongdoing. Philemon is expected to swallow his anger and receive both Onesimus (v. 16), and a little later also Paul (v. 22), with love. In terms of psychological categories: Paul proposes a double change of object. From the object "Onesimus", he diverts Philemon's reactive aggression onto himself — and from thence onto Philemon himself. Philemon is expected to *internalise* the aggression that he may not vent on the external world.

Sigmund Freud, in a 1932 letter to Albert Einstein, described the diversion of aggression onto less dangerous objects as an important means of avoiding wars.[20] Numerous empirical-psychological studies, also of cross-cultural nature, ever since have illustrated the phenomenon of replacing objects of aggression and of internalising aggression.[21] Such studies show, for example, that extremely stringent moral standards are developed by people who internalise the aggression that they cannot vent on the outside world. Other internalising subjects develop a high physical and psychological pain tolerance; or they burden themselves with hard physical exercise or with self-sacrificing work for the community. In extreme cases, they even ritually maim themselves. These examples illustrate the ways in which aggression can be directed against the subjects themselves.

Philemon, of course, does not have to go as far as the subjects in the mentioned extreme examples. Renouncing any compensation (v. 19), absorbing the damage, and developing love for the initial object of reactive aggression (vv. 19 and 16) — these are the bitter pills that Paul offers to Philemon to swallow. Nothing drastic; but difficult enough.

In 1Cor 6, Paul extends a similar recommendation to those who have suffered material loss through fellow Christians and who wish to take revenge by suing them in a pagan court. One piece of advice that

20 S. Freud, Warum Krieg? Brief an A. Einstein vom Sept. 1932, in: A. Mitscherlich et al. (eds.), S. Freud, Studienausgabe 9: Fragen der Gesellschaft/Ursprünge der Religion (FTB 7309), Frankfurt/Main 1982, 275–286.

21 I will only mention a few examples from the history of relevant research in this regard: E. Jacobson's classical study on political prisoners: Observations on the Psychological Effect of Imprisonment on Female Political Prisoners, in: K.R. Eissler et al. (eds.), Searchlights on Delinquency: New Psychoanalytic Studies. Dedicated to August Aichhorn, on the Occasion of His 70th Birthday July 27, 1948, New York 1949, 341–368, esp. 363ff.; C. Klüwer, Die Delinquenten und ihre Behandlungsmöglichkeiten, in: D. Eicke (ed.), Tiefenpsychologie 2: Neue Wege der Psychoanalyse, Psychoanalyse der Gesellschaft, Die psychoanalytische Bewegung, Weinheim/Basel 1982, 23–59, esp. 56; E. Lürßen, Das Suchtproblem in neuerer psychoanalytischer Sicht, in: ibid., 101–130, esp. 113; H. Henseler, Der psychoanalytische Beitrag zum Suizidproblem, in: ibid., 87–100, esp. 88. For cross-cultural research, see F. v. Boxberg, Analytische Feldforschungen, in: ibid., 366–395, esp. 386f.

Paul offers is that those Corinthians should tone down the reaction by asking a Christian mediator to help to settle the conflict. However, the solution most favoured by Paul is that of totally renouncing one's right to revenge, refraining from venting reactive aggression, and rather suffering the loss (vv. 6–7) — which would be another example of the internalisation of aggression.[22]

As if he wished to confirm the correlation between the *internalisation of aggression* and the adherence to *strict moral standards*, as mentioned above, Paul, in the immediate context (1Cor 6,9–11.18–20),[23] goes on to enumerate several rigorous rules of the Christian lifestyle. There seems to be a connection between the ethical rigour of Pauline Christianity and its advocacy of non-aggressive social relationships. Or, in other words, rigorous early Christian moral standards, especially concerning sexuality, and frequent internalisation of aggression, that is, a low level of vented aggression in social relations, seem to go hand in hand,[24] as modern psychology has also observed.

How one should interpret this correlation is another question. One could simply argue that the aggression internalisation is just another one of the strict norms that early Christians followed; and that all of these norms need to be considered to be on the same level and were *therefore* put side by side in the early Christian texts. Freud, however, interpreted strict moral behaviour as a *result* of the diversion of aggression towards one's own self as the replacement object. He thus tried to provide at least one explanation for the origin of the human conscience. In short, according to him, internalisation of aggression leads to a strict conscience which causes human beings to practise aggression against themselves; the *result* is strict moral behaviour.[25] Today, one certainly

22 See also Matt 5,43–48 (love of one's enemy) and 5,38f. (vengeful anger should not be vented, and thus vicious cycles of retaliating violence should be halted).

23 With regard to these high, often tendentiously ascetic standards in Pauline circles, see also 1Cor 5,9–13; 7,1–2a.7f.11.26–35.37f.40; 9,12.15.18.25.27; 10,6.8; 2Cor 5,4.8; 6,6; 7,1; 1Thess 4,3–8; Gal 5,13–26; Rom 1,24–27.29; 6,4.6.12.19; 7,5f.; 8,13; 12,1f.; 13,13f.; Col 3,5.

24 In a negative way, the same correlation is exemplified by misbehaving Corinthians who on the one hand are aggressive (1Cor 3,3) and on the other hand are reluctant to excommunicate the libertine fellow Christian of 1Cor 5. Positively — as in 1Cor 6 — Paul places both motifs, a low level of vented aggression and a high moral standard (esp. a carefully controlled sexuality), side by side in 1Thess 3,12; 5,15; 4,9–12 vs. 4,3–8, and also in Gal 5,13c–15.20.22f.26; 6,1 vs. 5,13b.16.19.21.23f. In both cases, the two strings of texts are tightly woven together. The same contextual closeness of the motifs can be observed in Col 3,5 vs. 3,8.12f., and in 2Cor 6,6; 12,20 vs. 12,21. See also Phil 1,9; Rom 1,29–31 vs. 1,24.26; as well as Rom 13,8b.9fin vs. 13,9; Rom 13,13a vs. 13,13b; and Matt 5,39–41.44–48 vs. the high moral standards of the remaining part of the Sermon on the Mount.

25 See S. Freud, Das Unbehagen in der Kultur, in: idem, Studienausgabe 9 (see n. 20), 191–270, esp. 250–256; idem, Warum Krieg?, in: ibid., 275–286, esp. 286; see also

has to discount Freud's concept of aggression as a "drive". But does this automatically disprove the rest of the hypothesis? This problem is beyond the scope of this article.

III. Further Rhetorical Means Involving Emotions in the Letter to Philemon

Paul's rhetorical goal is clear, as well as part of his strategy. But how does he spell out the details? Paul's biggest trump card is, of course, the fact that Onesimus has become a Christian in the meantime, and therefore needs to be looked at with the new eyes of a brother, not those of a slave's master. But there are additional, more subtle motivations for Philemon to follow the path of aggression management that Paul lays out for him and thus to receive Onesimus back with love.

1. Rhetorical Renouncement of Status and Reversal of Roles

Although Paul clearly stands hierarchically above Philemon (see above) and could give him orders (Phlm 8.14), he only subtly uses this authority — with a velvet glove. The weight of his authority is certainly present in the background, but it is well cushioned. How does Paul achieve this? Rhetorically, he does the opposite of being "bossy". Out of "love" (v. 9), he renounces the status of the superior, by repeatedly, if not monotonously, using egalitarian terms to describe his relationship with Philemon (brother [vv. 1.7.20]; co-worker [v. 1]; co-partner [v. 17]). Rhetorically he even puts himself into a position in which he is indebted to Philemon (v. 19b). He asks and petitions (παρακαλῶ, even twice [vv. 9–10]) — as if he were the dependant and Philemon the patron![26] This reversal of roles, almost a rhetorical "prostration", was designed to have its effect.[27] On receipt of the letter, Philemon probably felt embarrassed and hastened to comply with Paul's petition. In any case, this would have been the only way to avert the "shame" that was inherent in the situation craftily created by Paul, and to restore the "honour" of both the "real" patron and the "real" dependant, who in the social system was expected to be loyal to his patron.[28]

idem, Das ökonomische Problem des Masochismus, in: A. Mitscherlich et al. (eds.), S. Freud, Studienausgabe 3: Psychologie des Unbewußten (FTB 7303), Frankfurt/Main 1982, 339–354, esp. 353f.

26 The phrase διὰ τὴν ἀγάπην μᾶλλον in v. 9 underscores that παρακαλῶ is semantically far removed from ἐπιτάσσειν in v. 8. In addition, μᾶλλον indicates that παρρησίαν ἔχων ἐπιτάσσειν is an *adversative* participial construction.

27 See also 1Cor 9,19 (2Cor 4,5): Paul deliberately uses self-humiliation as a strategy to win over audiences.

28 The open renouncement of a strong argumentative trump ("I could command you" [v. 8]) is a rhetorical *antiphrasis*, as Steyn, Figures (see n. 11), 72, rightly points out.

At the same time, Paul's rhetorical self-humiliation exemplifies something that Philemon is expected to imitate. When, in the near future, Onesimus is back in Colossae, Philemon, too, will be expected to renounce the status of the superior and become a brother to his formerly pagan slave. It is as if Paul, between the lines, were repeating the "be an imitator of me!" found in 1Cor 4,16; 11,1; Phil 3,17 (1Cor 9; 1Thess 1,6; 2,14).

2. Freedom of the Audience

Paul's renouncement of status and of the right to give orders furthermore implies that he is leaving Philemon some freedom to make his own decisions. Philemon has to work out for himself what exactly "the good" (τὸ ἀγαθόν) is that he is expected to do (Phlm 6.14); Paul deliberately does not spell it out. On the one hand, what does Paul mean by saying that he could use Onesimus as another helper in Ephesus (v. 13, see vv. 23f.)? Does he mean that Philemon should send Onesimus back to Ephesus to serve Paul?

> If Col 4,9 can be trusted, Philemon indeed sent Onesimus back to Paul — and thus gave up some of his power over his servant, hurting his own interests by not only renouncing recompensation for the damage done by Onesimus, but also by doing without Onesimus work in his household. It is this "hurt" that helps individuals to internalise the aggression that they cannot vent on the outside world (see above). If Philemon sent Onesimus back to serve the church then he can be compared to other internalising subjects who develop a higher pain tolerance than usual or burden themselves with self-sacrifices for the community. The psychological studies quoted above illustrate such ways in which aggression can be directed against the subjects themselves and thus overcome.

On the other hand, what is specifically implied by the exhortation to receive Onesimus as a brother with love? Does it even imply freeing this slave? The καὶ ἐν σαρκὶ(!) καὶ ἐν κυρίῳ in v. 16[29] may comprise a strong hint. V. 21, a little later, may constitute another one: "I am writing to you, knowing that you will do even *more* than I say." To ask for manumission was not such an excessive demand; normally slaves could count on being manumitted as they grew older, at the latest in their 30s.[30] But Paul deliberately leaves all options open. Psychologically, this is wise. People who are not directly pushed, but only subtly guided by the orator, comply much better and offer less opposition. Paul knows this; Quintilian knows this. In v. 14, the apostle even explains his tactic in plain language: "I preferred to do nothing without your *consent* in

29 See also ὑπὲρ δοῦλον in v. 16.

30 This can be inferred on the basis of the juridical and epigraphic sources; see G. Alföldy, Die Freilassung von Sklaven und die Struktur der Sklaverei der römischen Kaiserzeit, in: H. Schneider (ed.), Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte der römischen Kaiserzeit (WdF 552), Darmstadt 1981, 336–371, esp. 359.

order that your goodness might *not be by compulsion but of your own free will*."[31]

A reading of Quintilian validates Paul's approach as a sound rhetorical method. A hearer "believes in what he thinks he has found out for himself" (ei, quod a se inventum existimat, credat [Inst. 9.2.71 et al.]). He "takes pleasure in detecting the (merely insinuated, not expressly spelled out) meanings, applauds his own cleverness, and while the other one still speaks he compliments himself" (gaudet intelligere, et favet ingenio suo et alio dicente se laudet [Inst. 9.2.78]).

By leaving the addressee some freedom of decision,[32] the speaker helps him to keep face ("honour") and thereby increases the likelihood of winning a compliant listener.

3. Honour and Shame in the Light of Group Norms

In v. 8 Paul reminds Philemon that the renunciation of reactive aggression is a Christian group norm, something that is a "duty" (τὸ ἀνῆκον).[33] In other words, it would be embarrassing for Philemon to deviate from this collective standard. The fellow Christians who will observe Philemon's reactions on receipt of the letter would not understand such a deviation. His honour is at stake, his excellent reputation, of which Paul cleverly reminds both him and the other readers (vv. 4–7).

4. Mild Provocation

Phlm 17 and 18 are two parallel εἰ clauses, both full of rhetorical ruse. They are almost teasing, toying with Philemon's feelings, in order to stir him up and nudge him in the direction in which Paul wants him to move.

31 According to J.P. Heil, The Chiastic Structure and Meaning of Paul's Letter to Philemon, Bib. 82 (2001) 178–206, who tries to find a chiastic structure in the letter, v. 14 can even be regarded as the centre and pivotal point of the entire letter. Heil, however, too one-sidedly interprets the wishful thinking of v. 13 as the objective of the letter. In fact, Paul aims at much more in this letter; v. 13 does not reflect its only purpose.

32 See also 1Cor 6,1–11: Paul gives the Corinthians two options. The same is true in 1Cor 7: Asceticism represents only one option among other legitimate ones.

33 See also ἀγαθοῦ τοῦ ἐν ἡμῖν εἰς Χριστόν in v. 6: "good" does not refer to what is deemed good in general, but to what applies specifically in the context of the Christian congregations. The fact that the renunciation of reactive aggression represents a group norm is also confirmed in 1Thess 5,15, where the congregation as a whole is exhorted to be watchful that nobody "repays evil for evil". Furthermore, see the texts referred to in n. 22 and n. 24.

εἰ οὖν με ἔχεις κοινωνόν, προσλαβοῦ αὐτὸν ὡς ἐμέ.
If you consider me a co-partner (and I leave the question open as to whether or not you do),[34] welcome him as you would welcome me!

Paul teasingly questions their partnership, although in reality he does not doubt it. Philemon's reaction can only be: "Of course, we are co-workers and partners in Christ's mission. How can you doubt it? I will prove it to you!" "But then," Paul implies, "in that case you have to accept the consequence, namely that you must receive Onesimus just as you would receive me, now that he is a fellow-Christian." Likewise v. 18:

εἰ δέ τι ἠδίκησέν σε ἢ ὀφείλει, …
If he has wronged you in any way or owes you anything (and I leave the question open as to whether or not he does), …

Paul teasingly questions Philemon's material loss, although in reality he does not doubt it.[35] Philemon's reaction can only be: "Of course, he wronged me! How can you doubt it?" "All right, then," implies Paul's text, "then you will have to accept the consequence that I myself take over Onesimus' debt — which in the end will mean that you must suffer the loss."

5. Praise with an Ulterior Motive

In v. 7, Paul lauds Philemon, "the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you". Later on, it turns out that this praise contained a hidden agenda. In v. 20, Paul adds a twist to the praise. In plain language, this subtle verse implies: As much as you refreshed the saints (v. 7), also refresh me — you probably owe it to me (v. 19) even more than to others.

Again, Philemon could only respond, "Of course, Paul, you are right!" Any other response would shame him. Nobody desires to fall back below their own standards. Philemon could never treat the apostle with less caring and consideration than other Christians. In other

34 This kind of conditional clause (εἰ + indicative, plus indicative or imperative in the main clause) is often falsely labelled "realis". In fact, it is an "indefinite". The reality of the if-clause content, for a moment, is in abeyance. It would be wrong to consider such if-clauses to be mere equivalents of causal phrases. The rhetorical impetus would be lost. — For M. Wolter, Der Brief an die Kolosser. Der Brief an Philemon (ÖTBK 12), Gütersloh/Würzburg 1993, 231f., the if-clause in v. 18 indicates that Onesimus believed himself to be innocent, which, however, is read into the text. Greek if-clauses exclusively reveal what the *speaker* himself thinks about the reality of the if-clause content.

35 If he did, he would devote more time to arguing that Philemon wrongly accused Onesimus. Moreover, in v. 11, he admits that Onesimus was "useless" in the past.

words, his own good behaviour in the past (v. 7) is rhetorically used to move him in the desired direction.[36]

6. Identification and Wordplay

V. 12, finally, adds an additional impetus to v. 20. In v. 12, Paul identified Onesimus with his own "innermost self" (τὰ ἐμὰ σπλάγχνα). In v. 20, he asks Philemon to refresh his "innermost self". Thus, in the light of v. 12, this also means: "Refresh *Onesimus*!" Or in other words, "By refreshing Onesimus upon his return, you will refresh me." Because of v. 12, there is a double entendre in the expression ἀνάπαυσόν μου τὰ σπλάγχνα ἐν Χριστῷ in v. 20.

7. *Delectatio* by Means of Wordplays

Paul uses wordplays to please, if not entertain, his audience. Besides his teasing εἰ clauses, and besides the twists that he gives to the expression τὰ σπλάγχνα ἀναπαύω in vv. 7.12.20, Paul engages in wordplay with δέσμιος – δεσμοῖς in vv. 9–10 and with the name Onesimus, "the useful, the profitable". Because of his wrongdoing, Onesimus was useless (ἄχρηστος), but now he is useful again (εὔχρηστος [v. 11]). Paul mentions the slave's name (v. 10) only in connection with this wordplay.

V. 20 adds another twist to the wordplay, thereby investing it with an additional flourish: "It is from you, Philemon, that I now would like to *profit* (ἐγώ σου ὀναίμην). This is really what interests me today – not only Onesimus' profitability."

Furthermore, vv. 18–19 comprise a play on the words ὀφείλει and προσοφείλεις ("he owes", "you owe"); the change of subjects turns Philemon's weapon against himself.

All of this shows wit. It will amuse — if not Philemon, at least the other recipients of the letter. According to Quintilian, enjoyment convinces an audience (Inst. 12.10.43–48: delectatione persuadent). Positive feelings are evoked by entertaining and delightful elements, provided that this kind of rhetorical ornament is not used too frequently (see Inst. 12.10.46[37]).

> Rhetorical ornament contributes not a little to the furtherance of our case. For when our audience finds it a pleasure to listen, their attention and their readiness to believe what they hear are both alike increased, while they are generally filled with delight, and sometimes even transported by admiration (Inst. 8.3.5; see 5.14.35; 4.2.46; 1.8.11).

36 The *prooemium*, therefore, stresses those of Philemon's qualities upon which the success of the letter depends; see F.F. Church, Rhetorical Structure and Design in Paul's Letter to Philemon, HThR 71 (1978) 17–33, here: 22.

37 If such rhetorical ornaments are used too frequently, they "mutually destroy the effects that they were designed to produce."

With regard to anger management, Quintilian gives the following advice: If you want to dampen and extinguish angry feelings and hatred in your audience, do not shy away from joking a little (Inst. 6.1.46; 6.3.9f.; see 4.1.29).

8. Rhetorical Vigour through Passionate Style

Quintilian knows that the speaker's passion can be expressed by means of a staccato style. In this way, thoughts can be expressed energetically, with verve, with vividness (Inst. 9.3.50–54). Quintilian knows this; Paul knows this. In Phlm 12, where he first identifies with Onesimus (see n. 11 above), he says: ὃν ἀνέπεμψά σοι, αὐτόν, τοῦτ' ἔστιν τὰ ἐμὰ σπλάγχνα. Try to enunciate this phrase! The speaker has to break it up into portions, because the accusative object is repeated: ὃν — αὐτόν — τοῦτ' ἔστιν. Paul feels passionately about this identification. It is a pillar of his argumentation.

Passion is also shown in the exclaiming vocatives of vv. 7 and 20. "Yes, brother (ναὶ ἀδελφέ)! In the Lord, I want to profit from you! Refresh (imperative) my innermost self in Christ!" (v. 20). Not coincidentally, the vocative ἀδελφέ consistently occurs in the same verses as the emotional τὰ σπλάγχνα.

9. Soliciting Pity

According to Quintilian, "There is a great deal to be gained by ... stirring our audience's emotions" (Inst. 5.8.3).

> As soon as they begin to ... *pity*, they begin to take a personal interest in the case ..., the judge, when overcome by his emotions, abandons all attempt to inquire into the truth of the arguments, he is swept along by the tide of passion ... (Inst. 6.2.6; see 6.2.3; 12.10.62).
>
> Pity (*miseratio*) alone may even move a strict judge (Inst. 4.1.14).

Paul does not refrain from using this rhetorical instrument. Six times he mentions his imprisonment (Phlm 1.9.10.13.22[38].23), which, of course, evokes pity, as does the reference to his old age (v. 9[39]). As a humble petitioner, he begs twice (vv. 9.10). Nobody turns down an old, wrongfully imprisoned man who is suffering for the common Christian cause (vv. 1.9b.23)!

Nevertheless, in vv. 8–9, Paul seems to have neglected one piece of advice that Quintilian gives his students: If a speaker who wishes to evoke pity shows too much self-assurance in the same sentence, the effect of the pity-soliciting elements might fall flat (Inst. 11.1.50,52,54). Self-confidently, in Phlm 8, Paul has just hinted at his authority. Should

38 See n. 10 above.

39 See n. 11 above.

he have rather brought up this reminder somewhere else in the context, farther away from vv. 9 and 10, to allow the pitying feelings to unfold? He might have become aware of this flaw and hastened to add another facet to vv. 9–10, in order to boost the effect of these verses:

10. Emotional Family Language

Into the mélange of pity-soliciting images of "prison", "old age", "to beg", Paul mixes the term "love" and the emotional metaphors of "child" and "to become a father". All of these images in vv. 9–10 create an emotional atmosphere that the hearer will not easily escape; this atmosphere is likely to win him over and to further his compliance with the speaker's wishes.

11. Kindling of Fear

An effective means of convincing a hearer is to kindle feelings of fear. This method is even more effective than the evocation of hope, as Quintilian (Inst. 3.8.39f.; see 4.1.21) and Aristotle (Eth. Nic. 10.9.4) point out.

(a) At the end, in Phlm 22,[40] Paul indicates that he expects to visit Philemon soon. It is tacitly understood that such a visit will also comprise an ideal opportunity to check on whether or not Philemon has complied with Paul's requests. Philemon cannot escape without being monitored, not only by a dozen people involved in this communication, but also by the apostle himself.

(b) The fear of disappointing somebody is a strong motivation. Who would wish to disappoint Paul's prayers (vv. 4.6), Paul's trust (v. 21), and Paul's other positive feelings that he has had for Philemon for quite some time (vv. 1.4–5.7.9; see above)? The mention of these feelings, of Paul's trust in the addressee, and of the prayers, adds another unobtrusive nudge to set Philemon in motion.

(c) Finally, the letter not only mentions other "co-workers" (v. 24) *besides* Philemon (v. 1); it also states that Onesimus has grown very close to Paul as his "child" and his "beloved brother" (vv. 10.16). Does Philemon need to fear losing his closeness to Paul? Has Onesimus replaced him? Should he fear the loss of Paul's genial proximity? Does he have reason to feel jealous? Certainly not, if he complies with Paul's letter! We do not know whether Philemon reacted to the text's signals in

40 According to Quintilian, the best place to kindle emotions is at the end of the speech. The second best place is the *prooemium*, where the speaker needs to access the audience's heart and make them kindly disposed. In Phlm, the *prooemium* is the emotionally warm *captatio benevolentiae* in vv. 4–7 (see above), which climaxes in the vocative "brother!" See Quint., Inst. 4.1.5; 6.1.9–14,51f.; 7.1.10; see also 6.4.22; 11.3.170; 4 Prooem. 6; 4.1.14,28; 4.2.112,115,120.

the way that has been described here. But these feelings were at least within the realm of possible responses of the reader.

12. Common Grounds

The common Christian cause, faith, and ethos (κοινωνός [v. 17]; κοινωνία τῆς πίστεως [v. 6]; θεοῦ πατρὸς ἡμῶν [v. 3]; ἀγαθοῦ τοῦ ἐν ἡμῖν [v. 6]) are strong cohesive factors, and thus a powerful motivation to comply with the speaker's goals.

13. Insinuated Syllogisms

As a final point, Paul's rhetorical renunciation of a hierarchical status is meant to suggest a syllogistic inference to Philemon. Paul calls himself the "beloved brother" of Philemon (v. 1); at the same time, Onesimus is labelled Paul's "beloved brother" (v. 16). This leaves only one logical conclusion: Philemon himself is a "beloved brother" to Onesimus (v. 16).

The same conclusion is suggested when Paul's higher status is factored back into the equation. Just as Paul won Philemon for Christianity (v. 19b), so he "fathered" his "child" Onesimus (v. 10). Consequently, they are both Paul's children, both brothers.[41]

41 A syllogism is also insinuated by vv. 20 and 12. See part III.6, above.

"You Will Do Even More Than I Say": On the Rhetorical Function of Stylistic Form in the Letter to Philemon

ERNST WENDLAND

I

This study illustrates the application of a text-based analysis of five important aspects of literary composition. The various stylistic techniques being investigated constitute the particular artistic (formal) and rhetorical (functional) strategies that the author, real or implied, is assumed to have employed in order to effectively (e.g., creatively, persuasively, attractively, etc.) communicate his message to his intended target audience. I will examine these features with specific reference to Paul's rhetorically shaped intercessory appeal to Philemon on behalf of the runaway slave, but now brother-in-Christ, Onesimus.

As we proceed with this epistolary discourse analysis, it will hopefully become more apparent what Paul meant to imply by his seemingly incidental remark in v. 21b: "knowing that you will do even more than I say" (εἰδὼς ὅτι καὶ ὑπὲρ ἃ λέγω ποιήσεις). My study suggests that the apostle actually had a very serious, perhaps even shocking, request in mind as far as Philemon was concerned — one that would significantly affect his relationship not only with Paul and Onesimus, but also with the entire "church" that gathered at Philemon's house (v. 2). It was considerably "more" (ὑπέρ) than what the textual surface would seem to indicate. This intriguing issue takes us to the heart of this intimate personal, yet also apostolic communal, letter — "one of the great romances of grace in the early Church."[1]

II

I will build upon a prior linguistic, *colon*-based analysis (omitted for lack of space)[2] in order to summarize and exemplify five prominent lit-

1 W. Barclay, The Letters to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon, Philadelphia 1960, 316.

2 See E. Wendland, Analyzing the Psalms: With Exercises for Bible Students and Translators, Dallas ²2002, ch. 3. Such a detailed text study further reveals how skill-

erary characteristics of biblical texts. Along with a close exegetical examination, this discourse-centered approach can serve to "flesh out", as it were, the *internal* cognitive frame of reference that guides the process of interpretation. This must always be coupled with the text-*external* perspective that is provided by the total situational environment and interpersonal setting in which the words were originally spoken or written.[3] From the point of view of any contemporary interpretation then, we are dealing with a case of one conceptual framework (our perspective today) being situated within the scope of another, circumscribing cognitive environment (that of the original text and thought-world), which is normally given the priority during one's hermeneutical activity.

Any comprehensive analytical schema, such as that just referred to, will (ideally) include a thorough examination of all the different *literary* devices and *rhetorical* strategies that an author employed in order to contextualize — that is, to motivate and to direct — the interpretation of his/her text in a certain way. These literary techniques either constitute or serve to reveal the various hermeneutical "clues" that have been built into the text by the original author, whether deliberately or intuitively, to guide his target audience (readership) along the path towards correctly construing the intended message that s/he has verbally conveyed to them. Some of these interpretive markers are more ostensible and hence understandable (even in translation), others are less so, while still others may require a great deal of study with reference to the original text and context before their full semantic, thematic, aesthetic, rhetorical, or symbolical significance can be perceived and understood.

The five textual strategies discussed below are *composite* literary categories in that each consists of a number of different facets or procedures. They are listed in a suggested general order of application during a holistic text analysis: genre selection (choosing the overall discourse type or template), compositional shifts (demarcating the unfolding progression of discourse), patterned recursion (shaping the larger

fully this letter has been shaped both stylistically and rhetorically in order to achieve the writer's chief communicative goals. We observe, for example, that Paul tactfully delays the expression of his primary purpose — namely, his personal plea to Philemon — until he has adeptly developed a case that would urge eventual acceptance. Thus his "appeal" of v. 10a is not actually mentioned anywhere in this section; in fact, Paul does not get around to stating it until v. 17. On the other hand, the apostle's deep-down desire is covertly suggested in the middle of a later purpose clause (v. 13b), which is carefully balanced in turn by his expression of concern for the authority and "free-will" of Philemon in this whole matter (another purpose clause, v. 14b).

3 See E. Wendland, Contextual Frames of Reference in Translation, Manchester 2008, ch. 1.

discourse arrangement of form), artistic highlighting (accenting selected areas and points within the discourse), and rhetorical shaping (infusing the discourse with persuasive force and feeling).

Together these overlapping and interconnected compositional tactics were presumably employed by an author to strategically fashion a particular passage of Scripture into its present textual form, one that reflects the specific theological or ethical purposes for which it was initially composed. These conceptual features must in turn be fully investigated as an essential part of the overall hermeneutical process.

Phlm is an ideal text to illustrate this exercise because it is a relatively short document (just 335 words in Greek) and can therefore be scrutinized in considerable detail and with respect to the complete composition. Perhaps due to its brevity and very personal nature, this letter does not rank among the "greats" of Pauline epistolary composition. It is often left out of discussion altogether, as demonstrated by the dearth of references to it in most studies of New Testament literature, beginning with the Apostolic Fathers[4] and certainly where the subject of Pauline theology is concerned.[5] A systematic examination of this text, however, leads us to a different conclusion. It serves to reveal the many literary — artistic and rhetorical — qualities of Phlm, features that not only *signify* meaning in a semiotic sense, but which also *constitute* meaning in that they effectively contribute to the letter's overall impact, appeal, and purpose. In this light then, we may be led to revise our assessment of the quality of this text and hence also its relevance for all Bible exegetes and ordinary readers today.

1. *Genre selection*: The term "genre" refers to a conventional, widely recognized category of literary discourse, normally one that is used to communicate within a particular social or verbal (oral or written) contextual setting. Genre analysis is a crucial facet of any artistic or rhetorical study. This is the characteristic that a person tends to consider first, often intuitively, without realizing it, since knowledge about the kind of composition that one is working with normally influences how one interprets the text. This is because each genre tends to have a typical form (structure), content (subject matter), and function (usage) within a given literary (or oral) tradition. A certain genre thus sets up a pattern of expectations which acts like roadmap along with a guidebook, or set of directions, that enables the analyst to know where s/he is going within

4 For example, Ignatius; see A. Patzia, Art. Canon, in: G.F. Hawthorne/R.P. Martin (eds.), Dictionary of Paul and His Letters, Downers Grove 1993, 85–92, here: 88.

5 B.W.R. Pearson, Assumptions in the Criticism and Translation of Philemon, in S.E. Porter/R.S. Hess (eds.), Translating the Bible: Problems and Prospects (JSNT.S 173), London/New York 1999, 253–280, here: 253.

the discourse and how to move from one place to another with greater confidence and understanding.

There are many different genres (and sub-types) of literature in the Bible, and so the first step of analysis is learning how to distinguish one from the other.[6] I cannot consider this subject in detail here,[7] but do wish to underscore its critical importance for understanding the Scriptures. Thus, readers or listeners must apprehend the original text in terms of its relevant literary categories, minor as well as major, that is, not only in terms of words, phrases, clauses, and sentences, but also with respect to the larger units of discourse along with their implicit communicative goals. Varied patterns of textual arrangement are often associated with particular genres of writing, each of which then acts as an initial hermeneutical frame of reference as one perceives and processes any literary text, whether secular or religious. The point of such a formal genre categorization is not the precise classification of any given instance, but rather its *functional* implication, which the literary stylistic forms help to give an indication of — that is, when considered in relation to one another, the text's content, and the discourse structure as a whole. In this respect, a progressive continuum is also evident, one that ranges from the *informative* function on the prose end of the scale to the *affective* (emotive and imperative) and *artistic* functions in the case of pure poetry.

How then can the process of genre selection, which is a characteristic of every meaningful text, assist us with the interpretation of Phlm? Although it is one of the briefest New Testament letters (only 2John and 3John being shorter), the overall discourse organization and basic stylistic features of Phlm match those of its much larger counterparts. The larger structure of Hellenistic letters is quite simple, consisting of a relatively short interpersonal *opening* and *closing* with a longer informative and/or affective *body* in-between.[8] In the Pauline corpus this basic tripartite arrangement was often modified to match the apostle's chosen communicative goals on a particular occasion. Thus each of the three

6 Strictly speaking, the term "genre" applies to *emic* literary categories, that is, those kinds of discourse, large and small, that are recognized within a given cultural and linguistic tradition, e.g., ἐπιστολή and παραβολή in Greek. "(Sub)types" then designate various items within an *etic*, non culture-specific or "universal", system of literary classification.

7 See E. Wendland, Translating the Literature of Scripture: A Literary-Rhetorical Approach to Bible Translation, Dallas 2004, ch. 3.

8 See the discussions on this issue in D.E. Aune, The New Testament in Its Literary Environment (LEC 8), Philadelphia 1987, 204–212; J.L. Bailey/L.D. van der Broek, Literary Forms in the New Testament: A Handbook, Louisville 1992, 23–30; S.K. Stowers, Letter Writing in Greco-Roman Antiquity (LEC 5), Philadelphia 1986, 185f.

major epistolary divisions would be differentiated into at least two subsections, as we see in Phlm:

OPENING
- Prescription
- Superscription (v. 1)
- Adscription (v. 2)
- Salutation (v. 3)
- Thanksgiving (vv. 4–7)

BODY
- Rationale/Exposition (vv. 8–16)
- Appeal/Exhortation (vv. 17–22)

CLOSING
- Secondary greetings (vv. 23–24)
- Grace benediction (v. 25)

Certain minor structural-thematic elements of a Pauline epistle may shift in location — and function — as we observe in his self-designation as a "prisoner" (δέσμιος), rather than as an "apostle" of Jesus Christ (v. 1; see Tit 1,1) and in his final *autograph* (v. 19) and *request for hospitality* (v. 22), which have here been moved from a more usual position in the closing to the body in order to serve in support of the apostle's personal appeal on behalf of Onesimus. This typical epistolary arrangement overlaps with, and is complemented by, the letter's rhetorical structure, that is, according to the compositional principles of Ancient Near Eastern formal argumentation and public speaking.

The text-type of Phlm may be classified more specifically with respect to its literary genre as a personal "letter of *recommendation*", of which there are two related subtypes — epistles of *introduction* or *intercession* (or *mediation*).[9] General features of the latter are described in the ancient epistolary handbook of Demetrius:[10]

The Commending Type (*systatikos*)
1. Two people are separated.
2. One person attempts to converse with the other.
3. There is an established positive social relationship between the two (e.g., friendship, family, patron-client).
4. The writer intercedes on behalf of a third party in order to initiate, maintain, or repair the relationship between the recipient and a third party.

Clearly, these interrelated situational and functional elements would apply well to Phlm, which as Stowers also notes: "contains several phrases and topical and formal features of introductory and intercessory letters."[11]

9 J.M.G. Barclay, Colossians and Philemon (NTGs), Sheffield 1997, 104f., cites a similar, somewhat later letter written by Pliny that is "an example of 'resort to a friend of the master', which we found to be a plausible explanation of the Onesimus story" (p. 104).

10 Stowers, Letter Writing (see n. 8), 54.

11 Ibid., 155.

A final note: Literary genres and their form-functional components are not monolithic or invariant verbal structures. In the mind of a skilled author (or orator), like all the strategies discussed in this section, genres are flexible discourse templates that can be incorporated and combined or otherwise modified in diverse, often subtle or imperceptible, ways in keeping with the author's artistic genius and specific rhetorical intentions. On the conceptual level at least, certain portions of the epistles, for example, may be viewed as realizing an underlying narrative account that must be taken into consideration when interpreting the text. Petersen points out that Phlm features "a story within a story":[12]

> Thus, the story of Onesimus's running away/debt, conversion, return, and of Paul's repayment of the debt occur within the story of *Philemon's* conversion/debt and his projected repayment of his debt in the form of his response to Paul's appeal.

A *narrative* consists of a series of chronologically arranged events (the "story"), which is often re-arranged (e.g., flash-backs, flash-forwards) or otherwise modified (e.g., through repetition, paraphrase, deletion, and selective intensification) by a skillful writer in order to create greater impact and appeal. The latter re-structured, cause-effect oriented event sequence is termed a "plot", which often exhibits one or more high points of action (the "peak") and/or emotion (the "climax").[13]

Petersen has proposed a useful method for comparing the *story* events (which he terms the "referential sequence" [RS]) with the *plot* events ("poetic sequence" [PS]) of Phlm, which may be charted as follows:[14]

Referential Sequence	Text Appearance	= Poetic Sequence
1. Philemon incurs a *debt* to Paul.	19b	7
2. Paul is imprisoned.	9 (see 1.10.13.23)	2
3. Onesimus runs away and incurs a *debt*.	15 (see 11–13.18–19a)	5
4. Onesimus is converted by Paul in prison.	10	3
5. Paul hears of Philemon's love and faith.	4–7	*1*
6. Paul sends Onesimus back to Philemon.	12	4
7. Paul sends letter of appeal to repay O's *debt*.	17–19a	6
8. (Assumed) Onesimus arrives with the letter.	12 (implied)	8
9. (Projected) Philemon responds to Paul's appeal.	20–21 (see 9)	9
10. (Projected) Paul pays a visit to Philemon.	22	10

We observe three strategic dislocations in the realized, textual order with respect to the hypothetical *referential* sequence of narrative events (i.e., elements 7, 5, and 1). These instances of "poetic" movement are of

12 N.R. Petersen, Rediscovering Paul: Philemon and the Sociology of Paul's Narrative World, Philadelphia 1985, 66.

13 For a more extensive description of the structural categories of story (idealized chronological sequence) and plot (realized textual order), see K. Beckson/A. Ganz, A Reader's Guide to Literary Terms: A Dictionary, New York 1960, 187f.

14 This is a revision of the chart found in Petersen, Paul (see n. 12), 69f.

artistic significance because they represent a variation from the norm, a strict chronological progression, but they are even more important for their rhetorical implication. Paul begins (PS 1) by praising Philemon for his Christian virtues (RS 5), thus setting him up for the appeal that he is about to make on behalf of a new "brother" in faith, Onesimus. The fact that Onesimus has incurred a serious but (deliberately) unspecified social and material *debt* in relation to Philemon by running away from home (RS 3) is intentionally delayed (PS 5) until Paul has laid the foundation for his intercessory request. On the other hand, Philemon's spiritual debt to Paul (RS 1) is deferred until the apostle reaches the climax of his argument (PS 7), stating his proposal in terms that Philemon would be hard pressed either to ignore or refuse.

> We have seen that Paul's story about Philemon is constructed around the [*power*-related] themes of indebtedness and repayment as these occur within the brotherhood of Christ, and that these themes, however literal or metaphorical, raise the fundamental issue of the economy, the integrity [*and the solidarity*] of the brotherhood.[15]

2. *Compositional shifts*: Verbal compositions are constructed by their author in textual *chunks* of varying sizes and diverse syntactic shapes to reflect a hierarchical network of topics and sub-topics. These are normally all related in some way to the major theme or action-line and purpose of the discourse at hand — that is, in keeping with its primary *genre* category (see II,1). Thus, a given text is normally broken up into conceptually more manageable portions as it progresses so that the various aspects of its content may be introduced and developed. One focal subject, person, event, setting, or circumstance shifts to the next in an unfolding syntactic and synchronic (topically-related) sequence.

This overt manifestation of "chunking" is one of the principal internal (cognitive) frames of reference that an author employs to direct his/her readers (hearers) along the path of interpreting the message that s/he wishes to communicate with them. Our minds progressively "process" such text portions as we hear or read them, the *paragraph* (prose, a "strophe" in poetry) being the most salient discourse segment since it embraces a number of conceptually related events, images, issues, and/or ideas. But how does this happen — how does the author guide his readers during this essential process of interpretation? In this section, we will examine another notable way whereby a literary text is "structured" into a more manageable and memorable format, namely, through compositional *shifts*.

The main strategy for identifying the breaks and transitions of any text, no matter what the genre, involves noting where a significant al-

15 Petersen, Paul (see n. 12), 78 (material in italics added).

teration occurs in the progression of composition. For example, a perceptible modification may be detected with regard to one or more of the following discourse features:

- the *central topic* (subject matter) or main *event line* that is being discussed or referred to;
- the *principal agent* or set of *participants* who are engaged in a certain action or event (the "cast of characters");
- the *speaker* and/or *addressee*(s) when direct speech occurs;
- *genre* or *sub-type* of text (e.g., prose/poetry, direct/indirect speech, judgment/salvation oracle);
- the discourse *setting* (time, place, circumstances);
- prevailing type of *imagery* (e.g., from drought and devastation to a rich garden paradise);
- prominent rhetorical *device* or discourse *function* (e.g., shift from ironic/sarcastic indictment to formal judgment);
- accompanying *emotive tone* (e.g., from sorrowful mourning to joyous exaltation);
- a new cluster of stylistic features that signal an *aperture* (e.g., vocative, imperative, rhetorical question, asyndeton);
- forms that signal a prior emphatic or distinctive *closure* (e.g., refrain, summary, exclamation, direct citation).

These ten elements often coincide or converge in their textual realization along with genre-specific opening or closing conjunctions, epistolary formulas, transitional expressions, and concluding summary statements that serve to signal the close of one unit and hence also the onset of the next, as will be seen on the chart below. The more features that are modified at a particular point in the composition, the more prominent and noteworthy the disjunction that occurs there. In this way, "minor" breaks may be distinguished from "major" ones, for example, a paragraph ("strophe") from a new section, episode, or stage in an argument (or a new "oracle" in prophetic poetry).

Such heuristic procedures for delineating a discourse into its constituent units invite a critical review of the facts when the scheme is actually applied to a given text. Differences of opinion among the versions and commentators are to be expected, and these must be comparatively examined in order to determine the most cogent and coherent solution in accordance with the organization of the text under consideration. This method also provides Bible exegetes with a means for testing and evaluating various structural and stylistic clues in the interest of better understanding the form, content, emotion, and intent of the original text.

The five general literary strategies being discussed in this study offer one coordinated approach to this task. In other words, by weighing together the diverse evidence supplied by *genre selection* and *compositional shifts*, further substantiated by *patterned recursion, artistic highlighting,* and *rhetorical shaping* (to be presented below), the analyst is in a better position to suggest where the main breaks, transitions, peaks, and climaxes occur within a complete composition or a distinct portion

of one. This is especially important in the lengthy central section of an epistle (the body), where a semantic outline may not always agree with the formal syntactic structure of the discourse. Literary criteria then can shift the balance in favor of one arrangement over another. The following is my proposal for the compositional structure of Phlm (vv. 8–22):

Begin a new paragraph at verse	Evidence based on external compositional shifts and internal cohesive properties:
8	Paul's word of "thanksgiving" (Εὐχαριστῶ [v. 4]) ends at the close of v. 7 with the fore-grounded vocative "brother" (ἀδελφέ). His argument of "appeal" now begins at v. 8, marked by the conjunction "Wherefore" (Διό). Paul's focus shifts from Philemon (vv. 4–7) to himself (vv. 8–9), and his tone from "consolation" (παράκλησις [v. 7]) to "boldness" (παρρησία [v. 8]).
12	The sequence of relative clauses initiated in v. 10 does not end in v. 12, but there is an evident change in discourse development as Paul moves from the preparation for his appeal (vv. 8–11), including its object (Ονήσιμον), to his plan of action, which began by "sending" Onesimus back to Philemon (ἀνέπεμψα [v. 12]). A new paragraph is not opened after the sentence which closes in v. 14 because the topical spotlight remains on the new "beloved brother" (ἀδελφὸν ἀγαπητόν) Onesimus (v. 16).
17	Paul's overview of his tacit as well as explicit hopes for Onesimus concludes in v. 16 with the emphasis upon the transformed relationship that now exists between the former slave and his master "in the Lord" (ἐν κυρίῳ). The apostle's overt appeal finally appears at the onset of v. 17, which is linked to the preceding grounds of his argument by the consequential conjunction "therefore" (οὖν). The essence of Paul's plea to "brother" Philemon is set forth in vv. 17–20, which concludes with the passionate reiteration "refresh my bowels in Christ" (ἀνάπαυσόν μου τὰ σπλάγχνα ἐν Χριστῷ [see v. 7]).
21	A summary of Paul's confident purpose in "writing" (ἔγραψα) Philemon leads off this transitional portion that brings the letter body to a quiet culmination (vv. 21–22). The future perspective here is reinforced with reference to an "apostolic parousia" in Paul's request to "prepare me a guest room" (ἑτοίμαζέ μοι ξενίαν), which not incidentally will offer him the opportunity of seeing first hand how the Onesimus affair has turned out. Paul's final "greetings" (Ἀσπάζεταί σε) lead off the letter's formal close in v. 23.

Clearly marked external borders provide a referential framework for the portion of text that is contained within a given unit, thus strengthening one's perception of its internal bonds of *coherence* (content) and *cohesion* (form). The larger arrangement of a verbal composition (and the conceptual development that it signifies) cannot be taken for granted, for instance, if Bible interpreters decide to simply follow the divisions of one standard translation or another, or even a set of versions. Such a perfunctory procedure may be an indication of the fact that they have not really mastered the sense or significance of what is being said in the original text, including the specific function of each of the distinct segments in the compositional sequence.

In fact, quite a diversity of opinion may be manifested by the major translations that are consulted with regard to their demarcation of a particular discourse segment. The following is a sample of English versions with regard to Phlm vv. 8–23 (Contemporary English Version [CEV], New Revised Standard Version [NRSV], Good News Bible [GNB], Revised English Bible [REB], New Jerusalem Bible [NJB], New International Version [NIV], and my proposal outlined above [EW]; "X" marks the "verse" where a paragraph division is displayed; GR indicates where the original Greek text makes a *sentence break*):

Verse	CEV	NRSV	GNB	REB	NJB	NIV	EW	GR
8	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
12	X		X			X	X	
15	X		X					X
17	X	X	X	X		X	X	X
19								X
20								X
21	X		X	X			X	X
22		X			X	X		
23	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

As the chart above shows, there are only two places (out of nine passages selected) where all eight versions consulted agree that a break should occur — at vv. 8 and 23. There is widespread agreement also at vv. 17 and 21. Important differences, however, are found elsewhere; furthermore, no single English version completely agrees with the Greek sentential units.

So, what difference does it make in any case? Most readers more or less automatically rely on a text's published segmentation pattern as they mentally process the discourse, whether sequentially or topically. This is especially true when they must at the same time also articulate the text aloud in some manner of common public utterance, as in the case of a formal liturgical service of worship, when established customs of intonation, pausing, rhythm, volume, and accentuation are necessary (and often taken for granted). These paragraphs, along with larger sectional divisions, help the reader to discern how the biblical writer has shaped his argument and developed his line of thinking in a particular direction, including special points of emphasis along the way. Modify this format on the printed page, and you change the way in which a person perceives and often reacts to the message as it has been represented. In this sense too, *format has meaning!*

3. *Patterned recursion*: In addition to the conventional formatting techniques associated with a certain genre (II.1) and the sequence of compositional shifts (II.2) noted above, a literary text is normally also organized in various ways by different kinds of linguistic "recursion". Such reiteration may involve sounds, morphological constituents, lexical items, grammatical constructions, and or larger patterns of discourse structure. The *recursion* of verbal form and associated content may be exact, when it is termed "repetition", or it may be approximate or otherwise corresponding in nature, i.e., "restatement", for example, a synonymous, contrastive, and metaphoric or metonymic paraphrase.

Along with helping to segment and arrange a composition into sections of varying sizes, recursion also provides the included units as well as the complete text with a meaningful sense of semantic coherence as well as linguistic cohesion. Discerning this essential literary property of *unity in diversity* — the significant *parts* functioning within an encompassing and integrating *whole* — is important both for guiding one to an accurate interpretation of discourse content and also for leading one to appreciate its intrinsic beauty of form and rhetorical forcefulness.

In this section we will examine several types of recursion that are used — together with the various shifts that occur — to further delineate the boundaries of internal units that comprise Phlm. A proposed textual arrangement based on reiterated elements thus acts as another vital structural frame of reference for interpreting the relationship of ideas that occur within the discourse as a whole. This *demarcating* function exists in addition to the *integrating*, or connective, function that recursion always serves by its very nature.

As noted earlier, it is helpful to keep in mind the principle that a *combination* of literary features (as opposed to isolated instances) always provides stronger evidence for marking the initial and final boundaries of a compositional unit. In short, the *more* markers, or structural indicators, that are present in one verse, the *surer* the analyst can be that a distinct text segment either begins or ends there. As a corollary to this in the case of recursion, the more *exact* the reiteration is (i.e., repetition), the *stronger* it functions as a signal of discourse organization. This method of demarcative structural analysis can be carried out with respect to any text-type in the Bible, but it is especially helpful in the case of non-narrative discourse, namely, poetic, prophetic, and epistolary literature.

The following lists a number of the more noteworthy instances of patterned recursion in Phlm. To save space, only a literal English translation is given, with the key corresponding elements indicated by italics, underlining, and/or boldface print:

- *Grace to you* and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. (v. 3)
  The *grace* of the Lord Jesus Christ *[be] with your spirit*. (v. 25)
  [At the beginning of the letter and again at its end — a structural *inclusio* — familiar epistolary formulas of Paul appear. However, these words also serve to highlight the essential theological context in which he makes his brotherly request of Philemon, namely, the "grace" shown to all believers by God the Father through Jesus Christ. This intercessory action occurs within the interpersonal framework provided by "you" (pl.) — that is, Philemon's "house-church" (v. 2b).]

- Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus and *brother* Timothy [we send greetings] to beloved Philemon, our *fellow worker* and to *sister* Apphia and to Archippus our *fellow soldier*. (vv. 1–2)
  Epaphras, my fellow captive in Christ Jesus, greets you [and] ... my *fellow workers*. (vv. 23–24)
  [Again we are dealing with the circumscribing aspect of Pauline letter style (i.e., an *inclusio* that crosses with the preceding one), but it is modified here to fit the immediate setting and the enclosed content, which emphasizes mutual *brother*- and *sister*-hood in Christ, a fellowship that must now include Onesimus (v. 17).]
- I thank (Εὐχαριστῶ) my God always making mention of you (sg.) *in my prayers* ... (v. 4)
  ... for I hope that *through your* (pl.) *prayers* I may be restored (χαρισθήσομαι) to you (pl.). (v. 22)
  [The body of Paul's appeal to Philemon is further enclosed by mention of mutual prayer, which is a prominent attribute of God's people in every setting and situation.]
- ... because the *bowels* of the saints have been refreshed through you, **brother**. (v. 7)
  Yes, **brother**, ... refresh my *bowels* in Christ. (v. 20)
  [As part of the build-up to his central plea for Onesimus, Paul reminds Philemon of the quality for which he is well known among the Christian community. As he brings his appeal to a close, Paul calls upon his "brother" to exercise that virtue once again with respect to the person who has provoked a possible bone of contention among them. The notion of reciprocal action is mirrored in the iterative chiastic construction of key terms here: *A* : B :: **C** ::: **C′** :: B′ : *A′*. This artistic feature (see also II,4) helps to mark the respective end-points of sub-units within the epistle (a structural sub-type of the *inclusio*, termed *epiphora*).][16]
- ... *whom* **I** sent back to you — *him, the one* who is **my** very bowels ... (v. 12)
  If **me** you regard as a partner, [you] receive *him* as **me!** (v. 17)
  [The onset of each of these crucial paragraphs in the discourse (i.e., structural *anaphora*) features a complex weave of pronominal usage — one that may reflect the current situation of controversy, that is, with Philemon now situated in the middle between Paul and Onesimus with a decision to make. How would Philemon react — would he personally solidify their mutual bond of fellowship by his action, or would he disrupt it by not responding to Paul's request?]
- ... the one [who was] then to you useless, but [who is] now both **to you** and **to me** *useful*. (v. 11)
  ... no longer as a slave, but *more than a slave* — a beloved brother — especially **to me**, how much more so **to you**, both in the flesh and in the Lord. (v. 16)
  [The respective anaphoric boundaries highlighted in the example above (i.e., new units *beginning* at vv. 12 and 17) are reinforced by conceptual reiteration at the *ends* of the preceding units (i.e., structural *epiphora* involving vv. 11 and 16). The amplification at the close of v. 16 clarifies the subtle enigma that Paul has generated: He has elevated Christian priorities ("in the Lord" — emphasized at the end) over what were formerly pressing social concerns ("in the flesh").]
- Yes, brother, as for **me** from **you** may I have some benefit, in the Lord. (v. 20a)
  [In parallel with v. 16 noted above, this wish similarly concludes a discourse unit, i.e., vv. 12–16 and 17–20 (structural *epiphora*), with a strong personal emphasis. Thus the two authority figures, Paul and Philemon, are juxtaposed with one other, but more importantly with "the Lord", whom they both served, and whose will was being sought in this human crisis that was threatening to disrupt or delay the progress of his heavenly mission.]

16 For a summary of some of the main recursive patterns in biblical discourse structure, see Wendland, Literature (see n. 7), 126f.

The preceding parallel sequences combine to form the foundation of a more substantial (albeit hypothetical) recursive pattern that extends right through the entire discourse — an all-embracing textual ring construction. This may be outlined as follows:

A (1–2) *Opening greetings* ("Christ Jesus" + five personal names)
| **B** (3) *"Grace" blessing* ("Lord Jesus Christ")
| | **C** (4) *"Prayers"* — Paul for Philemon
| | | **D** (5–7) *Pre-appeal plea* — that Philemon, "brother", would continue
| | | | to be active in "faith", "love" to "refresh the hearts of the saints"
| | | | **E** (8) *Paul's authority*: he could be "bold" and order Philemon (σοι)
| | | | | to forgive the debt of Onesimus
| | | | | **F** (9–10) *Paul's "appeal" (2x) for Onesimus*: plight of Paul, an
| | | | | | "old man" in "chains"
| | | | | | **G** (11) *Contrast*: formerly Onesimus was useless, but now
| | | | | | | useful "to you" (Philemon) and "to me" (Paul)
| | | | | | | **H** (12) *Action*: Paul sends Onesimus back to
| | | | | | | | Philemon though his feelings ("my bowels") are
| | | | | | | | affected
| | | | | | | | → **I** (13) *DESIRE*: what Paul would really like to
| | | | | | | | do: **keep Onesimus (πρὸς ἐμαυτόν) to serve**
| | | | | | | | **him/the gospel in prison in place of Philemon**
| | | | | | | | **(ὑπὲρ σοῦ)**
| | | | | | | **H′** (14) *Non-action*: Paul does not keep Onesimus with
| | | | | | | | him in Rome so as not to affect Philemon's
| | | | | | | | feelings (his knowledge, free will)
| | | | | | **G′** (15–16) *Contrast*: Onesimus is no mere "slave", but a
| | | | | | | "dear brother" — dear "to me" and "to you"
| | | | | **F′** (17–19a) *Paul's appeal for Onesimus*: promise of Paul, plight
| | | | | | of Onesimus, a wrongdoer and a debtor
| | | | **E′** (19b) *Paul's authority*: Paul reminds Philemon (σοι) of his
| | | | | spiritual debt to him
| | | **D′** (20–22a) *Post-appeal plea* — that Philemon, the "brother", would
| | | "refresh [Paul's] heart" through his "obedience" in bringing
| | | "benefit" to Paul
| | **C′** (22b) *"Prayers"* — Philemon for Paul
A′ (23–24) *Closing greetings* ("Christ Jesus" + five personal names)
B′ (25) *"Grace" blessing* ("Lord Jesus Christ")[17]

17 Note the twist in the general pattern at the very end, i.e., first A′, then B′; perhaps this is simply just another unobtrusive way of formally signaling the letter's conclusion.

Admittedly, some of the structural parallels noted above, involving similarities as well as contrasts, are more concrete, hence credible than others, but on the whole it is apparent that the overall topical organization of this letter is strongly concentric and recursive in nature. The inverted literary arrangement of the discourse is certainly not as noticeable as its linear, syntactic construction, but the former is significant in the sense that it functions covertly to reinforce the main stress points of the latter. If, as is commonly asserted, the core of such a formation (and the *midpoint* of this epistle) reveals the heart of the author's argument or thesis, then one might conclude that a major aim of Paul is to make Philemon aware of his real desire that Onesimus be released and commissioned to go back as a free man to serve him on behalf of Philemon in the apostle's prison ministry (segment I).[18] This wish is conveyed in a very muted manner, however — that is, buried deeply inside a dependent syntactic construction (a purpose clause) which lies embedded within another subordinate sequence (of relative clauses) in vv. 10–13.

4. *Artistic highlighting*: This broad category within the inventory of literary strategies targets the different stylistic forms on the *microstructure* of a composition, which an author employs to spotlight or to underscore selected portions of the text, whether prose or poetry. The operation of these features is especially apparent when they are found in more *concentrated* combinations as they reinforce one another to augment a particular thematic concept or a pragmatic effect. There is a wide range of artistic devices to consider here, but most of them should already be familiar to experienced Scripture exegetes and translators, for example, varieties of figurative language, idiomatic expressions, extended syntactic parallelism, lexical reiteration, rhetorical or leading questions, ellipsis, hyperbole, irony — to list several of the more common forms used for focusing and foregrounding selected portions of the biblical text. These stylistic elements are not merely esthetic or decorative in nature (i.e., "art for art's sake"); rather, in "the literature of Scripture"[19] they always serve some sort of "rhetorical" (pragmatic-communicative) purpose. For example, they frequently call attention to,

18 "Paul's word choice for helping [NIV] (*diakoneo*) [in v. 13] is striking because it comes from a different word for "slave" from the one he then uses in verse 16 (*doulos*). ... Paul uses words from the *diakoneo* family when speaking of gospel ministry (as in Col 1:7, 23, 25; 4:7, 17) ... [Onesimus] is Paul's minister and therefore a useful substitute for Philemon" (R.W. Wall, Colossians & Philemon [IVPNTCS], Downers Grove 1993, 209f.). F.F. Bruce, The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians (NIC), Grand Rapids 1984, 215, notes that a "parallel to Onesimus's serving Paul on Philemon's behalf is provided by Epaphroditus of Philippi", who was sent by his local church to Rome with a gift and also to render service to the apostle on their behalf.

19 See Wendland, Literature (see n. 7), 139–154.

and thereby also "cement", as it were, the discourse framework that has been postulated for a certain work, that is, with respect to its main structural boundaries and thematic peaks.

In this section, I have selected four different examples of such creative highlighting in Phlm. These features are not always noticed or discussed, even in critical commentaries (at least not with reference to a text's compositional organization): marked syntactic arrangement, conceptual recycling, intertextual resonance, and phonological foregrounding.[20]

Several instances of striking *syntactic placement* have already been noted on the macrostructure of Phlm. In the central passage of v. 13, for example, we observe the following arrangement, which is punctuated by emphatic personal pronouns:

ὁν	*he* whom
ἐγὼ ἐβουλόμην πρὸς **ἐμαυτὸν** κατέχειν,	**I** for my part resolved with **myself** to keep,
ἵνα ὑπὲρ σοῦ	→ in order that on your behalf
μοι	**me**
διακονῇ — ἐν τοῖς δεσμοῖς τοῦ εὐαγγελίου ...	*he* might minister to — in the bonds of the gospel ...

"*He*" — "**I**" — "you": The three focal human participants of this letter are intimately linked together in this subdued expression of the apostle's wishes. Here Paul comes the closest to revealing his heart-felt desire concerning his "heart" (v. 12), Onesimus, the slave who had undoubtedly broken his master's heart through some undisclosed act of infidelity. However, as a result of what had transpired there in Rome, all three "brothers" (v. 16) were now inextricably bound together in the service of Christ — for the sake of "the gospel".

Paul's wishful plan, however, had to deal with the reality of the situation, one that involved hierarchical sociocultural conventions (*master – slave*) in contrast to an egalitarian mode of Christian communal organization (*brother – brother/sister*). To be sure, the early church did have its authority figures, such as the apostle Paul, who was a "father" in relation to his converts, his "children" (v. 10). There were also local leaders, like Philemon, men who were highly respected both within the fellowship of believers and also in secular society. Paul tacitly indicates his recognition of the status quo in the very next verse (v. 14) by unfolding a set of contrasts that clearly reveals his deference to Philemon's ec-

20 There are a surprising number of other artistic features in this short letter, in particular: figurative language such as metaphor (e.g., "fellow soldier" [v. 2]; "child" [v. 10]; "bowels" [v. 12]), metonymy (e.g., "chains" [v. 10]; "gospel" [v. 13]; "hand" [v. 19]; "yourself" [v. 19]; "spirit" [v. 25]), and a thematically significant idiomatic expression ("refresh the bowels" [vv. 7.20]).

clesiastical position as well as his role as a beloved colleague in the gospel ministry. This circumstantial gap between the expectations and exigencies of the situation is reflected in the contrastive parallel syntactic arrangement of v. 14 in relation to v. 13:

13: "*I*" (ἐγὼ)	**14:** "without *your* consent" (χωρὶς δὲ τῆς σῆς γνώμης)
"I *would have wished*" (ἐβουλόμην)	"*nothing I desired*" (οὐδὲν ἠθέλησα)
"to *retain*" (κατέχειν)	"to do" (ποιῆσαι)
"in order that" (ἵνα)	"in order that *not*" (ἵνα μή)

This expression of dramatic alternatives with regard to possibility is concluded then in v. 14, with a modification in the normal grammatical positioning being employed to stress the ultimate virtue ("[doing] good" — in the *center*) coupled with the right attitude for achieving it ("free will" — climactic *end stress*):

ἵνα μὴ ὡς κατὰ ἀνάγκην	in order that not by compulsion
τὸ ἀγαθόν σου ᾖ	*your goodness might be (done)*
ἀλλὰ κατὰ ἑκούσιον	but of (your own) free will

Another prominent example of syntactic positioning coupled with emphatic pronominal usage occurs in v. 20 as Paul reaches the peak of his appeal: **ἐγώ σου** *ὀναίμην* ἐν κυρίῳ ("May **I** from **you** *have some benefit* in the Lord.") This parallels v. 13 above as the form of the text in effect mirrors its essential meaning: Paul expects a concrete demonstration of assistance ("benefit", ὀναίμην) from Philemon in the very person of "Onesimus" (Ὀνήσιμον [v. 10])!

In section II,3 we considered the structurally significant recursion of lexical items within the discourse of a literary text. At this point I will simply list instances of the more loosely connected kind of reiteration that functions to highlight the main topics in Paul's appeal to Philemon and to give some perceptible referential cohesion to the entire composition. This repetition of ideas creates a paradigmatically established set of semantic categories, each of which clusters around a principal subject, termed a "key concept", which has been abstracted as a label for the category as a whole. Four key concepts have been identified within the referential scope of Phlm. The following is a sequential listing of the related notions that are viewed as constituting these four cognitive classes (verse numbers in parentheses):[21]

21 In order to simplify this analysis somewhat, several related concepts have been combined into one generic category, e.g., bondage and indebtedness; kinship, fellowship, and partnership. The selection and placement of the individual lexical items here is a rather subjective exercise, but hopefully the chart will reflect, at least to some extent, the semantic links that are formed in a person's mind as s/he cognitively processes a text from beginning to end. Certain key terms do not appear in this listing, but I regard them as being closely related conceptually to one of the categories already present, e.g., "faith" (vv. 5–6) → KIN-/FELLOWSHIP.

verse	AFFECTION	BONDAGE/DEBT	PARTNERSHIP	SERVICE
1	beloved	prisoner	brother, fellow-	-worker
2		sister, church,	fellow-	-soldier
3	grace		Father	Lord
4	thanks		prayers	
5	love		saints	Lord
7	joy, love		brother	refreshed
	encouragement			hearts
8				do the right thing
9	love	prisoner		
10		bonds	child, begat	
11				[useless], useful
12	my heart			
13		bonds		minister ... gospel
14				do good, voluntarily
15				receive him
16	beloved	slave, slave	brother	Lord
17			partner	receive him
18		wronged, owes		
		reckon		
19		repay, owe in addition		
20			brother	benefit, refresh bowels
21				obedience, you will do
22			your prayers	prepare lodging
23	greet		fellow-	-soldier
24			fellow	-workers
25	grace		your [pl.] spirit	Lord

This is obviously a very tight-knit letter in terms of its lexical inventory and conceptual integration. A relative small corpus of key ideas is interwoven throughout the discourse to function as the basis for its central appeal and supporting argumentation: *affection*, *bondage*, *partnership*, and *service*. In many verses, three or more of these notions are manifested. They are enacted by a small cast of characters within the letter: *Paul*, *Philemon*, and *Onesimus* — all three in relation to *Christ* (God) on the one hand and the *church* (the fellowship of believers, functioning as a corporate unity) on the other.

"Christ" begins and ends the discourse (vv. 1.25), thereby embracing all the named representatives of his faith-full community, who in turn act as a human field of reference to contextualize the tense interaction of the central trio of participants: Paul who is attempting to mediate between the alienated Christian brothers, Philemon and Onesimus. Thus within the spiritual framework of the invisible Christ (vv. 1.3.25) and his visible church (vv. 2.23–24) the drama of this epistle is played out. "Faith" (vv. 5–6) is the indelible tie that binds individual believers to Jesus Christ and to one another, thus creating the distinctive "fellowship" of God's family. They demonstrate their faith in turn by means of various acts of "love" (vv. 1.5.7.9–10.16). In the special case at hand,

such "affection" is manifested through "forgiveness" — a free and full release from the "bondage" of social, moral, and spiritual indebtedness (vv. 17–19) — and by mutual acts of "service",[22] wherever there is a need that relates to the gospel ministry (vv. 11.13.20.21–22) and the unity of fellow workers in the community (vv. 4.7.15–16).[23]

Summarizing the semantic force of the key concepts in the letter as a whole, the following general theme can be proposed: CHRIST *motivates the personal* AFFECTION *arising from* FAITH, *which transforms servile human* BONDAGE *into brotherly* PARTNERSHIP *through mutual* SERVICE *in his* CHURCH. This theme is realized in a concentrated mode of affective expression in certain focal passages within the text, in particular, v. 9 and v. 17, which together set forth the letter's primary purpose:

> ... on the basis of love (*AFFECTION*) I rather appeal to you — I, Paul, an old man and now a prisoner (*BONDAGE*) of Christ Jesus ... So if you consider me a partner (*PARTNERSHIP*), welcome him as you would welcome me (*SERVICE*).

Another crucial example occurs in vv. 12b–13, which in a very passive manner presents the real desire of Paul's heart — that is, the pragmatic motive of the entire letter:

> ... this one/Onesimus is my very heart (*AFFECTION*), whom I would have liked to keep with me here so that he might minister to me (*SERVICE*) on your behalf (*PARTNERSHIP*) while I am bound by and for the gospel (*BONDAGE*).

In this way the *content* of discourse is highlighted by its literary *form* (e.g., recursion, textual architecture) in order to better effect the author's communicative *function* — artistry in verbal action to enhance the rhetorical purpose of personal persuasion.

The mention of "the gospel" in v. 13 raises this question: Why is so little of the "good news" (εὐαγγέλιον) expressed in this letter, that is, the essence of the apostolic message of salvation (sin-repentance-redemption-sanctification, etc.) that acts as the motivating force of the believer's life? The answer to this introduces another important aspect of an author's literary strategy, namely the use of a pervasive *intertextual resonance* that creates allusions to information that s/he can safely assume his/her audience (readership) will be quite familiar with. This essential presupposition of understanding makes it possible for Paul to

22 J.T. Burtchaell, Philemon's Problem: A Theology of Grace, Grand Rapids/Cambridge 1998, 17, observes that slavery (not servanthood) is "a master metaphor for Christian discipleship".

23 Note that the only two verses omitted from the preceding summary are those that refer to actions and attitudes that Paul does not want to see exhibited on the present occasion within the body of believers, namely, vv. 8 (an authoritative order) and 14 (coercion).

keep his personal letter to Philemon brief and to the point.[24] In other words, he can take for granted the fact that Philemon, along with those of his "house church", all know the basic theological principles concerning the "gospel" that Christ and his apostles preached and which is expressed elsewhere in early Christian discourse.[25]

A number of key words, expressions and references in Phlm thus function as verbal cues that could call to mind the indispensable issues and timely topics that Paul or one of his colleagues (like Epaphras, Col 1,7; 4,12; Phlm 23) had at some time in the past presented to the congregation meeting in Philemon's house — either orally or in writing. When arguing his case "in Christ" (v. 8) on behalf of Onesimus then, Paul would not have to reiterate this theological and ethical foundation underlying their common faith and life; a mere intertextual allusion would call such evangelical instruction to mind — the "word of truth" (Col 1,5–6). For example, when Paul praises Philemon for his "faith" and "love" (v. 5) it may have reminded him of a similar prayerful commendation for the Colossian churches in general (Col 1,3f. [NRSV]):

> [3]In our prayers for you we always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, [4]for we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints ...

In like manner, when Paul asks that God would lead Philemon to "be active in sharing [his] faith" and come to "a full understanding of every good thing we have in Christ" (v. 6 [NIV]), the scope of this prayer might have been enriched by a corresponding passage in Colossians (1,9–10 [NRSV]):

> ... asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of God's will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, [10]so that you may lead lives worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, as you bear fruit in every good work and as you grow in the knowledge of God.

24 Allusion also plays an important part in the artistic-rhetorical (figurative) element of Paul's argument, for example:

> Paul's stated readiness to share his economic resources [v. 18] shows the boundless character of his concern for Philemon. The commercial allusions function, then, as a quintessential illustration of the fact that Paul would utilize all resources at his disposal to prevent possible economic barriers, or any hindrances from forestalling the full granting of his request. ... The language of personal indebtedness also brings Philemon's story line to a climax in v. 19. (C.J. Martin, The Rhetorical Function of Commercial Language in Paul's Letter to Philemon [Verse 18], in: D.F. Watson [ed.], Persuasive Artistry: Studies in New Testament Rhetoric in Honor of George A. Kennedy [JSNT.S 50], Sheffield 1991, 321–337, here: 336f.)

25 Assuming Pauline authorship, I view Col as being the most likely literary candidate to provide this religious and moral background information — the principal subtext for Phlm. This letter was apparently written, sent, delivered, and communicated at roughly the same time as Phlm (Col 4,9).

As for the essence of Paul's "gospel" message, there could be no finer summary to keep in mind than that recorded in the Colossian letter (see Col 1,13–23a; 2,9–15).

With regard to the practical aspects of Christian living, there are several key passages in Colossians that pertain directly to the social, ethical, and ecclesiastical problems posed by the estrangement of the slave Onesimus from his master Philemon. Paul insightfully deals with the proper relationship that should exist between "slaves" and "masters" in Col 3,22–4,1. In the light of Paul's comprehensible admonition in Col 3,12–15 then, the manner in which Philemon is to "welcome" Onesimus is clarified (Phlm 17), and the rather cryptic "benefit" that Paul seeks (Phlm 20) is illuminated by Col 3,12–15.

There is yet another important, but often overlooked artistic method that biblical authors frequently employed in order to shape their discourse as a means of directing its intended interpretation. This is through the use of certain devices applied to the *oral-aural* dimension of his composition — features like alliteration, assonance, rhythm, rhyme, paronomasia — in order to create a variety of subtle effects that pertain to content, intent, emotion, attitude, and esthetic value. Such *phonological enhancement* was especially important for a live audience, though in ancient times literature was often read aloud by a reader even in isolation. There is abundant evidence throughout the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures that the original text was written with eventual public articulation in mind.[26] In other words, the authors formulated their composition, whatever the genre, so that it could be read — *aloud* — in such a way as to complement the message being communicated in several essential respects. Sound may be used, for example, to embellish or to emphasize selected aspects of a major theme or critical points of a narrative, to highlight prominent borders within the discourse structure, and to render the text as a whole more memorable as well as easier to remember.

The most obvious instance of this artistic device in Phlm occurs when Paul finally gets around to introducing the human object of his appeal — and then immediately forms a thematically-based pun that is related to the meaning of that name: "Onesimus" — "profitable, useful" (from the adjective ὀνήσιμος), the person who was formerly "useless" (ἄχρηστον) to Philemon (for whatever) reason, was now through

26 "The Greek word ἐπιστολή ('epistle') originally referred to an oral communication sent by messenger (Herodotus 4.10.1; Thucydides 7.11.1)" (Aune, New Testament [see n. 8], 158).

the conversion of Christ most "useful" (εὔχρηστον),[27] not only to his master, but also to the apostolic prisoner, Paul (vv. 10b–11). The impact of this pun may have been reinforced due to the similarity of the root χρηστός to the name for "Christ" (Χριστός). Also phonologically significant is the fact that each of the three focal terms here is situated at the close of a complete syntactic constituent. There may be a faint echo of this usage later on in the letter as Paul draws his appeal to a close and requests a special "benefit" (ὀναίμην) from his good brother in the Lord (v. 20).

As is evident in the Greek text, the entire discourse may be broken down into relatively short, rhythmic cadences of "utterance units", each of which represents a hypothetical "speech span" — that is, a meaningful stretch of articulation after which a breath pause might well occur. A closer examination of the text often reveals an even more artfully constructed passage, as we see for example in Paul's emotive build-up to his intercessory petition (vv. 15–16; the contrastive terms **A** and **B** have an *earthly* and a *spiritual* reference respectively):

	τάχα γὰρ διὰ τοῦτο **ἐχωρίσθη**	Perhaps this is why **he was parted** (from you)
A	πρὸς ὥραν,	for an hour,
B	ἵνα αἰώνιον	so that for all time
	αὐτὸν **ἀπέχῃς**, (**X**)	*him* **you might have back**,
A′	οὐκέτι ὡς δοῦλον	no longer as a slave
B′	ἀλλ' ὑπὲρ δοῦλον,	but more than a slave,
	ἀδελφὸν ἀγαπητόν, (**Y**)	as a beloved brother,
	μάλιστα *ἐμοί*,	**especially** to *me*,
	πόσῳ δὲ **μᾶλλον** *σοὶ*	but how much more **rather** to *you*,
A″	καὶ ἐν σαρκὶ	both in the flesh
B″	καὶ ἐν *κυρίῳ*. (**Y**)	and in the *Lord*.

The reiterated antithetical nature of Paul's persuasive argument is strengthened by the carefully positioned syntax — first a chiastic formation (v. 15), with an emphasis in the middle (X), and then a dual terraced pattern (v. 16) that mounts to a climax at the end of each series of units (Y). The poignant peak of v. 16 (overlapping with v. 15b) is augmented in Greek by a little phrasal rhyme scheme (underlined above), accompanied by alliteration and assonance, which also serves to throw the verbal spotlight of the author's concern squarely upon the participants involved: "him" (Onesimus), "me" (Paul), "you" (Philemon), and "the Lord" (see a similar juxtaposition of persons and sounds in the parallel lines of vv. 20a and 20b). The potential influence of such overt phonic enrichment is an important factor that contemporary communi-

27 "These two words are frequently contrasted in ancient moral literature and typically refer to a person's character more than to the quality of one's work" (Wall, Philemon [see n. 18], 206).

cators of Scripture should pay some attention to, especially when the text is to read orally in public.

5. *Rhetorical shaping*: In the section on genre selection above (II,1), Phlm was classified as an "epistle of recommendation", which like all Ancient Near Eastern letters manifests a basic tripartite discourse organization. As was already noted, an admirable literary work is normally arranged not only to communicate its message effectively, that is, in an appealing way with regard to both style and structure, but also to convince its intended readership to accept that message in terms of its subject matter and/or moral imperatives.[28] These three functions – the *informative*, the *artistic*, and the *rhetorical* – are distinct, but closely interrelated in most biblical literature. In this section I will survey some of the main cognitive-structural aspects of Paul's epistolary plea to Philemon in order to provide a sharper perspective on the expert manner in which this letter has been fashioned.

One standard format for constructing a speech, or the argument of a letter, features four main divisions within the body portion:[29]

- *Introduction* (*exordium*): The beginning of the discourse in which the writer attempts to elicit the goodwill of his addressees and to prepare the ground conceptually and emotively for the subject or exhortation at hand (Phlm 4–7).
- *Proposition* (*narratio, propositio*): A clear summary statement (*logos*) of the central theme, thesis, opinion, request, or appeal (concerning belief or behavior) and the reason for this proposal in the current setting of communication (vv. 10 ... [13] ... 17–18).
- *Elaboration* (*probatio, exhortatio, refutatio*): Sets forth various "proofs" for the chief line of argument in support of the proposition, whether logical (deductive) enthymemes or commonplace (inductive) examples, citations, maxims, anecdotes, analogies, contrasts, an appeal to some authority, etc.; these are often accompanied by personal entreaties and admonitions or a pointed refutation of a contrary position on the matter (vv. 8.10–16.18–19).
- *Conclusion* (*peroratio*): A reinforced summary or recapitulation of the central issue(s) and a final effort to evoke a sympathetic response (*pathos*), that is, to influence the attitudes and capture the emotions of the addressees with respect to the author and his expressed proposition (vv. 20–22).

28 Burtchaell (Problem [see n. 22], 11), among others, considers Phlm to be "a masterpiece of Greek persuasion".

29 See, for example, D.E. Aune, Art. Philemon, Letter to, in: idem, The Westminster Dictionary of New Testament and Early Christian Literature and Rhetoric, Louisville/London 2003, 354–356, here: 354f.; G.W. Hansen, Art. Rhetorical Criticism, in: Hawthorne/Martin, Dictionary (see n. 4), 823; B.L. Mack, Rhetoric and the New Testament, Minneapolis 1990, 41f.; Martin, Function (see n. 24), 323–326; R.R. Melick Jr., Philippians, Colossians, Philemon (NAC 32), Nashville 1991, 340f. The roughly corresponding Latin (sub-)designations are given in brackets. However, it is almost impossible to find a pair of contemporary scholars who completely agree on these rhetorical labels or the structure as a whole. The following is my attempt to synthesize the sources. We recall that Phlm is primarily an instance of *deliberative* rhetoric, with an emphasis on convincing an audience concerning what was expedient or advantageous for them to think, say, and/or do in a positive or negative sense (on this point, see B.J. Malina/J.J. Pilch, Social-Science Commentary on the Letters of Paul, Minneapolis 2006, 321; A. Patzia, Art. Philemon, Letter to, in: Hawthorne/Martin, Dictionary [see n. 4], 703–707, here: 705).

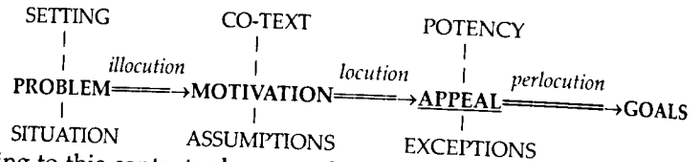
Note how the two middle constituents appear to be interwoven in their textual realization as part of the apostle's insightful strategy of argumentation. I also suggest that underlying Paul's overt requests, which constitute the "proposition" (vv. 10.17–18), is another one that is actually quite important to him personally (v. 13). Some of the specific formal "reinforcers" of these four major rhetorical moves in Phlm are listed below; they illustrate what a diverse array of stylistic techniques were at the disposal of ancient literary practitioners:

- an indirect summons of supporting "public witnesses" through the opening and concluding personal references (vv. 1–2.23–24);
- the ironic self-abrogation of one's right or authority, such as the power to "command" Philemon what to do (v. 8);
- the use of emotively-charged personal terms (e.g., "prisoner" [vv. 1.9]; "old man" [v. 9]; "begotten" [v. 10]; "in chains" [v. 10]; "partner" [v. 17]);
- a prominent *counterpoint-point* manner of argumentation throughout (e.g., vv. 8–11);
- a possible appeal to divine providence and planning (suggested by the particle "perhaps" and the passive verb ἐχωρίσθη), that is, God purposefully working in the "short separation" of Onesimus and Philemon for their "eternal" benefit (v. 15);
- "especially to me ... how much more to you" – a *qal wehomer* rabbinical rhetorical device that progresses from the lesser to the greater (v. 16);
- a vicarious analogy with regard to the desired action – to "receive him as me" (v. 17);
- anticipating and parrying potential problems or objections, using some measure of emotively toned euphemism or understatement (v. 18);
- Paul's "token offer" to repay the financial debt incurred by Onesimus (v. 19a – an offer that he was probably not in a position to carry out, though there is some debate on this issue);
- a contrastive claim "not to mention" what is then immediately stated (*paralipsis*) (v. 19b);
- concealing one's ultimate objective or primary request and leaving this to the addressee to deduce and freely decide upon (v. 20);
- praising the "obedience" of the addressee, without actually commanding the person what to do (v. 21a) – even that which is "above and beyond the call of duty" (v. 21b);
- concluding with the seemingly incidental addition of "one thing more" (v. 22), whereby the writer/speaker adds an afterthought, yet one that clearly impacts upon his preceding argument (a "veiled threat" to come check things out).

In order to properly understand and interpret the rhetorical dimension of any literary discourse, however, one must carefully investigate its *extralinguistic background* – in this case, the sociological, cultural, and religious setting of the text in its original Ancient Near Eastern environment. A thorough examination of this nature would take us well beyond the scope of the present essay so I will merely offer a suggestion as to how this contextual consideration may be combined with a co-

textual and a textual study within the compass of a single analytical framework.[30] Such an "argument-structure analysis" is especially helpful when dealing with the largely *paraenetic* (hortatory-admonitory-minatory) texts to be found in both the Hebrew prophets and also the apostolic epistles, because it takes into consideration a relatively large number of verbal, interpersonal, and situational factors.

The key structural and pragmatic elements that are explicitly or implicitly involved in the formal presentation of an argument are displayed below in dynamic interrelationship with each other and the central constituent of the whole, namely, the principal "speech act" of making an *appeal* on behalf of someone:



According to this contextual approach, the ten aspects of any hortatory discourse operate as an integrated communication system within the framework of the broader pragmatic theory of speech (and "text") acts,[31] which refer to what words (oral or written) actually *do* as distinct from what they overtly *say*. A speech act then may be defined as a combined sequence of three basic constituents: an *illocution*, or underlying utterance intention, a *locution*, the concrete verbal representation in a given language, and a *perlocution*, which designates the desired consequence or outcome of a certain speech act from the speaker's perspective. The larger *argument structure* may be briefly defined in terms of New Testament epistolary discourse in general and illustrated with specific reference to Phlm as follows (references to the text are given in parentheses):[32]

30 The following discussion is borrowed, with some modification, from Wendland, Literature (see n. 7), section 6.2.5. This conceptual framework must itself be "contextualized" by the world view and value system of the Ancient Near East, including such basic sociocultural perspectives and distinctions as honor-shame, freedom-slavery, in group-out group, challenge-riposte, fictive kinship, imperial politics, polytheism, corporate personality, reciprocity, and patronage (see Malina/Pilch, Commentary [see n. 29], 331–409).

31 The appropriateness of a "speech-act" approach to the analysis of the Pauline corpus is supported by the following observation by Martin, Function (see n. 24), 324–325: "Functioning as a substitute for Paul's presence, the letters became an appropriate 'surrogate' medium by which Paul could address the congregations as God's representative."

32 My view (see also M.J. Harris, Colossians and Philemon [EGGNT], Grand Rapids 1991, 241f.; C.S. Keener, The IVP Bible Background Commentary [New Testament], Downers Grove 1993, 642–644; P.T. O'Brien, Colossians, Philemon [WBC 44], Waco 1982, 266–268) is that the weight of textual and contextual (socio-cultural and historical) evidence still supports what some scholars term the "traditional" hermeneutical perspective on Phlm (see, e.g., Pearson, Assumptions [see n. 5], 259, and C.H. Felder, The Letter to Philemon, in: L.E. Keck [ed.], The New Interpreter's Bible XI, Nashville 2000, 833–905, here: 886), one that apparently goes back to John Chrysostom (see M.M. Thompson, Colossians and Philemon [THNTC], Cambridge/Grand Rapids 2005, 194). Representing a different point of view, Malina/Pilch, Commentary (see n. 29), 321, make the following observation:

> As a high context document [i.e., Phlm], little of what was going on then and there between Paul and his addressee(s) is spelled out in it. We are separated by such a broad sweep of time and culture from the communicating persons in their contexts that we must supply quite a bit of information to build a plausible reading scenario.

Alternative "reading scenarios" to that which I propose here may be found then in the second set of commentators cited above, including S.C. Winter, Paul's Letter to Philemon, NTS 33 (1987) 1–15. The most radically disparate is A.D. Callahan, Embassy of Onesimus: The Letter of Paul to Philemon (NTCt), Valley Forge 1997, who comes to the conclusion that Philemon and Onesimus are blood brothers! See Patzia, Philemon (see n. 29), 705f., and J.D.G. Dunn, The Epistles to the Colossians and Philemon (NIGTC), Grand Rapids 1996, 301–307, for a modified "traditional" approach.

a) *Setting* — encompasses the general historical, cultural, social, political, religious, and environmental milieu in which the written act of communication takes place, as this concerned both the author and his addressees/audience. Paul presumably wrote Phlm from a Roman prison (or while under house arrest) early in the second half of the first century CE (v. 1). Philemon was apparently a wealthy Greek Christian living in Colossae, a market town located in the prosperous Roman province of Asia (v. 2). Philemon had been directly converted through the preaching ministry of the apostle Paul some years earlier (v. 19). This was an age when commercial and domestic slavery was widely practiced and recognized as an important socio-economic institution. It was also a time when many slaves were being converted to Christianity with the ensuing question: How would this change in their spiritual status affect their social status in the community of saints?

b) *Problem* — refers to the particular spiritual or moral lack, fault, failing, need, test, or trial that the author wishes to discuss and deal with in his text, whether an entire book or only a selected portion. In this case, Paul faced the problem of how to reconcile the estranged slave Onesimus with his master Philemon without the benefit of a personal talk or the opportunity to bring the two together. It is important to note that neither Onesimus' departure/flight from Colossae nor his apparent theft (v. 18) is mentioned explicitly anywhere in the letter. This could be an essential aspect of Paul's argument strategy — a rhetoric of silence, that is, by not specifying any sort of wrongdoing on the part of Onesimus, the apostle may be tacitly suggesting that a complete forgiveness of all "debts" is the right place to start.

c) *Situation* — considers the human events or interpersonal interaction that occasioned or provoked the "problem"; it is the set of circumstances (the "rhetorical exigency") that calls for a verbal response from one or more of the parties concerned. By removing himself from slavery and service, Onesimus had committed a serious capital offense. If ever identified and caught, he would be subject to imprisonment and death under Roman law. Perhaps through the efforts of Christian slaves in Rome, Onesimus had come into contact with Paul and was subsequently converted to the Way (v. 10). On the other hand, it may be that Onesimus, knowing that the apostle was a close personal friend of Philemon, deliberately sought him out to serve as a mediator between him and his master in some dispute ("wrong", v. 18). In any case, he had surely risked his own life/freedom by ministering to an infamous political prisoner (v. 11). Now Paul was sending Onesimus on an equally dangerous mission back to his master as his personal emissary with this letter of intercession (see Col 4,9).

d) *Appeal* — designates the specific exhortation, command, admonition, rebuke, or warning that either promotes or prohibits a certain way of thinking and/or behaving in keeping with biblical teaching and its associated sanctified lifestyle. In this letter Paul makes two related overt requests, both of which involve some act of forgiveness: first, that Philemon "receive" (i.e., forgive) Onesimus, whom Paul commends as a Christian brother ("free" in Christ, v. 17); second, that he charge any of Onesimus' debts (such as those due to stealing or lost service) to Paul's own account (v. 18). The first appeal entails an associated behavioral consequence, namely, that Philemon would *not* punish Onesimus, either personally or through the public legal system. Paul's second petition calls to mind the fact that in one sense or another, all Christians are indebted to one another whether virtually or in reality.[33] Those who are in no position to repay can only be freely forgiven.

e) *Goal(s)* — summarize the author's desired outcome in terms of either new or reinforced thinking and behavior that may be expected to materialize, sooner or later, if the addressee(s) fully comply with the

33 Several additional Ancient Near Eastern sociological facts are relevant here:
> Respect for age was important in his culture, so Paul appeals to his age [v. 9]. ... The point of Paul's plea [v. 10] is that one could not enslave the son of one's own spiritual patron. ... Slaves were sometimes freed by their masters to become slaves of some god; here [v. 13] Paul asks that Philemon free Onesimus for the service of the gospel. He appeals not on his own authority but to Philemon's honor as a friend. ... Roman law saw slaves as both people and property; but a full brother [v. 16] would naturally not be viewed as property. ... By ancient social custom, friends were bound by the reciprocal obligation of repaying favors [v. 19]. (Keener, Commentary [see n. 32], 645f.; verse numbers added in brackets).

appeal. As a result of his passionate entreaty on behalf of Onesimus, Paul is hopeful that Philemon "will do even more than I ask" with regard to the case in question (v. 21). It is reasonable, at least arguable, that the main intention here (or *implicature*, considering the text in relation to its interpersonal context) is that Philemon would go beyond what Paul requests on the surface and would read between the lines, so to speak, in order to do something even greater to "refresh the apostle's heart" (v. 20). This would undoubtedly be to give Onesimus his freedom so that he might return to Rome to assist as a "partner" (Philemon's proxy) in Paul's mission outreach and stand as a living testimony of the power of forgiveness (vv. 13.17.20–21).[34] Whether or not this implicit personal aim of Paul is applicable, the potential impact of this master-servant crisis and its outcome for the whole Christian community was indeed great. Onesimus was a "test case" for the Colossian house church. If its leader, Philemon, would act in loving forgiveness towards his errant slave, he would not only confirm his status in the congregation, but would also establish the unity of the Body and set an example for other Christian slave owners (vv. 5–7).

f) *Potency* — estimates the relative degree of linguistic and emotive strength with which the text's major appeal and supporting motivations are expressed (i.e., its apparent level of directness, urgency, authority, etc.) or the relative degree of mitigation and indirection manifested during the overt or covert line of argumentation. An imperative verb, for example, would exhibit the least amount of verbal alleviation, while an optative wish would convey the greatest mitigation. Paul's approach, as he develops his multifaceted petition to Philemon, is very low key. He issues no direct command in connection with Onesimus' social and legal predicament (v. 8), and although he refers in different ways to his special personal request, he nowhere orders Philemon even to forgive Onesimus, let alone release him for service to Paul. The intention of the entire argument is developed by subtle implication and is based primarily upon Paul's close "loving" relationship with Philemon (vv. 5.7.9), on the one hand, and the bond that exists between Christ and his church on the other (vv. 3.5.16.20.23–25). It is a masterfully constructed deliberative discourse aimed at fraternal persuasion in the interest of the common good of the larger fellowship.

g) *Exceptions* — encompass any potential objections to the central appeal or imperative. Exceptions are conveyed by such devices as contrast, antithesis, counter-case, concession, opposing evidence, or a hy-

34 "The word 'emancipation' seems to be trembling on his [Paul's] lips, and yet he does not once utter it" — J.B. Lightfoot (cited in Harris, Philemon [see n. 32], 278).

pothetical rebuttal. They are generally anticipated by the author and dealt with in the discourse, whether overtly or — to avoid drawing too much attention to them — indirectly. Since exceptions are often implicit rather than stated, their postulation in the analysis must be tentative. As part of his plea to Philemon, for example, Paul confronts the chance that Onesimus may have stolen from Philemon by offering to make restitution on the slave's behalf (vv. 18–19a). The significant financial loss that the release of Onesimus would mean for Philemon is gently handled by a reference to the unpayable debt that Philemon owed Paul for his spiritual deliverance (v. 19b). Anticipating Philemon's possible tardiness, reluctance, or even refusal to deal with this sensitive issue, one that could bring him into sharp criticism (along with considerable "shame") within the secular community if he acquiesced, Paul makes a pointed promise to visit Philemon in the near future (v. 22). At that time he would be able to see for himself how the matter has been resolved and to address any outstanding concerns over the matter. This proposal merges with Paul's strategy of "quiet diplomacy" (or "motivation", see below).

h) *Motivation* — specifies the various types of reasoning offered in support of the author's appeal(s). These may be either deductive (e.g., cause-effect, general-specific, lesser-to-greater) "proofs"[35] or inductive "evidence" (e.g., anecdotes, maxims, personal testimonies, examples, analogies, case studies). Both kinds of reasoning relate to content (*logos*), emotion (*pathos*), and/or the speaker's personal credibility, reliability, and authority (*ethos*). In my view, Phlm consists of a string of interconnected motivations of varied potency that extends throughout the entire text, from the salutation to its valediction. This semi-narrative thread of largely implicit importunity builds progressively to a climax in v. 21b. The principal elements may be summarized as follows:

- Philemon's love and faith are well known in the community of believers; thus he stands as a prominent model to follow (vv. 5–6). =>
- Such Christian behavior has greatly encouraged Paul, a beloved co-worker in Christ's kingdom work (vv. 1b.7.17). =>
- The apostle prefers not to command his honorable colleague Philemon (v. 1) with regard to how he should act (v. 8), but Paul wants his friend to do the righteous thing of his own free will (v. 14). =>
- Paul is currently living in dire and depressing circumstances (v. 9). =>
- Formerly "useless" Onesimus is now a beloved fellow believer and most "useful" to the imprisoned apostle (vv. 11–12). =>
- Paul would like to keep Onesimus with him in Rome to assist in the gospel ministry (v. 13). =>
- Onesimus is in a position to serve Paul in prison on Philemon's behalf (v. 16). =>

35 Phlm is filled with partial syllogisms (enthymemes), for example, A. Philemon is Paul's "brother" (vv. 1.7); B. Onesimus is also Paul's "brother" (implied in v. 10); C. Therefore, Onesimus is Philemon's "brother" too (vv. 16.17)!

