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mechanisms for aid to the poor in the first-century  
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## Acknowledgements

Each one of you must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that by always having enough of everything, you may share abundantly in every good work. (2 Corinthians 9.7-8)

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**Paul's Collection in Light of Motivations and Mechanisms for Aid to  
the Poor in the First-Century World**

**By Deborah Elaine Watson**

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# **Paul's Collection in Light of Motivations and Mechanisms for Aid to the Poor in the First Century**

**Deborah Elaine Watson**

## **ABSTRACT**

In the first-century world, discussion concerning one's money and what to do with it constituted delicate ground on which to tread. Such a discussion normally would have been undertaken only between the most closely related of people who shared a similar background and/or within a clear set of social expectations. Even then, talk of money could prove difficult territory to navigate. If this were true for people with much in common, then, when undertaken between people with fewer relational links, little or no shared culture or history, such a discussion could have presented any number of challenges, if not outright obstacles for all the participants.

The Apostle Paul undertook just such a conversation, expending considerable time, thought and energy on the collection "for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem", referring to it in his letter to the Roman Christians and both letters addressed to the Christians at Corinth. This thesis will examine the collection in light of the bigger picture of motivations and mechanisms for aid to the poor and money movement in the first century Graeco-Roman and Jewish worlds. The objective is to render those motivations and mechanisms more clearly recognisable in the text and so to clarify their involvement in the conversation between Paul and the members of the churches to whom he wrote concerning the collection. What will emerge is a clearer understanding of the collection itself, a well-attested example of aid to the poor, a more nuanced understanding of the life of the early church for whom aid to the poor was a central tenet and practice, and a more balanced view of the Apostle Paul's interactions with both his own churches and the Jerusalem church.

## **DECLARATION**

I declare that this thesis embodies the results of my own work, that it has been composed by myself and does not include work that has been presented in any form for a degree to this or any other university. All quotations from, and reference to, the work of persons other than the author have been acknowledged in the footnotes and bibliography.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

All abbreviations conform to the guidelines of the Society for Biblical Literature.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Alexander, Patrick H. *The SBL Handbook of Style for Ancient Near Eastern, Biblical and Early Christian Studies*. Peabody: Hendrickson, 1999.

# Chapter One

## Introduction

### 1.1 Introduction

In the first-century world, discussion concerning one's money and what to do with it constituted delicate ground on which to tread. Such a discussion normally would have been undertaken only between the most closely related of people who shared a similar background, and/or within a clear set of social expectations. Even then, talk of money could prove difficult territory to navigate. If this were true for people with much in common, then, when undertaken between people with fewer relational links, little or no shared culture or history, such a discussion could have presented any number of challenges, if not outright obstacles for all the participants. In this respect, little has changed in the two intervening millennia.

The Apostle Paul undertook just such a conversation, expending considerable time, thought and energy on the collection "for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem", referring to it in his letter to the Roman Christians and both letters addressed to the Christians at Corinth. This thesis will examine the collection in light of the bigger picture of motivations and mechanisms for aid to the poor and money movement in the first century Graeco-Roman and Jewish worlds. The objective is to render those motivations and mechanisms more clearly recognisable in the text and so to clarify their involvement in the conversation between Paul and the members of the churches to whom he wrote concerning the collection. Not only will more light be shed on our understanding of the collection itself, but we will see with greater clarity a picture of the early church in whose life aid to the poor was a central tenet and practice.

The collection was a well-attested example of aid to the poor. We make it our focus since so much that has been written about the collection's significance – to Paul, to the Jerusalem church, to Paul's churches – has given relatively little attention to its Jewish background. Because of this, each new study has missed the information and insight that background could provide, resulting in an imbalanced and often overly politicised picture of the collection, Paul, and the leaders of the Jerusalem church, a picture which this thesis seeks to clarify.

We begin the process with a survey of collection studies, beginning in the early twentieth century. Focused studies of the collection have, until quite recently, been undertaken only at intervals of several decades. These rather long gaps suggest a lack of scholarly interest in the collection; the reasons for the disinterest remain unknown. Each author included below has investigated some aspect of the collection, adding his findings to the ongoing conversation concerning its motivations, mechanisms, and meaning(s).