- Nevertheless, Paul is sending Onesimus back to Philemon (vv. 12.17) =>
- Philemon owes his present spiritual state as well as the hope of eternal life to Paul (v. 19). =>
- Paul could really use some extra personal "refreshment" from Philemon (v. 20). =>
- Paul is most confident that Philemon will "obey" and do "even more" than what he is overtly requesting (i.e., a forgiving welcome for Onesimus), namely, release him from slavery for evangelistic service (v. 21) (this being the culminating climax of Paul's line of motivation). =>
- Paul will visit Philemon as soon as possible to wind up the case of Onesimus in person, perhaps receiving him then as a personal aide (v. 22a) (this being one possible denouement). =>
- *Ultimate anticipated outcome*: The answer to Paul's prayers and those of Philemon will merge (v. 22b) so that the apostle is once again "encouraged" by his dear friend and fellow worker's display of brotherly "love" (vv. 1b.5–7).

i) *Co-text* — identifies all texts that are either semantically or pragmatically related to the discourse under consideration, whether syntagmatically (i.e., *intra*textually, as part of the same document) or paradigmatically (i.e., *inter*textually, from a different but somehow related discourse — oral or written). Since Phlm is a short document, intratextual pressure is for the most part the product of recursion and the structural patterns which serve to demarcate and unify the discourse (see II,3). As for external sources, the greatest influence may well have come from Paul's letter to the *Colossians*, which was written and sent about the same time (Col 4,7–9). In addition to the same names of those being greeted by the apostle (see Col 1,1f.; 4,10–14; Phlm 1–2.23–24), there are some important thematic similarities: praise for the clear manifestation of the recipients' "faith in Christ Jesus" and "love for all the saints" (Col 1,4; Phlm 5); the call for believers to forgive one another (Col 3,13b; Phlm 17); and a strong appeal to demonstrate the qualities that promote spiritual unity in the church (Col 3,12–17; Phlm 6.15–17). Other instances of intertextuality that forge a conceptual link between these two letters involve certain key theological and ethical presuppositions as noted earlier (see also the "assumptions" below). In addition, there are also a number of lexical parallels between Paul's exhortations in Phlm and his other epistles (e.g., Eph 4,2–3.12–13.16.32; 6,9).

j) *Assumptions* — indicate the various ideas, values, attitudes, and feelings that a writer shares with his readership as part of their shared culture (Greco-Roman) and sub-culture (Christian). A writer takes it for granted that his own presupposed viewpoint (including a wider worldview) will be understood and applied to the text at hand by his audience in keeping with the pragmatic principle of *relevance*. When they share knowledge, it does not need to be made explicit in the text, though it may be stated for special effect (e.g., Paul's reminder to Philemon in v. 19 that he owes his life to Paul). Some other important assumptions underlie the argument of Phlm: In early Christianity the institution of slavery was accepted (without defending or supporting it)

with the idea that it could be ameliorated through a spiritual change in the persons involved. Reconciliation involving fellow Christians of diverse social statuses was essential to the unity of all believers in Christ and to the church as a religious fellowship (vv. 1–3.23–25). So too the demonstration of partnership in the work was crucial to their survival and promotion (vv. 6.13.17). Philemon is a genuine Christian and sincerely desires to be of assistance to Paul (v. 21); moreover, he has the legal power and wealth to enable him to commute Onesimus' potential sentence. Paul has the religious authority to command Philemon (v. 8). The congregation at Colossae, to whom this letter is also addressed (vv. 2.25), will support Paul's appeal that Philemon should forgive Onesimus. Paul will do his best to keep the promise to visit shortly – to pursue the Onesimus case if it has not yet been satisfactorily resolved (v. 22). As a believer and a beloved disciple of Paul (v. 10), Onesimus is personally demonstrating his repentance by returning to his master despite the potential danger of doing so. A positive decision by Philemon will benefit all the parties concerned (vv. 11.16).

It is interesting to observe when reading this hypothetical scenario that as Paul develops his discourse with Philemon (primarily, and secondarily also with the Christian assembly meeting at his house), he incorporates the three fundamental motives prescribed by the ancient teachers of rhetoric, namely, to establish rapport (*ethos*), to convince the mind (*logos*), and to move the emotions (*pathos*). These verbal tactics would no doubt have been familiar to most members of his intended audience and correspond to what are termed in modern parlance the "relational" (or "phatic"), the "informative", and the "affective" (emotive, imperative) functions of communication. The three types are subtly modulated from Paul's point of view and interwoven throughout the text as part of his applied strategy of persuasion, at times converging within the scope of a very short passage, for example, the juxtaposed promise and plea of vv. 19–20:[36]

> I, Paul, am writing this with *my own hand*, I will pay it back. (*performative*)
> Let me not mention to you that you even owe me your very self. (*informative*)
> Yes indeed, brother, (*relational*)
> may I have some benefit from you in the Lord; (*imperative*)
> refresh *my heart* in Christ! (*emotive*)

It is entirely possible that at this climactic stage in the unfolding development of Paul's argument the mention of "heart" (literally, "bowels" σπλάγχνα) is a veiled, perhaps euphemistic, reference to the chief object of his request – Onesimus himself (see v. 12). Thus, the implication is, Philemon should "refresh" both Onesimus as well as Paul by freeing the former![37]

On a more abstract level of conception, the rhetorical organization of any persuasive discourse may be further analyzed by examining the textual realization of two interpersonal macro-functions: status-preserving *POWER* and brotherly (communal) *SOLIDARITY*. The former, *vertical* dimension of social interaction represents an effort to exercise some measure of order or control in personal relations; the latter, *horizontal* dimension focuses upon a desire to create an emotive, cohesive bond between two or more individuals or groups. Thus, when composing Phlm, Paul skillfully balances one impulse over against the other in order to convey his obvious as well as his unstated wishes with the greatest amount of impact upon and apparent value for his addressee(s). Though he clearly alludes to his apostolic authority, he makes sure not to do this in a heavy-handed, obtrusive manner.

On the contrary, Paul implements a gentle, restrained approach, one in which his foremost desire is partially, but not entirely concealed. His chief interest seems to be to remain on good terms with his friend and colleague Philemon and to promote a prevailing atmosphere of harmony, brotherhood, and partnership in their common concern for the gospel ministry. In the passage above, for example (vv. 19–20), we see how Paul deftly words his text to move from an expression of deference (solidarity) in a promise to "repay" Onesimus' debt (line 1), to an exercise of power in a pointed reminder to Philemon about who led him to conversion (line 2), back again to an expression of "brother"-hood (line 3), a little more power in his request for "some benefit" (line 4), and closing with an appeal to the inclusive solidarity of faith that binds together all brothers "in Christ" (line 5).

36 Regarding the literary technique of applying a distinctive "point of view" in a text, Barclay, Philemon (see n. 9), 103, observes:

> [A] key aspect of Paul's letter is the way he represents what has happened, portraying the actors and events from the perspective, and the order, that will best suit his appeal.

37 "At every point [in the letter] Paul interposes himself into the relationship between Philemon and Onesimus, and this strategy reaches its climax in the direct appeal of v. 17. ... Here is the essence of Paul's strategy: so to identify himself with Onesimus and Onesimus with himself that Philemon has to regard the returning Onesimus as if he were Paul himself [and act accordingly]. ... Thus the returning Onesimus is totally transformed in the eyes of his master" (Barclay, Philemon [see n. 9], 108): Now he is someone most "useful" (v. 11), a "brother in the Lord" (v. 16), a person of great "benefit" both to Paul and also to Philemon (vv. 19–20).

III

What more can one say then about Phlm, based on the preceding form-functional, literary-discourse analysis? Space limits me to two final practical observations:

1. More specifically, with respect to serious exegetical and expository work, it is necessary to keep the distinct, but interrelated variables of *form* and *function* in mind when analyzing any paraenetic text of Scripture (whether apostolic or prophetic) in preparation for communicating it both meaningfully and also with equivalent impact and appeal for any purpose, via any type of media. All pertinent information concerning the original setting and circumstances needs to be taken into consideration as one carries out a study of the discourse *as a whole*. This whole includes not only the parts, but it embraces also the textual and extratextual *context* in which those parts occur and from which they derive their meaning and significance. Furthermore, in order for the basic message of a document to be accurately comprehended, a writer's paramount *problem-solving strategy* of rhetorical expression needs to be clearly recognized and correctly interpreted. This applies in particular to an author's special focus of attention, for example, the main thrust of Paul's explicit and implicit appeal to Philemon on behalf of Onesimus with respect to the principal interpretive options involving the expression "more than I say" (v. 21).

2. More generally then, we must not forget also the great contemporary relevance of this little letter of Paul to Philemon in terms of the salient thematic concepts of this letter: *affection, indebtedness, fellow-partner-ship, service* (see II,4). These summarize the *interpersonal ideal* that could well serve Christ's contemporary church through the common recognition that fellow members of the body are bound to one another by these same four factors. To be sure, they were first modeled by the Lord himself, in perfection.[38] So whenever and wherever in the world these qualities or activities are applied in mutual concern for his followers, there is great hope for the future, no matter what the prevailing social, political, economic, and related circumstances happen to be. Paul's appeal to Philemon on behalf of Onesimus is indeed a powerfully "creative adaptation of the gospel to the life of God's people"[39]:

> The way Paul handle[d] that situation continues to model how God's people should respond whenever social arrangements keep Christians from living out the truth that believers of all social [and cultural] backgrounds are equal in Christ. ... The difficult prospect we face ... is to set aside our social differences and the values undergirding society's various hierarchies to build *koinonia* — congregations of redeemed persons who have been given a new capacity to value and to love one another equally. Within Christ's church, [the Father] is an equal-opportunity God![40]

38 "Luther traced [in Phlm] a theological paradigm: Paul identified himself with Onesimus to advocate his cause, just as Christ takes our part to reconcile us to God" (Barclay, Philemon [see n. 9], 120).

39 Wall, Philemon (see n. 18), 190.

But we are left, here at the end, with a lingering question concerning the eventual outcome this letter: How did Philemon actually respond to Paul's evangelically based, artistically phrased, and rhetorically toned request? It is probable, at least arguable, that he would have acquiesced to the apostle's carefully crafted appeal for the release of Onesimus — "doing even more" than what Paul "said (asked)" in the surface structure of his letter.[41] Furthermore, the very presence of this letter in the canon of Scripture would suggest a positive response to its fervent expression of what must have been a serious personal crisis and faith-challenge within the congregational life of the early fellowship of believers. Indeed, the potent, provocative, proactive message of Phlm continues to confront the Church of Jesus Christ today with its many "Onesimuses".[42] It remains for contemporary communicators to transmit the religious *matter* of this book (and the others of Scripture) in the most relevant *manner* — one that is best suited for or most appropriate in the sociocultural setting at hand — a proclamation that perhaps even physically (i.e., *audibly*) as well as emotionally "refreshes the hearts of the saints" (τὰ σπλάγχνα τῶν ἁγίων ἀναπέπαυται [Phlm 7]).

40 Ibid., 189; my additions are in brackets.

41 As suggested in the preceding analysis, by the time he reaches v. 21, Philemon would have been positively swayed by the thread of strong implications that Paul had woven into this epistle, e.g., "I appeal to you for my son, Onesimus ... he has become useful ... to me ... I would have liked to keep him with me ... that I may have some benefit from you ... refresh my heart ... confident of your obedience ..."

42 "What might it mean to take our fellow Churchfolks as our dear brothers and sisters in Christ ... including junkies, those with brains burnt out by Alzheimer's, those on death row, [those afflicted with AIDS, those kids living on the street], those who despise us, those who cheat, and those we have cheated? What might it mean to be goaded to find what we owe to these dearest brothers and sisters? ... Once we figure that out, we will know that the Postcard to Philemon was a divinely benevolent letter-bomb" (Burtchaell, Problem [see n. 22], 334; my addition is in brackets).

How to Deal with Onesimus? Paul's Solution within the Frame of Ancient Legal and Documentary Sources

PETER ARZT-GRABNER

Phlm is the shortest of Paul's letters, and it deals mostly with the relationship between a slave and his master. Like other personal letters of Graeco-Roman times, Phlm is not a piece of historiography; it is not aimed at presenting the exact historical data, but rather at addressing a particular situation or problem from the letter-writer's point of view. Moreover, if the recipients of a written communication were already aware of the situation or problem itself, there would obviously have been no need for a letter-writer to provide a complete description of the situation or problem. The obscurity of the epistolary situation, generally speaking, is therefore typical of many letters. Moreover, it should be borne in mind that Paul, in his letters, left out many details, most probably because he himself, like his addressees, was already familiar with these details. Nowadays, however, we often do not know what questions were being answered in many ancient letters. Consequently, the problems faced by modern exegesis in respect of many Pauline passages should be regarded as clear evidence that Paul's letters are no systematic treatises on theological matters, but that they should be interpreted as letters written in specific situations, for specific recipients, and that these letters deal with specific matters relating to the everyday life of Paul's communities. All this is especially true in the case of Phlm.

Thus, with regard to the lack of background information about the present situation of Philemon and his slave Onesimus, it is obvious that Paul did not need to present more information than he really *wanted* to present, or than he thought necessary in order to achieve this objective. Moreover, the information that we find in Phlm was presented by Paul according to the way in which *he*, personally, viewed the situation, which may have been very different from the way in which Philemon viewed it. And, finally, it may be assumed that in his letter, Paul included every important argument and rhetorical device that he thought might strengthen his appeal — since this appeal was his primary intention.

While I was engaged in working on the Papyrological Commentary on Phlm,[1] and also during my work on another article dealing with Onesimus' situation when he met Paul,[2] I realised more and more that Paul's images and arguments are often based on legal, economic, and social issues relating to the everyday life of Graeco-Roman antiquity. Documentary papyri, ostraca, as well as waxed and wooden tablets provide the most accurate picture that we can obtain in respect of the practices relating to law, economics, social life, and also letter-writing during that period. In many instances, these sources provide us with extensive information in addition to that which is obtained from literary sources, thus making it clear that the practical situations and issues pertaining to Graeco-Roman society, on many levels and in respect of many details, were not always accurately portrayed in the usually idealised or stereotyped images drawn by authors of Greek and Latin literature, and were often more complex in reality.

Obviously, it can be taken for granted that documentary papyri, ostraca, and tablets do not present the final answers to the questions concerning Onesimus' status before he met Paul and after Philemon received him back. Rather, these sources draw frames that allow us to categorise the different options in terms of plausibility; thus, we are in a better position to decide which of the different solutions that are offered, are possible, and, of these, which are more plausible. On the other hand, options that are implausible, can be discerned more easily.

In this article, I will draw three frames based on legal and documentary sources to illustrate the complex and often divergent contextual background relating to the situation of Onesimus when he met Paul, as well as to the practical solution that Paul recommended to Philemon. Frame I will merely provide a short and basic overview regarding the complex institution of ancient Roman slavery, on the basis of papyrological evidence; this frame will make provision for some general conclusions in respect of Onesimus as a slave and Philemon as a slaveholder. The guideline for the development of Frame II will be Paul's personal description of Onesimus' situation before he had met Paul. Legal and documentary sources that contain equivalent expressions will provide the data for this frame, which will make it possible for us to realise the few options that were open to Paul as a starting point for his strategy and appeal. Frame III, finally, will be drawn from papyri illuminating the meaning and function of certain terms and expressions used by Paul, which lead to, or form the centre of his appeal, namely: πίστις/πιστός, and κοινωνός.

1 P. Arzt-Grabner, Philemon (PKNT 1), Göttingen 2003.
2 P. Arzt-Grabner, Onesimus *erro*: Zur Vorgeschichte des Philemonbriefes, ZNW 95 (2004) 131–143.

I. Frame I: Ancient Roman Slavery[3]

The slave status of persons can be attributed to war-captivity, but so far only one papyrus has been found that refers to the enslavement of prisoners of war (P.Hamb. I 63 [125/126 CE; see l. 9]). Factors that have not been papyrologically attested as yet are the capture of civilians to be sold as slaves, and the phenomenon of parents who sold their children or even themselves (attested by, e.g., Philostr., VA 8.7.12). Very well attested is the practice relating to the lineage of a slave mother, whose children were called either "descendants" (ἔγγονοι or ἔκγονοι)[4] or "houseborn" (οἰκογενής, in the sense of "slave by birth", "from birth onwards").[5] The rather extensive evidence indicates that slaveholders approved of and even encouraged the "natural" reproduction of their slaves.[6] The option of picking up foundlings from rubbish dumps[7] and treating them like housebred slave children was also financially attractive, as the costs of raising them, as a rule, did not exceed the expenses involved in purchasing slaves at the slave market, but were distributed over several years.

The sale and purchase of slaves was regulated by specific rules[8] and had to follow a particular sequence. The relevant terms could be speci-

3 For a more extensive presentation of the papyrological evidence, see I. Bieżuńska-Małowist, L'esclavage dans l'Égypte gréco-romaine 2: Période romaine (AFil 35), Wrocław etc. 1977; J.A. Straus, Art. L'esclavage dans l'Égypte romaine, in: ANRW II.10.1 (1988) 841–911. For a recent general overview, see I. Weiler, Über Sklavenhandel und Sklavenpreise in der Antike, in: A. Exenberger/J. Nussbaumer (eds.), Von Menschenhandel und Menschenpreisen: Wert und Bewertung von Menschen im Spiegel der Zeit (IUPM), Innsbruck 2007, 15–39.
4 See, e.g., P.Mich. V 322(a),14–15 (November 1, 46 CE); P.Oxy. II 265,21 (81–96 CE); III 496,5–6 with BL VI, 97 (= Chrest.Mitt. 287; April 19, 127 CE); for further examples, see Straus, L'esclavage (see n. 3), 851 n. 29.
5 See, e.g., P.Mich. II 121,4 vii,4 (April 30 – May 28, 42 CE); P.Oxy. XXXI 2582,6 (January 31, 51 CE); XXXVIII 2873 verso, 34 (October 25, 62 CE); for further examples and bibliographies, see Straus, L'esclavage (see n. 3), 853 n. 38; Arzt-Grabner, Philemon (see n. 1), 87f.
6 See E. Herrmann-Otto, *Ex ancilla natus*: Untersuchungen zu den "hausgeborenen" Sklaven und Sklavinnen im Westen des Römischen Kaiserreiches (FASk 24), Stuttgart 1994; Straus, L'esclavage (see n. 3), 853; Bieżuńska-Małowist, L'esclavage (see n. 3), 19–21, 27.
7 A foundling was called ἀναίρετος ("picked up"; e.g., BGU IV 1058,11 [= Chrest.Mitt. 170; C.Pap.Gr. I 4; March 30, 13 BCE]), or κοπριαναίρετος ("picked up from the rubbish dump"; e.g., P.Amst. I 41,70.87–88.114–115 with BL VIII, 7 [= C.Pap.Gr. I 7; May 23, 8 BCE]); see also the personal name Κοπρῆς (e.g., P.Berl.Leihg. I 6,51 [166/167 CE]; P.Mich. XV 751,33 [= New Docs. II pp. 63–64; late II CE]).
8 On the edict of the *curule aediles*, see below.

fied by the owner himself (the usual practice) or by an authorised agent.[9] As the relatively numerous preserved slave sale contracts[10] originate from several different provinces of the Roman Empire, they jointly constitute the most widely attested type of document of Roman times.[11] The purchase price probably depended on the age of the slave, on his or her abilities in respect of specific skills or crafts, as well as intellectual qualities, physical status, beauty, etc.[12] The tax due on the purchase of a slave (probably ten percent of the price) was the ἐγκύκλιον or τέλος εἰς τὰ ἀνδράποδα or τέλος δούλου[13], which actually comprised a tax on the transfer of real property and of certain other types of property.[14]

Concerning the duties and occupations of slaves, the documentary papyri and ostraca show a great variety. For example, we find slaves in the service of households or engaged in agriculture, we find them as messengers, craftsmen, stenographers, musicians, rented nurses and prostitutes, while some slaves were even deployed as managers, or within the Roman administration.[15] It is also important to note that

9 E.g., P.Oxy. I 94 (= Chrest.Mitt. 344; October 25, 83 CE). Only in the case of some regions, and only from the second or third century CE onwards, can we be sure that an appeal to the βιβλιοθήκη ἐγκτήσεων, the register for properties, was compulsory, concerning a slave who was about to be sold (see Arzt-Grabner, Philemon [see n. 1], 94–96.

10 See, especially, J.A. Straus, L'achat et la vente des esclaves dans l'Égypte romaine: contribution papyrologique à l'étude de l'esclavage dans une province orientale de l'Empire romain (APF.B 14), München/Leipzig 2004.

11 See below pp. 126f.

12 See Straus, L'achat (see n. 10), 79–86, 294–300; idem, L'esclavage (see n. 3), 861f.; for price lists, see Bieżuńska-Małowist, L'esclavage (see n. 3), 165–167; Straus, L'esclavage (see n. 3), 906–911; Weiler, Sklavenhandel (see n. 3), 31–34; K. Ruffing/H.-J. Drexhage, Antike Sklavenpreise, in: P. Mauritsch et al. (eds.), Antike Lebenswelten: Konstanz — Wandel — Wirkungsmacht; Festschrift für Ingomar Weiler zum 70. Geburtstag (Philippika 25), Wiesbaden 2008, 321–351.

13 For references, see Bieżuńska-Małowist, L'esclavage (see n. 3), 53 nn. 35f.; Straus, L'esclavage (see n. 3), 859 nn. 85–87, 89–93; S.L. Wallace, Taxation in Egypt from Augustus to Diocletian, New York 1969, 227–231; A. Martin/J.A. Straus, Le P.Oxy. I 185 et la taxe sur la vente des esclaves, CEg 64 (1989) 250–259, here: 252–254.

14 There is no solid and widespread evidence, as to whether the purchase of a slave had to be registered in the βιβλιοθήκη ἐγκτήσεων; SB I 5808 (March 23, 124 CE) and 5809 (I–II CE) probably represent exceptional rather than typical cases (see H.J. Wolff, Das Recht der griechischen Papyri Ägyptens in der Zeit der Ptolemäer und des Prinzipats 2: Organisation und Kontrolle des privaten Rechtsverkehrs [HAW 10/5/2], München 1978, 224f., and on the βιβλιοθήκη ἐγκτήσεων in general, pp. 222–255; Arzt-Grabner, Philemon [see n. 1], 94–96).

15 See Arzt-Grabner, Philemon (see n. 1), 96–101, 230–234; Bieżuńska-Małowist, L'esclavage (see n. 3), 73–108; Straus, L'esclavage (see n. 3), 867–876 (with bibliography p. 867 n. 141); idem, Quelques activités exercées par les esclaves d'après les papyrus de l'Égypte romaine, Hist. 26 (1977) 74–88. See also, e.g., H. Kreißig, Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft im Seleukidenreich: Die Eigentums- und die Abhängigkeitsverhältnisse (SGKA[B] 16), Berlin 1978, 8:

slaves in the cities were allowed to form organised associations (*collegia*), either in collaboration with colleagues of their respective occupations, or, in the sphere of religion, together with free people.

On the basis of this brief overview, it is clear that it would be incorrect to assume that slaves formed a homogeneous class. A very strange discrepancy in the hierarchical structure of ancient slavery lies in the fact that in some cases, slaves were not only found amongst the oppressed class — there were also slaves who were members and instruments of the oppressing class.[16] Slaves in high positions were by no means exceptional,[17] but nevertheless shared one common characteristic with other slaves: They were just slaves, and as such, they depended on their masters so completely that one could rely completely on them. And because slaves were discriminated against by society on account of their bondage, and because they often had different ethnic and cultural roots, their integration in society was highly unlikely. Moreover, there was hardly any possibility of solidarity with political opponents on the part of slaves.[18]

During the 1980s, authors such as O. Patterson, in particular, painted a predominantly negative picture of ancient slavery.[19] This tendency was actually in conflict with the conception of slavery that had developed during the preceding decades, which focused on aspects of ancient slavery that seemed to be much less oppressive (and even advantageous) compared to modern forms of slavery. Patterson's description

Wir finden Sklaven als landwirtschaftliche Arbeiter, als verurteilte Verbrecher in Bergwerken, als Vertreter in Handwerksbetrieben mit Geschäften auf eigene Rechnung, als geschniegelte Hausdiener bei reichen Bürgern, als Aufseher über freie Lohnarbeiter, als Polizisten, als Schildträger der Legionäre, als Prostituierte und einflußreiche Hetären, als Lehrer, Ärzte, kaiserliche Räte und Schreiber, als Bankiers, Grundbesitzer, als Eigentümer von Sklaven.

In addition, see E.W. Stegemann/W. Stegemann, Urchristliche Sozialgeschichte: Die Anfänge im Judentum und die Christusgemeinden in der mediterranen Welt, Stuttgart ²1997, 86: "Gerade unter Sklaven gab es gewichtige Unterschiede. Der Verwalter eines Gutes (*vilicus*) … wird auf einen Kleinbauern herabgeblickt haben, auch wenn er Sklave war."

16 See G. Alföldy, Antike Sklaverei: Widersprüche, Sonderformen, Grundstrukturen (TV.AA 7), Bamberg 1988, 19; K.-W. Welwei, Die Stellung der Sklaven im Spannungsfeld von *ius gentium* und *ius naturale* aus der Sicht römischer Juristen, Lav. 17 (2006) 87–97, here: 96, points out:

Hinzu kam eine mit familialen Verbänden vergleichbare gesellschaftliche Rangordnung, die zur Folge hatte, daß überall sich eindeutige Verhältnisse der Über- und Unterordnung herausgebildet hatten, die das tägliche Leben bestimmten. Es entstand aber gleichwohl kein starres Kastensystem.

17 See below pp. 137–139.

18 See Alföldy, Sklaverei (see n. 16), 20.

19 See O. Patterson, Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study, Cambridge 1982; see idem, Paul, Slavery and Freedom: Personal and Socio-Historical Reflections, Semeia 83–84 (1998) 263–279.

of the slave status as "social death" became a key term that was subsequently used by many other authors.[20] This pervasively negative portrayal is mostly based on ancient manuals addressing slaveholders and offering recommendations on how to manage the huge estates in Italy. But, as J.A. Harrill has pointed out, even those manuals describe manifold types of relationships between slaves and masters, and illustrate that a slaveholder quite often relied on the trustworthiness and the abilities of slaves to run his estate successfully.[21] To continually treat one's slaves harshly would have been foolish and risky, because slaves were an economic investment.

In particular, the documentary sources portray many slaves as individuals with names, abilities, and responsibilities. And, in contrast to the manuals mentioned earlier, the papyri, ostraca and tablets provide particulars pertaining to more average households. In this regard, R.S. Bagnall and B.W. Frier have analysed about 300 census declarations from Roman Egypt that were submitted between 12 CE and 259 CE, and which allow for fairly accurate statistics. They indicate that only 16 percent of households (26 out of 167) declared slaves.[22] However, "the overall incidence of slaveholding is a good deal higher in metropoleis (15 of 72 households, or 21 percent) than in villages (11 of 95, or 12 percent)"[23]. What is even more important is that approximately three-fifths of these slaveholding households had only one or two slaves who were deployed as domestic servants in most cases, while few households had "more than six or seven"[24]. Additionally important for our frame of ancient Roman slavery are the following results of this study:[25]

(1) the sex ratio is unbalanced in favour of female slaves;
(2) male slaves are manumitted quite early, while still capable of productive labour;
(3) the age of the oldest male slave is 32;
(4) the youngest freed males are 0[26] and 19[27];
(5) the youngest freed female is 22 and married[28];
(6) the next youngest are 35 and 36[29].

20 See, among others, J.A. Glancy, Slavery in Early Christianity, Oxford etc. 2002.
21 See J.A. Harrill, Slaves in the New Testament: Literary, Social, and Moral Dimensions, Minneapolis 2006, 85–113.
22 See R.S. Bagnall/B.W. Frier, The Demography of Roman Egypt (CSPESPT 23), Cambridge/New York 1994, 48f., 70f.
23 Ibid., 71.
24 Ibid.; see also ibid. 49.
25 See ibid., 71, 342f. (table D).
26 See P.Flor. I 4 with BL IV, 29.104 and IX, 83 (= Chrest.Wilck. 206; April 26 – May 25, 245 CE). See Bagnall/Frier, Demography (see n. 22), 304f. (household no. 243-Ox-1).
27 See SB XXII 15466 (February 20, 147 CE). See Bagnall/Frier, Demography (see n. 22), 233 (household no. 145-Ox-3).
28 See BGU I 55, col. II 1–10 with BL I, 12 and III, 8 (after August 25, 175 CE). See Bagnall/Frier, Demography (see n. 22), 233f. (household no. 159-Ar-1).

According to Bagnall and Frier, the demographic attributes of Egypt can be regarded as "typical" of the whole Mediterranean region.[30]

Probably, Roman citizens, who are not represented in the declarations, as they were generally not subject to the census, were socially and economically wealthier than the census population and owned more slaves.[31] However, we do not have papyrological evidence of landlords with hundreds or even thousands of anonymous slaves working on their estates. If such landlords ever existed in the Eastern Mediterranean, they must have been so few in number that they did not leave any traces in the documentary sources. Examples such as the correspondence between L. Bellenus Gemellus and his slave Epagathos,[32] who acted as steward on several of his master's estates, suggest that very wealthy people also entrusted selected slaves with the management of their property and were able to keep track of all their slaves' duties and errands.

II. Philemon and Onesimus: Master and Slave

Nothing particular is known about Philemon's household. It is probable, though not certain, that Apphia was his wife, and Archippus their son. We do not have any information regarding the number of slaves he owned. From clues provided by Paul in Phlm, we can at least infer that Philemon was wealthy enough, and his residence large enough, to accommodate the local Christian community when they held meetings.

29 Both mentioned in P.Alex.Giss. 22 (April 26 – May 25, 119 CE). See Bagnall/Frier, Demography (see n. 22), 197 (household no. 117-Ap-8).
30 Bagnall/Frier, Demography (see n. 22), 172f.:
> The results suggest that we should be duly cautious in extrapolating from Roman Egypt to the remainder of the Roman world, particularly as concerns characteristics, such as nuptiality and household structure, where regional culture may well have had a large and even decisive impact. Nonetheless, the basic demographic attributes of Roman Egypt are, at the least, thoroughly at home in the Mediterranean; they tend to recur in historical Mediterranean populations with considerable regularity. Nor is there any strong *a priori* reason why most of these attributes should be regarded as unique to Egypt among Roman provinces. In this weaker sense, the Egypt of the census returns may fairly be described as "typical".

31 See Bagnall/Frier, Demography (see n. 22), 49: "The census population is in any case probably less well socially and economically positioned than the Egyptians encountered in most Greek documentary papyri." But note the remark made by Ruffing/Drexhage, Sklavenpreise (see n. 12), 348, namely that "man sich nach dem Bild der überlieferten Sklavenkaufverträge keinen allzu großen Umfang des Sklavenhandels vorstellen kann", and furthermore: "Aber die nicht unerheblichen Kosten für den Unterhalt von Sklaven legen nahe, dass auch die hausgeborenen Sklaven wohl lediglich von den Spitzen der reichsrömischen Gesellschaft sinnvoll eingesetzt werden konnten."
32 See below pp. 138f.

According to Phlm 16, Onesimus was the slave (δοῦλος) of Philemon. In contrast to other designations that were frequently used for slaves, but which could also be used for non-slaves (παῖς, παιδάριον, παιδίον, οἰκέτης, σῶμα, etc.), δοῦλος and ἀνδράποδον are words that were reserved for slaves alone. Nothing is known about Onesimus' origins[33] and how he became a slave; but his name is a typical slave name ("useful one"), amply documented in the documentary papyri from Egypt, and also among the slave names of Rome.[34] The suggestion that Philemon's Onesimus was — contrary to his name — regarded as useless by his master (Phlm 11) may indicate that his rank in Philemon's household was not a very high one.

III. Frame II: Useful/Useless Slaves, Fugitives, Vagabonds

Concerning the present situation of Philemon's slave, Paul is very brief. Only two phrases in his letter (in v. 11 and v. 15) refer to this issue. Firstly, according to v. 11, Paul is aware of the fact that the slave was "once useless to you", i.e., to Philemon (τόν ποτέ σοι ἄχρηστον). For the purposes of a correct interpretation of the whole letter, it is crucially

33 Straus, L'esclavage (see n. 3), 865f., gives a list of the nationalities of slaves mentioned in papyri and ostraca.

34 H. Solin, in his list of slave names attested throughout the city of Rome, counts 185 slaves named Onesimus, as well as 18 female slaves named Onesime, one Onesimio(n), and two slaves Onesi[- - -] (H. Solin, Die stadtrömischen Sklavennamen: Ein Namenbuch 2. Griechische Namen [FASk.B 2], Stuttgart 1996, 465–468). On the papyrological evidence, see Arzt-Grabner, Philemon (see n. 1), 86f.; F. Preisigke, Namenbuch enthaltend alle griechischen, lateinischen, ägyptischen, hebräischen, arabischen und sonstigen semitischen und nichtsemitischen Menschennamen, soweit sie in griechischen Urkunden (Papyri, Ostraka, Inschriften, Mumienschildern usw) Ägyptens sich vorfinden, Heidelberg 1922, s.v.; D. Foraboschi, *Onomasticon alterum papyrologicum*: Supplemento al Namenbuch di F. Preisigke (TDSA 16), Milano 1967–1971, s.v.; J.H. Moulton/G. Milligan, The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament Illustrated from the Papyri and Other Non-Literary Sources, London 1929, s.v.; see also, e.g., SB XVI 12764,17 (I–II CE); P.Lond. II 208 Recto a (p. 67; = C.Pap.Gr. II 35),3-5 (with BL X, 97; June 25 – July 24, 138 CE).

The name is also attested on Attic inscriptions (see Ch. Fragiadakis, Die attischen Sklavennamen von der spätarchaischen Epoche bis in die römische Kaiserzeit: Eine historische und soziologische Untersuchung [Diss.], Mannheim 1986, 52 nn. 23-25, 54 n. 3; see also 364 nn. 584–587). See also inscriptions from Asia Minor: TAM II.3 1026,1–2 (Lycia; Roman); ILabraunda 39,1–4 (Labraunda; 212–300 CE); MAMA VIII 413,b,22–23 (Aphrodisias in Caria; no date). MAMA IV 32 (Phrygia; late III CE) is already Christian and refers to "Onesimus, the slave of God" — l. 3–5: Ὀνήσιμος | θεοῦ δοῦ|λος. For more references in inscriptions see P.M. Fraser/E. Matthews (eds.), A Lexicon of Greek Personal Names 1: The Aegean Islands, Cyprus, Cyrenaica, Oxford 1987, 352; M.J. Osborne/S.G. Byrne (eds.), A Lexicon of Greek Personal Names 2: Attica, Oxford 1994, 352f.; P.M. Fraser/E. Matthews (eds.), A Lexicon of Greek Personal Names 3A: The Peloponnese, Western Greece, Sicily and Magna Graecia, Oxford 1997, 343f.

A literary example is the Onesimus in Men., Epit.

important to take note of the fact that Paul mentions very clearly that he is already aware of this opinion of Philemon regarding Onesimus. Most probably, he had been informed about it by Onesimus. Therefore, this notion cannot relate to a flight of the slave, since if this had been the case, it would have been impossible for Paul to already be aware of Philemon's reaction. Rather, it refers to a more or less long-standing situation in respect of Philemon's experience with regard to his slave Onesimus.

Quite often, the wordplay ἄχρηστος - εὔχρηστος has been interpreted as Paul's reference to Onesimus' life before and after he became a Christian. This idea has been established on the basis of the interchange of η and ι which "occurs very frequently in all phonetic conditions throughout the Roman and Byzantine periods", as Francis Gignac remarks in his Grammar of the Greek Papyri.[35] He adds:

> This interchange of η with ι and ει reflects the phonological development of the Greek Koine, in which the sound originally represented by η generally merged with /i/ by the second century A.D.[36]

The Latin author Suetonius, in his famous passage on Claudius expelling the Jews from Rome (Claud. 25.4), attests that for a Roman, the Greek Χριστός ("Christ") could easily be mistaken for the Graeco-Roman personal name Χρῆστος/*Chrestus* (notice the different accent!).[37] It is possible that this similarity "led to the widespread ancient assumption that χριστιανός/χρη-/χρει- derived from χρηστός"[38], as attested by some Church Fathers.[39] Nevertheless, it is (and remains) uncertain

35 F.Th. Gignac, A Grammar of the Greek Papyri of the Roman and Byzantine Periods 1: Phonology (TDSA 55/1), Milano 1976, 235 (with extensive evidence from the papyri on pp. 235–239).

36 Ibid. 235. This is attested by inscriptions from Attica and Asia Minor (see ibid., 235 n. 1).

37 Tac., Ann. 15.44 uses the correct form *Christus*. For the use of the spelling Χρηστός instead of Χριστός in documentary papyri see, e.g., P.Lond. VI 1928,15 (mid IV CE); P.Nag Hamm. 68,12; P.Neph. 11,14 (both IV CE); SB V 7656,10 (IV–VII CE).

38 G.H.R. Horsley, New Documents Illustrating Early Christianity 3: A Review of the Greek Inscriptions and Papyri Published in 1978, North Ryde 1983, 129. But see M.J. Edwards, XPHCTOC in a Magical Papyrus, ZPE 85 (1991) 232–236, esp. 232f.:

> ... it is one thing to play upon words and another to think them identical, or advance one as a substitute for the other. The same observation applies with even greater force to those inscriptions and papyri (pagan and orthodox) in which the substitution of Χρηστιανός for Χριστιανός is regular, but that of Χρηστός for Χριστός more rare.

39 See Tert., Apol. 3.5; Lact., Inst. 4.7.5; Just., 1Apol. 4.1. See M. Wolter, Der Brief an die Kolosser. Der Brief an Philemon (ÖTBK 12), Gütersloh/Würzburg 1993, 263f. (with references to the Fathers); E. Lohse, Die Briefe an die Kolosser und an Philemon: übersetzt und erklärt (KEK 9/2), Göttingen ²1977, 279 (with references on the wordplay in Graeco-Roman and early Jewish literature); P.T. O'Brien, Colossians, Philemon (WBC 44), Waco 1982, 291; P. Stuhlmacher, Der Brief an Philemon (EKK 18), Zürich etc. ³1989, 39; H. Hübner, An Philemon – An die Kolosser – An die Epheser

whether such a wordplay would already have been used by Paul, and whether it would have been understood by Philemon.

The documentary papyri, and also some literary sources, recommend an interpretation of ἄχρηστος and εὔχρηστος in terms of the context of ancient slavery. Although these terms were not used only to refer to slaves,[40] the characterisation of slaves as "useless" or "useful" seems to have been typical of Graeco-Roman times.

In P.Oxy. VII 1070 Verso, 50–52 (III CE), a certain Aurelius Demareus calls his female slave "useless", and states that his wife should therefore not entrust her with the care of the entire household.

In contrast, in BGU I 37 (September 12, 50 CE), the owner of the slave Blastos emphasises that he needs him all the time — l. 6f.: οἶδας γὰρ πῶς αὐτοῦ | ἑκάστης ὥρας χρήζω{ι}. Blastos is obviously trustworthy enough to be sent to a partner of his master, but he has to be back as soon as possible so that he can be useful again.

Near the letter closing, the writer of P.Mich. VIII 477 (early II CE) reports that Isidoros and Sempronius salute a certain Zotike whom the addressee will be bringing along with him when he comes, "because", the letter-writer adds, "you know that we are going to need her here" — l. 41–43: ἣν ἐρχό|μ[ενο]ς κατεν[έγ]κεις μετὰ σο[ῦ συν-ει]δὼς ὅτι μέλλομεν | α[ὐτῆς] χρῄζει[ν ἐν]θάδε.[41]

During the same period, possibly on October 5, 104 CE, a certain Thermoutas wrote the letter SB V 7572. In l. 18–21, she writes: ἀσπάζετε ἡμᾶς Ῥοδίνη. | βέβληκα αὐτὴν εἰς τὴν τέχν[η]|ν αὖ χρήζο αὐτῆς, ἀλὰ ἡδύος ἔ|χο ("Rhodine salutes you. I have set her to the handiwork; again I need her, but I am happy").[42] Rhodine was probably not the sender's daughter, as the editor supposed, but a servant.[43]

The synonymous adjective χρήσιμος is used, for example, in a student's letter to his father (SB XXII 15708,41 [ca. 100 CE]) in an ironical way "... which is rare in the documentary papyri."[44] The slave Heraclas was responsible for the student's tuition through his work, but he ran away, and is therefore described as ὁ χρήσιμος Ἡρακλᾶς, κακὸς κακῶς ("the 'useful' Heraclas, woe to his wickedness"[45]).

The documentary evidence is confirmed by several authors of Graeco-Roman literature. In these writings, too, terms belonging to the word family χρηστός are not reserved for describing slaves. However, when

(HNT 12), Tübingen 1997, 35. On the discussion, see also J.D.G. Dunn, The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon: A Commentary on the Greek Text (NIGTC), Grand Rapids 1996, 329. Strictly in the sense of "wenig nützlich" – "sehr wohl nützlich" (H. Binder, Der Brief des Paulus an Philemon [ThHK 11/2], Berlin 1990, 55).

40 For the use of these terms to refer to a free citizen, see, e.g., P.Petr. III 53 (n), 4–6 (III BCE).

41 κατενέγκεις: "a new future formed from the aor. subj. and replacing the imperative" (H.C. Youtie/J.G. Winter [eds.], Papyri and Ostraca from Karanis: Second Series [UMS.H 50], Ann Arbor 1951, 56, on P.Mich. VIII 476,28).

42 Translation according to R.S. Bagnall/R. Cribiore, Women's Letters from Ancient Egypt, 300 BC – AD 800, Ann Arbor 2006, 283. "This letter is interesting because of its orthography and the clumsy construction of sentences" (P.W. Pestman, The New Papyrological Primer, Leiden etc. ²1994, 171; on pp. 171f. Pestman also presents an orthographically corrected version).

43 See Bagnall/Cribiore, Letters (see n. 42), 283.

44 J.R. Rea, A Student's Letter to His Father: P.Oxy. XVIII 2190 Revised, ZPE 99 (1993) 75–88, here: 85.

45 On the epigraphical and literary evidence relating to the curse κακὸς κακῶς, see ibid., 85.

they are, in fact, applied to slaves, they are used almost stereotypically to refer to an attitude that a slave is supposed to share or — in the case of ἄχρηστος — to avoid.

The Stoic philosopher Epictet, who himself spent his youth as a slave in Rome, reports the case of the shoemaker Epaphroditus, who sold his slave because the slave proved to be useless (διὰ τὸ ἄχρηστον εἶναι). Eventually, the slave established his career in the emperor's household and even became Caesar's shoemaker, thus eliciting his former master's admiration (Diss. 1.19.19–22).

The second phrase describing Onesimus' situation is found in Phlm 15. The Greek text reads: ἐχωρίσθη πρὸς ὥραν, which traditionally was translated as "he was separated for a short time". However, as I have shown in an article published in ZNW in 2004,[46] the passive form of χωρίζω — in both the literary and the documentary sources — always bears an active meaning that is best translated as "to go away, to depart, to leave", for example, UPZ I 19,13–14 (163 BCE): καὶ ὧδε μὲν οὐκέτι τολμήσαντος ἀποβῆναι, εἰς δὲ τὸν Ἡρακλεοπολίτην | χωρισθέντος ("and he did not dare to land here, but he went away to the Herakleopolite nome").

Some other examples from documentary papyri are: P.Ryl. II 125 (= Sel.Pap. II 278; C.Pap.Hengstl 49; C.Pap.Jud. II 420b; 28–29 CE), a petition by Orsenouphis reporting a theft that had taken place "after I had left home on business concerning my livelihood" — l. 10f.: ἐμοῦ χωρισθέντος εἰς ἀπο|δημίαν βιωτ[ι]κῶν χάριν; P.Berl.Möller 11 (= SB IV 7348; January 30, 33 CE), a private letter in which the following report is made in l. 11f.: Σαραπᾶς κὲ ὁ ἀδελφός σου | εἰς [Κό]πτ[ο]ν κεχώρισται ("Sarapas and your brother left for Koptos"); SB X 10529 B (I–II CE?), a private letter from Asklas in which a certain Sarapias is informed, in l. 3f. that: ἐχορίσθην ἀπὸ | σοῦ τῇ κε κὲ ἀνέβην εἰς Ψῶνιν ("I went away from you on the 25th[47], and I went up to Psonis").[48]

46 Arzt-Grabner, Onesimus (see n. 2).

47 According to BL VIII, 359, the month should be Payni.

48 See also: UPZ I 4, Kol. II 9 (= C.Ptol.Sklav. 83b; with BL V, 149; 164 BCE); 42,30 (= J.L. White, Light from Ancient Letters [FF.NT], Philadelphia 1986, nr. 37; October 3 – November 1, 162 BCE); 33,12; 34,8; 35,17; 36,15 (all dating further back than January 23, 161 BCE); 16,15 (written after May 28, 156 BCE); BGU VI 1247,18 (February 24 – March 24, 137 BCE); P.Lond. VII 2188,94 (after March 12, 148 BCE); P.Münch. III 51,17 (before January 27, 134 BCE); P.Tor.Choach. 11,38 (February 19 – March 20, 119 BCE); 11bis,25 (June 26, 119 BCE); 12,31 (December 11, 117 BCE); P.Tebt. I 19,10 (June 6, 114 BCE); 50,9 (= Chrest.Wilck. 329; 112/111 BCE); P.Amh. II 40,3 (II BCE); P.Grenf. II 36,10 (May 21, 95 BCE); BGU IV 1204,6 (= B. Olsson, Papyrusbriefe aus der frühesten Römerzeit, Uppsala 1925, nr. 2; White, Light [see above], nr. 63; October 3, 28 BCE); SB V 7636,11 (August 28, 70 or August 20, 41 BCE); P.Oxy. XII 1479,7 (late I BCE). Similar examples are found in SB XIV 11294,3 (November 26, 2 CE?), and BGU III 776,2 (I CE). For further examples, see Arzt-Grabner, Philemon (see n. 1), 104 (including n. 219).

Contracts of divorce contain the stereotyped clause χωρίζεσθαι ἀπ' ἀλλήλων, stating that the couple have "separated from each other". For examples, see F. Preisigke, Wörterbuch der griechischen Papyrusurkunden, mit Einschluß der griechischen Inschriften, Aufschriften, Ostraka, Mumienschilder usw. aus Ägypten, vol. 1: A–K, Berlin 1925; vol. 2: Λ–Ω (vollendet und hg. v. E. Kießling), Berlin 1927; vol. 3: Besondere Wörterliste (bearbeitet und hg. v. E. Kießling), Berlin 1931, s.v. χωρίζω; Moulton/Milli-

There is not a single reference that proves that passive forms of the verb χωρίζω were ever used to denote the passive mode ("to be separated") when referring to persons.[49] Therefore, the form ἐχωρίσθη in Phlm 15 should also be interpreted in the usual sense, namely "he went away".

Paul adds πρὸς ὥραν, describing Onesimus as someone who "went away for just a short time".[50] Paul then argues that possibly this only happened so that Philemon might receive back his slave forever. This is the only passage in the entire letter that can be interpreted as a possible reference — albeit an indirect one — to Onesimus' own intention when leaving his master's house: He did not want to run away forever, but intended to return after a period of time that could be regarded as relatively short — especially in comparison to eternity.

Peter Lampe, in an article written back in 1985,[51] drew attention to a legal discussion among Roman jurists including Proculus, Vivianus, Paulus, Labeo and Caelius, who argued that a slave who left his master in fear of the latter's anger and went to someone for help and intervention should not be regarded as a *servus fugitivus*. Lampe detected a similar case in Phlm, and concluded that therefore, Onesimus should not be regarded as a runaway slave, but rather as someone who had caused some material loss and, fearing the consequences of Philemon's anger, had approached Paul, asking for help to allay his master's wrath. In 1999, several years after the publication of Lampe's article, Albert Harrill responded to the article, questioning the use of legal evidence in historical inquiry.[52] "The deliberations of the jurists", Harrill argued, "were academic games having little to do with the practice of law."[53]

gan, Vocabulary (see n. 34), s.v. χωρίζω; see also BGU IV 1102,9 (= C.Pap.Jud. II 144; March 10, 13 BCE); 1103,6 (= Sel.Pap. I 6 [l. 2–30]; March 28, 13 BCE); P.Mich. V 340,41 (45/46 CE); P.Stras. IX 807,7 (98–117 CE); SB XII 10924,16 (June 14, 114 CE); P. Mil.Vogl. II 71,11 (= SB VI 9264; 172–175 CE); P.Bodl. I 61(d),10 (II CE); SB XVI 12334,2 (late II CE); P.Hamb. III 220,11 (223/224 CE), as well as later examples. See 1Cor 7,10f.15.

49 See, in the New Testament, Acts 1,4; 18,1f.; even Hebr 7,26 can be understood in this sense: the High Priest has "separated from the sins". The passive meaning only occurs in the context of aspects such as wages; see Preisigke, Wörterbuch 2 (see n. 48), s.v. χωρίζω: κεχωρισμένη πρόσοδος ("abgesonderte Einnahme").

50 Documentary references for πρὸς ὥραν date back to centuries after Paul (P.Kell. I 72,26–27 [mid IV CE]; P.Wisc. II 75,4–6 with BL VII, 282 [IV CE]; see Arzt-Grabner, Philemon [see n. 1], 105).

51 P. Lampe, Keine "Sklavenflucht" des Onesimus, ZNW 76 (1985) 135–137. See also — before Lampe — H. Bellen, Studien zur Sklavenflucht im römischen Kaiserreich (FASk 4), Wiesbaden 1971, 18, 78. For scholars following Bellen's and Lampe's arguments, see M. Wolter, The Letter to Philemon as Ethical Counterpart of Paul's Doctrine of Justification, pp. 169–179, here: 174 n. 14, in this volume.

52 J.A. Harrill, Using the Roman Jurists to Interpret Philemon: A Response to Peter Lampe, ZNW 90 (1999) 135–138.

53 Ibid., 137. K. Wengst, Der Brief an Philemon (ThKNT 16), Stuttgart 2006, 31f., argues that the Roman jurists were only referring to slaves who went to an *amicus domini*

According to Harrill, difficulties such as these "problematize the use of the Roman jurists to interpret Philemon", and he concludes: "Rather, we need to relocate the issue of slavery in the letter from a predominately legal question to one that stems from social, economic, and familial considerations."[54]

Concerning the use of legal evidence, I am not inclined to be as pessimistic as Harrill, at least not in this instance. An aspect that neither Lampe nor Harrill mentioned in their articles, is the context of almost all the legal passages that they cited. These passages are taken from book 21 of Justinian's Digest, which is devoted to the subject of the so-called Edict of the *curule aediles*. Actually, a large part of this edict has been preserved at the beginning of this book, which therefore comprises by far the best source on the edict. This edict, which dates back to the time of the Roman Republic, regulated the market against defects in slave merchandise.[55] It ordered the vendors of slaves to provide clear and public information about any diseases or defects of the slaves, and to indicate whether they had ever run away, or proved to be truants, or had not been released from liability for damage which they had perpetrated or caused. If none of these defects or problems were applicable, according to the edict of the *curule aediles*, a vendor was not obliged to provide any information at all. On the other hand, the edict clearly obliged the vendor to guarantee all the claims that he made in respect

within the same city (such as Rome), whereas the distance between Colossae (according to Wengst the city of Philemon's residence) and Ephesus (the supposed place of Paul's imprisonment), ca. 170–190 km, would have excluded such an option. E. Reinmuth, Der Brief des Paulus an Philemon (ThHK 11/2), Leipzig 2006, 9f., concurs with Lampe's and Bellen's arguments, but he emphasises the fact that leaving the master's house without his consent was illegal for a slave in any case.

54 Harrill, Jurists (see n. 52), 138.

55 On this edict, and especially on its clauses concerning the guarantee for slaves, see especially É. Jakab, *Praedicere* und *cavere* beim Marktkauf: Sachmängel im griechischen und römischen Recht (MBPF 87), München 1997; B. Kupisch, Römische Sachmängelhaftung: Ein Beispiel für die 'ökonomische Analyse des Rechts'?, LHRev 70 (2002) 21–54; P. Arzt-Grabner, "Neither a Truant nor a Fugitive": Some Remarks on the Sale of Slaves in Roman Egypt and Other Provinces, in: Proceedings of the XXV International Congress of Papyrology, July 29 – August 4, 2007, Ann Arbor (forthcoming). — On the guarantee clauses in papyrus contracts, see also H.-A. Rupprecht, Die Eviktionshaftung in der Kautelarpraxis der graeco-ägyptischen Papyri, in: F. Pastori/M. Bianchini (eds.), Studi in onore di Arnaldo Biscardi 3, Milano 1982, 463–479; Straus, L'achat (see n. 10), 152–157; G. Camodeca in T.Sulpicii, 115f.; idem, L'archivio Puteolano dei Sulpicii 1 (PDDRSSR 4), Napoli 1992, 141–164; idem, Tabulae Herculanenses: riedizione delle emptiones di schiavi (TH 59–62), in: U. Manthe/Ch. Krampe (eds.), *Quaestiones Iuris*: Festschrift für Joseph Georg Wolf zum 70. Geburtstag (FRAbh.NF 36), Berlin 2000, 53–76, here: 74–76 (in this article the documents are cited as T.Hercul.); O. Eger, Eine Wachstafel aus Ravenna aus dem zweiten Jahrhundert nach Chr., ZSRG.R 42 (1921) 452–468, here: 456–458; see also the bibliography in H.-A. Rupprecht, Kleine Einführung in die Papyruskunde (Die Altertumswissenschaft), Darmstadt 1994, 116f.

of any slave, which means that the vendor would be held accountable for all that he had said and promised at the time of the sale.

In practice – and there is actually quite an extensive amount of evidence relating to the merchandising of slaves in accordance with the edict – there were several different ways in which the slave merchants could provide the requested information about the slave's past. A very common method was the so-called *titulus*, which entitled placing a label around the slave's neck, stating his or her diseases, and indicating whether he or she had ever run away or roamed about.[56] Furthermore, symbolic outfits could be used to inform the potential purchaser about the slave's past: the *corona* would identify him as a prisoner of war, whereas criminal slaves and *fugitivi* were brought in chains to the market.[57] Obviously, the diseases and defects of a slave could also be stated orally; and an oral indication as to whether she or he was a *fugitivus* or an *erro*, could be given.[58]

Another option, which provided a more sophisticated method of recording all the information and details necessary for selling or buying a slave, was the drawing up of a sale contract. It is noteworthy that among the documents originating from outside of Egypt, preserved on papyri, ostraca, and waxed tablets, there are a relatively large number of slave sale contracts. There are explicit references to the edict of the *curule aediles* in contracts preserved on waxed tablets originating from Puteoli[59] and Herculaneum[60], and on papyri from Side in Pamphylia,[61]

56 There are no references to such a *titulus* in the papyri or inscriptions, but see Gell. 4.2.1:

> In edicto aedilium curulium, qua parte de mancipiis vendundis cautum est, scriptum sic fuit: "Titulus servorum singulorum scriptus sit curato ita, ut intellegi recte possit, quid morbi vitiive cuique sit, quis fugitivus errove sit noxave solutus non sit." (The edict of the *curule aediles*, in the section containing stipulations about the purchase of slaves, reads as follows: "See to it that the sale ticket of each slave be so written that it can be known exactly what disease or defect each one has, which one is a runaway or a vagabond, or is still under condemnation for some offence"; translation by J.C. Rolfe, The Attic Nights of Aulus Gellius 1 [LCL 195], Cambridge etc. 1970, 317, 319). See Jakab, *Praedicere* (see n. 55), 40f.

57 See Dig. 21.1.48.3 (Pomponius 23 ad Sab.); Jakab, *Praedicere* (see n. 55), 44f., esp. 45: Die Pomponius-Stelle zeigt uns, daß es den Ädilen nicht auf die Form der Information ankam. Der Verkäufer kann den Sklaven fesseln, ihm einen Hut aufsetzen oder einen *titulus* um den Hals hängen: Wichtig ist allein, daß der Käufer sich über die relevanten Eigenschaften des Sklaven informieren kann.

58 As attested by Hor., Epist. 2.2.1–19.

59 T.Sulpicii 43 (August 21, 38 CE; see T.Sulpicii 42 [March 18, 26 CE?]; 44).

60 T.Hercul. 60 (before 63/64 CE; see T.Hercul. 62 [November 30, 47 CE]).

61 P.Turner 22 (142 CE); BGU III 887 (= Chrest.Mitt. 272; C.Pap.Jud. III 490; FIRA III 133; July 8, 151 CE).

Seleucia Pieria (Syria),[62] and the Arsinoite nome in Egypt[63]. In addition, the clause *bonis condicionibus*, signifying that the sale had taken place under "good conditions", can also be regarded as a clear reference to the conditions explained in the edict.[64] This is attested in a contract from Ravenna.[65] Probably, the clause καλῇ αἱρέσει, preserved in several contracts from Egypt and in one from Ascalon/Phoenicia,[66] can be identified as the Greek equivalent of *bonis condicionibus*. It is also important to note that the contracts from Side, Ravenna, Seleucia, and Ascalon were brought to Egypt, obviously together with the purchased slaves, and were found there.[67]

An overview of the preserved slave sale contracts reveals a somewhat surprising circumstance: Not one of these contracts contains any reference to any information provided to the buyer by the vendor in respect of any disease or defect of the slave, or any indication that the slave to be purchased has ever run away or behaved as a vagabond.[68] On the contrary, many vendors confirm the slave's healthy condition. Some vendors expressly exclude a guarantee concerning epilepsy and leprosy, while others refuse to guarantee that the slave is neither a truant nor a fugitive,[69] and comparably few slave dealers include such a

62 P.Lond. I 229 (p. xxi) (= Ch.L.A III 200; FIRA III 132; C.Pap.Lat. 120; Jur.Pap. 37; May 24, 166 CE).

63 P.Hamb. I 63 with BL VII, 66 (Thebais?; 125–126 CE); see H.-A. Rupprecht (ed.), H.J. Wolff, Das Recht der griechischen Papyri Ägyptens in der Zeit der Ptolemäer und des Prinzipats 1: Bedingungen und Triebkräfte der Rechtsentwicklung (HAW 10/5/1), München 2002, 167f.

64 See Jakab, *Praedicere* (see n. 55), 187–190.

65 SB III 6304 (= C.Pap.Lat. 193; FIRA III 134; ca. 151 CE); the contract from Seleucia Pieria, P.Lond. I 229 (p. xxi), contains both clauses.

66 See SB V 8007,5 (Hermoupolis?; first half IV CE); P.Abinn. 64,15 (Alexandria or Philadelphia; 337–350 CE); P.Cair.Masp. I 67120,5 (Aphrodites Kome/Antaiopolites; ca. 567–568 CE). BGU I 316,5 was drawn up in Ascalon/Phoenicia (October 12, 359 CE). See Jakab, *Praedicere* (see n. 55), 208f.

67 The clause τοῦτον τοιοῦτον ἀναπόριφον (explaining that the slave is excluded from a provision in terms of which the purchaser may return the slave) may also directly refer to the aedilician edict, but there is no consensus in this regard as yet (see Jakab, *Praedicere* [see n. 55], 197–205).

68 With regard to the presupposition that slaves who had served for many years (*veterator* vs. *novicius*) were more trustworthy than recently imported ones, see Jakab, *Praedicere* (see n. 55), 141–144; see SB III 6304 (= C.Pap.Lat. 193; FIRA III 134; drawn up in Ravenna, ca. 151 CE).

69 Several vendors furnished a guarantee for the slave's health, usually including a specific reference to epilepsy, but did not mention any factors relating to vagabondry or flight, e.g., T.Hercul. 61 (May, 63 CE); T.Dacia 8 (October 4, 160 CE); SB III 6304 (= C.Pap.Lat. 193; FIRA III 134; Ravenna; ca. 151 CE); P.Euphrates 6 (= SB XXIV 16167) and 7 (= SB XXIV 16168; both Markopolis/Osrhoene; November 6, 249 CE); 9 (= SB XXIV 16170; Beth Phuraia/Syria Coele; June 13, 252 CE); P.Hamb. I 63 with BL VII, 66 (Thebais?; 125/126 CE); and many other examples from Egypt.

guarantee in their contracts. As I have explained in a recent paper,[70] the relevant clause and its variants may serve as a bench mark or test case with regard to the question as to how the practice of slave merchandising adhered to and verified the rules of the aedilician edict, or the question relating to the precise nature of the major interactions between the practice of the law ("Rechtspraxis") and the practice of business or merchandising ("Geschäftspraxis"). The oldest document containing such a guarantee is preserved in the fragments of a diptych of waxed tablets from Puteoli, inscribed on August 21, 38 CE (T.Sulpicii 43).[71] Tablet I is lost. The first three lines of tablet II, p. 3, contain the promise of the slave dealer that the slave is "released from liability [for theft and damage], that he is not a fugitive or truant et cetera according to the edict of the *curule aediles*": *[solutum e]sse, fugit[i]vom, | [err]onem [non] esse [et] cetera | in edicto aed(ilium) cur(ulium).*[72] A complete document that addresses all the major subjects of the edict — including the clause concerning flight and vagabondry — is preserved on a triptych from Alburnus Maior in Dacia dating back to May 16, 142 CE (T.Dacia 7).[73] A similar contract from Alburnus Maior was drawn up on March 17, 139 CE (T.Dacia 6). Two more Latin contracts, which are very similar, originate from Herculaneum (T.Hercul. 62 [November 30, 47 CE]; 60 [before 63/64 CE]).[74] More or less equivalent contracts in Greek that were found in Egypt, but which originate from Side in Pamphylia are P.Turner 22 (142 CE), and BGU III 887 (July 8, 151 CE).[75]

Of the contracts contained in the sources that comprise the focus of the discussion in this article, these seven slave sale contracts are the only ones amongst those that were drawn up during the first century and the first half of the second century CE that contain some kind of guarantee that the slave is "neither a truant nor a fugitive" — in Latin: *fugitivom erronem non esse*, in Greek: μήτε ῥέμβον μήτε δραπετικόν. The earliest contract written in Egypt, stating that the slave to be sold is neither a truant nor a fugitive, is SB III 6016 (with BL II.2, 121; V, 98),

70 Arzt-Grabner, Truant (see n. 55).
71 See Jakab, *Praedicere* (see n. 55), 166.
72 On the subject of this contract, see Camodeca, L'archivio (see n. 55), 141–155; see also Kupisch, Sachmängelhaftung (see n. 55), 25; Arzt-Grabner, Truant (see n. 55).
73 For a general discussion of the waxed tablets from Dacia, see E. Pólay, The Contracts in the Triptychs Found in Transylvania and their Hellenistic Features (SHH 133), Budapest 1980; see also idem, Verträge auf Wachstafeln aus dem römischen Dakien, in: ANRW II.14 (1982) 509–523; T. Sambrian, La *mancipatio* nei trittici della Transilvania, D@S 4 (2005) (http://www.dirittoestoria.it/4/Tradizione-Romana/Sambrian-Mancipatio-trittici-Transilvania.htm [retrieved: 25/01/2010]).
74 On these documents, see Camodeca, Tabulae (see n. 55), 55–63, 70–73.
75 = Chrest.Mitt. 272; C.Pap.Jud. III 490; FIRA III 133.

drawn up in Alexandria on March 28, 154 CE.[76] The slave is described as πιστοῦ καὶ ἀδράστου | καὶ ὄντα ἐκτὸς ἱερᾶς νόσου | καὶ ἐπαφῆς (l. 26–28: "faithful and not running away and being without epilepsy and claim [of others]"[77]). The same clause is found in only two other contracts, both written in the first half of the fourth century (P.Abinn. 64 [Alexandria or Philadelphia; 337–350 CE]; SB V 8007 with BL IV, 82 [Hermoupolis?; first half of IV CE]). Table 1 presents the relevant data in respect of these contracts.

When both variants are compared, it is noteworthy that, at the same point, at which some contracts contain the guarantee that the slave is not a truant (*erro* or ῥέμβος), other contracts contain a description of the slave as trustworthy (πιστός)!

I will come back to this observation later on. Firstly, however, I would like to draw just one general conclusion on the basis of the evidence found in these contracts, that is important for the purposes of interpreting Paul's letter to Philemon: Obviously, in the context of Graeco-Roman antiquity, there was some kind of interaction between the practice of law ("Rechtspraxis") and the practice of business or merchandising ("Geschäftspraxis"): The *curule aediles* stipulated what was necessary in order to avoid forms of merchandising that were unjust towards one of the parties, while leaving the method according to which these regulations would be followed in practice to the discretion of the parties. It was the *aediles'* strict order that the vendor had to inform the purchaser about any aspects that might potentially affect the quality of the slave at the time of sale.[78] On the other hand, the vendors and purchasers had a certain degree of influence (at least in an implicit sense) in respect of the legislation, since ultimately they had to determine, in practice, whether or not the regulations supported commerce and merchandising, while still ensuring that the transactions were just and trustworthy for both parties — vendors and purchasers.

The discussions of Roman jurists concerning fugitives and truants, as preserved in chapter 1 of book 21 of the Digest, all refer to the regulations of the *aediles* addressing the question as to whether a slave should be labelled as a fugitive or not, and why such a slave should, or

76 On this document, see also Straus, L'achat (see n. 10), 99–102, 356; SB III 6016 is the reprint of "P.Eitrem 5", as it is referred to by Jakab, *Praedicere* (see n. 55), passim (but on p. 208 n. 58, she refers to this document as SB II [*sic*!] 6016).
77 For a discussion concerning the meaning of ἐπαφή, see Straus, L'achat (see n. 10), 153 n. 282; Jakab, *Praedicere* (see n. 55), 202–204.
78 The reason for the rule stipulating that the slave's nationality should be mentioned was a similar one, as slaves of a particular origin were famous for specific abilities; see Jakab, *Praedicere* (see n. 55), 140f.

Table I
Contracts including a statement that the slave is no truant and no fugitive

Document	Date (CE)	Place/Province	Gender	Age	Price	Relevant clause
T.Sulpicii 43	August 21, 38	Puteoli/Italy	?	?	?	fugitivom erronem non esse
T.Hercul. 62	November 30, 47	Herculaneum/Italy	Girl	?	?	fugitivam erronem non esse
T.Hercul. 60	Before 63/64	Herculaneum/Italy	Girl	?	?	fugitivam erronem non esse
T.Dacia 6	March 17, 139	Alburnus Maior/Dacia	Girl	6	205 den.	fugitivam erronem non esse
T.Dacia 7	May 16, 142	Alburnus Maior/Dacia	Boy	?	600 den.	erronem fugitivum caducum non esse
P.Turner 22	142	Side/Pamphylia	Girl	10	280 den.	μήτε ῥέμβον μήτε δραπετικόν
BGU III 887	July 8, 151	Side/Pamphylia	Girl	12	350 den.	μήτε ῥέμβον μήτε δραπετικόν
SB III 6016	March 28, 154	Alexandria/Egypt	Male	?	1400 dr.	πιστοῦ καὶ ἀδράστου
SB V 8007	First half of IV	Hermoupolis?/Egypt	Female	20	913 tal. 2000 dr.	πιστὴν καὶ ἄδραστον
P.Abinn. 64	337–350	Alexandria or Philadelphia/Egypt	? (two slaves)	?	2400 tal.	πιστοὺς καὶ ἀδράστους

should not, be categorised as such. These discussions were thus of practical importance in the field of slave merchandise. Dig. 21.1.17 cites the first book of Ulpian's work on the edict,[79] in which he refers to earlier jurists and their opinions regarding the above-mentioned matter. He starts off with a reference to Ofilius and his definition of a fugitive slave (Dig. 21.1.17 pr.):[80] "Quid sit fugitivus, definit Ofilius: fugitivus est, qui extra domini domum fugae causa, quo se a domino celaret, mansit."[81] The following passages deal with the idea that the slave's intention not to return to his master is a decisive factor with regard to his classification as a fugitive. Turning to Vivianus, a jurist of the latter part of I CE, Ulpian writes (Dig. 21.1.17.3):

> Item apud Vivianum relatum est fugitivum fere ab affectu animi intellegendum esse, non utique a fuga: nam eum qui hostem aut latronem, incendium ruinamve fugeret, quamvis fugisse verum est, non tamen fugitivum esse. item ne eum quidem, qui a praeceptore cui in disciplinam traditus erat aufugit, esse fugitivum, si forte ideo fugit, quia immoderate eo utebatur. idemque probat et si ab eo fugerit cui erat commodatus, si propter eandem causam fugerit. idem probat Vivianus et si saevius cum eo agebat. haec ita, si eos fugisset et ad dominum venisset: ceterum si ad dominum non venisset, sine ulla dubitatione fugitivum videri ait.[82]

Referring to Proculus, a jurist of the time of the Iulio-Claudian emperors, Ulpian then adds (Dig. 21.1.17.4):

79 Ulpian, Ad edictum aedilium curulium I. This book was not only concerned with fugitives and truants, but also with the other issues mentioned in the edict, such as diseases and defects.

80 Latin text of Dig. according to P. Krueger/Th. Mommsen, Corpus Iuris Civilis 1: Institutiones/Digesta, Berlin 1954; English translation by S.P. Scott, The Civil Law: Including The Twelve Tables, The Institutes of Gaius, The Rules of Ulpian, The Opinions of Paulus, The Enactments of Justinian, and The Constitutions of Leo, Translated from the Original Latin, Edited, and Compared with All Accessible Systems of Jurisprudence Ancient and Modern, Cincinnati 1932 (repr. New York 1973).

81 As to what a fugitive slave might be, Ofilius gives the following definition: A fugitive is someone who remains outside of the master's house for the purpose of flight, or to conceal himself from the master.

82 It is also stated by Vivianus that a slave is understood to be a fugitive more on account of his intention than through the fact of his flight, for a slave who runs away to escape from an enemy or a robber, or to avoid a fire or the destruction of a house, although it is true that he is taken to flight, still he is not a fugitive. Again, a slave who has fled from a teacher to whom he has been delivered for the purpose of instruction is not a fugitive, if, perchance, he took to flight because he was badly treated by him. He holds the same opinion, where a slave runs away from a party to whom he was lent, if he did so for the same reason. Vivianus holds the same opinion if the slave runs away because he has been treated with too much severity. This, however, only applies where he runs away from those persons and returns to his master, but if he does not return to his master, he says that there is no doubt that he should be considered a fugitive.

> sin autem in hoc tantum latuisset, quoad iracundia domini effervesceret, fugitivum non esse, sicuti ne eum quidem, qui cum dominum animadverteret verberibus se adficere velle, praeripuisset se ad amicum, quem ad precandum perduceret.[83]

And further on, Ulpian remarks (Dig. 21.1.17.4–5):

> Illud enim, quod plerumque ab imprudentibus, inquit, dici solet, eum esse fugitivum, qui nocte aliqua sine voluntate domini emansisset, non esse verum, sed ab affectu animi cuiusque aestimandum. Idem Vivianus ait, si a magistro puer recessit et rursus ad matrem pervenit, cum quaereretur, num fugitivus esset: si celandi causa quo, ne ad dominum reverteretur, fugisset, fugitivum esse: sin vero ut per matrem faciliorem deprecationem haberet delicti alicuius, non esse fugitivum.[84]

Similar examples are quoted from Caelius (see Dig. 21.1.17.6–7, 16).[85] Before explicitly expressing his own opinion about the *erro* or truant slave, Ulpian refers to Labeo, a jurist of the time of Augustus (Dig. 21.1.17.14):

> Erronem ita definit Labeo pusillum fugitivum esse, et ex diverso fugitivum magnum erronem esse. sed proprie erronem sic definimus: qui non quidem fugit, sed frequenter sine causa vagatur et temporibus in res nugatorias consumptis serius domum redit.[86]

In slave merchandising, and in the complex relationships between slaves and their masters in general, the distinction between *erro* and *fugitivus* was presumably not always as complicated as it was made out to be in the discussions of Roman jurists,[87] but — as the slave sale contracts show — it is almost certain that anyone who wanted to sell or buy a slave had to be aware of a general distinction in this regard. This

83 If, however, he concealed himself only for the purpose of waiting until his master's anger had subsided, he is not a fugitive; just as where one whom his master intends to whip betakes himself to a friend in order to induce him to intercede for him.

84 For he says that the opinion held by many unreasoning persons, namely, that he is a fugitive slave who remains away for a night without his master's consent, is not correct; as the offence must be determined by the intention of the slave. Vivianus also says that, where a young slave left the house of his master and returned to his mother, and the question is asked whether or not he is a fugitive; he is one if he went away for the purpose of concealing himself to avoid returning to his master; but if he did so in order the more readily to obtain pardon for some offence by means of his mother, he is not a fugitive.

85 And also from Paulus (ca. 160–230 CE), see Dig. 21.1.43.1.

86 Labeo defines a truant slave as a petty fugitive, and, on the other hand, a fugitive as a great wanderer. But we correctly define a truant slave as one who, in fact, does not run away, but frequently roams about, without any reason, and, after having wasted his time in trifling matters, returns home late.

According to some scholars (e.g., Harrill, Jurists [see n. 52], 136), this opinion, as set out in Dig. 11.4.1.5, was reversed by Ulpian: "fugitivum accipe et si quis erro sit" ("*fugitivus* should be interpreted as covering an *erro* as well"). But this passage does not deal with runaway slaves and vagabonds in general, but "with the efforts used to track down runaways in order to bring them to justice" (J.G. Nordling, Philemon: A Theological Exposition of Sacred Scripture [ConCom], Saint Louis 2004, 141). In such cases, there "is no distinction registered between *fugitivi* and *errones*" (ibid.), as Nordling correctly remarks.

87 See Harrill, Jurists (see n. 52), 136: "all this hairsplitting".

means, that, at the very least, a general distinction between a fugitive slave and a truant must have been quite common throughout the Roman Empire. The decisive criterion in respect of this distinction was the slave's *attitude* towards the master: A *fugitivus* was defined as a slave who had run away with the intention of never coming back, and of staying away from the master forever, whereas an *erro* was a slave who could prove his/her original intention of returning to the master's household, albeit later than allowed or expected. On the other hand, we may assume that the difference in attitude was not always treated as a decisive factor or a cause for lenience, since it nevertheless remained important for a master that a slave should neither run away nor roam about, since, in both instances, the absence of the slave meant that he/she did not fulfil his/her duties, and — as a result — failed to increase the profit of the master. When searched for and caught, both truants and fugitives were treated (almost) equally, most probably because the authorities could not, and were not expected to, distinguish between the different attitudes, but were only concerned with returning the slaves to their masters. However, when the slave was handed over to the master, the distinction between *fugitivus* and *erro* could turn out to be decisive, not only with regard to the slave's eventual punishment, but also with regard to the (future) attitude of the master towards the slave, in terms of the question as to whether the master would trust the slave again, and whether the slave, in turn, would be trustworthy in the future.

IV. Onesimus — A Useless Vagabond?

From the foregoing evidence, it is obvious that Onesimus had not fulfilled his duty. Contrary to his name, which was a common slave name,[88] Onesimus was not useful, but — at least in the eyes of his master Philemon — useless.

Against the background of legal and documentary sources, Paul's description of Onesimus' situation in Phlm 15 does not fit in with the *fugitivus* hypothesis. Moreover, there is no other evidence in the letter that would justify the assumption that Onesimus was a *fugitivus*.[89]

88 See above, p. 120

89 In addition, the fact that Paul is the one who is sending Onesimus back to his master is a very strong argument against the *fugitivus* hypothesis, since under any circumstances, Paul would not have been commissioned with the task of sending back a fugitive slave (see Arzt-Grabner, Philemon [see n. 1], 105–108). Fugitive slaves as well as vagabonds, when caught, had to be handed over to municipal magistrates or public servants and kept under guard until they were brought before the prefect of the city guard or the governor. Both, of course, had to be returned to their owners as soon as possible (see Dig. 11.4.1–8); see J.-U. Krause, Gefängnisse im Römischen

However, there is also no clear evidence that Onesimus, intentionally and directly, went to Paul to ask him for help. Paul puts forward very logical arguments throughout his letter, and the rhetoric that he uses to express his viewpoints and achieve his intended goals is very effective. The strongest argument that Paul could have used in order to achieve his objective, would have been to point out that Onesimus had come directly to him, in order to ask him — as Philemon's friend and partner (see vv. 6–7 and 17) — for help. The often-cited letter by Pliny presents this argument very clearly and cogently, at the very beginning of the letter.[90] Paul does not use this argument at all, and the only explanation for this, in my opinion, is that he simply could not do so because it would not have been true. What he did do, however, was to describe Onesimus, in terms of the general distinction between *fugitivus* and *erro*, as a truant slave,[91] useless in the eyes of his master. Paul's clarification, postulating that maybe Onesimus left his master for just a short time so that Philemon might receive him back forever, may signify that Onesimus himself did not intend to stay away forever, but to return to his master of his own free will. It is possible that a member of the Christian community in the city where Paul was currently imprisoned,[92] had

Reich (HABES 23), Stuttgart 1996, 150; Straus, L'esclavage (see n. 3), 894–896; Bieżuńska-Małowist, L'esclavage (see n. 3), 140–143; eadem, Les esclaves fugitifs dans l'Egypte gréco-romaine, in: Studi in onore di Edoardo Volterra 6 (PFGUR 45), Milano 1971, 75–90; Bellen, Studien (see n. 51); S.R. Llewelyn, The Government's Pursuit of Runaway Slaves, in: idem, New Documents Illustrating Early Christianity 8: A Review of the Greek Inscriptions and Papyri Published in 1984–85, North Ryde 1998, 9–46, esp. 26–36; Arzt-Grabner, Philemon (see n. 1), 106–108.

90 See Pliny, Epist. 9.21,1: "Libertus tuus, cui suscensere te dixeras, venit ad me advolutusque pedibus meis tamquam tuis haesit. Flevit multum, multum rogavit, multum etiam tacuit, in summa fecit mihi fidem paenitentiae verae" ("The freedman of yours with whom you said you were angry has come to me, and flung himself at my feet, and clung to me as if I were you. He wept a lot, he begged a lot, but he also left a good deal unsaid; in short, he convinced me of his genuine penitence").

91 See R.P. Martin, Colossians and Philemon (NCeB), London 1974, 145: "It may be that the slave had come on an errand to Paul and had overstayed his time." However, Martin does not draw any conclusions on the basis of Phlm itself, or from extrabiblical sources (see also p. 167 — commenting on Phlm 18: This verse "may mean simply that his overdue absence from Colossae [on Philemon's business?] or as an escape meant that he owed his master the value of the work he would have done if he had been at work."). With reference to R.P. Martin's commentary, see also C.J. Martin, The Rhetorical Function of Commercial Language in Paul's Letter to Philemon (Verse 18), in: D.F. Watson (ed.), Persuasive Artistry: Studies in New Testament Rhetoric in Honor of George A. Kennedy (JSNT.S 50), Sheffield 1991, 321–337, here: 336 (see eadem, "Somebody Done Hoodoo'd the Hoodoo Man": Language, Power, Resistance, and the Effective History of Pauline Texts in American Slavery, Semeia 83/84 [1998] 203–233, here: 218): "Was he simply overdue in his absence from Colossae on Philemon's business?" However, the papyrus that Martin refers to (P.Oxy. XIV 1643 [298 CE]) deals with a runaway slave.

92 The place of Paul's imprisonment while writing Phlm is still under discussion. Practically, it could not have been very far from Philemon's residence, which may have

taken Onesimus to visit Paul in his prison cell, and that the subsequent events had developed from that occasion, probably starting with Onesimus' account of what had happened to cause his master to regard him as useless. Possibly he was not merely lazy but also a notorious vagabond. At least, Paul describes the situation as if that were the case, which means that Paul must have been confident that he could still convince Philemon that Onesimus should not be regarded as a fugitive. As Paul's letter to Philemon was obviously successfully delivered — otherwise it could not have been preserved and copied later on — we can be sure that Onesimus made his way back to his master without being caught and imprisoned as a *fugitivus*.

V. Frame III: Trustworthy and Confident Partners

Paul's appeal to Philemon is explicitly revealed at the end of the request which starts at v. 10. In v. 17, which can be said to comprise the core of the whole letter, Paul writes: "Therefore if you have me as κοινωνός, receive him [i.e. Onesimus] as myself!" Comparable demands can be found in letters of recommendation from the second or third century CE:

> The epistrategos Flavius Philoxenus introduces his friend Malchus to Apollonios, the strategos of Heptakomia, and makes the following request — P.Brem. 6,4–5 (117–119 CE?): ὥστε οὕτως ἔχε πρὸς αὐτὸν ὡς πρὸς | ἴδιόν μου μέρος ("Therefore, act towards him as if he were a part of myself").
>
> With a letter (P.Oslo II 55; II–III CE) in hand, a certain Diogenes sends his fellow tenant Theon, who is on brotherly terms with him,[93] to his "brother" Pythagoras with the request — l. 7–9: καλῶς οὖν ποι|ήσεις, ἄδελφε, τοῦτον ὑπο|δεξάμενος ὡς ἂν ἐμέ ("Please, brother, receive him as myself").[94]

been located at Ephesus (see Wolter, Letter [see n. 51], 174) or — less likely — at Colossae (see recently Wengst, Brief [see n. 53], 29f.). Accordingly, most modern scholars think of Ephesus as the place of Paul's imprisonment, whereas M. Gielen (Paulus — Gefangener in Ephesus? Teil 1, BN.NF 131 [2006] 79–103; Teil 2, BN.NF 133 [2007] 63–77) mainly uses chronological arguments against the likelihood of an imprisonment in Ephesus that lasted long enough to enable Paul to write several letters. Concerning Phlm, Gielen argues that Rome was probably its place of origin, and also postulates that Philemon's community dwelt in Rome or its surroundings.

93 See l. 5–7: οἰκεῖόν μου ὄντα | καὶ σχέσιν ἀδελφικὴν ἔχον|τα πρός με.

94 See also the letter of recommendation, P.Tebt.Tait 51 (2nd half II or III CE), in which a certain Souchas writes — l. 5–9: καλῶς ποήσις | ἀποδεξάμε|νος τὸν κομί|ζοντά σοι τὸ | ἐπιστόλιον ("Please, receive the person who brings you this letter"). Souchas adds that the person recommended, who is not mentioned by name, is a stranger and does not know the region.

Different, but still noteworthy, is P.Oxy. XIV 1663,6–12 (II–III CE), in which a certain Turbo introduces one Soter to Kleon, asking him to regard Soter as if he were his (or their?) small brother:

> Σωτῆ|ρα δέ, ἐξ οὗ τ[ὴ]ν ἀφορμὴν ἔσχον | ἐπιστεῖλαί σ[ο]ι, παρατίθεμαί σοι, ἄδελ|φε, ἵνα ὁρᾷς αὐτὸν ὡς Σερῆνον τ[ὸ]ν | μεικρὸν ἡμῶν ἀδελφόν, οὐ μόνον | διὰ τὸ ἦθος τὸ χρηστὸν ἄξιον τοῦ | τυχεῖν ἀλλὰ κ[αὶ ---] ("Since I have an opportunity to send to you,

In documentary papyri, the Greek term κοινωνός is not used in the general sense of "friend", but rather in the sense of "business partner."[95] Examples are numerous. In documents dating back to the time of Paul,[96] for instance, we find references to associates of agricultural companies or of workshops:

SB XII 11007,2 (I BCE/I CE); P.Lond. II 257 (p. 19),284 (94/95 CE); P.Stras. I 23,78; O.Bodl. II 1077,2 (both I–II CE); SB XXIV 15920,105.127 (87 or 103 CE); P.Flor. III 370,3 (December 4, 132 CE); perhaps O.Amst. 70,4; 71,4 (both mid/end II CE).[97]

The officials of the same liturgy may also address each other as κοινωνοί (see SB XVIII 13134,6 [111/112 CE]).

In BGU IV 1123 (time of Augustus), three persons who have inherited the lease of a piece of land draw up a contract for the purposes of common cultivation.[98] L. 4 reads: ὁμολογοῦμεν εἶναι τοὺς τρεῖς με[τό]χους καὶ κοινωνοὺς καὶ κυρίους ἕκαστον κατὰ τὸ τρίτον μέρος ἀπὸ τοῦ νῦν εἰς τὸν ἀεὶ χρόνον τῆς προκειμένης μισθώσε[ως] ("We agree that we three are associates and business partners and authorised persons for the aforesaid leasehold, each of us for the third part, from now on for all the time of the present lease").

From the first century CE we have BGU II 530, a letter from a certain Hermocrates to his son, whom he urgently asks for help because — l. 12–22 (with Olsson, Papyrusbriefe [see n. 48], nr. 69): κινδινεύ|ω ἐκστῆναι οὗ ἔχω | πόρου. ὁ κοινωνὸς ἡ|μῶν οὐ συνηργάσα|το, ἀλλ' οὐδὲ μὴν τὸ | ὕδρευμα ἀνεψήσθη, | ἄλλως τε καὶ ὁ ὑδρα|γωγὸς συνεχώσθη ὑ|πὸ τῆς ἄμμου καὶ τὸ | κτῆμα ἀγεώργητόν | ἐστιν ("I am running the risk of giving up my property. Our associate did not work with us, but the cistern has not at all been cleaned, and moreover the irrigation channel is filled up with sand, and the property is uncultivated").[99]

He states that he alone has to pay the taxes, although he is gaining nothing – l. 24–27: μόνον δια|γράφω τὰ δημόσια | μηδὲν συνκομιζόμε|νος. The κοινωνός, who left him to cope on his own, was obviously not his equal co-proprietor, but possibly a lessee.[100] Sometimes, the lessor and lessee formed a company by carrying out the cultivation in terms of fixed shares, distributing the profit proportionally.[101] Possibly the lessee occupied an intermediate position between Hermocrates and the lessees (γεωργοί) who are mentioned in l. 22–23. As this example illustrates, the relationship between two κοινωνοί could sometimes culminate in dissension.

This is also shown by a petition from the first century CE — P.Oxy. XLIX 3468: A certain Apollonios declares that he had borrowed money from a certain Harsiesis and that he had duly paid the annual interest to both Harsiesis and his wife Teteuris. Nonetheless, the two are enforcing a bill of distraint[102] against him: l. 10–15: ν[ῦ]ν δὲ | ὁ Ἁρσιῆσ[ι]ς, ἐποφθαλμιάσας | τῷ ὑπάρχοντί μοι μέρει | οἰκίας, ἧς ἐστιν κοινωνός μου, | ἐτόλμησεν ἐπιτελέσαι κα|τ' αὐτοῦ γράμματα ἐνεχυρασίας ("But now Harsiesis, casting covetous eyes upon the part that is mine of a house he owns jointly with me [literally: of which he is my κοινωνός], has dared to draw up a bill of distraint upon it"). As shown in l. 20–24, Apollonios had already appealed against the bill of distraint, as was his right, and an injunction had been granted by the strategos against Harsiesis and his wife. In such a case, the creditor should have proceeded no further without first making a counter-claim before the appropriate authorities, but according to Apollonius, Harsiesis and Teteuris had ignored the strategos' ruling and were continuing to lay claim to the property.[103]

To summarise: Apollonios appealed to the prefect with a request for protection. Apollonios and Harsiesis were co-proprietors of a house. They had begun to quarrel about an amount of borrowed money, in such a manner that they ultimately proceeded to take legal action against each other; and they had virtually ceased to be concerned about legal correctness.

The fact that business partners could have a debt relationship is shown, for example, by P.Oxy. XXII 2342,4–5 (March 16, 102 CE), in which the wine-merchant (οἰνέμπορος) Apion calls Pasion (who has died in the meantime) a κοινωνὸς | καὶ δανειστής ("business partner and debtor"). This fits in with Phlm 17, in relation to v. 19, in which Paul makes it clear to his κοινωνός Philemon that actually he, Philemon, is in his debt.

The documentary papyri and ostraca do not attest that a slave could sometimes be referred to by his master as a κοινωνός. Moreover, Paul does not explicitly call Onesimus a potential or future κοινωνός of Philemon; he only does so in an indirect way. Nevertheless, there is compelling papyrological evidence that slaves were sometimes appointed as managers or confidants by their masters:[104]

P.Wash.Univ. II 77 (October 28 – November 26, 21 BCE) is a petition submitted by a certain Phanias, son of Sarapion, who complains about the slave Hilarion: Hilarion is alleged to have led his sheep upon the cultivated field of Phanias and let them pasture, thus causing great damage. Phanias asserts that Hilarion should now compensate for the damage. It is striking that Hilarion's master is not mentioned in the document; it is the slave himself who is being sued, because he perpetrated the damage within his own sphere of responsibility. Obviously, it is assumed that Hilarion has enough money to pay the costs. The question will have to remain open as to whether Hilarion was, in addition to his duties towards his master, pursuing an enterprise of his own, or whether he was merely caring for the sheep of his master,

I am putting Soter in your charge, brother, in order that you may regard him in the same way as our small brother Serenus, for he deserves to gain this not only on account of his excellent character, but also ..." [then the papyrus breaks off]).

95 On this specific meaning of the term in literary sources, see Wolter, Brief (see n. 39), 273.

96 For further references, see Preisigke, Wörterbuch 2 (see n. 48), s.v. κοινωνός; Moulton/Milligan, Vocabulary (see n. 34), s.v. κοινωνός.

97 The information regarding BGU XVI 2625,21 (May 16, 15 BCE) is uncertain.

98 See H. Kreller, Erbrechtliche Untersuchungen auf Grund der gräko-ägyptischen Papyrusurkunden, Leipzig 1919, 82 n. 4; A. Steinwenter, Aus dem Gesellschaftsrechte der Papyri, in: Studi in onore di Salvatore Riccobono nel XL anno del suo insegnamento 1, Palermo 1936, 487–504, here: 496 n. 41.

99 The letter was written at the beginning of June (l. 42 Παοῖνι θ); the inundation of the Nile was imminent, and the irrigation machinery was in very bad condition; all of which had discouraged the renters of the land from cultivating the soil. Hermocrates was obviously the one who was responsible for this land, and he ran the risk of not being able to pay his taxes on time, because the amount of the tax did not depend on income, but on the area irrigated, and this area was calculated according to the height of the floods of the Nile, without taking eventual defects of the irrigation system into account. Hermocrates therefore needed to renovate his estate if he wished to pay the tax, instead of being forced to leave his land in order to avoid official retribution. See J. Hengstl in C.Pap.Hengstl p. 32 (with bibliography).

100 See Hengstl, ibid., 32.

101 See ibid. For a list of similar documents from Oxyrhynchus, see J. Rowlandson in P.Oxy. L pp. 216–218.

102 See R. Taubenschlag, The Law of Greco-Roman Egypt in the Light of the Papyri 332 B.C. – 640 A.D., Warszawa ²1955, 531–537; D. Hagedorn in P.Heid. IV pp. 189–191.

103 J.E.G. Whitehorne in P.Oxy. XLIX p. 127.

104 See Straus, L'esclavage (see n. 3), 874–876.

bearing personal responsibility with regard to both the way in which his duties should be fulfilled, and his financial (dis-)advantages.

BGU IV 1116 (April 11 or 21, 13 BCE) is a contract from Alexandria concerning the renting of a house, including a workshop, to a certain Sarapion; the lessor is a woman named Antonia Philemation; the final part of the contract reads – l. 38-41: διορθούμενος δὲ ὁ Σαραπ(ίων) τὸν κα|τὰ μῆνα φόρον τῇ Ἀντωνίᾳ Φιλη|ματίωι λήμ|ψεται παρὰ τοῦ δούλου αὐτῆς Φιλαργύρου τὴν | τρ.....ν ἀποχήν ("And Sarapion pays the monthly rent to Antonia Philemation and will receive the receipt from her slave Philargyros"). The rented house is situated in the Delta of the Nile. The lessor obviously lives in Alexandria, and so the slave Philargyros has the function of a manager who collects the rent as the owner's representative, and hands out the receipts.

A certain Marcus Iulius Alexander obviously employed slaves as deputies for his trade business in Berenike; two receipts, O.Petr. 252 (= C.Pap.Jud. I 118; July 8, 37 CE) and 267 (July 14, 43 CE), are confirmed by a slave who was serving as a proxy for his master.

In the subscription of an employment contract, P.Mich. V 349 (August 29 – September 27, 30 CE), a certain Harpaesis, son of Panorses, confirms that he will plant mulberry trees, and that he has already received a part of the fixed payment "from hand to hand, from Phileros, the slave" — l. 4–7: καὶ εἰληφέναι μοι παραχρῆμα | ἐκ τοῦ ἑσταμένου μισθοῦ δοθῆναι ἀπὸ ἀργυρίου δραχμῶν ἑκατὸν τεσ|σαράκοντα τεσσάρων ἐπὶ λόγου ἐσχηκέναι μαι παραχρῆμα διὰ χι|ρὸς παρὰ Φιλέρωτος δούλου ἀργυρίου δραχμὰς ἑξήκοντα ("And I have taken for myself at once and have received from the payment which was fixed to be given, from the one hundred and forty four drachmas of silver, sixty silver drachmas on account, at once, from hand to hand, from the slave Phileros"). It is notable that, in the entire document, no mention is made of the master of Phileros. Thus, Phileros was probably acting as the responsible manager.

In a protocol relating to a negotiation at the court of the prefect, P.Flor. I 61 (with Chrest.Mitt. 80; 85 CE), a slave is explicitly referred to as a προστάτης (l. 38; "supervisor").

A fairly well-documented case is that of a certain Epagathos (ca. 100 CE), who was entrusted by his master, L. Bellenus Gemellus,[105] with the administration of some of his estates.[106] In numerous instances, letters contain very specific instructions for Epagathos — for example, to care for the irrigation and digging of the olive-yards,[107] to employ and pay off several workmen,[108] to remove the manure,[109] to order carpenters to insert new doors,[110] and to provide Gemellus' household with food.[111]

105 On L. Bellenus Gemellus, see W.L. Westermann, An Egyptian Farmer, UWSLL 3 (1919) 171–190; N. Hohlwein, Le vétéran Lucius Bellienus Gemellus: Gentleman – Farmer au Fayoum, EtPap 8 (1957) 69–91; on the relationship between Gemellus and his slave Epagathos, see also Straus, L'esclavage (see n. 3), 875f.

106 The fact that Epagathos was a slave is attested by the contract Stud.Pal. IV, p. 116f. (109–110 CE), concluded on behalf of Gemellus διὰ Ἐπ[α]γά[θ]ου π[αι]δαρί[ου] (l. 5).

107 See P.Fay. 110,14–18 with BL I, 131 (= Olsson, Papyrusbriefe [see n. 48], nr. 52; White, Light [see n. 48], nr. 95; September 11, 94 CE); 111,20–22 (95 CE); 112,2–7 (May 21, 99 CE).

108 See P.Fay. 102 (ca. 105 CE).

109 See P.Fay. 110,10–11 (= Olsson, Papyrusbriefe [see n. 48], nr. 52; White, Light [see n. 48], nr. 95; September 11, 94 CE); 118,18–20 (= Olsson, Papyrusbriefe [see n. 48], nr. 60; November 6, 110 CE).

110 See P.Fay. 110,27–29 (= Olsson, Papyrusbriefe [see n. 48], nr. 52; White, Light [see n. 48], nr. 95; September 11, 94 CE).

Only once did Epagathos act in a manner that was amazingly thoughtless. The incident is all the more surprising in view of his high position:

> In a letter dating back to the year 95 CE, he is severely rebuked by his master: Two pigs which he had been ordered to deliver to the household of Gemellus had died on the way. Epagathos had allowed them to be driven on foot, although he had had more than enough beasts of burden available to transport them — P.Fay. 111,3–10 (= Olsson, Papyrusbriefe [see n. 48], nr. 53; C.Pap.Hengstl 132): μένφομαί σαι μεγάλως. ἀπο|λέσας χ[υ]ρίδια δύω ἀπὸ τοῦ | σκυλμοῦ τῆς ὡδοῦ (l. ὁδοῦ) ἔχων | ἐν τῇ [κ]όμῃ (l. κώμῃ) ἐργατικὰ κτή|νη δέκα. Ἡρακλίδας ὁ [ὀν]η|λάτης τὼ (l. τὸ) αἰτίωμα περι|επύησε λέγον (l. λέγων) ὥτι (l. ὅτι) σὺ εἴρηχας (l. εἴρηκας) | πεζῶι [τὰ χ]υρίδια ἐλάσαι ("I blame you greatly for the loss of two pigs owing to the fatigue of the journey, when you had in the village ten animals fit for work. Heraclidas the donkey-driver shifted the blame from himself, saying that you had told him to drive the pigs on foot").

Despite this incident, Epagathos continued to enjoy his master's confidence, as can be seen in the many letters that were written during the following years.

VI. Paul's Demand and Philemon's Task

Already in Phlm 6, Paul mentions Philemon's κοινωνία τῆς πίστεως, and this metaphoric sense of κοινωνία is, of course, also present in v. 17, in which Paul calls himself the associate (κοινωνός) of Philemon.[112] With the demand that Philemon should receive Onesimus as if he were Paul, the apostle orders him to receive Onesimus as an associate, as a full member of the Christian community.[113] But possibly Paul had something more in mind than just a "partnership of faith". Philemon is asked to accept his slave as his κοινωνός without any reservations. A fraternity in faith has already been mentioned by Paul earlier on in v. 16 (ἀδελφὸν ἀγαπητόν). Now, in this specific appeal, Paul also asks for something that is specified by means of the term ἐν σαρκί, at the end of v. 16, designating the human sphere. It is possible, therefore, that in addition to the envisaged community of faith between Philemon and

111 See P.Fay. 115,3–8 (= Olsson, Papyrusbriefe [see n. 48], nr. 57; August 21, 101 CE); 116,3–6 (with BL I, 131 and V, 28; = Olsson, Papyrusbriefe [see n. 48], nr. 58; December 2, 104 CE).

112 The term is used also in a metaphorical sense in the following passages: Matt 23,30; 1Cor 10,18.20; 2Cor 1,7; Hebr 10,33; 1Pet 5,1; 2Pet 1,4. For the use of the term in the literal sense, see Lk 5,10; 2Cor 8,23.

113 In this regard, the remark of Wolter, Brief (see n. 39), 274, is worth noting:

> Daß Paulus seine Aufforderung nicht direkt formuliert ('nimm ihn als Partner hinzu'), sondern Onesimus gleichsam hinter seiner eigenen Person versteckt, wird seinen Grund in der sachlichen Zumutung haben, die sie zweifellos für Philemon bedeutete: Es gehört nämlich zu den Grundsätzen des antiken Verständnisses von *koinônia*, daß sie ebenso wie die Freundschaft, deren Mittelpunkt sie markiert …, nur zwischen Gleichen möglich ist.

Wolter also refers to Arist., Eth. Eud. 1241b,17ff., but, as illustrated by BGU II 530 (I CE; see above p. 136) and P.Oxy. XXII 2342 (March 16, 102 CE; see above p. 137), this should not be taken too seriously.

Onesimus (v. 16), Paul also had in mind some kind of "business partnership" between Philemon and his slave. The possible status of Onesimus as business partner of Philemon fits in well with the papyrological evidence regarding particular careers of some slaves during Graeco-Roman times.

Regarding the references in the papyri, such as those presented above, it nevertheless remains true that Paul's demand was very unusual; he was actually asking Philemon to entrust a highly responsible task to a particular slave, and even to make him his partner — a slave who had to bear the ignominy of Philemon's verdict declaring him useless, and who seems to have yet again given his master a good reason not to trust him. Yet that is exactly what Paul is asking for: Philemon should trust his slave, he should give him a real chance to prove his trustworthiness, i.e. his being πιστός, his πίστις. Onesimus' return and his promise to stay with his master forever, according to v. 15, are also based on his faith, his belief in Jesus Christ. When he became a member of the Christian community he also became a member of a new "family", with Paul as his "father" in a metaphorical sense. Now, Philemon, too, should accept him as a "brother". But Paul's understanding of πίστις is not only a religious one, especially in Phlm: Already in v. 5, he referred to Philemon's πίστις, which is not only directed to the Lord Jesus (ἣν ἔχεις πρὸς τὸν κύριον Ἰησοῦν), but also to all his fellow Christians (καὶ εἰς πάντας τοὺς ἁγίους). Concerning Onesimus, and on the basis of the slave sale contracts discussed above, in which πιστός is synonymous with not being a truant,[114] it is obvious that Paul's understanding of πίστις is a very complex one that is relevant in a religious sense as well as in a social, private, and economic sense. It is relevant on all levels of a Christian community — levels that cannot be separated from one another. As for the slave Onesimus, πίστις also implies being a trustworthy slave, worthy enough to be entrusted with some important responsibility, either in the community or in his master's business — but most likely, Paul means both. And similarly, as far as Philemon is concerned, his πίστις should also include his slave(s) — in a κοινωνία that, finally, will be without any restrictions. The κοινωνία τῆς πίστεως that Paul has in mind is a "company of trust" in its full sense.

In terms of the psychological level, which is considered in detail by Peter Lampe in his article,[115] it seems very likely to me that Paul is not forcing Philemon to make just one particular decision, for example, to make Onesimus his business partner or to entrust him with a responsible position in the Christian community, or even to manumit him.[116] Nevertheless, all the arguments that Paul uses throughout the whole letter provide a clear indication that he is very much in earnest, and insistent that Philemon should really think hard about the concept of this κοινωνία that Paul is speaking about, and that he should devise a serious and realistic plan in this regard.[117] Certainly, Philemon should entrust his slave with a responsible task; something that would really offer Onesimus an opportunity to prove his trustworthiness. But the next step is up to Philemon; and thereafter, it is also up to him to decide what he intends to do, beyond what Paul has directly required him to do (see Phlm 19).

Philemon's reaction to Paul's demand may have taken the form of a particular decision; it may also have entailed a long-term plan of action, which, eventually, may have culminated in the manumission of his slave Onesimus, not as an instant first step, but after giving him every opportunity to prepare himself for a life of freedom, personal responsibility, and economic and social security. We do not know the details.[118] But the simple fact that Phlm was preserved makes it feasible to believe that Philemon, ultimately, did not react by disagreeing with Paul completely, but that he was somehow persuaded by Paul's argument that his slave Onesimus had returned to him of his own free will and intent, and that he should henceforth — despite their former conflict — entrust Onesimus with responsible tasks. Otherwise, the likelihood that Philemon would have kept the letter as a valuable document and that it would have been preserved and, later on, copied for distribution, would have been extremely small.[119]

114 See above p. 129.

115 See P. Lampe, Affects and Emotions in the Rhetoric of Paul's Letter to Philemon: A Rhetorical-Psychological Interpretation, pp. 61–77, in this volume..

116 The distinction between *fugitivus* and *erro* did, indeed, play a part in opening the way for the abolition of slavery, although we have to assume that it was not something the very first Christians could achieve. But appeals like the one advanced by Paul in Phlm, to provide slaves — and even vagabonds — with high positions within the community, to treat them as brothers and sisters, and, moreover, as true partners, in the end caused them to do so. The oldest papyrus document attesting to the manumission of a slave on the basis of a Christian attitude is P.Kell. I 48 (355 CE); see also P.Köln III 157 with P.Köln IV pp. 241f. and BL VIII, 156 (589 CE).

117 An indication of this may be discerned in Paul's announcement of his intention to visit Philemon and the community as soon as possible (see Phlm 22).

118 Actually, Col 4,9 also does not provide any definite indications concerning the "career" of Philemon's slave after Paul had sent him back to his master, as the authenticity of Col can be questioned, and in any case it is not certain whether the Onesimus of Col 4,9 can be identified with Philemon's slave (see Reinmuth, Brief [see n. 53], 16).

119 See Wengst, Brief (see n. 53), 44. However, Wengst's conclusion, that Philemon "wird ... den Sklaven Onesimus freigelassen haben, damit er Mitarbeiter des Paulus werde", is mere speculation. On the different possible outcomes, see, e.g., T. Nicklas, The Letter to Philemon: A Discussion with J. Albert Harrill, in: S.E. Porter (ed.), Paul's World (PAST 4), Leiden 2008, 201–220, here: 219f.:

Still, for us, as modern readers of Phlm, the story of Philemon and Onesimus finally ends as it started: in obscurity. But possibly that is the advantage that the shortest of Paul's letters holds for us in respect of present situations of conflict: that — like Philemon — we are asked by Paul to earnestly work out a practical concept of κοινωνία τῆς πίστεως on our own, on every possible level. Only when it is done in this way – in (self-)confidence, trust, and faith — it can really work.

The letter's success could have had very different faces: a "mild" reception by Philemon without a greater punishment; perhaps a later release, which, however, meant that he was still dependent on his master; a release into the work in the "service of the gospel" together with Paul — or a deeply changing attitude towards the "slave" and "brother" Onesimus. This last question cannot be answered.

The Letter to Philemon in the Context of Slavery in Early Christianity

G. FRANCOIS WESSELS

Paul's short Letter to Philemon is loaded with rhetorical nuances. It carries benevolent wishes and prayers, as well as requests and appeals which, for many reasons, would have been difficult to turn down, and which, for that reason, were more than requests. The subtext communicates powerfully to those readers who have the insight to understand it, since Paul's letter to his friend Philemon contains a rich variety of rhetorical strategies used by Paul in his attempt to persuade Philemon to comply with his wishes regarding Onesimus, Philemon's former slave. An investigation of these rhetorical strategies will hopefully enable observant readers to gain some insight into the nature of slavery in the first century CE — as well as into early Christianity's response to it. However, before we turn to the decoding of rhetorical strategies, the historical phenomenon of slavery in the Roman Empire during the first century CE requires our attention. What was the nature of this phenomenon? Should we assume that the slavery of that time was more or less the same as those slavery systems that were nearest in time to our own era — that is, the slavery systems established in European colonies and America? Or was it a different — perhaps a less severe — kind of slavery?

To provide a brief answer is not possible. The true nature of slavery in the first century is at present still a matter of debate. There are two main routes to the acquisition of knowledge on, and the historical reconstruction of, slavery in the first-century Roman Empire. Some of the most enthusiastic proponents of each of these two routes hold the view that their route alone can lead us to a proper understanding of the slavery of that time, and that the other route is a cul-de-sac. The two routes in question are: 1) the investigation of Roman legal texts; and 2) a social and historical analysis of slavery systems. We should consider the claims to truth made by the proponents of each of the two routes, in order to understand more about the nature of slavery in the first-century Roman Empire.

I. Investigating Roman Legal Texts

One method of describing the nature of slavery in the Roman empire of the first century is to investigate ancient Roman legal texts, in search of any information on the position of slaves. Such texts are combed to find information regarding the frequency of, and conditions for manumission,[1] and in order to determine whether slaves were regarded by Roman law as persons and therefore as accountable; whether a specific slave was a runaway slave (*fugitivus*), a truant (*erro*) or a slave who intended to return to his owner, but who had asked another slave-owner (or a person of similar social standing) for protection, in the hope that this person would intercede for the runaway slave with his original owner; and other related matters.[2]

However, the study of legal texts as a route to reconstructing slavery in antiquity has been criticised on the basis of a number of points. It is argued that: 1) Legal texts may or may not reflect the actual legal codes which were applied in a specific place and time in antiquity. Furthermore, legal texts may possibly reflect the idealistic views of philosophers in terms of what they thought the situation should be – but not the laws as they were actually applied. 2) Even legal codes may not mirror real practices at grassroots level; and even legal codes are prescriptive, which means that it cannot simply be assumed that they describe real legal practices.[3] 3) Some legal codes, such as the *Digest of Justinian*, which are often relied upon for the study of slavery in the first century, were compiled many years later, and it is uncertain whether these codes actually reflect the way in which they were applied in the first century.[4] 4) It is difficult to determine the extent to which Roman laws were fully implemented in the Roman provinces. Roman law often applied only to Roman citizens, while non-Romans retained their own laws.

In the light of the foregoing, some historians have rejected the investigation of legal texts as a means of determining actual conditions of slavery. They point out that this approach has often induced historians to reconstruct first-century slavery as a benign form of mass employment for the under-class, as well as a means of integrating foreigners

1 See J.A. Harrill, The Manumission of Slaves in Early Christianity (HUTh 32), Tübingen 1995, 53.

2 See P. Lampe, Keine "Sklavenflucht" des Onesimus, ZNW 76 (1985) 135-137. W.L. Westermann, The Slave Systems of Greek and Roman Antiquity (MAPhS 40), Philadelphia 1955, 107: "The problem of the runaways (*fugitivi, errones*) was a serious one in all parts of the Empire."

3 See Harrill, Manumission (see n. 1), 23.

4 See J. Byron, Paul and the Background of Slavery: The Status Quaestionis in New Testament Scholarship, CBibR 3 (2004) 116–139.

into society, thereby supplying an avenue for upward social mobility for some, such as the slaves in managerial positions.[5]

Criticism relating to the use of legal texts was vehemently expressed by Orlando Patterson in his very influential *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study*:

> Many modern students of slavery, in failing to see that the definition of the slave as a person without a legal personality is a fiction, have found irresistible a popular form of argument ... [which] has a standard formula. The scholar ... declares as a legal fact that the slave is defined and treated by the slaveholding class as a person without legal or moral personality. He then digs into his data and comes up with "proof" that the slave is indeed treated as a person in law—for is he not punished for his crimes? and are there not laws restricting the powers of the master? ... "You may define a person as a thing," goes the flourish, "but you cannot treat him as one".[6]

Patterson's point is that it is "irrelevant" whether Roman law defined slaves as things or persons. In fact, he admits: "No legal code I know has ever attempted to treat slaves as anything other than persons in law."[7] Roman law defined slaves as persons, he concedes; but a social-historical analysis of slavery in that period clearly demonstrates that slaves were indeed regarded not as persons (whatever their legal definition), but simply as things. Therefore, Patterson and others argue, the optimal route to reconstructing first-century slavery can only be attained through a thorough analysis of slavery as a historical and social phenomenon.

We will heed the arguments of Patterson and others; but it also needs to be pointed out that their arguments do not diminish the importance of analysing legal texts. The texts do offer valuable information with regard to many details relating to slavery, for example, the degrees of manumission.[8] Furthermore, it should also be noted that many of those scholars who have used legal texts, have done so without claiming that the information drawn from legal texts alone is adequate for the purposes of drawing a clear and complete picture of slavery. William Westermann's *The Slave Systems of Greek and Roman Antiquity*[9] and Thomas Wiedemann's *Greek and Roman Slavery*[10] both make

5 Ibid., 116f.

6 O. Patterson, Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study, Cambridge 1982, 22f.

7 Ibid., 23.

8 See Harrill, Manumission (see n. 1), 54.

9 Westermann, Slave Systems (see n. 2). His book helps researchers to understand that one should guard against speaking about Greek and Roman attitudes (and those in other cultures) as if one monolithic view of slavery existed in antiquity. On the contrary, there were many different approaches, and researchers of Christian origins should at least be aware of the arguments of Westermann and others. Westermann draws our attention to a paradox: Slavery in the Greek-speaking eastern part of the empire was less severe than in the Latin-speaking West, even though slavery in the Greek East was racially motivated. In the Greek East, slavery was "grounded in the theory of innate differences, both quantitative and qualitative, in the moral and intel-

liberal use of legal (and also literary, philosophical and political) texts, but do not use this material in an attempt to diminish the severity of the slavery systems of the ancient Greek and Roman cultures. It is admittedly true, for example, that a scholar such as Westermann cautions against the view that, in Roman and Greek systems, slaves were seen merely as objects, and nothing else. But Westermann issues this caution, not in order to contend that ancient slavery was a benign system, but simply to point out that, despite the fact that slaves were regarded as mere human chattel when it came to buying and selling, in terms of Roman law, they were regarded, at least formally, as human beings.[11]

M.I. Finley is another example of a scholar who used legal texts, but, who, at the same time, did much to deconstruct the perception of slavery in the Roman Empire in the first century as a humane institution. He held Roman legal distinctions to be crucial for a proper understanding of slavery.[12] Peter Lampe[13] also used information from Roman legal texts as the basis for his conclusion that Onesimus was not a fugitive slave — without arguing that slavery in the Roman Empire in the first century was a mildly benign social institution. In his *Slaves and*

lectual capacities of individuals which extend to include racial groups" (p. 28). In the Roman Latin-speaking West, the *treatment and working conditions* of slaves were more severe, even though the Romans — unlike Aristotle — did not regard slaves as racially designed to serve. With regard to slavery in the Roman West, Westermann points out that:

> In marked contrast with the severity of the Roman treatment of slaves, with the unlimited powers of control which lay with the *pater familias* and with the view, clearly expressed by Cicero, that it was beneath the dignity of a Roman official to grant too great latitude of influence to a slave, stands the broad-minded attitude of the Romans in admitting talented slaves after their manumission into the intellectual life of the Roman community. They were accepted into its political and economic life without any manifestation of prejudice arising from their former status. (p. 79.)

10 T. Wiedemann, Greek and Roman Slavery, London 1988.

11 Westermann, Slave Systems (see n. 2), 80:

> Fundamentally regarded, however, as an object of ownership, either by a single person, by several persons collectively, or by a corporation such as a *collegium* or the state, the slave was a chattel (*res*), subject to all the economic operations which were applicable to any other commodity, such as sale, mortgage ...

But then Westermann goes on to qualify this on p. 81: "Special treatment of the slave as *res* was necessarily required, however, by the recognition of these human qualities which distinguished him from other objects of use and exchange ...", and then concludes on p. 102:

> The question whether, in Roman law, a slave was conceived of, in any sense, as a *person* has been the subject of discussion among the modern scholars versed in the doctrines of ancient law. There seems to be little doubt that in Roman jurisprudence, as in the Greek concept, the slave was regarded *as a person as well as a res*. (Emphasis GFW.)

12 See M.I. Finley, Ancient Slavery and Modern Ideology, New York 1980, 68.

13 See Lampe, "Sklavenflucht" (see n. 2), 136.

Masters in the Roman Empire, K.R. Bradley[14] lavishly uses Roman legal texts as points of reference (see, for example, chapter 3), but his reconstruction of slavery convincingly shows how important a factor the use and abuse of power by slave masters was, and clearly demonstrates that slavery cannot be studied without understanding the roles played by power abuse and violence.[15]

In fact, most of the scholars mentioned above, who liberally use legal texts, would agree that an analysis of the texts alone would leave us with only a one-dimensional picture of slavery in the Roman Empire during the first century CE. What is needed to complete the three-dimensional picture is a historical and social analysis of slavery. The legal — and also the literary, historical, moral and papyrus[16] — texts can assist one to conduct such an analysis, together with other sources, such as archaeological finds, inscriptions and papyrus and parchment fragments. But it was the social and historical analyses conducted by scholars such as Patterson, Finley and Bradley that significantly influenced the debate on slavery in antiquity.

II. Social and Historical Analysis and Reconstruction of Slavery

Horsley points out that the diversity of vocabulary in various sources poses a problem.[17] The terms δοῦλος and *servus*, for example, cover wide semantic domains that indicate a variety of people in servanthood. These terms are often used in a metaphorical manner, referring to moral slaves of different social standings. Furthermore, ancient writers often named helots "slaves", which they were not — helots were not imported from outside but were subjugated from within their own native territories and could not be bought or sold.[18] To understand what slavery really was, the historian thus needs to look beyond the vocabu-

14 K.R. Bradley, Slaves and Masters in the Roman Empire: A Study in Social Control, Oxford etc. 1984 (²1987).

15 See J. Evans Grubbs, Women and the Law in the Roman Empire: A Sourcebook on Marriage, Divorce and Widowhood, London etc. 2002, xi, who emphasises the importance and reliability of Roman legal texts for the purposes of a historical reconstruction of social relations:

> Today it is widely recognized that Roman legal and documentary sources are an important source of information about women in the Roman world, and can present a more well-rounded and accurate picture of women's lives than classical literature, which is often tendentious and bound by the conventions of genre.

16 See Harrill, Manumission (see n. 1), 18.

17 R.A. Horsley, The Slave Systems of Classical Antiquity and Their Reluctant Recognition by Modern Scholars, Semeia 83/84 (1998) 19–66, here: 28. Here, Horsley relies on Finley's analysis.

18 See Harrill, Manumission (see n. 1), 16.

lary on the surface and investigate the extent of the power of slave-owners over those they owned, Finley argues. Once scholars begin to do that, they will see that, notwithstanding the recognition of slaves as persons in legal texts, slaves were in reality nothing but chattel, movable possessions, which could be bought and sold by owners without any consideration of the human and cultural relations that slaves might have had. For Finley,[19]

> The property element remains essential ... what separates the slave from the rest, including the serf or *peon*, is the totality of his powerlessness in principle, and for that the idea of property is juristically the key — hence the term "chattel slave".

Orlando Patterson agrees with Finley's social historical analysis, but takes it further. Slaves were not simply chattel. Their position was worse. They were dead people walking. Although biologically alive, they were socially dead.[20] That is why he called his book *Slavery and Social Death*. The slave had been physically and violently removed from his or her native home and environment, "stripped of ethnicity and all dignity"[21], and often forced to learn a foreign language and unfamiliar customs. It would have been virtually impossible for slaves who had been captured by means of an act of imperial conquest, to uphold and pass on to their physical children the customs and culture in which they themselves had been brought up.

Patterson argues that slavery was a form of institutionalised violence, most often upheld by the Roman imperial state.[22] Conquest or reconquest was a primary source of new slaves.[23] During a successful conquest, the rebels, the aged and the weak amongst the enemy were killed, according to many of Josephus' reports,[24] but the able-bodied survivors were captured as slaves. Their fathers were killed; they were enslaved. The powerlessness of these slaves was thus a substitute for death.[25] They were socially dead persons, without birthright, isolated from their social heritage and the traditions of their ancestors, "not allowed to inform their understanding of social reality with the inherited

19 Finley, Slavery (see n. 12), 307.
20 See Patterson, Slavery (see n. 6), 1–75.
21 Harrill, Manumission (see n. 1), 16.
22 A critical question which may be posed to Patterson is that of whether he has not perhaps exaggerated the role of the Roman state's conquests as a source of new slaves. According to Harrill, Manumission (see n. 1), 30, the "main sources of ancient slaves were warfare, piracy, brigandage, the international slave trade, kidnapping, infant exposure, some breeding, and the punishment of criminals." The Roman state was responsible for slavery resulting from warfare, but in the other instances, other people played a role.
23 See Horsley, Slave Systems (see n. 17), 29.
24 See Joseph., BJ 1.180, 222; 2.68, 75; AJ 17.289, 295.
25 See Horsley, Slave Systems (see n. 17), 29.

meanings of their forebears, or to anchor the living present in any conscious community of memory."[26]

The argument that the investigation of legal texts may mislead the historian into accepting a historical reconstruction of slavery in the Roman Empire which is superficial and which does not reveal the brutal character of slavery, is convincingly refuted by K.R. Bradley's book, *Slaves and Masters in the Roman Empire*, published in 1984 (followed by a second edition in 1987). The classical historian Bradley's abundant use of a variety of texts — legal sources (such as the *Digest of Justinian* or the *lex Junia*), as well as the writings of historians (such as Tacitus), politicians (such as Seneca), philosophers (such as Musonius Rufus), moralists (such as Juvenal) and agricultural writers (such as Columella) — does not prevent him from providing an incisive analysis of the way in which these texts reveal how slaves were totally controlled by their masters.[27]

Bradley illustrates this complete control without vilifying the Roman state or slave-owners. Throughout his book he reminds readers that even among self-centred and pragmatic Romans, moments of kindness could not be ruled out entirely. However, a closer analysis of the motives for many of the ostensible acts of kindness reveals a much harsher treatment of slaves. This Bradley illustrates with a number of examples. Attention will be focused on the aspects of holidays for slaves, slave marriages and slave families, and manumission, with a view to testing, as it were, the friendly face of the Roman system of slavery.

1. Acts of Kindness as a "Lubrication" for the Slave System

Even though Bradley reminds one that feelings of compassion and individual deeds of kindness on the part of Roman citizens and even the ultimate authorities who wielded the mechanisms of power over slavery must be recognised, his analysis clearly shows how the system of slavery functioned very effectively to entrench the power of the slaveholder class, despite any individual acts of compassion. In fact, deeds of kindness strengthened the system by making it more flexible, and therefore ultimately stronger. Acts of kindness — favours shown to slaves, as well as incentives and rewards, promises of manumission — may or may not have been granted in a genuine spirit of generosity by

26 Patterson, Slavery (see n. 6), 2.
27 It is interesting that Bradley's analysis was conducted independently of Patterson's study. Bradley does not refer at all to Patterson in the first edition (1984) of his book. In the supplementary bibliography in the second edition of 1987, Bradley does mention Patterson's 1982 book.

the master; but regardless of the spirit in which they were granted, these acts of kindness functioned as a "lubrication" to allow, as it were, the system to run smoothly: They served to diminish the severity of slavery and to support slavery in order to ensure its survival as a social institution. This can be demonstrated by means of the following examples: slave holidays, slave marriages and manumission of slaves.

a. Holidays for Slaves

Slaves were allowed to celebrate certain holidays on the Roman calendar, when they did not have to work.[28] As is the case today, many of these holidays were once holy days — feasts celebrating some religious event or honouring some god — for example Saturnalia, Matronalia and Compitalia. According to Catullus, Saturnalia was the most popular of the Roman holidays. Seneca complains in respect of this holiday, that then the "whole mob has let itself go in pleasures."[29] Pliny the Younger writes that he retired to his room while the rest of the household celebrated.[30] Slaves had the day off. As often happens with such feasts, "[n]ormal restraints were removed from slaves to the extent that they might gamble and address their masters more frankly than usual; and at Compitalia signs of servitude were removed from slaves."[31]

An interesting case was the peculiar holiday celebrated on 13 August, on which women washed their hair.[32] Plutarch was at a loss to explain the hair-washing ritual. The origins and meaning of the feast were obscure to him, and probably to many other Romans; yet 13 August was still celebrated as a holiday — also for slaves. Why were holidays celebrated when their origin and meaning were lost? Bradley offers a possible explanation:[33] The real reason for the holidays was no longer religious but social. The objective was to lighten up the lives of slaves — for one day — so that, after the brief celebration, they would work harder on other days. In support of this deduction, he refers to the Roman writers Solinus and Macrobius, who explicitly

> remark that slaves were given banquets (*cenae*) on March 1 and Saturnalia by their owners in order to foster *obsequium* for the immediate future or as a compensation for work completed in the recent past.[34]

28 See Bradley, Slaves (see n. 14), 29.
29 Sen., Epist. 18.3.
30 Plin., Epist. 2.17.24.
31 Bradley, Slaves (see n. 14), 43.
32 See ibid.
33 See ibid.
34 Ibid., 44.

b. Slave Marriages and Slave Families

Judith Evans Grubbs writes:

> Marriage between slaves or between a slave and a free person was a legal impossibility, though relationships between free persons and slaves certainly occurred in real life. If monogamous and long-lasting, such a union would be called *contubernium*, as would a union between two slaves. Such quasi-marital relationships are often attested in funerary inscriptions from the city of Rome.[35]

This state of affairs — namely that slaves entered into informal marriages — is confirmed by what one reads in the New Testament. Matt 18 contains the parable of the ungrateful δοῦλος,[36] who was threatened that if he did not pay his debt, "his wife and children and all that he had" would be sold to repay the debt. Even though the parable is fiction, it presupposes that slaves could enter into unions which, though not legal according to Roman law, passed for *de facto* marriages — the *contubernia* to which Evans Grubbs refers.

Around 200 AD, Tertullian wrote that, in his opinion, married slaves were better disciplined. By that time, many slaves did "marry".[37] By 325 AD, Constantine's social legislation forbade the separation by sale of man and wife.[38] Legal sources show that offspring from slave women were anticipated as a matter of course. Epigraphic material confirms that slave families existed. On grave epitaphs, for example, slave husbands expressed feelings of bereavement at the loss of their spouses. Bradley notes that

> the phraseology was doubtless highly conventional, much like its modern counterpart, but it suggests all the same a view of marriage based at least in part on mutual feelings, love and respect ... [T]he implication is strong that marriage (among slaves) was often regarded, once entered upon, as a binding and permanent union until the intervention of death.[39]

Among slaves, such a conventional view of marriage could only have existed if there were *de facto* married slave couples who lived together as families. "The epitaphs show that slaves referred to one another as mother and father, son and daughter, brother and sister, again just as free members of society did."[40] However, since marriage among slaves was legally not permitted, yet occurred openly, we must assume that these slave marriages were informal unions, allowed and condoned by slave-owners. Why would the latter allow such unions, for which Ro-

35 Evans Grubbs, Women (see n. 15), 143. See also S.M. Treggiari, Roman Marriage: *iusti coniuges* from the Time of Cicero to the Time of Ulpian, Oxford 1991, 81.
36 See J. Vogt, Ancient Slavery and the Ideal of Man, Cambridge 1975, 142.
37 See Bradley, Slaves (see n. 14), 47.
38 See C.N. Cochrane, Christianity and Classical Culture: A Study of Thought and Action from Augustus to Augustine, Oxford 1939, 198.
39 Bradley, Slaves (see n. 14), 49.
40 Ibid.

man law made no provision? It is possible — even probable – that these "marriages" were allowed by some slave-owners as an act of kindness. Yet, argues Bradley, a very important — possibly the most important — reason for this concession was that such *de facto* slave unions were beneficial to the slave-owner, in that they preserved social and economic stability among the owner's slaves,[41] and that they might produce, for the benefit of the slave-owner, a new generation of – probably docile — slaves.

The unwritten concessions allowing slaves to enter into "quasi-marital relationships"[42] and have children, paint a picture of reasonably humane treatment of slaves in the Roman Empire. However, says Bradley, the picture changes fundamentally if one considers the question as to how secure these informal slave marriages really were. The answer is: they were highly unstable. Since these unions were, in essence, not formally contracted marriages, before the law they did not exist. Such unions could thus be dissolved at the slave-owner's whim, and were often dissolved when more than a whim was at stake, for example when the slave-owner was in some financial difficulty, and needed to sell some property to raise cash. There was no existing legal impediment preventing the selling off of a "married" slave woman. And slaves could be sold, because they were essentially a form of property, "and as commodities they were hence disposable."[43] Or, if not sold, they could be hired out, or loaned out, or given as gifts. Bradley refers to Martial, who was "seeking a slave from a patron for sexual reasons as if this were quite common."[44] The mechanics of the slavery system were such that, even if, for reasons of kindness, a compassionate slave-owner did not wish to sell a "married" slave, economic pressures could force him to sell such a slave, and thus severely disrupt a slave family.

What made the situation even worse was the fact that such tragic transactions were not the exception. By analysing fragments of papyrus documents originating from Egypt, Bradley investigated the age of slaves sold in a particular place in Egypt. On the basis of the papyrological evidence available, he demonstrates that, with regard to female slaves, in the case of one batch of papyrus fragments reporting the sale of 30 female slaves, for example, not one female older than 35 was reported as being sold. Bradley comments that this is hardly surprising, since a prospective buyer would presumably be concerned as to whether the purchased slave would be young enough to: a) work and b) produce children, who would in their turn become slaves:

> The conclusion seems inescapable that any female slave could reasonably expect to be sold during her childbearing years because it was then that she was of greatest economic value to buyers and sellers alike.[45]

Some papyrus fragments indicate that, when women in the age range of 20–35 were sold, they were likely to be sold alone, thereby being forced to part with their "husbands" and whatever children they might have had together. Of the 21 women over 14 years of age mentioned in Table 1 in Bradley's book,[46] one was "sold with infant" and another "sold with two children". If we assume that the remaining 19 women had (say) 19 children under 14 years of age with them, this would mean that, of the 21 children sold, *only two were sold with their mothers*. From this evidence, Bradley logically concludes: "Familial disruption through sale is further implied by the evidence of sales of children who when sold were not accompanied by an adult."[47]

Even more disturbing is the large proportion of *children who were sold alone*, unaccompanied by an adult. According to Bradley's Table 1, 9 children under 14 years of age were sold alone, out of a total of 30 slaves sold. Their respective ages were: 4, 6, 7, 8, 11, 13, 13, 14, 13.

According to Bradley's Table 2, 11 children under the age of 14 were sold — out of a total of 21 slaves; in other words, more than 50% of the people sold were children! Of these 11 children, three were sold with an adult, and eight were sold alone. The ages of those who were sold with someone else, were 2, 3 and 8. The remaining eight, who were sold on their own, were respectively 3, 4, 7, 8, 8, 8, 8 and 13 years old.[48]

These few statistics reflect a shockingly high proportion of family disruption when slaves belonging to one family had to be sold. (Even the few children who were fortunate enough to be sold with their mothers were separated from their fathers and siblings.) It seems logical to conclude that, whenever a slave-owner was pressurised to sell a family (or part of a family), or whenever the prices were so favourable that he could not miss the opportunity, the chances that he would sell

41 Bradley, ibid., 51, quotes the Roman writer Varro with regard to the need to supply women to the foremen, the *praefecti*:

> The foremen are to be *made more zealous by rewards*, and care must be taken that they have a bit of property of their own, and mates from among their fellow-slaves to bear them children (Varro, RR 1.17.5, Loeb translation). But be the overseer what he may, he should be given a woman companion *to keep him within his bounds* and yet in certain matters to help him (Col. RR 1.8.5, Loeb translation).

42 Evans Grubbs, Women (see n. 15), 143.
43 Bradley, Slaves (see n. 14), 52.
44 Ibid.
45 Ibid., 55. "Menopause in antiquity was thought to have occurred on average between ages forty and fifty" (ibid. 57; here, Bradley is quoting D.W. Amundsen/C.J. Diers, The Age of Menopause in Classical Greece and Rome, HumBiol 42 [1970] 79-86).
46 See ibid., 57.
47 Ibid.
48 See ibid., 53–59.

one nuclear slave family as a unit were extremely low. It was much more likely that the slave family would be broken up and sold, piece by piece, as it were. This made much more sense economically.

The situation was exacerbated by the strong probability that family members might be sold to owners far from their home. The papyrological evidence from Egypt illustrates the forced geographical mobility to which some slaves were exposed — and Bradley[49] gives a number of examples.

This evidence puts the "benign treatment" of slaves who were allowed to marry and stay together as slave families into perspective. The main reason for allowing marriages and families was to stabilise the slave work-force — for the benefit of the slave-owner. When the economic situation of owners changed, slave marriages and families were likely to be broken up. One has to agree with Bradley: "It seems that slave-owners were little troubled about breaking servile familial ties when economic considerations made the sale of their slaves attractive or necessary."[50]

c. Manumission — Setting Slaves Free

Susan Treggiari starts her book with a chapter on the manumission of Roman slaves. "Public opinion in Rome," she writes, "accepted the freeing of slaves as normal and even desirable."[51] Quoting Cicero, she comments:[52]

> It is admitted (among Roman writers and orators), then, that slaves can, and do, hope for freedom, and that after enslavement in war a man might hope by working well and saving his *peculium* to win his liberty in a relatively short time.

In fact, towards the end of the Republic, so many manumissions were offered that in 2 BC and 4 AD, Augustus issued laws to limit manumissions.[53]

At first glance, the fact that the freeing of slaves was considered "normal and even desirable" seems odd, given the harsh conditions of

49 See ibid., 59.
50 Ibid., 60.
51 S. Treggiari, Roman Freedmen During the Late Republic, Oxford 1969, 12. In agreement with Treggiari, Bradley, Slaves (see n. 14), 51, points out that:

> Roman masters were indeed relatively liberal in the extent to which they conferred freedom on their slaves, and at any moment innumerable ex-slaves throughout the Roman world demonstrated by their mere existence that slavery was not of necessity a permanent state but one from which release was possible.

Harrill, Manumission (see n. 1), 53, agrees: "In Roman slavery, manumission – master-sanctioned release from slavery – was regular."
52 Treggiari, Freedmen (see n. 51), 12.
53 This is not the place to open a debate as to why manumissions were limited. See the discussion in Bradley, Slaves (see n. 14). Se. Suffice it to say that Augustus' legislation regulated manumissions.

the slavery system, as described above. Why would people of the slave-holding class, who thought of slaves as a commodity, as human chattel, regard the freeing of slaves as normal, even desirable? According to Treggiari, there were a variety of motives for manumission. Altruism was indeed a reason. "Even among pragmatic Romans, a philosophic idea cannot be discounted entirely."[54] The Stoics taught that slaves could be the moral equals of their masters. Cicero considered this to be possible. Bradley also acknowledges that one of the motives for manumission was indeed that

> owners were concerned to attract the esteem of their peers through acts of apparent kindliness, to act generously for its own sake ... or else to reward slaves in return for meritorious service and the personal demonstration of loyalty and obedience over the years.[55]

Some slave owners apparently had hearts of flesh and blood. Then again, moral doubts troubled not too many. Even some freed slaves themselves later became slave-owners, and some freedmen's treatment of their slaves "shocked even contemporaries".[56] It is most likely that altruism, as a motive for manumission, was mixed with more self-centred ideas. For example, a slave-owner who freed a slave could reward his deserving slave without incurring any inconvenience himself. On his death, the slave-owner would be honoured as a kind and righteous person.[57] If he made known his intention before the manumission, he could reap the benefit of loyal and hard-working slaves, looking forward to being rewarded with manumission.

But manumission could give a slave-owner benefits more concrete than honour and loyalty. Sometimes slaves were set free to save the slave-owner's skin, for example in cases where a slave's testimony in a court case could be potentially dangerous to the slave-owner. Slaves could be tortured under examination, freedmen not. So, in some instances, a slave-owner manumitted his slave to safeguard his own interests.

Manumission could also provide safeguards against economic disaster. When a slave was freed, the owner was paid a considerable sum. This was mostly taken from the so-called *peculium* — the cash property saved by the slave over years and which was at his disposal. According to Bradley,[58] who reminds us that a Roman legionary soldier earned HS

54 Treggiari, Freedmen (see n. 51), 12.
55 Bradley, Slaves (see n. 14), 60.
56 Treggiari, Freedmen (see n. 51), 13.
57 See ibid., 14: "He might enjoy the prospect of a fine funeral, his corpse attended by grateful freedmen with caps of liberty on their heads, witnesses to their patron's munificence."
58 See Bradley, Slaves (see n. 14), 107.

1 200 per year, HS 4 000 was mentioned as a manumission price in one case. In another, "HS 10 000 was paid by a dancer named Paris ... and HS 50 000 was paid by a slave doctor."[59] Naturally the slave owner could not expect such a price for a slave in his 50s; but even HS 1 000 was a useful sum of money. It should also be remembered that once a slave came to the end of his working days, he would be an economic liability to the slaveholder. Slaves were expensive to keep; they needed roofs over their heads and food to eat. Once they came to the end of their productive years, they became uneconomical, and virtually unsaleable. "The rush on manumissions in the late Republic was triggered off partly by the fact that poor masters found it cheaper to manumit than to feed and lodge slaves ..."[60] If an older slave could be sold his freedom, the slave-owner was not only freed of an economic burden, but in addition was paid some money by the slave. That was a bargain, which had to be considered.[61]

The *peculium* mentioned above played a crucial role. Money acquired by slaves became part of their *peculium* — cash or property at the disposal of the slave. Technically the *peculium* belonged to the slave-owner,[62] but in practice the slave usually had complete use and control of its content. The purpose of the *peculium* was to provide slaves with the opportunity to save cash, with which, after the age of thirty (for male slaves),[63] they could buy their freedom. The very fact that slaves

59 Ibid.

60 Treggiari, Freedmen (see n. 51), 28.

61 See A.D. Callahan/R.A. Horsley/A. Smith, Introduction: The Slavery of New Testament Studies, Semeia 83/84 (1998) 1–15, here 7:

> The manumitted slave, perhaps purchased as a child or even born in servitude, was well past his prime at the age of manumission. He would struggle not to spend his declining years in penury. Surely the shrewd slave owner was more than happy to dispense with the slave, the ultimate dispensable "tool", after having obtained from him the best years of his life ... An ageing philosopher describes the situation: " ... after garnering all that was most profitable to you, after consuming the most fruitful years of your life and the greatest vigour of your body, after reducing you to a thing of rags and tatters, he (the master) is looking about for a rubbish heap on which to cast you aside unceremonially, and for another man to engage who can stand the work." (Lucian, De mercede conductis, 39.)

62 See Wiedemann, Slavery (see n. 10), 52:

> In theory, a slave's savings (*peculium*) were absolutely the property of his master ... nevertheless, the Romans recognised that a slave could use such savings to buy his freedom, and under the emperors the law was prepared to enforce such a contract.

63 Callahan et al., Introduction (see n. 61), 7, point out that the age of thirty for male slaves should not be misunderstood:

> The legal evidence ... shows not that a slave must be manumitted at age thirty, but rather that he should not be manumitted before his thirtieth birthday – not a prerogative but a prohibition with a view to constraining manumission and not liberalizing it.

saved for their *peculium* indicates that they did receive some kind of wages, even if such payments were meant to provide nothing more than pocket money. In addition, at least some slaves received formal wages for their work.[64] Others who worked as doorkeepers, actors, doctors, prostitutes and so on, had jobs which held the potential for the collection of tips.

Although money from the *peculium* could also be used for other purposes, the *peculium* was mainly regarded as a kind of savings account with a view to buying one's manumission, soon after one reached the age of thirty. In this way, the *peculium* served as an incentive for slaves to save. It was a regular reminder to slaves that freedom was a long-term prospect, but not wholly beyond reach.[65] In this manner, the incentive of saving for the *peculium* served to maintain acquiescence among slaves, who did not wish to spoil their chances of acquiring freedom. Slaves were never sure that they would be set free at some stage before they were 40; but it was worthwhile to maintain their chances.

> Everything combined to produce subordination in the slave to the master during slavery and to create a situation in which total domination over and the exploitation of the slave were feasible.[66]

Bradley explores the latter theme further. Slaves were manipulated and controlled by their masters — but this control was not simply exercised by means of direct force. Rather, as a result of the fears and anxiety which conditioned the life of slaves, as described above, it may be inferred that the role of the slave, as envisaged by the slave-owner, *became internalised* within the slave to such a degree that it created the response of apparent obedience, "variously sincere or disguised according to the individual slave's wish to safeguard himself and his privileges."[67]

Then, of course, after the actual event of a manumission, there was the benefit of *operae*: As a condition of release, it was often agreed by the slave seeking freedom that he would continue to do some *operae* — works — for his ex-owner, for a certain length of time, without the ex-

64 Bradley, Slaves (see n. 14), 108, gives an example from a papyrus of the late second century which records the arrangements between a female slave-owner in Egypt and a local weaver who was to teach the woman's slave his craft:

> Technically the wages must have belonged to the owner who could have reimbursed herself for the slave's expenses; but it may also be that the slave was allowed to keep some of the money, perhaps to be saved for eventual manumission.

65 See ibid., 111.

66 Ibid., 112.

67 Ibid., 143.

owner being responsible for the slave's food and lodging.[68] This benefit, too, belonged to the slave-owner. The agreement regarding *operae* served the interests of slave-owners (work was done for them by ex-slaves, at no expense). But the illusion was created that the arrangement benefited freed slaves: They were now free. They no longer belonged to someone else! And yet they were not free: They were obliged by contract[69] to carry out their designated *operae*.

> Liberating a slave did not entail that he was immediately free to do as he pleased. When a Greek slave paid his master to become free, a contract was often drawn up which was guaranteed by a god; and many of these contracts survive, inscribed on the walls of public buildings at Delphi and similar religious centres. They are called "*paramone*-agreements", because they usually stipulate that the ex-slave must remain with *(paramenein)* his or her master for a number of years ...[70]

2. Bodies but not "Somebodies"

From the above, it is evident that the degree to which the lives of slaves were dominated by an external, as well as an internal locus of control was immense. Thus, the outward appearance of a relatively benign system of slavery[71] cannot be accepted as an accurate picture. In fact, the very elements of Roman slavery that endow it with a milder character — allowing slaves informal slave marriages and families, slave holidays and manumission — served to make the system slightly flexible, but therefore also much stronger and more controlling. Slavery was indeed a ruthless system, geared to benefit slave owners. This was only possible if the people who were enslaved were submitted to an extreme process of objectification. They were not regarded, in the first place, as other human beings, but as objects, which had to be controlled;[72] they were viewed as chattel[73] or as socially dead people.[74]

68 See ibid., 81. According to Treggiari, Freedmen (see n. 51), 16, the abuse of this opportunity might be one of the reasons why Augustus, in 56 BC, took measures to limit manumissions: "The institution of corn dole encouraged poorer masters to turn their slaves into *cives Romani* and so transfer the obligation of feeding them to the state."

69 See Wiedemann, Slavery (see n. 10), 46:

> Some *paramone*-agreements specify that the act of liberation is void if the freedman fails to obey his patron. Athenian law provided that if a patron sued his freedman for disobedience and he was acquitted, all obligations towards the patron would cease.

70 Ibid.

71 As suggested by S.S. Bartchy, *Mallon chrēsai*: First Century Slavery and the Interpretation of 1 Corinthians 7:21 (SBL.DS 11), Missoula 1973, 84, who argues that most slaves were treated relatively well, and that, with the prospect of an early manumission, "the vast majority of slaves in the first century accepted their lot and were satisfied with it."

72 See Bradley, Slaves (see n. 14), 30, 43.

73 See Finley, Slavery (see n. 12), 68.

74 See Patterson, Slavery (see n. 6), 22.

Recent studies by J. Glancy and J.A. Harrill have built on this interpretation of slavery in the Roman Empire. Glancy's study stresses "the corporeality of ancient slavery."[75] She points out that the Greek term σῶμα "body", functioned as a synonym for δοῦλος, "slave". This aptly expressed the way in which members of the slave-holding class looked upon slaves. They were "bodies" — living robots, not "somebodies". The bylaws of some fraternal societies indicated that when members failed to comply with the rules, they had to be punished, or if they were not available, their slaves could be punished in their stead. Such bylaws referred to slaves who received their masters' punishment as σώματα, bodies: "Slaveholders relied on slaves as body doubles"[76].

These bodies were not neatly defined and protected. They were "vulnerable to abuse and penetration"[77]. Slaves who ran away could be marked as chattel, and were branded. Glancy quotes an inscription, dating back to the fourth or fifth century, on a bronze collar that was placed around the neck of a slave: "I am the slave of archdeacon Felix. Hold me so that I do not flee."[78] This slave's body was looked upon by the archdeacon as that of an animal, such as a dog.

The bodies of slaves did not belong to them. Slave owners had free sexual access to the bodies of their slaves, and it was female slaves who were mostly exploited.

> A householder who impregnated a female slave increased his stock of slaves. A matron who gave birth to the child of a slave disrupted the household; the event would likely be the occasion for a divorce.[79]

The frequency of manumission inscriptions that imply that the freed slave was the master's sexual partner indicates the prevalence of such liaisons in Roman society.[80] "The assumption seems implicit in Roman society that intercourse with a slave, who had no moral responsibility and no choice, was morally neutral for the free initiator."[81] In the Acts of Andrew, a Christian document of the second century, we find the story of a Christian woman, Maximilla, who came under the influence of the apostle Andrew, and rejected sexual activity as polluting. Maximilla's husband, a non-Christian, did not appreciate her resistance to his sensual overtures. Maximilla found a solution by sending her slave Euclia, as a "body double" to assume her position in her husband's

75 J.A. Glancy, Slavery in Early Christianity, Oxford 2002, 3.

76 Ibid., 11.

77 Ibid., 12.

78 Ibid., 9.

79 Ibid., 21.

80 See ibid., 53.

81 Treggiari, Marriage (see n. 35), 301.

bed.[82] Maximilla's approval of her slave's sexual union with her husband suggests that she regarded her slave's body as a surrogate for her own body – an instrument at her disposal.

Harrill explains the possible philosophical basis for this way of thinking:[83] Aristotle regarded the "natural slave" (κατὰ φύσιν δοῦλος) as "a tool that breathes" (ἔμψυχον ὄργανον), who was deficient in reason (λόγος). According to Aristotle's body theory, a slave's body was biologically built for slavery:

> The intention of nature therefore is to make the bodies of the freemen and of slaves different – the latter brawny for necessary service, the former erect and unserviceable for such occupations.[84]

Although this theory was rejected by Euripides and the Stoics, it nevertheless persisted into Hellenistic and Roman times. It certainly contributed to a perception among people of the slaveholder class that slaves were sub-human: available bodies to invade, sexually abuse or mistreat. To physically hurt the body of slave was a morally neutral action – or at least, not as serious as an offence committed against the body of a free person.

These perceptions of the slave body affirm the definitions of slavery in the Roman Empire put forward by Patterson, Finley and Bradley. All three emphasise that slavery could only flourish within an environment where those who were captured, sold and kept as slaves were regarded as lesser human beings – to the extent that they were not even thought of as human beings. They were simply a commodity; they were chattel, objects, socially dead people. This is the context of slavery in which Phlm was written.

III. Implications for Reading the Letter to Philemon

What should strike every reader of Phlm, is that it is so much like other Pauline letters – and yet so different. The greeting, blessing and prayers are there at the beginning, as usual. Key Pauline phrases – such as the ἐν Χριστῷ/κυρίῳ phrases – are there; the appeal on the basis of love – which should be understood as referring to the love of God, revealed in the Christ event – is similar to the exhortations on the grounds of God's mercy demonstrated in Christ, which one finds in the other Pauline letters.

Yet the tone of the letter is different. There is an abundance of terms and expressions of endearment. Philemon is "our dear friend and fellow worker" (v. 1), "brother" (vv. 7.20), Paul's great helper in the past (v. 13) and "partner" (v. 17). Philemon is thanked for his love, which has given Paul such "great joy and encouragement" and "refreshed the hearts of the saints" (v. 7). Philemon is also treated with great respect. He is discreetly reminded that Paul, as a senior, *could* give orders, but has chosen not to. Paul has chosen, instead, to appeal to Philemon (vv. 8–9) – something one would only do if one were convinced that the person appealed to was gracious and merciful and would therefore consider the appeal favourably. Philemon, the junior partner, is assured that Paul does not wish "to do anything without your consent" (v. 14) – again expressing a gesture of great trust on Paul's part. Philemon is assured that the decision asked of him will in no way cost him anything: Paul will take care of that; Philemon does not need to worry. (And while money and possible debts are mentioned, Paul very subtly reminds Philemon that he owes Paul his "very self" – by explicitly "not mentioning" this [v. 19]. This brief but powerful phrase is meant to persuade Philemon not to misunderstand Paul's friendly tone and perhaps refuse.) And then, just in case Philemon is likely to be irritated by the remark in respect of his existential debt to Paul, he is once again showered with compliments regarding his spiritual ministry, as the senior apostle, who rightly should bless others, asks *him, Philemon,* for a blessing: "I do wish, brother, that I may have some benefit from you in the Lord; refresh my heart in Christ" (v. 20).

Who could refuse such a request? Such humility? From such a great man? Not many. Paul knew that. So what else was there to say, save "*Confident of your obedience,* I write to you, *knowing* that *you will do* even more than I ask" (v. 21)? Possibly just "one thing more": in order to make sure that Philemon does not later change his mind, he is reminded that this letter will be followed by a visit from Paul himself – and he is not only coming for a fleeting visit: "Prepare a guest room for me ..." And the very last words before final greeting are devoid of any threats, merely expressing a wish for male bonding: "I hope to be restored to you in answer to your prayers" (v. 22).

Why this exquisite rhetorical *tour de force*? And from someone who, when it was necessary, could be very blunt (think of Gal 1,6)? I do not know for sure, but submit this suggestion: Paul was convinced that a crucial decision had to be made – but not by him. The decision was in Philemon's hands. And in this case – in contrast to the Jewish/Gentile issue – there was little support for Paul in the form of joint decisions by the ecumenical church, such as the one referred to in Acts 15. Onesimus – whether a runaway slave, a truant or a slave looking for an

82 See Glancy, Slavery (see n. 75), 22.
83 See J.A. Harrill, Slaves in the New Testament: Literary, Social and Moral Dimensions, Minneapolis 2006, 18.
84 Ibid., 38.

intercessor[85] – had to be received back. And the decision was Philemon's. Paul's power was limited. This was not a situation for orders or commands. However, he had other options. So, instead of orders (which, as he reminds his readers, he was perfectly entitled to give), Paul opts for some "soft" talking. He greets his readers (as always), but then goes on to pray for Philemon (v. 4). He requests, he appeals, he reassures. He reminds his readers of the partnerships they share. He gives only one, very carefully disguised, threat. He reminds his readers of all the blessings and benefits that a positive answer on Philemon's part would bring: 1) Onesimus could now become really useful to Philemon, 2) Philemon's debt to Paul would be settled, 3) Philemon would have Onesimus back – "no longer as a slave, but more than a slave" (v. 16).

What did Paul mean by the latter expression? Did he mean that Philemon should receive Onesimus back, settle any matters of debt, welcome him as part of the house church – but remind him that he was still a slave, who, when the economy became unfavourable, might be put on the market? Or was Paul suggesting that Philemon should accept Onesimus as a fellow Christian, a brother in the church – and then go even further and set him free?

A minority of scholars think that Paul did not actually challenge the system of slavery, and that he was not suggesting Onesimus' manumission in Phlm, and also did not advocate manumission in any of his other letters. S. Schulz[86] argues that Paul did not make use of the opportunity to instigate a social protest against slavery. J.A. Glancy[87] warns against attempts to idealize early Christianity's involvement in slavery. A. le Grys is very emphatic: "The recent hermeneutic that finds subtle counter-cultural signals embedded in scripture is simply wishful thinking."[88] J.A. Harrill is of the opinion that Paul, in his letters (other than Phlm), far from criticising contemporary attitudes towards slaves and slavery, "strengthened beliefs that his Gentile readers already had

85 See ibid., 7.

86 See S. Schulz, Gott ist kein Sklavenhalter: Die Geschichte einer verspäteten Revolution, Zürich 1972, 167–193.

87 See Glancy, Slavery (see n. 75), 3.

88 A. le Grys, Review of Slaves in the New Testament (J.A. Harrill), JSNT 29/5 (2007) 29. Also see the review of Glancy's book by F.G. Downing, JSNT 29/5 (2007) 28. It is worth noting that few, if any, of these severe critics of Paul, have seriously engaged with the formidable argument in N.R. Petersen's Rediscovering Paul: Philemon and the Sociology of Paul's Narrative World, Philadelphia 1985 – a book which, regrettably, still receives too scant attention in the debate regarding Phlm and slavery.

about the morality of control, domination and abuse of human chattel."[89]

A second group of scholars agrees that Phlm heralds a dramatic change in the relationship between Philemon and his former slave. No longer would this relationship be that of a slaveholder and slave, but that of two fellow Christians. Paul alludes to the possibility that Philemon will do more; but we do not know for sure what he meant by this. Others are convinced that "more" refers to possible manumission, but emphasise that this was merely mentioned tentatively to Philemon, as a possibility.[90] Some scholars insist that the text of the letter does not make any reference to manumission,[91] although some see in this proposed new egalitarian relationship between Philemon and Onesimus a seed that would later flourish into a Christian activism for the abolition of slavery, for example F.F. Bruce: "What the Letter to Philemon does is to bring the institution into an atmosphere where it could only wilt and die."[92] Others, notably J.M.G. Barclay, argue forcefully that the letter does not contain an "unambiguous request" for manumission. Barclay is therefore "driven to conclude that it is deliberately open-ended."[93]

A third group of scholars argues that Paul's insistence that Philemon accept Onesimus, "no longer as a slave, but more than a slave, a beloved brother ... both in the flesh and in the Lord" (v. 16), was not ambiguous. Once Philemon was accepted as a fellow Christian in Onesimus' house church, it would be impossible to regard him any longer as a piece of chattel that could be sold if the price was right. Paul's mes-

89 J.A. Harrill, Paul and the Slave Self, in: D. Brakke/M.L. Satlow/S. Weitzman (eds.), Religion and the Self in Antiquity, Bloomington 2005, 51–69, here: 64.

90 See P. Stuhlmacher, Der Brief an Philemon (EKK 18), Zürich etc. 1975, 43.

91 See A. Suhl, Der Philemonbrief als Beispiel paulinischer Paränese, Kairos NF 15 (1973) 267–279, here: 276. This interpretation is not only found among scholars of a Lutheran persuasion, e.g., E. Lohse, Colossians and Philemon, Minneapolis 1971, 203–205 (against J.M.G. Barclay, Paul, Philemon and the Dilemma of Christian Slave-Ownership, NTS 37 [1991] 161–186, here: 162 n. 7), but also among some scholars who follow the Reformed tradition: see, for example, J.J. Müller, Die Briewe van die Apostel Paulus aan die Filippense en Filemon, Kaapstad 1964, 164.

92 F.F. Bruce, The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon and to the Ephesians (NIC), Grand Rapids 1984, 195. See also P.J. Gräbe, Ontvang jou Slaaf soos 'n Broer! Die Etiese Reikwydte en Ekklesiologiese Implikasies van die Verbondenheid aan Jesus Christus, in: J.H. Roberts et al. (eds.), Teologie in Konteks: Huldigingsbundel Aangebied aan Professor A B du Toit by Geleentheid van sy Sestigste Verjaardag, Johannesburg 1991, 427-439, here: 434, and also C.H. Felder, The Letter to Philemon, in: L.E. Keck (ed.), The New Interpreter's Bible XI, Nashville 2000, 833–905, here: 885: "Paul's primary focus is not on the institution of slavery, but on the power of the gospel to transform human relationships and bring about reconciliation." A similar argument is put forward by, R.McL. Wilson, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Colossians and Philemon (ICCONT), London/New York 2005, 329.

93 Barclay, Paul (see n. 91), 175.

sage could be refused by Philemon, but it could not be misunderstood: Paul wanted Philemon to set Onesimus free.[94] Some scholars are very cautious, like Michael Wolter, who emphasises that *Paul* "never demands distinctive actions", but stresses that the *Christian faith* confessed by Philemon, of which Paul reminds his friend, "creates a new reality and *demands* [my emphasis: G.F.W.] performance not only ... in the social world ... of the congregation, but also in the everyday life of Philemon's household."[95] Others, like J.H. Roberts, are more forthright: "The phrase 'you will do even more than I say' can really only have one meaning here: Philemon should set Onesimus free."[96]

I agree with the arguments brought forth by scholars who accept the third interpretation. The reasons for supporting this interpretation may be summed up as follows:

1. First, manumission was possible, as pointed out earlier in the discussion of slavery in the Roman Empire. Paul's failure to denounce slavery as a system and to campaign for the abolishment of slavery in the Roman Empire should be explained in terms of the fact that the abolishment of slavery did not even fall within the realm of possibility in Paul's day[97] — this must be conceded. But the manumission of a specific slave was not hard to imagine. It happened every day. So, the manumission of Onesimus was indeed an option open to Philemon.

2. Second, the cumulative significance of Paul's suggestive phrases — that Philemon should receive Onesimus back "no longer as a slave but more than a slave, a beloved brother", both "in the flesh and in the Lord" (v. 16), and "welcome him as you would welcome me" (v. 17), as well as the phrase, "knowing that you will do even more than I say" (v. 21) — can hardly be understood as implying that Philemon should merely receive back his slave without punishing him. Even the very critical Harrill, who sees very little critical awareness of slavery in the New Testament, concedes that in Phlm, Paul's phrase "more than a slave", as well as the phrase referring to a brother "in the flesh and in the Lord" (v. 16) "may imply that Paul hopes to secure the manumission of Onesimus."[98] This possibility is supported, writes Harrill,[99] by Paul's confident phrase in v. 21: "... knowing that you will do more even than I say."

But, one may ask, if manumission was so clearly the desired option in Paul's view, why did he not explicitly ask for it in his letter? Barclay is of the opinion that Paul did not know what to say. He points out that it was quite possible for Stoicism (represented by Seneca's famous 47th epistle in which he insists that *servi* are also *homines*) to reconcile idealistic words about the humanity of slaves with an acceptance of slavery, but he concedes that it would not have been so easy for Paul. Barclay concludes: "It is impossible to avoid the conclusion that ... there must be some tension here between the Pauline ideals of brotherhood and the practical realities of slavery."[100] It was this tension in Paul's own mind, Barclay argues, that caused the ambiguity of the whole letter to Philemon.

Barclay's solution must be rejected. The reason for Paul's reluctance to tell Philemon what to do must be sought in the power relations at play. There was always the possibility that a blunt order, issued by an apostle in prison, requiring an enormous concession from the leader of a house church in Colossae, might be refused — with disastrous consequences for Paul's position of authority. Moreover, it was important that Philemon's authority as a house church leader should be upheld and respected — for the future development of the church in Colossae. So, instead of addressing Philemon like a servant and issuing a blunt command to him, Paul uses all his rhetorical strategies in order to convince Philemon to do the right thing, and in the process enables Philemon to save face — almost as if setting Onesimus free would be Philemon's own idea. Lampe argues that Paul only uses this authority in a subtle manner. "He renounces the status of the superior,"[101] in order to set an example to Philemon. This "renunciation of reactive aggression is a Christian group norm,"[102] so Philemon is subtly pressurised to follow this example by forgiving and receiving Onesimus.

3. Third, Paul's understanding of the church as a body in which members were reconciled not only "in the spirit" but also "in the flesh"

94 See H.C.G. Moule, Colossian and Philemon Studies, London 1893, 295.

95 M. Wolter, The Letter to Philemon as Ethical Counterpart of Paul's Doctrine of Justification, pp. 164–179, here: 179, in this volume. In the same cautious vein: S.S. Melick Jr., Philippians, Colossians, Philemon (NAC), Nashville 1991, 345, states that slavery "was not even the issue it was written to solve ... The issue was Christian relationships. Nevertheless, genuinely Christian relationships bring an end to such evils as slavery."

96 J.H. Roberts, Vryheid, Gelykheid en Broederskap in die Brief aan Filemon. Die Evangelie as Maatskappy-Ontvormende Krag, in: C. Breytenbach, P.C. Lategan, eds., Die Boot en Opdrag: Perspektiewe op die Boek van die Nuwe Testament, Scriptura Sta, Stellenbosch 1992, 254–274, here: 274: "The phrase 'you will do even more than I say' can really only have one meaning here: Philemon should set Onesimus free." (My translation: G.F.W.)

97 See Barclay, Paul (see n. 91), 161f.

98 Harrill, Slaves (see n. 84), 14.

99 See ibid.

100 Barclay, Slave-Ownership (see n. 56), 182.

101 P. Lampe, Affects and Emotions in the Rhetoric of Paul's Letter to Philemon: A Rhetorical-Psychological Interpretation, pp. 61–77, here: 70, in this volume.

102 Ibid., 72.

made no allowances for receiving a former slave as "a beloved brother" only in spiritual terms. Roberts[103] concludes:

> It was not possible (in terms of Paul's understanding of the church) that Christians could accept one another in the church as fellow freed people, as one another's equals and brothers and sisters, and then operate in society as non-equals.

Petersen[104] puts forward a forceful argument in favour of this position in his monograph:

> [Philemon] finds that "being in Christ" makes a totalistic claim upon him from which there are no exceptions. If he is to remain in the service of Christ the Lord, he cannot be "in Christ" only when he is "in church".

In her 2005 commentary, Marianne M. Thompson convincingly argues that a reading of the letter to Philemon which views Paul as asking for Onesimus' spiritual reception as a brother in Christ, without the setting free of his body as a slave, assumes "a dualistic anthropology"[105] in Paul, which his writings do not confirm.[106] Thompson emphasises that Paul did not work according to a dualistic understanding of body and spirit. Therefore, for example, he vigorously resisted an attempt to condone a church practice in Antioch which would establish a spiritual unity of Jewish and Gentile Christians without a bodily fellowship (Gal 2,11–14). She concludes: "To imagine that unity in Christ does not assume tangible shape in the church, in relationships among people, and in the church's witness to and work in the world simply sells out the reconciling gospel of Jesus Christ."[107] For Philemon to receive Onesimus back as a brother "in Christ", it was necessary, by implication, that Philemon should free him from the bonds of slavery, which made it possible for him to be sold as chattel. The phrase "more than a slave", according to Peter Arzt-Grabner,[108] could even refer to Paul's suggestion

103 Roberts, Vryheid (see n. 96), 265 (my translation: G.F.W.).

104 Petersen, Paul (see n. 88), 269.

105 M.M. Thompson, Colossians and Philemon (THNTC), Grand Rapids 2005, 247. According to this reading of Paul, when he "spoke of 'unity in Christ,' he had in mind an invisible unity of those saved, a 'spiritual' equality that did not encompass social realities" (ibid.).

106 I.J. du Plessis, How Christians Can Survive in a Hostile Social-Economic Environment: Paul's Mind Concerning Difficult Social Conditions in the Letter to Philemon, in: J.G. van der Watt (ed.), Identity, Ethics, and Ethos in the New Testament (BZNW 141), Berlin/New York 2006, 387–413, fails to appreciate Paul's rejection of such a dualism: "Paul's dualism between flesh/spirit is probably decisive for his attitude towards slavery" (p. 410). This failure to appreciate Paul's non-dualistic anthropology is the reason why, despite many useful observations made in the course of his 30-page article, Du Plessis finally comes to the wrong conclusion: "Paul's concern with social questions is mostly focused on the situation within the church and shows remarkable reticence for such issues beyond the confines of the church" (p. 410).

107 Thompson, Philemon (see n. 105), 254.

108 See P. Arzt-Grabner, How to Deal with Onesimus? Paul's Solution within the Frame of Ancient Legal and Documentary Sources, pp. 113–142, here: 139f., in this volume.

that Philemon should receive Onesimus not only as a "full member of the Christian community" but as a partner in business.

4. Fourth, Paul sent his letter not only to Philemon, but also to the church members who met in his house. The letter is therefore a public letter and public knowledge of the letter should thus be assumed. This implies that Philemon, in his decision as to whether to comply with Paul's suggestions or not, is also accountable to "the church that meets in your home" (v. 2). When Paul returns to visit (v. 22), he will visit not only Philemon but also the church. So, the issue as to what should be done with Onesimus is not only Philemon's decision. Petersen[109] writes, "The return of the house-master's slave as a born-again slave requires the rest of the community to renegotiate its relations with *each* of them." The public knowledge of Paul's wishes would place even more pressure on Philemon to comply. It would make it much more difficult for him to keep the new brother in the position of a slave.

Thus, we have to conclude: Even if the picture of slavery painted in the first part of this study is only reasonably accurate, it is clear that slaves — notwithstanding any acts and gestures of individual kindness, such as being admitted to the local house church as members — remained a commodity. They were mere tools. At best, they were chattel — socially dead people.

Whenever Paul dealt with the challenge as to how people from different religious backgrounds were reconciled and united in the local church, he was adamant that such reconciliation should not simply be a platonic, spiritual reconciliation. Jew and Gentile were reconciled in Christ, therefore they could — and should — have fellowship together (Gal 2,11–14; 3,28). It is hard to believe that, in taking the trouble to effectuate reconciliation between Onesimus and Philemon, Paul would have been satisfied with at a platonic, spiritual reconciliation - especially if the ominous possibility remained that Onesimus could be sold whenever times became difficult. Manumission was not only a theoretical possibility; it was regulated by law and was socially accepted. Why would Paul not have longed to see Onesimus freed? Why not indeed — if he was already willing to refund Philemon for whatever losses he had suffered?

With all this evidence at hand, it seems to me that the conclusion is inevitable: Paul's guiding suggestion that Philemon should receive Onesimus back — "no longer as a slave, but better than a slave, as a dear brother" (Phlm 16) — can best be understood as a request to set Onesimus free. Whether or not this request was heeded, we do not

109 Petersen, Paul (see n. 88), 99.

know. If we accept the information found in Col 4,7–9 as historical information, as Du Plessis suggests, then it may well be possible that Du Plessis is right: "... then it seems as if Onesimus was indeed freed by Philemon."[110] But we do not know for sure. And why, in the following decades, the early churches did not continue to press for the manumission of — at least — Christian slaves, we are not sure either. But that is a matter that warrants attention at its own right.

110 Du Plessis, Christians (see n. 106), 407.

The Letter to Philemon as Ethical Counterpart of Paul's Doctrine of Justification

MICHAEL WOLTER

I

1. In the following contribution I would like to ask a question which is very rarely posed in contemporary research and textbooks on Paul's theology: How can we correlate Paul's argumentation in Phlm with his theology — or at least with certain aspects of it, developed in his other letters?[1] Moreover, the quest for the theology of Phlm might seem rather adventurous in some people's eyes, since they interpret this brief writing as if there were nothing theological in it; and in this respect they agree with Norman Petersen's succinct statement: "... the knowledge Paul shares with his addressees in the Letter to Philemon is not 'theological'."[2] If Phlm is at all related to the other Pauline letters,[3] the

1 A good example of this shortcoming is the treatment of Phlm by J.D.G. Dunn, The Theology of Paul the Apostle, Grand Rapids/Cambridge 1998. Dunn gives this letter no more than 14 lines out of a total of 737 pages and restricts the presentation of its theology to an outline of "Paul's sensitivity and skill as a mediator between individuals of different social status." (p. 576.)

2 N.R. Petersen, Rediscovering Paul: Philemon and the Sociology of Paul's Narrative World, Philadelphia 1985, 201. See also J.A. Fitzmyer, The Letter to Philemon: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary (AncB 34C), New York/London 2000, 37: "... theologically considered, the Letter to Philemon is not a primary example of Pauline teaching." Yet the author states a few lines later: "The letter, however, has a number of points, some even like *obiter dicta*, which would have to be incorporated into any comprehensive treatment of Pauline theology." (Ibid.) Also lacking any theological reflection is the detailed analysis by N. Baumert, Ein Freundesbrief an einen Sklavenhalter? Der Brief des Paulus an Philemon, in: idem, Studien zu den Paulusbriefen (SBAB 32), Stuttgart 2001, 131–160.

3 In some commentaries this question is not even raised; see, e.g., the introductions in A. Suhl, Der Brief an Philemon (ZBK.NT 13), Zürich 1981, 9–24; J. Gnilka, Der Philemonbrief: Auslegung (HThK 10/4), Freiburg etc. 1982, 1–12; J.D.G. Dunn, The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon: A Commentary on the Greek Text (NIGTC), Grand Rapids/Carlisle 1996, 299–309; P. Lampe, Der Brief an Philemon, in: N. Walter/E. Reinmuth/P. Lampe, Die Briefe an die Philipper, Thessalonicher und an Philemon (NTD 8/2), Göttingen 1998, 203–232, here: 205–207; E. Reinmuth, Der Brief des Paulus an Philemon (ThHK 11/2), Leipzig 2006, 1–20. The same is true of the guide to the Letter to Philemon by J.M.G. Barclay, Colossians and Philemon (NTGs), Sheffield 1997, 14f., 97ff. (despite the fact that this guide is not brief in nature), as well as the

redefinition of the relationship between master and slave as having been transformed into a relationship between "brothers", as it is expressed in vv. 15–16 ("You might have him back ... no longer as a slave but more than a slave, a beloved brother"), is regarded as the main factor that links this letter to texts such as 1Cor 7,22; 12,13; Gal 3,28; Col 3,10f.[4] Here, Paul states that the distinction between "slaves" and "free" has been abrogated, like the distinction between Jews and Gentiles (1Cor 12,13; Gal 3,28), as well as that between male and female (Gal 3,28), within that symbolic universe which is created and determined by faith in Jesus Christ. However, two differences should not be overlooked: Firstly, it is not simply the general distinction between "slaves" and "free" to which reference is made in Phlm, but the social hierarchy between one individual slave and *his* individual *master*. And, secondly, in Phlm, the social context in which the abrogation of the aforesaid distinctions was applicable, was not restricted to worship as an extra-everyday-life event; it was an intrinsic part of the everyday life of Philemon's household: The master and his slave were not only brothers ἐν κυρίῳ, but also ἐν σαρκί, as indicated in Phlm 16.

In this contribution, I intend to take the matter even further, with a view to the integration of Paul's argumentation in Phlm into the theological contexts of justification (*"Begründungszusammenhänge"*) as they are expressed in his other letters. As far as I was able to determine, this issue has never been raised systematically. If any questions arise relating to the theology of Phlm, twentieth-century German commentators often content themselves with quoting Martin Luther's preface to Phlm, written in 1522.[5] The interaction in which Paul, Philemon and Onesimus are bound together in Phlm, is allegorically correlated with the soteriological interaction between God, Christ, and sinners: Luther here compares Paul's intercession with Philemon for the benefit of Onesimus

introductory overview by L. Bormann, Philemonbrief, in: O. Wischmeyer (ed.), Paulus: Leben – Umwelt – Werk – Briefe (UTB 2767), Tübingen/Basel 2006, 233–240.

4 See, e.g., J. Ernst, Die Briefe an die Philipper, an Philemon, an die Kolosser, an die Epheser: übersetzt und erklärt (RNT), Regensburg 1974, 124; P. Stuhlmacher, Der Brief an Philemon (EKK 18), Zürich etc. 1975, 67; I.H. Marshall, The Theology of Philemon, in: K.P. Donfried/I.H. Marshall, The Theology of the Shorter Pauline Letters (NTTh), Cambridge 1993, 175–191, here: 186f.; M. Barth/H. Blanke, The Letter to Philemon: A New Translation with Notes and Commentary (ECC), Grand Rapids 2000, 170ff.; D.G. Horrell, Solidarity and Difference: A Contemporary Reading of Paul's Ethics, London/New York 2005, 124–129, esp. 127; U. Wilckens, Theologie des Neuen Testaments I/3. Die Briefe des Urchristentums: Paulus und seine Schüler, Theologen aus dem Bereich judenchristlicher Heidenmission, Neukirchen-Vluyn 2005, 253.

5 This is the case in the commentaries by E. Lohse, Colossians and Philemon: A Commentary on the Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon (Hermeneia), Philadelphia 1973, 188; Stuhlmacher, Philemon (see n. 4), 60; Fitzmyer, Philemon (see n. 2), 36.

to what Christ did on behalf of sinners before God. This means that the role of God is allotted to Philemon, the role of Christ to Paul himself, while Onesimus stands in the position of the sinners:

> This epistle gives us a masterful and tender example of Christian love. For here we see how St. Paul takes the part of poor Onesimus and, to the best of his ability, advocates his cause with his master. He acts exactly as if he were himself Onesimus, who had done wrong. Yet he does this not with force or compulsion, as lay within his rights; but he empties himself of his rights (original: *"eussert sich seines Rechten"*) in order to compel Philemon also to waive his rights. What Christ has done for us with God the Father, that St. Paul does also for Onesimus with Philemon. For Christ emptied himself of his rights (original: *"Christus hat sich auch seines Rechten geeussert"*) and overcame the Father with love and humility, so that the Father had to put away his wrath and rights, and receive us into favor for the sake of Christ, who so earnestly advocates our cause and so heartily takes our part. For we all are his Onesimuses if we believe it.[6]

The hinge between the two stories — the story of Paul, Philemon, and Onesimus and the story of Christ, God, and sinners — is pointed out by Luther, who connects Phlm 8–9, in which Paul says that he renounces his right to command Philemon to do his duty (παρρησία ... ἐπιτάσσειν ... τὸ ἀνῆκον) but rather appeals to him "on the basis of love" (διὰ τὴν ἀγάπην μᾶλλον παρακαλῶ), with Phil 2,7, in which Paul describes the kenosis of Christ who "emptied himself, taking the form of a slave" (ἑαυτὸν ἐκένωσεν μορφὴν δούλου λαβών).[7]

However, it is absolutely clear that this connection is only established by Martin Luther and was not intended by Paul himself. It is part of the reception history of Phlm and cannot be proved to be part of Paul's own theological thinking. Luther's interpretation is based on an etic perspective and not on an emic point of view.

2. If we now change the perspective and ask how Phlm is interconnected with his other letters, the following factors — apart from the characteristically Pauline greetings in the opening and the closing of the letter (vv. 3.25),[8] as well as the thanksgiving in v. 4 — can be pointed out:

(a) The pair ἀγάπη and πίστις in v. 5 and the chiastic sequence of these two terms in vv. 5–7 (ἀγάπη – πίστις – ἀγάπη) are typically Pauline. The parallelization of these two terms is not attested in the Jewish and non-Jewish Greek literature, and within the New Testament it can only

6 Translation (with slight alterations) according to E.Th. Bachmann, Luther's Works XXXV, Philadelphia 1960, 390. — Martin Luther's German version is published in WA.DB 7,292f.

7 See the translation of this text by Luther himself ("... eussert sich selbs/vnd nam Knechts gestalt an" [WA.DB 7,217]), as well as the translation in the RSV ("... emptied himself, taking the form of a servant").

8 Compare Phlm 3 with Rom 1,7; 1Cor 1,3; 2Cor 1,2; Gal 1,3; Phil 1,2; 1Thess 1,1, and Phlm 25 with 1Cor 16,23; 2Cor 13,13; Gal 6,18; Phil 4,23; 1Thess 5,28.

be found in the Pauline and deuteropauline epistles (see 1Cor 13,13; 16,13f.; 2Cor 8,7; Gal 5,6; Eph 1,15; 3,17; Col 1,4; 1Thess 1,3; 3,6; 5,8; 1Tim 1,5.14; 2,15; 6,11; 2Tim 1,13; 2,22; Tit 2,2). This pair can be interpreted as a Christian adaptation of the traditional "canon of the two virtues", which reduces the complexity of human behaviour to two basic relations: the relation to God and the relation to other human beings.[9] The combination of πίστις and ἀγάπη in Paul replaces the combination of εὐσέβεια and φιλανθρωπία or of ὁσιότης and δικαιοσύνη in non-Christian writings (see, e.g., Philo, Spec.Leg. 2.63; Virt. 95; Her. 168, 172). πίστις designates the proper Christian relationship to God, and ἀγάπη the proper relationship to other human beings. However, there is a slight difference which must not be overlooked: Whereas in the other Pauline letters πίστις is always in the first position and ἀγάπη in the second, Paul here reverses the sequence. Not only does he place ἀγάπη in the first position in v. 5; he also places this term at the fringe positions within the overarching chiasmus of vv. 5–7.

(b) Also characteristically Pauline is the use of κοινωνία with a genitive (see 1Cor 1,9; 10,16; 2Cor 8,4; 13,13; Phil 2,1; 3,10; see also Phil 1,5). As Josef Hainz has shown,[10] this parlance designates a relationship of commonality that is constituted by a common participation in something. If we put Phlm 6 amongst the other texts, it immediately becomes clear — although the expression κοινωνία τῆς πίστεως occurs nowhere else — that it closely matches the theological concept which is expressed in the other texts. κοινωνία τῆς πίστεως, in particular, is not far removed, semantically speaking, from κοινωνία … Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (1Cor 1,9), ἡ κοινωνία τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος (2Cor 13,13), κοινωνία πνεύματος (Phil 2,1), and ἡ κοινωνία … εἰς τὸ εὐαγγέλιον (Phil 1,5), since in all instances Christian commonality through participation is constituted by one of the distinctive Christian identity and boundary markers: Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, the gospel, and — in Phlm 6 — faith.[11]

(c) By designating Onesimus in v. 10 as "my child, to whom I gave birth (or: "whom I have begotten") while in chains" (τὸ ἐμοῦ τέκνον, ὃν ἐγέννησα ἐν τοῖς δεσμοῖς), Paul uses the same imagery as in the other letters, in which he describes his relationship to the communities that were founded by him:[12] As 1Thess 2,7 and 11 show, Paul regards himself as both the "mother" and "father" of the community, and in 1Cor 4,14 (see also 3,1–4); 2Cor 6,13; 12,14; Gal 4,18f. he addresses the communities as his "children" (τέκνα) whom he has "begotten" (1Cor 4,15: "… you do not have many fathers. Indeed, in Christ Jesus I begot you through the gospel" [διὰ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου ἐγὼ ὑμᾶς ἐγέννησα]) or for whom he is "in the pain of childbirth" (ὠδίνειν [Gal 4,19]).

This imagery underscores the fact that Pauline Christianity was what we call a "religion of conversion": The members of the Christian communities that had been founded by Paul had been brought up within non-Christian families and as a result of their conversion to faith in Jesus Christ had gained a new identity. Their pre-conversional existence had "died" (Rom 6,6–8), and conversion had made them a "new creation" (2Cor 5,17; Gal 6,15). It should not be overlooked that, according to Phlm 19 ("I say nothing about your owing me even your own self"), this had happened not only to Onesimus, but also to Philemon, his master.

(d) At this point it is possible to draw an interim conclusion: Relative to its length and to the particularity of the circumstances in which it was written, we may say that Phlm is comparatively well furnished with distinctive elements of Paul's theology. There is no reason to assign an exceptional position to this letter — at least as far as its theological branding is concerned. It is even possible to substantiate this conclusion by hypothesizing that as the closest correlation could be identified the correspondence between the theological substructure and the purpose of Phlm and his doctrine of justification as it is developed in Gal and Rom. To corroborate this assumption, it will be necessary, firstly, to determine the events that preceded the writing of the letter, as well as the purpose of the letter (II); secondly, to give a brief outline of Paul's doctrine of justification (III); and finally, to bring these two aspects together (IV).

II

1. As to the events that happened before Paul wrote his letter, I will follow the reconstruction that was advocated for the first time by Heinz Bellen[13] and brought to the attention of New Testament scholarship by

9 This was described by A. Dihle, Der Kanon der zwei Tugenden (VAFNRW.G 144), Köln/Opladen 1968; see also K. Berger, Die Gesetzesauslegung Jesu: Ihr historischer Hintergrund im Judentum und im Alten Testament 1. Markus und Parallelen (WMANT 40), Neukirchen-Vluyn 1972, 143ff.

10 See J. Hainz, Art. κοινωνία κτλ., EDNT 2 (1991) 303–305, here: 304f.

11 The notion that Paul's ecclesiological concept of κοινωνία connects Phlm with the other Pauline letters is also highlighted by N.T. Wright, Putting Paul Together Again: Toward a Synthesis of Pauline Theology (1 and 2 Thessalonians, Philippians, and Philemon), in: J.M. Bassler (ed.), Pauline Theology 1: Thessalonians, Philippians, Galatians, Philemon, Minneapolis 1991, 183–211, here: 203ff.

12 See esp. C. Gerber, Paulus und seine ‚Kinder': Studien zur Beziehungsmetaphorik der paulinischen Briefe (BZNW 136), Berlin/New York 2005, 205ff.

13 H. Bellen, Studien zur Sklavenflucht im römischen Kaiserreich (FASk 4), Wiesbaden 1971, 18, 78.

Peter Lampe:[14] According to their interpretation, Onesimus was no runaway slave (*fugitivus*) as defined by Roman law. It thus follows that his absence from the household of Philemon did not make him liable to prosecution. Rather, it should be assumed that Onesimus was blamed for a certain wrongdoing or some kind of misbehaviour in his master's household, and that he had to face punishment. In this situation – perhaps considering himself innocent, as the hypothetical tone of v. 18 suggests – he turned to Paul, whom he knew to be a friend of his master. He also knew Paul's location. This location was within reach for him – and he thus approached Paul and asked him for mediation between himself and Philemon. The advantage of this reconstruction is that it helps to explain why Onesimus showed up at the place where Paul was imprisoned without having to draw on stopgaps relating to shortage of money, remorse, contingency, or that he was taken along by a member of the local community who visited Paul.[15] Furthermore, this reconstruction also rules out the possibility that Phlm was written during Paul's Roman custody: From the outset, Onesimus not only knew Paul's location, but it was also feasible for him to get there. Since Philemon's house, in which Onesimus lived, was located in a city of Asia Minor (in Ephesus or – less likely – in Colossae), it is very unlikely that the city of Paul's custody was Rome. How would a non-Christian slave in a city of Asia Minor know where in Rome Paul was kept imprisoned (or how would he know somebody who knew where Paul was imprisoned)? Moreover, how would he manage to get there on his own initiative?

In addition, Paul's letter tells us also that Onesimus did, in fact, meet Paul, that he told him his story (the latter can be deduced from Phlm 18–19a), and that something unforeseen happened: Paul converted him to faith in Jesus Christ.

2. The purpose of Paul's letter is neither to solve Onesimus' domestic problems, nor to induce Philemon to refrain from punishing his slave for his misbehaviour. Paul only broaches this matter in vv. 18–19a,

14 P. Lampe, Keine "Sklavenflucht" des Onesimus, ZNW 76 (1985) 135–137; see also the subsequent discussions by B.M. Rapske, The Prisoner Paul in the Eyes of Onesimus, NTS 37 (1991) 187–203; M. Wolter, Der Brief an die Kolosser. Der Brief an Philemon (ÖTBK 12), Gütersloh/Würzburg 1993, 228–231; H. Balz, Art. Philemonbrief, TRE 26 (1996) 487–492, here: 489; Dunn, Philemon (see n. 3), 304f.; Barclay, Philemon (see n. 3), 101; Fitzmyer, Philemon (see n. 2), 20; P. Arzt-Grabner, Onesimus *erro*: Zur Vorgeschichte des Philemonbriefes, ZNW 95 (2004) 131–143; I.J. du Plessis, How Christians Can Survive in a Hostile Social-Economic Environment: Paul's Mind Concerning Difficult Social Conditions in the Letter to Philemon, in: J.G. van der Watt (ed.), Identity, Ethics, and Ethos in the New Testament (BZNW 141), Berlin/New York 2006, 387–413, here: 398f.; Reinmuth, Philemon (see n. 3), 10. – See the earlier discussion in Gnilka, Philemon (see n. 3), 2f.

15 Arzt-Grabner, Onesimus (see n. 14), 141.

and it merely comprises a minor aspect of his letter, which should not be identified as the centre of its interest. It is of crucial importance that the pre-history of the letter, and the purpose of the letter, should be considered separately. Even so, it is not the renunciation of punishment that Paul is aiming at, but simple damage compensation: "If he has wronged you in any way, or owes you anything, charge that to my account. I, Paul, am writing this with my own hand: I will repay it."

The focus of Paul's main argumentation should be identified as the first and thus far determinative imperative in the letter, namely the demand which is articulated in v. 17, εἰ οὖν με ἔχεις κοινωνόν, προσλαβοῦ αὐτὸν ὡς ἐμέ ("Since you have me as a friend, accept him like me"). My interpretation of this request is in agreement with that of Norman Petersen.[16] Together with Onesimus, Paul sends the letter to Philemon because he anticipates something that lies ahead for Onesimus – something that the sociologists would call an *inconsistency of status*: The slave has become a brother! At the very moment of Onesimus' return into his master's house, a tension between two symbolic universes would inevitably crop up: On the one hand, Paul sees the symbolic universe of Philemon's household (in v. 16, he calls it ἐν σαρκί), in which Onesimus was a slave, is a slave and remains a slave, and on the other hand, he also sees the Christian symbolic universe (according to v. 16: ἐν κυρίῳ), in which, through his conversion, Onesimus has become Philemon's "beloved brother" (v. 16) and κοινωνός (v. 17).

What Paul wants to achieve by means of his letter is easy to understand: In a situation of conflicting identities he urges Philemon to let the Christian identity of Onesimus become predominant over his legal identity, and to treat his slave as a beloved brother – not only in the congregation (ἐν κυρίῳ), but also in the social world of his household (ἐν σαρκί). And this imposition is not at all alleviated by any proposal to change Onesimus' legal status by manumission![17] Paul does not ask Philemon to set his slave free.[18]

But let us return to the theological level: By means of the term κοινωνός in v. 17, Paul refers back to κοινωνία in v. 6. This recurrence of the language and the concept of participation sheds light on the question as

16 Petersen, Paul (see n. 2).

17 See already Wolter, Philemon (see n. 14); C.S. de Vos, Once a Slave, Always a Slave? Slavery, Manumission and Relational Patterns in Paul's Letter to Philemon, JSNT 82 (2001) 89–105, here: 102.

18 This fact contradicts the theological correlation between Phlm and Gal which is drawn by R.B. Hays, Crucified with Christ: A Synthesis of the Theology of 1 and 2 Thessalonians, Philemon, Philippians, and Galatians, in: Bassler, Theology (see n. 11), 227–246, here: 245: Phlm 16 "suggests that Paul's language in Galatians about liberation from bondage through Christ has a literal application."

to what it is that constitutes the commonality of Philemon and his slave, as well as the reason for its predominance over the old identity attributions: It is nothing other than *faith in Jesus Christ*, which creates not only new identities but also new social relations between those who share in this faith.

III

We may describe Paul's doctrine of justification as a semantic field which shows a distinctive topography that is modelled by four terminological landmarks: In the centre stands the connection of the *faith*-terminology (πίστις, πιστεύειν) with derivations from the root δικαι- (i.e., δικαιοῦν, δικαιοσύνη, δίκαιος, δικαίωσις), designating *righteousness and justification*. Whereas "faith" was the distinctive identity marker of the Pauline communities from their very beginnings (see 1Thess 1,3.8; 2,13; 3,2.5.6.7.10; 4,14; 5,8), its combination with the δικαι-terminology was occasioned by the Galatian controversy: The Jewish-Christian opponents probably substantiated their demand for the circumcision of the Gentile Christians by referring to Gen 17,10–14. In Gal 3,6 Paul counters their argument by bringing Gen 15,6 into play: "And Abraham believed the Lord; and the Lord reckoned it to him as righteousness." Later on, in Gal 3,11, he corroborates this argument by quoting Hab 2,4. These are the only Old Testament texts in which God calls human beings "righteous" on the grounds of their "faith". This combination occurs for the first time in Gal 2,16; 3,6.8.11.24 and later on in Phil 3,9 and in Rom 1,17; 3,22.26.28.30; 5,1; 9,30; 10,4.6.10.