## 1.2 Early Collection Studies

Those studies undertaken in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century were few in number, and tended to be very brief. For these scholars, there simply was not a lot to say about the collection because they considered its meaning as self-evident: Paul's collection was an obligation of Gentile Christians toward the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem.

### 1.2.1 J.R. Willis

The earliest 'modern' (i.e. 20<sup>th</sup> century) treatment of the collection, produced by J.R. Willis in 1916, was painfully brief (a mere two pages) and definite.<sup>1</sup> For Willis, the collection was clearly an injunction imposed on Paul by the pillars of the Jerusalem Church, a body which had experienced the failure of "practical communism" to effect "a permanent settlement of social evils",<sup>2</sup> and the resulting collapse of their local relief-fund. These were the two main factors leading to their need for outside help.<sup>3</sup>

Willis infers that a belief in the imminent Parousia, fostering a decreased desire to engage in revenue-producing labour, combined with benefaction in the Graeco-Roman world and organised help in the Jewish, led to an expectation of helping in the Christian community. The overall tone is negative toward the Jerusalem church, which found itself in financial difficulty due to its attempt to settle social ills through the sharing of resources, a strategy, says Willis, that only "aggravated and perpetuated them".<sup>4</sup> Given his disapproval of his perceived ethos of the Jerusalem church, Willis' statement that "some attempt to bring (Jewish and Gentile Christians) together was necessary",<sup>5</sup> can hardly be taken as other than a criticism of the Jerusalem church.

### 1.2.2 Karl Holl

Karl Holl, writing in 1928, also considered the collection as the obligation of Gentile Christians toward the Jerusalem Church. This congregation of Jewish believers saw itself as the humble, called out, lowly people of God, analogous to those in Judaism who knew themselves to be particularly vulnerable, dependent upon God while they awaited the Messianic deliverer, and who were, therefore, entitled to aid from others.<sup>6</sup> Holl's view may rightly be questioned as there is no evidence that the terms "poor" and "saints" as found in

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<sup>1</sup> J.R. Willis, "Collection" in *Dictionary of the Apostolic Church*, ed. J. Hastings (NY: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1916), 223-225.

<sup>2</sup> Willis, "Collection", 223.

<sup>3</sup> Willis, "Collection", 224.

<sup>4</sup> Willis, "Collection", 223.

<sup>5</sup> Willis, "Collection", 223.

<sup>6</sup> Karl Holl, "Der Kirchenbegriff des Paulus in seinem Verhältnis zu dem Urgemeinde", in *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Kirchengeschichte* vol.2 (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1964 [1928]), 58-62.

Rom. 15:26 and 1 Cor. 16:1<sup>7</sup> were used by the Jerusalem church or Paul to mean other than their plain meanings of “economically deprived” and “Christian”.

### 1.3 Mid-20<sup>th</sup> Century Studies

#### 1.3.1 Keith Nickle

In 1966, thirty-eight years after Holl’s five page treatment of the collection appeared, Keith Nickle, in *The Collection: A Study in Paul’s Strategy*, sought to examine “Paul’s project within the context of the life of the first-century Church in which it occurred, in the hope that it may contribute to the appreciation of the initial Christian attempt to avoid a severance in the Body of Christ”.<sup>8</sup> His focus on the unity of the early church as the primary goal of the collection led him to consider “all the external factors which had a bearing on the project”, examine the “striking similarities between Paul’s collection and certain contributions which were extant in Judaism”, define the “three levels of significance with which Paul invested his project”, and attempt to “assess the impact which the collection had on the later life of the Church up to AD 150”.<sup>9</sup>

Nickle’s aim was commendable. He studied the collection in order to demonstrate that it was a means of preserving the unity of the church, and in the process provided a largely helpful discussion of that aspect of the collection. What Nickle did not do, however, was to conduct a thorough investigation into the background(s) of the collection as aid to the poor. His study was largely limited to a consideration of the collection as reflective of and analogous to the temple tax<sup>10</sup> in Judaism. He thus cut short other avenues of exploration, including those concerning aid to the poor, benefaction, and the movement of money.<sup>11</sup>

Nickle’s work provided a platform for further scholarly investigation of Paul’s collection, but inexplicably, just as there had been a decades-long gap in scholarly interest in the collection, several more decades would pass with very little scholarly interest in the collection, a fact noted with surprise in 1992 by Dieter Georgi,<sup>12</sup> who, next to Nickle, is perhaps the best known of the commentators on the collection.