The negated assertion that "righteousness" *cannot* be achieved by the "works of the Law", "by works", or "by the Law" (Gal 2,16a; see also 2,16c; 3,11; Rom 3,20.21.28; Phil 3,9) functions as a corresponding counterpart of this proposition. By the term "law" (νόμος), Paul always means the Torah, through which Israel displays and lives out her election as God's people, who were chosen from amongst the Gentiles.

Related to this landmark is the reference to the universality of *sin* (Rom 1,18–3,20, esp. 3,9.20; 7,7–25; Gal 3,22). This anthropological reference explains why it had become evident that not one single person is able to achieve righteousness through the fulfilment of the law: Sin always gains the upper hand, and every human being can only deal with the law as a sinner, and every single law causes new sins: "Law came in, with the result that the trespass multiplied" (Rom 5,20).

And finally: Both of these factors — the inclusivity of faith and the universality of sin — result in the theological supersession of the distinction between Jews and Gentiles; "all" (πάντες) are justified by faith, and "all" (πάντες) have sinned (Rom 1,16; 3,9.20.30; 10,4; 1Cor 1,21–24; Gal 5,6; 6,15); οὐ γάρ ἐστιν διαστολή (Rom 3,22–23; 10,12–13). The supersession of this distinction is very closely related to the statement about the meaning of the Torah and its fulfilment, since it is precisely the practice of the Torah that makes the Jews different from non-Jews. By the practice of the Torah, Israel lives out her distinctiveness from the Gentiles. The merit of the so called "new perspective on Paul" lies in the fact that it has drawn attention to this correlation.[19]

To summarize: Paul's doctrine of justification took shape in the Galatian controversy, and it was expanded to a theory of Christianity in Romans. It was conceived in terms of Paul's own Jewish heritage, and it served as a literary context of justification, which comprehensively explains the fundamental principle by which Paul had already been guided since the very beginnings of his preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ: that faith in Jesus Christ creates a new identity which supersedes every other given identity.

IV

If we relate these observations back to Phlm and compare the two semantic fields, the differences should not to be overlooked: In Phlm we have neither the δικαι-terms nor the demarcation from the ἔργα νόμου and the abrogation of the difference between Jews and Gentiles, on the one hand, nor the reference to sin, on the other. It is only the πίστις (vv. 5.6) and the notion that it prevails over contextual distinctions by bringing about κοινωνία between all those who share in it, which could be identified as constituting an overlap with the semantic field of Paul's doctrine of justification. However, the structural analogy between this concept and the line of argument in Phlm is obvious, since in both cases Paul consistently allots one and the same role to faith in Jesus Christ: It not only unites Jews and Gentiles but also the master and his slave.

In addition, we can even adduce one more correlation: Paul's appeal to Philemon's "love" (ἀγάπη [vv. 5–7.16]) conforms to his use of this concept within argumentations that are closely related to the semantic field of his doctrine of justification:[20] According to Gal 5,6 (ἐν γὰρ Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ οὔτε περιτομή τι ἰσχύει οὔτε ἀκροβυστία ἀλλὰ πίστις δι' ἀγάπης ἐν-

19 See esp. K. Stendahl, Paul Among Jews and Gentiles, in: idem, Paul Among Jews and Gentiles: And Other Essays, Philadelphia 1976, 1–77; J.D.G. Dunn, The New Perspective on Paul: Revised Edition, Grand Rapids/Cambridge 2008, esp. 1–97, 99–120.

20 See also F. Thielman, Theology of the New Testament: A Canonical and Synthetic Approach, Grand Rapids 2005, 391: "Paul understands the love command to mean that within the newly restored people of God, the barriers between ethnic groups and social classes are levelled." However, in Phlm Paul does not refer to the precept of Lev 19,18.

ἐργουμένη), it is *faith and love* of all things that replace the distinction between Jews and Gentiles. From the point of view of the doctrine of justification, as expounded above, Rom 13,8–10 and Gal 5,14 point in the same direction:

> Rom 13,8–10 (NRSV): 8Owe no one anything, except to love one another; for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law (ὁ γὰρ ἀγαπῶν τὸν ἕτερον νόμον πεπλήρωκεν). 9The commandments, "You shall not commit adultery; You shall not murder; You shall not steal; You shall not covet"; and any other commandment, are summed up in this word, "Love your neighbour as yourself." 10Love does no wrong to a neighbour; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law (πλήρωμα οὖν νόμου ἡ ἀγάπη).
> Gal 5,14 (NRSV): For the whole law is summed up in a single commandment, "You shall love your neighbour as yourself" (ἀγαπήσεις τὸν πλησίον σου ὡς σεαυτόν).

Here, the observance of the Torah which separates Jews from Gentiles is replaced by *love* which — at least according to Gal 5,6 — unites them.

It thus follows that Paul's argumentation in Phlm is not as far removed from his doctrine of justification as it might seem at first glance. Of course, we cannot say, like Peter Stuhlmacher, that Phlm lets us "discern and understand ... how the apostle introduces the responsibility for his gospel of justification ... into the day-to-day living of a Christian house-church."[21] In Phlm, Paul does not base his argumentation on his doctrine of justification. Yet the structural analogies are obvious. Moreover, Phlm demonstrates the ethical impact of Paul's theological thinking. It refutes Albert Schweitzer's claim that the Pauline concept of faith "closes the pathway to a theory of ethics."[22] Faith in Christ gives everybody who shares in it a new identity that disregards every social or cultural ascription of status. Faith in Christ creates a new reality and demands performance not only ἐν κυρίῳ, but also ἐν σαρκί, that is to say: not only in the social world of the extra-everyday life of the congregation, but also in the everyday life of Philemon's household. The slave owner is not urged to set his slave free, but he is enjoined to treat him as a brother and friend:[23] to eat with him at one and the same table and to share with him the kiss of friendship and brotherhood. The social impact of this demand will be much more far-reaching than a demand to manumit his slave could ever be.

Paul does not provide any indication as to exactly what this entails, or how it should be put into practice — for example, if the shoes need

21 Stuhlmacher, Philemon (see n. 4), 17; German original: "erkennen und nachvollziehen ..., wie der Apostel sein Rechtfertigungsevangelium ... in den praktischen Lebensvollzug einer christlichen Hausgemeinde hinein verantwortet."

22 A. Schweitzer, The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle, London ²1953, 225. This translation attenuates the German original which states much more plainly: "Er (sc. Paul) schneidet sich also den Weg zur Ethik ab."

23 The connection to the Hellenistic concept of friendship is marked by κοινωνός in v. 17; see esp. G. Stählin, Art. φίλος κτλ., TDNT 9 (1974) A.II.2.

to be cleaned; but he leaves such arrangements to Philemon and his newborn "brother". But this is, in general, characteristic of his ethical admonitions: He never demands distinctive actions; rather, he gives general guidelines and then leaves it to the members of the Christian communities to transform these guidelines into adequate and distinctive ethical actions. Some may perceive this lack of ethical determinateness as a burden, but, in fact, it corresponds to Paul's theology, since it is faith in Jesus Christ which functions as the only and exclusive identity marker of Christian communities. And this faith is always in quest of its adequate ethical performance in changing cultural and social contexts.

Love in the Letter to Philemon

PIETER G.R. DE VILLIERS

I. Introduction

The Greek word for love (ἀγάπη) and its cognates are encountered five times in the 25 verses of Phlm[1] (Phlm 1.4.7.9.16). This may not sound like very many instances, but a formal and material analysis of these references to love, as well as the use of other expressions of love, will show that this is a key aspect of this Pauline letter[2] and a recurring motif which gives coherence to the letter as a whole.

Before such an analysis is carried out, it should be noted that the prominence of love in the letter is not determined by a word count indicating the number of occurrences of the word ἀγάπη. Even where the word group and its cognates are not specifically used in the various parts of the letter, other terms of intimacy and endearment presuppose and reflect love as a semantic field. These include sibling terms such as child, brother, sister, father, and emotional terms such as "my heart" and "refreshing". If the semantic field of love, affection and compassion

1 In commentaries and in most secondary writings, the motif of love is not always discussed at length or as a prominent feature. See, e.g., J. Gnilka, Der Philemonbrief: Auslegung (HThK 10/4), Freiburg etc. 1982; M. Wolter, Der Brief an die Kolosser. Der Brief an Philemon (ÖTBK 12), Gütersloh/Würzburg 1993; J.D.G. Dunn, The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon: A Commentary on the Greek Text (NIGTC), Grand Rapids/Carlisle 1996; J.M.G. Barclay, Colossians and Philemon (NTGs), Sheffield 1997; P. Lampe, Der Brief an Philemon, in: N. Walter/E. Reinmuth/P. Lampe, Die Briefe an die Philipper, Thessalonicher und an Philemon (NTD 8/2), Göttingen 1998, 203–232; M. Barth/H. Blanke, The Letter to Philemon: A New Translation with Notes and Commentary (ECC), Grand Rapids 2000; J.A. Fitzmyer, The Letter to Philemon: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary (AncB 34C), New York/London (AncB 34C), 2000; E. Reinmuth, Der Brief des Paulus an Philemon (ThHK 11/2), Leipzig 2006.

2 For a list of words that express the semantic domain of love, affection and compassion, see J. Louw/E.A. Nida, Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains 1: Introduction & Domains, New York 1988, 25.33–25.58. See also C. Lindberg, Love: A Brief History through Western Christianity (BBHR), Malden/Oxford 2008, for a discussion of Greek words for love. Lindberg mentions words such as ἐπιθυμία (desire), φιλία (friendship), φιλαδελφία (brotherly love), and φιλανθρωπία (benevolence) which express concern for the well-being of others. He admonishes against evaluating love in antiquity in terms of modern understandings of love. For the Pauline use of concepts relating to love, in contrast to love in the Graeco-Roman context, see Dunn, Philemon (see n. 1), 58, and below.

is taken as a guideline,[3] the following outline, based on a close reading of the text and of its form as a ring composition, reveals the central[4] place of love in this letter:

A Paul writes to Philemon as a *"beloved"* co-worker (vv. 1–3) about
  B his fellowship in faith and his **refreshing** *love* for the Lord and for others (vv. 4–7).
    C Paul then appeals on the basis of *love* to Philemon to do "what is fitting" towards Onesimus (vv. 8–11).
      D Paul is reluctantly *sending back Onesimus* who is Paul's *"heart"*, though he would like to keep him (vv. 12–13).
        E Paul embeds an explanation to the effect that he wanted to do nothing without Philemon's knowledge and consent. Philemon should *do good* voluntarily — out of choice, rather than through being forced (v. 14).
      D' *Onesimus* is *sent back* to Philemon to be welcomed as a *"beloved brother"* (vv. 15–17).
    C' Paul will stand surety for any debt that stands in the way of Philemon's reconciliation with Onesimus, though Philemon owes him "his very self" (vv. 18–19).
  B' The benevolent love of *"brother"* Philemon towards Onesimus will **refresh**[5] Paul (vv. 20–22).
A' Philemon is remembered by the community of believers (vv. 23–25).

This reading shows how the language of love permeates the letter in almost all its constituent parts. To appreciate this fully, it is important to note the ring composition that determines the letter's form.[6] In the outside frame of the letter (A and A'), Paul integrates the issue between

3 Louw/Nida, Lexicon (see n. 2), 288–296.

4 See W. Schrage, The Ethics of the New Testament, Edinburgh 1988, 213, for examples of the central position of love in Pauline texts.

5 The motif of ἀναπέπαυται/ἀνάπαυσον appears in both B and B'.

6 A distinction should be made between a chiasm and a ring composition for the sake of clarity. A chiasm is mostly regarded as a stylistic device with a specific structure (A, B, B', A') in which A and B are repeated in an inverse order: B is immediately discussed by B'; after which A' follows as a repetition of the first element. In the case of a larger text with more units, it is better to use the term "ring composition". Phlm contains more than four such units (A, B, C, D, E, D', C', B' and A'), each with its own motifs and coherence, whilst these units are mutually and hierarchically related in reverse order on syntactical and semantic levels. The arguments for this close reading cannot be spelled out in detail here, owing to a lack of space. Some substantial treatises have been written on Phlm as a ring composition. One of the first of these was N.W. Lund, Chiasmus in the New Testament: A Study in Formgeschichte, Chapel Hill 1942, 219, followed later by J.W. Welch, Chiasmus in Antiquity: Structures, Analyses, Exegesis, Hildesheim 1981, 225, and J. Heil, The Chiastic Structure and Meaning of Paul's Letter to Philemon, Bib. 82 (2001) 178–206. Although I differ from Heil in respect of some details, mostly on a syntactical level, I concur in general with his findings. Recently the results of these analyses were evaluated positively by D.E. Aune, Art. Philemon, Letter to, in: idem, The Westminster Dictionary of New Testament and Early Christian Literature and Rhetoric, London/Louisville 2003, 354–356, here: 355.

Philemon and Onesimus into the context of the community of believers. Members of the community are mentioned by name and addressed with terms that reveal the close, intimate relationships between them (this aspect will be discussed in more detail later on). Philemon, for example, is called the "beloved" co-worker. In sections B and B' respectively Paul discusses the positive refreshing outcomes of Philemon's love, and of his possible reconciliation with Onesimus. The focus is on Philemon's actions. (Key motifs are ἀδελφέ, σπλάγχνα, ἀναπαύ-.) In C and C', Paul appeals specifically to Philemon, on the basis of love, on behalf of Onesimus, and undertakes to compensate Philemon. The focus is on the relationship between Paul and Philemon. Paul's name and the personal pronouns referring to himself create coherence between these two sections, but also between their contents. In D and D' the focus is on the return of Onesimus to Philemon, with "sending/having back" (ἀνέπεμψα, ἀπέχῃ) as the key motif. E represents the appeal to Philemon to allow Onesimus to join Paul.

II. Love as a Hallmark of Community

To appreciate Paul's language of love in Phlm, it is illuminating, first of all, to note Paul's descriptions of characters in his letter, all of which point towards a community of members who fostered intimate, close relationships with one another. He speaks of Christians generally as the "holy ones" (Phlm 5.7), whilst the more specific term "co-workers" that is used to refer to Philemon (v. 1), Mark, Aristarchus, Demas and Luke (v. 24) portrays his special bond with them in terms of their shared mission. The mission language is intensified by Paul's use of graphic prison or military terminology, referring to himself as a prisoner of Jesus Christ (vv. 1.9), Epaphras as his fellow captive (v. 23) and Archippus as a fellow soldier (v. 2). These descriptions indicate a special bond between Paul and his addressees, based on their common faith and mission. By means of these terms, Paul further develops the letter's opening remarks, in which he has already delineated the close community between authors and recipients. The opening lines indicate that he and Timothy are writing the letter to the house church of a close associate who shares in his proclamation of the gospel (vv. 1–2). At the end of the letter he sends greetings from five other workers (vv. 23–24). His remarks about the issue under contention fit into this corporate framework.

Several other terms in this letter also reflect the intimate relations between the characters. Using a special word that denotes fellowship,

Paul delineates Philemon as his "partner"[7] (v. 17). He further uses familial language[8] by referring to Timothy and Apphia as brother/sister (vv. 1–2) and Philemon as brother (vv. 7.20). Onesimus is Paul's "child" whom he has "begotten" in prison (v. 10; see 1Cor 4,15). Their faith and work bring them together in a close community that emulates that of the family in Graeco-Roman times.[9] Paul further emphasises this intimate relationship with Philemon through the careful way in which he addresses him at two key moments in the letter, by means of the vocative "brother" (Phlm 7 and 20; see the further discussion below).[10] All these terms point towards a loving relationship between Paul and his missionary colleagues, as will be explained further below. The bond between them is determined by their common faith and mission.

Against the background of these descriptions, it is striking to note the even more intimate terms used for Onesimus and Philemon. In the opening of the letter, Paul addresses Philemon as "the beloved". Of all Paul's co-workers (Timothy, Apphia, Archippus, Epaphras, Mark, Aristarchus, Demas and Luke), only Philemon is described in this way. This caught the attention of early readers of the text, as is evident from the fact that some manuscripts also describe Apphia as the "beloved" (D^2, Ψ, M [sy^p, sa^{mss}]).

Later on, in Phlm 16, which is also the middle part of the letter (D-D'), Paul repeats the "beloved" motif when he asks Philemon to receive Onesimus back, not as a slave,[11] but as more than a slave, "as a beloved brother". Paul stresses the intimacy of this relationship with Philemon by balancing his description of Philemon as a beloved brother in D' with his portrayal of Onesimus in D (v. 12) as Paul's "heart" (αὐτόν, τοῦτ' ἔστιν τὰ ἐμὰ σπλάγχνα).[12] In the preceding section (C), Paul described his relationship with Onesimus in familial terms, as was pointed out above: Onesimus is his "child" whom he begot in prison (v. 10; see the discussion further below on the special meaning of this term in Pauline literature). Now, in D, he calls him his "heart", underlining this expression of affection by adding that he would have liked to keep Onesimus with him (v. 13). At the end of D', the expression of Paul's desire to see a loving relationship between Philemon and Onesimus (as beloved brothers) is further intensified by his request to Philemon to receive Onesimus as he would receive Paul, who is his partner (v. 17). In v. 1 Paul calls Philemon *the beloved* and co-worker. In Paul's relationship with him, Philemon thus has an example of the loving relationship that he should foster with Onesimus.

In antiquity, siblingship was perceived as a loving relationship. As Aasgaard aptly observes in his study on siblingship in Paul,

> Above all ... the sibling relationsip [sic!] was associated with love: siblings were expected to display love towards one another (ἀγάπη, ἀγαπᾶν). ... Thus, more than other family relationships, the sibling relation was thought to be distinguished by mutual love.[13]

The close link between siblingship and love is in keeping with Paul's repeated allusions to love as a seminal feature of the life in faith. Paul, in agreement with his social context,

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7 Secondary literature has argued convincingly that this is a business term. See E. Lohmeyer, Die Briefe an die Philipper, an die Kolosser und an Philemon: übersetzt und erklärt (KEK 9), Göttingen ^{11}1956, 189; E. Lohse, Die Briefe an die Kolosser und an Philemon: übersetzt und erklärt (KEK 9/2), Göttingen 1968, 284; and P. Stuhlmacher, Der Brief an Philemon (EKK 18), Zürich etc. 1975, 49f. Though this may be true in general, Paul integrates the commercial term so strongly into a religious context that it denotes, first of all, a communal relationship determined by common religious bonds. In this regard, see the further discussion below.

8 See R. Aasgaard, 'My Beloved Brothers and Sisters!' Christian Siblingship in Paul (JSNT.S 265), London/New York 2004, 244f, 311, who describes familial language in Phlm as "a fundamental perspective", noting that "clearly he [i.e., Paul] wants to create an 'atmosphere of love' in connection with this letter." (p. 245) However, Aasgaard allocates only one page to a discussion of love.

9 Aasgaard, Siblingship (see n. 8), 311.

10 Barth/Blanke, Philemon (see n. 1), ad loc. Also note the emphatic position occupied by "brother" at the conclusion of Phlm 7. See the different order in Phlm 20. The authors note that in Phil 4,1 there is one other analogous instance, in which the term "loved ones" concludes a sentence.

11 On the status of Onesimus as a slave, see P. Lampe, Keine "Sklavenflucht" des Onesimus, ZNW 76 (1985) 135–137, who argues that Onesimus was not a runaway slave. See also B.M. Rapske, The Prisoner Paul in the Eyes of Onesimus, NTS 37 (1991) 187–203; Barclay, Philemon (see n. 1), 101 (who insightfully weighs the various possibilities); Aune, Philemon (see n. 6), 356; P. Arzt-Grabner, Onesimus *erro*: Zur Vorgeschichte des Philemonbriefes, ZNW 95 (2004) 131–143; I.J. du Plessis, How Christians Can Survive in a Hostile Social-Economic Environment: Paul's Mind Concerning Difficult Social Conditions in the Letter to Philemon, in: J.G. van der Watt (ed.), Identity, Ethics, and Ethos in the New Testament (BZNW 141), Berlin/New York 2006, 387–413; M.M. Thompson, Colossians and Philemon (THNTC), Grand Rapids/Cambridge 2005, 196f. For criticism of Lampe's thesis, see J.A. Harrill, Using the Roman Jurists to Interpret Philemon: A Response to Peter Lampe, ZNW 90 (1999) 135–138, and B. Witherington III, The Letters to Philemon, the Colossians, and the Ephesians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Captivity Epistles, Grand Rapids 2007, 68–73, though the contra-arguments are not convincing.

12 Dunn, Philemon (see n. 1), 321. See further below for more details and for a discussion of "child" as another intimate term used by Paul to refer to Onesimus.

13 Aasgaard, Siblingship (see n. 8), 308; G. Quell/E. Stauffer, Art. ἀγαπάω κτλ., ThWNT 1 (1933) 20–55, here: 51, also observe,

> Das organische Prinzip, das ein für allemal mit der Richtung der Liebe auf den Nächsten gegeben ist, wirkt sich hier organisierend aus: Nächstenliebe, einst die Hilfsbereitschaft gegen den Genossen des israelitischen Bundesvolks, heißt jetzt Dienst am Genossen des neuen Gottesvolkes, heißt das Heil der Bruderschaft zum Leitgesichtspunkt der Lebensführung machen. Ἀγαπητός und ἀδελφός werden *Wechselbegriffe* [secondary italics] (1 Th 2,8; Phlm 16).

In the footnote to this passage, the authors also refer to Phlm 5 to point out that love of the other as one's brother is implied through the use of this word.

> ... alludes again and again to ideas of love, and exhorts his co-Christians to attitudes and actions of love towards one another, which, as noted, involved both emotions and practical obligations.[14]

This statement by Aasgaard can be confirmed by noting the descriptions applied by Paul to believers in his other letters. "Beloved" or "beloved brothers" as designations for co-believers are well known in the Pauline tradition, providing a context for their application in Phlm. For example, Paul uses these terms for his co-workers in 1Cor 10,14 (beloved), 15,58 (beloved brothers), and Phil 4,1 (ἀδελφοί μου ἀγαπητοὶ καὶ ἐπιπόθητοι; see also 2Cor 7,1; 12,19; Phil 2,12). The illuminating phrases in 1Thess 1,4 (ἀδελφοὶ ἠγαπημένοι ὑπὸ θεοῦ) and Rom 1,7 (ἀγαπητοῖς θεοῦ) trace the love to God, thus stressing the special nature of this love even more. Though Paul did not restrict love to groups associated with him, he applies "the sibling metaphor particularly to close missionary co-workers, in a way that makes these persons appear as in a special position."[15] Paul's language indicates that love is a hallmark of the believing community.[16]

All this can also be illustrated further if Paul's portrait of siblingship is compared with contemporary Graeco-Roman ideals of brotherly love. Aristotle[17] reflected on the nature of the relationship between children, which he described as a loving relationship, based on their having been being born of the same parents. Their identity and biological link with their parents make them identical to each other (Eth. Nic. 8.12.3). Much later, Plutarch[18] also wrote a treatise with the rather telling title of "Fraternal Affection" (see Mor. 488A). In it he criticised any conflict or jealousy in a family. Brothers should rather make mutual concessions and live in peace.

In these cases, however, the mutual bond between people is determined by common parentage. Paul's religious portrait of brotherhood, in contrast, is not based on biological links, but on believers' relationship with God.[19] In contrast to the conventions of their surrounding social system, believers relate to others as to their natural family. Paul's affectionate language towards Philemon and Onesimus reflects the caring, affectionate and intimate relationship between those who are part of the believing community, as well as Paul's general concern that

14 Aasgaard, Siblingship (see n. 8), 309.
15 Ibid., 308.
16 Ibid., 310. Aasgaard notes that the notion of siblingship and sibling love (φιλαδελφία) in Paul's ethics is not taken into account in contemporary scholarship, though it is even stronger than such notions as friendship.
17 See ibid., 61.
18 See ibid., 93–106.
19 See the full and useful discussion ibid., 118–132.

Christians should "treat one another honourably", should "harbour positive and strong emotions towards one another" and should "further unity amidst diversity"[20]. Paul's language in Phlm thus reflects how faith modified the social conventions of his time. Philemon, having joined the new family of God, needed to grow into a deeper understanding of its religious ethos which he had inherited as a believer, and also of its implications for his life in his household. As a believer he had to reconsider his relationship with his slave, the more so as his slave had also been converted during the time he spent with Paul (Phlm 10). Their relationship needed to be comprehensively reconfigured by their faith on both a personal and a concrete level. Their new life, which had been established in Christ, now warranted a new lifestyle.[21] All this is illustrated on a simple level in Paul's descriptions of Philemon and Onesimus. When he addresses them, his language reflects the symbolic universe of believers, but at the same time it also illustrates a lifestyle of complete acceptance and affection beyond all boundaries. His request to Philemon to act similarly is given legitimacy by his own words and deeds. In this way, language creates new realities.

III. Love as a Corollary of Faith

In the thanksgiving at the beginning of Phlm, Paul strikingly praises Philemon's love and faith (Phlm 4–7). It is because of these two qualities of love and faith that Philemon has gained a special reputation among believers (v. 5). Several insights can be gained from this combination of the two qualities, as will be explained in the following subsection.

1. Faith and Love

The significant way in which faith determines and creates an intimate relationship between believers has been pointed out in the previous section. In the thanksgiving of Phlm faith plays a prominent role. Thanksgivings in Pauline letters spell out important religious and moral issues which are relevant within the context of author and readers, which are developed in more depth in the body of the letter and which determine the outcomes of the communication.[22] In this sense they often point towards an exigency or crisis that requires a solution.

20 Ibid., 307.
21 See the debate of Bornkamm and Bultmann on eschatological dialectics in Schrage, Ethics (see n. 4), 170, who notes that Paul's paraenesis is addressed to the saints as those who "are pilgrims in the new life that is theirs."
22 See P.T. O'Brien, Introductory Thanksgivings in the Letters of Paul (NT.S 49), Leiden, 1977, 58–60; Aune, Philemon (see n. 6), 355; N.T. Wright, The Epistles of Paul to the

The thanksgiving in Phlm deserves special attention because it is the only passage in the letter in which faith is explicitly mentioned (Phlm 5 and 6). In addition, the passage accentuates one particular aspect of faith and then combines it with love. From the intricate composition of the thanksgiving, which will be discussed below, it is clear that Paul deliberately aims to link the two concepts closely, since he considers both of them to be vital in order to address the issue which has created tension in the house church of Philemon. Just how closely they are connected is demonstrated by the striking way in which Paul refers to both of these qualities by means of the singular relative pronoun "which" (ἥν).[23] However, it is the neat[24] ring composition, in particular, which reveals the seminal place accorded to faith and love.[25] A close reading of the text reveals the following pattern:

A [4]Εὐχαριστῶ τῷ θεῷ μου πάντοτε μνείαν σου ποιούμενος ἐπὶ τῶν προσευχῶν μου, [5]ἀκούων σου **τὴν ἀγάπην**

B καὶ **τὴν πίστιν** ἣν ἔχεις πρὸς τὸν κύριον Ἰησοῦν καὶ **εἰς** πάντας τοὺς ἁγίους,

B′ [6]ὅπως ἡ κοινωνία **τῆς πίστεώς** σου ἐνεργὴς γένηται ἐν ἐπιγνώσει παντὸς ἀγαθοῦ τοῦ ἐν ἡμῖν **εἰς** Χριστόν.[26]

A′ [7]χαρὰν γὰρ πολλὴν ἔσχον καὶ παράκλησιν ἐπὶ **τῇ ἀγάπῃ** σου, ὅτι τὰ σπλάγχνα τῶν ἁγίων ἀναπέπαυται διὰ σοῦ, ἀδελφέ.[27]

The combination of the two motifs of love and faith is not unambiguous, and has thus lead to confusion.[28] Literally the Greek reads: "Hearing of your love and faith which you have for the Lord Jesus and

Colossians and to Philemon: An Introduction and Commentary (TynNTC 12), Grand Rapids 1988, 174.

23 Barth/Blanke, Philemon (see n. 1), 272, regard the singular as an indication that the two concepts are treated as one. Together they act "perhaps as a hendiadys or as complementary and mutually interpretive synonyms."

24 The ring composition is one indication of the literary nature of this letter. The letter displays several literary characteristics. Using a pun on the name Onesimus, which is a (common) Roman surname meaning profitable/useful, Paul describes Onesimus as having been useless to Philemon, but as now being useful to him (Phlm 11). See also Aune, Philemon (see n. 6), 355. G. Steyn, Some Figures of Style in the Epistle to Philemon: Their Contribution towards the Persuasive Nature of the Epistle, EkklPh 77 (1995) 64–80, refers to assonance, polysyndeton, inclusion, ellipsis, repetition of propositions, antithesis, isocolons, paranomasia, and anacoluthon.

25 An author who composes his material in terms of a ring composition will not only do so on a macro-level — such literary techniques will also be found on the micro-level.

26 B and B′ are both separate units, as is evident from their similar endings, both beginning with an εἰς-phrase.

27 A′ is a unit, indicated formally by the insertion of γάρ in v. 7.

28 H. Riesenfeld, Faith and Love Promoting Hope: An Interpretation of Philemon v. 6, in: M.D. Hooker/S.G. Wilson (eds.), Paul and Paulinism: Essays in Honour of C.K. Barrett, London 1982, 251–257, regards this verse as one of the most difficult passages in the New Testament. See also the remarks made by Barclay, Philemon (see n. 1), 97, on a more general level, regarding the "allusiveness" of the letter, which has created so many difficulties in its interpretation.

for all the holy ones". Most interpreters rearrange the Greek, with the argument that if faith, which is traditionally associated with belief in God/Christ,[29] is linked to "faith in the Lord Jesus", the sentence becomes clearer. Love should then be combined with "all the holy ones". The NIV translation, for example, reads as follows: "I hear about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the holy ones."[30] The Greek text, however, does not support such a neat solution. The motifs of love and faith in this letter are so closely interconnected in the ring composition that they cannot be taken apart in this way. Faith cannot be restricted to the pronouncement in Phlm 5. It directly reappears in Phlm 6, where there is no indication that it should be understood as referring only to faith in the Lord Jesus.

To avoid confusion, the two motifs should be read together, and should be understood in the light of the ring composition. As the above close reading reveals, love is placed in the ring composition's outer frame: The introductory remark in Paul's thanksgiving (thanking God) is motivated by the reference to Philemon's love (A). Paul concludes the section with the remark concerning his great joy and comfort in Philemon's love (A′). In both frames, he notes the joy he experiences as a result of the love of Philemon. Faith is discussed within this framework of love as the inner part of the ring composition (B and B′).

Faith is developed in this inner part both on a vertical and a horizontal level. Paul first mentions Philemon's faith in B and then speaks about "the fellowship" of this faith which should become powerful (B′). In A, Paul refers briefly to love and faith towards both God and others, and subsequently goes on to develop this theme meaningfully in the following parts of the ring composition. Therefore, when he speaks of Philemon's "faith" in B, he is already anticipating faith as fellowship, which is present in the following verse (B′).[31] This point will now be argued in more detail.

29 For a discussion of faith in the Pauline traditions, see Dunn, Philemon (see n. 1), 56f., who writes:

> Perhaps more than any other word, 'faith' sums up the distinctive feature of the Christian gospel and life for Paul ... Rather like 'grace' ..., Paul's use of 'faith' dominates New Testament usage (142 of 243 occurrences). (p. 56)

Dunn interprets faith in the Pauline sense as "sheer trust in the power and grace of God, as against a more typical traditional Jewish emphasis on faithfulness ..." (ibid.)

30 Wright, Philemon (see n. 22), ad loc., notes that it is possible that love and faith could be directed towards Jesus and other Christians, but this would mean that "faith" implies both faith as trust, and faith as faithfulness. See also Dunn, Philemon (see n. 1), 317, who observes that there is no reason why Paul could not have thought jointly of love and faith as the sum of the Christian lifestyle and "therefore of both as related to both 'the Lord Jesus' and 'all the saints' ..."

31 See Dunn, Philemon (see n. 1), 317.

2. The Communal Nature of Faith

From the thanksgiving, it is evident that Paul has a specific aspect of faith in mind. Having mentioned "faith" in the general sense of the word, he immediately introduces a particular aspect of it by referring to the *fellowship* or *sharing* of faith.[32] Having spoken about faith (B), he then elaborates on the effect of faith (B'). He does the same thing with regard to love. He mentions love first (A), and then points out the effect of love on him and others (A').

The phrase ὅπως ἡ κοινωνία τῆς πίστεώς σου in Phlm 6 has also been interpreted in different ways because of its ambiguous formulation.[33] The κοινωνία motif illuminates the corporate nature of faith. In Pauline literature, in which this term occurs 13 times (out of a total of 19 instances in which it appears in the New Testament), it is often linked with faith in such a way as to denote the sharing of faith (Phil 1,5). It also indicates a lifestyle that Christians share with each other.[34] One shares the body and blood of Christ (1Cor 10,16) or the fellowship of the Holy Spirit (Phil 2,1).[35]

It is this aspect of faith as fellowship that Paul aims to develop in Phlm.[36] Believers share a common identity and life with others through their faith. As believers they experience good things in their midst (Phlm 6).[37] Through faith they become part of a sphere of grace. In their new communality and sharing of "all this good" (v. 6), they mature and grow to a powerful understanding of the good. Other believers are thus accorded a special status in spiritual formation, since the sharing of good brings about a deepening of faith as fellowship. Spiritual growth is the result not only of the relationship with the divine, but also of the mutual relationship with other believers. Dunn describes this in a concrete way as

> ... evoking the picture of the church gathered in Philemon's house benefiting from Philemon's testifying of his own experience of faith, no doubt prompting other members in turn to share their experience of faith (its ups and downs) in a way that was beneficial to them all.[38]

32 For the history of this word, see ibid., 318.
33 Dunn (ibid., 319) notes all the possible meanings.
34 See ibid., 318; Wright, Philemon (see n. 22), 176.
35 See also 1Cor 1,9; 2Cor 13,13; Phil 1,5; 2,1.
36 1Cor 1,8f.; 10,16.24; 2Cor 13,13; Phil 2,1-3. Dunn, Philemon (see n. 1), 318f., observes: "What Paul had in mind here, then, is almost certainly the subjective experience of a faith shared in common." See also Barth/Blanke, Philemon (see n. 1), 281f., and Wright, Philemon (see n. 22), 176.
37 The text literally expresses the hope that "the fellowship of your faith might become effective *in the recognition* of all the good that is among us for Christ." It is not clear from the wording of the phrase whether only Philemon or all Christians are being referred to here.

Though Paul is assuming Philemon's faith in the Lord (the religious element), he finds joy in the faith which Philemon shares in fellowship with the holy ones and which continues to be energised by the experiences which flow from their faith. Paul will spell out the implications of this fellowship for the relationship between Philemon and Onesimus later in the letter.[39]

In the light of recent linguistic insights to the effect that words do not have meaning, but meaning has words, it is not surprising to note that κοινωνία is sometimes linked to the motif of love. Louw/Nida classify κοινωνία under the semantic domain of association, with "to associate" as first subdomain. They remark that κοινωνία and its cognates imply a close relationship which in some cases may be "somewhat enduring" (with reference to Eph 5,11; συγκοινωνέω; κοινωνία; κοινωνός). They include φίλος and φίλη as part of the same subdomain.[40] In the letter, Paul uses the motif of faith in this sense of the practical expression of faith that characterises all those who are close associates in Christ. Their fellowship as a group of believers inspires and encompasses acts of kindness, caring and sharing.[41] Faith, thus understood, already suggests to the reader an attitude and lifestyle that are closely linked to love. In view thereof, it becomes even clearer why Paul links faith, as fellowship, so closely to love in the thanksgiving.

This has implications for a proper understanding of the impact of Phlm. Though the letter contains an individual request to Philemon, it also — in addition to its other functions[42] — has a didactic character which reflects Paul's pastoral concern. Paul understands that Philemon's actions will affect not only Onesimus, but also his co-workers and their churches. The tension between Philemon and Onesimus holds possible consequences for the well-being of the church in general, particularly in terms of the cohesion of its members. Their common faith implies that they should be living a life of fellowship. This is an insight that Paul also goes on to develop through his comments on love (see further below).

In this letter, therefore, Paul does not present faith from an intellectual perspective as the acceptance of certain insights or dogmatic con-

38 Dunn, Philemon (see n. 1), 319.
39 Lampe, Philemon (see n. 1), 213.
40 Louw/Nida, Lexicon (see n. 2), 446f.
41 O'Brien, Thanksgivings (see n. 22), 56.
42 See D.F. Tolmie's discussion concerning the rhetorical function of Phlm: idem, Tendencies in the Research on the Letter to Philemon since 1980, pp. 1–27, here: 11–16, in this volume.

tents. Nor does he discuss faith polemically, as in Galatians, where it is contrasted with the law. Paul perceives faith in terms of a fellowship which powerfully affects believers in their mutual relationships. This is why he combines ἡ κοινωνία τῆς πίστεως with the phrase ἐνεργὴς γένηται (Phlm 6). The word ἐνεργής appears in 1Cor 16,9 (see also Hebr 4,12[43]). But there are 30 other words in the Pauline letters that are formed from the stem ἐνεργ-. These include words that refer to the power of righteous prayer (e.g., 1Thess 2,13), God's power in the resurrection (Col 2,12), and to the conformation of the lowly body to Christ's glorious body (Phil 3,21). These words are used to indicate that Christians can do powerful deeds (Gal 3,5).[44] Faith increasingly and powerfully transforms believers into the new identity and lifestyle that they have inherited in Christ. In this sense there is nothing static about faith. Faith involves the saints in a dynamic spiritual journey and comprises a process.

There is another aspect that warrants brief attention at this point. Faith that creates ever new and powerful forms of κοινωνία has a mystical quality to it, as the phrase παντὸς ἀγαθοῦ τοῦ ἐν ἡμῖν εἰς Χριστόν, with its telic meaning, in Phlm 6 reveals.[45] Unity with others, with all its beneficial consequences, brings about greater unity with Christ. Having been transformed by Christ and living a transformed life, the transformation into deeper fellowship brings one closer to Christ. It is therefore not only fellowship, but ultimately fellowship with others in Christ, that is important to Paul. In his discussion of the conflict between Philemon and Onesimus, Paul is implicitly addressing a group of Christians about the nature of their communal faith, in order to make them aware of the need for ongoing transformation. Their mutual relationship is a result of their shared faith; but growing deeper into such fellowship will empower them to experience the mystical presence of Christ. Their mystical union with Christ, expressed in this letter by means of repeated use of phrases such as "in Christ" (vv. 6.8.20), "in the Lord" (vv. 16.20), and "in Christ Jesus" (v. 23), will be deepened by their mutual fellowship.

From this interesting link between faith, love and the good, it is evident that faith is a dynamic, trusting and, above all, intimate relationship with the divine, which affects mutual relationships between

43 On κοινωνία in Hebr, see H.-J. Klauck, Moving In and Moving Out: Ethics and Ethos in Hebrews, in: J.G. van der Watt (ed.), Identity, Ethics, and Ethos in the New Testament (BZNW 141), Berlin/New York 2006, 417–443, here: 429f. The κοινωνία in Hebr is reminiscent of the depiction of faith and love in Phlm.

44 Barth/Blanke, Philemon (see n. 1), 283.

45 See M.J. Harris, Colossians and Philemon (EGGNT), Grand Rapids 1991, 252f.

believers by creating and promoting intimate fellowship. Believers are co-fellows who share their spiritual journey with one another and, in doing so, seek to deepen their relationship with God in Christ.

IV. The Nature of Love in the Letter to Philemon

The close link between faith and love in Phlm is not unique in Paul's writings. Faith is often linked with love in the Pauline letters. Faith represents the space in which love operates.[46] If faith creates community between those who believe in Christ, love is its necessary corollary, which characterises this fellowship.[47] Paul asserts this in so many words in Gal 5,6: "The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love."

The importance of love in Phlm as a whole has been expounded to some degree in the close reading of the text in a previous section. Of all the different parts of the letter, love is especially prominent in the thanksgiving (Phlm 4–7), where it is linked with faith.[48] However, an aspect that is unusual for Pauline literature is the fact that love is mentioned before faith (see, e.g., Eph 1,15; Col 1,4.7f.; 1Thess 1,3).[49] At the same time Paul speaks intensely about love. He thanks God for Philemon's love "every time" (πάντοτε) he remembers Philemon in his prayers (Phlm 5 [A]), whilst in Phlm 7 (A') he expresses his great joy and encouragement because Philemon has refreshed the brothers (note the play on words in Phlm 4 and 7: εὐχαριστῶ and χαρὰν ... πολλὴν ἔσχον).[50] Love is therefore the more prominent of the two qualities. This is confirmed by the rest of the letter, in which faith is not mentioned again, whilst references to and images suggesting love are repeated in almost all the subsequent sections of the letter.

This prominence of love in Phlm corresponds with the seminal role of love elsewhere in the Pauline tradition. In Rom 13,8–10 Paul links

46 B. Thurston, The New Testament in Christian Spirituality, in: A. Holder (ed.), The Blackwell Companion to Christian Spirituality (BCRel), Oxford etc. 2008, 55–70, writes, "For Paul, if faith is the seed from which Christian spirituality grows, then love is its finest fruit. The life of faith ... is the chief characteristic of life in Christ." (p. 60)

47 See Wolter, Philemon (see n. 1), 253, who writes, "Glaube und Liebe bilden ein Begriffspaar, das die fundamentalen Dimensionen der christlichen Identität benennt." For the important role of faith in Pauline literature, see Dunn, Philemon (see n. 1), 57f., and further below.

48 See the discussion in Barth/Blanke, Philemon (see n. 1), 272; and O'Brien, Thanksgivings (see n. 22), 53.

49 Some manuscripts therefore switch the two, so that faith is mentioned first in the thanksgiving. See Dunn, Philemon (see n. 1), 315 n. 1.

50 Note also the use of present-tense verbs. Such iterative language further underlines the importance of love. In this regard, see O'Brien, Thanksgivings (see n. 22), 50.

love together with faith and hope in a triad, as is also the case in 1Cor 13, though he singles out love as the greatest among them in the latter case. This is spelled out clearly in 1Cor 12–13:

> The celebration of love as the greater spiritual gift, as the most excellent way (12:31), and as that which most fully defines one's identity as a member of Christ makes it clear that, ultimately, this is the value that should determine one's decisions and actions.[51]

The following discussion will indicate some of the most prominent features of love in Phlm and explain why love is so significant.

1. Love and the Divine

In Pauline literature, love of God is often a quality of God or Christ in the subjective sense. This meaning of the phrase is found, for example, in 2Cor 13,13. Love is also portrayed as a divine gift to humanity in, for example, the seminal passage in Rom 5,5.8 (see also Phil 2,1f.). This gift is expressed in a variant form when Paul speaks of believers as "beloved by God" (1Thess 1,4; Rom 1,7). The divine love is also assumed in 1Thess 4,9f., in which Paul notes that the Thessalonians have been taught by God to love each other.

A noteworthy example in other Pauline traditions is Eph 3,14–19, because it illuminates different dimensions of love. In this passage, loaded with a dense configuration of motifs, faith and love are also linked, as in thanksgiving in Phlm. The author prays that the Father ("from whom his whole family in heaven and earth derives its name" [v. 15 {NIV}]) will strengthen his audience with power in their inner being so that Christ may dwell in their hearts "through faith". At the same time he prays that they, "being rooted and established in love," (v. 17 [NIV]) may grasp with all the saints "how wide and long and high and deep" the "love of Christ" (v. 18 [NIV]) is, which "surpasses knowledge" (v. 19 [NIV]). Here love is depicted as divine, overpowering in its nature, but also as a gift to humanity in which they remain and live. Paul also depicts love of God in an objective sense as typical of the human response to God, for example, when he speaks of believers who love God (1Cor 2,9; 8,3; Col 1,4). The same mixture of various aspects of love is found in Eph 5,1f. The author asks the audience to be "imitators of God ... as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and

51 C. Cyss Crocker, Reading 1 Corinthians in the Twenty-First Century, New York/London 2004, 199; see also K.F. Ulrichs, Christusglaube: Studien zum Syntagma pistis Christou und zum paulinischen Verständnis von Glaube und Rechtfertigung (WUNT 2,227), Tübingen 2007, 81f.

sacrifice to God" (NIV). In this passage, love is more prominent than faith.

Such references to love of and for God are not found in Phlm, although love as love for God may be suggested in Phlm 5 in Paul's remark about the "love and faith which you have for the Lord Jesus Christ and all the saints." The close connection between faith and love indirectly suggests the divine nature and origin of love. Paul thanks God for Philemon, because the reports about Philemon's love and faith (ἀκούων [v. 5]) reflect the divine action in his life and his positive response to it.[52] This praise of Philemon's love provides the foundation for Paul's request to Philemon to accept Onesimus as a beloved brother "in the Lord" (v. 16). Love is due to Onesimus, not because of any inherent quality of his, but because of both his and Philemon's loving relationship with the divine. In this way, loving relationships are defined and determined by the relationship with God. Paul's image of God as "Father" in v. 3 expresses a loving relationship with which people are embraced and which must be extended to and shared with others by those who experience it.[53]

This image of God's love would have been noteworthy among some groups within the context of Paul's gentile congregations. Lindberg, for example, noted in a recent study that such a view contrasts with Aristotle's assertion that God cannot love humanity. According to Aristotle, it is impossible for God to love humanity, for that would detract from the perfection of the First Cause which cannot think of anything except what is perfect, i.e., God-self.[54] Paul's understanding of the divine nature of love contrasts with such a view. It clearly finds its roots in the Hebrew Scriptures in which God's originary love for Israel is expressed through several different Hebrew words (love: אָהַב and חֶסֶד; choose: בָּחַר; and set one's heart: חָשַׁק). These words all delineate Yahweh's election of and durable, resilient love for Israel.[55]

2. The Relational Nature of Love

In general, Paul more often tends to relate love to mutual relationships between believers. This is the case, for example, in 1Thess 3,12, where

52 O'Brien, Thanksgivings (see n. 22), 50. See the similar pattern in Col 1,3f.; Phil 1,3f.; 1Thess 1,2f.

53 See in this regard Eph 3,14–19, already mentioned above. These verses speak of the family of the Father, in the midst of whom Christ dwells through faith. The family, rooted and established in love, seeks to understand the power of this love.

54 See Lindberg, Love (see n. 2), 8, 13. See also the discussion below regarding love in Greek texts.

55 W. Brueggemann, Theology of the Old Testament: Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy, Minneapolis 1997, 414–417.

he prays that the Lord may make his readers' love increase and overflow for each other, just as Paul's love does for them (see also 1Thess 4,9;[56] see esp. the next section). Most of Paul's pronouncements in Phlm depict love first and foremost as a caring relationship between believers.[57] In this letter, Paul views love mostly in terms of horizontal relationships.

Paul develops the horizontal perspective on love in more detail by suggesting that it is possible that Philemon and Onesimus were separated so that Philemon might have Onesimus back as a beloved brother "in the flesh and in the Lord" (Phlm 16). Their intimate relationship is given a theological grounding through the phrase "in the Lord". But this is linked with the phrase "in the flesh". According to Dunn, the expression ἐν σαρκί refers to the relationship of Philemon to Onesimus as that of a master to his slave. In his view, the "unclear" phrase implies that the social relationship between the two remains unchanged, though their mutual love would relativise their relationship, "infuse it with a family warmth, and make for heightened respect and consideration on both sides"[58]. There is, however, a deeper dimension to this expression. Barth/Blanke regard the ἐν σαρκί expression as referring to Onesimus in terms of his total existence, which would then imply that Philemon should accept him lovingly for what he is.[59] In the final analysis, love is about a person-to-person relationship. It is a sharing and giving of oneself, unconditionally, in relationship to the other as a human being. Elsewhere Barth/Blanke develop the implications of the motif of "flesh" in more detail. They point out that, instead of being "calculatingly chimeric, ideologic, or superhuman, the love Paul has in mind is realistic, pragmatic, and therefore true to both Jesus Christ and humankind."[60] Flesh should not be interpreted in a moralistic sense; it denotes the human person in all his/her physical, psychic, historical

56 This verse is illuminating, because it identifies φιλαδελφία with τὸ ἀγαπᾶν ἀλλήλους.

57 Dunn, Philemon (see n. 1), 58, speaks of "an active concern for one another".

58 Ibid., 336. Whether Paul's letter implies a request for Onesimus' manumission is much debated. See the excellent overview of the debate in Barclay, Philemon (see n. 1), 120–126.

59 Barth/Blanke, Philemon (see n. 1), 472, observe that this means acceptance of Onesimus as a total person (including his past, present, and future behaviour, along with all the evident weaknesses and failures enumerated in, e.g., 1Cor 13,4–7), and not only in a partial sense:

> Certainly the so-called 'conversion' of Onesimus; his place in the church as a 'Christian,' or 'brother'; and his present and future usefulness (v. 11) will have provided the occasion for loving him. Still, he is not to be loved for those reasons only — as if love might be reduced or withdrawn whenever Onesimus does not live up to expectations. True love is not a conditional gift and bond, but accepts the neighbor, brother, and sister just as they are.

60 Ibid., 454.

and social facets.[61] This phrase means that faith changes the owner's perception of his slave from that of someone who is a possession and an underling to that of a human being whom one relates to as a person in his/her own right and to whom one shows goodness. Even if the master–slave relationship remains intact, their faith establishes a personal link and bond between them. In a radical manner, they are both equals in the Lord and in the missionary community.

Paul's perspective on this can be illustrated by his relationship with Philemon. In Phlm 14, Paul writes that he resolved not to keep Onesimus with him without Philemon's consent. If Onesimus were to stay with Paul, it should not be as a result of compulsion, but of Philemon's benevolence (μὴ ὡς κατὰ ἀνάγκην τὸ ἀγαθόν σου ᾖ ἀλλὰ κατὰ ἑκούσιον). Paul's relationship with Philemon is based on respect for him as a person whose good deeds cannot be enforced. Rather, these should be acts of love, performed out of free will. His actions should be "voluntary" in nature, reflecting a positive desire and a personal decision to do what he feels is right and good.[62] It is this mutual respect, reflecting a loving relationship in the Lord, which Paul would also like to see between Philemon and Onesimus as "beloved brothers". Paul thus links love to interpersonal relationships and integrates these relationships within the relationship with Christ. He urges his fellow believers to consider their own personal relationships within the social context from the perspective of their bond with Christ.[63]

Pronouncements of Paul concerning the master–slave relationship in his other letters illuminate his remarks in Phlm. Though Paul, for the most part, does not challenge the system of slavery, as has been noted above, he relativises the relationship of master and slave on several levels in his other letters. The most obvious instance in this regard is his remark in Gal 3,28f. that there is neither "slave nor free", because of humanity's unity in Christ. Where he asks slaves to accept their situation (1Cor 7,21–23), he also adds that they should not become slaves of men (1Cor 7,23b), that is, that they should not be dictated to by men, but by God. In this sense, he relativises the master–slave relationship in

61 Ibid., 456.

62 The word ἑκούσιον is a hapax. The adverb appears only in Hebr 10,26 and 1Pet 5,2. Louw/Nida, Lexicon (see n. 2), 295f., translate it as "your own free will". They add, however, that in some languages willingness to perform an action is normally expressed negatively (as not being forced to do so). "A positive expression of 'willingness' may be indicated idiomatically by a phrase such as 'my heart approves'." They consider this word to be part of the semantic domain of attitudes and emotions, grouping it together, e.g., with "love, affection and compassion". See also the following section on love as a transformative force.

63 See H.N. Ridderbos, Paulus: Ontwerp van Zijn Theologie, Kampen 1966, 352–355.

the light of the relationship of both with God. At the same time, Paul also reconfigures the master-slave relationship by calling on slaves to obey their masters, while also requesting masters to provide slaves with what is right and fair (Col 4,1).

Other Pauline texts illuminate Paul's relational understanding of love in Phlm. Love is so important that he regards it as the summary of the law as the organising principle for mutual relationships between people (see also 1Thess 1,3f.; 5,8;[64] Rom 1,7; 1Cor 13; Gal 5,6.13.22).[65] In Rom 12,10, for example, Paul spells out the ideal nature of relationships by instructing believers to lovingly relate to one another with "brotherly" love. Such "brotherly" relationships imply not causing harm to others (Rom 13,10). Whilst 2Cor 6,6 mentions love as a virtue, Gal 5,22 lists it as the first fruit of the Spirit.[66] These conceptualisations of love also overlap with the understanding of love in the rest of the New Testament. Spicq writes that the verb "love"

> ... signifie le plus souvent 'apprécier, faire grand cas, tenir en haute estime'; c'est un amour de profond respect (1 Petr. 2:17), qui s'allie souvent à l'admiration et peut culminer en adoration.[67]

And as an indication of the concrete nature of love, Spicq adds that love asks to be manifested, demonstrated and exhibited. In these terms, he underlines the way in which love is focused on concrete behaviour, acts of kindness, seeking the well-being of the other and holding the other person in the highest esteem.

Finally, it is necessary to point out briefly that the spontaneous nature of obedience and love as the root of doing good, is reminiscent of Paul's Jewish traditions. Israel's love for Yahweh implies acknowledging Yahweh's sovereignty and keeping the oath of loyalty. The identity

64 Here, love also appears together with hope and faith in a triad.

65 C. Spicq, Theological Lexicon of the New Testament 1: aga – elp, Peabody 1994, 18–22, has pointed out that love is mentioned relatively seldom in Greek texts outside the New Testament. It is interesting to compare the Pauline readings with some of these cases. Where love is mentioned in antiquity, for example in Plato, it is often very different from the kind of love referred to in Phlm. With regard to the Greek perspective, Lindberg, Love (see n. 2), 7, writes:

> Love is directed toward an end, toward an immortality freed from the fetters of physical existence, freed from the downward pull of appetites such as sexual desire, and freed from loving things or persons for their own sake because eternal happiness cannot be acquired in what is perishable.

For the links with Hebrew Scriptures and Jewish texts, see P. Borgen, Early Christianity and Hellenistic Judaism, Edinburgh 1996, 241f., who discusses Gal 5,22f. in the light of Lev 19,18 and Philo's Virt. 182. He suggests that the love commandment should be understood within the context of proselytism.

66 See Cyss Crocker, Corinthians (see n. 51), 200; V.P. Furnish, The Love Command in the New Testament, Nashville 1972, 94.

67 C. Spicq, Notes de lexicographie néo-testamentaire 1 (OBO 22,1), Fribourg/Göttingen 1978, 19.

of Israel as Yahweh's people comprises the grounds for an appeal to concrete, radical obedience. As a result, this obedience is not a burden, but an inclination and a joy because of who Israel is.[68] Obedience, doing good and loving others are thus rooted in Yahweh's loving outreach to Israel and the divine-human relationship. Love in this letter to Philemon mostly reflects the affective, caring and communal dimensions of divine and human love in the Old Testament.[69]

3. Love as Motivation

Paul is aware of certain rules that demand obedience and govern proper behaviour. In Phlm 8, he states that he will not be bold and order Philemon to do his duty. Paul thus indicates in a direct manner that the Christian community lives according to binding norms and values which can be enforced on its members. However, he goes on to indicate a still higher principle of action by mentioning, in v. 9, that he is appealing to Philemon on behalf of Onesimus "out of love" (διὰ τὴν ἀγάπην). Related to this, is his appeal in v. 14 that Philemon should do good willingly, "out of benevolence", and not through being forced to do so. It is also interesting that Paul remarks in v. 8 that he could be bold and order Philemon to do what he "ought" to do, or to do his "duty" (ἐπιτάσσειν σοι τὸ ἀνῆκον).[70] What "duty" is Paul referring to here? Since he never designed an ethics along the lines of, for example, Aristotle's ἠθικὴ θεωρία, his letters, including Phlm, cannot be read in terms of a systematic-theoretical reflection on the ethos of his community. The letters are mostly practical, written in moral language which is metaphorical and implicit in nature rather than philosophical and technical; and they are ultimately motivated by love.

Love inspires believers to undergo transformation in their relationships, that is, to act humanely and caringly towards others. In doing so, they will merely be reflecting what they themselves experienced when they were transformed.[71] This transformation must continue to be effectuated in their own lives. Love is the powerful force that motivates believers to reconfigure and transform their relationships with others.

68 Brueggemann, Theology (see n. 55), 419–421.

69 For love of one's enemies in Greek (cynic) texts, see H.-J. Klauck, The Religious Context of Early Christianity: A Guide to Graeco-Roman Religions (SNTW), London/New York 2000, 382f.

70 M.S. Enslin, The Ethics of Paul, New York/London 1957, 215, compares Paul's claim to obedience from others with certain norms that were applicable in the context of Pythagorean and Orphic groups, among whom the word of the master was final.

71 See the remarks in Witherington, Philemon (see n. 11), 94.

4. Love as Transformation

Love radically changes and transforms the way one views the other person. Paul urges Philemon to act out of love by accepting Onesimus as a beloved brother, despite the history of tension between them (Phlm 15–16). This requires a radical transformation in Philemon's relationship with his slave. It means loving someone who is not normally considered to be an object of love and who, furthermore, is a slave who left and even wronged his master.

Paul's own ministry, as it is reflected in this letter, already exemplifies the type of attitude that he asks of Philemon. Onesimus, who left his master, who may have wronged him, is now a trusted co-worker of Paul. Paul lovingly speaks of the slave Onesimus as "my child" (Phlm 10), using a special term of endearment. Though Paul describes believers as children of God, "this is one of the few occasions in his letters where the relationship between converter and converted is described as that of parent to child (Gal. 4.19; 1 Thess. 2.11)".[72] In Phlm 12 Paul uses an equally special description, τὰ σπλάγχνα, which expresses a love which touches the innermost parts of one's emotional existence and reflects intense compassion (see 2Cor 6,12; 7,15; Col 3,12; Phil 1,8; 2,1; 1John 3,17; Lk 1,78). Onesimus, who was a "useless" slave, has become useful to both Philemon and Paul (Phlm 11).[73] The slave who wronged his master is now entrusted with more responsibilities in the mission.[74]

5. Love as Sacrifice

In this letter, another dimension of love is illustrated by Paul's relationship with Philemon. Paul's language reveals that the return of Onesimus could not have been an easy option. It held some risks for Onesimus. But the letter suggests that Paul himself is also in a precarious position. He describes himself with pathos as an "old man" (Phlm 9). He refers four times to his incarceration. He is "a prisoner of Christ Jesus" who is "in chains" (v. 1; vv. 9–10). In v. 13 he again points out that he is "in chains for the gospel". In addition, he has seen Onesimus converted, grown fond of him, found him useful, and would be glad to have him as a helper in his dire situation (v. 11). It is in this context that Paul's love for Philemon takes on a special dimension. Paul sends this useful, beloved "child", his "heart", back to his master and even takes

72 Barclay, Philemon (see n. 1), 107.
73 See also Lk 10,33 and 15,20. Both these passages reflect the same compassion that is under discussion in Phlm.
74 See Barclay, Philemon (see n. 1), 100.

responsibility for any wrong that Philemon may have suffered, and for any debt that he may have incurred (v. 18). In doing so, he looks beyond his own needs and his own precarious situation. He acts for the greater good of others. The letter thus provides a prime example of love as self-sacrifice.[75] His action is not merely rhetorical manipulation, since he underlines that he is sending Onesimus back so that Philemon may have him back "for good" (v. 15).

6. A Comprehensive Love

Love is not, as may be inferred from the remarks above, merely about the individual relationships between Paul, Philemon and Onesimus. In Phlm, Paul's love is evident in his relationship with Philemon and his household, whilst Philemon's love is shown to "all the saints" (Phlm 5). This reflects the network of intimate relationships within early Christian communities. This theme of intimacy among believers is found elsewhere in Pauline texts. From 1Thess, in which the believers' love in Asia is also reported, it is clear that early Christians did not only care for those close to them. The collection for the saints in Jerusalem also illustrates the concern for the well-being of others (Rom 15,26; 1Cor 16,1). Love functions within the broader framework of the community of saints and even extends to those on the outside.[76]

This corporate nature of love is important to Paul, as is clear from the fact that he refers to and singles out this comprehensive love in key passages such as the thanksgivings. It has a programmatic place in his mission. The reports about Philemon's love (Phlm 5) indicate that Paul's congregations shared his sensitivity in respect of this topic. It is so important because of its consequences. This group sensitivity would have contributed towards motivating Philemon to live up to his reputation among believers. He needed to consider that his relationship with Onesimus was not merely a private matter, but affected the well-being of the church as a whole.

Once again this dimension is reminiscent of Paul's Jewish traditions. Israel is a community of persons bound in membership to each other and living in reciprocity, in terms of which each person-as-member must be treated well enough "to be sustained as a full member of the community."[77] Love therefore includes both a response to Yah-

75 See Dunn, Philemon (see n. 1), 58.
76 In this regard, see Ridderbos, Paulus (see n. 63), 322, who refers to 1Thess 4,12 and Col 4,5.
77 Brueggemann, Theology (see n. 55), 421.

weh's love and a love that "promotes the well-being of others" – which means emulating Yahweh's love.[78]

V. Conclusion

The conversion of his co-worker's slave in prison offers Paul an opportunity to plead for a loving relationship between Onesimus and Philemon by bringing them to a deeper understanding of the implications of their mutual faith. For Paul, faith radically transforms relationships, especially by challenging natural and social barriers between people. He defends this position in Gal 3,28–29, where he argues that one's ethnic, biological or social identity does not determine Christian existence. He refers specifically to the human distinction between slaves and free people which has been abrogated by the new dispensation in Christ. It is the rootedness in Christ that brings about the new creation (2Cor 5,17) and establishes the new family of God in heaven and on earth, in whose hearts Christ dwells, so that they are rooted in love, and stand in awe before love (Eph 3,14–20). The new reality in Christ determines all other realities (Gal 3,28). One deserves to be loved simply because of one's status as a brother or sister in the faith.[79] Onesimus' "birth" in Christ creates a new reality that overturns all existing realities. Faith is a decisive stimulus towards love; but love, in turn, is closely connected to faith as fellowship.

Phlm is a practical text which represents an ethical application of Paul's understanding of the gospel as God's gracious and loving act of reconciliation. Faith in God establishes community with others; but in doing so, it reflects the loving community that is established by God in Christ with humanity. The letter reveals itself as a communication with an important spiritual message: It is a message to an individual, Philemon, and his church, about the ongoing transformative effect of the gospel on the community of believers, on their mutual relationships and on their understanding of each other as human beings with inner dignity and worth.

78 See ibid.

79 Barclay, Philemon (see n. 1), 110. Thompson, Philemon (see n. 11), 199f., adopts a similar view: Paul did not want to return a slave to his master; rather, he wished to make it clear that

> ... a Christian in a vulnerable position would be treated as a brother in Christ by a fellow Christian. Such treatment follows not Roman law or social convention but the demands of Christian conduct. (p. 199)

Paul redefines the relationship between Philemon and Onesimus in terms of the entirely new footing established by the gospel. "The key words that are to shape their relationship are not master and slave but brother, fellowship (partnership), and love (vv. 16–17)." (ibid.)

The letter is about the experience of faith in early Christianity in a challenging situation. It focuses on a mundane, practical event which involves two individuals, but at the same time it is driven by a spirituality that transcends a specific context and reflects the important place of love within the Christian symbolic universe. Therefore, it involves the wider community of which Paul, Philemon and Onesimus are members; but it also has a bearing on the Pauline mission and, ultimately, the integrity of the gospel. It is a letter in which much more is at stake than the mere reconciliation of a master with an unhappy slave. Ultimately it conveys the message that, in the Christian existence, nothing is more important than love.

Contextual Interpretation of the Letter to Philemon in the United States

ROBERT ATKINS

Scholars writing from a Feminist and Liberationist perspective have alerted us to the ethics of biblical interpretation.[1] Paul's Letter to Philemon, especially in its 19th and 20th century context of the United States, offers a study in the importance of attention to these abstract and seemingly secondary ethical issues. I contend that the contemporary context of the interpretation of Phlm in the United States is the way it informed the debates about the holocaust we in the United States call the "peculiar institution" of slavery and its fallout through the period of reconstruction and on into the middle of the 20th century. This is important, since real people's lives, freedom and fortune are affected by the way the text is read. Biblical scholars have not taken into account sufficiently their complicity in the value system that supported slavery and consequently are unobservant about the effect of their readings on future generations.

My strategy is to observe the linkages that connect public policy with biblical reading. By observing these linkages historically, we can see how the reading of the text shifts in the context of great ethical transitions. Applying the same reading strategy to contemporary debates reveals the effect of one's bias in exegesis.

For example, one can observe a linkage between abolition and temperance in the later 19th century. As a United Methodist pastor, I have become deeply aware of the history of my own church denomination and use that awareness as my lens.[2] My own social location and history

1 E.g., E. Schüssler Fiorenza, Rhetoric and Ethic: The Politics of Biblical Studies, Minneapolis 1999.

2 I am a seminary educated, ordained pastor of a largely white, suburban Chicago, United Methodist Church. The local Church I serve is one of the larger parishes in my denomination in the region. The Methodist pastor of the Church in which I grew up, Oscar Plumb, was a student of Bordon P. Bowne at Boston. Our Council of Bishops challenged Bowne's teaching position at Boston in 1905. He was sustained in his position at Boston as he defended himself successfully against heresy charges in a Church trial. The earlier successful challenge of the teaching position of Hinckley Gilbert Mitchell at Boston was linked to his Social Gospel ideology and, I believe, backward to the effect of the discussion of slavery in the 19th century.

demonstrates the power of these linkages, the biblical exegesis behind them and the effect on people. Karen Tucker, in her study of the practice of worship in the American Methodist Church movement, notices this curious connection between beverage alcohol and slavery in the latter part of the 19th century:

> By 1874, an anonymous article in the *Western Christian Advocate* boasted that numerous churches in and around New York and Philadelphia had "banished the alcoholic cup from the Lord's table" since they had determined, in an interesting moral comparison, "that the Bible no more sanctions the use of intoxicants at the Lord's table than it does American slavery."[3]

That anonymous article was editorially advocating a change in worship practice. Methodists in the North correlated the zeal for abolition before the civil war with the cause of temperance. They began using unfermented wine in the Eucharist. Since fresh grape juice was usually not available, they experimented with reconstituting raisins and straining the juice. Thomas Welch and his son Charles began bottling grape juice for their Methodist Episcopal Church in 1869, using principles developed by Louis Pasteur in 1862. By 1874 — the date of the article in the Western Christian Advocate — this was a wide-spread practice that made the use of unfermented grape juice possible for a non-alcoholic communion.

The Christian Advocate was published under the authority of the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church beginning in 1826. Through most of the 19th century it was the official paper of the denomination. Beginning in 1834, the Western Christian Advocate, a parallel paper of the General Conference, addressed the western expansion of the Church. It provided news of the Church, official proceedings of meetings, obituaries, articles and letters to the editor on controversial issues. It encouraged the work of spreading the gospel in the west. Articles on the practice of worship helped unify church practice for the growing denomination whose preachers and teachers were neither university educated nor seminary trained.

As white settlers moved west, following the Ohio River and out into what is now the north central region of the United States, the circuit riding Methodist preachers followed. Each was assigned a "circuit" of locations on the prairie to visit a couple of times a year in the hope of developing new Methodist classes and Churches. The Circuit Riding preachers, called and energized in the second great awakening in the early 1800's, were uneducated but enthusiastic. The Western Christian Advocate helped institutionalize the growing Church and identify it as "Methodist" through articles on the theology, polity and practice of the

3 K.B. Westerfield Tucker, American Methodist Worship, New York 2000, 151.

Church. Its enthusiasm for temperance and later women's suffrage paralleled the experience of abolition. The Social Gospel, with its emphasis on praxis over theory, grew out of these movements as they developed within the Methodist denomination. In 1908 the Methodist Episcopal Church voted its first and only creed — The Social Creed — renewed at its 100th anniversary at the General Conference of the United Methodist Church in 2008.[4]

In the later 19th century many in the Methodist Episcopal Church North, especially those whose enthusiasm led to the third great awakening, questioned the value of higher education unless it supported the "plain sense" reading of a Church that accepted the cultural values of the day. Instead of providing awareness, deeper understanding and authority, higher education was seen as a counterweight to the enthusiasm and confidence provided by an un-nuanced literalist reading of the Bible. In the 1890's, Hinckley Gilbert Mitchell[5] was secretary of the SBL, editor of what became the JBL, second director of the American Schools of Oriental Studies and Research and professor of Hebrew Bible at Boston University. He was an ordained Elder in the Methodist Episcopal Church. Among other things, because he taught the documentary hypothesis for the origin of the Pentateuch and because of his support of the Social Gospel, he fell into conflict with the Methodist Episcopal Council of Bishops. His teaching was "investigated" in 1894 and 1899. He was removed from the faculty at Boston through the Council of Bishops' objections to his continued appointment in 1904. At that time, the Bishops retained the power to review faculty appointments at Boston every five years. The attempt to bring him up on heresy charges was foiled by sympathetic Bishops who moved his credentials from conference to conference faster than the charges could follow after an unsuccessful Church trial of Borden P. Bowne, a colleague at Boston.

The core objectors to Dr. Mitchell came from conservatives from Southern California who feared that his attention to "higher criticism" removed God from their Bible; fears confirmed by his advocacy of Social Gospel principles. They held to a literalist reading as they saw it. Their readings were, however, driven by an ideology of social conservatism. Hinckley Gilbert Mitchell believed he was following the evidence where it led — and it led him toward a Social Gospel interpretation. In turn, his "objective reading" was driven by an ideology of "scientific observation".

4 See The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church, Nashville 2008, ¶166.
5 H.G. Mitchell's autobiography was published with the title: For the Benefit of My Creditors, Boston 1922.

Temperance is a model for how exegesis of texts is controlled by concern for contemporary social issues. In the later part of the second great awakening there grew a deep concern regarding the ethical issue of sobriety. From the middle of the century in many circles and with growing common assent, drinking alcohol was seen as a sin because it led to sin. This became a theme of the third great awakening at the end of the century. Yet it seemed on the face of it that the Bible approved the drinking of wine. A plain sense reading of the Gospel accounts noticed that Jesus turned water into wine, then later blessed a cup of wine and gave it to his disciples to drink. So how was it that wine that was made, blessed and given by Jesus could now be the root of sin?

In the later 19th century in America there were strong feelings about the wine question. Leonard Smith, preacher from Illinois in the 1880's:

> Jesus made wine out of water. Perhaps as the water was drawn from the vessels it was made wine. That wine was evidently sweet wine, the unfermented juice of the grape. ... Christ would not use any but new wine. Would he have if the people were intoxicated given them new wine to make them drunker? Blasphemy. Certainly the wine used was a new sweet wine. Nowhere was any other wine used.[6]

The solution was the two-wine theory for interpreting the Bible. In 1848, Moses Stuart of Andover Seminary, the pre-eminent biblical scholar of his day — defined so by the Church that read his work – published his "Scriptural View of the Wine-Question".[7] Stuart was widely known as an authority in both scholarly and popular circles. Histories of biblical scholarship in the United States still call him the "father of scientific biblical studies". He affirmed the two-wine theory for biblical interpretation and this Congregationalist carried the day for Arminean Methodists. Later when he published his "Conscience and the Constitution"[8] supporting Daniel Webster, the Compromise of 1850 and the Fugitive Slave Act, he used his authority as a recognized biblical scholar to speak against the abolitionists.

The two-wine theory says that when the Bible speaks approvingly of wine, it refers to sweet or unfermented grape juice. When the Bible speaks disapprovingly — "Hear, my child, and be wise, and direct your mind in the way. Do not be among winebibbers, or among gluttonous eaters of meat; for the drunkard and the glutton will come to poverty, and drowsiness will clothe them with rags" (Prov 23,19–21 [NRSV]) – it refers to fermented wine. On the basis of this odd exegesis, American

6 Quoted by Westerfield Tucker, Worship (see n. 3), 152.

7 M. Stuart, Scriptural View of the Wine-Question, in a Letter to the Rev. Dr. Nott, President of Union College, New York 1848.

8 M. Stuart, Conscience and the Constitution: With Remarks on the Recent Speech of the Hon. Daniel Webster in the Senate of the United States on the Subject of Slavery, Boston 1850.

Methodist Churches to this day do not serve fermented wine at communion, only grape juice.

The distortion of slavery on American society and social policy shifted readings from a "plain sense" reading that *accepted* the social world as it was, to a "plain sense" reading controlled by a moral outlook *offended* by the social world as it was. This change set the pattern for other readings that engage social issues like temperance. Like abolition, temperance became the context for reading strategies of the Bible. This context for the reading of the Bible changed in a very short period of time. By the mid 1870's, just a decade after the war, the common reading of the Bible in evangelical Protestant churches (like the Methodist denomination) in America included the wisdom that slavery was against God's will — just as was the use of alcohol. All texts were read to comply within this social context because the Bible was assumed to speak univocally.

This common agreement was not available before the Civil War. The Methodist Episcopal Church split North and South on the issue of slavery at the General Conference of 1844. But the split failed to receive the required ratification by the regional conferences. In 1845 the Southern Conferences met and set up the Methodist Episcopal Church South. The Council of Bishops (made up then of only Northern Bishops as the Southern Bishops had withdrawn) responded by declaring the Plan of Separation null because three fourths of the conferences had failed to ratify it. They then named Trustees — all Northerners — to manage and control the real assets of the Church, the publishing division, the schools and seminaries, and all real Church property. The clergy "superannuated and supernumerated" of the South were effectively disenfranchised and separated from any financial support. The Conferences in the South protested. It took a decision of the Supreme Court of the United States to settle the dispute in 1854 declaring the two churches separated with proportional shares in the real assets.[9]

In the years preceding 1844 in an effort to avoid this church split, the leadership of the Methodist Episcopal Church sought to limit debate and quell intense feelings on this issue. In 1836 the Bishops closed the General Conference with a pastoral statement that said in part:

> From every view of the subject which we have been able to take, and from the most calm and dispassionate survey of the whole ground, we have come to the solemn conviction, that the only safe, scriptural, and prudent way for us, both as ministers and people, to take, is wholly to refrain from this agitating subject, which is now

9 This story is told in E.S. Bucke (ed.), The History of American Methodism III: A Divided Church in a Divided Nation, Nashville 1964.

> convulsing the country, and consequently the church, from end to end, by calling forth inflammatory speeches, papers and pamphlets.[10]

The American Methodist Episcopal Church was unable, despite the diplomacy of its Bishops, to remain united. Biblical exegetes still repeat this pattern of seeking to avoid conflict. The denomination reunited north and south in 1939 at the cost of an apartheid system of racial segregation, the legacy of slavery.[11]

This long convoluted story intensifies our awareness of what is at stake in the reading of Phlm and more broadly in the reading of the Bible. People's lives, livelihood and freedom depend on how the text is read. Readers of sacred text thus have a moral obligation to be aware of the social context of their readings and to be held accountable because of the authority given to readings of the Bible by communities of faith.

Presented with a conflict between what one "knows" is a right moral attitude and what the Bible says, readers, especially those who express belief in the authority of the Bible, will find a way to interpret what they read by granting privilege to their own belief set rooted in their own social and historical context. In other words, the social, political, historical, and geographic context of the reader determines to a large extent what the reader understands, focuses on, and remembers in the biblical text. All readers do this. Because this behavior is universal within each cultural milieu, it is invisible to readers, but at times of great social upheaval, this normally covert pattern may be exposed.

Most biblical readers have a blind spot when it comes to our reading of the text. "Plain sense" is defined by readings so obvious the text does not need explanation. But one person's "plain sense" reading may not match the reading another person gives of the same passage from a different time or place. Does the Bible change or does one's viewpoint change or both? By observing that over time ethical conflicts in society — major disagreements over social policy that involve ethical issues – cause shifts in the way one reads the Bible — its "plain sense" meaning — we confirm that contextual interpretation offers insight into a multiplicity of interpretations that are all relevant, purposeful, insightful, meaningful and "true", if not equally just and ethical. Contextual interpretation thus exposes the multiplicity of readings and the multi-vocal testimony of the Bible.

Most readers of the Bible in the United States today agree that slavery in all forms, in all places is ethically wrong, morally repugnant, unjust and not in line with the will of God. All readings of the Bible are nuanced by this common moral agreement. Even if the text is read in its historic context to support slavery, the interpreter will nuance this finding through a strategy that distances the contemporary reader from the context of the first readers.

10 Council of Bishop's "Charge" at the conclusion of the 1836 General Conference, quoted in: The Western Messenger 2 (1837) 20.

11 See F.A. Norwood, The Story of American Methodism: A History of the United Methodists and their Relations, Nashville 1974, 406ff.

This common agreement that slavery is not in line with God's will has not always been so common. Before 1865, the "plain sense" reading of the Bible, especially in the New Testament, found that the Bible did not condemn slavery, but, in fact, endorsed it by giving instruction for how to behave as a slave and as a slave owner. This was the common reading in both North and South. The Bible was widely read as limiting the brutality of slavery, not the institution nor its essential violence. In both the Hebrew Bible and the Greek text, God simply accepted slavery as a part of life, giving instruction on how to manage it. This plain sense reading offered no support for the abolition of slavery, but rather some limitation on abuse.

On May 27, 1850, Representative J.H. Thomas of Tennessee addressed the issue of the admission of California to the union from the floor of the U.S. House of Representatives. The admission of California as a free state was the context of the debate over the "Compromise of 1850". This compromise kept the union together for an additional decade, postponing civil war, at the cost of the Fugitive Slave Act. Representative Thomas spoke to this issue:

> I will not insult the understanding of this House, by proving ... that St. Paul, with all his zeal and all his knowledge and all his piety, knew as much of morality and Christianity, as these self-styled *reformers*, when he sent back a runaway slave to his master, or when he encouraged and countenanced the institution by writing most affectionate counsel and wise rules for masters and servants, (the word here translated servants is by the learned, held to mean slaves.)[12]

For most of the 19th century the traditional background story to Phlm was decisive for defining the biblical position on the question of slavery. Paul sent a runaway slave back to his owner. Paul recognized and honored a Christian leader in Philemon who owned Onesimus, his slave. Paul may have asked for special treatment on behalf of Onesimus, but the fact remains that he sent a slave back to his owner, honoring and approving the institution of slavery.

Representative Thomas' reference to the "learned" is an indicator of his reliance on biblical exegetes of his day. He expresses the common sense reading of the Bible and the Constitution in his day:

12 Cong. Globe, 31st Congress, 1st session 629 (1850). Accessible on the internet through the United States Library of Congress (http://www.loc.gov): http://memory.loc.gov/ ammem/amlaw/lwcg.html (retrieved: 6/4/2009).

> Sir, the abolitionists for a while repelled the idea that slavery was sanctioned, either by the Bible or by the Constitution; but such has been the force of argument upon this subject, that many of their leaders have been forced to admit both, and to sustain their folly, have been compelled to renounce both the Bible and the Constitution as being immoral and unjust.[13]

Representative Thomas accurately describes the state of the discussion about slavery in the 1850's in the United States. The Bible, the Constitution, history, tradition and "manifest destiny" were all read to support the institution of slavery. The common sense reading of the Bible described a morality that asked how slaves should be treated, not whether there should be slaves.

Slavery thus created a distortion that exposed the contextuality of the reading of the text. This is the process by which great moral issues in society expose the deep architecture of the reader's symbolic universe and the assumptions or "fault lines" along which society breaks. The rhetoric of the Declaration of Independence of the United States with phrases like "self evident truths", "created equal" and "unalienable rights" came not from any contemporary reading of the Bible but rather from an Enlightenment Philosophy that read these profound ideas back into the text. From the early 1800's onward, there was a deep and growing sense of conflict between these words that fired the imagination and began the experiment in democracy in the United States with the continuation of the institution of slavery recognized in the Constitution and the biblical text.

The key turning point was the Compromise of 1850. The Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 was part of a series of five federal laws resolving several controversies between the states. This compromise was the result of intense negotiation and political statesmanship that sought to avoid conflict. The narrative of the WGBH Boston production "Africans in America" describes the situation succinctly:

> Henry Clay, U.S. senator from Kentucky, was determined to find a solution ... On January 29, 1850, the 70-year-old Clay presented a compromise. For eight months members of Congress, led by Clay, Daniel Webster, Senator from Massachusetts, and John C. Calhoun, senator from South Carolina, debated the compromise. With the help of Stephen Douglas, a young Democrat from Illinois, a series of bills that would make up the compromise were ushered through Congress.
>
> According to the compromise, Texas would relinquish the land (extending to Santa Fe [*annotation by the author*]) in dispute but, in compensation, be given 10 million dollars — money it would use to pay off its debt to Mexico. Also, the territories of New Mexico, Nevada, Arizona, and Utah would be organized without mention of slavery. (The decision would be made by the territories' inhabitants later, when they applied for statehood.) Regarding Washington, the slave trade would be abolished in the District of Columbia, although slavery would still be permitted. Finally, California would be admitted as a free state. To pacify slave-state politicians, who would have objected to the imbalance created by adding another free state, the Fugitive Slave Act was passed.[14]

13 Ibid.

The Missouri Compromise of 1820 had balanced the number of states, slave and free. The 1850 compromise brought in a new free state — California — balanced by the Fugitive Slave Act. The compromise may have delayed the secession of the Southern States but the Federal Fugitive Slave Act energized the abolitionist movement making secession inevitable. I quote Section 6 of the Fugitive Slave Act at length so the force of the legislation may be understood.

> SEC. 6. And be it further enacted, That when a person held to service or labor in any State or Territory of the United States, has heretofore or shall hereafter escape into another State or Territory of the United States, the person or persons to whom such service or labor may be due, or his, her, or their agent or attorney, duly authorized, by power of attorney, in writing, acknowledged and certified under the seal of some legal officer or court of the State or Territory in which the same may be executed, *may pursue and reclaim such fugitive person, either by procuring a warrant from some one of the courts, judges, or commissioners aforesaid, of the proper circuit, district, or county, for the apprehension of such fugitive from service or labor, or by seizing and arresting such fugitive, where the same can be done without process,* and by taking, or causing such person to be taken, forthwith before such court, judge, or commissioner, whose duty it shall be to hear and determine the case of such claimant in a summary manner; and upon satisfactory proof being made, by deposition or affidavit, in writing, to be taken and certified by such court, judge, or commissioner, or by other satisfactory testimony, duly taken and certified by some court, magistrate, justice of the peace, or other legal officer authorized to administer an oath and take depositions under the laws of the State or Territory from which such person owing service or labor may have escaped, with a certificate of such magistracy or other authority, as aforesaid, with the seal of the proper court or officer thereto attached, which seal shall be sufficient to establish the competency of the proof, and with proof, also by affidavit, of the identity of the person whose service or labor is claimed to be due as aforesaid, that the person so arrested does in fact owe service or labor to the person or persons claiming him or her, in the State or Territory from which such fugitive may have escaped as aforesaid, and that said person escaped, to make out and deliver to such claimant, his or her agent or attorney, a certificate setting forth the substantial facts as to the service or labor due from such fugitive to the claimant, and of his or her escape from the State or Territory in which such service or labor was due to the State or Territory in which he or she was arrested, *with authority to such claimant, or his or her agent or attorney, to use such reasonable force and restraint as may be necessary, under the circumstances of the case, to take and remove such fugitive person back to the State or Territory whence he or she may have escaped as aforesaid. In no trial or hearing under this act shall the testimony of such alleged fugitive be admitted in evidence; and the certificates in this and the first [fourth] section mentioned, shall be conclusive of the right of the person or persons in whose favor granted, to remove such fugitive to the State or Territory from which he escaped,*

14 "Africans in America" (http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part4/4p2951.html [retrieved: 6/4/2009]). The "Africans in America" Web site is a production of WGBH Interactive. See also the linked interview with Eric Foner (http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part4/4i3094.html [retrieved: 6/4/2009]).

and shall prevent all molestation of such person or persons by any process issued by any court, judge, magistrate, or other person whomsoever.[15]

This is, I believe, the context of the reading of Phlm in the United States both in the 19th century and continuing to today. Social policy, politics, and union were in the balance and the compromise made the cost clear. The Fugitive Slave Act made every law enforcement officer and every officer of the court vulnerable to substantial Federally enforced fine and imprisonment if they did not assist in the return of escaped slaves to slave states. All persons of color in the North became vulnerable because due process was not available to a person identified as an escaped slave. A slave was simply property, without rights and without hope of citizenship.

The Fugitive Slave Act was defended in congress and in public by reference to the actions of Paul in Phlm. He converted a run-away slave and sent him back to his master. The addressee of the letter is Philemon. In the letter we hear nothing of Onesimus, his desires, contrition, or intent. Instead it is a letter from an apostle of Christ with his own sense of authority to a slave-holding patron of a house church with his own recognized authority in the community. Those who supported slavery keyed their interpretation of the letter to the addressee of the letter, Philemon.

Thornton Stringfellow, a Virginian and pastor of Stevensburg Baptist Church in Culpeper County, wrote a series of proslavery books and articles. His argument and insight is typical of the period. He says of Phlm:

> Paul little thought, when writing this letter by [sic!] a fugitive slave, and returning him to his Christian master, (who was also a minister of the Gospel,) and most affectionately entreating that Christian master to receive this fugitive again and to forgive him, and binding himself in writing to pay that master for all which this slave had stolen or wrongfully taken from him — that it would prove [sic!] as leaven hid in three measures of meal, until it produced such a sense of what was just, and proper, and right, and Christian-like, as to induce thirteen sovereign States, seventeen hundred and twenty-nine years after that letter was written, to copy his example, and bind themselves in a solemn covenant to imitate him in their future course of national conduct. How painful it is to see the moral power of this inspired example dying away under the sway of infidelity, which repudiates the Bible, and proclaims "freedom and equality", where God in his word teaches there is none.[16]

He argues that it is only in the 19th century that returning another person's property is somehow seen as against the will of God as revealed in the Bible. According to him, in the first century, Paul chose to do

15 American historical documents, legislation, congressional debates and court decisions are available online from the Library of Congress: http://www.loc.gov. I quote the whole section for its sense of authority. The emphasis added.

16 T. Stringfellow, Slavery: Its Origin, Nature, and History, Considered in the Light of Bible Teachings, Moral Justice, and Political Wisdom, New York 1861, 53.

what is right. Now in the 19th century it takes a Federal law to require what should have been obvious.

His literal "plain sense" reading of the text contrasts with alternative readings that also "proofed leaven hidden in three measures of meal."[17] His reading may be contrasted with those whose reading was controlled by their moral vision centered on the great commandment. Jesus is asked: "What is the greatest commandment?" And his two-fold reply puts love of neighbor in the context of a person's love of God. Abolitionists found in the great commandment a love ethic that made all people equal. This egalitarian love ethic was then used to interpret other texts. Since the construct that inter-textual biblical readings must be consistent was given privilege, the Bible was assumed to be internally consistent and the egalitarian love ethic was given priority to control all other readings. This reading goes on to make inferences about the early church linking the worship of idols with slavery:

> Besides, although it is true that the system of slavery, in popular language, is not just condemned by name in the New Testament, yet all the individual parts that compose the whole are expressly forbidden by Christ and his apostles, such as man-stealing, theft, robbery, oppression, separation of parents and children, taking the laborer's toil without equivalent pay, etc.; while, on the other hand, duties are enjoined at direct variance with slavery, such as love to man, reciprocal duties and obligations, marriage, obedience to parents, mercy, justice, etc. And who can read the great avowed end of Christ's coming without seeing in it the death-warrant of slavery in the following words: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind; to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord." Luke iv, 18, 19. Indeed, the sentiments and practice of the primitive Church declare, without doubt, that the emancipation of slaves became general among them, although they did not require absolutely emancipation in all cases, or perhaps in any one individual case; for the principles of slavery were held in the utmost abhorrence by the primitive Christians, and slavery had, therefore, neither defenders nor apologists among them. And the principles upsetting slavery were radical and prominent in the early Church, and the general practice was emancipation as far as they could, while those who were yet legal slaves were treated as *brethren*, and only an opportunity was needed to set them free, as in the case of Onesimus and Philemon; for, in the primitive Church, the wretch that would sell his Christian brethren, or disregard the principles of freedom, would be hooted out of the assembly of the pious, the same as a man who would attempt to sacrifice to idols, and make it a part of divine service among Christians.[18]

17 J.A. Harrill, Slaves in the New Testament: Literary, Social, and Moral Dimensions, Minneapolis 2006, 170–174, describes this "seed or leaven" form of argument used in both pro-slavery and abolitionist argument.

18 C. Elliott, History of the Great Secession from the Methodist Episcopal Church in the Year 1845: Eventuating in the Organization of the New Church, Entitled the "Methodist Episcopal Church, South", Methodist Episcopal Church, Cincinnati, 1855, col. 99f.

There were additional alternative readings (to plain sense literalism) that focused on the letter of Paul to Philemon and insisted on emancipation. Albert Barnes re-reads the story to focus not on the action – that is sending the escaped slave back — but on the ethical request, that is, accept Onesimus as a beloved brother. Arguments against slavery tended to put weight not on Philemon but on Onesimus.

> The principles laid down in this epistle to Philemon, therefore, would lead to the universal abolition of slavery. If all those who are now slaves were to become Christians, and their masters were to treat them 'not as slaves, but as brethren beloved,' the period would not be far distant when slavery would cease.[19]

Barnes goes on to question the background story that Onesimus was a slave. He offers alternative scenarios — apprentice, flesh and blood brother to Philemon, or servant — as if to create "reasonable doubt" concerning the universal background story and therefore call into question conclusions regarding the import of Phlm for the Fugitive Slave Act, again focusing on the status of Onesimus to challenge the traditional claim that Paul's behavior toward Philemon supported or at least did not condemn slavery.

The Episcopal Bishop of Vermont, John Henry Hopkins, chose to stand apart from the rising tide of abolitionism by appealing to the long-term hope of hearts strangely warmed by compassion and Christian sentiment. He looked to end conflict by appealing to the force of the gospel to change hearts over time:

> St. Paul did not constrain Philemon to emancipate his slave Onesimus, but he inculcated such principles as divested slavery of its evils. ... But, by Christianizing the master, the Gospel enfranchised the slave. It did not legislate about mere names and forms, but it went to the root of the evil, it spoke to the heart of man. When the heart of the master was filled with divine grace, and was warmed with the love of Christ, the rest would soon follow.[20]

He avoided responsibility for not calling for immediate justice and emancipation through his reading of text and history:

> If it were a matter to be determined by my personal sympathies, tastes, or feelings, I should be as ready as any man to condemn the institution of slavery; for all my prejudices of education, habit, and social position stand entirely opposed to it. But as a Christian ... I am compelled to submit my weak and erring intellect to the authority of the Almighty. For then only can I be safe in my conclusions, when I know that they are in accordance with the will of Him, before whose tribunal I must render a strict account in the last great day.[21]

He assesses those clergy who he sees as reading the call for the immediate abolition of slavery back into the text as disregarding the plain

19 A. Barnes, An Inquiry into the Scriptural Views of Slavery, Philadelphia 1857, 330.
20 J.H. Hopkins, A Scriptural, Ecclesiastical, and Historical View of Slavery, from the Days of the Patriarch Abraham, to the Nineteenth Century: Addressed to The Right Rev. Alonzo Potter, New York 1864, 213.
21 Ibid., 6f. Quoted by Harrill, Slaves (see n. 17) in his frontispiece.

sense meaning of the Bible. He implies rejection of those who read the Bible to give privilege to freedom and the "rights of man":

> The great majority, in every community, are the creatures of habit, of association, and of impulse; and every allowance should be made for those errors which are committed in ignorance, under a generous sympathy for what they suppose to be the rights of man. I can not, however, make the same apology for those who are professionally pledged to understand and inculcate the doctrines of the Bible. On that class of our public instructors, the present perilous crisis of the nation casts a fearful responsibility. Solemnly bound by their sacred office to preach the Word of God, and to follow Christ and his apostles, as the heralds of "peace and good will to men," they seem to me strangely regardless, on this important subject, of their highest obligations. But it is not for me to judge them. To their own Master, let them stand or fall.[22]

Responding to criticism of his support of Senator Webster and the Compromise of 1850, Moses Stuart (the biblical scholar who supported the use of non-alcoholic wine for communion) wrote "Conscience and the Constitution" in 1850. He also sought to avoid conflict by countering arguments for immediate abolition of slavery. He challenged the claim of a "higher law" that puts the claim of God's unwritten law over that of the state. He emphasized the word "forever" and the force of his emphasis carried well beyond his lifetime.

> What now have we here? Paul, sending back a *Christian* servant, who had run away, to his *Christian* master; and this even when Paul had such an estimation of the servant, that he much desired to keep him as a helper, while he himself was in bonds for the gospel's sake. Yet he would not continue to do this; although it was so desirable to him. He enjoins it upon Onesimus to return to his master *forever*. This last phrase has reference to the fact, that Paul supposed that the sense of Christian obligation, which was now entertained by Onesimus, would prevent him from ever repeating his offence. ... Paul's conscience, then, like his doctrines, was very different from that of the Abolitionists. Paul's conscience *sent back* the fugitive slave; theirs *encourages him to run away*, and then protects him in the misdeed, yea justifies, applauds, glorifies him, as a noble, independent fellow. The conscience of Paul sends back the fugitive, without any obligation at all on the ground of compact; theirs encourages and protects his escape in the face of the most solemn national compact. And all this for *conscience* sake![23]

Some radical abolitionists responded by throwing out all such interpretation and interpreters — the "come-outers" who called for the rejection of the church and the Bible. They did not fear conflict. William Loyd Garrison simply rejected most of the biblical text in favor of the theology of the Declaration of Independence. He coupled the Sermon on the Mount with the Declaration to find the belief that "human beings are created in God's image and thus have a right to absolute freedom."[24] His radical abolitionist stand was based on an *image of God the-*

22 Hopkins, View (see n. 20), 18.
23 Stuart, Conscience (see n. 8), 60f.
24 D. McKanan, Is God Violent? Theological Options in the Antislavery Movement, in: K. Chase/A. Jacobs (eds.), Must Christianity Be Violent? Reflections on History, Practice and Theology, Grand Rapids 2003, 50–68, here: 57.

ology — the belief that the image of God is present in the individual. This viewpoint was exemplified by the resolution of the New Bedford (Massachusetts) African Americans after the passage of the Federal Fugitive Slave Law and the Dred Scott Decision.

> *Resolved* that we neither recognize nor respect any laws for slavery, whether from Moses, Paul, and Taney. We spurn and trample them all under our feet as in violation of the laws of God and the rights of men.[25]

The 1857 Dred Scott decision of the Supreme Court imposed "in perpetuity" upon former slaves and their descendents making them non-citizens forever. Chief Justice Roger B. Taney wrote for the majority:

> The question is simply this: Can a negro, whose ancestors were imported into this country, and sold as slaves, become a member of the political community formed and brought into existence by the Constitution of the United States, and as such become entitled to all the rights and privileges and immunities guarantied [sic!] to the citizen? ... The question before us is, whether the class of persons described in the plea in abatement compose a portion of this people, and are constituent members of this sovereignty? We think they are not, and that they are not included, and were not intended to be included, under the word "citizens" in the Constitution, and can therefore claim none of the rights and privileges which that instrument provides for and secures to citizens of the United States.[26]

The reading of Phlm correlates with the conclusion that slavery was a condition that remained in perpetuity. The Dred Scott decision ratified what Moses Stuart claimed: "He [Paul] enjoins it upon Onesimus to return to his master *forever*."[27] Consequently slavery did not end with the emancipation proclamation and the thirteenth amendment. "*Forever*" carried well into the 20th century through multiple generations of the descendents of former slaves.

In a new study Douglas Blackmon demonstrates the continuation of the pattern of slavery through abuse of law and due process well into the 20th century.[28] This abusive pattern was pernicious and widespread across many states. Former slaves and their descendants were accused and convicted of petty crimes and ordered to pay a small fine. Court costs were added to the fine to create a fee they could not afford. A white landowner would pay the fine and receive the forced servitude for a period of time — often more than a year. This new form of slavery

25 Quoted by Harrill, Slaves (see n. 17), 178.

26 The Dred Scott Decision: Opinion of Chief Justice Taney; With an Introduction by J.H. Van Evrie. Also, an Appendix, Containing an Essay on the Natural History of the Prognathous Race of Mankind, Originally Written for the New York Day-Book by Dr. S.A. Cartwright, New York 1860, 17. (American historical documents, legislation, congressional debates and court decisions are available online from the Library of Congress: http://www.loc.gov.)

27 Stuart, Conscience (see n. 8), 60.

28 D. Blackmon, Slavery by Another Name: The Re-enslavement of Black Americans from the Civil War to World War II, New York 2008.

was profitable because the new owner had no fiduciary responsibility for the slave.

Blackmon documents the benefit large corporations, like US Steel, received from this new form of slavery. Besides having mines and smelters operated by convict/slave labor that, unlike the previous form of slavery, required almost no investment, the corporations used slave/convict labor to break union strikes and keep wages low.

In 1939, in the midst of this new form of slavery and Jim Crow laws that perpetuated it, the Methodist Episcopal Church North, Methodist Episcopal Church South and the Methodist Protestant Church (a smaller group of churches generally located along the Mason-Dixon line) joined together to form the Methodist Church in America. In order to make sure there could not be an African-American Bishop, the son of a former slave, over a free white Church or Conference, Black churches were combined in a non-geographically defined "Central Conference" effectively disenfranchising them. This apartheid system remained in effect until the merger with the Evangelical United Brethren Church in 1968 — 100 years after the Civil War and the 15th amendment.

The pattern of biblical interpretation that maintains to this day took hold: faith in progress. In this sanitized view, slavery was at one time acceptable but is now morally bankrupt. We moderns must simply accept the world situation as it was and understand the difference in the situation today. We can let the past remain the past without comment. From a commentary on Phlm written near the beginning of the 20th century:

> The attitude of the great Christian apostle towards this institution is, naturally, a subject of much interest; and this epistle, which represents that attitude in a practical issue, has therefore figured in most discussions on the moral aspect of slavery ... It is more than questionable whether St. Paul had grasped the postulate of the modern Christian consciousness that no man has the right to own another.[29]

And a century later a commentary written at the beginning of the 21st century:

> We find further proof of Paul's basic attitude to slavery in Philemon when he pulls out all the rhetorical stops not only to protect the life of a runaway slave but to obtain both the slave's freedom and the slave's recognition by his former owner as a brother in Christ to be treated as if he were Paul himself. ... He must start with society as he finds it. Then he attempts not to attack the problem in the public sphere but rather to put the leaven of the gospel into the structures of the Christian community and let it do its work over the course of time, all the while advocating Christian treatment of all members of the household, involving the sort of respect all "persons" deserve even if they play subordinate roles in the structure of the family.[30]

29 M.R. Vincent, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles to the Philippians and to Philemon (ICC), New York 1897, 194.

30 B. Witherington III, The Letters to Philemon, the Colossians, and the Ephesians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Captivity Epistles, Grand Rapids 2007, 29f.

There may be days and times when it is possible to believe that evolutionary change will come in society through the leaven of faithful life or that human culture can wait for enlightenment. But, as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa demonstrated, today is not that day. Reconciliation is not cheap and truth is difficult to hear. The complicity of American biblical scholars in the holocaust known as American slavery has yet to be fully encountered as scholars continue to give privilege to "scientific observation" over ethics. As the Compromise of 1850 recedes into the past, other social issues take our focus away from the continuation of that holocaust among African American males even to this day — a holocaust justified by reading Phlm and accepting the vision of progress that does not yet exist.

There are many ways to look at and measure the continuing effects of slavery in America in social scientific analysis of jobs, wages, real estate ownership and investments. For example, the incarceration rates in the United States correlate with a pattern of the way slaveholding social values continue to have sway. On January 1, 2008, 1 in 100 adults over 18 years old in the United States was incarcerated in jail or prison. But a breakdown of that rate shows that this rate is radically different when divided by race and ethnicity.

An analysis of Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics midyear 2006 reports by the Pew Center on the States[31] shows the rate of incarceration was:

1 in 106 for white males 18 and older — 1% of the population
1 in 15 for black males 18 and older — 7% of the population
1 in 58 for white males 20 to 34 — 2% of the population
1 in 9 for black males 20 to 34 — 11% of the population

Frederick Douglas, former slave and abolitionist leader, distinguished between reader and text. Instead of rejecting the text, he rejected the interpreter:

> The Constitution is pro-slavery because men have interpreted it to be pro-slavery, and practice upon it as if it were pro-slavery. The very same thing, Sir, might be said of the Bible itself; for in the United States men have interpreted the Bible against liberty. They have declared that Paul's epistle to *Philemon* is a full proof for the enactment of that hell-black Fugitive Slave Bill which has desolated my people for the last ten years in that country. They have declared that the Bible sanctions slavery. What do we do in such a case? What do you do when you are told by the slaveholders of America that the Bible sanctions slavery? Do you go and throw your Bible into the fire? Do you sing out, "No union with the Bible!"? Do you declare that a thing is bad because it has been misused, abused, and made a bad use of? Do you throw it way on that account? No! You press it to your bosom all the more closely; you read it all the more diligently; and prove from its pages that it is on the side of liberty — and not on the side of slavery.[32]

31 The Pew Center on the States (ed.), One in 100: Behind Bars in America 2008, Washington, DC 2008. (Pew Center on the States Public Safety Performance Project Report, available on the web at http://www.pewcenteronthestates.org.)

It has taken more than 150 years for Moses Stuart's *"forever"* to be transformed.[33] I conclude that biblical exegetes have a responsibility to speak a word that liberates and brings justice.[34] This is the ethics of biblical interpretation. Without ethical interpretation, the interpreter will continue to be rejected. As an alternative strategy, Walter Brueggemann speaks of "testimony" as the characteristic way in which the Bible speaks:

> "Testimony" has increasing emerged as a practice of "truth from below" that is profoundly democratic and that does not await any authorization from hegemonic powers, epistemological or economic.[35]

Following the linkages, we observe that liberative readings tend to pay attention to the one who has no voice in the text — in this case Onesimus. We also observe that liberative readings appreciate the multivocal testimony of the text — in this case the reader's own context makes complex the simple identification of a "plain sense" reading. Finally we observe that liberative readings nuance ancient context with ethical queries questioning the use of the text — in this case the history of the use of the text and its interpretation.

By tracing the linkages of slavery, the use of Phlm to support the Fugitive Slave Act and the connection to the continuation of new forms of slavery into the 20th century, we observe the power of interpretation to free and to condemn. Like the correlated social issue of temperance, abolition revealed the impact of biblical exegesis and interpretation on people's lives for generations. It matters what we say when we interpret the testimony of the Bible!

32 Quoted by Harrill, Slaves (see n. 17), 178f.

33 March 12, 1850, in his argument against abolition of the slaves, Senator Turney predicted on the floor of the United States Senate that if the trajectory of the abolitionists was carried to its logical conclusion, eventually a person of African descent would be elected to highest office and become "one of us". On January 20, 2009, Barack Obama became the 44th President of the United States.

34 The Feminist Sexual Ethics Project of Brandeis University in its "Beyond Slavery" focus gives serious thought to how American culture and religious communities can be freed from the vestiges of slaveholding values.

35 W. Brueggemann, Testimony to Otherwise: The Witness of Elijah and Elisha, St. Louis 2001, x.

Paul, Power and Philemon. "Knowing Your Place": A Postcolonial Reading

JEREMY PUNT

I. Introduction: Slavery and Postcoloniality

When the slave Olaudah Equiano, a native of West Africa, bought his freedom in the nineteenth century for £40, he became a citizen of London and also an outspoken critic of the slave trade. In the English language that he taught himself mainly from the Bible, Equiano

> ... argued that slavery went against the basic understanding of the doctrine of Atonement, which claimed that people were brought up with the inestimable blood of Christ, and therefore should not end up "as slaves and private property of their fellow human beings."[1]

He interpreted Phlm against the hermeneutical tide of the time, focusing on Paul's appeal that Onesimus should be accepted back as a brother, and, with reference to the early church's penchant for holding all things in common, questioned the notion that Onesimus could any longer be the private property of Philemon. In his attack on slavery — and the holding of private property, too — he employed the Bible, of which he acquired a copy in the form of the King James Version, "the most venerated cultural icon of the British culture of the time"[2], pointing out similarities and differences between his life and the biblical narrative. In his interpretation, he reminds his readers of the Christian moral responsibility towards the vulnerable. Equiano's interpretation of Phlm was one of its first resistant readings, from the inside (the point of view of a slave) — or possibly more accurately, from the underside — since the Enlightenment. In fact, Equiano's reading of Phlm is a good example of a postcolonial interpretation, a reading from the periphery, creating room for a subaltern voice.

1 R.S. Sugirtharajah, Postcolonial Criticism and Biblical Interpretation, Oxford/New York 2002, 53.

2 M.D. Chapman, The Shortest Book in the Bible, ET 118 (2007) 546–548, here: 547.

II. A Postcolonial Reading: Point of Departure and Methodology

Nowadays, postcolonial criticism is mostly employed for the purposes of studying colonial history, with a view to investigating imperialism and hegemony operating in different forms and at different levels. However, as a critical theory and approach, it is also used to explore the complex aftermath of colonialism, which has been shaped by a history of both repression and repudiation. Postcolonial biblical criticism represents a shift in focus, a strategy of reading that often attempts to point out what was missing in previous analyses, but also to rewrite and correct; a postcolonial approach therefore involves restoration and transformation as well as exposé.[3] One way of employing postcolonial criticism in our context, for example, would be to further engage Equiano's interpretation of Phlm, so as to allow the subaltern to speak through a hermeneutic of retrieval or restoration. Another approach, in terms of which the ideological critical roots of postcolonial criticism probably show most clearly, is to rely on the textual politics of this kind of criticism. This involves an ideological-critical reading under the auspices of a hermeneutic of suspicion — and what follows is one example of such a postcolonial reading of Phlm.

The letter that Paul wrote with apostolic authority, albeit with considerable rhetorical skill, to Philemon, the slave owner and apparent community leader, about Onesimus the slave who appealed to Paul and was subsequently converted, lends itself to being read from a postcolonial perspective for a number of reasons.[4] Postcolonial biblical interpretation's focus on relationships of domination and subordination is useful for investigating the wide-ranging, but often interconnected, areas of gender, race, sexuality and economics,[5] and is suitable for interpreting this letter that is bristling with uneven relationships of power. Postcolonial hermeneutics is interdisciplinary in nature and therefore capable of accommodating a diversity of criticisms, approaches and methods,[6] even if, as a mode of critical inquiry, it is strongly aligned with ideological criticism. In short, postcolonial biblical interpretation addresses disproportionate power relationships at the geo-political as well as the subsidiary level, at the level of the empire and the relationship between the imperial and the colonial, but also at the social and personal levels of the powerful ruler and the subaltern, to the extent of investigating relationships and interaction between the centre and the periphery[7] — while at the same time investigating the interrelationship, and also debunking the apparent distinctions and contrasts, between the two.

An appropriate starting point for a postcolonial reading of Phlm is to acknowledge that it was written from the perspective of slaveholders and not from the perspective of a slave[8] — although the letter is *about* Onesimus, it was certainly not written from his perspective.[9] Without

3 The hegemonic context in the first century CE was governed by the power imbalance imposed and maintained by the Roman Empire, but supported by and co-existing with various other social configurations such as patriarchalism and slavery. A postcolonial perspective acknowledges the complexity of cultural and political configurations and structures that form boundaries between the opposing sides of the powerful and the marginalised within a hegemonic context (see H.K. Bhabha, The Location of Culture, London/New York 1994, 173).

4 The terminological bind in which postcolonial theory sometimes finds itself — and possibly we should rather distinguish between (post)colonial and imperial studies (see F.F. Segovia, Decolonizing Biblical Studies: A View from the Margins, Maryknoll 2000, 133–135) — is also present here: e.g., the choice in favour of a postcolonial approach does not presuppose an understanding of Phlm as a call for the manumission of Onesimus or for an "ideological" change in Philemon; neither does it necessarily presuppose a non-authoritarian apostle.

5 Incorporating a wide range of material, F.F. Segovia, Mapping the Postcolonial Optic in Biblical Criticism: Meaning and Scope, in: S.D. Moore/F.F. Segovia (eds.), Postcolonial Biblical Criticism: Interdisciplinary Intersections (BPCol), London/New York 2005, 23–78, esp. 64–70, settles on five defining issues for postcolonial criticism: "postcolonial" as a psychological or social term that is related to consciousness rather than being descriptive of historical conditions; a spatial understanding of imperialism and colonialism as the centre and periphery; the sphere or "terrain" of inquiry as "the analysis of both cultural production and material matrix" (p. 67); a broad referential reach that allows for an understanding of the periphery in its own right and not only in its inevitable relationship with the centre; and imperial-colonial contact as multifarious in nature.

6 Postcolonial criticism "seeks to analyze how the imperial-colonial phenomenon bears on constructions of the other-world, the this-world, and their relationship as advanced in the texts themselves, as construed in the established tradition of readings and readers in the West, and as offered in the contemporary production of readings and readers in the world at large" (ibid., 24). Cultural and postcolonial studies are deliberately not disciplinary, but rather exploratory activities that question the inherent problems of disciplinary studies; they "discipline the disciplines" (G.M. Gugelberger, Postcolonial Cultural Studies, in: M. Groden/M. Kreiswirth [eds.], The Johns Hopkins Guide to Literary Theory & Criticism, Baltimore/London 1994, 581–585, here: 582.)

7 The scope (or range of the field) of postcolonial studies covers, as far as operative breadth is concerned, the wide range of imperial-colonial formations from the empires of antiquity up to the present reach of global capitalism. As for underlying frameworks or foundational contexts, both economic and political environments are taken into account, up to and including those of capitalism and modernity (see Segovia, Criticism [see n. 5], 70–72).

8 Although it must be admitted that "[w]e know that slavery marked the body: through shaved heads, tattoos, fetters, and the visible scars of physical discipline" and "[w]e do not know, however, how slavery marked the person whose body bore these stigmata" (J.A. Glancy, Slavery in Early Christianity, Minneapolis 2006, 29), the letter is written from one perspective of (apostolic) authority to another (slave-owner authority).

9 To read Paul's claims in some of his letters about being a slave of Christ himself, and his appeals to followers of Jesus to become slaves of Christ, as being indicative of a slave's perspective, would be to move beyond the text and context. It is more likely

entering into a long discussion in this regard, it can be said that there are probably few New Testament texts in respect of which the ethics of interpretation are more urgently required than in the case of Phlm.[10] A postcolonial interpretation of Phlm broadens the hermeneutical lens, for example by allowing different exegetical methodologies and advocating a change of style — it allows one to deal with the *socio-historical context of slavery*, in terms of daily social practices, as well as with the letter's literary qualities and understanding of the world; to take account of historical material situated behind as well as in front of the text. Attempts to (re)construct the socio-historical contexts of Paul's letters meet with significant setbacks. Apart from general problems[11] associated with attempts to explain the *relationship between ancient text and context* — bearing in mind that at the best of times, these comprise two different perspectives rather than two separate entities — the Pauline letters present a particular position, often in a polemical or at least prejudiced situation, and are shaped by Paul's politics of othering,[12] reflecting not so much direct contrasts between positions as a rather *hybrid confluence of positions*, brought about, inter alia, by mimicry. Moreover, these letters are set in the agonistic society of the first-century, urban

the power of mimicry and the influence of hybridity that are at issue here. See the discussion below on Paul's appeals with regard to being or becoming a slave of Christ.

10 Although with a different purpose in mind and using another approach, K.J. Vanhoozer, Imprisoned or Free? Text, Status, and Theological Interpretation in the Master/Slave Discourse of Philemon, in: A.K.M. Adam/S.E. Fowl/K.J. Vanhoozer/F. Watson (eds.), Reading Scripture with the Church: Toward a Hermeneutic for Theological Interpretation, Grand Rapids 2006, 51–93, here: 54, proposed to read Phlm "as a treatise on the ethics of interpretation". However, his pursuit of a theological interpretation informed by a theodramatic approach in the end borders on the allegorisation he wishes to avoid (see p. 89), and jettisons, or at best ignores, the material context of the letter, reducing it to a matter of humility in accepting one's social status!

11 There are a number of reasons for this difficulty, some of which are not restricted to Pauline texts, such as the general difficulty in connecting language or linguistic signifiers or the narrative/epistolary world to social or historical "reality" or the actual signified elements (see M.M. Mitchell, John Chrysostom on Philemon: A Second Look, HThR 88 [1995] 135–148, here: 135). Once these connections are made, further difficulties are posed by the referential difference between ancient and modern versions of similar-sounding entities (e.g., household; father-son relationship; slavery, etc.; see C. Frilingos, "For My Child, Onesimus": Paul and Domestic Power in Philemon, JBL 119 [2000] 91–104, here: 93f.); the issue of perspective and ideology, or the involvement of the social location of both author and reader and their respective communities; the problems associated with ancient texts and their conventions, style and rhetorical appeal; the danger of mirror-reading in polemical texts (see J.M.G. Barclay, Mirror-Reading a Polemical Letter: Galatians as a Test Case, JSNT 31 [1987] 73–93) such as the Pauline letters; and so on.

12 See J. Punt, A Politics of Difference in the New Testament: Identity and the Others in Paul, in: C. Breytenbach/J. Thom/J. Punt (eds.), The New Testament Interpreted: Essays in Honour of Bernard C. Lategan (NT.S 124), Leiden 2006, 199–125.

Mediterranean world. The history of interpretation further provides ample evidence that Paul's interpreters mostly aligned themselves with his position,[13] often eliding other active and submerged voices in the text.

In terms of a postcolonial approach to Phlm, more is at issue than Paul's position and intentions; and the possible effect of the letter in respect of Philemon's convictions and behaviour as a "Christian" slaveholder is not the only concern. This does not mean that it is not also important to discern these aspects; but a postcolonial perspective is, firstly, also intensely interested in the subaltern, the voice which has been drowned out, not only in the letter, but also in subsequent hermeneutical discourse through the ages. To be sure, this is not about an artificially constructed historical image of a first-century slave named Onesimus; rather, it is all about hermeneutical perspective.

> The key function of postcolonial criticism is to register how the knowledge we construct and impart as academics is structured by the absence, difficulty or impossibility of representation of the subaltern. This is to recognize, however, the fundamental inadequacy of that knowledge and the institutions that contain it, and therefore the need for a radical change in the direction of a more democratic and non-hierarchical social order.[14]

Secondly, a postcolonial hermeneutics is interested in the relationships of power and domination, and their effects. Thus, postcolonial studies illustrate how the positions of coloniser and colonised or powerful and powerless were constructed and linked to one another, even though their interaction was hardly conducted on equal terms. Indeed, postcolonial biblical criticism can ultimately assist in arriving at a proper understanding of the effects and implications of such interaction and its resultant hybridity.

As further evidence of the value of postcolonial biblical criticism, it should already be clear that, on the one hand, this type of criticism (also) operates with a constructive edge — acknowledging that it is the case but making no excuses for it. On the other hand, a postcolonial approach is not about proving the ineffectiveness of other hermeneutical approaches; rather it aims to "analyze the major mistakes of the

13 This trend probably reveals as much about the interpreters' social location and privilege (whether political, ecclesial, economic, etc., or a combination of these) as it reveals about their assumptions and positions regarding the nature of the Bible as authoritative or normative or foundational text — and of course, also about their hermeneutical stances. E. Schüssler Fiorenza, Paul and the Politics of Interpretation, in: R.A. Horsley (ed.), Paul and Politics: Ekklesia, Israel, Imperium, Interpretation. Essays in Honor of Krister Stendahl, Harrisburg 2000, 40–57, refers to "malestream" interpreters identifying themselves with (the letters of) Paul, and also identifying Paul too closely with the communities he addressed.

14 Sugirtharajah, Criticism (see n. 1), 201.

past" while building "bridges for future dialogue."[15] Since in Phlm, slavery is not simply a theme, as it is, for example, in 1Cor, but rather the determining context, informing the framework *and* gist of the letter, and since "[s]lavery is one of the most extreme forms of the relation of domination, approaching the limits of total power from the viewpoint of the master, and of total powerlessness from the viewpoint of the slave"[16], a postcolonial approach to this document is eminently suitable.[17]

III. Roman Empire and Slavery: A Slave Society

1. Slavery as a Pervasive First-Century Social Institution

First-century slavery in the Mediterranean area[18] is difficult to pin down under generalised categories, since slavery was not restricted to a social class or status, and nor did slaves constitute a single, specific social class, with a particular, clearly definable status. Moreover, the lives of slaves were determined by their owners, and the owners' whims. Although some slaves may have had a low status, they may nevertheless have had a disproportionately high class indication, for example as result of being the slave-agent of a high-status person. Referring to oneself as the slave of such a person could then be regarded as a claim to prestige, rather than as an act of humility.[19] Generally speaking, however, slavery was not regarded as a desirable state of being, and where it became a necessity, it was tolerable only on the basis of the prospect of its early cessation — and even in such a case, the former slave was left in the position of a "freed" person, which mostly resulted in his or her dependence upon the former owner turned patron, with limited claim to social position and the privileges available to (especially male) free persons.[20]

For modern people, first-century slavery is a difficult concept to understand, given today's sensibilities regarding the value and dignity of human life, and since the structure of modern society, with its accompanying norms and values, is at odds with institutionalised slavery. The claim that "[t]he operation of the Roman imperial order at every level thus depended on the labor of these dishonoured and inferior beings, these 'speaking tools'"[21], requires attention with a view to understanding the mechanics of such a society or imperialist order. Unlike the more recent colonialist race-based slavery and the current modern-day (largely) economically-based "slavery" (with and without inverted commas!), the sources for slavery in antiquity were not confined to children born of slave mothers, or prisoners obtained through kidnapping and war booty; they also included exposed infants and the self-sale of free persons.[22] Slavery in biblical times was consequently a widely diverse, but at the same time pervasive institution,[23] with people from all walks of life being enslaved, resulting in a situation where

15 M.W. Dube, "Woman, What Have I To Do With You?" A Post-Colonial Feminist Theological Reflection on the Role of Christianity in Development, Peace and Reconstruction in Africa, in: I.A. Phiri/K.R. Ross/J.L. Cox (eds.), The Role of Christianity in Development, Peace and Reconstruction, Nairobi 1996, 244–258, here: 248f.

16 A.D. Callahan, The Letter to Philemon, in: F.F. Segovia/R.S. Sugirtharajah (eds.), A Postcolonial Commentary on the New Testament Writings (BPCol 13), London/New York 2007, 329–337, here: 330, refers to slavery as "the most important power relation of production under Roman imperialism".

17 Three aspects of slavery distinguish it from other forms of extreme domination: socially, slavery involves the use or threat of violence on the part of one person towards another; psychologically, it involves the ability to convince other persons to change their understanding of their interests and circumstances; and culturally, it entails the normalisation of enforced duty — "the means of transforming force into right, and obedience into duty" (O. Patterson, Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study, Cambridge, MA 1982, 1f.). As Patterson puts it, slavery was social death!

18 Phlm contains no explicit quotations from the Hebrew Bible, but Deut 23,16f. may be regarded as the Jewish setting for handling slavery. There is, however, no indication that Onesimus was a Jewish slave; it is more likely that he was a Gentile who had converted under Paul's tutelage and who was now being returned by Paul to his owner Philemon, an action prohibited by Deut 23,16f. See G.K. Beale/D.A. Carson (eds.), Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament, Grand Rapids/Nottingham 2007, 918.

19 See D.B. Martin, Slavery as Salvation: The Metaphor of Slavery in Pauline Christianity, New Haven 1990; see also C. Osiek, Family Matters, in: R.A. Horsley (ed.), A People's History of Christianity 1: Christian Origins, Minneapolis 2005, 201–220, here: 209.

20 In all of these discussions, it is important to distinguish between various social locations; and two examples in this regard are important to keep in mind here: firstly, Roman slavery and Greek or Eastern slavery displayed certain differences; and secondly, rural slaves, and especially those who worked in the mines were exposed to circumstances that were vastly different from those faced by household slaves in the cities: see S. Briggs, Paul on Bondage and Freedom in Imperial Roman Society, in: Horsley, Paul (see n. 13), 110–123, here: 111f.

21 C.J. Martin, The Eyes Have It: Slaves in the Communities of Christ-Believers, in: Horsley, Origins (see n. 19), 221–240, here: 221. Slaves were also referred to in first-century documents as "speaking tools" (*instrumenta vocale* [Varro, Rust. 1.17.1]).

22 Pointing out the Roman Empire's involvement in sourcing slavery is important: The enslavement of conquered people on a large scale by the Roman Empire for the purpose of fulfilling the latter's "ambitious empire-building aspirations" was accompanied by the devastation and impoverishment of the peasantry and their eventual displacement to the large latifundia. Those events followed in the wake of Roman military campaigns (see ibid., 225).

23 "The invisibility and marginalization of slaves in the reconstruction of Greek and Roman social history, in which their presence was pervasive, is a paradox *par excellence*" (ibid., 224). M.I. Finley, Ancient Slavery and Modern Ideology (Exp. ed., ed. by B.D. Shaun), Princeton 1998, 79, distinguishes between slave societies and societies in which there were slaves, arguing that the former were not present in all areas of what became known as the Roman Empire.

slaves were found at all levels of society: from the hard-suffering slaves in mines to the household slaves whose daily lives were comparatively less demanding, to the slaves who held executive positions as managers of huge agricultural estates.[24] Although slavery was not a generally favoured option in a context where freedom was a highly valued state of life, people in some cases nevertheless voluntarily took up slavery as the perceived only remaining option. "[T]here was no action or belief or institution in Greco-Roman antiquity that was not one way or another affected by the possibility that someone involved *might* be a slave."[25]

In New Testament times, slavery was thus not merely an aspect of Graeco-Roman society; the Roman Empire as such was largely a slave society.[26] As an institution, slavery was the "permanent, violent domination of natally alienated and generally dishonoured persons": the constant threat and actual infliction of violence, natal alienation and loss of honour as the characteristic elements of slavery meant it was "social death"[27]. Of all the many and varied ways in which the Roman Empire exerted its power and control over the peoples of the first-century Mediterranean area, institutionalised slavery was the "most extreme form of displacement"[28]. Slaves belonged to the ancient households of their owners, and comprised part of these households along with the members of the family. They participated in the religious celebrations and rituals of the house. However, they were not considered part of the family; their status, welfare, and even their very existence depended on the benevolence of their owners.

> We cannot forget the basic brutality of the system, in which human persons were deprived of a past and future, unable to claim natal family or legitimate offspring, and answerable with their bodies in a brutally exploitative system that early Christians did little to alleviate.[29]

Slavery as an institution was maintained by the threat and use of violence, including punishment, torture and even execution.[30] Although "the history of interpretation underemphasizes the somatic dimensions of slavery, including the sexual availability of the slave body and the

24 Slaves nevertheless always remained corporally vulnerable. See Glancy, Slavery (see n. 8), 44, who refers to incidental cruelty suffered by domestic slaves, although the indignities that they generally suffered paled in significance in comparison to the terror that slaves experienced in the mines.
25 Finley, Slavery (see n. 23), 65.
26 See Briggs, Paul (see n. 20), 110.
27 Patterson, Slavery (see n. 17), 13; see Martin, Eyes (see n. 21), 228.
28 R.A. Horsley, Introduction, in: id. (ed.), Paul and the Roman Imperial Order, Harrisburg 2004, 1–23, here: 12.
29 Osiek, Matters (see n. 19), 211.
30 See ibid., 206.

vulnerability of the slave body to corporal abuse"[31], such considerations[32] cannot summarily be dismissed in the interpretation of either the New Testament in general or Phlm in particular, especially since the reasons for and conditions of Onesimus' enslavement are not clear, with the possible exception of the likelihood of his deployment as a household slave. However, a factor that is possibly even more important for the purposes of our discussion, is the effect of the social location of New Testament authors and the communities they represented and addressed, within a culture so thoroughly informed by and built around slavery. In a word, the disregard of the ideological setting of slavery could jeopardise the interpretation of Phlm.

2. Slavery as an Ideological Setting: Bodies, Authority, Power, Obedience

The primary element that determined the circumstances and experiences of slaves was their bodiliness, their corporeality,[33] which ranged from their vulnerability to restraint, and the likelihood of abuse, to gender-specific dimensions of their servitude.[34] Although first-century slavery had many faces, slaves were used, inter alia, as a safe and benign sexual outlet throughout antiquity, since the sexual use of male and female slaves[35] for their owners' pleasure was deemed to constitute a fair and just practice in Graeco-Roman society.[36] The effect of the dual system of slaveholder patriarchy, which implied that gender was constructed through sexuality, and that the sexual availability of slaves was an intrinsic part of their inferior status was that sexuality was used to uphold a hierarchical order in society, and to indicate the legal and so-

31 Glancy, Slavery (see n. 8), 154.
32 In the New Testament, 1Pet 2,18–21, for example, it is clearly demonstrated that a slave's wrongdoing incurred corporal punishment.
33 Generally, slaves were answerable with and in their bodies in three ways: corporal punishment, which was mostly meted out to slaves only; the provision of testimony or evidence necessarily under torture; and being sexually available to their owners (see Finley, Slavery [see n. 23], 94–96).
34 See Glancy, Slavery (see n. 8), 29.
35 "Although some matrons exploited their male slaves sexually, constraints on the sexuality of freeborn women rendered this practice less acceptable than the sexual exploitation of male or female slaves by male slaveholders" (Glancy, Slavery [see n. 8], 21), mainly because of the different outcomes when children were born from such liaisons: Children born of slave women increased the owner's stock, whereas the birth of a child as a result of a liaison between a male slave and a free woman would wreak havoc in the household, and possibly lead to divorce; the child would be illegitimate although freeborn. For more discussion of the double vulnerability of female slaves, see C. Osiek/M.Y. MacDonald/J.H. Tulloch, A Woman's Place: House Churches in Earliest Christianity, Minneapolis 2006, 95–117.
36 See Glancy, Slavery (see n. 8), 21–24, 144.

cial status of people.[37] The corporal vulnerability of slaves meant that slaves, male and female, were primarily bodies and had no dignity as persons; they were there for the pleasure of others, and were bought and sold as bodies. In short, "[t]he slave body was subject to insult, abuse, and penetration," and was "available for the slaveholder's use as a surrogate."[38]

Institutionalised slavery and its pervasive character had a considerable impact on the character of the inhabitants of the Graeco-Roman world,[39] although it should be borne in mind that this impact may have been present in ways that might not always appear to be immediately associated with the practices of slavery.[40] In other words, in a slaveholding society (culture), in which people's characters and habits were moulded by lifetimes of command and obedience, young and old became habituated to power; and it is thus reasonable to incorporate its impact on the emerging structures and ideology of early churches into the discussion.

> In tracing the impact of the slaveholding culture on the church that grew up in its midst, therefore, one might well examine the ethos of the body in the first centuries of Christianity.[41]

While, conversely, a particular ethos of the body may have sustained a slaveholding culture, the point is really that in the first century CE, the two could not be divorced from one another.

Slaves served as sexual surrogates in households, where female slaves, in particular, not only had to comply with sexual demands that a married woman could effectively refuse to fulfil, but were also often required to be the general sexual stand-ins for their matrons when the latter, for whatever reason, opted out of sexual relations with their husbands.[42]

37 See Briggs, Paul (see n. 20), 110–123.

38 Glancy, Slavery (see n. 8), 93.

39 "[T]he master-slave relationship cannot be divorced from the distribution of power throughout the wider society in which both master and slave find themselves" (Patterson, Slavery [see n. 17], 35).

40 See Glancy, Slavery (see n. 8), 152.

41 Ibid., 154. Despite increasing interest in asceticism in early Christianity as a way of disciplining the body and guarding its integrity through the rejection of sexual activity, foods, refinements, sleep, pleasure and the like, slaves were not in the picture. This can partly be attributed to the indignities and deprivations that (some) slaves had to endure through no choice of their own (and would slaves have recognised these activities as such [asceticism] in any case?), as well as to the fact that many slaves were in the opposite predicament: that of not being able to refuse the sexual attention of their slaveholders, and also that of being reliant on food and rest in order to cope with their workload so as to avoid punishment (see ibid., 154f.).

42 See ibid., 21–24.

> In a world where householders treated their slaves as recalcitrant bodies to be restrained by corporal corrections, ascetic Christians emphasized the discipline and the control of their own bodies. Just as householders regarded the control of unruly slave bodies to be a standard part of household management, ascetic Christians regarded the control of their own unruly bodies as a necessary dimension in the management of their spiritual houses.[43]

In other words, just as slaves were perceived and treated as bodies, the body was to be treated as a slave in the context of the early church (see 1Cor 9,27)![44]

The impact of a slaveholding society is also evident in the writings of the New Testament authors, who not only presupposed the presence of slavery but clearly did not consider it morally unacceptable;[45] in fact, some authors emphasised the undeniable importance of slaves and, especially, the regulation of their proper conduct — submission to the authority of slaveholders — as a function of a decent and proper ordering of Christian life. In Col 3,22–4,1 and Eph 6,5–9 the slaveholders were addressed together with an indication of responsibilities and obligations, ostensibly to maintain the stability of the household through the fair treatment of slaves; however, in 1Pet 2,18–21 slaves are instructed to submit even to excessive and abusive authority. Moreover, in the Pastoral Epistles (see 1Tim 6,1–2a; Tit 2,9f.), in which there are clear indications that slaveholders were part of the communities being addressed (see 1Tim 6,1–2a), only the slaves were instructed in respect of their duties and responsibilities.

43 Glancy, Slavery (see n. 8), 155. The classical topos of slaves being characterised by a lack of self-control is reminiscent of the modernist racial theory: "[I]t is manifest that want of self-control distinguishes the character of the Negroes" (Hegel in S. Kelley, Racializing Jesus: Race, Ideology and the Formation of Modern Biblical Scholarship [BiLi], London/New York 2002, 2).

44 Space does not allow for much argument here, but it is significant that the body is often used as metaphor for the church in Paul's letters. While the source of the slaves' dishonour was their bodies, since a slave "conceived as a sōma, or body, was nonetheless unable to guard her or his body from insult or violation" (Glancy, Slavery [see n. 8], 28), Paul's appeals in, e.g., 1Cor 3,16f. comprise pleas to keep the church as a body holy or pure, as the temple of God. Briggs, on the other hand, sees the metaphorical use of slavery as part of the discourse of evasion:

> The raw exercise of power, the display of the unlimited subjugation of the slave, can only be sustained if it is embedded in a broader field of social relations that stubbornly resists the coercive character of slavery (Briggs, Paul [see n. 20], 110).

45 Claims that Jesus' teaching about the dignity of all people in the end destabilised the dehumanisation of slaves evidently ignore the importance of the trope of slavery in his teachings (see Glancy, Slavery [see n. 8], 145). Another difficulty lies in determining when reference is being made to a slave (see the two accounts of the Roman military official in Matt 8,5–13 and Lk 7,1–10), and in some cases, in the uncertainty as to whether the afflicted person is a child or slave.

IV. Paul, the Letter to Philemon, and Claims to Identity and Power

Criticism of Paul's failure to address the system of slavery cannot simply be dismissed as anachronistic idealism, since slavery tied in with the Roman imperial order, as well as with the Empire's main building blocks consisting of the emperor cult, the place and role of the *pater familias* and the patronage system.[46] And once again, these are not merely the construed elements of a history of ideas; in actual fact, they pervaded the whole material and certainly also the ideological domain of the first century CE. It was from within this first-century material context of slaveholding that Paul directed a letter to Philemon. In the opinion of some, this letter does not address the context of slavery, at least not directly. If it addresses the issue at all, it does so, at best, metaphorically. One particular challenge was posed by David Callahan,[47] who argued that Philemon was not Onesimus' owner but his (estranged) brother, as an explanation for Phlm 16, in which Philemon is exhorted to accept Onesimus as a brother, and no longer as a slave. But while this argument does justice to a context in which slaves were regarded as aliens rather than as kin, it (conversely, and probably erroneously) also contains the implicit assumptions that estranged relatives could therefore simply be considered or called slaves.[48] Of all possible contexts that can be applied to Phlm, the most apparent and appropriate still seems to be that of slavery.

A few important shifts stand out in the history of the interpretation of Phlm.[49] For example, Norman Petersen's[50] socio-rhetorical work on

46 Briggs, Paul (see n. 20), 110–123, refers to slavery and gender as a dual system; see also P. Kwok, Postcolonial Imagination and Feminist Theology, Louisville 2005, 87.

47 A.D. Callahan, Paul's Epistle to Philemon: Toward an Alternative *Argumentum*, HThR 86 (1993) 357–376; id., John Chrysostom on Philemon: A Response to Margaret M. Mitchell, HThR 88 (1995) 149–156.

48 See the criticism raised by Glancy, Slavery (see n. 8), 171 n. 94, and Mitchell, Chrysostom (see n. 11), 135–148. Callahan's subsequent argument that the absence of a language "of myths of alterity, pretensions of entitlement, claims to rights, threats of coercion" (id., Letter [see n. 16], 336; see also 333) augurs in favour of the interpretation of Phlm as an attempt to heal the rift between Philemon and Onesimus as estranged brothers is difficult to sustain. In my reading, as shown below, Paul's rhetoric — however diplomatic and subtle it may be — in fact represents a discourse informed by otherness, assertions of claims and rights, and compulsion through threats. In addition, even if Callahan's identification of Paul's style in Phlm is accepted as accurate, it does not necessarily follow that the presence of elements that are contrary to those generally used in the context of slavery/colonialist discourse is indicative of the absence of such discourse.

49 See, e.g., J.A. Harrill, Slaves in the New Testament: Literary, Social and Moral Dimensions, Minneapolis 2006, 6–16; and J.M.G. Barclay, Paul, Philemon, and the Dilemma of Christian Slave Ownership, NTS 37 (1991) 161–186, here: 163–165, for a brief review of some important theories regarding the interpretation of Phlm and the position of Onesimus in particular.

Phlm challenged deeply-held convictions regarding the intent and purpose of this short letter, as well as the nature of its contents. In another interpretative swing, the commonly accepted assumption that Paul is interceding on behalf of a runaway slave[51] staring death in the face has been challenged.[52] Instead, the evidence of a trilateral option which was available to slaves has been put forward as more convincing explanation of Paul's role in mediating the relationship between Philemon and Onesimus. In terms of this option, a slave could namely appeal to a friend, or preferably a patron,[53] of his owner in the case where the slave feared punishment. It is possible that this is why Onesimus had looked Paul up in prison, whose intervention he sought to restore him in Philemon's favour. In that case, Onesimus was not so much a runaway or *fugitivus*, as a slave appealing to Paul as his patron for possible intervention on his behalf with Philemon. If this is so, then Onesimus made use of Paul as an *amicus domini*, believing that Paul, as a friend, and possibly in an even greater capacity (as an apostle?), would be in a position to successfully appeal on his behalf to Philemon, so that the relationship between Onesimus and Philemon could be restored. According to contemporary authors (jurists) such as Proculus (Dig. 21.1.17.4), slaves could legitimately appeal to a friend of their owner, and even physically approach such a person without the danger of being branded a *fugitivus*, especially since such an action could be interpreted to be in the owner's long term economic interest. In such cases, if slaves appealed to someone of higher status or social rank than their offended owner, they increased their chances of a successful restoration of relationships. Despite Paul's imprisonment, his considerable power at both the level of friendship and that of religion made him a good choice to act as intercessor on behalf of Onesimus.[54]

50 N.R. Petersen, Rediscovering Paul: Philemon and the Sociology of Paul's Narrative World, Philadelphia 1985.

51 See Barclay, Paul (see n. 49), 164.

52 See, e.g., P. Lampe, Keine "Sklavenflucht" des Onesimus, ZNW 76 (1985) 135–137; B.M. Rapske, The Prisoner Paul in the Eyes of Onesimus, NTS 37 (1991) 187–203.

53 See Osiek et al., Place (see n. 35), 195–198; and J.K. Chow, Patronage in Roman Corinth, in: R.A. Horsley (ed.), Paul and Empire: Religion and Power in Roman Imperial Society, Harrisburg 1997, 104–125, on patronage in the early Roman Empire, which can be described as the grease that kept the wheels of the Roman economy, society, and politics turning. In fact, along with military conquest, the rhetoric of peace, prosperity and concord, as well as the imperial cult, the Roman Empire in the first century CE was also propped up, to a large extent by the system of patronage (see also R.A. Horsley, Rhetoric and Empire — and 1 Corinthians, in: id., Politics (see n. 13), 72–102, here: 87–90). On patronage as a way of integrating the empire, see C.B. Kittredge, Corinthian Women Prophets and Paul's Argumentation in 1 Corinthians, in: Horsley, Politics (see n. 13), 103–109, here: 107.

54 See Rapske, Prisoner (see n. 52), 196–198, 203.

Amidst the letter's series of rhetorical claims and counterclaims, one objective of a postcolonial reading of Phlm, amongst others, would be that of discerning the role and voice of Onesimus, however tentatively and prudently, especially in view of the fact that his "voice" was all but drowned out by Paul's overpowering rhetoric (and implicitly, by Philemon's voice as well). In a classic case of a clash between slaveholder morality and slave morality, only the morality of the slaveholder, who harbours both the stereotypical assumptions about slaves as well as the usual societal expectations of slaves, is heard. Attempting to understand agency amidst indications that slaves and others of low status were involved from the start in communities of the followers of Jesus,[55] is complicated by the fact that the New Testament documents present only the voices of the slave-owners. Nevertheless, in terms of a postcolonial approach, it soon emerges that the crucial issue with regard to the Onesimus–Philemon situation was hardly Onesimus' potential freedom, but rather the variety of relations of domination and subjugation, and the exercising of power and rhetorical manipulation. In the following section, the complex power relations simultaneously operative at different levels in Phlm are re-read in terms of postcolonial criticism's concern with the way in which power constructs and formats identity, in conjunction with difference, mimicry and hybridity.

1. Identity and Difference: The Slave Onesimus

In the Roman world of the first century, slavery was built upon the erasure of identity. Slaves were uprooted or deracinated outsiders, because they were deprived of kinship, the most elementary of social bonds.[56] Although slave systems varied over time in respect of the degree of fluidity in the status of slaves, in terms of a cross-cultural perspective "outsider" status was always intrinsic to the situation of the slave.[57] "Natal alienation" or the slave's deprivation of kinship ties — either ascending or descending[58] — rendered complete the outsider status of

55 Pliny the Younger's reference (Epist. 10.96) to his interrogation of two slave women who were deaconesses or ministers in early Christian churches corroborates this, as do Paul's claims about the composition of the Corinthian church (1Cor 1,16–28); see Glancy, Slavery (see n. 8), 130.

56 See Finley, Slavery (see n. 23), 75. Paternal links of slaves were often not acknowledged; and while maternal links were mentioned in legal documents, they had no legal consequences, but merely served the purpose of identifying the slave, and were recorded in the same way as the slave's other distinguishing features, such as body markings. Slave mothers and their children could be disposed of separately, and could thus be sold or willed to different households (see pp. 73–77; Glancy, Slavery [see n. 8], 18).

57 See Glancy, Slavery (see n. 8), 94.

58 See Patterson, Slavery (see n. 17), 5–8, 35–76.

slaves.[59] The notion that "what is good for the goose is good for the gander" is, of course, not a valid axiom in the context of unequal social relationships; and it certainly was not applicable in the first century CE. For example, whereas certain actions would be regarded as perfectly acceptable behaviour for slaveholders, a vastly different opinion often prevailed in respect of similar actions by slaves.[60] Different moral standards for slaveholders and slaves respectively had a bearing on the evaluation of their social actions, including their behaviour in the household and in public.

In Phlm, Paul re-established and reinforced difference through the othering of Onesimus and the establishment of himself as the ultimate patron of both slave and slave-owner. While Paul couched his authority in ambiguous and cautious language, making his claims to authority clear without causing embarrassment, in Phlm 10, he established himself as Onesimus' father in one fell swoop. Ancient authors distinguished between the loving discipline administered by a father[61] to a son and the harsh discipline reserved for slaves, a difference that fell away under Christian influence.[62] But the question remains as to whether this claim (regarding Paul having become Onesimus' father) would necessarily have implied that this relationship "supersede[d] any slavish role Onesimus may have served in Philemon's household", and that Paul now "possessed a greater right to the slave than the slaveholder"[63]. At best, Paul claimed both Philemon and Onesimus as sons, without forcing the issue of equality between the two of them, but rather insisting upon his own patronage.

59 The majority of freed slaves were Junian Latins (slaves who had been informally freed by their Roman citizen owners) and were therefore still outsiders in relation to dominant society; their children were freeborn but not citizens, and upon their death, their estates reverted back to their former owners, leaving their own children no inheritance rights. However, in Roman society, "[a]long with Junian Latins who satisfied the conditions for recognition as citizens, formally manumitted slaves were automatically granted citizenship" (Glancy, Slavery [see n. 8], 95).

60 Such double standards are found in the second-century author Athenaeus's Deipnosophists 6.262.d, in which a slave's voice is heard bemoaning both the wanton waste of food and other excesses at the banquet table; yet slaves are warned not to help themselves to the leftovers for fear of being seen as "impudent gluttons" (Glancy, Slavery [see n. 8], 135) — thus the moral standards for the free and the slaves were clearly different.

61 In the first century, children were believed to be stubborn and in need of discipline including physical punishment, and, regarding boys especially, it was believed that strictness and punishment would cultivate self-disciplined adults capable of enduring pain and hardship. Severe beatings of children and slaves were nevertheless frowned upon (see Osiek, Matters [see n. 19], 206f.).

62 See ibid., 207.

63 Frilingos, Child (see n. 11), 101.

Paul's remark about Onesimus having possibly wronged Philemon, or possibly being in debt to Philemon (Phlm 18),[64] may be ascribed to the stereotypes that were as prevalent in slaveholder and slave moralities as in any other context in the first century. Slaves were often expected to exhibit attitudes such as industriousness, loyalty, humility, patience, and even friendliness, while they were equally often, and typically, accused of being lazy, untrustworthy, dishonest, deceitful and — especially — of being prone to steal.[65]

> Given ancient stereotypes about the inherent character of the slave — at best faithful, most often childlike and incompetent, at worst dangerously hostile — the harmonious and effective management of the slaveholding establishment emerges as a dangerous challenge.[66]

Slaveholders therefore took measures that ranged from coaxing slaves to display the required behaviour, to basically beating them until they complied and exhibited what was considered an appropriate slave morality.[67] "What Nietzsche identified as 'slave morality' (submission, obedience, respect), ancient writers presented as 'slaveholder morality', the attitudes that slaveholders desired to inculcate in the enslaved bodies in their households."[68]

64 Whether Phlm 18 is an indication of some actual wrongdoing on Onesimus' part, either at an earlier stage or at the time of his running away (e.g., stealing money for the purpose of funding his runaway trip), or whether it is a reference to his having left the household of Philemon, or merely a stereotypical embellishment by Paul, is difficult to determine.

65 The accusation of theft was common in Jewish contexts, with the rabbis asserting that "[a]ll slaves are assumed to steal" (Glancy, Slavery [see n. 8], 134); in Graeco-Roman contexts Roman jurists assumed that runaway slaves stole both their own bodies and their owners' property, and in Apuleius' Golden Ass, fleeing slaves take along their owners' possessions. This stereotype has long influenced the common understanding of Phlm 18–19a, namely that Onesimus had stolen from Philemon when he left. Another facet of assumptions about slaves' theft includes the possible reasons for their doing so. These may vary from a survival strategy for self or family to self-enrichment or even resistance — often depending on the slave's social location. Again, sources indicating the views of slaves on this matter are lacking (see ibid., 133f.). See, e.g., the stereotypical instructions to slaves in Tit 2,9f. not to talk back or steal, indicating that in terms of a slaveholder's morality, the contribution made by slaves to the building up of the church did not occur through the use of their positive virtues, but through controlling what were regarded as their ingrained vices. Such moral and intellectual deficiencies were also ascribed to lower-class free people by the Roman aristocracy, who nevertheless maintained the social distinction between free poor citizen and slave (Briggs, Paul [see n. 20], 121).

66 Glancy, Slavery (see n. 8), 137. The ancient proverb was that the householder had as many enemies as he had slaves (Sen., Epist. 47.5); see Glancy, ibid.

67 The household codes of Col and Eph, and similar instructions in the Pastoral Epistles and 1Pet, reflect a slaveholder morality rather than a slave morality, since these codes did not acknowledge the moral agency of slaves; on the contrary, the codes promoted moral dependency rather than moral maturity among slaves, turning slavery into a form of moral training, and above all, serving the interests of slaveholders (see Glancy, Slavery [see n. 8], 142f.). I concur with Glancy's opinion that these codes disparage the avoidance of punishment or the securing of manumission of self or loved ones as a motivation for the slaves' servile cooperation through hard work and obedience, in favour of a theological rationale: submission pleases God (see Eph 6,5f.; see Glancy, Slavery [see n. 8], 145). In 1Pet 2,18–21 however, the situation is different: Servile subordination is not linked to the will of God or Christ; rather, the suffering of slaves is linked to Christ's wounds, as a comfort and encouragement in suffering, and not as a legitimation for domination. In fact, where the slaveholders' will and God's will are equated in Col and Eph, slaves and not slaveholders are linked to Christ and his injuries in 1Pet (see Glancy, Slavery [see n. 8], 149f.).

It is difficult to speculate on the extent to which slaves, like Onesimus, who found themselves in Christian households or households that had become Christian, would have aspired to a different life, whether in terms of more humane treatment or even in terms of freedom. Dale Martin[69] believes that in all likelihood, slaves would indeed have aspired to freedom, "eyeing the good of freedom". Martin refers to texts such as Gal 3,28; 5,13; 1Cor 6,20; 7,21 — while admitting that the meaning of 2Cor 3,17 and Phlm remains contested.[70] The extent to which membership of the community of followers of Jesus would have been regarded as an accessible *and* effective mechanism to effectuate freedom — especially in cities where manumission was common[71] — and not primarily as a preferred choice in respect of religious persuasion, remains difficult to establish. What is clear from the letter, however, is that Paul's acknowledgement of the fact that Onesimus met him for the first time in prison (Phlm 10) implies that Onesimus took the initiative in this whole episode. The situation of which Phlm is a derivative was, as far as can be determined, the result of Onesimus' preemptive actions in appealing to Paul!

And in the end, regarding Onesimus' identity, even if Phlm is interpreted as suggesting that Paul was actually appealing for Onesimus to be manumitted, Onesimus would still have largely remained an outsider.

68 Glancy, Slavery (see n. 8), 142.

69 See Martin, Eyes (see n. 21), 229f.

70 How slaveholders negotiated their Christian faith in the early church remains obscure. Evidence of ecclesial manumission exists in Polyc 4.3 and in Herm(m) 8.10 and Herm(s) 1.8. However, whereas there were probably some members of the communities of the followers of Jesus who set their slaves free, other members appear to have maintained the "long-established power relations of the Roman order" (see Martin, Eyes [see n. 21], 231).

71 Not only was manumission common, but such regular setting free of slaves was part of institutionalised slavery: It did not serve as a denunciation of, or a call to put an end to the institution; rather, it served to maintain the system of slavery (Briggs, Paul [see n. 20], 113).

> The frequency of manumission among the Romans was not the result of humane attitudes towards slaves but part of an elaborate system of social control, which ensured the survival and stability of the slave society (p. 112).

> [A]lthough the regularity of manumission in Roman practice promoted some incorporation of outsiders into the society, that process was by no means inevitable and was certainly not swift, more likely to occur over the span of several generations than within a single lifetime.[72]

It is the construction of Onesimus' identity, not only in contrast to but also in conjunction with that of Philemon, which introduces the possibility of mimicry.

2. Identity and Mimicry: The Slaveholder Philemon and the Apostle

Like other authentic Pauline letters, in which the absence of a household code can be noted, Phlm also contains at most some vague presuppositions about the relationships that Paul assumed to be applicable between slaveholders and slaves in the communities he addressed. In this letter, of which the style and content were mostly determined by the rhetorical setting of Paul's relationship — and even friendship – with Philemon and Onesimus, no specific norms for treating slaves are spelled out, and no specific instructions are provided as to whether or how relationships should or could change if either slaveholder or slave should wish to enter a community of followers of Jesus. As in the other undisputed Pauline letters, slaves are not directly instructed to submit to their masters or matrons, or to display appropriate slave attitudes of submission, obedience and respect.[73]

It is almost impossible to determine the extent to which attitudes and actions described in first-century documents such as Phlm comprise an actual reflection of the true state of affairs for slaves – or rather, of the expectations of slaveholders with regard to their slaves. This is further complicated by the fact that

> ... many slaves internalized the values and behaviors advocated by slaveholders and that many other slaves learned to behave so that their owners believed they had internalized the desired moral code.[74]

In postcolonial analysis, the term "mimicry" is often used to describe such behaviour, thereby highlighting its ambivalent mixture of deference and disobedience, which amounts to a counter-strategy brought

72 Glancy, Slavery (see n. 8), 95. Two considerations are important here: One, manumission was the prerogative of the slave-owner: "Although manumission was relatively common for Roman slaves, the ultimate decision whether to release a slave from bondage rested with the slaveholder rather than the slave" (p. 93). Two, it did not fundamentally change the identity of the manumitted slave:

> In the eyes of the law, the process [of manumission] was not a process of the transformation of a slave into a free person but rather the recognition of the free identity of the person formerly identified as a slave (p. 95).

For the different implications that manumission had for Roman, as opposed to Greek slaves, see Finley, Slavery (see n. 23), 97.

73 See Glancy, Slavery (see n. 8), 140–142.

74 Ibid., 132.

into play by the colonised or the subalterns: subversion cloaked in apparent submission.

Paul left no doubt in any part of his letter that Philemon was indebted to him.[75] While Paul addressed Philemon as "brother" in the *exordium* (Phlm 7) and in the *peroratio* (v. 20; also "partner" or κοινωνός [v. 17]), he nevertheless ensured that he emphasised his position of authority over the slaveholder and head of the household.[76] First, Paul reminded Philemon of what he (Philemon) has already done for "all the saints" (vv. 5.7). This would compel Philemon not to conduct himself in a manner that would be in conflict with his past actions. It would also remind him that the presence of the saints could be attributed, in no small way, to Paul himself. Paul asserted his authority even more strongly in the *probatio*, with reference to his prerogative "to command" (v. 8), and what he presented as his own decision to simply make an earnest request, or "to appeal" (vv. 9–10). In the light of the rhetoric of the letter, Paul's assertion that he wanted Philemon to consent voluntarily and not be forced (v. 14) cannot be taken at face value! In the *peroratio* Paul's authority is asserted fully, both in terms of the position of Onesimus, who is to be welcomed (v. 17) and pardoned for his possible wrongdoing (v. 18), and also in respect of Paul himself, who is to benefit and have "his heart refreshed" (v. 20).[77] Importantly, intertwined with the demands expressed in vv. 17–22, is an assertion of Paul's authoritative position — a strategy that can be referred to as "gentle com-

75 By situating Phlm within the context of the household *ekklesia*, Paul stacked the deck against the possibility of a refusal on Philemon's part to grant his request, as is evident in the opening lines addressing Philemon among other persons, along with "the church in your house" (Phlm 1f.). "Framed by the agonistic code of ancient Mediterranean life, this public hearing raised the honor-shame stakes both for Paul and Philemon" (Frilingos, Child [see n. 11], 99). See also S. Bieberstein, Disrupting the Normal Reality of Slavery: A Feminist Reading of the Letter to Philemon, JSNT 79 (2000) 105–116, on the importance of the network of relationships that is invoked in the letter.

76 Paul's rhetoric did more than create a relationship which placed him on an equal footing with Philemon as *pater familias*, since the household metaphors contributed to Paul's challenge to and subversion of Philemon's authority and his rights regarding Onesimus (Frilingos, Child [see n. 11], 100).

77 "Paul replaces Philemon as the *pater familias*; this effectively pushes Philemon's authority outside the epistle's margins" (Frilingos, Child [see n. 11], 101). If the father metaphor indicated authority (see E.A. Castelli, Imitating Paul: A Discourse of Power [LCBI], Louisville 1991, 101) or intimacy (see B. Holmberg, Paul and Power: The Structure of Authority in the Primitive Church as Reflected in the Pauline Epistles [CB.NT 11], Lund 1978, 77–79), this does not necessarily mean that these connotations were mutually exclusive in the first century CE (thus also Frilingos, Child [see n. 11], 103 n. 60). However, should a choice be necessary, the context in which the metaphor was used should be the decisive factor in deciding its denotation; and in Phlm, authority is foregrounded.

pulsion"[78]. Philemon is fully indebted, with his very life, to Paul (v. 19b), and Philemon is fully obliged to obey Paul's wishes (v. 21). Paul's request to have a room prepared for him could be interpreted as a subtle warning that he intends to investigate in person whether Philemon has complied with his instructions.[79]

In these appeals[80] to Philemon, Paul speaks at times on behalf of Onesimus, becoming the slave's voice, partly for the benefit of Onesimus, but also with Paul's own interests in mind. His appeals to Philemon involve the use of the language of slavery together with fraternal language. Paul does not only use language in this way in Phlm (vv. 1.7.10.16.20); but also does so in Rom 6,16–23 and 1Cor 7,17–24; 9,19.[81] Taking up his voice through Paul, Onesimus thereby fitted in with the slaveholder's expectations, but in such a way as to challenge and subvert the relationships necessary for maintaining the system of slavery effectively, while also shifting the focus to Paul's exercise of power. It is not clear to what extent Onesimus had been forced to avail himself of this last or even only option available to him, i.e., that of reaching out to Paul and converting – realising or anticipating the extent to which his actions would force Philemon's hand regarding his (Onesimus') treatment (and possibly even his social position).

In addition to the family metaphors used by Paul to establish his authority over Philemon, other devices also come into play, such as wordplay, or punning on the notion of "useless/useful" (Phlm 11), which implies a claim of having been more successful than Philemon in soliciting productivity from Onesimus. Roman *exemplum* literature also portrayed slaves as good, obedient, loyal, and faithful, thus propagating imaginary notions reflecting the ideology of the powerful rather than the real convictions or actions of the slave; in short, this literature upheld the popular ideals and cultural values of the slaveholders. One scholar uses the notions of ὀφθαλμοδουλία (eye-service) and ἀνθρωπάρεσκοι (people-pleasers) with reference to Eph 6,5f. and Col 3,22 to indicate

78 Frilingos, Child (see n. 11), 103f.

79 Paul's obtrusive remark about his impending visit rests upon his audacious assumption that his desire and plans are shared by Philemon and company, since he bases his hope of being restored to them on "their prayers" (Phlm 22; see Frilingos, Child [see n. 11], 104).

80 The emphasis that Paul places on the fact that he is "requesting" and not "commanding", "asking" and not "instructing", "recommending" and not "enforcing" (in Phlm 8–10.14, but also throughout the letter) can probably be interpreted as a face-saving olive branch held out to Philemon by Paul (see Frilingos, Child [see n. 11], 103f.), seeing that he has placed Philemon on the spot amidst a group of people where Philemon is the head of the household, and therefore most probably also in charge of the gatherings of the faith community.

81 See Mitchell, Chrysostom (see n. 11), 148 n. 47.

the suffering of slaves, but also their "masquerade of deferential obeisance"[82]. But again, it is Onesimus' rhetorically inscribed position and mimicry that emerge in Paul's letter, in terms of the aspiration to be the "good slave", on the one hand, while such perceptions are simultaneously challenged in Phlm 16, where the focus falls on sibling relations, on the other.

3. Identity and Hybridity (Philemon and Onesimus, and Paul)

Phlm as a skilful rhetorical masterpiece of suggestion and appeal requires our attention beyond the epistolary level, with a view to also understanding the complex practical situation from which it emerged. Perceptions (constructions) of identity and lines of authority are certainly made complex, and are often compromised and even subverted, in Phlm.[83] The complexity reaches a kind of "apex" in Paul's insistence that Onesimus is not only his "child"[84] but also his agent, a representative of the apostle himself (Phlm 17), and that Philemon's actions towards Onesimus will therefore be understood by Paul as being directed at him (Paul) at the same time. In v. 16, Paul momentarily establishes a sibling relationship between himself, Philemon and Onesimus by asking that Onesimus be accepted back as a "brother" – and then he withdraws by means of a hyperbole, leaving the slaveholder behind in a sibling relationship with his slave: "especially to me but how much more to you".[85] In v. 12, where Paul describes Onesimus as "my very heart", and in v. 17, in which he requests Philemon to accept Onesimus as if he were Paul, Onesimus becomes Paul's surrogate, the agent of Paul. The exchanging of hearts, and of debts owed, implies mutual obligations of Philemon and Paul towards each other, and trilaterally between the two of them and Onesimus.

To some extent, the slaveholder–slave relationship already harboured the seeds of hybrid identities. Slaves were the "surrogate bodies" of their owners, the body substitutes of the slaveholders, in differ-

82 Martin, Eyes (see n. 21), 238.

83 Phlm 10 has generated some discussion, since it seems to indicate both Paul's intervention on behalf of Onesimus and a request to acquire the services of the slave. The debate about the term of περί, as to whether it means "on behalf of" (see, e.g., E. Lohse, Colossians and Philemon: A Commentary on the Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon [Hermeneia], Philadelphia 1971, 199), or whether it indicates the object of the request ("for": see, e.g., S.C. Winter, Paul's Letter to Philemon, NTS 33 [1987] 1–15), has generally been resolved in favour of the former (see Frilingos, Child [see n. 11], 102 n. 53).

84 Paul refers to Philemon in v. 10 as τοῦ ἐμοῦ τέκνου, "my child". An adult male slave's lack of honour and dignity was often underscored by his being addressed as παῖς or *puer* ("little one" or "boy"); see Martin, Eyes (see n. 21), 228.

85 See Frilingos, Child (see n. 11), 102f.

ent ways. Since slaves were regarded as an extension of their owners, their actions impacted on the status of the owners who, according to Roman law (see Dig. 47.10.17.7), also carried some legal liability, albeit ambiguous and with various qualifications, for the actions of their slaves. The extent to which slaveholders — and particularly slaves — are likely to have been aware of such legalities formulated in elitist circles is unclear; however, evidence[86] suggests that slaveholders used slaves for their own (often not very respectable) purposes, such as engaging in violence on behalf of the owners.[87]

It was not only the lives of Philemon and Onesimus — like those of countless other slaveholders and slaves — that were inextricably linked to one another, since in Phlm, Paul involves himself in their relationship as well. This should further be understood against the more general background of Paul's invocation of slavery language. The significance of Paul's references to himself and others as "slaves of Christ"[88] deserves more attention than the scope of this article allows; and such references comprise yet another example of hybridity, amidst Paul's discourse of power in the communities he addressed as an apostle.

If it is correct to argue that Philemon's acceptance of Onesimus' return on Paul's terms would have amounted both to Philemon's acceptance of Paul's power in the household where Philemon was formerly the figure of authority, and to Onesimus' continuing presence in Philemon's household as a reminder of Paul's authority,[89] then it can be said that effectively, not very much had changed for either of the parties concerned. Paul still remained the final authoritative father of the community; Philemon might have had to tailor his style as the head of his own household; and Onesimus, even in the event of his being manumitted, would still remain an indentured servant in the household —

86 The literary sources depicting servile slaves as being prone to unsocial behaviour, aiding their owners in various illicit activities, may also be compromised reflections biased in favour of slaveholders and their interests. Glancy, Slavery (see n. 8), 16, cites an example from Apuleius, The Golden Ass (Met. 10.44), in which Apuleius portrays the matron's slave, who is roped in to poison her honourable stepson for refusing her attention, not as indicative of the slave's faithfulness and fidelity (under duress of torture) to his slaveholder, but rather as an illustration of a slave's predisposition to criminal activity and obstinacy.

87 See Glancy, Slavery (see n. 8), 15f.

88 Paul's reflexive rhetorical claims to being δοῦλος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ are found twice: in Rom 1,1 with reference to himself, and in the plural, in Phil 1,1, with reference to himself and Timothy (see Col 4,12 where the term is applied to Epaphras); see 1Cor 7,22.

89 See Frilingos, Child (see n. 11), 104.

but Onesimus' clientage-duties would from now on also include services to his ultimate patron, Paul (as hinted at already in Phlm 13).[90]

Paul claimed power in his letter to Philemon in a subtle and rhetorically strategic way, availing himself mainly of household terminology and family imagery, which he employed skilfully to exert his authority.[91] This does not rule out the possibility that affection and goodwill were also, and simultaneously, present in the letter; but the strength of Paul's letter lay in its focus on enforcing his position: Philemon was presented with one option only! Notwithstanding the specific content of Paul's expressed expectations of Philemon, he clearly expected him to obey (see Phlm 21).[92] Paul's intricate rhetorical ploys are often readily acknowledged as affirming his position as the authoritative yet compassionate apostle, the adept and skilful yet subversive epistolographer, and so on, but often without accounting for Paul's latent if not active complicity in condoning and therefore reinforcing institutionalised

90 If Paul indeed intended, by means of his letter to Philemon, to effectively ask that Onesimus should assist him (Paul) while in prison (Phlm 13), or accompany him (Paul) on his missionary work, without there being any prospect of Onesimus' status as a slave being abrogated in any way, then (from a slave morality perspective) Paul's letter did nothing to challenge first-century slavery or improve Onesimus' life. At best, having Onesimus seconded to Paul may have ameliorated what seems to have been a tense relationship between Onesimus and his owner Philemon. Whether or not Paul's subtle request to Philemon carried the approval of Onesimus cannot be verified. (Grammatically, however, it seems unlikely that Paul was actually asking for Onesimus' services; more probably, he was asking *about* them: παρακαλῶ σε περί.) See the proposal of R.F. Hock, A Support for His Old Age: Paul's Plea on Behalf of Onesimus, in: L.M. White/O.L. Yarbrough (eds.), The Social World of the First Christians: Essays in Honor of Wayne A. Meeks, Minneapolis 1995, 67–81, based on the reading of πρεσβύτης as "old man", that Paul indeed requested the services of Onesimus for himself, partly with the intention of ending the tension between owner and slave. See also n. 83 above.

91 See Frilingos, Child (see n. 11), 97.

92 The one question most often asked in response to the reading of Phlm is: What exactly did the apostle want the slaveholder to do? Suggestions that have been put forward include the repair of the slaveholder–slave relationship, more favourable working conditions for Onesimus, the transfer of the slave to Paul, and even a request for the manumission of the slave. More recently, and probably mainly as a result of modern sensibilities, the latter has often been proposed as the preferred option. Here, modern sensibilities are challenged, since the manumission that was typical of open slave systems (although the Roman slave system was situated halfway between open and closed systems, since manumission did not reach the majority of slaves) actually reinforced the system of slavery:

> [R]egular manumission can reinforce a slave system, particularly in instances in which slaves compensate their owners for their liberty and continue to serve them after manumission, as happened in Roman slavery (Glancy, Slavery [see n. 8], 94).

Glancy challenges the assertion that Roman slavery was more "a temporary phase of life", which is based on a misplaced notion of Roman soft-hearted generosity, and tends to extrapolate the experience of a small group of slaves to slaves in general. See also n. 71 above.

slavery. With identities simultaneously being complexified, intensified and hybridised, Onesimus became both more (brother) and less (brother of his owner); and Philemon both retained his status (slave-owner) and lost it (patron of Paul, but also having his own slave as a brother); while Paul's status only increased (in terms of expanding patronage), and was moderated only to some extent by his relationship to Jesus Christ. While Paul's challenge was aimed at Philemon's authority and his position as the owner of Onesimus, Onesimus' voice remains silent throughout Phlm, although he took the initiative that led to the writing of the letter. Notwithstanding his physical location, and in addressing his own non-elite, freeborn "status anxiety", the only person who really emerged in a stronger social position than before was Paul![93]

4. Interpretative Tradition and Remaining Ambivalences

The decades and centuries following the writing of Phlm, notwithstanding some criticism of slavery as well as of its extreme abuses, saw the continuation of slavery among Christians[94] — since "slavery was too much of a cultural convenience to be questioned for many centuries"[95] — together with the concomitant expectations in respect of the obedience of the slaves, including the justification and even recommendation of their corporal punishment, as suggested by Augustine, for example. Since this history cannot be reversed, biblical interpreters' wish to be able to show that Paul challenged slavery in Phlm or at least set the ball rolling, is understandable.[96] But unfortunately, it also obscures the text! Scholars often oscillate between different understandings and portrayals of Paul, presenting the apostle, on the one hand, as

93 See Briggs, Paul (see n. 20), 121. For the social elite it would have been, in addition to safeguarding their own social status, important to shield the institution of slavery as a way of preserving the social order from corruption. Individual slaves striving to obtain their freedom was no threat to the all-important distinction between slave and free, but the social aspirations and mobility of wealthy freed persons and possible infiltration of the social elite, was perceived as a danger to the system of slavery itself (see p. 122).

94 Although slavery was already on the decline in the New Testament times, not for moral reasons but because of its financial inefficiency (see C. Osiek, Slavery in the Second Testament World, BTB 22 [1992] 174–179, here: 178), it emerged forcefully again in the slavery-based economies of colonial Brazil, the Caribbean and antebellum southern America.

95 Osiek et al., Place (see n. 35), 114.

96 Hermeneutical and other dangers accompany the interpretation of Phlm in the aftermath of a long history of human enslavement, and amidst continuing and persistent human trafficking in the modern, globalised world. Biblical hermeneutics was never immune to such danger and tension, since as much as it consciously participated for a long time in offering legitimisation for slavery and related practices of hegemony, it is today at times still found, if unwittingly, to extend privilege and favour to the powerful.

someone who perpetuated first-century social systems which would today be regarded as unjust or at least unpalatable, with issues related to politics, gender, slavery and sexual orientation probably being most often discussed. On the other hand, numerous studies can be cited which claim that Paul either fundamentally challenged, or at least to some extent attenuated,[97] the excesses of oppressive or hegemonic social systems.[98]

As a first-century person, and having grown up in an apparently prosperous household (if conclusions about Paul's higher-than-average literacy level and his family's Roman citizenship are justified), Paul would not have been a stranger to living in a household incorporating slaves. His letters,[99] and for what they are worth, the accounts in Acts, provide evidence that Paul was regularly in contact with slaveholders and slaves alike. Still, it remains difficult to establish the degree to which Paul engaged slaveholders and slaves in fledgling communities of followers of Jesus. Together with the danger of twenty-first century, theologically informed positions determining exegetical results,[100] the interpretation of Phlm is often made dependent on other Pauline statements on slavery. On the one hand, Gal 3,28 and 1Cor 12,13 (see Col 3,11) are often cited as demonstrating Paul's conviction that in Christ, the rift between persons enslaved and free persons was removed. On the other hand, Paul never recommended the abolishment of slavery in any of his writings, but evidently accepted it as a permanent feature of his society. However, the situation was complicated by the fact that

97 A tendency not limited to the issue of Paul and slavery: Literary and epigraphic evidence available today portrays elitist perspectives, and at best their public acceptance; the feelings and convictions of the slaves of antiquity remain a largely closed book. See, e.g., Joshel's (see Glancy, Slavery [see n. 8], 19) and Finley's (see id., Slavery [see n. 23], 161–190; see Briggs, Paul [see n. 20], 112) challenges relating to Vogt's claims about the humanity of Roman slavery.

98 It is questionable whether Paul's position on the Roman authorities can be treated along similar lines as his perspective on gender or his stance on slavery. Even where scholars acknowledge the ambiguity of Paul's position on these topics, Paul and his positions are often defended by means of the assertion that he attempted to manage the convictional and the contingent, e.g., the reciprocality between apocalyptic passion and practical sobriety in politics; between charisma and order in gender roles; see G. Zerbe, The Politics of Paul: His Supposed Social Conservatism and the Impact of Postcolonial Readings, CGR 21 (2003) 82–103, here: 96. However, it is often Paul's stance on slavery which becomes the Achilles' heel of such explanations — even when Paul's instructions to Philemon regarding Onesimus are understood as his argument for different (better?) treatment of the slave.

99 The reference to "Chloe's people" and the οἶκος of Stephanas in 1Cor 1,11.16; 16,15 (see the references to "households" in Acts 16,15.34; 18,8) may have indicated the domestic slaves of a wealthy slaveholder, thus underscoring the higher profile accorded to slaveholders in the Pauline communities; see Barclay, Paul (see n. 49), 165.

100 See ibid., 162.

slaveholders — and especially those who did not belong to the community of believers — could extract obligations, such as sexual duties, from their slaves. Such arrangements would probably have been abhorred by the community of followers of Jesus, to the extent that these practices might have been deemed to be polluting the whole community (see, e.g., 1Cor 5).[101]

Against the background of the failure on the part of the New Testament, as well as early Christianity itself, to challenge abusive, hegemonic systems such as slavery, because of the imminent expectation of the *parousia* and/or because the notion of heavenly citizenship was given preference, the contradiction between claims that, on the one hand, Paul realised the tension inherent in "the new reality that exists in Christ and the reality of this old age that still makes a distinction between ... slave and free"[102], and on the other hand, that he, in what would appear to have been a rather simplistic, if not careless way,[103] "used it [slavery, which was so pervasive] as a metaphor for the Christian life"[104], is not addressed.[105]

Just as Philemon, as a slaveholder, exercised control over Onesimus, Paul's rhetorical claims sought to establish his authority and control over both of them — and essentially over the local community. Rather than assuming the role of δοῦλος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ,[106] Paul took up the attitude of the ultimate slaveholder, even if his claims and expectations were couched in carefully constructed rhetoric intent on persuasion rather than harsh enforcement.[107] This strategy could possibly

101 See Glancy, Slavery (see n. 8), 49; Barclay, Paul (see n. 49), 161–186.

102 F.J. Matera, New Testament Theology: Exploring Diversity and Unity, Louisville/London 2007, 212.

103 If Paul did, in fact, use these expressions in a deliberate, informed way, this would suggest that he had a broader vision and insight in respect of the social institution of slavery — an insight that went beyond first-century sensibilities. However, in this case, the questions arise as to why he remained at least neutral, if not actually affirmative, in his attitude to slavery, and why, of all metaphors, slavery was deemed the appropriate metaphor to describe the relationship of the followers of Jesus with him (e.g., in 1Cor 6,20; 7,23).

104 Matera, Theology (see n. 102), 213.

105 See ibid., 213f.

106 "In the end, Paul's representation of 'the slave' consists of a bland moral polarity of good and bad and is an artificial construction serving Roman slaveholding ideology. The apostle's speech-in-character uses such stereotyping to influence congregations, which would only have strengthened prejudices that his Gentile readers already held about the morality of control, domination, and abuse of human chattel" (Harrill, Slaves [see n. 49], 33).

107 Paul's insistence on the danger of spiritual enslavement curiously relies on "imagery that evokes the somatic liabilities of servile status" (Glancy, Slavery [see n. 8], 38). Because Paul subordinates the power of the flesh to the power of the spirit, generations of readers have been convinced that the hazards of mundane slavery must pale in comparison to the evils of spiritual bondage. However, the structure of Paul's argument [in Galatians] is contingent on the somatic configuration of first-century slavery. (ibid.)

be explained by Paul's own precarious position, on the one hand, and the impact of a slaveholder mentality/morality, on the other hand. Paul apparently had no legal hold over Onesimus, and his relationship with Philemon was clearly not governed by ancient enslavement regulations; on the contrary, Paul's appeal to Philemon was aimed at testing the strength of their friendship. Moreover, by assuming power over both Philemon the slaveholder, who was also the head of the household (*pater familias*), and the slave Onesimus, Paul at once subverted or at least unsettled[108] the conventional social structure of ancient society,[109] but simultaneously also established himself in the role of the ultimate authority over Philemon's household and other households in the community of the followers of Jesus.[110]

V. Conclusion

Postcolonial biblical hermeneutics offers a number of distinct advantages as a theoretical approach more capable than many others of accounting for complex relationships of power, and of going beyond a bland accusatory mode which (more often than not) aims to insist on the exoneration from guilt, even where it would be the guilt of being implicated through re-establishing other, replacement structures of privilege *and* want, while being oblivious of the presence of the same hegemonic patterns that were criticised previously. Phlm (like other Pauline letters) did not set a general norm in terms of which slaveholding in the communities of the followers of Jesus was required to be relinquished, even in cases where both slaveholder and slave belonged to

108 Unlike the situation in Acts, which portrays the Spirit "responding to the invitations of slaveholders", making use of patriarchal household structures and treating "enslaved members of households as dependent bodies subject to the intellectual and spiritual authority of slaveholders" (ibid., 48). Glancy laconically remarks that it was not the gift of the Spirit but their secular status that secured the role of household-heads!

109 See Frilingos, Child (see n. 11), 91–104; L.M. White, Paul and *Pater Familias*, in: J. Sampley (ed.), Paul and the Greco-Roman World: A Handbook, Harrisburg 2002, 457–487, here: 469f.

110 "The letter, then, is concerned less with Onesimus' situation than with Paul's own status" (Frilingos, Child [see n. 11], 104). So also, if M.J. Brown, Paul's Use of ΔΟΥΛΟΣ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΥ ΙΗΣΟΥ in Romans 1:1, JBL 120 (2001) 723–737, here: 733, is correct, and the term δοῦλος used by Paul to refer to himself in Rom 1,1, is a technical term with connotations that link it to the concept of being a slave of the emperor, then Paul assumed a very powerful position and words of power for himself, backed by Christ! For the metaphorical use of slavery to describe the relationship between God, Christ and the believer in Paul's letters, see Briggs, Paul (see n. 20), 111–115.

such a community.[111] Today, biblical interpreters can only guess at the subsequent position of the slave Onesimus in Philemon's household, and venture suggestions as to the reasons for his leaving Philemon, and also regarding his later association with Paul. Would Paul's letter to Philemon have significantly changed the status of Onesimus in Philemon's household? Some scholars[112] have answered in the negative, claiming that Paul's plea was, at most, for a more humane treatment of Onesimus by Philemon, without any intention on Paul's part of impinging on the honour of the latter.[113] Would Paul's letter have significantly challenged the patterns (not to mention the systems) of domination which Paul and Philemon respectively maintained and extended? The answer is, again, that this would have been unlikely.

The extent to which Paul succeeded in convincing Philemon, the other addressees and those concerned, such as Onesimus, of the validity of his claims to authority, and even more, the extent to which they complied with Paul's wishes, cannot be established or deliberated here. What is clear, however, is that Paul not only subverted the authority and the identity of those receiving his letter; he also re-established both his identity and his authority in a less ambiguous way than his rhetoric may suggest.

111 "Paul's letter to Philemon, from which commentators often attempt to infer the earliest Christian attitudes towards slaves and especially fugitive slaves, is both too ambiguous and too personal to provide such information. ... To transform this personal intervention into a systematic statement of fugitive slaves violates the tenor of the letter. ... To take this ambiguous letter as starting point for discovering early Christian attitudes towards runaway slaves or slavery more broadly is a futile enterprise" (Glancy, Slavery [see n. 8], 92).

112 See, e.g., C.S. de Vos, Once a Slave, Always a Slave? Slavery, Manumission and Relational Patterns in Paul's Letter to Philemon, JSNT 82 (2001) 89–105.

113 Also, understanding the rhetorical nuances used by Paul in Phlm as primarily reflecting an attempt to allow Philemon to save face, and inferring that Paul's use of rhetoric should not be used as evidence for his ambiguous position on slavery, is untenable in the light of Paul's rather ambiguous statements and claims elsewhere (see 1Cor 7) and his frequent use of slavery terminology in the form of positive metaphors, and thus with apparent approval. Following upon the supposedly egalitarian and emancipatory baptismal formula of Gal 3,28, the reconstructed narrative of Gal 4,21–5,1 re-imposed the dual system of gender and slavery; and in 1Cor 6,15f., visits to prostitutes were condemned, while slavery as an institution was not addressed, in a context where most prostitutes were slaves or ex-slaves, and in which slaves were expected to be sexually available to their owners (see Briggs, Paul [see n. 20], 110–123).

Hierarchy and Obedience: The Legacy of the Letter to Philemon

PIETER J.J. BOTHA

An interest in body criticism correlates with an interest in *lived* religion, i.e., in faith as practised by people in the context of their everyday lives. That the body matters, no one disputes; and as a subject of critical inquiry, this topic has generated many new configurations of knowledge.[1] As a critical concept, the "body" provides theological and religious studies with opportunities to translate ideas and concepts into experiences, but it also poses a challenge, namely, to ask vital and self-reflexive questions about the impact and the actual use of exegetical and theological readings. More concretely, such an interest leads to an awareness of the importance of developing an ethical conception of ordinary or "everyday" life, "a conception of what it means to be answerable to another human being, to be responsive to the Other's claims on me."[2] To conduct an analysis with bodiliness in mind is to explore the *materiality* of respect, love, care, responsibility, freedom — and, especially, to raise awareness of the very real lack thereof, despite the use of such words.

I. Paul, Philemon, Slavery

Most commentators on Phlm emphasise that the letter comprises a positive contribution. There is a remarkable consensus surrounding the notion that, although Paul was not out to develop "a social program aimed at calling the institutions of the Greco-Roman world into question"[3], the beginnings of a new social order can be detected in Paul's letter, and that the subversion of the old order was being initiated. From a historical perspective, however, it must be admitted that such an observation should be regarded as questionable — especially in view of its sheer superficiality. Many centuries passed before any significant

1 See J.J. Bono, Does the Body Matter?, Config. 5 (1997) 177–187.

2 E.L. Santner, On the Psychotheology of Everyday Life: Reflections on Freud and Rosenzweig, Chicago 2001, 9.

3 B.L. Mack, Who Wrote the New Testament? The Making of the Christian Myth, New York 1996, 144. I quote Mack as an illustrative example.

change in the social order could be demonstrated;[4] and within Christian circles, aspects of social change have remained problematic to this day. Given the incredible discrepancies, violence and abuse that are being faced in social orders, it has become imperative to consider the role of Christian traditions and their origins in the contemporary world, and to question the nature of that "positive contribution".

In studies on Paul and the problem of slavery, a distinct apologetic tone can be discerned, which begs for attention.[5] A notable strategy in this regard is to interpret the New Testament references to slavery in a metaphorical light. This is an interesting theology that subsumes physical pain, exploitation, abuse, humiliation and suffering under "usefulness to the gospel", or which "spiritualises" physical suffering into "true" freedom.[6]

Another noteworthy feature of studies on Paul and slavery is the insistence that slavery was "acceptable" in those times.[7] My interest in the scholarship surrounding Phlm is driven by a current concern: Is it satisfactory — or even responsible — to say that slavery is a historical phenomenon and that Paul was a child of his times? These are self-evident statements and they really do not mean very much. Surely we

4 Two egregious examples of Christianity's failure to make much difference at all are slavery and savage judicial penalties. See R. MacMullen, 'What Difference Did Christianity Make?', Hist. 35 (1986) 322–343, here: 325.

5 See R.A. Horsley, The Slave Systems of Classical Antiquity and Their Reluctant Recognition by Modern Scholars, Semeia 83/84 (1998) 19–66.

6 Such "freedom" is defined as the state of being "free from sin and death and free to do the will of God and live" as a slave, as emphasised, for example, by A.A. Ruprecht, Art. Slave, Slavery, in: G.F. Hawthorne/R.P. Martin (eds.), Dictionary of Paul and His Letters, Downers Grove 1993, 881–883, here: 882. Such perspectives abound; I will draw attention to just one example, namely: J.L. de Villiers, Cultural, Economic, and Social Conditions in the Graeco-Roman World, in: A.B. du Toit (ed.), Guide to the New Testament 2: The New Testament Milieu, Halfway House 1998, 133–158, here: 137.

7 In "the ancient world slavery was accepted as an integral part of society and its economic working"; thus J.D.G. Dunn, The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon: A Commentary on the Greek Text (NIGTC), Grand Rapids/Carlisle 1996, 306. See also R.McL. Wilson, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Colossians and Philemon (ICCONT), London/New York 2005, 237, and indeed most commentaries. It is quite remarkable, in view of the complexities and the many ambiguities of slavery, as well as the many layers of resistance to slavery, that scholars can simplistically claim that slavery was a fully accepted institution in antiquity. The extensive range of attempts by many ancient authors to justify slavery should, at the very least, serve to make us aware of just how contested slavery must have been.

> The ancient world does not fit the model of a slave society ... wherein slavery was simply accepted, in the sense that there was so little discomfort felt about the institution that no one saw the need to defend it. Interventions of a critical or justificatory nature did occur, anxieties and tensions surfaced, and ideologies were actively engaged in keeping them in check. (P. Garnsey, Ideas of Slavery from Aristotle to Augustine (WBSML), Cambridge etc. 1996, 238.)

may dare to expect some awareness and acknowledgement of the suffering and exploitation that occurred? Is it in any sense a meaningful response to insist that it is "anachronistic" to judge the ancients' acceptance of slavery?[8] Admittedly, there is a wide gap between the ancients and us; but some grave questions demand attention: *Why* and *how* do perspectives to the effect that slavery is natural and unavoidable develop? How and why did slavery succeed? Why the longevity of slave systems? Surely *understanding* is far more important than mere definitional descriptions followed by a distancing of oneself from "their" practices?

After all, the continuing concern of scholarship dealing with Phlm is precisely the conviction that the letter is somehow relevant to the problem of slavery.[9] This study is essentially a call for self-critical interrogation: Are our defensive and apologetic readings of Paul — and in particular of Phlm — really the best we can do?

Phlm has been studied in overwhelming detail,[10] and it is imperative to indicate why one considers *another* contribution to be worthy of attention. The study of an ancient text should be concerned with the problematisation of the original discourse; but such a study should also be concerned with the manner in which writings have, via the existence and operations of practices formed over centuries, contributed to the

8 Despite the popularity of this claim (i.e., that it is anachronistic to judge the ancients' acceptance of slavery), the implied approval of cultural relativity is left undiscussed. Cultural relativity is a deeply contested perspective: see P.J.J. Botha, Cultural-Anthropological History and the Jesus Traditions, ThViat 32 (2008) 92–141. Furthermore, moral evaluation is part and parcel of historiography: see A. Oldfield, Moral Judgments in History, HTh 20 (1981) 260–277. More to the point, the claim to impartiality easily becomes an adoption of the insider's values: To insist that the legal system created by *slave-owners* makes the system completely acceptable to *them* is simply paraphrasis. One would like to know what the slaves thought about the "acceptability" of their condition. The survival of slave-systems is inextricably bound up with the adoption of the perspectives of the slave-owners — a point frequently made by historians of slavery, e.g., O. Patterson, Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study, Cambridge, Mass. 1982, 1–14, 207.

9 A number of creative proposals have been developed to problematise the identification of Onesimus as a slave: see D.F. Tolmie, Onesimus — 'n Wegloopslaaf? Oor die ontstaansituasie van die Filemonbrief, VEccl 30 (2009) 279–301. However, the most straightforward and logical way to read the text, and especially v. 16, is to accept that the status of Onesimus was that of a slave, and that his being a slave was a significant factor in the negotiation between Paul and Philemon: see J.A. Fitzmyer, The Letter to Philemon: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary (AncB 34C), New York etc. 2000, 17–23. A.D. Callahan, Embassy of Onesimus: The Letter of Paul to Philemon (NTCt), Valley Forge 2007, 40, claims that Onesimus was literally Philemon's brother, in the sense of a blood relation, but see J.A. Harrill's review in CBQ 60 (1998) 757–759.

10 See J.A. Harrill, The Manumission of Slaves in Early Christianity (HUTh 32), Tübingen 1995, 2 n. 4; "The object of no little discussion" (Fitzmyer, Philemon [see n. 9], ix; see 53–78).

formation of cultures and identities. In order to achieve this, interpretation should move beyond the unacceptable alternatives of objectivism or relativism and attempt to connect theory and practice.[11] This requires an awareness of the environment of the critic, which makes it important to ask what the effects of these writings have been; to question whether they have been beneficial or detrimental to cultures; to probe how they can be re-defined and re-conceptualised; to analyse the ways in which they have been responsible for the formation of certain social roles, social identities and hierarchies; and most importantly, to ask why we continue to engage in "criticism" of these texts.

Historical study which focuses on the phenomenon of slavery inevitably confronts us with questions about ourselves, and the implications are far too serious to be passed over with glib invocations of cultural relativity or apologetic justifications. In this article, I will argue that, in studies dealing with Paul and slavery, especially with regard to Phlm, there is a tendency to confuse linguistic meaning with historical reference, or with communicative acts. In terms of speech act theory, it seems as if propositional content and illocutionary force are deemed equivalent when Phlm is studied. Essentially, I think that more is at stake than simply deciding whether Onesimus was a *fugitivus* or an *erro*, and that there are more fundamental issues to be dealt with than merely trying to determine the probable content of the "actual" request that Paul put to Philemon concerning Onesimus.

II. Practices and Values in Phlm

Phlm contains a deliberate ambiguity (or intentional indirectness) as to what exactly is expected of the addressee; but there is a fair amount of consensus among scholars that the letter reflects a positive purpose – at least in terms of an endeavour to deal with an awkward, difficult situation. This "ambiguous yet constructive" aspect is formulated as follows by Burton Mack[12]:

> This letter is an extremely valuable document. It spotlights an actual situation in which Christians had to confront the gap between the kingdom of God as a mythic ideal and Roman society as the real world in which they lived. ... Here we learn that [Paul] fully understood the place Christians occupied as a religious association or a philosophical school within a larger, working society. ... When confronted with this concrete case, however, Paul did not use the notion of the one body of Christ to question the institution of slavery. As he would put it in his correspondence to the Philippians, also written from prison at about the same time, Christians should be "blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, in which you shine like stars in the world," because "our citizenship is in heaven" (Phil. 2:15; 3:20). There is no indication that the Christ cult developed a social program aimed at calling the institutions of the Greco-Roman world into question. Paul's Letter to Philemon shows only that the Christ cult fostered a certain circumspection with respect to the Roman world and that it could encourage critical thinking about social relations with the Christian ideal in mind.

11 Of many possible references, see L.J.D. Wacquant, Pierre Bourdieu, in: R. Stones (ed.), Key Sociological Thinkers, New York, 1998, 220–223. See also R.J. Bernstein, Beyond Objectivism and Relativism: Science, Hermeneutics, and Praxis, Oxford 1983, esp. 223–231.