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<sup>7</sup> 2 Cor. 6:10; Gal. 2:10; Ja. 2:2-3, 5-6 all refer to material, rather than any other sort of poverty. In order to read Holl’s definitions for ‘the poor’, as well as ‘the saints’ (“Der Kirchenbegriffe”, 59-60) into the text, one must discount or ignore the plain sense of these words in the majority of New Testament documents. See below §6.2.2.2 “Remember the Poor”, and David Roy Register, “Concerning Giving and Receiving” (M.Phil. Thesis, University of Sheffield, 1990), 70-73, 147-150.

<sup>8</sup> Keith F. Nickle, *The Collection: A Study in Paul’s Strategy* (Allenson: Naperville, Ill., 1966), 10.

<sup>9</sup> Nickle, *Collection*, 11.

<sup>10</sup> Nickle devoted almost twenty pages of *The Collection* to the tax (74-93), and only two to a consideration of Jewish charity (93-95).

<sup>11</sup> Had he delved into the practice of money movement in the first century, Nickle would have found a more straightforward explanation than what could be termed ‘political considerations’ for the named and unnamed delegates who accompanied the collection to Jerusalem, *Collection*, 18-22; 1 Cor. 16: 3-4; 2 Cor. 8:16-24; cf. Acts 20:14. See below Chapter 5 “Money Movement”.

<sup>12</sup> Dieter Georgi, *Remembering the Poor: The History of Paul’s Collection for Jerusalem* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1992), viii, ix.

### 1.3.2 Dieter Georgi

*Geschichte der Kollekt des Paulus für Jerusalem* was published in 1965, at the same time as Nickle's *Collection*, but twenty-seven years passed before a revised, English translation, *Remembering the Poor: The History of Paul's Collection for Jerusalem*, appeared. In it Georgi maintained that the collection was meant to be a sign of the connectedness and equality of all followers of Christ, a sign of the growth and vitality of the church and an indication that in Christ, all, whether Jew or Gentile, were unified (in reality as well as in theory). Portraying the collection "as a mirror of [Paul's] missionary effort as a whole",<sup>13</sup> he attempted "to draw a picture of the ups and downs involved in the history of Paul's collection for Jerusalem".<sup>14</sup>

Georgi painted Paul as an equal in his dealings with the leaders of the Jerusalem church; an equal who held the others (i.e. the leadership and members of the Jerusalem church) in respectful regard because of their standing in Christ, and who looked to the collection as tangible evidence of that regard as shared by the gentile churches with which Paul worked. Moral and economic partnership, then, as opposed to an alliance of inequality, constituted Georgi's understanding of Paul's intent in taking up and delivering the collection for Jerusalem.<sup>15</sup>

These concepts of equality and partnership, important, even crucial to a correct understanding of the relationship between the Gentile churches and the church in Jerusalem, figure large in Georgi's treatment. In this he followed Nickle, whose focus was on the unity of the church. Georgi, however, insisted on a unity of equals, whereas Nickle seemed to imply, in his suggestion that the collection corresponded most closely to the temple tax, that the Gentile churches were responding as those bound to honour a "higher" body.<sup>16</sup>

Georgi's assertion that the collection was originally contractual in nature (initiated at the Jerusalem Conference in 48 C.E.),<sup>17</sup> but "had been transformed into a paradigm for ecumenical communal exchange in the form of a financial contribution"<sup>18</sup> failed to acknowledge the very real possibility that Paul's understanding of the collection may have pre-dated the Jerusalem Conference and been deeply influenced by several factors, not least his Jewish heritage and grounding in the Jewish scriptures.