12 Mack, New Testament (see. n. 3), 144.

Like most interpreters, Mack agrees that Paul uses subtle formulation (owing to a complex situation), yet maintains an implicit censure of unacceptable social institutions: Paul fosters circumspection, yet encourages critical thinking. He is *neither* directly *nor* explicitly critical of Roman slavery, but "nuanced"[13] about a concrete case. Similarly, Lloyd Lewis[14] notes that

> Paul does not answer the question directly, and he does not insist on either of these two options [emancipation or adopting a double standard]. ... What Paul does, rather, is to make himself, in essence, the envoy of Onesimus, identifying himself with the runaway convert so closely that the debts that Onesimus incurred Paul desires to assume (v. 18). Thus Paul has brought to light the implications of being his child and the child of God in a church and community where equal status under the gospel, as shown in Galatians, is a virtue and where an apostle, a runaway slave, and a slaveholder can be interchanged. He now leaves it to Philemon to decide ...

In other words, Paul does not address the problem of slavery as such, but we "can take heart from Paul" because "*careful* examination"[15] of his language shows that his ambiguity may not be so much the result of indecision, as of his unwillingness to sanction the social roles found in his environment. Among scholars, the use of the phrase "careful examination" typically indicates reference to some exceptional linguistic phenomenon, or to some interesting link to the "background" or context, in order to justify a preferred interpretation. It is emphasised that social relations among actors are influenced by culture; and by discussing some link(s) to historical phenomena, it becomes possible to "clarify" Paul's statements. Hence the persistent interest in Roman legal texts dealing with slavery when studies on Phlm are being conducted.

But the issue is far more complex than such "clarifications" would lead us to believe. Humans *also* affirm practices of power; in our actions we not only "reflect" aspects of "background" but actually contribute to the structuring of the social relations of power among different positions in terms of class, gender and so on. In terms of anthropological history, human communicative events are not just reflections of culture,

13 "Delicate" is another favoured descriptor; see, e.g., Fitzmyer, Philemon (see n. 9), 34.

14 L.A. Lewis, An African American Appraisal of the Philemon-Paul-Onesimus Triangle, in: C.H. Felder (ed.), Stony the Road We Trod: African American Biblical Interpretation, Minneapolis 1991, 232–246, here: 245f.

15 Ibid., 246.

but interactive configurations of interests, culture and events. Along with Marshall Sahlins,[16] we may ask: What was the structure of the conjuncture, the interplay of expectations, of choice, of ideology, of self-interest and the specific moment with regard to Phlm? Are Paul's endearing terms and positive tone a reaction to, or a manifestation of hierarchy and submission?

There is scope (and reason) to shift our reading perspective on Phlm. This can be done by analysing the problematisation which generated this writing. In order to do so, it is necessary to foreground the discursive practices within which the "text" happens. We need to *critically* probe the social principles and power relations that informed the text(s) at hand.[17] To understand the "problematisation" that generated the document, more is needed than a delineation of the way in which the terms (the verbal phenomena) are arranged, or a discussion of linguistic structures; the interlocking of values and meanings should receive attention in order to determine why and how this discourse persuades, and to what effect.

In the first-century Mediterranean world, the practices of slavery and of kinship were both determined by the principle of hierarchy.[18] The discursive event associated with Phlm is embedded in those practices (slavery and kinship) that reflected the principles of hierarchy and obedience.

Phlm deals with the relationship between Paul and Philemon, a relationship connected to fellow-believers; and "clarification" of this relationship was generated by the presence of Onesimus. In the letter, the discussion of this relationship is permeated by the reality of slavery. The terminology used — such as δέσμιος and its affiliated terms (vv. 1.9.10.13), as well as the semantically related δοῦλος (v. 16), and συναιχμάλωτος (v. 23) — makes this clear. The practice of slavery was characterised by absolute ownership, control, indebtedness and obedience. The right to command and the expectation of absolute obedience formed part of this practice. The master-slave relationship, in which Philemon is the master and Onesimus the slave, is evident in vv. 11.13.15.17–18. References to commands, reflecting control — also including Paul's relationship to Philemon — are noticeable in the use of ἐπιτάσσειν (v. 8) and προσλαμβάνεθαι (v. 17). A slave was property; so terminology concerned with owning, exchanging, buying and selling is to be expected, and is indeed present. The "indebtedness" (and possible injustice) to the master can be seen in vv. 18.19.20. Ownership language is prominent in this letter: πρὸς ἐμαυτὸν κατέχειν (v. 13), ἀπέχειν (v. 15), and acting "on behalf of" somebody else (v. 13). In the master-slave relationship, a slave must be of benefit to the master: formerly Onesimus was "useless", but now he is "useful" or of "good service" (v. 11); he could "serve" Paul (v. 13).

The practice of slavery controls this particular discourse, even when the practice of kinship is employed in the discourse.[19] The relationship between Paul and Onesimus (v. 10) and the suggested relationship between Philemon and Onesimus (v. 16) are indicated by means of kinship terms (additionally, other persons who form part of the network of which Paul and Onesimus are members, are labelled by means of kinship terms such as "brother" and "sister": vv. 1.2.7.20). But though Philemon is called "brother" (vv. 7.20), they are brothers because they have God as Father (v. 3), of whom Paul is a special representative (note εὐχαριστῶ τῷ θεῷ *μου* [v. 4]). Paul is the "senior" brother (v. 9), who *may*

16 "We have to do with ... a set of historical relationships that at once reproduce the traditional cultural categories and give them new values out of the pragmatic context. [All were] ... following their received inclinations and interests. The result was a little social system, complete with alliances, antagonisms — and a certain dynamic" (M.D. Sahlins, Islands of History, Chicago 1985, 125).

17 The influence of P. Bourdieu, The Logic of Practice, Stanford 1990, 52–65 (and see idem, Outline of the Theory of Practice: Structures and the Habitus, in: G.M. Spiegel [ed.], Practicing History: New Directions in Historical Writing after the Linguistic Turn (RHist), New York 2005, 179–198), is obvious here. An excellent introduction to this (methodological) issue is that of J.N. Vorster, Rhetorical Criticism, in: A.B. du Toit (ed.), Focusing on the Message: New Testament Hermeneutics, Exegesis and Methods, Pretoria 2009, 505–578, here: 541–567: "Principles generate practices and the interaction between principles and practices creates what is regarded as 'normal', as 'real', as 'natural'" (p. 546).

18 "It should be kept in mind that it is often quite difficult to distinguish between 'principle' and 'practice' and this is especially the case when material from antiquity is analysed. In such cases notions such as *habitus* and 'context of situation' may function as analytical categories which open the possibility for a cooperation of these elements. In many cases, more than one principle are also operative, and to delineate *one* as generative principle confuses the complexity of the way in which social structures and processes of symbolisation operate in the construction of the social body" (Vorster, Criticism [see n. 17], 548).

19 Kinship studies by New Testament scholars tend to concentrate on early Christian fictive kinship as expressions of identity and solidarity (see H. Moxnes, What is Family? Problems in Constructing Early Christian Families, in: H. Moxnes [ed.], Constructing Early Christian Families: Family as Social Reality and Metaphor, London 1997, 13–41; D.A. deSilva, Honor, Patronage, Kinship & Purity: Unlocking New Testament Culture, Downers Grove 2000, 157–240). Note that kinship in Graeco-Roman antiquity was embedded in hierarchy; a reference to sons could hardly avoid evocation of the notion of the *patria potestas*, and mention of "brother(s)" implicitly raised awareness of the first, or preferred brother. For Plutarch and other Graeco-Roman authors, there is a hierarchy of honour (τιμή, δόξα) structuring familial and other relations. Brothers do indeed come before friends, but "we should always be careful to reserve for a brother the first place ... whenever we deal with occasions which in the eyes of the public give distinction and tend to confer honor (δόξαν)" (Plut., De Frat. Amor. 491B [LCL]).

command (v. 8). Both practices (slavery and kinship) manifest the principle of hierarchy.

Ostensibly, the letter is concerned with Onesimus' future; and one would suppose that *his* future prospects and his rights would be addressed. However, Onesimus is not really present in the letter. An exchange of "rights" and "privileges" between Paul and Philemon is discussed. The discursive practice of slavery assigns a subhuman status to slaves.[20] Certain people were meant to be slaves, whereas others were meant to be masters. In Philemon, there are several indications of the "givenness" of this absolute power over a slave's life:

(a) Ownership of slaves is not disputed, and the possession of slaves as property – whether by Philemon or even Paul – is not called into question (v. 13); owning a slave is natural. Even if Paul envisaged the manumission of Onesimus by Philemon, the absence of any reference to, or suggestion of emancipation remains striking, *given the claims of love, sonship and brotherhood*.[21] Given that there *was* criticism of slavery in Graeco-Roman antiquity,[22] the apparent self-evidence, the "naturalness" of Paul's language about ownership, is indeed strange.

(b) Paul's promissory note (v. 18) confirms that, at the least, he regards himself as a partner-in-ownership. The promise of payment points to the transfer of property.[23] If Philemon manumitted Onesimus, it is not unlikely that he would have replaced him with another slave. Paul's offer to pay Onesimus' debt (an offer that is presented with emphasis in vv. 18–19) stresses that he, as father/owner in Christ, is master over Onesimus. In reality, this commitment on Paul's part may even have comprised an additional ploy to induce Philemon to agree to Paul's request – it is not clear whether there were actually any debts involved (after all, it may have been the case that Onesimus had run away because of maltreatment).

> If Philemon agrees to let Paul pay Onesimus's debts, if only the loss in service he has suffered, then Philemon must acknowledge that Paul "owns" Onesimus in some way, either as Christian convert or as slave or both, that they are in some sense now "partners" in Onesimus, even as they have been partners in the faith (v 17).[24]

(c) Ownership covered every single aspect of the slave's life (note the recognition of ownership until the owner himself decides to terminate it [v. 15]; also note the bartering with regard to the possibility of compensation, [vv. 18–19]). Accordingly, Paul refers to Philemon's rights: ὑπὲρ σοῦ (v. 13); χωρὶς δὲ τῆς σῆς γνώμης (v. 14). The slave is completely without support and completely dependent on the master.

> From the slave's perspective, he was bereft of the group ties that could provide him with alternative sources of strength and therefore was totally dependent on his master for security and livelihood. From his master's perspective, he was bereft of conflicting loyalties and therefore totally devoted. Like an "empty vessel" (Phil 2:7), he could be turned to any use that would advance his master's goals.[25]

Continued dependency is simply assumed (and affirmed) by Paul.

(d) In Phlm, it is unquestioningly accepted that Onesimus' fate lies completely in the hands of his owner (παρακαλῶ [vv. 9–10]; also note the assumption that returning to his master is the "correct" thing for Onesimus to do, despite the possibility of punishment [vv. 12.14.15.17.19]). In this connection, the wider context of *fugitivus/fugitivarius* is relevant, even if Onesimus was not a runaway slave. Ownership required the management of the slave's absences or presences; runaway slaves were punishable by death; and if they were not killed, they were branded.[26] Onesimus' being, his entire existence, was at all times framed by the reality of ownership, either directly by his master, or indirectly by the power of the *fugitivarii*.

(e) Paul's use of παρρησία, and the appeal to do τὸ ἀνῆκον (v. 8), paving the way for the request of the letter (v. 14), are important. Though absolute power was assigned to ownership, the "good" owner must be the virtuous "good man", the man with self-control. Part of Paul's persuasive power lies in his presentation of himself as the virtuous man, a proper "owner" and "father" who exercises his authority with restraint.[27]

(f) The value of slaves was measured in terms of their usefulness to their masters and not in terms of their humanity. The reference to Onesimus' earlier uselessness and his usefulness now (v. 11), and the obvious concern regarding his usefulness to either Philemon or Paul (vv. 11.13), underline this aspect.

In this particular (rhetorical) situation, the practice of ownership / slavery is a manifestation of the principles of hierarchy and obedience. Paul and Philemon belonged to a higher class than Onesimus; they belonged to a class "located above that of slaves and freedmen".[28] It was this principle of hierarchy which made possible the *givenness* of the language used in Phlm. To heed the message, to be persuaded by its language, would imply the affirmation of hierarchy, as well as acknowledgement of the practice of ownership and the principle of usefulness.

Onesimus is *not* the subject of the letter. From the letter itself, we can only infer that the subject of the prayer with which Paul opens his request is the sharing of

20 This is the implication of the doctrine of slaves as property. Fate decided the status of slaves, hence this subhuman status was considered to be "natural" or "normal", as pointed out by P. Veyne, The Roman Empire, in: P. Veyne (ed.), A History of Private Life 1: From Pagan Rome to Byzantium, Cambridge, Mass. 1987, 5–234, here: 52; see also Garnsey, Ideas (see n. 7), 23–52.

21 A son received *emancipatio*, which contrasted fundamentally with the manumission of slaves: see G. Schiemann, Art. Emancipatio, DNP 3 (1997) 1006–1008.

22 For a summary of such critical opinions, see Garnsey, Ideas (see n. 7), 53–86.

23 Note the commercial language, ὀφείλειν, ἐλλογεῖν and ἀποτίνειν: see C.J. Martin, The Rhetorical Function of Commercial Language in Paul's Letter to Philemon (Verse 18), in: D.F. Watson (ed.), Persuasive Artistry: Studies in New Testament Rhetoric in Honor of George A. Kennedy (JSNT.S 50), Sheffield 1991, 321–337, here: 332f.; Fitzmyer, Philemon (see n. 9), 116f.

24 G. Feeley-Harnik, Is Historical Anthropology Possible? The Case of the Runaway Slave, in: G.M. Tucker/D.A. Knight (eds.), Humanizing America's Iconic Book: SBL, Centennial Addresses 1980 (BSNA 6), Chico 1982, 95–126, here: 121.

25 Ibid., 111.

26 For more information on the wide range of activities and legislation surrounding the *fugitivarius*, see D. Daube, Slave-Catching, JRev 64 (1952) 12–28. The point is that even the option of fleeing is *completely* determined and controlled by others.

27 For restraint as the mark of a good/virtuous slave-owner, see W.V. Harris, Restraining Rage: The Ideology of Anger Control in Classical Antiquity, Cambridge, Mass. 2001, 317–336. For the role of restraint in other Pauline arguments, see D.B. Martin, Paul without Passion: On Paul's Rejection of Desire in Sex and Marriage, in: Moxnes (ed.), Families (see n. 19), 201–214.

28 N.R. Petersen, Rediscovering Paul: Philemon and the Sociology of Paul's Narrative World, Philadelphia 1985, 172.

Philemon's faith (ἡ κοινωνία τῆς πίστεώς σου [v. 6]). Paul wants Philemon to obey him (and to actively spread the faith); and Onesimus is the means by which he seeks to achieve this end. Indeed, the question as to whether Onesimus, as a slave, has done Philemon an injustice by his absence, is not presented as a problem. What is taken for granted by both parties is Onesimus' position: Onesimus is the object of actions to be taken, about whom decisions will be made. The inferior status of Onesimus as property is assumed throughout the letter. Paul does not even mention Onesimus' action(s). Even the suggestions in respect of the adaptation of the status of Onesimus' person emphasise submission.

Paul introduces another discursive practice, namely that of kinship: Onesimus should no longer be defined as a "slave," but as his, Paul's "son" (v. 10). This redefinition of the status of Onesimus in terms of the kinship practice redefines his relationship to Philemon as well; Onesimus is now his "brother" (v. 16), but Philemon is the "brother" who has the most to gain. Paul employs the *topos* of the beneficial to "re-instate" Onesimus as the valuable slave.

The *topos* of the beneficial connects the slavery and kinship practices. As an absent slave, Onesimus is useless to Philemon, but as a brother he can again be properly present; and thus Philemon and Paul can benefit (vv. 11.15.16.20). The proper management of property (Onesimus) is to the advantage of the owners. Although the kinship terms are all denotatively familial, insider terms, they are connotatively the official signposts of a hierarchical cultural ethos.

Some possible violation of ownership practices seems to underlie the letter (i.e., certain "rights" of Philemon were possibly violated). Paul's introduction of the kinship terminology into the argument, along with the careful avoidance of any reference to possible offences (one could almost speak of Paul's mitigation of any possible offences by either or both parties [vv. 15–16]), entirely overlooks the slave's desire for freedom, and confirms him in his condition.[29] The

> ... pursuit of social harmony within the new community, while speaking the language of mutuality and reciprocity, refuses to acknowledge present injustice and the actual disequilibrium of power. It only weakly tries to mitigate the injustice of structures which it refuses fundamentally to challenge.[30]

Philemon is both "listener" and "decision-maker". Paul functions as the "speaker" with a particular interest in the outcome of the rhetorical act and exerts his influence to sway the decision in favour of his interests. Although the outcome of the rhetorical act is of direct interest to Onesimus, he exerts no influence, nor does he contribute any options. He functions simply as the topic of the discourse. Other persons mentioned are Timothy, Apphia and Archippus (vv. 1–2), as well as Epaphras, Mark, Aristarchus, Demas and Luke (vv. 23–24). The mentioning of these persons has persuasive significance, as they provide a more public character to the letter. It also cultivates goodwill.

29 G. Shaw, The Cost of Authority: Manipulation and Freedom in the New Testament, London 1983, 137.
30 Ibid., 134.

Philemon is depicted as the decision-maker, but the relationship between Paul and Philemon is not equal. Paul sets the parameters by highlighting Philemon's exemplary and obedient behaviour, and he circumscribes their relationship — and the interaction between them — in terms of a father-son affiliation. Paul also refers to himself as πρεσβύτης (v. 9); and even before he introduces Onesimus as the concern of this letter, he makes it quite clear that he is in a position to "command" (v. 8). Towards the end of the letter, Philemon is explicitly requested to be obedient (v. 21) and to prepare for Paul's visit (v. 22). Philemon is thus shown to be indebted to Paul. Despite the fact that Paul and Philemon probably belonged to the same social class, the principle of hierarchy made it possible to establish the relationship of a superior to a subordinate within the kinship pattern used by Paul. Philemon is a brother, but the "lesser" brother.

In the letter, Paul is persuading his audience that he has power even when he has no authority. Philemon's person is constructed via a recognition of his reputation and status. Philemon's status as the head of a household is recognised: He is portrayed as the man in control, the *vir bonus*, as can be seen in v. 14. By first asking for his consent, Paul recognises Philemon's status as the head of the household, capable of being an effective manager of that household. The "good man" is recognised as a calm and just slave-owner in the letter. As a matter of fact, the probability of injustice is only imputed to Onesimus (v. 18).

Despite the recognition of his status and reputation, Philemon's inferior position in relation to Paul pervades the letter. Paul maintains the right to command (v. 8), to expect obedience (v. 21), to require reciprocal benefit (v. 19), and to identify both Onesimus and Philemon as brothers (v. 16), while his own status as father is implicit. Thus, throughout the letter, we find the principle of hierarchy.

III. Making Slave Bodies

Obedience, submission and ownership as discursive practices have far-reaching ramifications in historical contexts. Discussions of slavery in Paul's world tend to focus on the legal aspects underlying the system, and are usually limited to descriptions of the range of conditions in

which slaves lived and worked.[31] If we consider slavery as social death, without focusing exclusively on the property relationship involved, and if we take the *compulsory nature of the slave's relation to his/her master* properly into account, it becomes possible to adopt an interpretive and analytical stance towards this social institution. Considering the differentiating characteristics of behaviour (of *human beings*) is a useful way to deal with anachronism.[32]

> First, slavery has been one of the most ubiquitous of human institutions, and has existed in many places. It has been present in societies dominated by all major religions and ideologies, and had legally lasted in some places into the second half of the twentieth century—if not more informally in places until the present day. Although there are important differences in its economic and legal basis, certain characteristics regarding who could be enslaved or who could be bought and sold had important similarities, and the study of these differences and similarities provides a useful basis for numerous comparative studies related to the understanding of human behavior and social institutions. Second, slavery, when it existed, should not be examined in isolation from other institutions and happenings at that or other times. Thus it is important to trace the various linkages of slavery with the nonslave aspects of different societies. Third, related to the second, the previously sharp line between slavery as *the* evil and other labor and social systems that are therefore seen as quite different, and thus somehow more acceptable, has now become blurred, pointing to the usefulness of more detailed comparisons of the legalities and actualities of various types of social and labor institutions.[33]

Finley's insistence on an "objective" and non-anachronistic perspective when writing about ancient slavery is well-known.[34] However, as important as a dispassionate and impartial stance may be, we *do* need to figure out how a society could develop *and maintain* slavery — or at least, we need to explore some of the factors involved. Claims of objectivity cannot be employed in order to avoid confronting the reality of

31 This tendency is probably related to the problems in defining slavery. For useful analyses, see O. Patterson, Slavery, ARSoc 3 (1977) 407–449, here: 431–433; M.I. Finley, Ancient Slavery and Modern Ideology, London 1983, 67–78; D.B. Davis, Looking at Slavery from Broader Perspectives, AHR 105 (2000) 452–466; idem, Reflections on Abolitionism and Ideological Hegemony, AHR 92 (1987) 797–812. It is imperative that New Testament scholarship should move beyond the listing of legal aspects regulating the situation within which slavery operated, or merely providing descriptions of the circumstances of (some) slaves.

32 With regard to slavery, Patterson argues that violent domination, natal alienation, and degradation are the "constituent elements" of the social death that defines slavery and distinguishes it from other conditions: see idem, Death (see n. 8), 13; idem, Slavery as Social Institution, IESBS 21 (2001) 14146–14152, here: 14147. Such elements of human behaviour cannot simply be dismissed as being culture-related and context-bound. In a discussion of Plautus' *Rudens* (952–955, Palaestra's cry), Patterson, Death (see n. 8), 12, makes the following comment:

> Whoever wrote [these words] knew, in a profound way, what slavery really meant: the direct and insidious violence, the namelessness and invisibility, the endless personal violation, and the chronic inalienable dishonour.

33 S.L. Engerman, Slavery at Different Times and Places, AHR 105 (2000) 480–484, here: 480.

34 See Finley, Slavery (see n. 31), 11–66.

continuities that extend across time and place. An approach that suggests that "slavery" is something "over there", "in the past", a "product of its times", is not necessarily objective — and is definitely incomplete.

The extent of slavery in Graeco-Roman times may lead one to underestimate the immense challenges of maintaining a slave society. Given the numbers of people involved and the complexities of maintaining a slave society, reference to the legal system alone cannot explain the survival and "success" of the slave system. In addition, we should not underestimate the considerable "power" of slaves. That is, such a system can only operate efficiently with considerable cooperation and support from the slaves themselves.

> As a class and as individuals, slaves are always exploited, but the individual slave is frequently in a good position to provide the master with a poor return on his investment, to cheat him, to rob him, damage his property, or make him liable to others for property damage ... and even assault and kill him. Moreover, the slave, exploited himself, has the clearest reason to exploit the master. The main question, then, is how to maximize the benefits of slavery for the owner.[35]

To achieve such benefits, more was required than a mere legalisation of the system. Social stability necessitated conditions that were conducive to compliance, as well as a reduction of the potential for resistance on the part of the slaves; and to this end, slave-owners granted various incentives and rewards which catered to their slaves' interests. Roman authors were well aware of the effectiveness of such mechanisms of social control. Bradley[36] points out how two of the incentives and rewards mentioned by Roman writers, namely family life and manumission, actually functioned in the everyday lives of slaves:

> [M]asters reinforced this system of relatively generous treatment with a constant counterpoint of violence in order to secure their ends. Together the generosities and climate of fear which can be seen to surround servile life help to explain the survival over time of the Roman slavery system.[37]

Herein lies the significance of Bradley's study: the insight that the brutality implicit in the institution of slavery, and the obvious humanity with which (at least some) individual slaves were treated, are not contradictory. Rather, they were alternative strategies by means of which slave-owners managed to obtain obedience or at least acquiescence from their slaves. Bradley maintains that self-interest rather than humanitarianism or a growing mitigation of slavery dictated the apparent generosity of owners in giving their slaves holidays, family life, or even manumission.

35 A. Watson, Roman Slave Law, Baltimore etc. 1987, 1.

36 See K.R. Bradley, Slaves and Masters in the Roman Empire: A Study in Social Control, Brussels 1984, 113–137, 141.

37 Ibid., 45.

It is also important to keep in mind that the "conflicting" tendencies of rigid, forceful subordination of slaves, on the one hand, and protection of slaves against abuses, on the other, characterise slave systems across the ages.[38]

Bradley draws specific attention to the role of manumission. A major factor in the experience of slaves was the anticipation by many slaves of some form of emancipation (and citizenship in cases where a slave was owned by a Roman). "Since manumission was normally the reward for years of loyalty and obedience, it would have functioned as an effective socialization into an attitude of subservience and compliance"[39].

Finley describes manumission as "the most complete metamorphosis one can imagine"[40] in juristic terms. Clearly the promise or possibility of manumission provided various mechanisms of control. The anticipation of becoming a freedman or -woman encouraged a slave to exercise self-discipline and work hard — behaviour that was rewarded in two ways. Such conduct was usually the quickest means to accumulate the substantial funds that could be offered to an owner in exchange for manumission — usually much more than enough to buy a younger replacement. It also provided an example to other slaves of the kind of attitude that an owner would wish to encourage by willingness to manumit, that is, to reward faithful work and loyalty. The many former slaves throughout the Empire were living proof that slavery did not have to be a permanent state. On the other hand, owners could punish disloyal slaves by including in their wills a clause prohibiting their heirs from ever manumitting these slaves.[41]

Manumission facilitated the ancient slave system immensely, and that is the crucial point that needs to be grasped. The concept of manumission not only presupposes slavery; it also presupposes the importance of selected and controlled freedom. The point is not that freedom

38 See J.E. Mason, Social Death and Resurrection: Slavery and Emancipation in South Africa, Charlottesville 2005, 43–46. Mitigation and emancipation not only presuppose continuing subordination; they also affirm and justify participation in exploitative hierarchies: see Davis, Reflections (see n. 31), 797–800.

39 C.S. de Vos, Once a Slave, Always a Slave? Slavery, Manumission and Relational Patterns in Paul's Letter to Philemon, JSNT 82 (2001) 89–105, here: 98.

40 Finley, Slavery (see n. 31), 97.

41 The fairly limited extent of actual manumissions, together with the intricacies of patronage and individual contexts and the lack of realistic alternatives, should also be considered. For more on the diversity and complexities of manumission, see K.R. Bradley, Slavery and Society at Rome (KTAH), Cambridge 1994, 154–165. The philosopher Epictetus, himself an ex-slave, pointed out that the slave who thought only of gaining his freedom might be reduced, when he was manumitted, to "slavery much more severe than before" (2.1.27).

was possible, but that freedom was controlled by a very rigid system. By definition, manumission entailed a concept of freedom that necessitated *participation* in slavery. The acceptance and support of the system of slavery comprised the main achievement of Roman manumission.

Slavery is also a relation of *domination*. Cut off from all support, the slave was *totally* at the mercy of the owner.[42] The impact of such isolation was that all options for *any* kind of relationship for a slave were dependent on obedient submission to the master's/mistress's wishes. In this way, the *essence* of the institution, as exploitation, was managed by means of subservience and humiliation.

Ancient slavery, moreover, was an institution fundamentally based on *violence*.[43] It was by violent means that the support/social network of the enslaved was destroyed. Though physical violence may often have been limited, the *threat* of violence was omnipresent.

Augustine, in the course of praising his mother Monica, tells of an incident concerning Monica and her mother-in-law. (This incident is cited by Augustine as an illustration of Monica's good character.) Tension arose between the two women because the household slaves were gossiping about Monica. However, she continued to show deference to her mother-in-law, whose affection she thus regained. To prevent further occurrences of such incidents, the mother-in-law arranged with her son to have the slaves whipped. After a severe beating, the chastened slaves caused "no more problems" and harmony prevailed between mother- and daughter-in-law (Conf. 9.9.20).

The typical disregard of the slaves, the casual mention of physical punishment, the completely *incidental* reference to the slaves in the paean to a mother, all comprise an excellent illustration of the essential features of slavery: Enslaved people were mere tools, comprising a "background" to "real" people and "serious" life. The transformation of persons into such "things" was effectuated by means of violence. Slaves were acquired by violence (whether direct or indirect), subdued

42 This separation is a defining characteristic of slavery:

> [S]laves were universally considered as outsiders, this being the major difference between them and serfs. They were natally alienated persons, deracinated in the act of their, or their ancestors', enslavement, who were held not to belong to the societies in which they lived, even if they were born there. They lacked all legal or recognized status as independent members of a community (Patterson, Institution (see n. 32), 14147).

43 The "power of the master was usually total, if not in law, almost always in practice. Violence was the basis of this power. Even where laws forbade the gratuitous killing of slaves, it was rare for masters to be prosecuted for murdering them, due to the universally recognized right of masters to punish their slaves, and to severe constraints placed on slaves in giving evidence in courts of law against their masters, or free persons generally" (ibid.).

by violence and maintained by violence. There is *nothing* innocent about the command that slaves should give "single-minded obedience" to their masters "with fear and trembling" as if to Christ.[44]

Underlying all of this is the hierarchical value system with a discourse of "more valuable" and "less valuable" bodies. As a system, slavery is a one-way flow of benefits, and only a tiny segment of the concerned society reaps those benefits. Slavery was "profitable, very profitable"[45] for the *few*. Such a system *requires* the dissemination of the self and the other in binary terms, of *higher* and *lower* positions, with few "on top" and many "below". The principle of hierarchy forces the establishment of identity and authority to be couched in terms of owner and owned. The hierarchical discourse results in the continuous dislocation and transformation of bodies — yes, of bodies, because we know that this was a language that cut deep into flesh.

Violent behaviour is also closely associated with hierarchy. As a discursive presentation, hierarchy can only facilitate the continuing objectification and subjection of others,[46] and slavery is a very ugly manifestation of the powerful and dangerous interconnections of domination, hierarchy and violence. It is violence that makes hierarchy so profitable.

The idea of hierarchy raised here is not simply concerned with a particular hierarchy in society, but with its "givenness". The principle of hierarchy as practised by Paul functions where the notion of *gradation* itself is accepted and aspired to in a society — where there is a fundamental acknowledgement of divinely legitimated *difference*.[47] Such a system which creates and perpetuates distinctions provides the symbolic machinery for the production of endless forms of enmity and violence. "Everyone does not receive divine blessings. Some are cursed – with dearth and with death — as though there were a cosmic shortage of prosperity."[48]

44 Eph 6,5; see Barn 19,7, Did 4,11. The statement that "Slaves, male and female, should not be despised but neither let them become conceited (ἀλλὰ μηδὲ αὐτοὶ φυσιούσθωσαν), that they should serve the more to the glory of God ... and that they should not wish to be set free at the public cost, lest they become slaves of lust" (IgnPol 4,3), drew the following comment from G.E.M. de Ste. Croix, The Class Struggle in the Ancient Greek World: from the Archaic Age to the Arab Conquests, Ithaca 1981, 420:

> I confess that I find the last phrase somewhat inconsequential, nor can I see exactly how an even more intense degree of labour on the part of the slave can enhance the glory of God.

45 M.I. Finley, A Peculiar Institution?, TLS 3887 (July 2, 1976) 819–821, here: 821.

46 See K.J. Ferraro, The Dance of Dependency: A Genealogy of Domestic Violence Discourse, Hypatia 11/4 (1996) 77–91.

47 The divine structuring of inheritance, descent and the conferral of symbolic property was widely discussed by ancient authors: see, e.g., Garnsey, Ideas (see n. 7), 157–235.

48 R.M. Schwartz, The Curse of Cain: The Violent Legacy of Monotheism, Chicago 1997, xi.

Even when Paul apparently advocates equality, the principle of hierarchy determines the essential characteristics of the new relationships proposed. For instance, Gal 3,28 is embedded in hierarchy, as circumscribed by the terms "seed of Abraham", "brothers" and "heirs".[49] Paul apparently colligates different groups such as "Jew" and "Greek", "slave" and "free", "male" and "female", so that the differences no longer apply; but these categories are transferred to a particular group called "sons of God" (v. 26), who are designated as "Abraham's seed" and as "heirs" (v. 29). Paul aims to convey prestige and status, and he does so through the principle of hierarchy. The Greek is to be considered as a "son of the Jewish God", the female as a "son", as "seed of Abraham". The condition of the "no longer slave" actually merely comprises a contrast to that of the "bad" slaves still in bondage to beings who by nature are no gods (4,8–10). Hierarchy is not abrogated, the male is still in the superior position, and freedom is still the quality associated with the superior position of status. Divine preference fundamentally structures the discursive web undergirding the value system. Violence (as rejection, negation and eventual destruction) cannot be excluded.

Slavery is thus the symptom (or manifestation) of a comprehensive system of values; it is maintained by a distinct discourse. The discursive web of hierarchy not only supports slavery, but also facilitates the violence at the very heart of the system. The obedience and submission evoked by Paul's letter is bound up with the situation of slavery. It is not so much the immediate purpose of Paul's letter that is at issue, but its ultimate purpose.

IV. Self-Reflexive Discourse, Freedom and Philemon

History unequivocally proves that Christianity is not incompatible with slavery. At the same time it must be maintained that slavery is *fundamentally* wrong. This evaluative stance is based, in part, on our Christian heritage. Yet, Christian traditions could not effectively exclude slavery — and the role of the principle of hierarchy must be seen as a contributing factor. It is as a result of this hierarchy and hierarchical categorisation that biblical traditions sometimes contribute to social death.

49 The patriarchal tenor of this text has been noted by J.M. Lieu, Circumcision, Women and Salvation, NTS 40 (1994) 358–370, here: 369; see also L. Fatum, Women, Symbolic Universe and Structures of Silence: Challenges and Possibilities in Androcentric Texts, StTh 43 (1989) 61–80.

Two ways in which we can redefine and reconceptualise our interaction with Paul's letters are to weave *our* discursive webs with the principle of mutuality, and to cultivate thinking about freedom as embodied.

In a way, slavery is a view of human beings, of humanity and of what it means to be "free". A mere paraphrasing of ancient descriptions obscures the importance of asking "hard" questions about what freedom would entail, and of acknowledging that such questions can never ignore the principle of hierarchy.

In *our* discursive practices, both mutuality and freedom are conceptually deeply influenced by Christian tradition. It is, however, crucial that we should not ignore (or underestimate) those other impulses which distort relationships into exploitation undergirded by violence. There are alternatives to violence as an "instrument" for achieving ends. Great effects can come about through participatory acting, that is, "where people are *with* others and neither for nor against them – that is in sheer human togetherness"[50]. Even though Arendt is not discussing slavery as such, her argument about evil is quite relevant. She argues that evil (such as the Nazi destruction of Jews) is caused not so much by ideology, nor by a bizarre devotion to sadism – rather, it has its deepest roots in thoughtlessness *and the unwillingness to place oneself in another's position.*[51]

With such strategies in mind, it is proposed that one should also read Paul imaginatively, and against the grain. Of the apostle who explicitly claimed to have been intensely concerned with *moral bondage*, we can and should expect more.[52]

Our reading should raise some actual practical (embodied) questions.[53] How should Onesimus address Philemon? How should Philemon greet Onesimus? How should Onesimus address Paul? Who determines (and how) who may speak first? Should Onesimus now sleep in his own room, in the slave quarters or in the same room as Philemon? Are they only brothers "in the Lord", when they worship? What

50 H. Arendt, The Human Condition, Chicago 1958, 180. Arendt writes about "true" political action which must be viewed as the opposite of violence, coercion or rule. In her conception of such action, the sharing of words and deeds by diverse equals, whose acting together generates a power quite different from the forceful ability to impose one's will which we normally identify with political power, should be our ideal. See also H. Arendt, Communicative Power, in: S. Lukes (ed.), Power (RSPT), London 1986, 59–74.

51 H. Arendt, Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil, New York ²1964.

52 See J.D.M. Derrett, The Functions of the Epistle to Philemon, ZNW 79 (1988) 63–91, here: 65.

53 See J.M.G. Barclay, Paul, Philemon and the Dilemma of Christian Slave-Ownership, NTS 37 (1991) 161–186: the "dilemma of Christian slave-ownership".

about the punishment of slaves – how is "brother Onesimus" to deal with other slaves?

It is easy to *talk* about spiritual slavery and spiritual freedom. It is far, far more difficult (and costly) to *live* without violence; and the facilitation of material, physical mutuality is really challenging. It is remarkable that Dunn can make the following claim:

> Such teaching [v. 16] put into practice from the heart would transform and enrich any social relationship, whatever its continuing outward form, and if sustained over time was bound to undermine and diminish any radical inequality between the partners.[54]

How a social relationship can be "enriched" – let alone transformed – without change in its "outward form" is beyond my understanding. Dunn's assertion merely amounts to a reiteration of the principle of hierarchy; it is reminiscent of the "reasoning" of the patronising master managing his subordinates.

It is also easy to emphasise historical distance, and to underestimate the dramatic impact of the role that the violent, hierarchical underside of Christianity played in history – and still plays. I am mindful of Frederick Cooper's recent criticism of postcolonial critics' tendency towards "leapfrogging legacies"[55]. As New Testament scholars, we cannot simply leapfrog over the disturbing role that Christianity's foundational texts played in connecting obedience and exploitation, in propping up authority with violence, in creating the conditions for social death.

Slavery is the manifestation of a comprehensive system of values; it is maintained by a distinct discourse. Central elements of this value system are present in the New Testament and other early Christian texts. A variety of readings of the New Testament consolidates and encourages these elements. This does not happen intentionally, but it has become vital to address these issues.

A situational and embodied understanding of economic and political relations – one that links the lived experiences of the physical body

54 Dunn, Philemon (see n. 7), 307.

55 F. Cooper, Postcolonial Studies and the Study of History, in: A. Loomba et al. (eds.), Postcolonial Studies and Beyond, Durham/London 2005, 401–422, here: 405. As examples of "leapfrogging legacies", Cooper refers to critiques in the U.S.A. that attribute black poverty to the legacy of slavery, but ignore the period of urbanisation and industrialisation between 1863 and 1963, and to M. Mamdani's allusion to the colonial policy of the 1920s and 1930s as the cause of authoritarianism and ethnicity in Africa in the 1980s and 1990s, without any account being taken of dramatic economic and political developments in the 1950s.

with the social, cultural, and body politic[56] — requires honest and consistent self-reflexive criticism.

Self-critical reflection is an essential element in striving towards freedom and transforming authority. Every "method" (or combination of methods) is a discourse of meaning, a rhetoric of possibilities, an invitation to see the world "rightly". We cannot simply add these aspects up, or irresponsibly select the method that suits us. We do know that no single methodological system is complete; therefore we adapt, trying out various perspectives.[57] But the contingency of readings and the recognition that interpretations are never fully methodologically correct should not blind us to the underlying thrust of our perspectives. It is not the "method" that is at issue, but rather the "world" seen by means of that method. To select or construct a method is to take a stand on what the world is, how it should be perceived and how it could be.

What I am suggesting is thus a radical historicisation of history ("always historicise") and I take this as the starting point for a reflexive historian, going on to suggest that, for subsequent historical work, you develop a self-consciously held (and acknowledged) position.[58]

V. Concluding Remarks

The New Testament texts *do* things, but it is by means of interpretations that they construct and reproduce social relations. It is the text-in-reading which reinforces current cultural norms and propagates them for the future. In this study I have set two parameters for a discussion of Phlm:

(1) It is not satisfactory to merely paraphrase Paul's statements on slavery/slaves; attempts to *understand* the phenomenon and *evaluate* his ideas must be made.

(2) It is misleading to invoke cultural and historical determination in order to justify or explain the lack of constructive, critical responses to slavery by early Christians.

There are many possible claims that can be made about Phlm and slavery, but three things seem clear:

(1) Paul did not address the underlying issue of *violence*. The possibility that Paul's "proposal" concerning Onesimus may refer to manumission is not crucial. Slavery is the product of violence; violence requires the principle of hierarchy, the discourse of better/worse, good/unfavourable, strong/weak. To deal with slavery, its *violence* must be dealt with.

(2) Claims that Paul's views on slavery should not concern us that much, because he was a child of his time, when slavery was seen as "normal", are *extremely* problematic. One ends up with ethical inconsistencies (after all, we do not excuse other atrocities such as cannibalism and apartheid on the grounds that they are, or were, "justifiable and normal" in their contexts).

(3) Uncritical talk about those who accepted slavery actually denies them their humanity. To claim that such persons did not know better or had no alternatives is to deny that they *could* have done better with regard to suffering and abuse. Of course they did not have our values; but to state that they could not have been aware of the anguish and exploitation is to imply that they were inhuman.

With regard to the enduring problems of exploitation and violence, we tend to think in terms of finding *the* cause, to consider the big events, to ask for the "great hero" to save us. Actually, the real challenge is to notice how we establish patterns of passivity in individuals, which are sustained through discursive practices of hierarchy. We need to be aware of how, by means of authority undergirded by violence, we tend to become disconnected in the midst of life, disconnected from others and from bodily experiences. It is this disconnectedness which comprises the setting for abuse and victimisation. We need to be vigilant, in order to discern how easily and almost imperceptibly our practices tend to slip away from mutuality and freedom.

Victor Klemperer wrote that it is not the big things that are important to him, "but the everyday life of tyranny, which gets forgotten. A thousand mosquito bites are worse than a blow to the head. I observe, note down the mosquito bites."[59]

56 The connection between discursive practices, the principle of hierarchy and embodiment is analogous to an approach informed by symbolic anthropology: see N. Scheper-Hughes/M.M. Lock, The Mindful Body: A Prolegomenon to Future Work in Medical Anthropology, MAQ 1 (1987) 6–41.

57 See K. Jenkins, Re-Thinking History, London etc. 1991, 66.

58 Ibid., 69.

59 V. Klemperer, I Will Bear Witness: A Diary of the Nazi Years, 1942–1945: vol. 2, New York 1999, 308.

The Reception of the Letter to Philemon in the Early Church: Origen, Jerome, Chrysostom and Augustine

PAUL B. DECOCK

I. Introduction

The commentary of Jerome,[1] the homilies of John Chrysostom,[2] and a reference to Phlm 20 in the discussions of St. Augustine on the issue of things to be enjoyed (*frui*) and things to be used (*uti*) in Doctr. Christ. 1.33.37 give us a sense of the ways in which Phlm was read in the Early Church. It should be of special interest that of late, several scholars have come to the conclusion that the commentary by Jerome substantially reflects the now lost commentary by Origen, which "in all likelihood, represents the first commentary ever written on the epistle."[3]

Furthermore, according to Bammel, "Origen, like Jerome, started his Pauline exegesis with a commentary on the last and shortest epistle, that to Philemon."[4] This attention given to the letter in the Early Church is also evident from the fact that both Jerome and Chrysostom devote their Prologues to a defence of the letter against those who reject it.

In order to appreciate the reception of Phlm, it is important to bear in mind the particular ways in which biblical texts were read in the

1 Written in 387/8, according to J.N.D. Kelly, Jerome: His Life, Writings, and Controversies, New York 1975, 145. For the Latin text, I use F. Bucchi (ed.), Commentarii in epistvlas Pavli apostoli ad Titvm et ad Philemonem (CChr.SL 77C), Turnhout 2003.

2 Preached in Constantinople in 402, according to J.N.D. Kelly, Golden Mouth: The Story of John Chrysostom — Ascetic, Preacher, Bishop, Grand Rapids 1985, 133. I use the text and numbering of the second edition of Bernard de Montfaucon, Sancti Joannis Chrysostomi opera omnia editio altera, ed. Th. Fix, Paris 1838, and the English translation by Philip Schaff in: NPNF 13, 545–557.

3 R.E. Heine, In Search of Origen's Commentary on Philemon, HThR 93 (2000) 117–133, here: 133. According to C. Bammel, Origen's Pauline Prefaces and the Chronology of his *Pauline Commentaries*, in: G. Dorival/A. le Boulluec (eds.), Origeniana Sexta: Origène et la Bible/Origen and the Bible; Actes du Colloquium Origenianum Sextum, Chantilly, 30 août – 3 septembre 1993 (BEThL 118), Leuven 1995, 495–513, here: 496, Jerome's commentaries on Gal, Eph, Tit and Phlm "are largely plagiarised from Origen." This is also the view of Bucchi, Commentarii (see n. 1), LIV, who refers to older literature on the issue.

4 Bammel, Prefaces (see n. 3), 511.

church. The focus was on the divine meaning of the texts for the readers, although questions of origin were in no way neglected, as we can gather from Jerome's commentary. In fact, Jerome devotes several lines to arguing that the letter was written in Rome at the same time as the Letters to the Philippians, the Colossians and the Ephesians; furthermore, he argues that Philemon stayed at Colossae (82–137).[5] However, the ultimate aim of reading the biblical texts was not to obtain factual information, but to ensure that the readers would be moved and guided in their commitment to God. Accordingly, several scholars have pointed out a greater affinity between the pre-modern approach and the post-modern approach.[6]

Furthermore, Early Christian interpretation, at least from the end of the second century AD, was firmly rooted in the practices and approaches of Greco-Roman philosophy, rhetoric, and history writing. It is widely accepted[7]

> that Origen approached his work as a biblical commentator in a definite tradition of commentary literature. He had gone to the philosophical schools of Alexandria, listened to the lectures introducing the study of Aristotle and Plato, learned their methodology, and applied it to his commentaries on the Bible.[8]

These philosophical introductions paid special attention to the aim or theme, the usefulness (τὸ χρήσιμον), the authenticity, the place of the treatise in the order of reading, the title, and the division into heads. At the end of his brief study on Origen's introduction to John's Gospel, Heine[9] concludes:

> Origen treats four of the six standard topics discussed in the introductions in philosophical commentaries, namely (1) the order, (2) the division into heads, (3) the aim or theme of the treatise, and (4) the reason for the title. He also treats one, or possibly two, of the points treated in the general introductions to Aristotle's philosophy, namely what sort of person the interpreter must be, and perhaps also the qualities necessary in the student.[10]

5 The numbers are those of the lines in the edition of Bucchi, Commentarii (see n. 1).

6 See, for instance, A.C. Thiselton, New Horizons in Hermeneutics: The Theory and Practice of Transforming Biblical Reading, Grand Rapids 1992, 146. C. O'Regan, De doctrina christiana and Modern Hermeneutics, in: D.W.H. Arnold/P. Bright (eds.), De doctrina christiana: A Classic of Western Culture (CJAn 9), Notre Dame 1995, 217–243, here: 222, comments on Hans Frei's classic work, The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative:

> And thus, perhaps, the real question being asked in Frei's text is not how one is to understand the relation between a moribund hermeneutic modernity and a postmodern understanding representing a live and livable option, but rather, what is the relation of postmodern to premodern construal given the structural interruption and disfigurement of the modern crisis of reference.

7 See I. Hadot, Les introductions aux commentaires exégétiques chez les auteurs néoplatoniciens et les auteurs chrétiens, in: M. Tardieu (ed.), Les règles de l'interprétation (Patrimoines), Paris 1987, 99–122; B. Neuschäfer, Origenes als Philologe (SBA 18), Basel 1987; R.E. Heine, The Introduction to Origen's Commentary on John Compared with the Introductions to the Ancient Philosophical Commentaries on Aristotle, in: Dorival/Le Boulluec, Origeniana (see n. 3), 3–12.

8 Heine, Introduction (see n. 7), 12.

9 Ibid.

It is important to point out the special interest in the reader or interpreter, which can be seen in the concern for the right order of reading (Jo. 1,14–23a),[11] which is then shown to require certain moral and religious qualities in the reader. For Origen (Jo. 1,23–24),

> No one ... can grasp the meaning (τὸν νοῦν) of John's Gospel who has not leaned on Jesus' breast and received Mary to be his mother. ... This, in turn, leads Origen, via Gal. 2.20, to a quotation from Paul ... "But we have the mind (νοῦν) of Christ, that we may know the things that have been given to us by Christ" [1 Cor 2,16.12].[12]

This focus on the readers of the texts is also seen in the emphasis on the effects of reading, *enjoyment* and/or *usefulness*. The study by Studer[13] is very helpful in this regard. He points out that these two issues have not received sufficient attention in Early Christian studies. With regard to *utilitas*, Early Christian interpretation easily recognized this aspect as one of its primary interests; it was already clearly expressed in the Scriptures (1Cor 10,1–13; Gal 4,21–31; 2Tim 3,16) and was obviously taken over from the Jewish approach to interpretation. Studer[14] refers to texts of Origen, Basil, Gregory of Nyssa, John Chrysostom, Theodoret of Cyrus and Augustine. The second aim, *delectare*, met with a more ambiguous reception. However, despite views such as "Non loquendi decor, sed ratio vivendi,"[15] the aspect of beauty and *delectatio* was regularly highlighted with regard to the Psalms,[16] and even with regard to the biblical narratives.[17]

The usefulness of Scripture was of course understood in terms of salvation: Reading Scripture was meant to edify the readers, to lead

10 Hadot, Introductions (see n. 7), 111–119, shows a similar correspondence in Origen's preface to his commentary on the Song of Songs.

11 See Heine, Introduction (see n. 7), 9:

> Origen has constructed a pyramid whose apex is the Gospel of John. This is not an order of reading, however, as with the treatises of Aristotle, but an order of *perspective*.

12 Ibid., 10. As is well known, Origen made similar remarks about the maturity required in order to understand the Song of Songs (see R.P. Lawson, Origen's Prologue, in: Origen, The Song of Songs: Commentary and Homilies; Transl. and Annot. by R.P. Lawson [ACW 26], Westminster, Md/London 1957, 22f.).

13 B. Studer, *Delectare et prodesse*: Zu einem Schlüsselwort der patristischen Exegese, in: Mémorial Dom Jean Gribomont (1920–1986) (SEA 27), Rome 1988, 555–581.

14 Ibid., 563.

15 "Not eloquence of language, but guidance for life." Or., Hom. in Ex. 1.1 (Studer, *Delectare* [see n. 13], 564).

16 See Studer, *Delectare* (see n. 13), 563–566.

17 Christian interpreters emphasised the difference between myths or fables and biblical histories, but they would nevertheless have been able to see an allegorical sense in these narratives, paying attention to both *utilitas* and *delectatio*; see already 2Macc 2,25 (see Studer, *Delectare* [see n. 13], 566f.).

them by means of a process towards an ever more authentic Christian life. Origen, who had an enormous influence on the interpretation of Scripture in Western as well as in Eastern Christianity, articulated the stages of the Christian progress in terms of three types of processes: *purification* (moral growth), *enlightenment* (knowing how to discern what is absolute and what is relative; only God is absolute and all the rest relative), and *union* with God. The three books of Solomon, Proverbs, Qohelet, and the Song of Songs, in that order, lead the person through each of these stages.[18] This interest in the idea of progress in the Christian life is also expressed in a number of other ways: Origen spoke of a series of seven songs which the Scriptures teach us to sing, of which the Song of Songs is the climax.[19] Gregory of Nyssa, in his Life of Moses, treated the three encounters of Moses with God as three stages in Moses' spiritual progress. Augustine was able to present the series of the Beatitudes in Matthew, combined with the gifts of the Spirit in Isaiah 11, as a spiritual path from fear of God to wisdom (Doctr. Christ. 2.7.9–11). Furthermore, according to Augustine, the test of a correct reading and understanding of the Scriptures is that of whether it builds up love of God and neighbour; if not, the interpretation has missed the point (see Doctr. Christ. 1.35.39–40.44 and the reference to 1Tim 1,5).

Finally, the ancient approach to the interpretation of texts, unlike the modern view, did not limit itself to the articulation of the view of the author, but used the text as a stepping stone for a further exploration of the subject under discussion. Galen, for instance, was often a creative, participant reader, who modernised the views of Hippocrates, in spite of the fact that he claimed to interpret Hippocrates on the basis of the latter's own frame of reference. For him, as for many of his contemporaries, explanation (exegesis) moved back and forth between explanation of the text and explanation of the subject under discussion. Galen was not so much interested in a history of the development of medicine as in the *usefulness* of his explanation of Hippocrates.[20] Galen represented an approach which was widespread, from Plato down to Plotinus and Eusebius.[21] This creative form of exegesis, working out the implications of a text, developing what was present in embryonic form,

18 See Or., Cant. Prol. 4 (Origen, Song [see n. 12], 39–46).

19 See Or., Cant. Prol. 4 (Origen, Song [see n. 12], 46–50): Exod 15,1–19; Num 21,17–20; Deut 31,30–32,44; Judg 5,1–31; 2Sam 22,1–51; 1Chron 16,7–36. For a recent discussion, see J.C. King, Origen on the Song of Songs as the Spirit of Scripture: The Bridegroom's Perfect Marriage-Song (OTM), Oxford 2005, 226–231.

20 See J. Mansfeld, Prolegomena: Questions to Be Settled before the Study of an Author, or a Text (PhAnt 61), Leiden etc. 1994, 152–154.

21 Ibid., 155f.

> was applied on a large scale by pagans and Christians alike: by philosophers, critics and exegetes, by rhetoricians and orators, and by lawyers dealing with written laws, or testaments and similar documents.[22]

In the following discussion, we will illustrate how these early texts on Phlm demonstrate this focus on the usefulness of Scripture for salvation; secondly, we will consider the way in which Phlm 14 was explored in Jerome's commentary and in Chrysostom's second homily; and finally, we will pay special attention to the way in which Augustine struggled in order to reach the right understanding of the words *uti* and *frui*, which are found in his Latin text of Phlm 13 (*inutilis ... utilis*) and 20.

II. Usefulness for Salvation

1. John Chrysostom

Chrysostom devotes most of his introduction to the homilies to the question of the usefulness of the letter, in argument against those who claim that it was not worth incorporating this small letter in the collection of Paul, since it deals "with a small matter in behalf of one man" (772C). He replies that these small epistles deal with necessary issues; furthermore, he argues that a detailed account of all that the apostles did and said, even of their diet, their lodgings, and so on, would be most useful (πολλῆς ὠφελείας γέμει) (773A). He then describes a process by means of which even seeing the places where they sat or were imprisoned can lead to excitement and greater zeal (διανιστάμεθα καὶ προθυμότεροι γινόμεθα) (773A). Every aspect of the life of a spiritual person is of use (ὠφελεῖ) to those who hear about it. Finally, Chrysostom points out three important matters which are addressed in the letter, thus challenging the claim that the letter is superfluous (773B–774B). The first of these is related to the fact that, like Paul, we ought to be diligent in all matters; Paul was not ashamed to send back a runaway slave, a thief and a robber, with such positive recommendations. Secondly, we should not despair about the possibility of change in slaves, even "if they have proceeded to extreme wickedness." He adds, "much more ought we not to despair about the free." Thirdly, we ought not to with-

22 Ibid., 161. According to B.F. Meyer, A Tricky Business: Ascribing New Meaning to Old Texts, Gr. 71 (1990) 743–761, this separation between text and subject matter, or text and referent, in favour of the text can be linked with the work of D. Strauss; Meyer proposes the term "ascription of meaning" to refer to cases in which the interpretation is not restricted to the textual-historical meaning but ascribes new meaning to the texts. Some ascriptions are successful (Lonergan on Pascal) while others fail (Northrop Frye's Great Code).

draw slaves from their masters without the latter's consent.[23] Here Chrysostom is particularly concerned about blasphemy against God among the Gentiles:

> But now many are reduced to the necessity of blasphemy, and of saying Christianity has been introduced into life for the subversion of everything, masters having their servants taken from them, and it is a matter of violence. (774B)[24]

He concludes the introduction to the homilies with the words: "For having gained already so many advantages (κερδάναντες)[25] from it, we shall gain more (κερδανοῦμεν) from the text." (774B)

2. Jerome

In the Prologue, Jerome also responds to arguments against the canonicity of the letter. Some, he says, argue that this is not a letter from Paul, or if it is from Paul, that it does not have anything which can *edify* one, or that it was not written to *teach* one (27–30).[26] However, he argues, the fact that it deals with a trivial issue (reflecting *humana imbecillitas*: 4 and 35) cannot be taken as a criterion in respect of canonicity, since several of the accepted letters contain such passages. The Holy Spirit is not chased away when one occupies oneself with the needs of the body, as if these were sins (43–47). What saddens the Spirit is vice and sin, while even simple acts may be rewarded with divine sonship.[27] According to Jerome, those who reject the letter because of its brevity and simplicity do not understand the power and wisdom hidden in it. He then indicates that his commentary will attempt to bring these qualities out, through the prayers of the readers and the working of the Holy Spirit in him as commentator (65–69). In order to reveal this hidden power and wisdom, Jerome, following Origen, uses a variety of methods that were common in his day. For example, in his commentary on Phlm 6, he begins by correcting the Latin translation (286–290). The text he has quoted reads as follows: "ut communicatio fidei tuae evidens fiat in agnitione omnis boni quod in nobis est in Christo."[28] He replaces *evidens* with *efficax* or *operatrix*. This emphasises more clearly that faith and love must be efficacious; that is, these qualities need to be completed by means of action. Jerome then continues with a close scrutiny of the other words in the verse in order to show all the dimensions of a mature faith and love (290–311). The point is driven home to his readers by means of a rhetorical exclamation: "Quantis gradibus quantisque profectibus apostolicus in altiora sermo se tendit!"[29] This exclamation is followed by a series of parallel statements[30] which articulate the required steps to be taken, in respect of which Philemon is upheld as an example to be imitated. Here Jerome exploits the rhetorical method of praise and blame; a further example of this is found where the readers are induced to admire and imitate Paul's magnanimity: In the darkest misery of his imprisonment he only thinks about the gospel of Christ (373–377).

Jerome concludes his commentary (636–655) by reviewing the "Hebrew etymology" of the names of all those mentioned in the letter, although it is difficult to understand how he arrived at these "etymologies". He uses them to provide a kind of a summary of the letter. The point of this exercise may become somewhat clearer if we remember that he probably drew this material from Origen's commentary. For Origen, names, particularly Hebrew names, contain power to nourish what is good and to destroy what is evil, similarly to incantations.[31]

23 He refers to 1Cor 7.21, which he explicitly interprets as a recommendation not to opt out of slavery; this is further explained by means of 1Tim 6.1, "that the word of God not be blasphemed."

24 According to Kelly, Chrysostom (see n. 2), 99, the "council of Gangra in Paphlagonia had recently (c. 355) anathematised those who, on religious grounds, encouraged slaves to resist or break away from their masters." For another relevant text, see Jerome's Ep. 5.3, regarding the returning of a runaway slave of Florentinus (Kelly, Jerome [see n. 1], 50).

25 The noun was used earlier on: "But the greater part, not knowing the benefit that would result thence, proceed to censure it." (773A)

26 The numbers refer to the lines indicated in the CChr.SL edition.

27 As Jerome puts it in the Prologue (51–55):

> Otherwise, would it be a sin to give someone a cup of cold water (Matt 10,42), to wash the feet (John 13.5.14), to slaughter a calf (Lk 15.23), to prepare a lunch (Matt 22.4), since we know that because of these acts some are adopted as sons of God?

28 "So that the sharing of your faith may become *evident* in the recognition of all the good among us in Christ."

29 "With which great steps and with which great advances does the apostolic word direct its course towards the heights!" (297–298)

30 "Habet ... caritatem et fidem ... *sed* ... *non* ... **communicet**; **communicet** ... *sed* ... *non* **expleat** ...; **impleat** ... *sed* ... *non* ... **notionem**. Sit talis quoque qui et opus habeat et **scientiam**, *sed non* habet omnis boni ..." (298–304). Jerome is in fact elaborating on a series of steps towards perfection based on vv. 5f.; there must be communication in faith and love with everyone equally; the will to communicate in this manner must be realized in action; all aspects of one's action must be fully understood; all virtues are to be equally developed. Paul sees these fully realized in Philemon, in contrast to most of us. However, whatever good we praise in Philemon and whatever example we take from the apostles is good because it is received from Christ, who is its source (305–311).

31 In Philoc. 12, referring to the names in Josh 15,13–62, Origen asserts: Τὰ γὰρ ἐν ἡμῖν ἐπάδεται, καὶ τὰ μὲν κρείττονα τρέφεται, τὰ δὲ χείρονα καταργεῖται (12.2 [lines 25–26]). In Philoc. 12.1 (lines 28–30), Origen recalls 1Cor 14,14, in which Paul refers to such a situation, where the spirit is praying while the intellect remains without fruit. Philoc. 17 (= Cels. 1.24f. and 5.45f.) deals again with the power of the Hebrew words, in particular of the divine names in Hebrew, and why Christians do not use the names of the Greek god, Zeus. While incantations have power — the power is in the sounds of the words and not just in the concepts — the Hebrew names of God have exceptional power, since Hebrew is the original language of humanity. Origen accepts the Stoic

Jerome shows particular interest in Luke, whose name is mentioned last in Phlm 23–24. He first reminds his readers about Luke's medical profession and the fact that he wrote a Gospel and the Book of Acts; this then leads him to point out that "as often as his works are read in the churches, his *medicine* does not cease" (624f.). In this regard, it is important to bear in mind that Origen compares the Scriptures to a full set of medicinal plants for an able interpreter to use for healing (Philoc. 10.2). Jerome's commentary ends with a development of the "etymology" of the name of Luke, already mentioned in line 642, *ipse consurgens* — "he himself rises":

> And at last, from him who rising by means of himself, is daily increased and makes progress, while the world is filled by his Gospel, and increases as often as it builds up being heard and read. (654–656)[32]

III. Phlm 14: "not from necessity, but voluntary"

1. Jerome

Jerome first broaches a question raised by some people, as to why God has not created human beings in such a way that they would of necessity do what is good. According to him, God could have created humans in such a way that they would not be able to do evil, but then they would be good by necessity, not voluntarily, and therefore not really good, because: "Certainly, nothing can really be called good, except if it is voluntary" (411f.). Furthermore, in order for us to be similar to God, freedom of choice is required, as God is good by choice, not by necessity. If, however, we had been created good by necessity, we would no longer be similar to God. Therefore, by endowing us with our own free will, God made us more in his own image and likeness. Being like God is absolutely good, while being good by necessity is even in some way an evil (415–420).

view of the "natural" link between the sounds of words and their reference, against Aristotle who accepted the theory of convention. See M. Harl, Origène. Philocalie 1-20. Sur les Ecritures, in: Origène. Philocalie 1–20. Sur les Ecritures. Introd., texte, trad. et notes par M. Harl. La Lettre à Africanus sur l'histoire de Suzanne. Introd., texte, trad. et notes par N. de Lange (SC 302), Paris 1983, 127–132.

32 There is a parallelism between this passage, "dum Evangelio eius orbis impletur, et totiens crescit quotiens auditus et lectus aedificat," and the earlier one that also deals with Luke's writings, "cuius liber quotienscumque legitur in ecclesiis, totiens eius medicina non cessat" (624f.). "Healing" and "building" are parallel images for the effectiveness and usefulness of the Scriptures for the world. The image of Luke "rising" is related to this effectiveness and to the resulting praise for him in all the churches (622f., where Jerome applies 2Cor 8.18 to Luke). On the image of "building", see Lk 6.47–49; Acts 20.32; 1Cor 14.3.4.5.12.17.26; Eph 4.11f.

Heine,[33] who is followed by Bucchi,[34] has shown how Jerome has taken over this whole argument from Origen. Origen was reading the Pauline statement in terms of his own context, against Gnostics, who wanted to blame the creator for the evil deeds of the creatures. In this debate, Phlm 14 was one of Origen's favourite passages. He also used it in Hom. in Jer. 20.2, as well as in Or. 29.15 (though not explicitly, in the case of the latter).

Later on, the text appears at least twice in Augustine's writings against the Pelagians, who used this text to stress human freedom in such a way as to deny the need for God's grace.[35]

2. Chrysostom

Chrysostom develops the same contrast between volition and necessity towards the end of his second homily. Throughout the moral application he recalls the reality of slavery in his own context — not in order to challenge the social institution, but to use it as an image for one's relationship with God and then to give directives concerning the relationship between masters and slaves in the light of God's relationship to human beings. Chrysostom begins the moral application with the words: "These things are not written without an object, but that we masters may not despair of our servants, nor press too hard on them ..." (782DE). He also refers to the experience of human masters, with a view to bringing about a greater appreciation of God's attitude to humans:

> For how is it not absurd, if we bear with masters beating their servants, knowing that they will spare them, because they are their own; and yet suppose that God in punishing will not spare? (784C)

However, Chrysostom is not limiting his application to the treatment of slaves by masters; the point he wants to put across is that, before God, we have to be genuinely humble; we have to remember that when we

33 Heine, Search (see n. 3), 128–131.

34 Bucchi, Commentarii (see n. 1), LXVII–LXIX.

35 See Perf. Iust. 19.40f. and Grat. 2.4. In the latter text Augustine comments on the interpretation of Phlm 14 and other similar texts:

> But there is reason to fear that all these divine testimonies and whatever other ones there are ... may be understood in defense of free choice in such a way that for a pious life and good behavior which merits an eternal reward no place is left for the help and grace of God. And then, when the wretched human beings live well and act well — or rather think that they live well or act well — they dare to boast in themselves, not in the Lord, and to place the hope of living rightly in themselves, so that they incur the curse of Jeremiah ... (Jer 17,5) (R.J. Teske, Answers to the Pelagians 4: To the Monks of Hadrumetum and Provence. Transl., Introd. and Notes by R.J. Teske [The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century I:26], Hyde Park, NY 1999, 73).

have done all that is required, we still remain in debt to God. This point is again made clear by means of a reminder that, since masters purchase slaves with their money, they want them completely for themselves; all they have belong to their masters. Chrysostom then exclaims:

> How much more must it be so with him, who brought us out of nothing into being, who after this bought us with his precious blood, who paid down such a price for us as no one would endure to pay for his own son, who shed his own blood for us? (785A)

Everything we have, our life, our possessions,

> will by the *necessity* of death be taken from us. Although we are not humble for His sake, we shall be made humble by tribulations, by calamities, by overruling powers. (785B)

The *voluntary* surrender of everything we have, to which Chrysostom calls us, is understood as an "emptying" of ourselves, out of love for Christ, of our lives, our wealth, our glory, and all other things (785E).

Both Jerome and Chrysostom thus expand the meaning of the words "voluntary" and "necessity" in v. 14 by weaving them into a discourse addressing their own context.

IV. Phlm 20 and Augustine's Exploration of *uti* and *frui*

Although Augustine's discussion does not occur in a commentary or a homily on Phlm, in Doctr. Christ. 1.33.37 he explicitly interprets the Latin "ego te fruar in Domino"[36] in his discussion on the "great question whether human beings ought to regard themselves as things to be enjoyed [*frui*], or to be used [*uti*], or both" (Doctr. Christ. 1.22.20). His answer is complex. Among the "things", only eternal and unchanging things are to be enjoyed; all the rest are to be used. But what about our fellow human beings? We are commanded to love them. But, are they to be loved for their own sake, or for the sake of something else? Augustine's answer is firm:

> So if you ought not to love yourself for your own sake, but for the sake of the one to whom love is most rightly directed as its end, other people must not take offense if you love them for God's sake and not their own. This, after all, is the rule of love that God has set for us: *You shall love*, he says, *your neighbor as yourself; God*, however, *with your whole heart and your whole soul and your whole mind* (Doctr. Christ. 1.22.21).[37]

36 The NRSV translates it as "Let me have this benefit from you in the Lord!"

37 E. Hill, Teaching Christianity: Translation and Notes, in: J.E. Rotelle (ed.), Teaching Christianity: De Doctrina Christiana (The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century I:11), Hyde Park, N.Y. 1996, 101–244, here: 127 n. 22, notes that this may sound inhumane and invites modern readers "to make an effort of sympathetic imagination":

> When I love you for God's sake, I thereby (in Augustine's use of the term) necessarily love you for your own sake, for your truest, deepest sake, because it means I am loving you, and hence "enjoying" you, in God, where you properly belong, and I am wanting you to join me in enjoying God for ever.

Any interpretation of the Scriptures which does not define this twin love in this way is mistaken (Doctr. Christ. 1.36.40). Therefore, Augustine interprets Phlm 20 as follows:

> It is in this sense that Paul writes to Philemon. *In this way, brother*, he says, *let me enjoy you in the Lord* (Phlm 20). But if he had not added *in the Lord*, and had merely said, *let me enjoy you*, he would have been placing his hopes of bliss in Philemon (Doctr. Christ. 1.33.37).

Phlm, with the occurrence of the verb *frui* in v. 20 and the adjectives *inutilis* and *utilis* in v. 11, must have provoked Augustine to draw this text into his effort to clarify the issue of the "order of love". It would seem that Augustine's rhetorical and philosophical background, particularly his familiarity with the writings of Cicero,[38] made him more attentive to the potential hidden in the verb *frui* and led him to develop the contrast between *frui* and *uti* in order to explain the commandment of love of God and love of neighbour. While the meaning of the verb in the Greek text (ὀναίμην) ranges from "obtaining profit or help" to "obtaining enjoyment",[39] the Latin *frui* clearly seems to favour "enjoyment".[40] One might be inclined to think that this emphasis on the verb *frui*, and particularly its contrast with *uti*, in connection with Philemon, was peculiar to the Latin tradition. However, Augustine may have been developing a reflection started by Origen. Jerome's commentary on Phlm 20 (500–509) already stresses that the enjoyment Paul is talking about is not simply that of delighting in someone's company, but a joy which arises from the fact that Philemon is filled with all virtues after the model of Christ. As Philemon abounds in these, Paul wishes that by enjoying him he may himself be filled with the same virtues.

38 While it is often asserted that Augustine was inspired by Varro (see, for instance P. Agaësse, Art. Fruitio Dei, DSp 5 [1964] 1546–1552), J.-M. Fontanier, Sur l'analogie Augustinienne honestum/utile//frui/uti, RSPhTh 84 (2000) 635–642, has recently drawn attention once again to Cicero, particularly the rhetorical schema of *honestum/utile* and *frui/uti*.

39 See H.G. Liddell/R. Scott (eds.), A Greek-English Lexicon: A New Ed., Rev. and Augm., Oxford 1940, s.v.; the KJV translates this verb in line with the distinction perceived by Augustine between "using" and "enjoying": "Let me have joy from you in the Lord!" However, most recent Bibles, such as the NRSV, translate it as "Let me have this benefit from you in the Lord!"

40 The verb *frui* is not common in the Vulgate. In Prov 7,18 it is used to refer to the enjoyment of passionate embraces in adultery (as in Gen 38,16); in Eccles it is used several times to refer to the full enjoyment of the pleasures of life: 2,1.10; 5,17–18; 7,15 (as in Deut 28,41; Wis 2,6). It is used twice more in the New Testament: In Rom 15,24 Paul speaks about the prospect of enjoying the company of the Roman community, and in 1Tim 6,17 the rich are challenged not to be proud of their wealth, but to fix their hopes on God, "qui praestat nobis omnia abunde ad fruendum."

It is most likely that Augustine was familiar with Jerome's commentary on Phlm, as it was the first of a batch of four commentaries, one of which deals with Gal. He was certainly familiar with the commentary on Galatians, since he questioned Jerome's interpretation of Paul's challenge to Peter.[41] It is also most likely that in his comments on Phlm 20, Jerome is following Origen[42] and that Augustine is therefore developing an exegetical tradition that can be traced back to Origen. It is certainly striking that the contrast between "use" and "love" is found in Origen's Prologue to the Commentary on the Song of Songs: "... for God gave the things to men to be used, not to be loved."[43] It is unlikely that Augustine was drawing directly on this particular passage of Origen, since Rufinus only translated it into Latin in 410.[44] However, there can be no doubt that Augustine was developing a tradition of reflection on love which had already been developed in Origen's exegesis of the Song of Songs. One possible source of contact with Origen's commentary might have been Ambrose, who was clearly familiar with the Greek text.[45] However, Origen's homilies on the Song of Songs would have been available to Augustine in Jerome's Latin version.[46] In fact, there is also a strong similarity between Origen's treatment of the order of charity in his Second Homily on the Song of Songs (1 and 8) and Augustine's Book I of Doctr. Christ., in which he comments on Phlm 20.[47] It is very striking that both Origen and Augustine link their reflections on the "order of love" with Cant 2,4: τάξατε ἐπ' ἐμὲ ἀγάπην (LXX);

41 On Augustine's disagreement with Jerome's explanation of the argument between Peter and Paul, see the discussion of the correspondence between Augustine and Jerome in Kelly, Jerome (see n. 1), 263–272.

42 Although Heine, Search (see n. 3), does not deal with this verse in his search for parallels in Origen to Jerome's commentary.

43 Translation: Lawson, Origen (see n. 12), 25.

44 According to M. Naldini, Structure and Pastoral Theology of Teaching Christianity, in: Rotelle, Christianity (see n. 37), 11–27, Augustine already wrote the first three books of Doctr. Christ. in 396, while the Latin translation of Origen's commentary by Rufinus only appeared in 410, according to Lawson, Origen (see n. 12), 4f.

45 This can be seen, for instance, in De Isaac vel anima, where one also finds the theme of the threefold knowledge symbolized by the wells dug by Isaac; see S. Sagot, La triple sagesse dans le De Isaac vel anima: Essai sur les procédés de composition de saint Ambroise, in: Y.M. Duval (ed.), Ambroise de Milan: XVI[e] centenaire de son élection épiscopale, Paris 1974, 67–114; S. Sagot, 'Le Cantique des Cantiques' dans le 'De Isaac' d'Ambroise de Milan. Étude textuelle et recherche sur les anciennes versions latines, RechAug 16 (1981) 3–57.

46 This text was translated into Latin by Jerome in Rome around 383, according to Lawson, Origen (see n. 12), 19, and may have been used by Augustine while he was writing the first part of Doctr. Christ.

47 Compare Origen's summary with the passage from Doctr. Christ. 1.22.21, quoted above: "... but a neighbor is to be loved as thyself, and God, with thy whole heart and with thy whole soul and with thy whole mind and with thy whole strength" (Hom. in Cant. 2.8).

"ordinavit in me caritatem" (Vg). Origen has commented on this verse at some length in his Commentary (Cant. 1.7), and more concisely in the Second Homily (Hom. in Cant. 2.8). Augustine seems to be evoking this verse in the introduction to his own discussion on the "order of love" in Doctr. Christ. 1.27.28–30.33. In any case, the first explicit quotations of Cant 2,4 appear in sermons of about the same time, interestingly in a form that is closer to the Septuagint (imperative) than to the Vulgate (indicative): "Ordinate in me caritatem."[48]

Augustine's exploration of the meaning of *frui* and *uti* for the life of his listeners and readers is typical of biblical interpretation in the Early Church, which focused on words rather than on units of discourse.[49] A large part of Book I of Doctr. Christ. deals with the practical meaning of the words *uti* and *frui*. The words were of course commonly known, but the challenge for Augustine was that of understanding how they should be applied in the life of Christians faced with the question of love of "things": God, self, neighbour, wealth etc. According to Augustine, the answer must be drawn from the Scriptures as a whole, not just from isolated units of text, such as Phlm. However, developing such an answer is not a straightforward logical process. Early on, Augustine stressed the primary importance of the inner teacher:

> [I]t is more truly said that "the sign is known in the thing" than "the thing is learned from a given sign". At this point the treatise unfolds its essential point that Christ the inner teacher acquaints the soul with the realities behind all signs (*De Magistro* 11,38).[50]

We are not enlightened by the outward sound of the speaker's words, but by "the truth which presides over the mind itself from within, though we have been led to consult because of the words" (Mag. 11.38).[51] Later, as a pastor and bishop, Augustine became more careful

48 See J.M. Rist, Augustine: Ancient Thought Baptized, Cambridge/New York 1994, 51 n. 18: "The first quotation of 'Ordinate me in caritatem' seems to be in Sermo 100.2 (perhaps in 395) or in Sermo 37.2 (perhaps in 397)."

49 See O'Regan, De doctrina christiana (see n. 6), 221. For a more detailed discussion of Augustine's understanding of words, signs and things, see Rist, Augustine (see n. 48), 23–40.

50 M. Cameron, Art. Sign, A.D. Fitzgerald (ed.), Augustine Through the Ages: An Encyclopedia, Grand Rapids 1999, 793–798, here: 794. This is also the view of Origen, who identifies the theme of the Song of Songs as "love", and states:

> But we must realize how many things there are that ought to be said about this charity, what great things also about God, since He is Charity Himself. For, as *no one knoweth the Father but the Son, and he to whom it shall please the Son to reveal Him*, so no one knows Charity except the Son. In the same way also, *no one knoweth the Son*, since He Himself likewise is Charity, *except the Father*. (Cant. Prol. 2, translated by Lawson, Origen [see n. 12], 39)

51 This, of course, is why prayer for understanding is crucially important. See Doctr. Christ. 4.15.32–4.16.33; see also Or., Cant. Prol. 3:

to balance the importance of internal experience with external guidance as a remedy for human weakness and sinfulness: "a need of a structured and reliable doctrinal support that is based on the Scriptures and guaranteed by the authority of the Church."[52]

Augustine's exploration of *frui/uti* illustrates a typical approach of the Early Church; the aim of this kind of exploration is not restrictive, in the sense of limiting oneself to what Paul meant in a particular passage, or to the original context thereof; rather, the words are explained in response to, and in dialogue with, the culture and language of Augustine's audience (Cicero) and with Scripture as a whole, as well as the interpretative tradition of the church. Phlm 20 is therefore part of a broad network of explorations into the meaning of these words for Augustine's audience. He sees his contribution as part of a communal process of learning[53] through which God's Spirit moves the individual members of the community to the insights that they need in order to move forward in their particular journeys of love.[54]

[H]e will be able to investigate and discover these things more carefully; always provided that he have first sought and knocked at Wisdom's door, beseeching God to open to him and to make him worthy to receive the word of wisdom and the word of knowledge through the Holy Spirit, and to make him a partaker of that Wisdom who said: *I stretched out my words and you did not hear.* ... According to this same doctrine of the most wise Solomon, therefore, it behoves him who desires to know wisdom to begin with moral instruction, and to understand the meaning of the text: *Thou who hast desired Wisdom: then keep the commandments, and God will give her thee* (Translation Lawson, Origen [see n. 12], 43).

52 L. Alici, Sign and Language, in: Rotelle, Christianity, (see n. 37), 28–45, here: 36:

[L]et us not be too proud to learn what has to be learned with the help of other people, and let those of us by whom others are taught pass on what we have received without pride and without jealousy. ... Let us be on our guard against all such dangerous temptations to pride, and let us rather reflect on how the same apostle Paul, although he had been struck down and instructed by the divine voice from heaven, was still sent to a man to receive the sacraments and be joined to the Church. (Doctr. Christ. Prol. 5f.)

T. Kato, Sonus et Verbum: De doctrina christiana 1.13.12, in: Arnold/Bright, De doctrina christiana (see n. 6), 87–94, here: 91, also draws attention to a text in the opening section of the Confessiones: "You breathed into me by the humanity of your Son, by the ministry of your preacher."

53 "Then again charity itself, which binds people together with the knot of unity, would have no scope for pouring minds and hearts in together, as it were, and blending them with one another, if human beings were not to learn anything from one another." (Doctr. Christ. Prol. 6)

54 "... so he [the eloquent speaker] is at pains to ensure as far as he can ... that his listeners understand them, enjoy them, obey them. And he should not be in the slightest doubt that if he can ensure this, and to the extent that he can, it is more the piety of prayer than the ready facility of orators that enables him to do so; by praying then both for himself and for those he is to address, let him be a prayer before being a speaker. ... About any of the matters, after all, that have been dealt with in terms of faith and love, there are many things that can be said, and many ways they can be said by those who are well versed in such work; but who knows what is the right thing for us to say, or for someone to hear from us, at precisely this time, but the one who can see into the hearts of us all?" (Doctr. Christ. 4.15.32)

Augustine's conclusion is that we should love God and those who are able to love God: "... love of the thing to be enjoyed [God] and of the thing which is able to enjoy that thing together with us [our neighbor]" (Doctr. Christ. 1.35.39). But he returns to the distinction between means and ends: "... so that we love the means by which we are carried along, on account of the goal to which we are being carried" (Doctr. Christ. 1.35.39).[55] This distinction is well illustrated in Paul's entreaty to Philemon: "Let me enjoy you *in the Lord*."

V. Conclusion

Although Phlm seems to have been looked down upon in certain quarters, as not "worthy" of canonical status because of its brevity and because it dealt with an individual case and an issue which did not seem worthy of the Holy Spirit, both Jerome and Chrysostom defended its canonicity with emphasis on its usefulness. The notion of "the voluntary", as reflected in v. 14 attracted the attention of both Jerome and Chrysostom; Jerome developed it in terms of contemporary questions on human freedom, while Chrysostom did so in terms of spiritual exhortation towards a free and total surrender of the self to God. Augustine commented on v. 14 in his anti-Pelagian writings, insisting that it should not be read as a denial of the absolute need for God's grace. With regard to v. 20, Jerome and Augustine reflected on the order of love and on the nature of our "enjoyment" of one another "in the Lord". This reflection led to the development of the topic of the *fruitio Dei* in later Medieval theology and spirituality.[56]

55 For a fuller discussion, see A. Dupont, To Use or to Enjoy Humans? *Uti* and *Frui* in Augustine, in: F. Young/M. Edwards/P. Parvis (eds.), Augustine – Other Latin Writers: Papers Presented at the Fourteenth International Conference on Patristic Studies, Held in Oxford 2003 (StPatr 43), Leuven 2006, 89–93. For a discussion of the development of Augustine's thinking on the issue, see Rist, Augustine (see n. 48), 159–168. He rejects the view of Nygren that Augustine teaches that "we should in effect 'exploit' our neighbor to secure our own happiness in God" (ibid., 163).

56 See Th. Koehler, Art. Fruitio Dei, DSp 5 (1964) 1552–1569.

St. Jerome's Dissertation on the Letter to Philemon

ALFRED FRIEDL

In 386, Jerome[1] settled in Bethlehem where the noble widow Paula and her daughter Eustochium built three convents for women and one monastery for men. From 389 until his death in 419/420 he presided over the latter and lectured on the classic authors at the monastic school.[2] Between 386 and 388,[3] he composed his first exegetical works, namely those on Phlm, Gal, Eph and Tit in that order[4] and in rapid succession,

1 Hier., In Philem., is cited according to the critical edition by F. Bucchi (ed.), Hieronymi Presbyteri Commentariorvm in Epistvlam Pavli Apostoli ad Philemonem Liber Vnvs, in: eadem (ed.), Commentarii in Epistvlas Pavli Apostoli ad Titvm et ad Philemonem (CChr.SL 77C), Turnhout 2003, 75–106. Numerals after the biblical book indicate the verse(s) Jerome is dealing with, while page number(s) and line number(s) are given in braces.

2 See A. Souter, The Earliest Latin Commentaries on the Epistles of St. Paul, Oxford 1999, 99; B. Altaner/A. Stuiber, Patrologie, Freiburg etc. ^{9}1980, 395; R.E. Heine, The Commentaries of Origen and Jerome on St. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians (OECS), Oxford 2002, 7.

3 • *September 386:* P. Nautin, La date des commentaires de Jérôme sur les Épîtres Pauliniennes, RHE 74 (1979) 5–12, here: 10; C.P. Bammel, Die Pauluskommentare des Hieronymus: Die ersten wissenschaftlichen lateinischen Bibelkommentare?, in: Cristianesimo Latino e cultura Greca sino al sec. IV: XXI incontro di studiosi dell'antichità cristiana, Roma, 7–9 maggio 1992 (SEA 42), Roma 1993, 187–207, here: 187 ("Sommer 386"); R.E. Heine, In Search of Origen's Commentary on Philemon, HThR 93 (2000) 117–133, here: 118; F. Bucchi, Introduzione, in: eadem, *Commentarii* (see n. 1), V–LXIX, here: V–VII.
• *386–388*: Heine, Commentaries (see n. 2), 7.
• *387–388*: Th. Zahn, Geschichte des Neutestamentlichen Kanons 2: Urkunden und Belege zum ersten und dritten Band, Erlangen 1890/1892, 1001; A. v. Harnack, Origenistisches Gut von kirchengeschichtlicher Bedeutung in den Kommentaren des Hieronymus zum Philemon-, Galater-, Epheser- und Titusbrief, in: idem, Der kirchengeschichtliche Ertrag der exegetischen Arbeiten des Origenes (II. Teil: Die beiden Testamente mit Ausschluß des Hexateuchs und des Richterbuches) (TU III,12/ 42.4), Leipzig 1920, 141–168, here: 141; J.N.D. Kelly, Jerome: His Life, Writings, and Controversies, London 1975, 145; D. Brown, *Vir Trilinguis*: A Study of the Biblical Exegesis of Saint Jerome, Kampen 1992, 129, 155.
• *387–389*: Altaner/Stuiber, Patrologie (see n. 2), 400.
• *389–392*: Souter, Commentaries (see n. 2), 100.

4 Jerome probably followed Origen by starting with Phlm (see C.P. Bammel, Origen's Pauline Prefaces and the Chronology of his Pauline Commentaries, in: G. Dorival/A. le Boulluec [eds.], Origeniana Sexta: Origène et la Bible/Origen and the Bible; Actes du Colloquium Origenianum Sextum, Chantilly, 30 août – 3 septembre 1993 [BEThL 118], Leuven 1995, 495–513, here: 505f.). Hier., In Philem. 1–3, uses evidence from

after the two women had induced him to write explanations of the Pauline Epistles for them.[5] In his introduction to the second book of his explanation (*explanatio*) of Eph, he provides us with a glimpse of his way of working:

> I am not producing a polished and carefully pondered discourse. I am using what is almost street language to reveal the mysteries of the Scriptures. Sometimes I go through up to a thousand lines in a single day so that the interpretation of the apostle which has been begun may be finished with the prayers of Paul himself whose epistles we are attempting to expound.[6]

The expositions on Phlm and Tit consist of one book each; those on Gal and Eph consist of three books each. Although Jerome apparently intended to treat all of the epistles,[7] the extant interpretations constitute all his explanations of the *Corpus Paulinum*.

The aim of this article is to present a systematised summary of Jerome's exegesis of Phlm.

I. Sources

In contrast to Jerome's prologues to his interpretations of Gal and Eph,[8] he does not mention any source for his works on Phlm and Tit. His reason for withholding his source(s) for these two books remains uncertain.[9] Nevertheless, in his interpretation of Phlm, at least three sources can be discerned:

Phlm and other epistles in order to provide historical background to Phil, Col and Eph as well, which "supports the view that its model was the first of a group of *Pauline Commentaries*" (p. 505).

5 See Hier., In Philem. 1–3 {81,7–10}; idem, In Eph. I Prol. {PL 26, 440A}.

6 Hier., In Eph. II Prol. {PL 26, 477A–B}; translation by Heine, Commentaries (see n. 2), 141; see also Hier., In Gal. III Prol. {G. Raspanti (ed.), Commentarii in Epistvlam Pavli Apostoli ad Galatas (CChr.SL 77A), Turnhout 2006, here: 158}.

7 See Hier., In Philem. 1–3 {81,5–14}; idem, In Eph. II Prol. {PL 26, 477B}.

8 Hier., In Gal. I Prol. {CChr.SL 77A (see n. 6), 6f.}, states that he has followed Origen and has read the short commentaries (*commentarioli*) of Didymus the Blind, Apollinarius of Laodicea, Alexander the heretic, Eusebius of Emesa, and Theodore of Heraclea, which he has dictated from memory and mixed with his own views. Idem, In Eph. I Prol. {PL 26, 442C}, again refers to Origen, whom he has followed in part, and the two short commentaries of Apollinarius and Didymus. See also Zahn, Geschichte 2 (see n. 3), 1001f.; Souter, Commentaries (see n. 2), 108–138; Bammel, Pauluskommentare (see n. 3), 188f.; Brown, *Vir* (see n. 3), 155; Heine, Search (see n. 3), 188; Bucchi, Introduzione (see n. 3), VII–IX.

9 The explanations given by C.H. Turner, Art. Greek Patristic Commentaries on the Pauline Epistles, DB(H) [5] (⁶1927) 484–531, here: 496; Bammel, Pauluskommentare (see n. 3), 191, and Heine, Search (see n. 3), 118, are rather speculative. Souter, Commentaries (see n. 2), 125, already draws attention to the important fact that Jerome's dependence on different sources may create

> the impression that Jerome's commentaries are not much more than compilations from earlier Greek expositions. But this impression would be unjust. It is abundantly true that he has used earlier Greek writers, and has thus preserved valuable exegetical material that would otherwise have been lost; but there are many signs that he was primarily a Latin.

Brown, *Vir* (see n. 3), 129 n. 66, also touches on the important fact that Jerome's use of other explanations "should not necessarily be taken as a castigation of his own scholarship, for he himself states this as his aim in writing commentaries", since

> it is the accepted practice of commentators, whether of the bible or secular literature, to set out the interpretations of other men alongside their own. Besides this, Jerome has preserved many passages, especially of Origen, which would otherwise be lost (see also Bammel, Pauluskommentare [see n. 3], 194, 205–207).

Unfortunately, Heine, Search (see. n. 3), passim, Bammel, Prefaces (see n. 4), 495f., and eadem, Pauluskommentare (see n. 3), 207, do not take this principle into account and accuse Jerome of plagiarism from Origen.

10 See H.R. Drobner, Lehrbuch der Patrologie, Freiburg etc. 1994, 286f.

11 By overestimating Origen, Heine, Search (see n. 3), 118f., fails to appreciate Jerome's independent contribution.

12 See I. Hilberg (ed.), Sancti Eusebii Hieronymi Epistulae Pars I: Epistulae I–LXX (CSEL 54), Wien 1996, 257: "In epistula ad Philemonem librum I."

13 See Heine, Search (see n. 3), 117.

14 Heine, Commentaries (see n. 2), 2.

15 See Heine, Search (see n. 3), 133. In the prologue, Harnack, Gut (see n. 3), 141f., discerns the use of two Greek exegetical works, one of them being Origen.

16 See above p. 289f. n. 4.

1. Origen

Jerome studied Origen's works during his stay in Antioch between 371(?) and 379/380.[10] Subsequently he became an ardent admirer of Origen and used his homilies and explanations as the primary source for his biblical interpretations.[11] In Epist. 33.4[12] Jerome enumerates Phlm as one of those Pauline letters that Origen has interpreted in a single book; however, the Greek manuscript tradition is unfortunately entirely lost.[13] In the case of Eph, the juxtaposition of the Greek excerpts from catena commentaries and Jerome's text shows his extensive dependence on Origen and the different ways in which he makes use of his work, "sometimes reproducing it literally and other times only reflecting Origen's ideas."[14] Thus, one can assume that this is true of his treatment of Phlm as well, and that by following this approach, Jerome has made accessible what is probably the first interpretation of this Pauline epistle that was ever written.[15]

(i) By starting his exegetical work on the Pauline Epistles with Phlm, Jerome probably modelled himself on Origen.[16]

(ii) In the prologue, the particular theological topics that are discussed (view on inspiration; the Holy Spirit's presence in sinners, prophets, apostles, and Jesus Christ), the combination of citations from the Scripture (Ezek 16,43 in conjunction with Eph 4,30), and the use of the characteristic Origenian technique of "[giving] arguments for and against a proposal, allowing imagined opponents to present considerations with which he himself agrees, but then turning them around

against them"[17] all indicate Jerome's dependence on the work of the Alexandrian exegete.[18]

(iii) In discussing the name-change from Saul to Paul,[19] Jerome uses the classical "problems and solutions" approach which is a fundamental component of Origen's exegetical technique.[20] A parallel account in the prologue to the Latin translation of Origen's interpretation of Rom[21] was probably taken by Rufinus of Aquileia from Origen's interpretation of Phlm.[22]

The same characteristic "problems and solutions" technique is used to deal with the problem of how one can have the same belief in Christ Jesus and in his saints (Phlm 5).[23] The "Apology for Origen" of Pamphilus of Caesarea and his pupil Eusebius of Caesarea, translated by Rufinus, cites a parallel discussion which is attributed to Origen[24] and shows unmistakably that Jerome has used it as a source.

(iv) In the explanation of v. 5, there are two more indications pointing to Origen as Jerome's source: One can find a similar reference to "faith in all the saints" in Origen's interpretation of Eph 1,15,[25] and the figurative saying of the approved money-changer who proves the genuineness of a coin is found in the Origenian text on Eph 4,25a.31; 5,10.[26]

17 Bammel, Prefaces (see n. 4), 506 n. 67; see Heine, Search (see n. 3), 125.

18 For a thorough discussion, see Heine, Search (see n. 3), 120–126, and Bucchi, Introduzione (see n. 3), LIV–LVIII, LXII. However, despite Heine's useful observations, his opinion that Jerome does not provide more than a translation of the Origenian text cannot be properly substantiated owing to the lack of parallel texts.

19 See Hier., In Philem. 1–3 {81,10–83,59}.

20 See Heine, Search (see n. 3), 126f.; Bucchi, Introduzione (see n. 3), LXII–LXV.

21 See Or., Comm. in Rom. I.2 (Praefatio) {C.P. Bammel, Der Römerbriefkommentar des Origenes: Kritische Ausgabe der Übersetzung Rufins, Buch 1–3 (VL 16), Freiburg/Br. 1990, 42–44}; see also Or., Or. 24.2 {GCS 3, 353f.}. Ambrosiast., In Rom. Prol. 1.1, Chrys., Hom. 1.1 in Rom., and Thdt., Rom 1.1, are obviously dependent on Origen as well (see Bucchi, Introduzione [see n. 3], LXV).

22 See Bammel, Prefaces (see n. 4), 503–505; Heine, Search (see n. 3), 127.

23 See Hier., In Philem. 4–6 {90,228–92,286}.

24 See R. Amacker/É. Junod, Pamphile et Eusèbe de Césarée: Apologie pour Origène suivi de Rufin d'Aquilée sur la Falsification des Livres d'Origène: Tome 1, texte critique, traduction et notes (SC 464), Paris 2002, 202–207. See also Turner, Commentaries (see n. 9), 496; Souter, Commentaries (see n. 2), 115; Heine, Search (see n. 3), 128; Bucchi, Introduzione (see n. 3), LXI–LXII, LXV–LXVII.

25 See J.A.F. Gregg, The Commentary of Origen upon the Epistle to the Ephesians, JThS 3 (1902) 233–244, 398–420, 554–576, here: 398; see also Heine, Commentaries (see n. 2), 106 n. 20f.

26 See Gregg, Commentary (see n. 25), 419, 557, 562; Souter, Commentaries (see n. 2), 117; Heine, Commentaries (see n. 2), 192 n. 30, refers to Or., Jo. 19.44, and Comm. ser. 33 in Mt.

(v) Or., Hom. 20.2 in Jer.,[27] cites Phlm 14 and shows how he has understood this verse. Jerome's exegesis of Phlm 14, dealing with the frequently discussed question as to why God did not make humankind good and (morally) upright, displays close similarities to this passage and suggests his dependence on Origen.[28]

(vi) It is likely that Augustine, in his interpretation of v. 20 in Doctr. Christ. 1.33.37, develops an exegetical tradition which can be traced back to Origen via Jerome.[29]

(vii) In the discussion of Phlm 23, two correspondences again point to Origen: the independent tradition related by the patriarch Photius[30] that also connects Paul's parents with Giscalis,[31] and the allegorical interpretation of the meaning of "fellow-prisoner" with the aid of Ps 83(84),7, which Rufinus[32] quotes as an interpretation of Origen.[33]

(viii) At the end of his dissertation on Phlm, Jerome reverts to Origen again with his explanation of the Hebrew etymology of all proper names which occur in Phlm.[34]

2. Tertullian

Jerome's remarks that the brevity of Phlm has defended the epistle against Marcion's alterations[35] and that Marcion has "gnawed at" certain passages of Paul's letters,[36] undoubtedly depend on his reading of Tertullian.[37] The same is true with regard to his discussion of the complicated burdens of the Law.[38]

27 See P. Husson/P. Nautin, Origène, Homélies sur Jérémie: Tome II. Homélies XII–XX et Homélies Latines ; trad. par P. Husson et P. Nautin, éd., introd. et notes par P. Nautin (SC 238), Paris 1977, 256.

28 See below section XII sub v. 14.

29 See P.B. Decock, The Reception of the Letter to Philemon in the Early Church: Origen, Jerome, Chrysostom and Augustine, pp. 273–287, here: 282–285, in this volume.

30 See Quaestio 116 ad Amphilochium {PG 101, 688C}.

31 See Hier., In Philem. 23–24 {103,590–594}; for more details see below section VII.1.1.3.

32 See Rufin., Apol. Adv. Hier. 1.42 {M. Simonetti (ed.), Tyrannii Rvfini Apologia (contra Hieronymvm), in: idem (ed.), Tyrannii Rvfini Opera (CChr.SL 20), Turnhout 1961, 29-123, here: 78}; see also Turner, Commentaries (see n. 9), 496; Souter, Commentaries (see n. 2), 115; Heine, Search (see n. 3), 132f.; Bucchi, Introduzione (see n. 3), LX–LXI.

33 See Harnack, Gut (see n. 3), 146 n. 2; Heine, Commentaries (see n. 2), 143 n. 2, 164 n. 20, refers to Jerome's interpretation of Eph 3,1 and 4,1 where a similar view of the body is expressed and in which he depends on Origen.

34 See below p. 299 n. 90, and Decock, Reception (see n. 29), 279f.

35 See Hier., In Philem. Prol. {79,60–80,65}: Tert., Adv. Marc. 5.21.1 {E. Evans (ed. and transl.), Tertullian, Adversus Marcionem 1–2 (OECT 5/1–2), Oxford 1972, 640}.

36 See Hier., In Philem. Prol. {79,60–80,65}: Tert., Adv. Marc. 1.1.5 {Evans, Tertullian (see n. 35), 4}.

37 Pace Souter, Commentaries (see n. 2), 118–120, who attributes both references and the mention of Valentinus, Marcion and Apelles to Origen (see also Harnack, Gut [see n. 3], 141f.). However, Heine, Search (see n. 3), 122, 126 n. 49, proves that Ter-

3. Varro

After having complained that Paula and Eustochium are compelling him to deal with Phlm, Jerome confesses, with an allusion to a saying by Ennius which is reported by Varro in his work on the Latin language, that up to this day he did not dare to "make a sound" about Paul.[39]

II. No "Commentary" on Phlm

Jerome avoids classifying his work on Phlm.[40] In his introductory remarks to Paula and Eustochium, he mentions that they have compelled him to discuss (*dissero*)[41] Phlm, which would suggest a *dissertatio* (dissertation, disquisition). In the prologue to his work on Gal,[42] however, Jerome mentions that only a few days ago he had interpreted (*interpretatus*) Phlm, which suggests an *interpretatio* (interpretation). This shows that Jerome did not use a clearly defined terminology, and least of all did he intend to write a "commentary" in the modern sense of the word.

III. Indications of the Epistle's Structure

Although Jerome does not present an explicit structure of Phlm, several short notes reveal a rough division into heading (*praescriptio* [v. 1a]),[43] introduction (*praefatio* [vv. 1b–3]),[44] introduction to the main part (*praefatio* [vv. 4–7]),[45] main part (*corpus epistulae* [vv. 4ff.]),[46] and subscription

tullian is most probably the source for, at least, the reference to Marcion's attitude towards Philemon (see also Zahn, Geschichte 2 [see n. 3], 1000; Bammel, Prefaces [see n. 4], 506 n. 67).

38 See Hier., In Philem. Prol. {80,75}: Tert., Adv. Marc. 4.1.6 {Evans, Tertullian (n. 35), 258}.

39 See Hier., In Philem. Prol. {81,13f.}: Varro, Ling. 7.101 {R.G. Kent, Varro, On the Latin Language 1: Books V–VII. With an English Translation, London etc. 1951, 352–355}. Hier., In Gal. II Prol. {CChr.SL 77A (see n. 6), 78f.}, explicitly refers to this polymath (see also Souter, Commentaries [see n. 2], 127).

40 In the manuscripts one can find the superscriptions *explanatio* (explanation), *expositio* (exposition) and *tractatus* (tract) (see the references under Hier., In Philem. 1–3 {81,1}). Jerome calls his work on Eph an *explanatio* (see idem, In Eph. II Prol. {PL 26, 477A}).

41 See Hier., In Philem. 1–3 {81,5–10}.

42 See Hier., In Gal. I Prol. {CChr.SL 77A (see n. 6), 5}; however, see ibid. III Prol. {CChr.SL 77A (see n. 6), 158}.

43 See In Philem. 1–3 {86,149}; Jerome uses the verb *praescribo* and not the noun.

44 See ibid. 1–3 {88,188–191}.

45 See ibid. 10–13 {96,382f}.

46 See ibid. 1–3 {88,188–191}.

(*subscriptio* [vv. 23–25])[47]. This division implies that the body of the letter consists of vv. 8–22 and shows that Jerome more or less meets with the results of modern epistolary analysis of Paul's letter.[48]

IV. Occasion for Interpreting Phlm

Despite Paula's and Eustochium's repeated requests, Jerome has pertinaciously refused to interpret the epistles of St. Paul, because he has not dared to utter a single sound on the apostle so far. However, now they have compelled (*cogo*) him to discuss the letters in an inverted (*praeposterus*) and abnormal (*perversus*) order, starting with the shortest, the last, and — with regard to the contents — apparently the most insignificant letter of the *Corpus Paulinum*.[49]

V. Place of Origin and Date of Composition of Phlm

Paul dictated Phlm in Rome while he was in prison and in fetters.[50] During the same period in which he composed Phlm (just he and Timothy are writing;[51] his fetters for Christ have become manifest in the *praetorium*[52]), he also composed Col (the opening[53] and conclusion[54] are similar to those of Phlm; Philemon, Onesimus and Archippus are of Colossian descent[55]), and Eph (references to fetters for Christ;[56] concluding instructions as in Col[57]). Phlm is a private letter and not a public one.[58]

VI. Prologue (*argumentum*)

Many Church Fathers, especially the exegetes of the School of Antioch,[59] would place an *argumentum* (ἀπόθεσις, σκοπός, προθεωρία) at the

47 See ibid. 23–24 {103,576f}; here Jerome also employs the verb *subscribo*, instead of the noun.

48 See, e.g., J.A.D. Weima, Paul's Persuasive Prose: An Epistolary Analysis of the Letter to Philemon, pp. 29–60, in this volume.

49 See ibid. 1–3 {81,5–10.13f.}.

50 See ibid. 1–3 {84,82–86,137}.

51 See Phil 1,1 par Phlm 1.

52 See Phil 1,13 par Phlm 1.9.

53 See Col 1,1.23d–24 par Phlm 1.9.

54 See Col 4,18 par Phlm 19.

55 See Col 4,7–9.17; Phlm 2b.16; also: Hier., In Philem. 23–24 {103,573–582}.

56 See Eph 3,1; 4,1 par Phlm 1.9–10.13.

57 See Col 3,18–4,1 par Eph 5,22.25; 6,1–9.

58 See Hier., In Philem. 1–3 {85,111–113}.

59 See R. Bultmann, Die Exegese des Theodor von Mopsuestia, posthumous ed. by H. Feld/K.H. Schelkle; Stuttgart etc. 1984, 28–30/22–24; Bammel, Prefaces (see n. 4), 499f. In Antioch, where Jerome had studied Greek, he had also attended the exegetical lec-

beginning of their interpretations of Paul's letters. These *argumenta* are the commentary on the addressees, as it were, and they form a kind of introduction, intended to lead the readers to and introduce them into the present text. Usually, exegetes dealt with introductory questions in this section, i.e. they would introduce the respective church, describe the historic situation that comprised the setting of the letter, outline its contents, and determine its literary genre. In the case of Phlm, Jerome deviates from this practice by concentrating on discussing the epistle's authenticity and canonicity.[60]

One can summarise and systematise Jerome's discussion of the letter's authenticity as follows:

(1) The opponents do not wish to include Phlm among the Pauline letters.
(1.1) Their "picked out" and "forced" main arguments include, *inter alia*:
(1.1.1) [Christological-pneumatological argument] Like the prophets (Ezek 1,3), Paul also wrote as an ordinary human being and did not always write everything through Christ (see 2Tim 4,13; Gal 5,12; Phlm 22), because he was not constantly filled with the Holy Spirit as was the case with Jesus Christ (John 1,32).[61]
[Christological] counter-argument: Then all Pauline letters to communities have to be rejected because they contain similar statements which reveal human weakness. In 1 Cor 7,12 Paul frankly states that he is not speaking through Christ but on his own. However, if these letters are held to be authentic, then the same applies to Phlm, too.[62]
(1.1.2) [Christological argument] Mundane everyday works are not always done in the presence of the Lord.[63]
[Trinity-theological] counter-argument: It is a mistake to think that mundane activities per se are sinful and that they drive away the Holy Spirit:[64]
(i) Vices and sins as enumerated in Ezek 16 grieve and drive away the Holy Spirit but this does not apply to mundane everyday activities which, in some cases, determine one's affiliation to God.[65]
(ii) The assumption that mundane everyday works are of inferior value, entails the Gnostic distinction of two creators.[66]
(1.2) Therefore they are of the opinion that
(1.2.1) Phlm was not written by Paul.[67]
(1.2.2) However, even in the event that the letter should be authentic, it does not deserve to be included into the Pauline corpus, for two reasons:
(1.2.2.1) [Spiritual argument] There is nothing in it that edifies us;[68]
(1.2.2.2) [Argument from tradition] There is no teaching in it (in this case they are at one with the tradition).[69]
(1.3) With regard to expressions, Phlm is simple.[70]

tures of bishop Apollinaris of Laodicea (see Altaner/Stuiber, Patrologie [see n. 2], 394).

60 Jerome has woven elements of an *argumentum* for Phlm into his interpretation of vv. 8f. (see also Bucchi, Introduzione [see n. 3], LIX).
61 See Hier., In Philem. Prol. {77,1–78,26}.
62 See ibid. {78,30–43}.
63 See ibid. {77,5–8}.
64 See ibid. {78,43–79,47}.
65 See ibid. {79,47–53}.
66 See ibid. {79,55–60}.
67 See ibid. {78,27f.}.
68 See ibid. {78,28f.}.
69 See ibid. {78,29f.}.

Counter-argument of Jerome: It is a sign of ignorance not to realise how much power and wisdom are hidden in such single expressions.[71]
(1.4) Its brevity makes the letter despicable.[72]
Counter-argument of Jerome: In this case one also despises the Twelve Minor Prophets.[73]
(2) In addition to their counter-arguments the defenders allege:
(2.1) [Argument from tradition] All churches in the whole world have accepted the letter because they think it is authentic (in this case they are at one with the tradition).[74]
(2.2) Marcion has incorporated Phlm in his Apostolos/Apostolikon.[75]
(2.3) The letter is composed with evangelic charm.[76]

There are not sufficient criteria to clearly establish the identity of the opponent(s) to this epistle.[77]

VII. Characters Mentioned in the Epistle

Altogether, eleven individual persons and the local church (probably that of Philemon) are mentioned. According to the order in which they are mentioned, these are:

1. Sender

1.1 Paul

1.1.1 Saul — Paul

At the outset of his exegesis, Jerome devotes himself to the threefold question[78]: Why did Saul accept (*accipio*) the name (*nomen*) Paul, when

70 See ibid. {80,65f.}. John Chrysostom and Theodore of Mopsuestia also had to refute contemporary points of criticism relating to the epistle's simplicity and brevity (see Th. Zahn, Geschichte des Neutestamentlichen Kanons 1: Das Neue Testament vor Origenes, Erlangen 1888f., 266–268; idem, Geschichte 2 [see n. 3], 1000, 1003).
71 See ibid. {80,66f.}.
72 See ibid. {80,69f.}.
73 See ibid. {80,70–75}.
74 See ibid. {78,32f.}.
75 See ibid. {79,61–80,65}.
76 See ibid. {80,75f.}.
77 See Bammel, Prefaces (see n. 4), 506 n. 67, and esp. Heine, Search (see n. 3), 120–126, who also discusses Zahn's theory (Zahn, Geschichte 1 [see n. 70] 266–270; idem, Geschichte 2 [see n. 3], 997–1006) at some length. According to N.A. Dahl, The Origin of the Earliest Prologues to the Pauline Letters, in: idem, Studies in Ephesians: Introductory Questions, Text- & Edition-Critical Issues, Interpretation of Texts and Themes (ed. by D. Hellholm et al.) (WUNT 1, 131), Tübingen 2000, 179–209, here: 197, the opponents of Jerome, John Chrysostom and Theodore of Mopsuestia apparently "did not so much attack the letter as defend an ancient form of the Pauline letter collection which did not include Philemon."
78 See the modern scientific treatises on Paul's name by M. Hengel (in collaboration with R. Deines), Der vorchristliche Paulus, in: M. Hengel/U. Heckel (eds.), Paulus und das antike Judentum: Tübingen-Durham-Symposium im Gedenken an den 50. Todestag Adolf Schlatters († 19. Mai 1938) (WUNT 1, 58), Tübingen 1991, 177–293, here: 193–208; K. Haacker, Zum Werdegang des Apostels Paulus: Biographische Daten und ihre theologische Relevanz, in: ANRW II.26.2 (1995) 815–938, 1924–1933,

did this happen and by whom was this surname (*cognomino*) bestowed?[79] Only naïve Latins (*simpliciores Latini*) could hold that his former name has anything to do with the fact that, as in the case of King Saul, it was a common name in the tribe of Benjamin.[80] In terms of Latin grammar, he is called Saulus, with the declensional case-ending *-us* attached to the Hebrew name.[81] Having settled this aspect, Jerome proceeds to the question as to why, or by order of whom, Paul has abandoned his former name (*antiquum nomen amiserit*) and assumed the new one (*novum sumpserit*): Whereas in the case of Abram/Abraham and Sarai/Sarah the alteration originated from God,[82] and, in the case of Simon/Peter and the sons of Zebedee/sons of Thunder from Jesus, there is no explicit biblical indication for the alteration in the case of Paul. However, audacious (*audacter*) speculations (*suspiciones*) could be verified on the basis of Acts 13,2–13a, in which the name Paul is used for the first time: As victorious Roman commanders and emperors would name themselves after the nation or the land they have conquered (e.g., Africanus, Creticus, Adiabenicus, Parthicus, Sarmaticus), Saul — having defeated the proconsul Sergius Paulus — is named after the first spoils of the Church (*primum ecclesiae spolium*).[83]

Not everyone who is fettered, but only the one who is fettered for the sake of the name of Christ and for his belief, is truly "one who is fettered for Jesus Christ" (*vinctus Iesu Christi*).[84] This is an additional surname (*cognomen*) of the apostle that he uses uniquely in this letter, although he testifies to his fetters[85] for the sake of his belief in Eph, Phil, and Col, too.[86] On the one hand, this name is evidence of greater severity (*maius supercilium*) than the name "apostle"; on the other hand, it was precisely the authority (*auctoritas*) of the fetters that compelled Philemon to comply with Paul's request concerning Onesimus.[87]

here: 828–830); idem, Paulus, der Apostel: Wie er wurde, was er war, Stuttgart 2008, 25f.; R. Riesner, Die Frühzeit des Apostels Paulus: Studien zur Chronologie, Missionsstrategie und Theologie (WUNT 1, 71), Tübingen 2001, 121–139.

79 Jerome does not use the terms consistently: He speaks (1.) of the surname which was bestowed on Paul and which he has accepted (see Hier., In Philem. 1–3 {81,12f}); furthermore he states (2.) that Paul has abandoned his former name and has assumed the new one (see ibid. 1–3 {82,23f}) and (3.) that he has been called Paul instead of Saul (see ibid. 1–3 {82,29; 83,59}).

80 See ibid. 1–3 {81,15–18}.

81 See ibid. 1–3 {81,19–82,22}.

82 These two examples do not fit the argumentation from a logical point of view, because what matters in both cases, is the change of the name as such, and not only the bestowal of a surname.

83 See ibid. 1–3 {82,23–83,63}.

84 See ibid. 1–3 {84,77–79}.

85 Jerome consequently distinguishes between fetters (*vincula*) and prison (*carcer*).

86 See ibid. 1–3 {83,65–68}.

87 See ibid. 1–3 {83,68–84,73}.

In antiquity, the proper name was inseparably linked to the person because it was considered to comprise a person's characteristic feature or accepted identification mark. This is the reason why Jerome would not translate these names in the Vulgate, but instead, would transliterate them.[88] Occasionally, he adds an explanatory gloss to make it easier for the reader to understand. In his *Liber interpretationis Hebraicorum nominum* (Nom. Hebr.),[89] however, he gives etymological explanations of all biblical names, and he concludes his dissertation on Phlm with an epilogue, as it were, comprising a symbolic explanation of all proper names that occur in the epistle,[90] despite having already translated the apostle's name in this manner in the course of his interpretation of vv. 1–3: In Hebrew, with good reason, "Paul" means "the marvellous one" (*mirabilis*) or "the admirable one" (*admirabilis*), because Saul ("the one who is being desired [by the devil]" [*expetitus*]), whom the devil has demanded (*postulatus*) as a persecutor of the church, has become a chosen vessel.[91]

1.1.2 Devotion to the Preaching of the Gospel

More than once, Jerome notes Paul's unselfish and absolute devotion to the preaching of the gospel:

- According to Gal 6,14, he does not boast of wisdom, riches, eloquence or secular power, but of Christ's sufferings alone.[92]
- Because of his burning passion for Christ (*in Christum mente fervens*), he displays amazing magnanimity (*magnanimitas*): Although he is imprisoned and fettered and is constricted by the dirty body, the separation from his nearest and dearest, and sorrowful darkness, he does not feel the injustice, is not tantalised by pain and is exclusively intent on the gospel.[93]

88 See Brown, *Vir* (see n. 3), 115f.

89 See P. de Lagarde (ed.), S. Hieronymi Presbyteri Liber interpretationis Hebraicorvm nominvm, in: S. Hieronymi Presbyteri opera: Pars I, Opera et exegetica 1 (CChr.SL 72), Turnhout 1959, 57–161.

90 See Kelly, Jerome (see n. 3), 146: At the end of his work on Phlm,

> Jerome cannot resist the temptation ... of throwing in quite gratuitously a pseudo-explanation (almost certainly cribbed from Origen) of all the proper names used in the epistle, and then drawing an edifying lesson from their supposed symbolism.

According to Bucchi, Introduzione (see n. 3), LII–LIII n. 7, the allegorical interpretation of the etymology of biblical names is typical of the Alexandrian Jewish tradition.

91 See Hier., In Philem. 1–3 {83,60–63}; 25 {105,636f.643}.

92 See ibid. 1–3 {84,73–77}.

93 See ibid. 10–13 {95,373–377}.

- Since he acts for the sake of Christ, he thereby acquires a certain degree of boldness (*fiducia*) towards Philemon.[94]
- His conformity with Christ compels him to plead for Onesimus and to stand surety for him. Since Paul imitates his master (*imitator Domini sui* [see Eph 5,1]) and Christ speaks in him (see 2Cor 13,3), he must act as Christ would, to the best of his ability. In this case it is Isa 53,4 which motivates his actions: Just as the suffering Christ has assumed human injustice, Paul assumes the injustice done by Onesimus.[95]

1.1.3 Giscalis

Jerome[96] knows of a rumour (*fabula*)[97] in connection with Paul's fellow-prisoner Epaphras[98]: The parents of the apostle Paul hailed from Giscalis[99] in Judea.[100] When the province was laid waste by the Romans, and the Jews were dispersed throughout the world, they were transferred (*transfero*) to Tarsus in Cilicia, the very young (*adulescentulus*) Paul sharing the fate of his parents.[101] However, according to Jerome, Paul views himself more as a Judean than as citizen of Tarsus (see 2Cor 11,22; Phil 3,5).

1.2 Timothy

In Hebrew, his name means "the beneficent one" (*beneficus*).[102] Whereas in other Pauline letters, Sosthenes[103] or Silvanus and Timothy[104] are co-

94 See ibid. 8–9 {94,329–335}.
95 See ibid. 18 {99,469–472}.
96 See ibid. 23–24 {103,589–597}.
97 Unlike a *historia* (λόγος) which is historically verified, a *fabula* (μῦθος) refers to a story that is invented or fictitious with regard to its contents. The term also refers to gossip, talk etc. (see P.G.W. Glare [ed.], Oxford Latin Dictionary, Oxford 2007, 665 s.v.; K.E. Georges, Ausführliches lateinisch-deutsches Handwörterbuch 1, Darmstadt 1992, 2652f. s.v. However, according to Zahn, *fabula* = μῦθος = *historia* [see Harnack, Gut [see n. 3], 145 n. 3). Hier., Vir. Ill. 5.1 {A. Ceresa-Gastaldo (ed.), Gerolamo, Gli Uomini Illustri, *De viris illustribus* (Bpat), Firenze 1988, 81f.}, relates this tradition as a fact, in a condensed form.
98 For more details on the relation between Epaphras and Paul see below sub 4.1.
99 Other spellings are Gyscalis, Gyschalis, Gischalis, Gischala and Giscala.
100 Actually it was situated in Upper Galilee.
101 As stated above (see section I.1.[vii]), this tradition probably goes back to Origen. Although one can be sure that both Origen and Jerome were aware of the evident contradiction between their tradition and Acts 21,39; 22,3.28, modern research has not come up with a satisfying solution as yet; see Harnack, Gut (see n. 3), 145f.; Hengel, Paulus (see n. 78), 206–208; Haacker, Werdegang (see n. 78) 828–830; Heine, Search (see n. 3), 131–133; Bucchi, Introduzione (see n. 3), LXI–LXII. — I would like to thank Dr Johannes Deißler (Akademie der Wissenschaften, Mainz) for participating in an intensive discussion of this problem with me via e-mail.
102 See Hier., In Philem. 25 {105,637.644}.
103 See 1Cor 1,1.

authors, Timothy alone features as co-sender[105] with Paul in four epistles.[106] He is deservedly loved (*diligibilis*)[107] or highly esteemed (*carissimus*), because he is engaged in the same work for Christ as Paul.[108]

2. Recipients

2.1 Philemon

Philemon is Onesimus' master,[109] whose name means "the one who is pardoned in a miraculous way" (*mire donatus*) or "mouth of the bread" (*os panis*) in Hebrew.[110] With a view to consistency, he must be a citizen of Colossae as well. He is holy (*sanctus*) because he has become known to the apostle owing to his great belief and his great love, not only by hearsay but also through his actions.[111] He participates in the operative belief and love in the full knowledge of every good, the source of which is Christ.[112]

It is impossible for him to decline Paul's request, for a number of reasons:

- Who could possibly refuse somebody who is an apostle, an old man and — above all — who is fettered?[113]
- Paul's testimony of the conversion of Onesimus places pressure on him.[114]
- Paul does not plead for Onesimus as Philemon's slave, but as his (Paul's) son, whom he has begotten in his bonds.[115]
- Since Philemon feels a great desire to have Paul as his partner, in order to become like him and to share his bonds with him, he basically has no choice other than to accept Onesimus as his partner as well.[116]
- Notwithstanding the high price he has had to pay as a result of the theft Onesimus, a runaway slave who squandered money, committed, he scores a twofold profit: Firstly, he has received

104 See 1Thess 1,1; 2Thess 1,1.
105 Concerning co-authorship, see below section IX.
106 See 2Cor 1,1; Phil 1,1; Col 1,1; Phlm 1.
107 See below section VIII for an explanation of this adjective and A. Blaise, Dictionnaire Latin-Français des auteurs Chrétiens, Turnhout 1993, 273 s.v., for a definition of its meaning.
108 See Hier., In Philem. 1–3 {87,150–174}.
109 See ibid. 1–3 {85,107–113}.
110 See ibid. 25 {105,637f.644f.}.
111 See ibid. 4–6 {89,219–221}.
112 See ibid. 4–6 {93,305–311}.
113 See ibid. 1–3 {83,68–84,73}; 8–9 {94,333–335}.
114 See ibid. 8–9 {94,350–353}.
115 See ibid. 10–13 {95,361–364}.
116 See ibid. 17 {98,458–99,467}.

back a very dear (*carissimus*) and an eternal (*aeternus*) brother, and, secondly, Paul has made himself his debtor (*debitor*).[117]

2.2 Apphia

In Hebrew her name means "the containing" or "liberty".[118] She does not harbour any false or hypocritical sisterhood within her.[119] Analogous to Gal 3,29, in the list of the addressees, she is listed between Philemon and Archippus because of her merits, regardless of her sex.[120]

2.3 Archippus

The Hebrew meaning of his name, "length of doing", points to his incessant holy work.[121] According to Col 4,17 and Phlm 2b, he also came from Colossae and was perhaps the bishop of the church there, or a preacher of the gospel.[122] He is called "fellow-soldier" (*commilito*) because he has won the fight against the enemies of the name of Christ along with Paul and Timothy.[123]

2.4 The Church/Community

In spite of the vague wording, it seems that the church in the house of Philemon and not that in the house of Archippus is being addressed, because Paul addresses Philemon alone after the senders and recipients have been listed.[124]

3. The Reason for the Epistle — Onesimus

His name means "the responding one" in Hebrew (*respondens*),[125] and he comes from Colossae (see Col 4,17). Accompanied by Tychicus,[126] he is the bearer of the apostle's official letter to the community in Colossae, and also of his private letter (*privatas ... litteras*) to Philemon from Rome.[127]

He is Philemon's slave[128] who, having stolen some goods that comprised part of the fortune of the family (*quaedam rei domesticae*), ran

117 See ibid. 18 {99,474–477}.
118 See ibid. 25 {105,638.645–106,646}.
119 See ibid. 1–3 {87,174f.}.
120 See ibid. 1–3 {88,194–197}.
121 See ibid. 25 {105,638f.; 106,646f.}.
122 See ibid. 1–3 {85,113f.}.
123 See ibid. 1–3 {87,175–88,179}.
124 See ibid. 1–3 {88,180–197}.
125 See ibid. 25 {105,639; 106,647f.}.
126 See ibid. 1–3 {86,130–137}.
127 See ibid. 1–3 {85,101–113.122f.}.
128 See ibid. 1–3 {85,107–113}.

away to Italy in order to escape arrest in the vicinity of the crime. In Italy, he squandered the stolen goods in an extravagant manner;[129] later the apostle would guarantee repayment for these goods. In Rome the apostle Paul converted him to Christianity, baptised him and made him his servant (*minister*). Paul's testimony (*testimonium*) in respect of the absolute conversion of the runaway slave and robber places a great amount of pressure (*grande pondus*) on Philemon: The gospel of Christ Jesus implies that Onesimus is to be forgiven, not by a master but as fellow-slave and fellow-preacher of the gospel.[130]

Before his Christianisation he was of no use (*inutilis*) to Philemon because he had caused damage to him (and to nobody else); now, after his conversion, he is useful (*utilis*) to both: to Philemon by serving Paul on his master's behalf, and to Paul, by serving him through the preaching of the gospel.[131]

4. List of Greetings

4.1 Epaphras

Concerning this fellow-prisoner[132] whose name means "the one who bears fruit" (*frugifer*), "the one who is seeing" (*videns*), or "the one who grows up" (*succrescens*) in Hebrew,[133] one could draw several conclusions regarding his co-imprisonment, if the rumour about Giscalis[134] is true (*si ita est*):

- One could suppose (*suspicor*) that Paul and Epaphras were Roman captives at the same time when they were young, and that Epaphras became a Christian after he and his parents had been settled at Colossae (see Col 4,12).
- Some interpret their captivity in a hidden (*reconditum*) — symbolic (*sacratum*) — sense: Having been captured and fettered, both have been brought into this valley of tears (see Ps 83[84],7).[135]
- If both interpretations are rejected because of the specification "in Christ Jesus", one can assume that Epaphras was in prison together with Paul.

129 See also ibid. 18 {99,472–474}.
130 See ibid. 8–9 {94,336–95,356}.
131 See ibid. 10–13 {95,370–372}.
132 See ibid. 23–24 {103,588–104,614}.
133 See ibid. 25 {105,639–640; 106,649}.
134 See above sub VII.1.1.3.
135 Concerning the dependence of this interpretation on Origen, see above section I.1. sub (vii).

4.2 Mark

Jerome regards "the one who is sublime by order" (*sublimis mandato*)[136] as the author of the Gospel.[137]

4.3 Aristarchus

Provided that the rumour concerning the descent of Paul and Epaphras is true, something similar[138] may well be applicable to the one whose name means "the mountain of a distinguished work" (*mons operis amplioris*).[139]

4.4 Demas

In Hebrew his name means "the one who is silent" (*silens*),[140] and it is possible that he was "silent" because he had forsaken Paul for a while for the love of the world (see 2Tim 4,10).[141]

4.5 Luke

"The one who stands up by himself" (*ipse consurgens*)[142] has been transformed from a physician for bodies into a physician for souls so that as often as his book is read in the churches, the effect of his medicine[143] does not lessen. 2Cor 8,18 mentions him, he has bequeathed the gospel and the book of Acts to the church.[144] He grows daily and makes progress because the world is filled with his gospel. He also grows as often as the gospel edifies those who hear and read it.

VIII. Considerations Concerning Translation

Occasionally, Jerome critically considers the Latin translation of the Greek text at issue:

1. In v. 1,[145] Jerome does not at all approve of the use of the attribute *dilectus* ("beloved") to describe Philemon, because that translation

136 See Hier., In Philem. 25 {105,640f.; 106,649f.}.
137 See ibid. 23–24 {104,616}.
138 See ibid. 23–24 {104,602–604,617}.
139 See ibid. 25 {105,641; 106,650f.}.
140 See ibid. 25 {105,641; 106,651–653}.
141 See ibid. 23–24 {104,617–105,619}.
142 See ibid. 25 {105,641f.; 106,653–656}.
143 See Or., Philoc. 10.2, and Decock, Reception (see n. 29), 280.
144 See ibid. 23–24 {105,619–625}. See R. Strelan, Luke the Priest: The Authority of the Author of the Third Gospel, Aldershot etc. 2008, 79–90, for the traditions which link Luke with Alexandria, Paul, and the Third Gospel, and in which he is regarded as evangelist and doctor.
145 See Hier., In Philem. 1–3 {87,150–174}.

would only have been correct if the Greek had read ἠγαπημένος whereas ἀγαπητός should have been rendered as *diligibilis* ("lovable"). Only he who justly deserves to be loved (*qui merito diligitur*) is *diligibilis*, whilst the *dilectus* does not deserve love (*dilectionem non meretur*) as is the case with an enemy, for example, who is loved or not being hated only due to the precept (*praecipimur/praecipitur*) in Matt 5,44 par Lk 6,27. Therefore, the better translation for ἀγαπητός in Ps 44(45),1 would be *diligibilis*, God's beloved (יְדִידְיָה or *amatus Dei*) being — contrary to the view of the Jews — not Solomon but Christ (see also Isa 5,1), who deserves to be loved by the saints. The repeated quotation of v. 1 suggests that Jerome gives preference to *carissimus*: Philemon highly esteemed because he is engaged in the same work for Christ as that in which Paul himself is engaged.

2. In v. 5, *efficax* ("efficacious") or *operatrix* ("operative") would be a better translation for ἐνεργής *evidens* ("apparent") in order to show that faith has to be perfected by deeds.[146]

3. In v. 20a,[147] the Latin rendering of ναί, ἀδελφέ, which is a kind of adverb referring to one who flatters, as *ita, frater* does not do justice to the Greek original. A similar linguistic violence (*vis*) is the translation of אֲנָּא as ὠ δή in the Septuagint.

IX. Stylistic Peculiarities

1. In some of Paul's epistles, additional senders are mentioned[148] because these letters were dictated at the same time and in the presence of these men.[149] Jerome assumes (*puto*) a twofold reason for this co-authorship: On the one hand, several authors imply greater authority (*maior auctoritas*); on the other hand, Paul observes his own direction in 1Cor 14,30 and includes spontaneous inspirations of the Spirit of his fellow-worker(s) and cites him/them as sender(s), too.

2. Another characteristic feature of Pauline writing (*mos scribendi*) is that in the main part of the epistle, only Paul addresses Philemon, despite the fact that several senders and addressees have been mentioned.[150]

3. Whereas in general children are "the innermost part" (*viscera*) of their parents,[151] in vv. 7.12.20 apostolic linguistic usage (*idioma apostoli-*

146 See ibid. 4–6 {92,286–290; 93,305–307}.
147 See ibid. 20 {100,491–499}.
148 See above sub VII.1.2.
149 See Hier., In Philem. 1–3 {86,138–149}.
150 See ibid. 1–3 {88,184–191}; 4–6 {89,211f.}.
151 See ibid. 10–13 {996,388f.}.

[illegible] shows the entire love of the mind [illegible] or the inner disposition of the heart [illegible] and the desire of the soul (*plena ac* [illegible]) when that which has been requested is accepted.

X. Grammatical and Stylistic Observations

There are several grammatical inconsistencies[illegible] in St. Paul's text which Jerome deals with in two ways: in some cases he tries to explain the inconsistency, while in others, he merely [illegible] the grammatical structure or the style of a phrase or sentence:

1. Though v. 2 is ambiguous ([illegible]) in the sense that it is not clear whether the church in the house of [illegible] or the church in the house of Philemon is being referred to, it seems [illegible] that it is more likely to be Philemon's community, because it is [illegible] that Paul is writing in the main part of the epistle.

2. The ambiguous phrase (*ambigue* [illegible]) in v. 4[illegible] does not allow a clear conclusion as to which word is being referred to by 'always' (*semper*): Does Paul always thank God or does he always think of Philemon in his prayers? Jerome tends to express the opinion that both aspects are implied.

3. Since v. 5[illegible] is based on the stylistic figure of the construction [illegible], love and faith should be related to both objects (the Lord Jesus and all his saints).

4. Through the addition of the opposite adverb 'perhaps' (*forsitan*) in v. 15,[illegible] the sentence sounds more temperate (*temperat*) and the phrase is to the point (*pulchre*), since God's decisions are hidden (see Rom 11,33), and therefore it would be daring (*temerarium*) to pronounce that which is doubtful (*dubium*) to be certain (*certum*). Thus, by cautiously, reservedly, haltingly and indeterminately adding the word 'perhaps,' Paul deters other slaves from fleeing in order to become pupils of the apostles (*apostolici*).

152 See ibid. [illegible]
153 See ibid. [illegible]
154 [illegible]
155 See ibid. [illegible]
156 See ibid. [illegible]
157 See ibid. [illegible]
158 See ibid. [illegible]

5. According to v. 12, Paul's innermost part is Onesimus; however, in v. 20b[159] it is not clear (*ambigue*) whom Paul has in view in his reference to the "innermost part": (i) In the event that Onesimus is "the innermost part of Paul in Christ", then he is referred to in this way with good reason, because the apostle has begotten him while being in fetters for Christ. (ii) In the event that "the innermost part" refers to "Onesimus through Philemon in Christ", then Onesimus should derive new strength from Philemon in Christ, through his being taught by his sermons in Christ.

6. In v. 25,[160] Paul uses the stylistic figure of συνεκδοχῇ to express the idea that grace is in the entire person, making him spiritual and uniting him with the Lord.

XI. Rhetorical-Psychological Strategies Used by Paul

On various occasions, Jerome points out the apostle's clever use of certain stylistic features, by means of which he induces Philemon to grant him his request:[161]

1. Instead of the name "apostle", Paul deliberately employs the more weighty surname, "the one who is fettered for Jesus Christ" (v. 1), with a view to ensuring that his intercession for Onesimus will have the prospect of success.[162]

2. In his request to Philemon, the apostle uses his authority purposefully and intentionally (vv. 8–9): He does not frankly command (*impero, iubeo*), but he implores (*obsecro, peto*) as an aged petitioner (*grandis petens*) in whom is vested the authority of an apostle, of an old man and of one who is fettered for Jesus Christ.[163]

3. He exerts pressure on Philemon through his testimony regarding the Christianisation of the slave or robber who is now his servant in preaching the gospel (vv. 8–9).[164]

4. In his intercession (vv. 10–13), he does not plead for Onesimus as Philemon's slave, but as his (Paul's) son, whom he has begotten in the fetters which he has to endure for the sake of the gospel.[165]

159 See ibid. 20 {100,510–101,518}.
160 See ibid. 25 {105,629–631}.
161 "Since he wants to get what he requests ..." (*volens impetrare quod postulat*) (ibid. 10–13 {95,361}). For a modern interpretation of Paul's emotive rhetoric see P. Lampe, Affects and Emotions in the Rhetoric of Paul's Letter to Philemon: A Rhetorical-Psychological Interpretation, pp. 61–77, in this volume.
162 See ibid. 1–3 {83,68–84,71}.
163 See ibid. 8–9 {94,329–335}.
164 See ibid. 8–9 {94,350–353}.
165 See ibid. 10–13 {95,361–364}.

5. In appreciation of Onesimus' supreme effort to abide by his conversion to Christ, he is mentioned twice by Paul in vv. 10–13, viz. as his "son of the fetters" and as his "servant in preaching the gospel", so that Philemon, who has received wise and moderate praise in the introduction, will wish to prove that he well deserves the praise, and will therefore not dare to refuse.[166]

6. Paul subtly takes advantage of Philemon's desire (*cupio*) to consider him his partner (v. 17) by compelling him to make a decision to either accept Onesimus as his partner too, or otherwise renounce the fellowship (*consortium*) of both.[167]

7. The apostle challenges Philemon's views (v. 19):[168] Does the loss caused by Onesimus compare to the fact that Philemon himself is indebted to the apostle? After all, he owes his being a Christian to Paul. Being the "owner" of Philemon, Paul could have freely decided what to do with Philemon's "property", Onesimus, too, but he leaves it to Philemon to decide of his own free will to have mercy on the person who deserves forgiveness.

8. Owing to his confidence (v. 21) Paul prejudges (*praeiudico*), as it were (*quodammodo*), that Philemon will not refuse his request (*ne ei negare liceat*).[169]

XII. Theological Themes

Apart from the exegesis that has been discussed in the foregoing sections, Jerome unfolds general theological themes which deserve special attention. They are presented verse by verse, according to the order of their occurrence.

v. 3:[170] The wish of grace and peace from the Father and from the Lord shows that Son and Father have the very same nature (*una natura*), since the Son is also able to grant grace and peace as the Father does. Grace (*gratia*) means that we are saved neither on merit (*meritum*) nor as a result of any work (*opus*). Peace (*pax*) reflects God's reconciliation through Christ according to 2Cor 5,20.

v. 4:[171] Jerome explains the ambiguous phrase in terms of a synthesis of the following two factors: On the one hand, according to 1Thess 5,18a, Paul always gives thanks to God; on the other hand, he probably would have included Philemon in this prayer when praying for the

166 See ibid. 10–13 {95,379–96,384}.
167 See ibid. 17 {98,458–99,467}.
168 See ibid. 19 {99,484–489}.
169 See ibid. 21 {101,520–522}.
170 See ibid. 1–3 {88,198–89,204}.
171 See ibid. 4–6 {89,212–225}.

saints (*sancti*) and the righteous (*meliores*). Paul asks in his prayer that Philemon's faith and love with regard to Christ and all his saints will continue on the basis of the community in faith and the practice of the perception of every good through the mercy of Christ. The love towards Christ Jesus and all his saints complies with the double command in Mark 12,28–31 parr.

v. 5:[172] According to the stylistic figure of the construction ἀπὸ κοινοῦ, love and faith both refer to the Lord Jesus and all his saints. In Exod 14,31d, one and the same faith (*una atque eadem credulitas*[173]) of the people of Israel is directed towards God and Moses alike. This is not only true regarding Moses alone, but also with regard to all the Lord's saints, and therefore a perfect faith (*perfecta fides*) in God implies faith in his saints. This means that one can only believe in God as the creator if one also believes that everything is true (*verum*) that has been written about the saints such as Adam, Eve, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Moses and Aaron, Joshua, the Judges, Samson, Samuel, David, Nathan, Gad, Elijah, and Elisha. Only he who believes (*credo*) and approves (*comprobo*) everything that history (*historia*) tells of the patriarchs, the prophets and outstanding men, is able to believe in the God of the saints. He alone can be led to the faith of the Old Testament, so that he will proceed from the faith of the law to arrive at the faith of the gospel. The righteousness of God will then be revealed in him (Rom 1,17). According to Lev 19,2b, the same holiness is destined for the servants as for the Lord. The praise of Philemon is not insignificant, because he who believes that God is holy, does not stagger and fall by declaring holy those who are not holy or by declaring as not holy, those who are holy; one who acts in this way makes himself guilty of the offence depicted in Isa 5,20c.b, where holiness and its opposite are contrasted with each other. Only a skilled money changer, who examines the coin for its genuineness, will not stagger in discriminating those who are holy.

v. 6:[174] He who has the same love and the same faith with regard to God and his saints, should not deviate in his participation in this faith, and has to perfect the faith through deeds.[175] Accordingly, faith perfected by deeds requires perception (*agnitio*) or knowledge (*scientia*), and works of justice (*opera iustitiae*) must lead to knowledge. Love and faith have to be directed to God and the saints in a balanced manner;

172 See ibid. 4–6 {90,228–92,286}.
173 For the post-classical and Christian usage of *credulitas* in the sense of "faith," see Blaise, Dictionnaire (see n. 107), 229 s.v.
174 See Hier., In Philem. 4–6 {92,286–93,311}.
175 Concerning the translation of the adjective ἐνεργής, see above section VIII sub 2.

the will (*voluntas*) must be perfected by deeds, and finally, a perfect idea of the deeds (*notio perfecta gestorum*) has to be obtained. The knowledge of all good enables everything which is done in a just (*iuste*), gentle (*mansuete*), and eager (*studiose*) way, to be in accordance with the virtues. All these attitudes are realised in Philemon: He participates in an operative faith and love (*communicatio operatricis fidei et caritatis*) in the knowledge of all good (*agnitio omnis boni*), which is good only because it is derived from Christ, its source (*de Christi fonte*). This perception is a sign of Christ and it is not only perfectly (*perfecta*) present in the apostles, but it is also totally (*tota*) present in Philemon.

v. 7:[176] In this verse Paul intensifies the reason for his statement in v. 4: Philemon's love deserves thankfulness towards God because, by having looked after (*suscipio*) the hearts and souls of the saints, he has strengthened (*reficio*) them. The resultant joy is not a temporary, transitory or accidental joy, but a great and extraordinary one and is intensified by comfort.

vv. 8–9:[177] Since Paul did everything for the sake of Christ and thus could not be inferior to Philemon, he was entitled to assume a kind of boldness (*fiducia*) which would have authorised him to frankly command (*impero, iubeo*) and not to ask (*peto*), the more so as both could benefit through the case of Onesimus. However, the apostle decided to implore (*obsecro*) with the authority of an old man and of one who is fettered for Jesus Christ.

v. 14:[178] Using the "problems and solutions" approach,[179] Jerome looks into the intensively discussed problem as to why humankind was not created good (*bonus*) and (morally) upright (*rectus*), or in other words, he attempts to deal with the issue of a free will (*liberum arbitrium*). His argumentation displays a fourfold structure:

(i) God is good of his own free will (*voluntarie*) and not from necessity (*ex necessitate*).

(ii) According to Gen 1,26, humankind, too, has to be good not from necessity, but of its free will (seen in this way, the opinion that humankind had to be created so as not to tolerate evil, implies that it would be good from necessity and not of their own free will and thus would not be like God).

(iii) Only that is good which is done out of free will.

(iv) Although Paul could have retained Onesimus in service to himself without Philemon's approval, which would have been good, nevertheless, it would not have been determined by free will, and in another way, would have turned out not to be good. Therefore, Paul acts prudently by sending back the fugitive slave to his master to be of use to him.

Hence, concerning the solution to the question, it follows that:

(i) If God had made humankind good, independently of its free will, it would be good from necessity, which in another way certainly would turn out to be evil (*malum*).

(ii) By leaving humankind to its free will, God has made it according to Gen 1,26.

(iii) It is absolutely good to be like God (*similem ... Deo esse absolute bonum est*).

vv. 15–16:[180] As in the case of Joseph (see Gen 37–50), where evil became an opportunity for good and God turned the crooked considerations of humankind into upright ones, so too, in the case of Onesimus, the evil beginnings (*mala principia*) became an opportunity for a good thing (*res bona*): If Onesimus had not fled to Rome, he would not have seen Paul in fetters there, he would not have embraced the faith in Christ, he would not have been made the apostle's son and he would not have been sent to work for the gospel. Thus, a fugitive slave has become a servant of the gospel.

The relationship between slave and master ends with death. However, Onesimus has been made eternal (*factus aeternus est*) owing to his faith in Christ and has become an eternal brother (*frater aeternus*) to the eternal Philemon (and naturally also to the eternal apostle) at the same time. Whereas he previously was subjected to him in the nature of the flesh only, he now is bound together with him in the nature of the spirit of liberty (*spiritus libertatis*; see 2Cor 3,17). Consequently, every slave is bound together (*constringo*) with his master by a double law (*lex duplex*): temporarily by the necessity of the flesh, eternally by the spirit.

v. 17:[181] Paul makes the future fate of Onesimus, his partner (*consors*), son, and "innermost part", conditional upon Philemon's desire to subsequently have Paul as his partner; in concrete terms this implies his showing such progress towards Christ that he becomes like the apostle, sharing the fetters with him.

v. 18:[182] In accordance with Isa 53,4, Paul justly pleads for (*se oppono*) Onesimus and vouches for (*spondeo*) his debt, because he has to act like Christ.

176 See Hier., In Philem. 7 {93,312–325}.
177 See ibid. 8–9 {94,329–95,356}.
178 See ibid. 14 {96,391–97,420}.
179 See Heine, Search (see n. 3), 128–131; Bucchi, Introduzione (see n. 3), LXVII–LXIX.
180 See Hier., In Philem. 15–16 {97,424–98,457}.
181 See ibid. 17 {98,458–99,467}.
182 See ibid. 18 {99,469–477}.

v. 19:[183] In support of his promise, Paul has not dictated the letter as he usually would have done, but has written it with his own hand. However, there is a mutual obligation, because Philemon has become a Christian through the preaching of the apostle, and thus is also indebted to him. Hence, Paul was free to decide what to do with Onesimus, but he left it to Philemon's free will (*voluntas*) to have mercy on him and to forgive (*ignosco*) him.

v. 20a:[184] The apostle Paul, who abounds in virtues, rejoices only in the one who combines in himself many virtues that harmonise with each other, and everything which belongs to Christ. Thus, he desires Philemon to be filled with wisdom, justice, self-control, gentleness, temperance, and chastity (see 1Cor 1,30; Gal 5,22–23) while he rejoices in Philemon; the addition "in the Lord" makes a distinction between this pleasure (*fruitio*) and that without the Lord.

v. 21:[185] Owing to his confidence in Philemon, Paul anticipates his decision. If the apostle says that he knows that Philemon will do even more than he asks, he actually aspires to ask less in order to make it possible for Philemon to obtain the reward for the additional service. If Philemon is willing to do this even for a human being, he will be all the more willing to do so for the love of God. For this reason, he deserves to be praised by the apostle, surpassing the person Lk 17,10b refers to. Equally, virginity (*virginitas*), which goes beyond what is commanded, is crowned with a higher reward.

v. 22a:[186] Paul was neither rich nor overloaded with work nor dissatisfied with a single chamber when he refers to accommodation. Rather, his intention was to have an apartment (*domus*) in order to be able to manage the concourse of the multitude of Jews who were expected to come to hear him once he started to proclaim the Crucified, bringing them doctrines which had never been heard before. The ideal accommodation needed to comply with several criteria: Assembling in it should be easy; it should be spacious, far from theatres and what is morally detestable; and it should be situated on the ground floor. This is why Paul was a tenant for two years in the not-so-small Roman abode (*mansio*) whither the Jews streamed daily (see Acts 28,16–30).

v. 22b:[187] Paul's pardon owing to the prayers of the entire church is not so much a gift to the apostle, who is prepared for martyrdom; rather, it is a gift to those who would like to hear him, or those to

183 See ibid. 19 {99,479–489}.
184 See ibid. 20 {100,500–509}; concerning v. 20b, see above section X sub 5.
185 See Hier., In Philem. 21 {101,520–532}.
186 See ibid. 22a {101,533–102,549}.
187 See ibid. 22b {102,550–103,571}.

whom he was sent. Paul was in prison several times (see 2Cor 11,23) and was set free either through the help of God or through the persecutors themselves, so that the new preaching (*nova praedicatio*) could spread all over the world. Since there were no recommendations of the senate yet and the sword of Nero had not yet consecrated Christian blood, it so happened that Christians were arrested for the sake of the newness of the preaching (*novitas praedicationis*), by Jews and Gentiles, as a result of the rage of the crowd; however, they were released again after the outburst and fury had calmed down (see Acts 25,13–26,32).

vv. 23–24:[188] The correspondence of the names in the list of greetings with Col 4,10ff. is an indication that both letters were written at the same time and delivered by the same messenger. There are two explanations for the fact that Col mentions more names than Phlm: Not everybody was acquainted or friends with everybody else and there is a difference between a private letter and a letter to the whole congregation.

v. 25:[189] In Israel, the head was looked upon as the prime part of the body, symbolising the entire person; with the saints it is the spirit (*spiritus*) which is considered an individual's major (*maior*) and best (*melior*) part. By means of συνεκδοχῆ Paul indicates that grace is in the entire person and in all its parts so that the entire person, i.e. flesh (*caro*), spirit (*spiritus*) and soul (*anima*), becomes a spiritual person (*homo spiritalis*) or is put into a spiritual state (*substantia spiritalis*) and is thus united with the Lord (see 1Cor 6,17).

XIII. Jerome and Slavery

In keeping with the common attitude of his time, when even monks used to have slaves, the Church Father does not question slavery as such. He grew up on a wealthy Christian family estate with many slaves and had moved in the best circles of Rome and Constantinople, where slavery was basically accepted and a traditional institution.[190] Consequently, he never mentions the manumission of a slave, and even declares himself to be in favour of the retention of slavery in a case where a slave's emancipation would have been possible. The spectrum

188 See ibid. 23–24 {103,573–105,625}.
189 See ibid. 25 {105,626–635}.
190 See R. Klein, Der Kirchenvater Hieronymus und die Sklaverei: Ein Einblick, in: H. Bellen/H. Heinen (eds.), Fünfzig Jahre Forschungen zur antiken Sklaverei an der Mainzer Akademie 1950-2000: *Miscellanea* zum Jubiläum (FASk 25), Stuttgart 2001, 401–425, here: 402f.

of Jerome's statements in this regard ranges from negative to positive opinions on slavery, or on slaves and their behaviour.[191]

In his explanation of Phlm 16,[192] he states that a Christian slave is bound fast to his master by a twofold law (*duplici domino suo lege constringi*): On the one hand by the necessity of the flesh in time, on the other hand by the Spirit in eternity. The importance of this principle can be exemplified by the subject "flight of a slave",[193] which is not unimportant to him and which he unquestionably disapproves of as is shown in his treatment of Onesimus' action: Concerning his sin (*peccatum*) and the disgraceful deed (*facinus*) of his doing a person injustice, he does not deserve pardon.[194] Whereas the villainous slave and runaway deserved hate prior to his conversion, he now, as a Christian, deserves even more love.[195] Onesimus remains Philemon's property of which Paul could have made use (*utor*); instead, Paul has returned Philemon's property to him.[196] Slaves do not have to run away like Onesimus did, in order to become disciples of the apostles.[197]

One cannot and must not expect Jerome to provide an anachronistic solution to the modern "question of slavery". Nevertheless, he is able to offer a different kind of liberty on the basis and on the level of the Christian belief: By accepting Christ, the slave Onesimus experiences a change of his nature — although only death will end the temporal slave-master relationship, he is now already no longer a slave, but has received the Spirit of liberty and has become an eternal brother of his master and of the apostle Paul.[198]

191 See Klein, Kirchenvater (see n. 190), 408–415.
192 See Hier., In Philem. 15–16 {98,446–457}. Hier., In Eph. 6,5–8.9 {PL 26, 541A–542C} and idem, In Tit. 2,9–10 {Hieronymi Presbyteri Commentariorvm in Epistvlam Pavli Apostoli ad Titvm Liber Vnvs, in: Bucchi, Commentarii (see n. 1), 1–73, here: 48–52} deal with the differences in the obedience of free and unfree family members towards the *pater familias* (see Klein, Kirchenvater [see n. 190], 420–425).
193 See Klein, Kirchenvater (see n. 190), 403f.
194 See Hier., In Philem. 8–9 {94,348–350}.
195 See ibid. 10–13 {95,364–368}.
196 See ibid. 19 {99,486–489}.
197 See ibid. 15–16 {98,440–442}.
198 See ibid. 15–16 {98,446–453}. Klein, Kirchenvater (see n. 190), 425, fails to notice this nuance.

XIV. Jerome's Views Regarding the Jews

In his dissertation on Phlm, Jerome's attitude towards the Jews is either neutral or negative[199] — corresponding to the clichés of the Early Church:[200]

(i) The multitude of Jews (*turbae Iudaeorum*) daily flocks together at Paul's Roman abode (v. 22a).[201]

(ii) According to Num 1,18, the people of Israel (*populus Israhel*) are counted by their heads, the head being interpreted as the best part of the human body (v. 25).[202]

(iii) In his discussion of "(God's) beloved" in Ps 44(45),1 and Isa 5,1 he mentions the Jews (*Iudaei*) who incorrectly link this expression to Solomon; in this way the circumcision from the Jewish people (*circumcisio de populo Iudaico*) has struck a stone of offence and the rock of scandal (v. 1).[203]

(iv) Besides heathen idolaters, it is at the instigation of "enviers from the Jews" (*a Iudaeis invidentes*) that Christians are imprisoned (v. 22b).[204]

XV. Conclusion

A careful and well-balanced judgement of Jerome's dissertation on Phlm leads to the conclusion that views claiming that his "explanations of the New Testament have no great value,"[205] are "an impudent plagiarism"[206] and thus belong to "the most unpleasant results of his writing,"[207] are unfair misjudgements. Despite all defects[208] — of which Jerome was fully aware — he was determined "to use the very best authorities at his command"[209] and he "approached his task with a well-furnished mind and a perfectly trained pen ..., with a live intellect

199 For Jerome's negative view of the Jews, see Klein, Kirchenvater (see n. 190), 405f. For his anti-Judaic polemic in his interpretation of Tit, see Bucchi, Introduzione (see n. 3), XXXVI–XL.
200 Brown, *Vir* (see n. 3), 167–193, provides an overview of Jerome's terminology and related topics concerning Jews and Judaism.
201 See Hier., In Philem. 22a {102,548–549}.
202 See ibid. 25 {105,626–629}.
203 See ibid. 1–3 {87,159–179}.
204 See ibid. 22b {102,562}.
205 L. Saltet, Art. St. Jerome, CE (1910), retrieved from <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08341a.htm> (26/1/2009).
206 Bammel, Pauluskommentare (see n. 3), 207.
207 Harnack, Gut (see n. 3), 168.
208 See, e.g., Hier., In Gal. I Prol. {CChr.SL 77A (see n. 6), 6f.}; III Prol. {CChr.SL 77A (see n. 6), 157}.
209 Souter, Commentaries (see n. 2), 137.

and a real Christian faith."[210] Our investigation, too, "has indeed shown, what the author himself never disguised, that his work is compilation, but the whole has passed through his mind and bears the stamp of his peculiar genius."[211]

210 Ibid. 137f.
211 Ibid. 138.

Honour Discourse in John Chrysostom's Exegesis of the Letter to Philemon

CHRIS L. DE WET

I

Orlando Patterson writes that slavery may be defined as the "permanent, violent domination of natally alienated and generally dishonoured persons"[1]. It can thus be said that discourse regarding slavery, especially in an ancient context, cannot be successfully conducted if no reference is made to the social concepts of honour and shame. In the light of this reality, the present study examines John Chrysostom's use of honour discourse with regard to slavery in his homilies In epistulam ad Philemonem,[2] preached during his period of office in Antioch between 386 and 397 CE.[3] The question is therefore asked: How does honour discourse function in Chrysostom's exegesis of Phlm? The honour motif features recurrently in Chrysostom's exegesis[4] of the brief Pauline letter, and these three homilies, with an introductory "hypothesis", serve as important sources for examining Chrysostom's views on

1 O. Patterson, Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study, Harvard 2007, 13. See also J.A. Glancy, Slavery in Early Christianity, Minneapolis 2006, 18.
2 The Greek text of the homilies is available in PG 62.701.12–720.7, and in translated form in NPNF 13, 545ff.
3 See J. Quasten, Patrology 3: The Golden Age of Greek Patristic Literature, from the Council of Nicaea to the Council of Chalcedon, Westminster 1990, 449f. See also C. Moreschini/E. Norelli, Early Christian Greek and Latin Literature 2: From the Council of Nicea to the Beginning of the Medieval Period, Peabody 2005, 146–159. Biographical studies on John Chrysostom include: C. Baur, John Chrysostom and His Time (2 vols.), Westminster 1959f.; J.N.D. Kelly, Golden Mouth: The Story of John Chrysostom — Ascetic, Preacher, Bishop, Ithaca 1995, esp. 99f., where Chrysostom's views on slavery are summarised; W. Mayer/P. Allen, John Chrysostom (EChF), London/New York 2000.
4 John Chrysostom operated within the Antiochene School of exegesis. Their exegetical method seemed to have been specifically opposed to the allegorical approaches of the Alexandrian School. The Antiochene exegetes promulgated an exegesis that takes the history, context, grammar and rhetoric of the text seriously, without allegorising every element present. See K. Froehlich, Biblical Interpretation in the Early Church (SEChrT), Philadelphia 1984, 19; F.M. Young, The Fourth Century Reaction against Allegory, StPatr 30 (1997) 120–125.

slavery. Moreover, they also provide a glimpse into the *Wirkungsgeschichte* of the Christian treatment of slavery which may, in turn, provide some insights to modern scholars.[5]

The examination commences with a discussion of the nature of slavery in the fourth century CE, which forms the historical context of the homilies. Attention will be focused, inter alia, on various levels of abstraction, from Roman legislation on slavery in the fourth century, to ecclesiastical documents pertaining to the oppressive practice – a full understanding of which, even yet, remains elusive. The composition of Chrysostom's audience, most of whom were slave-owners themselves, is also investigated. The next stratum of the enquiry entails a discussion of the contents of the homilies, which consist of a prologue, an argument put forward by Chrysostom, followed by the disquisitions of the three separate homilies. Thereafter, a critical and detailed topical reflection on the homilies is offered, serving as a synthesis of all three homilies.

II

1. Studying the historical context of slavery in the late fourth and early fifth centuries is more complex than one would imagine. Despite the numerous bills of sale, legal codes, as well as the elaborations in the writings of ancient authors, it must be kept in mind that none of these can offer a clear or complete picture of the historical milieu of slavery. Glancy correctly notes that the picture presented by these documents is the product of a number of scholarly decisions.[6] The differences that exist between such scholarly reconstructions often tend to distort, rather than clarify the picture. For example, there are some authors, such as Gregory of Nyssa (Hom. in Eccl. 4), who write against the institution of slavery. Palladius (Historia Lausiaca LXI, Vita Melania Iunioris) recounts the story of a Roman millionaire and benefactor, a woman called

5 An example of the value of Patristic homilies for the modern researcher is found in the scholarly dialogue between M.M. Mitchell and A.D. Callahan on Chrysostom and the origin of the "traditional view" that Onesimus was a runaway slave. The contributions by these two scholars illustrate the importance of referring to late ancient Christian authors' writings in modern biblical-scientific study – and also the caveats that apply to the use of such texts. See A.D. Callahan, Paul's Epistle to Philemon: Toward an Alternative *Argumentum*, HThR 86 (1993) 357–376; M.M. Mitchell, John Chrysostom on Philemon: A Second Look, HThR 88 (1995) 135–148. It is not the intention of this study to speculate on the legal status of Onesimus as a runaway slave or *fugitivus*.

6 See Glancy, Slavery (see n. 1), 3.

Melania who, along with many other acts of charity, released nearly eight thousand slaves.[7]

Then there are instances that illustrate an opposite point of view, such as the discovery of a fourth- or fifth-century slave collar, or *titulus*, with an inscription reading: "I am the slave of the archdeacon Felix. Hold me so that I do not flee."[8] According to Thurmond,[9] who studied Roman slave collars, most known slave collars have been worn by the slaves of Christian owners. On the other hand, these collars may have functioned as a substitute for tattooing or branding slaves on the face, a practice outlawed by Constantine.[10] Another example of the difficulty of arriving at an accurate picture of slavery is found in a more formal source, namely the Theodosian Code (see Cod. Theod. 15.8.2; as well as in the later Justinian Code [see Cod. Iust. 11.40.6]), in which female slaves receive some liberties:

> If fathers or masters should be procurers and should impose upon their daughters or female slaves the necessity of sinning, we do not allow such procurers to enjoy the right of ownership ... But if the slaves and daughters so wish ... they shall be permitted to implore the aid of bishops, judges, and defenders, to be released from all the bonds of their miseries.[11]

However, Constantine's laws, with their Christian inclination, seem to have mainly comprised attempts rather to control the libidinous tendencies of people, especially women, rather than being formal legal provisions against the practice of slavery.[12] The laws seem to be more focused on the control of sexuality than the manumission or defence of slaves. Yet these laws do illustrate the close interrelationship between corporeality, sexuality and slavery. Shima's[13] observation, based on the work of F. Fabbrini, that the Christian church played a big role in the decline of slavery is an oversimplification. McHugh reminds the reader that the Constantinian institution of the manumissio in ecclesia was "in no sense obligatory and probably not widespread."[14]

2. In order to take a closer look at the current object of study, namely John Chrysostom, it is crucial to consider the composition of his au-

7 If the average price of a slave was more or less $100, the cost of this act would amount to nearly $800 000.

8 Glancy, Slavery (see n. 1), 9.

9 D.L. Thurmond, Some Roman Slave Collars in CIL, At. 82 (1994) 459–493.

10 See ibid., 493.

11 M. Maas, Readings in Late Antiquity: A Sourcebook, London/New York 2000, 234f.

12 See J. Evans Grubbs, Law and Family in Late Antiquity: The Emperor Constantine's Marriage Legislation, Oxford 1995, 271.

13 S. Shima, "Manumissio in Ecclesia": Its Significance in the History of Sacral Manumissions, SZ 91 (1982) 285–320, 421f.; see F. Fabbrini, La Manumissio in Ecclesia (PIDRDOM 40), Milano 1965; J.A. Harrill, The Manumission of Slaves in Early Christianity (HUTh 32), Tübingen 1995.

14 M.P. McHugh, Art. Slavery, EEC² (1999) 1066f., here: 1066.

dience. Mayer has convincingly argued that Chrysostom's audience in Antioch consisted mainly of upper- and middle-class citizens, with military personnel and monks often present.[15] The poorest of the poor, and slaves, comprised either a very small component of his audience, or were completely absent. A cursory reading of the homilies reveals many instances in which he speaks to the members on how they treat and should treat their slaves. Since many of Chrysostom's listeners were wealthy, most of them were, without a doubt, slave-owners. Chrysostom was therefore addressing slave-owners, most of whom accepted slavery as a natural state of affairs, which many church leaders, such as Chrysostom himself and also Augustine (Ciu. 19.15f.), refuted and attributed to sin.

3. Thus, slavery as a phenomenon in the late fourth and early fifth centuries is an elusive subject. Much of the evidence falls within a long tradition of scholarly interpretation. In other instances, there is some degree of contradiction between primary sources. The voices of the slaves are silent, and the evidence seems biased, since only slave-owners and government officials provided literary accounts. Even a closer examination of Chrysostom's audience and context proves problematic, since he was mostly speaking to slave-owners and not slaves. The sources thus appear to be rather one-sided. The description of the homilies now follows.

III

1. The three homilies on Phlm are preceded by an argument or hypothesis, mainly comprising some general remarks on the letter. This argument contains important hermeneutical premises that Chrysostom utilises in the homilies. He discusses the protagonists and the significance of the letter, and makes some general remarks on slaves.

According to Chrysostom, Philemon was a "very remarkable man" (ὁ θαυμαστὸς ἀνήρ). This can be inferred from the fact that Philemon's whole household was comprised of Christians — so many that it could actually be called a church. Chrysostom further speculates that Philemon's house possibly served as a lodging place for Christians. His close relationship with Paul also attests to his prodigious character. Reference is then made to Onesimus. Chrysostom believes Onesimus to have been a runaway slave who had stolen something from Philemon. Furthermore, according to Chrysostom, Onesimus had met Paul in Rome, was subsequently taught by him and received baptism. This interpretation is based on Paul's statement in Phlm 10 that Onesimus has been "begotten in my bonds", which, according to Chrysostom, refers to baptism. He also defends the canonical status of the brief letter.

15 See W. Mayer, Who Came to Hear John Chrysostom Preach? Recovering a Late Fourth-Century Preacher's Audience, EThL 76 (2000) 73–87.

2. In the first homily, covering Phlm 1–3, Chrysostom uses Paul's salutation to illustrate the interpersonal dynamics of the letter. The main participants are Paul, Onesimus and Philemon. The role of Paul, as Chrysostom construes it, seems complex. On the one hand, Paul is a prisoner; and under normal circumstances, prisoners should be ashamed. Yet Paul also fulfils the role of patron and *paterfamilias* of the Christian communities, and is therefore worthy of honour.[16] Paul's lower-status marker as a "prisoner in chains", as Chrysostom puts it, is reminiscent of Onesimus' status as a slave, while his higher-status marker as the patron and friend of Philemon endows him with worth and possibly leverage over the latter. Chrysostom rightly sees little social difference between a slave and an imprisoned individual — both would be bereft of honour. Moreover, as has been pointed out, Chrysostom understands the status of Onesimus to be that of a runaway slave, and therefore, that of a fugitive and criminal. Paul is consequently in the privileged position of having "close honour-proximity" to both Onesimus and Philemon. "Close honour-proximity" implies that two or more individuals have more or less the same degree of social worth in the eyes of peers in the community. In the case of close honour-proximity, whether in the form of friendship or collegiality, a measure of social influence can be assumed, especially with regard to patron-client relationships. Chrysostom calls Paul and Philemon both "friends" and "fellow labourers", and thus social equals. In the homily, the word "favour" (χάρις) is used to describe the influence that Paul attempts to exert. Paul's inclusion of slaves in the salutation to the church, according to Chrysostom, can be interpreted as an honour award to the slaves. Chrysostom reminds his audience of Gal 3,28, which clearly implies that slaves and free persons should be treated as equals. He points out (Hom. in Philm. 1.1):

> Here he has not even omitted the slaves. For he knew that often even the words of slaves had power to overthrow their master; and more especially when his request was on behalf of a slave. And it was possibly the slaves who frustrated him. He does not allow them therefore to fall into envy, having honoured them by including them in a salutation with their masters. And neither does he allow the master to be insulted. For if he had made mention of them by name, perhaps he would have been angry. And if he had not mentioned them at all, he might have been discontented. Observe therefore how prudently he has found a way by his manner of mentioning

16 This motif of Paul's role as *paterfamilias* is also found in his other letters; see S.J. Joubert, Managing the Household: Paul as *paterfamilias* of the Christian Household Group in Corinth, in: P.F. Esler (ed.), Modelling Early Christianity: Social-Scientific Studies of the New Testament in its Context, London/New York 1995, 213–223.

> them, both to honour them by his mention of them, and not to displease the master. For the name of the church does not want masters to be angry, even though they are counted as equals with their servants. For the church knows not the distinction between master and servant. By good actions and by sins it defines the one and the other. If then it is a church, do not be disappointed that your slave is saluted with you. For in Christ Jesus there is neither slave nor free [Gal 3,28].[17]

It is clear from this excerpt that, on the one hand, Chrysostom is faced with the social reality of his (and Paul's) day, according to which slavery is quite commonplace; and on the other hand, that in terms of his theological idealism, there is no longer any distinction between slaves and freed persons.[18] Yet slavery is such a common phenomenon, that even a distinction such as that between sinners and redeemed persons in the church, is portrayed by Chrysostom by means of a metaphor of slavery. Sinners are slaves to sin, while redeemed individuals are slaves of God.[19] In the pericope, the complacency of the slave-owners is still tacitly accommodated. Slaves are mentioned, but not by name. The mere mention of slaves should be enough to stifle any trace of envy on the part of the slaves and any sense of insult on the part of the owners.[20] Chrysostom thus uses cultural stereotypes in his homilies on Phlm, according to which slaves are of less worth than their masters. He even assumes that slaves are usually considered wicked and not trustworthy, and often susceptible to envy.

The homily concludes with a lengthy theological-ethical discussion of the question as to who people should honour. The rhetoric is accusatory, since people choose to honour other people rather than God. It must be borne in mind that, within Chrysostom's socio-theological framework, God is considered to be the divine patron, the one who bestows all gifts and favours, while human beings are viewed as clients. This pattern of social hierarchy that Chrysostom pursues, challenges the conventional hierarchy in which his middle- and upper-class audience members find themselves. For instance, it places the poor on a high-status stratum, since they represent opportunities for the non-poor to gain favour from the Patron. Since God is at the top of the social ladder, he is worthy of honour exceeding that which is accounted to

17 PG 62.705.14–32.

18 See especially Hom. in 1 Tim. 17.2; G. Kehnscherper, Die Stellung der Bibel und der alten christlichen Kirche zur Sklaverei: Eine biblische und kirchengeschichtliche Untersuchung von den alttestamentlichen Propheten bis zum Ende des Römischen Reiches, Halle 1957, 166.

19 Chrysostom does, in fact, believe that sin is the cause of slavery (see Laz. 6.7; Hom. in 1 Cor. 40.5).

20 According to Chrysostom, it seems that slaves were quite susceptible to the sin of envy and, in effect, the "evil eye". The moderation which he identifies in Paul's rhetoric apparently reflects an attempt to defuse any sign of envy on the part of the slaves (Hom. in Philm. 1.1).

any human being.[21] Yet people insult God by not acknowledging his omniscience. This means that people readily satisfy their sinful lusts, without realising that God can see them; however, they would be reluctant to do the same, for instance commit adultery, if other people could see them (Hom. in Philm. 1.2):

> But not only do you honour people more than God; you also force others to do the same. Many have in such a way constrained their servants and slaves. Some have drawn them into marriage against their will, and others have forced them to do reprehensible services, to engage in iniquitous love, to commit acts of theft, and fraud and violence. The accusation is then twofold, and neither can they obtain pardon upon the plea of necessity. For if you yourself do wrong things against your will, and at the command of the master, there is still no excuse.[22]

Chrysostom asserts that people forcing slaves to partake in shameful deeds, such as marrying against their will, sexually immoral acts, theft, fraud and violence, have a double judgement awaiting them.[23] In the first instance, this is because the bodies of the slaves serve as surrogate bodies for the slave-owners.[24] Not only are the slave-owners sinning in their own bodies; they also sin in their surrogate bodies. Secondly, the slave who commits the shameful or criminal act is not exempt from the judgement. The judgement that Chrysostom is referring to seems to be an eschatological judgement. Slaves, like all other human beings, will face judgement before God. This places the slaves in a predicament, since whether by means of the judgement of Roman law or by means of divine retribution, they will suffer. On the other hand, one may infer that Chrysostom assumes that slaves have the power to choose; this is also implied by the Justinian Code. However, in the historical context of Chrysostom's day, exercising this choice in practice was somewhat more problematic. Slaves would suffer no matter what choices they made, either at the hands of their masters, or by means of the rod of Roman justice, or as a result of divine punishment. The implication thus is that slaves who obeyed their masters and committed illegitimate deeds were also honouring people above God, and were thus guilty in

21 The topic of Chrysostom's socio-theological hierarchy has already been discussed elsewhere by the author: see C.L. de Wet, The Homilies of John Chrysostom on 1 Corinthians 12: A Model of Antiochene Exegesis on the Charismata (Unpubl. MA diss., University of Pretoria), Pretoria 2007, esp. 246.

22 PG 62.706.35.

23 C. Osiek has conducted a very interesting study on female slaves and the problem of sexual abuse by their masters, which became a complex moral dilemma in early Christian communities; see C. Osiek, Female Slaves, *Porneia*, and the Limits of Obedience, in: D.L. Balch/C. Osiek (eds.), Early Christian Families in Context: An Interdisciplinary Dialogue (RMF), Grand Rapids/Cambridge 2003, 255–274; see also J.A. Glancy, Obstacles to Slaves' Participation in the Corinthian Church, JBL 117 (1998) 481–501.

24 See Glancy, Slavery (see n. 1), 21–24.

the same manner as the unjust slave-owners. In the case of Philemon and Onesimus, as Chrysostom hints, it seems that the ideal would be non-violent reconciliation, based on fraternal commonality, as urged by Paul.

Wealth distribution, which is the main motif of the homily, comprises a frequent theme in the Chrysostomian homiletic conclusions. What relevance does this have with regard to slavery? Chrysostom speaks to the wealthy slave-owners on the subject how to manage their wealth. It should be noted that slaves do not form part of the audience, or at least not an active part. If there are slaves in the audience, Chrysostom is not speaking to them. Instead, the slaves are encapsulated in the collective wealth of the slave-owners. Manumitting slaves is regarded as a form of wealth distribution. In another homily, Chrysostom actually urges his audience not to have any slaves, since God has given them hands in order to care for themselves. He moderates the excessive nature of this statement by adding that, as a worst-case scenario, masters may own one or two slaves at most. However, if they buy slaves, it should not be for the purpose of servitude; but rather, they should educate and manumit them — a very commendable statement by Chrysostom (see Hom. in 1 Cor. 40.5).[25]

3. In the second homily, covering Phlm 4–16, Chrysostom once again focuses on the patron-client etiquette. He notes that Paul does not ask Philemon immediately for a favour, but starts off by praising him. Paul also first offers Philemon a "favour" in the form of his prayers for him (Phlm 4). Sensitive to Paul's rhetoric, Chrysostom further highlights the fact that Paul is attempting to "shame" Philemon into responding in terms of the same patron-client etiquette. Chrysostom then goes on to explain why Paul uses this euphemistic rhetoric. It is because Philemon's feeling toward Onesimus is that of anger, since he has not only run away, but has also been guilty of robbery. Therefore Paul is attempting to soothe Philemon. Chrysostom thus portrays Paul in this letter as a man attempting to calm the enraged slave-owner.

Chrysostom highlights two tactics that Paul uses to mollify Philemon. Firstly, Paul points out that Onesimus is once again profitable to Philemon, and also to Paul himself (Phlm 11). Onesimus therefore has physical value again, as a slave. Secondly, Chrysostom points out that Onesimus' name is not mentioned in the first nine verses of the letter, not even in the salutation.

The next section of the homily (Hom. in Philm. 2.2) comprises an important hermeneutical key in Chrysostom's exegesis. He states:

25 PG 61.353.42–354.18.

> "You, therefore", he says, "receive him, who is my own bowels!" He shows the greatness of his love. He does not say, "Take him back!", nor, "Do not be angry!", but "Receive him!"; that is, he is worthy not only of forgiveness, but of honour. Why? Because he has become the son of Paul.[26]

Chrysostom notes that Paul does not actively rely upon arguments based on emotion. He does not dictate to Philemon how he must feel. Rather, Paul provides a passive *argumentum ad sensum*, based on the newly-found fictive kinship between Paul and Onesimus.[27] The implication of this relationship is that Onesimus is worthy of both pardon (συγγνώμη) and honour (τιμή). Onesimus is more than a slave; he is a child (τέκνον) of Paul. The dishonoured slave is thus made honourable in Philemon's sight. Again, Chrysostom recognises Paul's euphemism. He does not say that Onesimus fled, but rather that he was separated from Philemon. Chrysostom also explains the voice of the verb ἐχωρίσθη. According to him, it is a *passivum divinum*, aimed at showing that God in fact separated Onesimus from Philemon in order to achieve a greater good, namely, to cause him to become a child of Paul. Onesimus would never run away again, since he was now a brother.

In the following section, Chrysostom makes a very significant statement (Hom. in Philm. 2.3):

> "No longer as a slave, but more than a slave, a brother beloved, especially to me." ... But if he is my brother, you also will not be ashamed of him. By calling him his son, he has shown his natural affection; and by calling him his brother, his great goodwill for him, and his equality in honour.[28]

In this instance, Chrysostom introduces his virtue discourse. By making Onesimus a brother, Paul causes the latter's honour to become equal (ἰσοτιμία) to that of Philemon, which is an act of goodwill (εὔνοια). ἰσοτιμία becomes the dominant theme of the honour discourse in the homilies. This ἰσοτιμία is based on the fictive kinship bonds that Onesimus shares with Paul and Philemon. Onesimus has received a spiritual birthright, something to which a slave could not possibly aspire. But Onesimus also moves into the sphere of brotherhood (ἀδελφότης) with Philemon.

Chrysostom does not hesitate to point out this brotherhood to his slave-owning audience, thereby challenging their disposition towards

26 PG 62.710.45–50.

27 For a discussion of the term "fictive kinship", see D.A. deSilva, Honor, Patronage, Kinship & Purity: Unlocking New Testament Culture, Downers Grove 2000, 199–226. Furthermore, D.B. Martin, Slave Families and Slaves in Families, in: Balch/Osiek, Families (see n. 23), 207–230, has provided an interesting study on slaves in families, on the basis of various funerary inscriptions, which shed some light on the relationship between slaves and the families they served. Some slaves were indeed considered as sons.

28 PG 62.711.27–56.

their slaves. What is the moral for the slave-owners? Slave-owners need to pardon slaves if the slaves have wronged them, and not be severe (τραχύς) with them. This seems to refer to the physical beatings that slaves had to endure from their masters. As Paul has honoured Chrysostom's audience by calling them "brothers", so too must the slave-owners honour the slaves. Paul's status as an apostle, according to Chrysostom, did not hinder him from calling non-apostles "brothers" and "friends".

The virtue of humility (ταπεινοφροσύνη) is introduced in the conclusion of the homily. Slave-owners require humility if they wish to honour their slaves. The conclusion begins with a comical play on words: "Do not be proud of [your] humility." Slave-owners should not boast that they treat their slaves well. Their motives must to be philanthropic and not self-aggrandising. The concept of φιλανθρωπία is somewhat complex.[29] It is not virtuous, in essence, to be philanthropic, as many wealthy people attempt to use φιλανθρωπία as a corollary of ὕβρις. Chrysostom compares such people to the Pharisee in Lk 18,12, whose motives were egocentric. Philanthropy must spring from sincere motives.

Finally, Chrysostom elaborates on the metaphor of slavery in the closing lines of the conclusion. All the saints belong (as slaves) to God. Christian slave-owners are thus advised to deal in the same way with their slaves as God has dealt with them. The metaphor of slavery is understood now in terms of a relationship, as Combes has stated.[30] The glory of the heavenly master is that he loves his slaves, and this should be enough reason for earthly slave-owners to do the same.

4. In the third homily, covering Phlm 17–25, Chrysostom devotes substantial attention to the issue of friendship.[31] Paul and Philemon are friends, but Onesimus now also enters the social sphere of friendship. As the homilist notes, Paul selects his words carefully. He does not say "if he has stolen money", but rather, "if he has wronged you". The language used is no longer that of slave and slave-owner, but that of friends. Friendship implies equality; and this seems to strengthen Chrysostom's previous argument in respect of ἰσοτιμία.[32] The equality of

29 φιλανθρωπία featured in the conclusion of the first homily and is implied in the conclusion of the second.

30 See I.A.H. Combes, The Metaphor of Slavery in the Writings of the Early Church: From the New Testament to the Beginning of the Fifth Century (JSNT.S 156), Sheffield 1998, 146–157.

31 For discussions on the topic of friendship in antiquity, see D. Konstan, Friendship in the Classical World (KTAH), Cambridge 1997; C. White, Christian Friendship in the Fourth Century, Cambridge etc. 2002, esp. 85–97.

32 In her study on Christian friendship, White has made some interesting observations on friendship between men and women, on the basis of Chrysostom's friendship with Olympias. She states that, according to Chrysostom, two factors contributed to bringing about equality between men and women as friends: Firstly, an ascetic virtue is implied, meaning that women and men, especially women, according to White, should "repudiate marriage and child-bearing" (eadem, Friendship [see n. 31], 88); and secondly, since many of these women were wealthy aristocrats, and thus of high social status, men may have deemed it socially profitable to start friendships with them (see ibid.; see also E.A. Clark, Jerome, Chrysostom and Friends: Essays and Translations [SWR 2], New York ²1982). Obviously such categories would have to be re-evaluated if slavery, rather than gender, comprised the focal issue.

33 PG 62.718.11–23.

slaves and owners, as is evident from Chrysostom's previous arguments, is based on the fact that they serve a communal divine master, as well as the fact that the church does not (or should not) recognise traditional hierarchies.

Chrysostom points out that Paul's language is intricately woven to comply with the rules of engagement between friends and patrons. But his words are also complimentary, so as "even to calm a wild animal". The foundation of Paul's relationships is love.

An exposition of the final salutation in the letter serves as the conclusion of the homily. Chrysostom provides a lengthy discussion of the relationship between grace and chastisement, and also uses the slavery metaphor to illustrate his viewpoint. He constructs a diatribe, in which someone asks why it is good for God to chastise people. He responds thus (Hom. in Philm. 3.3):

> You who raise these questions and who have servants; if I could make it clear to these people that if they [the slaves] should destroy the family of their masters, if they should attack them, if they should destroy everything, if they should turn things upside down, if they should treat them as enemies, and their masters would not threaten them, nor correct them, nor punish them, nor even discipline them with a word, would this be any proof of goodness? I maintain that this is the extreme side of cruelty, not only because the wife and children are betrayed by this irrational kindness, but because the slaves themselves are destroyed since they will become drunkards, poor, self-indulgent, and more irrational than any animal.[33]

Chrysostom incorporates the slavery metaphor in order to relate to the audience, the majority of whom were probably slave-owners, and to make them understand his argument better. The notion is accepted that rebellious and anti-social slaves, like criminals, should be punished. The punishment is for the good of the slave, in order to prevent him from being consumed by vice. This punishment or chastisement is grace, since it guards the families of the masters and also the slaves themselves. Accordingly, grace entails the visitation of judgement on the wicked, in order to protect society and the wicked themselves.

IV

1. This section attempts to offer a synthesis of the results of the foregoing investigation. Two issues will be discussed, namely the manumission of slaves and the inclusion of slaves in fictive kinship communities.

Firstly, the focus will fall on the issue of wealth and the manumission of slaves. Chrysostom does, in some instances, motivate his slave-owners to manumit their slaves. However, it is important to examine the premises behind manumission, as this act was not always practised out of principled benevolence. Slaves were regarded by Chrysostom as part of the riches of his audience. His pro-monastic attitude, especially in Antioch, may shed more light on this issue: Slaves were to be manumitted, firstly, because the wealthy were advised to dispose of most of their wealth, since wealth corrupts. Furthermore, monks and ascetics were scorned in Antioch, and Chrysostom most vehemently strove to defend their honour and social standing in the community. He did this by urging his wealthier patrons to give their wealth away to the poor, and to manumit their slaves. Manumission would thus be a sign of φιλανθρωπία. However, φιλανθρωπία should be properly understood in terms of its ancient context. According to Chrysostom, it was not merely a virtue, but could even be a vice, like ὕβρις. Since most of his listeners were probably also patrons in the city, φιλανθρωπία could become a means to increase their honour and popularity. Thus, pride was the great danger of φιλανθρωπία. It could often result in φιλοτιμία, the love of honour, which was a vice. According to Chrysostom, the wealthy slave-owners should not merely release their slaves in order to increase their own honour, but rather, in imitation of Paul's treatment of Onesimus, their actions should be based on a conviction of humility.

Furthermore, on the basis of Phlm, many monasteries accepted runaway slaves, and according to Cod. Iust. 1.3.37, slaves who became monks received free status as long as they remained in the monastery. A slave in a monastery could then increase the honour of the master. Slaves could only become monks at the behest of their masters, and it seems that many masters released their slaves in order to allow them to become monks. If Glancy is correct in claiming that the body of a slave served as a surrogate body for the owner, it is possible that the owners had their own spiritual or social benefit in mind when they sent their slaves to a monastery. It is uncertain whether Chrysostom shared this ideology, and it seems unlikely that this practice was common in the late fourth century.

According to Chrysostom, manumission should arise from the owner's own volition. In another instance, he urges that runaway slaves should not be taken away from the service of their masters.[34] It is therefore important to take a closer look at the motives and conditions of slave-manumission in the early church.

The locus classicus of slave-manumission in Chrysostom's writings is found in his fortieth homily on First Corinthians. In this homily, Chrysostom indicates that people should not have slaves in the first place, and that at most, they should have one or two. Rather, people should purchase slaves with the intention of teaching them a trade and then setting them free — an honourable thing for masters to do.

2. The second issue that may be distinguished is the close interrelation between slavery and kinship, specifically fictive kinship. The most significant aspect of Chrysostom's exegesis of Phlm is the way in which he relates slavery, honour and kinship. At the outset of this study, it was indicated that slaves were natally alienated and dishonoured. The two concepts, honour and kinship, in an ancient context, thus cannot be separated.

In ancient society, honour resided especially in one's kinship. Honour was also genealogically reflective.[35] Slaves had no honour because they had no birthright. This is also why the bodies of slaves were not honoured. The word "body" (σῶμα), according to Glancy,[36] was actually a synonym for "slave". Chrysostom proceeds from the premise that, as a result of Onesimus' conversion and baptism, a higher symbolic reality became applicable, namely a fictive kinship-community. The implication is thus that Onesimus received two grants of honour. He received birthright, i.e., an honourable body, through Paul, the *paterfamilias*. As a logical inference, he also received the relationship of brotherhood with Philemon. Thus, the reception of fictive birthright implied an honour-grant to the body of Onesimus. Rather than be beaten, Onesimus should be embraced "in the flesh" (Phlm 16).

Furthermore, the concept of ἰσοτιμία is introduced by Chrysostom. However, this does not refer to social ἰσοτιμία, but symbolic or fictive ἰσοτιμία. It should also be noted that Onesimus was still not viewed as being equal to Paul, only to Philemon.

But in practice, how effective was this fictive kinship-community socially and culturally, especially with regard to slavery? Most importantly, it should be borne in mind that fictive kinship-communities did

34 See Hom. in Philm. 2.2.
35 See B.J. Malina, The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology, Louisville/London ³2001, 32–40.
36 See Glancy, Slavery (see n. 1), 10.

not change kinship on a structural level (e.g., fictive kinship-communities in early Christianity were still patriarchal). Kinship on a structural level was still constructed through culture and by the authorities. In fictive kinship-communities, only membership and member-status were changed. Chrysostom, for instance, still made use of cultural stereotyping to make sense of the fictive kinship system.

Fictive kinship could also be problematic with regard to the experience of corporeality, since fictive communality could potentially result in corporeal tension and confusion — the body was not certain of its identity, since tension existed between the kinship structures outside of the fictive kinship community and those inside the kinship community. Corporeality determined social order, and with a new fictive kinship structure, the conventional social order[37] was changed in the experience of, in this instance, the slave. From the perspective of New Testament times — a perspective which appears to have been valid even in the later centuries of late antiquity — Berger[38] states that, according to the common cultural system or worldview, bodies were made to be ruled, either by divine beings or persons who occupied higher positions in the social hierarchy. Since fictive kinship provided socially limited and merely symbolic honour to a physical body, this honour was only recognised by peers in the same community. Outside of the fictive kinship-community, for example, on a macro-economical level, the body could lose its honour, or the honour could be reversed into a perception of shame. What could be worse than being a slave? One could reply: "Being a Christian slave!" With the honour converted into shame, the body was now "degenealised", resulting in a constant "seesaw" effect in a person's status. This degenealisation could be socially and culturally traumatic. Merely being part of a fictive kinship-community would thus not remove the harsh reality of still being regarded as a slave outside the community. Other slaves who were not part of the fictive kinship-community were not going to treat the slave as a freed person. Another problem was that fictive kinship-communities, especially in the case of Christianity, were often antithetical to the outside society — they became anti-societies, with their own anti-language (that is, honour became shame and shame became honour). In the fourth and fifth centuries, this situation was even more complex, since there were even more different varieties of "Christianities", some institutional and others not.

37 See K. Berger, Identity and Experience in the New Testament, Minneapolis 2003, 65f.
38 See ibid., 64f.

Chrysostom, in his homilies (and the same can possibly even be said of Paul in Phlm), seems to struggle to reconcile or even balance the tension between non-fictive and fictive kinship-communities. As a logical result, ἰσοτιμία became oxymoronic. In practice, it was limited ἰσοτιμία, or equality of honour only among fictive equals in a limited social space. In reading Chrysostom, the modern scholar thus should be aware of the need to rethink and re-describe without interpreting fictive kinship in terms of a dichotomy, and also without oversimplifying the problem of slavery.

3. In conclusion, it should be pointed out that the honour discourse in Chrysostom's homilies on Phlm functions on two thematic levels, namely wealth-distribution (with reference to monastic ideals, and particularly in the context of manumission), and kinship:

Firstly, the honour received through the manumission of slaves was regarded as secondary to the honour received through the dissolution of wealth. However, the manumission of slaves could also be considered as the dissolution of wealth. Slaves were still regarded as property. The property now merely belonged to someone else. The resultant honour might arise from the slave's participation in monasticism, but the master received the grant of honour (the slave remained a slave, either to the master or the monastery). φιλανθρωπία thus became the honour-catalyst for the slave-owner. The slave was only a surrogate body for that of the owner. Whether the owner manumitted the slave as a gesture of wealth-dissolution, or whether he had the slave work in a monastery, the honour still devolved to the owner.

Secondly, in terms of kinship, the slave received a fictive birthright. Fatherhood and brotherhood, which were both grants of honour, arose from this birthright. The problem did not lie with the fatherhood/brotherhood, but rather with the fictivity thereof. The dichotomy was problematic in that it caused corporeal confusion, especially in the case of slaves, since it was principally, but not structurally, antithetical to other dominant systems. ἰσοτιμία was thus only effective and valid in a limited way. Therefore, the honour discourse in Chrysostom's homilies, in the light of the foregoing, provides perspective on the linguistic and systemic challenges that arise in reading Phlm.

For his time, Chrysostom was nevertheless advanced in his thinking, despite being bound to patriarchal and other pre-modern frames of reference. His homilies provide many useful resources for the study of Phlm, especially for the purposes of a social-scientific approach to the New Testament. His sensitivity to the grammar, rhetoric, culture and society behind the text makes Chrysostom a creative partner in dialogue when one reads Phlm.

Theodore of Mopsuestia on Paul's Letter to Philemon

JOHN T. FITZGERALD

I. Introduction

Theodore of Mopsuestia was undoubtedly one of the most important and famous representatives of the so-called "Antiochene school of exegesis"[1]. Details about his life are obscure and debated, but the general sequence of events seems relatively clear.[2] He was born in Antioch[3]

1 J. Quasten, Patrology 3, Utrecht etc. 1960, 402, regards him as "by far" the school's most famous representative. See esp. M.F. Wiles, Theodore of Mopsuestia as Representative of the Antiochene School, in: P.R. Ackroyd/C.F. Evans (eds.), The Cambridge History of the Bible 1: From the Beginnings to Jerome, Cambridge 1970, 489–510. An excellent Forschungsbericht on the history of the school in recent scholarship is provided by A. Viciano, Das formale Verfahren der antiochenischen Schriftauslegung: ein Forschungsüberblick, in: G. Schöllgen et al. (eds.), Stimuli: Exegese und ihre Hermeneutik in Antike und Christentum. Festschrift für Ernst Dassmann (JAC.E 23), Münster 1996, 370–405. For the provocative thesis that the famous Antiochene antipathy to allegory was rooted in (or at least influenced by) an adverse reaction to Julian the Apostate's use of allegory in interpreting pagan myths, see F. Thome, Historia contra Mythos: Die Schriftauslegung Diodors von Tarsus und Theodors von Mopsuestia im Widerstreit zu Kaiser Julians und Salustius' allegorischem Mythenverständnis (Hereditas 24), Bonn 2004.

2 On Theodore's life and thought, see esp. H.B. Swete, Art. Theodorus (26), DCB 4 (1887) 934–948; L. Patterson, Theodore of Mopsuestia and Modern Thought, London 1926; É. Amann, Art. Théodore de Mopsueste, DThC 15.1 (1946) 258–280; R. Devreesse, Essai sur Théodore de Mopsueste (StT 141), Vatican City 1948; F.A. Sullivan, The Christology of Theodore of Mopsuestia (AnGr 82), Rome 1956; R.A. Greer, Theodore of Mopsuestia: Exegete and Theologian, Westminster 1961; R.A. Norris, Manhood and Christ: A Study in the Christology of Theodore of Mopsuestia, Oxford 1963; G. Koch, Die Heilsverwirklichung bei Theodor von Mopsuestia (MThS.S 31), München 1965; J.McW. Dewart, The Theology of Grace of Theodore of Mopsuestia (SCA 16), Washington, DC 1971; F. Thome/H.J. Vogt, Art. Theodoros v. Mopsuestia, LThK^3 9 (2000) 1414f.; P. Bruns, Art. Theodor von Mopsuestia, TRE 33 (2002) 240–246; M. Simonetti, Theodore of Mopsuestia, in: Ch. Kannengiesser, Handbook of Patristic Exegesis 2 (BiAC 1), Leiden 2004, 799–828; F.G. McLeod, The Roles of Christ's Humanity in Salvation: Insights from Theodore of Mopsuestia, Washington 2005; idem, Theodore of Mopsuestia (EChF), London 2009, who provides a succinct yet valuable Forschungsbericht of scholarship on Theodore (pp. 8–16).

3 On Antioch and its history, see G. Downey, A History of Antioch in Syria: From Seleucus to the Arab Conquest, Princeton 1961; idem, Ancient Antioch, Princeton 1963. On Antioch in the post-Constantinian period, see G. Downey, Antioch in the Age of

about 350 or 352 CE,[4] studied rhetoric there under Libanius,[5] perhaps some philosophy,[6] and then, while still a teenager, entered Diodore's

Theodosius the Great, Norman 1962; and esp. D.S. Wallace-Hadrill, Christian Antioch: A Study of Early Christian Thought in the East, Cambridge etc. 1982.

4 Theodore's date of birth is most often given as ca. 350, but R.E. Carter, Chrysostom's Ad Theodorum lapsum and the Early Chronology of Theodore of Mopsuestia, Vig Chr 16 (1962) 87–101, argues for 352.

5 See now R. Cribiore, The School of Libanius in Late Antique Antioch, Princeton 2007. Whereas Dewart, Theology (see n. 2), 10, thinks "Theodore emerged unscathed" from Libanius' school, C. Schäublin, Untersuchungen zu Methode und Herkunft der antiochenischen Exegese (Theoph. 23), Köln/Bonn 1974, 86f., correctly points out that Theodore would have learned from Libanius such rhetorical techniques as ἠθοποιΐα, that is, "speech-in-character", which gives what a specific individual would say in a particular situation. For the speech-in-character exercises in Libanius' progymnasmata, see C.A. Gibson (trans.), Libanius's Progymnasmata: Model Exercises in Greek Prose Composition and Rhetoric (WGRW 27), Atlanta 2008, 355–425. For a clear example of Theodore's use of this technique, see his comment on the opening of Ps 34^{LXX}:

> In this psalm blessed David prophesies the events concerning Jeremiah. Adopting his point of view in the inspired composition, he gives voice to what he probably would have said in the situation. He employed this usage in particular in many cases, saying what was appropriate for the people to say with whom the composition deals (R.C. Hill [transl.], Theodore of Mopsuestia: Commentary on Psalms 1–81 [WGRW 5], Atlanta 2006, 339).

For a general discussion of the importance of rhetorical education for patristic and especially Antiochene exegesis, see F. Young, The Rhetorical Schools and Their Influence on Patristic Exegesis, in: R. Williams (ed.), The Making of Orthodoxy: Essays in Honour of Henry Chadwick, Cambridge 1989, 182–199; idem, Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture, Cambridge 1997. On the relationship of patristic exegesis to that of profane literature, see also the remarks of R. Bultmann in his Habilitationsschrift of 1912: Die Exegese des Theodor von Mopsuestia, (H. Feld/K.H. Schelkle [eds.]), Stuttgart 1984, 128–134.

6 Whether Theodore formally studied philosophy for a brief time is uncertain. Soz., H.E. 8.2, says that Theodore was highly skilled in the thought of both rhetoricians and philosophers, and Barhadbĕšabbā ʿArbāyā (a teacher in the School of Nisibis in the second half of the sixth century) in his H.E. 19 (PO 9.5, [489]–631, here: 504) claims that Theodore had been instructed in the knowledge of philosophy and was proficient in all the wisdom of the Greeks when he abandoned secular studies (see also Carter, Chronology [see n. 4], 97). There would have been some exposure to philosophy under Libanus (Simonetti, Theodore [see n. 2], 799), but inasmuch as philosophy was hardly the focus of rhetorical training, other influences are likely. Yet no ancient source names any philosopher with whom he may have studied. Andragathius, the otherwise unknown philosopher with whom Theodore's boyhood friend John Chrysostom is said to have studied (Socr., H.E. 6.3; Soz., H.E. 8.2; Phot., Cod. 96), is sometimes suggested, but that necessarily remains an attractive yet unverifiable conjecture. That Theodore's general familiarity with philosophy — for example, his acquaintance with philosophical theory and terminology regarding the emotions — came principally through the use of doxographies is quite likely (see Schäublin, Untersuchungen [see n. 5], 151; Dewart, Theology [see n. 2], 6f.). His teacher Diodore may also have played an important later role in mediating to Theodore aspects of their classical heritage. After all, he had studied in Athens, wrote on philosophical topics, and used his classical training to argue effectively against Julian the Apostate and his pagan agenda. The extent to which Theodore's acquaintance with philosophy, especially Stoicism, influences his exegesis is debated (see, e.g., McLeod, Roles

"monastery" (ἀσκητήριον), where he began his theological training.[7] His fellow student under both Libanius and Diodore was John Chrysostom,[8] who is credited with persuading Theodore to leave Libanius and join the ranks of the ascetics.[9] Later, when Theodore, not yet twenty years old, left the monastery with a view toward marriage and a secular career, Chrysostom once again intervened. John wrote his friend a protreptic letter, exhorting him to return;[10] the letter worked,[11] and

[see n. 2], 115–119), yet it is reasonably clear that he, like most patristic theologians, shared the basic Neoplatonic Weltanschauung of the age (Greer, Theodore [see n. 2], 13). On the importance of fourth- and fifth-century philosophy for understanding Theodore's anthropology and ultimately his Christology, see Norris, Manhood (see n. 2), esp. 1–78.

7 Of Diodore's numerous exegetical works, only a small portion remains. The most substantial is his commentary on the Psalter, which has been partially edited by J.-M. Olivier, Diodori Tarsensis commentarii in Psalmos 1: Commentarii in Psalmos I–L (CChr.SG 6), Turnhout 1980, and translated into English by R.C. Hill, Diodore of Tarsus: Commentary on Psalms 1–51 (WGRW 9), Atlanta 2005. The fragments of his commentaries on Paul, especially Romans, have been collected and edited by K. Staab, Pauluskommentare aus der griechischen Kirche: aus Katenenhandschriften gesammelt und herausgegeben, Münster ²1984, 83–112, and are available in the TLG.

8 For Chrysostom as an interpreter of Paul, see esp. M.M. Mitchell, The Heavenly Trumpet: John Chrysostom and the Art of Pauline Interpretation (HUTh 40), Tübingen 2000.

9 See Socr., H.E. 6.3; Soz., H.E. 8.2; Phot., Cod. 96. For John and Theodore as friends and one-time students of Diodore, see also Thdt., H.E. 5.39.

10 "After studying the ecclesiastical laws, and frequenting the society of holy men, he was filled with admiration of the ascetic mode of life and condemned city life. He did not persevere in the same purpose, but after changing it, he was drawn to his former course of life; and, to justify his conduct, cited many examples from ancient history, with which he was well acquainted, and went back into the city. On hearing that he was engaged in business and intent on marriage, John composed an epistle, more divine in language and thought than the mind of man could produce, and sent it to him" (Soz., H.E. 8.2; transl. C.D. Hartranft, NPNF 2/2, 400). Whether Chrysostom's letter survives is debated. There are two works in the corpus of Chrysostom titled Ad Theodorum lapsum. The longer of the two is a treatise, whereas the shorter is a letter. Whereas older scholarship, following the lead of Leontius of Byzantium and Isidore of Seville, viewed both works as addressed to Theodore of Mopsuestia, contemporary scholars tend to reject that view, with some denying that either work was addressed to the later bishop of Mopsuestia, and others arguing that only the letter was sent to him. The statement in the text that Theodore had not yet celebrated his twentieth birthday is based on the letter in Chrysostom's corpus. For the two documents, see J. Dumortier (ed. and trans.), Jean Chrysostome, À Théodore (SC 117), Paris 1966; for Theodore as less than twenty, see Ep. 4.17 (p. 68). For discussion, see G. Jouassard, Ad Theodorum lapsum, HJ 77 (1958) 140–150; C. Fabricius, Adressat und Titel der Schriften an Theodor, CM 20 (1959) 68–97; Carter, Chronology (see n. 4); and L. Van Rompay, John Chrysostom's "Ad Theodorum lapsum": Some Remarks on the Oriental Tradition, OLoP 19 (1988) 91–106.

11 "Upon reading it, he repented and immediately gave up his possessions, renounced his intention of marrying, and was saved by the advice of John, and returned to the philosophic career" (Soz., H.E. 8.2; transl. C.D. Hartranft, NPNF 2/2, 400).

Theodore returned to monastic life,[12] during which he began writing commentaries and other works,[13] with his first commentary devoted to the Book of Psalms,[14] and a second commentary (this one on the Twelve Minor Prophets)[15] written soon thereafter. When Diodore became bishop of Tarsus in 378,[16] Theodore assumed the leadership of the school.[17] In 383 he was ordained a presbyter (presumably by Flavian, the bishop of Antioch from 381–404). A few years later he may have moved to Tarsus; if so, it means that he was reunited with Diodore.[18] In 392 he became bishop of Mopsuestia in Cilicia,[19] an ecclesiastical promotion doubtless made possible by the stature he had acquired through his writings, especially his monumental *De incarnatione*,[20] and

12 Barḥadbĕšabbā ʿArbāyā, H.E. 19 (PO 9.5, 505) claims that Theodore spent twenty-one years in the monastery with the "Flavians and Diodores" (see also Carter, Chronology [see n. 4], 92f.). For that to be accurate, it must include the time that Theodore later spent with Diodore in Tarsus.

13 His first works thus date from his twenties, that is, the 370s. There is no reason to give credence to the polemical claim of Leontius of Byzantium, one of Theodore's fiercest critics, that Theodore "was no more than eighteen when he took to subjecting the divine Scriptures to drunken abuse" (Nest. et Eut. 8 = PG 86, 1364; transl. R.C. Hill, Theodore of Mopsuestia: Commentary on the Twelve Prophets [FaCh 108], Washington 2004, 3).

14 What remains of the commentary in Greek and Latin has been edited by R. Devreesse, Le commentaire de Théodore de Mopsueste sur les Psaumes (I-LXXX) (StT 93), Città del Vaticano 1939, and translated by Hill, Psalms (see n. 5). Numerous emendations of Devreesse's text are suggested by V. Bulhart, Kritische Studien zum lateinischen Text des neuen Theodorus von Mopsuestia, WSt 59 (1941) 134–145. For possible Syriac fragments of the commentary, see L. Van Rompay (ed. and trans.), Théodore de Mopsueste: Fragments syriaques du Commentaire des Psaumes (Psaume 118 and Psaumes 138–148) (CSCO 435-436/CSCO.S 189-190), Leuven 1982.

15 This is the only one of Theodore's commentaries to survive entirely in Greek. It has been edited by H.N. Sprenger, Theodori Mopsuesteni commentarius in XII Prophetas (GOF.B 1), Wiesbaden 1977, and translated by Hill, Prophets (see n. 13).

16 Diodore had been banished to Armenia in 372 by the Arian emperor Valens, but he became bishop of Tarsus in 378, following Valens' death earlier that year.

17 See Simonetti, Theodore (see n. 2), 800, citing the testimony of John of Antioch as preserved by Facundus.

18 For Theodore's move to Tarsus, possibly following a visit by Diodore to Antioch in 386, see Hesychius of Jerusalem apud Mansi 9, 248; Swete, Theodorus (see n. 2), 936; Bruns, Theodor (see n. 2), 240; McLeod, Roles (see n. 2), 30f.

19 Wallace-Hadrill, Antioch (see n. 3), 17, calls attention to the ancient legend about Theodore's arrival there:

> Barḥadbešabba recounts the legend of Theodore's arrival at his diocesan town of Mafsoustia (Mopsuestia), a particularly pagan place, he observes, given to the worship of Mopsus. At the bishop's approach, the great man's virtue caused the statue of the god to fall in ruins.

See Barḥadbĕšabbā ʿArbāyā, H.E. 19 (PO 9.5, 508).

20 Fr. Inc. was written between 382 and 392, probably in the mid-380s; it is described by Quasten, Patrology (see n. 1), 410, as not only Theodore's most important work but "the most important of all the treatises the School of Antioch ever produced." For English translations of the fragments, see R.A. Norris (transl. and ed.), The Christological Controversy (SEChrT), Philadelphia 1980, 113–122, and McLeod, Theodore (see n. 2), 126–147.

by other significant factors.[21] Theodore served as bishop there until his death in 428. All throughout this period, in Antioch,[22] Tarsus, and Mopsuestia, he continued to write.[23]

Indeed, by all accounts, Theodore was one of the most prolific theologians of the post-Constantinian church. According to John, the Bishop of Antioch (d. 441/442), Theodore's polemical works alone numbered 10,000,[24] whereas Facundus of Hermiane, the sixth-century North African bishop and theologian, was even more hyperbolic, calling Theodore's total corpus of writings "innumerable"[25]. Furthermore, these treatises tended to be quite long. For example, according to Gennadius of Marseilles (fl. 470), Theodore's *De incarnatione* comprised fifteen books (*libri*) and contained as many as 15,000 verses (Vir.Ill. 12). Similarly, Photius (Cod. 38) says that the first book (βίβλος) of Theodore's commentary on Genesis contained seven volumes (τόμοι).[26] Again, to

21 In addition to Theodore's theological stature, at least three other factors were involved in his elevation to the episcopal see. The first was the death of Olympius, the previous bishop of Mopsuestia, which created the vacancy. The second was a meeting with the Macedonians (Pneumatomachians) at Anazarbos in 392 (on which see Theodore's Disputatio cum Macedonianis [Disp. c. Mac.] [PO 9.5, 637–667]) in which Theodore represented the orthodox position. Theodore "is said to have been consecrated a bishop so as to be endowed with the episcopal status the Macedonians wanted in the person who would confer with them over the question of the divinity of the Holy Spirit" (McLeod, Roles [see n. 2], 31). He appears to have been given the see of Mopsuestia soon thereafter (Simonetti, Theodore [see n. 2], 800). The third factor was doubtless the influence of Diodore in helping his protégé gain this appointment. Swete, Theodorus (see n. 2), 936, surmises that it was Diodore who consecrated him.

22 Centuries later, on three occasions Photius refers to him initially as "Theodore of Antioch", doubtless because the treatises of Theodore that he read indicated that they were written during Theodore's time in Antioch or otherwise associated him with the city. See Cod. 4 (Adv. Eunom.); 38 (Comm. in Gen.); 177 (Adv. Def. Pecc. Origin., which Photius calls "Against Those Who Say that People Sin by Nature and Not by Inclination"). In both Cod. 4 and 38 Theodore is subsequently identified as the bishop of Mopsuestia (as is he also in Cod. 96). A similar identification occurs in the margin of a manuscript in Cod. 177. Photius also mentions Theodore in Cod. 5 and 6.

23 On the chronological sequence of Theodore's writings see J.M. Vosté, La chronologie de l'activité littéraire de Théodore de Mopsueste, RB 34 (1925) 54–81.

24 Thdt., H.E. 5.39, depicts Theodore as a spiritual warrior who was a "successful combatant against every heretical phalanx" (transl. B. Jackson, NPNF 2/3, 159). Similarly, Narsai, the first head of the School of Nisibis, in two lines of verse, says of Theodore, "The just man was dressed all his life with a sword of the spirit, and he fought with troops of heretics" (On the Three Doctors 14.473.16f.; transl. A.H. Becker, Fear of God and the Beginning of Wisdom: the School of Nisibis and Christian scholastic culture in late antique Mesopotamia [Divinations], Philadelphia 2006, 113).

25 Swete, Theodorus (see n. 2), 938.

26 Ancient and medieval authors differ in their use of the words "tome" and "book", with some (such as Phot. in Cod. 38) using "book" as the more extensive of the two terms, and others doing the opposite. For instance, whereas Gennadius says that

give an example in terms of modern publications, the recently published text and translation of his commentary on just Psalms 1–81 runs to more than 1100 printed pages.[27] If the entire commentary had been preserved, a text and translation edition would surely exceed 2000 printed pages. Unfortunately, the great bulk of these writings have perished owing to Theodore's condemnation in 553 at the Second Council of Constantinople (the Fifth Ecumenical Council).[28]

Despite the loss of almost all the Greek originals, Syriac translations of virtually all of Theodore's works, which had been made even before his death,[29] prolonged their life until at least the Middle Ages.[30] Two medieval lists of his writings exist, one found in the Chronicle of Seert (Siirt),[31] and the other in a catalogue of Syriac ecclesiastical books given

Theodore's Fr.Inc. comprised fifteen books, Ebedjesus lists it in his catalog as consisting of one tome.

27 See n. 5 above for Hill's edition.

28 Even before 553, Rabbula, the bishop of Edessa (411/12–435), had all of Theodore's writings that were at Edessa burned; the only exceptions were his commentaries on John and Ecclesiastes, which had not yet been translated from Greek into Syriac. He did so shortly after Theodore's death in 428; see Cause of the Foundation of the Schools (PO 4.4, 380). This work is traditionally attributed to Barḥadbĕšabbā, bishop of Ḥalwān, who is often identified with Barḥadbĕšabbā ʿArbāyā. The authorship of the work is now debated, with some distinguishing between the two men and others attributing the Cause to a third party: see A. Vööbus, History of the School of Nisibis (CSCO 266/CSCO.Sub 26), Louvain 1965, 294–296; G.G. Reinink, 'Edessa Grew Dim and Nisibis Shone Forth': The School of Nisibis at the Transition of the Sixth-Seventh Century, in: J.W. Drijvers/A.A. MacDonald (eds.), Centres of Learning: Learning and Location in Pre-Modern Europe and the Near East (BSIH 61), Leiden 1995, 81; I. Ramelli, Linee introduttive a Barhadbeshabba di Halwan, *Causa della fondazione delle scuole*: Filosofia e storia della filosofia greca e cristiana in Barhadbeshabba, ʾIlu 9 (2004) 127–181; and A.H. Becker, Sources for the History of the School of Nisibis (TTH 50), Liverpool 2008, 11–16. As is well known, Rabbula is also said to have destroyed some 400 copies of Tatian's Diatessaron.

29 See Vööbus, History (see n. 28), 19; Wallace-Hadrill, Antioch (see n. 3), 45; and E.C.D. Hunter, The Transmission of Greek Philosophy via the 'School of Edessa', in: C. Holmes/J. Waring (eds.), Literacy, Education and Manuscript Transmission in Byzantium and Beyond (MeMe 42), Leiden 2002, 225–239, esp. 230f. As Hunter (pp. 237f.) points out, many of Theodore's works were again translated into Syriac after Rabbula's death (see n. 28 above).

30 On the reception of Theodore in the School of Nisibis, see Becker, Fear (see n. 24), 113–125.

31 PO 5.2, 289–291. The Chronicle of Seert, sometimes referred to as The Nestorian History (PO 4.3; 5.2; 7.2; 13.4), is an anonymous East Syrian historiographic work, preserved in Arabic, of very uncertain date. S.H. Moffett, A History of Christianity in Asia 1: Beginnings to 1500, San Francisco 1992, 203, places the author in the ninth or tenth century. W. Witakowski, Art. Seert, LThK³ 9 (2000) 392f., says that it was perhaps composed between 864 and 1020, which suggests that it may stem from the eleventh century. So also Becker, Fear (see n. 24), xvi, who dates it to the period 912–1020 (but see also p. 46, where he gives the ninth or tenth century as its date). Simonetti, Theodore (see n. 2), 801, dates it to ca. 1100, and Quasten, Patrology (see n. 1), 402, assigns it to the first half of the thirteenth century. Whatever its date of composition, chapter 53 of the work concerns the "History of Mar Theodore"; P. Dib's French translation of this chapter (PO 5.2, 284–291) is partially available in Vosté, Chronologie (see n. 23), 60f. On this important source for East Syrian Christianity, see now E.-I. Yousif, Les chroniqueurs syriaques, Paris 2002, 279–344.

by Ebedjesus, the Metropolitan of Armenia in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth century.[32] Of these two lists, that by Ebedjesus is clearly the superior one, though that in the Chronicle of Seert often confirms and supplements the list of Ebedjesus, who gives a list of thirty-six works by Theodore preserved in Syriac at that time. Of these thirty-six works, twenty-one were commentaries on books of the Bible,[33] covering many books of both the Old and the New Testament. In addition to the commentaries on the Psalms and the Twelve Minor Prophets, Ebedjesus mentions commentaries by Theodore on Gen, 1–2Sam, Job, Eccles, Isa, Jer, Ezek, and Dan, and other sources suggest that he may also have written on the rest of the Pentateuch and Cant.[34]

Ebedjesus mentions commentaries on eighteen books of the New Testament. These are on Matt,[35] Lk,[36] John,[37] Acts,[38] and the fourteen

32 In his rhymed catalogue, Ebedjesus covers some 200 authors, with the list of Theodore's works comprising chapter 19. The catalogue was translated into Latin by J.S. Assemani, BOCV 3, 3–362, esp. 30–35. For a French translation of the catalogue, see Vosté, Chronologie (see n. 23), 57–61.

33 On Theodore as an exegete, see H. Kihn, Theodor von Mopsuestia und Junilius Africanus als Exegeten, Freiburg 1880; Bultmann, Exegese (see n. 5); L. Pirot, L'œuvre exégétique de Théodore de Mopsueste 350 – 428 après J.-C. (SPIB), Romae 1913, critically reviewed by Bultmann in ThLZ 39 (1914) 363f., and reprinted in idem, Exegese (see n. 5), 134f.; R. Devreesse, La méthode exégétique de Théodore de Mopsueste, RB 55 (1946) 207–241; D.Z. Zaharopoulos, Theodore of Mopsuestia on the Bible: A Study of His Old Testament Exegesis (ThIn), Mahwah 1989; H.J. Vogt, Bemerkungen zu Exegese und Christologie des Theodor von Mopsuestia, in: R. Bäumer et al. (eds.), Synodus: Beiträge zur Konzilien- und allgemeinen Kirchengeschichte: Festschrift für Walter Brandmüller (AHC 27/28), Paderborn etc. 1997, 5–27.

34 The Chronicle of Seert mentions a commentary on the Pentateuch in three volumes (PO 5.2, 289), and other sources suggest that Theodore at least discussed Cant, even if he did not write a commentary on this book. On the canon of the OT in Antioch, see R.C. Hill, Reading the Old Testament in Antioch (BibAC 5), Leiden 2005, 19–25.

35 Mt., drawn exclusively from the catenae, is found in PG 66, 703–714, and is also printed in J. Reuss, Matthäus-Kommentare aus der griechischen Kirche (TU 61), Berlin 1957, 96–135, and is available in the TLG.

36 PG 66, 715–728, and J. Reuss, Lukas-Kommentare aus der griechischen Kirche (TU 130), Berlin 1984, 12–14.

37 Theodore's commentary on John is preserved in Syriac, and was published with a Latin translation by J.M Vosté, Theodori Mopsuesteni commentarius in Evangelium Johannis Apostoli (CSCO 115–116/CSCO.S 62–63), Leuven 1940. The Greek fragments have been edited by Devreesse and published in his Essai (see n. 2), 305–419. They are now available in the TLG and have been translated by G. Kalantzis, Theodore of Mopsuestia, Commentary on the Gospel of John (EChrS 7), Strathfield 2004. On this commentary, see now F. Thome, Studien zum Johanneskommentar des Theodor von Mopsuestia (Hereditas 26), Bonn 2008.

38 PG 66, 785f. The twelfth anathema of the Fifth Ecumenical Council (printed in Mansi 9, 384f., and in DS³³, 150f. [nos. *435 = †225]) condemns Theodore's commentary on Acts for ostensibly making the following comparison (regarding Acts 11,26): "And still worse, in his commentary on the Acts of the Apostles the same Theodore com-

Pauline letters (including Hebr, which Theodore viewed as Paul's), and the Chronicle of Seert adds a commentary on Mark.[39] That is, according to these two lists, Theodore wrote commentaries on all NT books except the seven Catholic Epistles (Jas, 1–2Pet, 1–3John, Jude) and Rev. The significance of these data is debated. As is well known, the Catholic Epistles and Rev were absent from the earliest canon of the churches in East Syria,[40] and the absence of known commentaries by Theodore on these books has led some to suggest that he went back to the old Syriac canon and rejected all these books.[41] Others have argued that Theodore accepted 1Pet and 1John (that is, two of the three major Catholic Epistles) and rejected the rest.[42] If so, that would make him similar to John Chrysostom, who apparently never quotes passages from 2Pet, 2–3 John, and Rev,[43] and to Theodoret of Cyrus.[44] Such an interpretation

pares Christ to Plato, Manichaeus, Epicurus, and Marcion, and maintains that, as each of these discovered his own system and was thereby responsible for his followers being called Platonists, Manichaeans, Epicureans, and Marcionites, so also Christ discovered a system, and the Christians are named after him." The translation is that of M.V. Anastos, The Immutability of Christ and Justinian's Condemnation of Theodore of Mopsuestia, DOP 6 (1951) 123–160, here: 128. Finally, Ernst von Dobschütz argues that an anonymous prologue to Acts found in the Greek minuscule manuscript 88 (twelfth century, written on parchment leaves, and housed today in the Biblioteca Nazionale at Naples) was written by Theodore and derived from his lost commentary on the Acts of the Apostles; see idem, A Hitherto Unpublished Prologue to the Acts of the Apostles (Probably by Theodore of Mopsuestia), AJT 2 (1898) 353–387. Von Dobschütz provides a translation of the text, which is also available in the TLG. Devreesse, Essai (see n. 2), 38f., rightly rejects the attribution of this prologue to Theodore.

39 See PO 5.2, 290. Putative fragments from this commentary on Mark are printed in PG 66, 713–716, but these must be considered highly dubious. According to Reuss, Lukas-Kommentare (see n. 36), v, there are no commentaries on Mark preserved in the catenae to the gospels. Furthermore, many scholars regard a commentary on Mark by Theodore as unlikely (so, for example, Bultmann, Exegese [see n. 5], 23); on the other hand, it is just as likely that Theodore did comment on Mark but that his remarks have vanished. For the view that he commented on all the gospels, see Bruns, Theodor (see n. 2), 241.

40 See J.A. Bewer, The History of the New Testament Canon in the Syrian Church, AJT 4 (1900) 64–98, 345–363, here: 360; B.M. Metzger, The Canon of the New Testament, Oxford 1987, 113–120, 218.

41 See, for example, T. Zahn, Das Neue Testament Theodors von Mopsuestia und der ursprüngliche Kanon der Syrer, NKZ 11 (1900) 788–806, and idem, Introduction to the New Testament 1, Edinburgh 1909, 123. See also Bultmann, Exegese (see n. 5), 24, and Vosté, Chronologie (see n. 23), 63 and 78 n. 3, for the view that Theodore accepted into his NT canon neither the Catholic Epistles nor the Apocalypse.

42 See B.F. Westcott, A General Survey of the History of the Canon of the New Testament, Cambridge etc. ^{5}1881, 442f.; Swete, Theodorus (see n. 2), 940; C.R. Gregory, Canon and Text of the New Testament (IThL), New York 1907, 281; and Pirot, L'œuvre (see n. 33), 128, 153.

43 So C. Baur, Der Kanon des hl. Joh. Chrysostomus, ThQ 105 (1924) 258–271. Kalantzis, Theodore (see n. 37), 11, says that this is also true of Theodore. Devreesse, Essai (see n. 2), 42, argues that Theodore did not reject the three major Catholic Epistles, but

would also fit the Peshitta, the late fourth- or early fifth-century Syriac translation of the NT, which includes the three major Catholic Epistles but does not contain 2Pet, 2–3John, Jude, and Rev.[45] Although this interpretation of the data is certainly possible, two pieces of evidence count against it. To begin with, one of Theodore's fiercest critics, Leontius of Byzantium (d. ca. 543), explicitly accused him of rejecting James and the other Catholic epistles (PG 86, 1366). Although testimony from a hostile source is often suspect, in this case it receives support from a source friendly to Theodore. As B.M. Metzger correctly points out,[46] Isho'dad of Merv (mid-ninth century) says that Theodore, the Interpreter,[47] his exegetical hero, never mentions any of what he calls "the three Catholic Epistles", namely Jas, 1Pet, and 1John. He says,

> Theodorus also, the Interpreter, does not even mention them in a single place; nor does he bring an illustration from them in one of the writings he made; although we see that he brings illustrations not only from the books that are written by the Holy Ghost; but also from the book about Job, and that from the Great Wisdom, and from Bar Sira, those which are written by human learning.[48]

In short, it is highly probable that Theodore wrote commentaries on all NT books that he deemed canonical. In the view of the Chronicle of Seert, "He commented on the New Testament", and "His pen did not touch any writing of Scripture without giving it a perfect explanation."[49]

II. Theodore's Commentaries on Paul

In general, Theodore's biblical commentaries fall into two different chronological periods of his life. Most of his OT commentaries were written prior to his ordination as a presbyter, whereas all of his NT commentaries appear to have been written after that time; indeed, all

simply does not cite them; similarly, he compares Theodore to Chrysostom, saying that they simply ignored the four minor Catholic Epistles.

44 So Gregory, Canon (see n. 42), 281, and Metzger, Canon (see n. 40), 216.

45 See Metzger (see n. 40), Canon, 219.

46 See ibid., 215.

47 Mephasqana, the venerated sobriquet by which Theodore was known in East Syriac Christianity.

48 M.D. Gibson (ed. and transl.), The Commentaries of Isho'dad of Merv, Bishop of Hadatha (c. 850 A.D.), in Syriac and English 4: Acts of the Apostles and Three Catholic Epistles in Syriac and English (HSem 10), Cambridge 1913, 36. The "Great Wisdom" mentioned in the quotation is, of course, the Wisdom of Solomon. Isho'dad himself comments on the three major Catholic Epistles because they are part of his Bible. His testimony about Theodore's silence regarding these three epistles is corroborated by the extant corpus of Theodore's works. As Bruns, Theodor (see n. 2), 241, says, "It is certain that Theodore nowhere cites 1 Peter, James, and 1 John" (my transl.).

49 My translation of Vosté's French translation (Chronologie [see n. 23], 61).

appear to date from the period when he was bishop of Mopsuestia.[50] Of the two major NT commentaries that survive in whole or in part, the ones on John and Paul, both are usually dated to the fifth century, and thus represent Theodore's mature thought as both an exegete and a theologian.[51]

The commentaries on Paul's letters[52] were written after his commentaries on the gospels[53] and appear to date from the late first and/or second decade of the fifth century, which makes them "among the latest of Theodore's expository works."[54] Nestorian tradition supports Theodore's episcopacy as the time when he composed these commentaries, linking them to Theodore's putative devotion to the cult of St. Thecla, whose martyr shrine (Hagia Thekla) was near Seleucia of Isauria (modern Silifke) on the Calycadnus River.[55] The epicenter of the cult of Thecla was thus in the same Roman province of Cilicia as was Mopsuestia, making regular pilgrimages to her tomb possible. According to Barḥadbĕšabbā's The Cause of the Foundation of the Schools,[56] Theodore used to go regularly to Thecla's tomb in order to pray, seeking help in explicating the Scriptures.[57] The Chronicle of Seert adds an anecdote in which Theodore's prayers were answered. He supposedly had a dream one day in which he saw a venerable old man, seated on a chair near Thecla's tomb. Thecla was at his side, praying ardently for him to unbind Theodore. Thecla's intercession worked. The old man approached Theodore, made the sign of the cross on his heart, and gave him fourteen keys, with which he would be able to unlock the fourteen letters of the apostle Paul.[58] Theodore's Pauline commentaries were thus understood in the medieval Church of the East to be the result of Thecla's intercession and assistance.

None of these commentaries on Paul survived entirely in Greek. Isolated comments on various passages in the letters are found in the catenae, but that is all that exists for his work on the major epistles of Rom,[59] 1–2Cor,[60] and Hebr.[61] The situation is much better for the minor

50 This is the conclusion that Vosté reached in Le commentaire de Théodore Mopsueste sur Saint Jean, d'après la version syriaque, RB 32 (1923) 539–543. Here Vosté cites the statement of the mid-sixth-century Chronicle of Edessa that Theodore began to interpret the Holy Books in the year 402, and he interprets that to mean that Theodore began his commentaries on the New Testament in that year. His views, with some modifications, were repeated two years later in idem, Chronologie (see n. 23), esp. 70–81, and subsequent scholarship seems generally to have followed him in this regard (e.g., Dewart, Theology [see n. 2], 16; Zaharopoulos, Theodore [see n. 33], 34f., and Kalantzis, Theodore [see n. 37], 9). To be more precise, Vosté, Chronologie (see n. 23), 78f., assigns two of Theodore's OT commentaries (those on Eccles and Job) to his episcopal period (with the commentary on Job dated ca. 417), dates all of Theodore's NT commentaries to the period 400–415, and likewise dates most of Theodore's polemical works to his later years.

51 Vosté, Commentaire (see n. 50), 541–543, and idem, Chronologie (see n. 23), 77, dates the commentary on John to the first decade of the fifth century. Whereas in Commentaire, 543, he placed Theodore's commentary on John before those on Matt and Lk, in Chronologie, 77, he reverses himself and concludes that Theodore wrote his gospel commentaries in canonical order, with John as the last of these. By contrast, Kalantzis, Theodore (see n. 37), 9f., places the commentaries on the Synoptic Gospels in the years 408–411, after his commentary on John was finished. But precise dating is difficult, if not impossible, and Thome, Studien (see n. 37), 30 and 74, calls attention to the fact that K. Schäferdick, in an unpublished 1958 Bonn dissertation, had already pointed out difficulties with Vosté's dating of the John commentary to the first decade of the fifth century. It should be noted in that regard that Devreesse, Essai (see n. 2), 52, dates the John commentary to ca. 385, long before the inception of Theodore's episcopacy.

52 For Theodore's understanding of Paul, see esp. U. Wickert, Studien zu den Pauluskommentaren Theodors von Mopsuestia: als Beitrag zum Verständnis der antiochenischen Theologie (BZNW 27), Berlin 1962, who concurs that Theodore's commentaries on Paul are a mature work (p. 3 n. 15; 104 n. 20). See also idem, Die Persönlichkeit des Paulus in den Pauluskommentaren Theodors von Mopsuestia, ZNW 53 (1962) 51–66; H.B. Swete (ed.), Theodori Episcopi Mopsuesteni in epistolas B. Pauli commentarii 1: Introduction, Galatians – Colossians, Cambridge 1880, lxxix–lxxxvii; and Pirot, L'œuvre (see n. 33), 287–301.

53 See Vosté, Chronologie (see n. 23), 77, and Devreesse, Essai (see n. 2), 41, 52.

54 So McLeod, Roles (see n. 2), 31, who places them "sometime in the first two decades of the fifth century." Swete, Commentarii 1 (see n. 52), lxii, says that they cannot be earlier than the first decade of the fifth century, and clearly prefers the first half of the second decade (411–415) as the terminus a quo for these commentaries. Vosté, Chronologie (see n. 23), 77, gives the dates 411–415 as the period for the minor Pauline commentaries, citing Swete, though Swete never claimed that they were completed by 415. See also Kalantzis, Theodore (see n. 37), 10, for 411–415 as the period when Theodore "undertook the task of commenting on all the Pauline epistles, including the epistle to the Hebrews", and n. 59 below. Swete, Commentarii 1 (see n. 52), lxi–lxii, is also sympathetic to the view of John Mill, given in the prolegomena (§907) to his monumental edition of the NT in 1707, that Euthalius borrowed his chapter summaries of the Pauline letters (and thus also the numbers of the chapters themselves) from Theodore (on this conjecture, see also F.H.A. Scrivener, A Plain Introduction to the Criticism of the New Testament: for the Use of Biblical Students, Cambridge/London ²1874, 59). Swete argues that Euthalius' source was written in 396, placing it early in Theodore's episcopate, and that if it does stem from Theodore, it would have laid the foundation for the commentaries on Paul that he would later write.

55 See esp. S.J. Davis, The Cult of Saint Thecla: A Tradition of Women's Piety in Late Antiquity (OECS), Oxford 2001, and C. Burris/L. Van Rompay, Thecla in Syriac Christianity: Preliminary Observations, Hugoye 5.2 (2002) 1–24 (http://syrcom.cua.edu/Hugoye/Vol5No2/HV5N2BurrisVanRompay.html) [retrieved: 3/2/2010].

56 For the debate about the authorship of this work, see n. 28 above. In addition to the French translation of A. Scher in PO 4.4, see the Italian translation of I. Ramelli, Barhadbeshabba di Halwan, *Causa della fondazione delle scuole*: traduzione e note essenziali, ʾIlu 10 (2005) 127–170, and the English rendering of Becker, Sources (see n. 28), 94–160. For discussion of the genre of the work, see Becker, Fear (see n. 24), 98–112.

57 See PO 4.4, 379.

58 See PO 5.2, 288f.

59 For the fragments of his commentary on Rom, see Staab, Pauluskommentare (see n. 7), 113–172, and the TLG. Theodore's Romans commentary has been translated by C.D. Gregory, Theodore of Mopsuestia's Commentary on Romans: An Annotated Translation (unpubl. PhD diss.; Southern Baptist Theological Seminary) Louisville 1992. Gregory (p. 9) dates Theodore's commentary on that letter to the first decade of

epistles, for which there is a Latin translation of all nine letters, plus some Greek fragments from the catenae.[62] The translation was most likely made in North Africa in the mid-sixth century and was occasioned by the controversy about Theodore during the reign of Justinian.[63]

According to both the Chronicle of Seert and Ebedjesus, Theodore wrote these commentaries in response to requests from six different individuals, though they often give different names for the various letters. That is the case with the letter to Philemon. Whereas the Chronicle of Seert gives Heudatus as the person who asked Theodore to write on Philemon, Ebedjesus says it was Cyrinus.[64] The Latin translation does not preserve the names of any individual, but as we shall see, it is certain that at least Theodore's commentary on Phlm was written in re-

the fifth century but gives no reasons for doing so. Inasmuch as Theodore is usually thought to have written his Pauline commentaries in canonical order, with the exception of Hebr (see Swete, Commentarii 1 [see n. 52], lxiii), this dating for the commentary on Rom is not impossible. Much depends on whether Theodore was aware of Pelagius' Pauline commentaries, written during the period 405–409. There are certainly parallels between the two commentaries as far as the minor epistles are concerned (see Swete, Commentarii 1 [see n. 52], lxii, lxxiv–lxxvi; A. Souter, The Earliest Latin Commentaries on the Epistles of St. Paul, Oxford 1927, 229). If this is also true for Rom, it would argue for the second decade as the period of composition.

60 Fragments of Theodore's commentaries on the Corinthian correspondence are printed in Staab, Pauluskommentare (see n. 7), 172–196 (1Cor), and 196–200 (2Cor), and also available in the TLG. See U. Wickert, Einheit und Eintracht der Kirche im Präskript des ersten Korintherbriefes, ZNW 50 (1959) 73–82.

61 For the fragments of the commentary on Hebr see Staab, Pauluskommentare (see n. 7), 200–212, and the TLG. For possible emendations to the Theodore texts in Staab, see Wickert, Studien (see n. 52), 199–206. For Theodore's interpretation of Hebrews, see esp. R.A. Greer, The Captain of Our Salvation: A Study in the Patristic Exegesis of Hebrews (BGBE 15), Tübingen 1973, esp. 178–263.

62 Swete, Commentarii 1 (see n. 52), based his edition on two Latin manuscripts (Codex Ambianensis 88 = Corbiensis, and Codex Harleianus 3063 = Cusanus) and Greek fragments from the catenae, which he took primarily from volumes 6 and 7 of CGPNT. Since the time of Swete, two other Latin manuscripts have been discovered (one at Paris, the other at Gand [Ghent]) and a number of suggestions proposed for emending the text. See D. De Bruyne, Le commentaire de Théodore de Mopsueste aux Épîtres de S. Paul, RBen 33 (1921) 53–54; CLA 1, 3 (no. 4), and CLA 5, 42 (no. **4); De Bruyne et al., Nouvelle liste de *membra disiecta*, RBen 47 (1935) 305–311, here: 305; W.L. Lorimer, Theodore of Mopsuestia: In *Ep. I ad Tim.*, ii, p. 123, 11 Sw., JThS 44 (1943) 58–59; E. Dekkers, Un nouveau manuscrit du commentaire de Théodore de Mopsueste aux Épîtres de S. Paul, SE 6 (1954) 429–433; and Wickert, Studien (see n. 52), 206–212.

63 So Swete, Commentarii 1 (see n. 52), li–lviii. See also Souter, Commentaries (see n. 59), 53; A. Siegmund, Die Überlieferung der griechischen christlichen Literatur in der lateinischen Kirche bis zum zwölften Jahrhundert (ABBA 5), München-Pasing 1949, 133; Dekkers, Manuscrit (see n. 62), 429.

64 According to the Chronicle of Seert (see PO 5.2, 290), Heudatus also requested the commentary on Hebr. Similarly, Ebedjesus (see Assemani, BOCV 3 [see n. 32], 33) has Cyrinus also request an exposition of Hebr, but adds Tit as another of Cyrinus' requests.

sponse to a specific request. This evidence suggests that Theodore may not have been as systematic in expounding the Pauline corpus as modern scholarship has tended to assume. He may not, for instance, have written the commentaries in mostly canonical order, but may have done so more or less piecemeal, explicating particular letters in response to requests for them.

Each of Theodore's commentaries on the Pauline letters has interesting aspects and merits greater attention by modern scholars. Yet the one on Phlm is especially intriguing. As H.B. Swete noted approximately 130 years ago, "The commentary upon the Epistle to Philemon with its singularly interesting and valuable argument may perhaps be regarded as the crowning effort of the Interpreter's expository power."[65] It is to a closer examination of that commentary that we now turn.[66]

III. The Commentary on Phlm: Two Key Interpretative Issues

1. The First Issue

In commenting on Phlm, Theodore appears to be most concerned with two key interpretive issues. The first of these is *the particularity of Phlm as a letter*. To a certain extent, this was a problem with all of the Pauline letters, and the thesis that Paul wrote letters to seven churches was designed as an argument in favor of their catholicity and universal significance.[67] Yet of all Paul's letters, the most problematic in this regard was Phlm, precisely because its subject matter was the most particular. Indeed, as Nils A. Dahl points out, "Philemon is the only known example of a Pauline letter explicitly rejected because of its limited scope."[68]

65 Swete, Commentarii 1 (see n. 52), lxiii.

66 Theodore's commentary on Phlm is occasionally cited in modern treatments of Paul's letter; see, for example, E. Lohse, Colossians and Philemon: A Commentary on the Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon (Hermeneia), Philadelphia 1971, 190 n. 18. Despite its occasional citation by biblical and patristic scholars, the commentary remains largely unknown to most modern scholars and does not appear to have been the subject of any discussion in its own right.

67 The idea that Paul wrote letters to seven churches appears, for example, in the Muratorian Canon, where Paul is strangely said to have done so in imitation of his predecessor John, who, "though he wrote in the Apocalypse to seven churches, nevertheless speaks to them all." For the text and a translation of the Muratorian Canon, see D.J. Theron, Evidence of Tradition: Selected Source Material for the Study of the History of the Early Church. Introduction and Canon of the New Testament, London 1957, 107–113, esp. 111.

68 N.A. Dahl, The Particularity of the Pauline Epistles as a Problem in the Ancient Church, in: W.C. van Unnik (ed.), Neotestamentica et Patristica: Eine Freundesgabe, Herrn Professor Dr. Oscar Cullmann zu seinem 60. Geburtstag überreicht (NT.S 6), Leiden 1962, 261–271; a reedited edition, with expanded footnotes and bibliography,

According to Dahl, this issue may have arisen as early as the second century and continued until the time of Jerome and Theodore,[69] with the particularity of Phlm proving especially troublesome in Syria:

> For certain we know that it was excluded from the canon of, at least, those parts of the Syrian Church of which Ephraem was representative. In the introductions to their commentaries, Theodore of Mopsuestia and [Ps.-] Chrysostom defend its right to canonicity, as does also Jerome. The latter draws upon a Greek source in which Philemon was defended against a literary attack by some early representative of higher criticism, whose arguments are summarized and refuted. This critic made the point that we have to distinguish between what is said by Christ, speaking in the Apostle, and what Paul said as a human being, e.g., 2 Tim 4:13 or Gal 5:12. The Epistle to Philemon would in its totality belong to the second category, if it was written by Paul at all; that is to be doubted, as the letter was rejected by some of the older fathers. In answer to this it is, among other things, said that it is a great error to think that the Holy Ghost is alienated by concerns for matters of every day life, like those dealt with in Philemon.[70]

The ancient debate about the catholicity, and hence canonicity, of Phlm thus provides the context for understanding why Theodore wrote his commentary on Phlm. Whether the person who asked Theodore to comment on Phlm was Cyrinus (so Ebedjesus) or Heudatus (so the Chronicle of Seert), it is clear that this individual has raised the question of the letter's relevance for anyone other than the principals involved:

> But what profit could be acquired from [the letter] must be explained more clearly, because I do not suppose that everyone is able to recognize it. You have yourself asked us especially to discuss this problem (259,5–8).[71]

Theodore gives a long answer, which may be summarized as follows: Of Paul's fourteen letters, some (such as Rom) were written to entire churches, and others were written as particular letters to various people (such as those to Timothy and Titus). The letters to the churches have an obvious relevance beyond the specific circumstances that the apostle addressed, for "all of us are instructed, and we learn what we ought to

appears in D. Hellholm et al. (eds.), N.A. Dahl, Studies in Ephesians (WUNT 131), Tübingen 2000, 165–178, here: 169. My citations are from the 2000 version.

69 See ibid., 168.

70 Ibid., 168f.

71 See also 266,10f.: "I have just now spoken of this above, because my judgment is that not everyone has been able to see the question this way." Citations refer to the page and line numbers of Swete's edition. The commentary on Phlm is in idem (ed.), Theodori Episcopi Mopsuesteni in epistolas B. Pauli commentarii 2: I. Thessalonians – Philemon, Cambridge 1882, 258–285. Citations of Theodore's comments on other Pauline letters include the volume number only when they occur in volume one. The translations of Theodore (sometimes modified) are those of R.A. Greer, whose translation of Theodore's commentaries on the minor Pauline epistles is scheduled to appear soon in the SBL's WGRW series. I wish to thank Professor Greer for permitting me to make use of his translation prior to its publication and for commenting on an earlier draft of this article. Needless to say, I am solely responsible for any errors that remain.

know" (260,11f.). This knowledge consists of not only doctrines that are to be believed but also precepts regarding ethical conduct (260,12–17). But the same is true for "the particular letters" (259,14.18). "All of us are instructed by the letters that are particular in many things of general import, because ... the apostle plainly wrote these people many things pertaining to the community" (260,17–20). For example, even though the Pastoral Epistles were written to definite individuals, the instructions they contain, at least "for the greater part", are "what seems to be of general import because of the special character inserted in them" (259,19f.). Theodore immediately clarifies what he means by explaining, "That is, Paul has taught them [Timothy and Titus] what ought to be done in the church generally" (259,20f.). Inasmuch as the matters dealt with "pertain to what is generally profitable" (260,1), they instruct "those who have the care of the church" (260,20f.) how they ought to act, enabling them to fulfill their ministry by "benefiting many" (260,3). Consequently, "each one of us can achieve the qualities about which he has plainly written to them" (260,22f.). That includes presbyters, deacons, widows, slaves, masters, rich people, men, women, and indeed, all "those who fulfill a role in the church" (260,23–261,5). So, through these particular letters "everyone", but especially "whoever is appointed to preside" (259,22f.) is taught what he or she "is to be like" (260,24), and "what [it] becomes them to do" (261,2). This instruction is designed to enable them "to do whatever would benefit the community" (259,23).

Having demonstrated the catholicity of the Pastoral Epistles, Theodore turns next to Phlm.[72] He begins by acknowledging that Phlm is more particular than the Pastoral Epistles, and that it has a two-fold particularity — the addressee and the epistolary purpose.

> This letter written to Philemon is not only particular because it was written to a definite person, but is also clearly seen to be so because of the line taken in the letter (260,4–6).

That is, it has a particular purpose regarding the relationship between Philemon and Onesimus, a master and a slave. Rather than being a public letter written to an entire church about "important matters" (266,6), it was a private communication concerning "so unimportant a

72 Technically, Theodore discusses the catholicity of the Pauline letters generally, and of the Pastoral Epistles in particular, twice. The first time is 259,5–260,3, and the second is 260,10–261,5. He interrupts these two discussions in order to note the extreme particularity of Phlm (260,4–10), then finally turns to a discussion of Phlm's universality (261,5ff.). For the sake of simplicity, I have collapsed the two discussions in my treatment.

matter" (266,8). Even the people of Paul's own time, the *perfecti*,[73] found such an issue to be alien (*alieni*) and irrelevant to them; they viewed it as an extraneous matter that concerned another man and his property, not them and their own property (265,21f.). Given this two-fold particularly, what is the letter's relevance or usefulness (*utilitas*) for the church as a whole (261,6)? Theodore's answer is as follows:

> It is so that all who are kept in the service of the church, especially those seen to be in charge of the churches, may know how they must act with those joined to us in faith, especially when there is a question of matters that seem a personal concern of theirs. Someone would then be able to see the benefit (*utilitatem*) of this especially if he were to look at the behavior of many people in our own times. And now, as people appointed to build up the benefit of others, we want to admonish those joined to us in faith about what ought to agree with that mode of life with which Paul with his most earnest entreaty wants them to agree (261,6–16).

In short, the general relevance of Phlm consists in the example it supplies of how a Christian, and especially a church leader, is to advise and admonish a fellow Christian in what appears to be a "personal matter", that is, "a personal concern of theirs" (*ad illos proprie pertinere* [261,10]). The aim of this admonition is that the conduct of the person admonished may accord with the "mode of life" (261,15) that Paul articulates in his letters.

Theodore seeks to show the relevance of such a model by pointing to the behavior of "many" (*multis* [261,12]) of his contemporaries. "There are some, as though they were masters (*domini*) of those joined to us in faith, who want to give people orders (*praecipere*)" (261,16f.). In short, some people, including Christian leaders, treat fellow Christians as though they were their slaves, bossing them around. They treat *everyone* that way, regardless of the social station of those addressed:

> A great many people in our times, failing to know what, how, and when things ought to be done, think that for the sake of true religion (*pietatis*)[74] everything in the present life ought to be confused, and that there should be no distinction between slaves and masters, rich and poor, those titled rulers and those seen to be ruled by others. Yet they think they are the only ones competent to form these opinions, so that with much authority (*multa auctoritate*) about their own views they give orders (*imperent*) for those things, claiming this control (*potestatem*) for themselves from I know not where (262,17–24).

73 In his note on this word, Swete (Commentarii 2 [see n. 71], 265f.) says that it means "the educated, the upper classes of Paul's day" and that it stands here "for καλοκἀγαθοί, or the like." He infers that such people "held themselves aloof from their slaves" and "took no interest or concern in their welfare." I see no basis in the rest of Theodore's commentary for such a use of the word *perfecti* and think it more likely that he means "the Christians" at the time of Paul's letter. See esp. Theodore's comments on Gal 3,26, where he interprets "sons of God" as τέλειοι (1:55,23 [catenae]) or *perfecti* (1:55,16 [Latin translation]), and Gal 6,1, where "spiritual" is similarly interpreted as *perfecti* (1:103,16). His point is not that the *perfecti* stood aloof from their own slaves — which is not at all the matter that Theodore is discussing here — but that they viewed the subject matter of Phlm, dealing as it did with another man's slave, as *alien* to them. The Latin word *alienus* is, after all, regularly used with regard to what has to do with someone else, not oneself. See esp. 279,9 (on Phlm 13), where Theodore refers to "someone else's slave" as *alienum seruum*.

74 *Pietas*, literally, "piety", is an impossible term to translate appropriately. In patristic parlance, it is often a code word, as here, for "Christianity".

Such a *modus operandi*, Theodore says, was explicitly rejected by Paul himself in 2Cor 1,24, where he declared that he was not the "master" (κυριεύομεν) of the Corinthians' faith. He knows, of course, that Paul was perfectly capable of being rather sharp at times. Yet he argues that Paul penned 2Cor 1,24 "to show that he used these weighty words not because he was possessed by an angry swelling of the mind or by some kind of rashness" — as the stereotypical master was when dealing with a slave who had irritated him — "but that he pursued this course for the benefit of others when the very fact required it to be done" (262,13–16).

Consistent with that recognition, Theodore concedes that, theoretically, Paul could have exercised his apostolic authority and directed Philemon what to do, for this was a matter "over which [Paul] plainly had authority and control" (266,9). Yet even orders have to be obeyed, for the power to obey or to disobey resides with the person commanded. In that sense, even the apostle himself had no ultimate control over the conduct of others (262,7–9). Similarly, inasmuch as virtue cannot be compelled, the Corinthians had to "correct themselves from sin" (262,7). In his dealings with Philemon, Paul shows himself to be a *model of humility* (265,12; 284,9), entreating rather than demanding.[75]

Therefore, "because he is unwilling to give Philemon orders (*imperare*)" (266,9), Paul proceeds "with such great humility" (266,8) to entreat "his own disciple" (266,7).[76] Paul's decision to entreat rather than command is reflected in the way he describes himself in the letter-opening, designating himself as a "prisoner" rather than an "apostle".[77]

75 Theodore also calls attention to Paul's humility in commenting on 1Tim 1,3:

> Above all, blessed Paul's humility is worth admiring, since in writing to his disciple he did not say "as I have commanded" or "I have approved" or "I have said", but simply "*as I have asked*" [1Tim 1,3] or "as I have entreated" (69,7–10).

For other texts in which Theodore emphasizes humility as a central aspect of Paul's personality, see Bultmann, Exegese (see n. 5), 120 n. 2. Paul's humility is also emphasized by Theodore's friend, John Chrysostom: see esp. M.F. Wiles, The Divine Apostle: The Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistles in the Early Church, Cambridge 1967, 23 n. 8. For the possibility that Theodore may have had a copy of Chrysostom's homilies on Paul, see Swete, Commentarii 1 (see n. 52), lxxii n. 5; idem, Commentarii 2 (see n. 71), 267 n. on line 1.

76 For Theodore's depiction of Paul as a man of tenderness and tact, see also Wickert, Persönlichkeit (see n. 52), 57.

77 Noted *inter alia* by Bultmann, Exegese (see n. 5), 116. See also 275,10f.: "He did not say, 'because of my apostleship' or 'because of the high rank with which I am plainly endowed'."

Theodore emphasizes that, though Paul wrote a number of "prison epistles", this self-designation is unique among his letter-openings (267,4–11)[78] and is a sign of the apostle's humility:

> But because he was writing about individual matters to Philemon and about what had been placed under the authority of Philemon himself, he decided to write this more on his own, so that he may not seem to be giving Philemon orders by using his apostolic authority from a presumption like this. Instead, he formed the opinion that what should rather be set forth was what could convincingly persuade Philemon to think that it would be no great thing to bestow such an extremely unimportant favor on him (267,11–17).[79]

Paul's humble example is utterly compelling and illustrates how one is "to show care toward the saints" (266,12):

> For in the case of the present letter who is so difficult to persuade or so hard hearted that he would not marvel when he sees Paul, standing out so great and illustrious in all respects and excelling almost all people in the virtues of true religion, writing to his own disciple with such great entreaty so that he would bestow pardon on a slave? (265,13–18)

That, Theodore suggests, was precisely why the private letter to Philemon was included among the letters to be read in public assemblies of the church:

> And so those who at the beginning appointed the letters to be read in the church seem to me to have ordered that this letter should be read in the church just as the rest, because they paid special heed to it, since more than the other letters, this letter was able to teach humility to those who heard it (266,1–5).

Theodore finds especially irksome two aspects of his contemporaries' conduct. The first is their authoritative, even angry and condescending manner of advising and admonishing fellow believers:

> It makes a great difference that someone in giving advice (*consilium*), even about what is contained in divine scripture, should instruct people with gentleness (*modestia*) and should not order them authoritatively (*non ex auctoritate praecipiat*) – and this concerning matters about which he has received no law that he should act this way (262,1–4).

The second irksome aspect of his contemporaries' behavior is their penchant for treating social distinctions as though they did not exist. That is, some of his contemporary Christians seem to believe that texts such as Gal 3,28 imply that all believers should be treated alike, which in this particular case meant that all should be treated as slaves and commanded what to do, even in "personal matters". Unfortunately, this alleged lack of partiality towards fellow believers actually results in two distinct groups within the church, the "masters" who admonish and

78 This self-designation does occur, of course, elsewhere in the Pauline letters: Eph 3,1; 4,1; Phlm 9. For Chrysostom's encomia on the "chained Paul", see Mitchell, Trumpet (see n. 8), 176–185.

79 Similarly, Theodore regards Timothy's inclusion in the letter-opening as another sign of Paul's humility, for "he does not scorn" (*non dedignatur*) to associate Timothy with himself in a private letter (268,4–6).

the "slaves" who are admonished. Theodore is adamant that such was not Paul's way of giving admonition and advice.

2. The Second Issue

The "egalitarian" manner in which some of Theodore's contemporaries treat fellow believers is closely connected with the second major interpretive issue with which the bishop of Mopsuestia is concerned. The hermeneutical issue appears to be centered in *the proper interpretation of Paul's statement in Phlm 15–16* that Onesimus was temporarily separated from Philemon so that the latter might permanently retain him "no longer as a slave but more than a slave, a beloved brother". Theodore himself is adamant that Paul is not hinting here at Onesimus' emancipation. "Even here, he does not order him to set his slave free"; instead, he simply asks the master to pardon his slave because Onesimus' "judgment has changed for the better" (264,5f.). But some of Theodore's contemporaries are clearly proto-abolitionists, at least as far as certain Christian slaves are concerned:

> But if someone nowadays found such a case, he would neither entreat nor seek that the slave should be pardoned by his master, but would write with much authority that "a slave joined to us in faith and hastening to true religion of his own free will ought to be freed from slavery". For there are many people like this at the present time, who want themselves to be seen circumspect (*cauti*) by imposing burdensome orders on others (264,8–14).

Theodore never identifies precisely who these "many people" (264,13; see 261,12) are that issue such onerous imperatives (*onerosa imperando* [264,14]) regarding the emancipation of other people's slaves. Yet his statement almost surely reflects an ecclesiastical debate that was raging in the early church over whether a slave who converted to Christianity was to be emancipated. In that debate, Onesimus was the key piece of apostolic evidence, as can be seen from the Apostolic Canons, which comprise the concluding chapter of the Apostolic Constitutions. The latter is a fourth-century (ca. 380) collection of ecclesiastical law that draws on various sources,[80] some of which (such as the Didascalia Apostolorum) originated in Syria.[81] The work itself is almost certainly of Syrian provenance, with its contents frequently reflecting ecclesiastical life at Antioch,[82] and the compiler of the Apostolic Canons is probably the same individual who compiled the Apostolic Constitutions as a

80 For 380 as the approximate date of compilation, see M. Metzger (ed. and transl.), Les Constitutions apostoliques 1: Livres I et II (SC 320), Paris 1985, 57–60.

81 The Didascalia Apostolorum forms the basis of the first six books of the Apostolic Constitutions: see A. Vööbus (ed.), The Didascalia Apostolorum in Syriac (CSCO 401–402, 407–408 / CSCO.S 175–176, 179–180), Louvain 1979.

82 See Metzger, Constitutions (see n. 80), 55.

whole.[83] In short, Theodore and the compiler of the Apostolic Constitutions and/or Apostolic Canons were probably contemporaries who lived in the same general geographical region. The relevant canon (Can. 82) reads as follows:

> We do not permit slaves (οἰκέτας) to be ordained into the clergy without their masters' consent (γνώμης); for this would grieve those who have acquired them. For such a practice would occasion the overthrow of houses (οἴκων ἀνατροπήν). But if at any time a slave appears worthy (ἄξιος) to be ordained into a high office, such as our Onesimus appears to be, and if the masters (δεσπόται) give their permission (συγχωροῦσιν), give him his freedom (ἐλευθεροῦσιν), and dismiss him from their house, let him be ordained.[84]

As will be readily apparent, the canon is concerned neither with the emancipation of the slave population in general nor with the manumission of all Christian slaves in particular. The canon is restricted to those Christian slaves who are potential candidates for ordination ("appears worthy to be ordained"), and it takes a socially conservative approach. The consent of the master is a non-negotiable prerequisite; if the master is not willing to manumit the slave, the latter may not be ordained. Indeed, ordination here presupposes emancipation.

In all likelihood, there were at least three reasons why this approach to the matter made eminent good sense to the composer of the canon. First, it prevented unworthy slaves from escaping bondage on the simple pretext of desiring ordination. They had to be candidates who, like Onesimus, were worthy of ordination. Second, it prevented the church from usurping the master's authority over the slave, which would have been tantamount to social anarchy and the subversion of families ("the overthrow of houses").[85] Third, if slaves were ordained without being emancipated ("give him his freedom"), they would remain subject to their masters and could be potentially taken away from ecclesiastical service if summoned by them for secular service. Indeed, that is precisely the problem reflected in Ep. 79 of Gregory of Nazianzus (d. 390). Here

83 Anonymous, Art. Apostolic Canons, ODCC³ (2005) 90. There are 85 canons in toto, with individual canons sometimes drawing directly on conciliar canons and at other times merely dealing with matters discussed at councils. Metzger, Constitutions (see n. 80), 22f., leaves the issue open as to whether the compiler of the Apostolic Constitutions also compiled the Apostolic Canons or simply made use of an already existing collection.

84 Const. App. 8.47.82 (J. Donaldson [transl.], Constitutions of the Holy Apostles, ANFa 7, 573–763, here: 759 [revised]). See also Swete, Commentarii 2 (see n. 71), 264, and M. Metzger (ed. and transl.), Les Constitutions apostoliques 3: Livres VII et VIII (SC 336), Paris 1987, 307.

85 For the phrase "overthrow of houses", see Pl., Prt. 325c, where it is mentioned in conjunction with "confiscation of property", and compare Aesch., Eum. 335.

> we find him referring to a case where a slave had been made bishop over a small community in the desert. The Christian lady to whom he belonged [Simplicia] endeavoured to assert her right of ownership, for which she was severely rebuked by St. Basil.[86] After St. Basil's death she again claimed her slave, whereupon Gregory addressed to her a letter [Ep. 79] of grave remonstrance at her un-Christian desire to recall his brother bishop (συμποίμην) from his sphere of duty ...[87]

Nor was this an isolated case of someone being ordained while still a slave, as the interactions of Jerome (d. 419/20) and John II of Jerusalem (d. 417) reveal:

> ... in Jerome's time slaves were sometimes ordained without having obtained enfranchisement. John, bishop of Jerusalem, having complained of such an ordination in the church at Rome, Jerome, writing to Theophilus, bishop of Alexandria, retorts that John himself has some among his clergy of the same condition, and urges that Onesimus, whom Paul converted while in prison, was ordained a deacon while still a slave ...[88]

Here Jerome takes a position contrary to that of the Apostolic Canons. He denies that emancipation is necessary for ordination and invokes Onesimus as the prime evidence for the practice.

Theodore, by contrast, discusses Onesimus without ever mentioning the issue of ordination. Over against the interpretation of "no longer as a slave" (Phlm 16) as signaling Onesimus' manumission, Theodore insists that "we are not in the least taught this on the basis of this letter", a fact that "many people ignore and neglect" (264,15f.). He argues, on the basis of 1Cor 7,17.20, that Paul "thought it best for individuals to remain in their own rank, provided that the purpose of true religion was preserved" (262,25f.).[89] In Theodore's view, Paul accepted disparities in the social order for two principal reasons — God permitted them, and they did not damage the "true religion", namely Christianity (262,26–263,1). The rich and the poor, just like slaves and free people, were equally able to "be zealous for true religion" if they were willing, or, if they preferred, to be zealous for something else (263,1–7).

86 See Bas., Ep. 115, and the note in A.C. Way (trans.)/R.J. Deferrari, Saint Basil, Letters 1: 1–185 (FaCh 13), Washington, DC 1951, 242f.

87 J.B. Mullinger, Art. Slavery, DChA 2 (1880) 1902–1910, here: 1905. Text and translation of Ep. 79 are available in P. Gallay (ed. and transl.), Saint Grégoire de Nazianze: Correspondance 1: Lettres I-C (CUFr 165), Paris 2003, 99–102. See also Swete, Commentarii 2 (see n. 71), 264.

88 Mullinger, Slavery (see n. 87), 1905, citing Hier., Epist. 82.6 (PL 22, 516): "One of his [John's] charges is that we have allowed a slave to be ordained. Yet he himself has clergymen of the same class, and he must have read of Onesimus who, being made regenerate by Paul in prison, from a slave became a deacon" (transl. W.H. Fremantle, NPNF 2/6, 364).

89 Gal 3,28 is not mentioned because Theodore views this passage as pertaining primarily to the age to come, when "there is neither marrying nor giving in marriage" (commenting on "neither male and female", with an allusion to Matt 22,30 par.), when circumcision is not practiced ("neither Jew nor Greek"), and when "all diversity of circumstance will be done away with" ("neither slave nor free" [1:57,25–30]).

Instead of changing their social rank, people "are to remain in their own rank" (263,7f.), and in that rank they are obligated "to apply diligence to what is fitting" (263,8f.). What due diligence meant for slaves was clear: "He instructed slaves to furnish entire obedience as slaves to their masters with all carefulness, whether they had ungodly or godly masters" (263,19–264,2). At the same time, he encourages masters to treat their slaves with kindness:

> There is laid up with God a bountiful reward for masters in return for the kindness they exercise toward their slaves, and especially if at some time they are willing to bestow pardon on those who transgress (283,9–12).

Theodore's application of this general sentiment to the particular case of Philemon and Onesimus is seen in the following section of this article.

IV. Theodore's Depiction of Onesimus, Philemon, and Apphia

1. Onesimus

In terms of the history of interpretation of Phlm, Theodore belongs to what is currently regarded as the traditional reading of the letter. That is, Theodore regards Onesimus as a "fugitive slave" (*fugitiuo seruo* [281,9]). He mentions Onesimus' "flight" (*fuga*) from his master's house several times (258,4; 280,16.20; 281,16), and he places all of the blame for the slave's departure on Onesimus, and none on Philemon, his master. Theodore knows, of course, that "there are found slaves better than many masters" (271,7f.), but Onesimus was not one of those. He begins by saying that Onesimus, "with a wicked intention, ran away from his master" (258,3f.). He later refers to "the earlier wickedness of [Onesimus'] judgment" (258,7), "the perversity of his judgment" (280,20), "the offenses he had previously committed" (259,3; see 260,9), and Onesimus' "transgressions" (*delictis* [283,3]).

Onesimus' conversion is described in terms of repentance (*poenitentia*). He "repented (*poenitentem*) of the evils he had previously done" (260,8), which entailed "abandoning the earlier wickedness of his judgment" (258,7f.) and "the previous perversity of his purpose" (277,14). "His judgment has changed for the better" (264,6), so that he was "hastening to true religion of his own free will" (264,12). Those actions resulted in him "changing his habits" (282,7), "turning back to a better condition" (264,3f.), and thus in "the present correction of his purpose" (259,4; see 278,3f.). There is now a marked "improvement of his manner of life" (278,20f.), so that he has become "so much better than himself" (281,16; see also 281,2).

In discussing Onesimus' conversion or "change" (μεταβολή [281,23]; *mutabilitas* [264,6; 277,12.15; 281,13]), the primary focus is not so much

the slave's changed relationship to God, though Theodore is keen to note that Paul "taught him to have diligence for true religion" (259,1f.). The emphasis falls rather on the import of Onesimus' conversion as far as the slave's future conduct toward Philemon is concerned.[90] This "change of his way of life" (281,23) and "the change of his character and purpose" (281,12f.) provide the basis for Paul's appeal to Philemon. "Everything done was done for Philemon's profit" (278,7f.). Onesimus "consented of his own free choice to return to his master, vowing to pay him all due obedience" (258,8f.). Indeed, Onesimus is depicted as "having undertaken to follow careful obedience to his masters by sharing in their purpose" (272,7f.),[91] "promising that hereafter he will serve his master in integrity of judgment with all devotion" (264,4f.). From now on, Paul tells Philemon, Onesimus will "pay the obedience owed you with all faithfulness as a slave" (281,17f.). His "usefulness" (εὔχρηστον [Phlm 11]) as far as Philemon is concerned refers to his "servile obedience" (*seruile obsequium* [281,10; see 278,2]), "servile goodwill" (δουλικὴν εὔνοιαν [281,21]), and "service" (ὑπηρεσίαν [278,20]). "Onesimus is useful (*utilis*) to Philemon because of obedient services" (*obsequiorum causa* [278,10]). In short, Onesimus the Christian slave is presented by Paul as now "suitable for obeying orders" (258,10–259,1), which is in accordance with the apostle's dictum that slaves are to render "entire obedience" (263,19) to their masters.

Despite all the emphasis that is laid on Onesimus' future obedience, there is something more. Because Onesimus will now be "more than a slave", he will display more than the obedience that "slaves usually display to their masters" (281,11f.). "A dearly beloved brother" (Phlm 16) is "a brother who strongly loves you" (281,15) and thus is "ready from now on to suffer all things for you as a brother strongly joined to your love" (281,18f.). Theodore regards the ending of v. 16 as "obscure on account of too much succinctness" (282,2f.),[92] but he treats it as Paul's testimony (*testor* [282,4]) regarding Onesimus' conduct toward him and his assurance that Onesimus will be even more scrupulous in

90 This emphasis stands in contrast to Theodore's emphasis elsewhere. Indeed, according to H.M. Riley, Christian Initiation: A Comparative Study of the Interpretation of the Baptismal Liturgy in the Mystagogical Writings of Cyril of Jerusalem, John Chrysostom, Theodore of Mopsuestia and Ambrose of Milan (SCA 17), Washington, DC 1974, 213, Theodore, Chrysostom, Basil, and Augustine all saw conversion "as a decision for an ascetical life."

91 Here the ownership of Onesimus seems to be extended to Philemon's wife and son.

92 On Theodore's conviction that "conciseness" (συντομία) is a mark of biblical style in general and of Pauline style in particular, see Schäublin, Untersuchungen (see n. 5), 146 n. 57. As he does here, Theodore elsewhere notes the obscurity of what Paul says (see, e.g., his comment on Eph 2,12 [1:149,4f.]).

his treatment of Philemon. He summarizes this understanding with the following paraphrase:

> If Onesimus has come to be like this toward me, changing his habits so that of his own free will he is willing to furnish me all servile obedience, how will he not much more be like this toward you, to whom as someone zealous of true religion he should pay love because of his faith, and to whom as his master he should display his service with all faithfulness (282,6–11).

Onesimus, therefore, will henceforth be a much better slave because he is now a Christian. He is not only the "poster boy" for conversion viewed in terms of a radical change from vice to virtue but also a sterling example of why Christian masters should encourage their slaves to embrace the faith — doing so will make them better and more obedient slaves.[93]

2. Philemon

Theodore presents Philemon in a thoroughly positive light. He begins by calling him a "faithful and religious man" (258,3). He later repeats the claim that Philemon was "a faithful man" (264,2; 265,19) and adds that, as Paul's "own disciple" (264,3; 265,17; see 266,7), he was "zealous for true religion" (282,9f.) — the sine qua non of piety (263,6) — and was "adorned with virtuous habits" (265,16). As someone who "was zealous for the service of the saints", Philemon is called a "fellow worker" by Paul (268,16; Phlm 1). Theodore views the ὅπως-clause in Phlm 6 as indicating result (as in Ps 50,6^{LXX}) rather than purpose (274,1–2).[94] Consequently, Theodore interprets Paul as referring here to what Philemon has already done rather than what he prays he will do in the future. So, just as Philemon's affection for God was proved by the love he displayed toward the saints (273,9–11; see Phlm 5), so also his faith was proved in the same way (274,4f.). Philemon is manifestly "eager to do everything good toward the saints for the sake of the Lord Christ" (274,5f.). Given Philemon's Christian conduct, it was "a great and worthy thing that much thanks should be given for Philemon" (274,7f.) and praise bestowed upon him (275,4). At the same time, Theodore recognizes that, especially in comparison with an apostle, Philemon was hardly a "distinguished" disciple (266,7f.).

93 For an emphasis on Christian masters giving their slaves the "day off" on Saturday, Sunday, and various church festivals so that they will be able to rest and have time to attend church "for instruction in piety", see Const. App. 8.33.1–9.

94 See also his interpretation of the ἵνα-clause in Phlm 13 in terms of result rather than purpose (279,11f.). On Theodore's penchant for an ecbatic interpretation of such clauses, see Thome, Historia (see n. 1), 210–212.

Because Philemon was such a good man, his reaction to Onesimus' flight was not anger and hostility, but sorrow (280,16).[95] For that reason, Paul did not even consider the possibility that Philemon might physically punish Onesimus when he returned home. Paul "did not say 'do not afflict him with slaughter, do not put him in chains'. For he did not think that Philemon would do anything like this to him" (278,18–279,2).[96] His purpose was not to appease Philemon's anger but to "remedy his sorrow" (280,17). Yet Paul also "knew that Philemon did not have a good opinion about [Onesimus] because of the previous perversity of his purpose" (277,13f.). As a result, Paul's overriding worry was that Philemon's memory of "the perversity of [Onesimus'] character and purpose" would result in his refusal to take the slave back (279,2f.).

That was a real possibility because Onesimus was not Philemon's only slave. He had other slaves, and at least some of them were Christians. These are the people whom Paul collectively greets in Phlm 2, when he refers to "the church that is in your household." To be precise, they are the ones "who were considered for whatever reason included in the family" (271,11f.). That these slaves were believers is indicated by the apostle's use of the word "church". Otherwise, Paul would have said "to your household" (271,12–16). In short, Onesimus was hardly necessary for the proper functioning of Philemon's household, as Onesimus' absence from the household had demonstrated, and Philemon needed to be encouraged to give his slave a "second chance".

3. Apphia as Representative of Christian Women

Theodore adduces an argument about women that is based on Phlm 2, where Paul refers to Apphia (Affia in the Latin translation). Theodore regards her as Philemon's wife (265,11; 269,2; 270,4.11), with Archippus viewed as the couple's son (270,2.12.15).[97] But in the text of the Pauline epistles that he is using,[98] the apostle refers to Apphia as τῇ ἀγαπητῇ,

95 Contrast Chrys., Hom. in Philm. 1 (on Phlm 1–3), who thought that Paul's opening comments were an attempt to quench Philemon's anger. For brief extracts from patristic comments on Phlm, see P. Gorday (ed.), Colossians, 1–2 Thessalonians, 1–2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon (ACCS.NT 9), Downers Grove 2000, 309–318.

96 On corporeal punishment and violence as standard measures in dealing with slaves, see J.T. Fitzgerald, Early Christian Missionary Practice and Pagan Reaction: 1 Peter and Domestic Violence against Slaves and Wives, in: M.W. Hamilton et al. (eds.), Renewing Tradition: Studies in Texts and Contexts in Honor of James W. Thompson (PTMS 65), Eugene 2007, 24–44.

97 See also 270,8, where Theodore insists that Archippus is a man, not a woman.

98 On Theodore's Pauline text, see Swete, Commentarii 2 (see n. 71), 340–345; for the Latin version that appears in the commentary, see idem, Commentarii 1 (see n. 52), xli–xliv. In general, Theodore's text conforms to what ultimately became the Byzantine text. Earlier scholarship tended to see this text (called, *inter alia*, the "Koine" text,

"the beloved",[99] rather than as τῇ ἀδελφῇ, "the sister", which was undoubtedly the original reading.[100] The consequence of such a reading was that Paul used the same term ἀγαπητός to refer to both Philemon and Apphia. For that reason, Theodore says that "in what he wrote about individuals Paul bestows equal honor on both men and women" (264,16–265,2). "Paul, indeed, not only joins the wife to the husband in what he has written, but also awards them equal respect in his greeting" (269,1f.). "And just as he called him 'beloved', so, too, he called her, since he considers that women differ in no way from men with respect to true religion" (269,13–15).[101] All of this pertains to wives as *individuals*: "When he writes of them as individuals, he makes them equal in honor with their husbands" (265,5f.), which is how Theodore understands the import of 1Cor 11,11 (265,6–9). When it comes to the *church*, however, Paul was no egalitarian. "In the common ordering of the church, for the sake of decency and seemly order, he wants women to be in second place", and women "should not exercise the services that men are seen to exercise" (265,2–5).

V. Theodore's Depiction of Paul and His Understanding of Phlm

1. Paul

Theodore depicts "the blessed apostle" (258,1f.5) and "great man Paul" (264,3; see 265,15) as "a prisoner in chains" when he saw Onesimus (258,6; see 267,8.17; 268,12; 276,18; 277,9), but he does not specify in his comments on the letter where the apostle was incarcerated. Yet inasmuch as Theodore believed that Paul was incarcerated twice in Rome

the "Syrian" text, the "Ecclesiastical" text, and the "Antiochian" text) as the product of a revision of the NT text carried out by Lucian of Antioch (d. 312) in the late third or early fourth century; see, for example, K. Aland/B. Aland, The Text of the New Testament: An Introduction to the Critical Editions and to the Theory and Practice of Modern Textual Criticism, Grand Rapids 1987, 50f., 64–67. However,

> Recent studies of the Byzantine text have shown that it can be found in rudimentary form as early as the fourth century ... but that its final form represents a slowly developing tradition, not one that sprang up immediately at one time and place. It was not, in other words, a textual recension created by a single person or community (so B.M. Metzger/B.D. Ehrman, The Text of the New Testament: its Transmission, Corruption, and Restoration, New York ⁴2005, 279).

99 The Latin translation of Phlm 2a reads *et Affiae carissimae*, "and to Affia, dearly beloved" (268,15).

100 B.M. Metzger, A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament: A Companion Volume to the United Bible Societies' Greek New Testament, Stuttgart ²1994, 588.

101 This is the reading of the Greek text as drawn from the catenae. The Latin translation has "calling her 'dearly beloved' (*carissimam*), just as he had called him 'dearly beloved' (*carissimum*), because in no respect does he want there to be a difference between men and women according to the principle of true religion" (269,2–5).

(1:116,14–117,7) and explicitly identifies Rome as the place of composition for Phil (1:198,16–20) and his first imprisonment as the time when that letter was written (1:205,12–24),[102] he doubtless viewed Rome as also the place from which Phlm was written and Paul's first imprisonment as the time of the letter.

Because Philemon was Paul's "own disciple" (264,3; 265,17; see 266,7), Theodore infers that Paul must have known not only Philemon but also his family and household. Therefore, when the apostle "saw" Onesimus, he "knew that he was from Philemon's household and family" (258,5). At the same time, Theodore refrains from hazarding a guess as to the particular circumstances under which Paul "saw" Onesimus (258,6), and he similarly does not raise the issue of how long Onesimus has been gone from Philemon's house. He focuses rather on Paul's efforts to convert and guide Onesimus, doing so in terms of "reconciliation" (*placauit* [258,7; see 258,9]),[103] "counsels" (258,6), "exhortations" (258,6f.), "instructions" (258,10), and "teaching" (259,1).

2. The Letter

Theodore is adamant that Paul's primary purpose in writing the letter is to persuade Philemon "to pardon Onesimus" and "to take him back in affection" (259,2–4; see 280,8f.). Both of these goals are crucial, with forgiveness the logical prerequisite to affectionate restoration. Consequently, Paul "prays him to pardon the slave for his previous sin" (264,6f.), and writes "so that [Philemon] would bestow pardon on a slave" (265,18; see 283,12; 284,4). To pardon Onesimus is tantamount to showing him "kindness" (*bonitate* [283,16]), which God will reward with a similar kindness toward Philemon (283,10). With these words, Paul encourages Philemon not simply to take Onesimus back but also to do so "affectionately" (*affectuose* [278,15f.]). Theodore lays enormous stress on "affection", mentioning it nine times in his commentary on the letter.[104] If Philemon regards Onesimus with affection, it means that he will take him back "as more than a slave" (281,9) and "exact no reckoning for what the slave had once committed" (260,8–10).[105]

102 This is in contrast to 2Tim, which he places during Paul's second imprisonment (see 1:205,16–20; 2:190,13.20; 191,10).

103 On the Greco-Roman and Pauline understandings of reconciliation, see J.T. Fitzgerald, Paul and Paradigm Shifts: Reconciliation and Its Linkage Group, in: T. Engberg-Pedersen (ed.), Paul Beyond the Judaism/Hellenism Divide, Louisville 2001, 241–262, 316–325.

104 259,4; 260,7; 269,12; 272,7; 273,10; 275,1; 278,15.17; 281,8.

105 See also Theodore's comments on Eph 5,21 (1:182,15–183,21), where he emphasizes the importance of mutual affection between masters and slaves.

Given the contemporary debate about the ordination of slaves (see above), Theodore is also keen to elucidate why Paul returned Onesimus to Philemon. He sent him back "so that he might not seem to make someone else's slave his own" (278,19). Acting otherwise would have seemed "to be dragging the slave away as not belonging to his master" (278,1f.). Even to have proposed keeping someone else's slave would have been audacious (279,8f.), so actually doing so was unthinkable. In all this, Theodore is implicitly opposing the ordination of slaves without their masters' consent, viewing it as an unconscionable usurpation of the masters' property rights. And he nowhere hints that Philemon ever manumitted Onesimus.[106] Nevertheless, he supports Paul's right as an apostle to have retained Onesimus with him and not sent him back to Philemon. "Had [Paul] done so, it would not have been right for Philemon to take offence" (280,7f.). Theodore's logic is that the profit from a slave's labor belongs to the slave's master. Therefore, if Paul had indeed appropriated Onesimus, the reward for Onesimus' service to Paul would have belonged to Philemon. Considering who Paul was and that the apostle's suffering was "for the salvation of all people", "it would have gained Philemon no small rewards from such a duty" (280,2–4). "For if your slave [had ministered] to me, he would certainly have gained a reward for you by doing so, and would have brought you profit" (279,13–15).

His contemporaries' authoritative manner (see above) leads him to stress that the letter is an "entreaty" (*obsecratio* [277,2; 283,18f.]) and a "supplication" (*supplicatio*). He also adds words and phrases designed to amplify the supplicatory character of the letter, calling it a "most earnest entreaty" (261,15f.), and an epistle written "with much supplication" (264,8), "with such great supplication" (265,17f.), and with "copious supplication" (284,8). Similarly, he calls the letter a "petition" (*petitio* [279,5; 284,11]), an "ardent appeal" (*adiuratio* [284,3]), and a "request" ([*postulatio*] [284,18]) in which Paul is requesting (*rogare* [284,8]) and "imploring" (*precari* [284,12]) Philemon to grant him "an extremely unimportant favor" (267,16f.; see 275,19f.; 283,13; 284,14f.). As these comments suggest, in terms of epistolary theory Theodore is classifying Phlm as a "supplicatory" letter. This type is well known from Pseudo-Demetrius' Epistolary Types, where he defines it as follows: "The supplicatory (ἀξιωματικός) type consists of requests (δεήσει), supplications (λιταῖς) and so-called entreaties (λιτανείαις); sometimes it

106 So also Pirot, L'œuvre (see n. 33), 294: "Saint Paul does not request emancipation for Onesimus; he is content to implore his pardon" (my transl.).

consists of a petition (παραιτήσεως)."[107] By appealing to Philemon in this fashion, Paul was not only being humble but also rhetorically effective. That is because, as Theodore says when commenting on 1Tim 1,3, "entreaty (*obsecratio*) produces eagerness" in people "together with a certain delight of the mind" (69,11f.). To have commanded Philemon would have been counter-productive. "This is because an entreaty surely can animate even those who are quite indolent, whereas the weight of a command (*praecepti*) seems often to have made sluggish even the person grasped by eagerness" (69,12–14).

As a former student of Libanius and the art of rhetoric, Theodore would have been familiar not only with epistolary theory but also with other rhetorical features of the letter. For example, he recognizes that Paul's goal is persuasion (267,15; 276,15; 277,1; 278,17; 281,5; 282,16; see 265,14), and he notes three standard rhetorical techniques that Paul employs in the letter, namely, the use of praise, assertions of confidence, and the avoidance of shame. All three are frequent in "exhortations", another term that he uses to characterize Paul's words to Philemon (*exhortatio* [275,4.14; 278,5; 282,5]; see *adhortabatur* [275,17]). First, he describes Paul's words to Philemon in terms of "praise" (*laus* [275, 4.13) and notes that praise of past actions is simultaneously an exhortation to similar actions in the future, for such encomia "usually make people more enthusiastic in the times that follow" (275,5f.).

Second, despite all the praise that Paul lavishes on Philemon, Theodore recognizes, or at least suspects, that Paul was not as confident about Philemon's "obedience" as he asserts in v. 21. Paul, to be sure, may say that he writes as he does, "not doubting that you [Philemon] will quickly bestow the favor" (284,14f.). But that assertion of confidence in Philemon in fact betrays the doubt in Paul's mind.

> He seems also to have some suspicion that perhaps Philemon would not easily assent to his petitions, and for this reason the apostle has been compelled to implore him more fully than usual (284,9–12).

The abundance of Paul's pleas is thus a more reliable index of the apostle's actual assessment of the situation than are his assertions of confidence.[108]

Third, Theodore argues that Paul's self-designation as "an old man" (v. 9) was designed to induce Philemon to both "shame" (*uerecundia* [276,2]) and "reverence" (*reuerentia* [276,8]). Combining both notions, he

107 Ps.-Demetr., Ep. Typ. 12; see A.J. Malherbe, Ancient Epistolary Theorists (SBibSt 19), Atlanta 1988, 36f.

108 See S.N. Olson, Confidence Expressions in Paul: Epistolary Conventions and the Purpose of 2 Corinthians (Yale Univ. unpubl. diss.), New Haven 1976.

says, "Respect (*erubesce*)[109] my old age" (276,17). Theodore dilates upon Paul's "great age" (276,15), adding the detail that Paul at this time had "white hair", a feature that stands in marked contrast to the depiction of the elderly Paul as "bald-headed" in A. Paul. et Thecl. 3.5.

Finally, Theodore draws upon the ancient theory of friendship to interpret Phlm.[110] Exploiting the close conceptual linkage in the ancient Mediterranean world between κοινωνία and φιλία, he interprets κοινωνόν in v. 17 in terms of friendship.[111] One of the most common ideas about friendship was that friends had "all things in common", and Theodore paraphrases Paul's statement in v. 17 as meaning,

> If you are my companion (*communicas*) in faith and think that everything should be completely common to us (*ad plenum existimas nobis omnia esse communia*), take him back because of me (282,20–22; see also 283,2f.).

To grant Paul's request regarding Onesimus is, to put it in modern terms, "to do a friend a favor", and among friends, "there ought to be no hesitation in bestowing a favor of this kind" (283,12f.).

Friendship also underlies another statement by Theodore, when he interprets v. 20 to mean that Philemon's grant of pardon to Onesimus will show that he is making "spiritual progress (*profectum spiritalem*) in all things that are in accord with God" (284,6f.). In antiquity it was common to link progress to friendship, with friends typically viewed as indispensable to progress in the moral and spiritual realms.[112] Consequently, if Philemon does his friend Paul a favor in regard to Onesimus, he will make "spiritual progress", which the apostle will view as his own "profit" (284,8).[113]

VI. Conclusion

Theodore's interpretation of Phlm demonstrates that he interpreted the text in light of the hermeneutical concerns of his age and in keeping

109 Lit., "to blush", "turn red", as a sign of either shame or respect.

110 See esp. D. Konstan, Friendship in the Classical World (KTAH), Cambridge 1997; J.T. Fitzgerald (ed.), Friendship, Flattery, and Frankness of Speech: Studies on Friendship in the New Testament World (NT.S 82), Leiden 1996; idem, Greco-Roman Perspectives on Friendship (SBL.RBS 34), Atlanta 1997; idem, Paul and Friendship, in: J.P. Sampley (ed.), Paul in the Greco-Roman World: A Handbook, Harrisburg 2003, 319–343; idem, Christian Friendship: John, Paul, and the Philippians, Interp. 61 (2007) 284–296.

111 On κοινωνία as a key theme in Theodore's thought, see L. Abramowski, Zur Theologie Theodors von Mopsuestia, ZKG 72 (1961) 263–293, here: 274–276.

112 On progress and its links to friendship, frankness of speech, and the emotions, see now J.T. Fitzgerald (ed.), Passions and Moral Progress in Greco-Roman Thought (RMCS), London 2008.

113 Inasmuch as friendship in the ancient Mediterranean world was commonly viewed as an exchange relationship, the use of commercial language in describing it was widespread.

with his own exegetical and rhetorical training.[114] In that regard, he was no different from any other interpreter. As we have seen, he was especially concerned to prove that Paul's little letter to a particular person "about so unimportant a matter" (266,8) had enormous pastoral and hermeneutical implications for the entire church. Both what Paul said and how he handled the situation involving Philemon and Onesimus were paradigmatic. He did not issue orders to Philemon but sought to persuade him, namely, to pardon Onesimus, to take him back, and to treat him with affection. To achieve those goals, Paul emphasized the conspicuous change in Onesimus' life and the difference that would make in the servile obedience that he would henceforth render to his master. In making his humble plea, Paul also made use of standard rhetorical techniques and appealed to the friendship that the two men shared as fellow Christians. For Philemon to do as Paul asked would not be to "obey an order" but "to grant a favor". In keeping with his supplicatory approach, Paul refused to command Philemon to emancipate Onesimus. Similarly, he repudiated the notion that a Christian slave could be appropriated for ecclesiastical use without first obtaining the master's consent. Even when he might have exerted his apostolic authority, Paul chose to plead and to persuade. Such actions displayed the apostle's extraordinary humility, which he thought was a lesson that the church of all ages needs to learn.

114 So also Swete, Commentarii 1 (see n. 52), lxix:

> This practical interest leads him often to refer to the conditions of the Church in his own day; and in the teaching of the first century he discerns wholesome lessons for the clergy and laity of the fifth.