Georgi asked whether the term, "the poor", had a special significance when it referred to the Jerusalem church (he thinks it does),<sup>19</sup> and how the term *μνημονεύω* as it appears in Gal. 2:10 (which he takes as referring to the collection) should be interpreted,

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<sup>13</sup> Georgi, *Remembering the Poor*, 15.

<sup>14</sup> Georgi, *Remembering the Poor*, 15.

<sup>15</sup> Georgi, *Remembering the Poor*, 32-33.

<sup>16</sup> Georgi, *Remembering the Poor*, 87-89.

<sup>17</sup> Georgi, *Remembering the Poor*, 21.

<sup>18</sup> Georgi, *Remembering the Poor*, 152.

<sup>19</sup> Georgi, *Remembering the Poor*, 33-42, 53, 157; cf. 163-165.

both indications of Georgi's attention to the first-century setting of the collection texts. He seems, however, with the exception of a passing glance at χάρις,<sup>20</sup> to take no account of first century Graeco-Roman patronage/benefaction practices, something Stephan Joubert later made the focus of his work on the collection.

Georgi's work bears witness, as does Nickle's, to how often the limitations of one's understanding of a circumstance described in Scripture only become obvious over time, as new evidence comes to light and is taken into account. For Nickle this occurred in his misidentification of the collection with the temple tax, and for Georgi, in his presumption of Gnostics at work amongst the Galatian Christians and his belief that Gnostic wisdom was involved in Paul's conception of ἰσοτήρ, an understanding which he develops at some length in an appendix.<sup>21</sup>

Limitations notwithstanding, Georgi's contribution to collection studies has been significant, and consisted of his focus on "the environment of biblical texts".<sup>22</sup> Along with textual analysis, and hermeneutical considerations, Georgi emphasized the need to examine "the issues of the texts in their historical, cultural, social, and political environment"; [to see] "the faces of others besides the author, insiders and outsiders alike...as involved in a much larger environment. Possible opposition...modification beyond the author's intention are...as much issues of inquiry as...interpretative affirmation of the text".<sup>23</sup> Georgi's work is helpful, and it is important in the history of collection studies. *Remembering the Poor*, along with Nickle's *Collection*, have been mandatory reference points for scholars whose work touches on matters concerning the collection.

With respect to this present undertaking, Georgi's focus, which is primarily on the collection as a unique undertaking (which for him had its beginnings only in 48 C.E.),<sup>24</sup> contrasts with this study which proposes to investigate the collection as a particular example of customary ongoing aid to the poor in the first century Jewish context.

## 1.4 Rhetorical Studies

### 1.4.1 Verlyn Verbrugge

Verlyn Verbrugge's<sup>25</sup> particular focus is on Paul's leadership style as it is displayed in 2 Corinthians 8-9, 1 Corinthians 16, and Romans 15. Largely leaving aside consideration of the collection itself, opting instead to define and analyse the "commanding letter",

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<sup>20</sup> Georgi, *Remembering the Poor*, 53-54.

<sup>21</sup> Georgi, *Remembering the Poor*, Appendix 2, 138-40; cf. 65, 85-88, 91.

<sup>22</sup> Georgi, *Remembering the Poor*, vi.

<sup>23</sup> Georgi, *Remembering the Poor*, vi.

<sup>24</sup> Georgi, with most scholars, ties the collection to Gal. 2.10. This problematic linkage will be addressed in §6.2.2.2 "Remember the Poor".

<sup>25</sup> In Verlyn D. Verbrugge, *Paul's Style of Church Leadership Illustrated by His Instructions to the Corinthians on the Collection: To Command or Not to Command* (San Francisco: Mellen Research University Press, 1992).

Verbrugge's study contributes to form-critical study of documents such as non-literary letters in the ancient world. He analyses the three Pauline letters mentioned above with respect to principles of deliberative rhetoric and contributes to an understanding of the use of rhetorical principles in literary letters by Greek/Latin authors.

Verbrugge's is the first study to analyse the relationship between Paul's statements concerning the collection and the various rhetorical situations in which the statements may have been made. It contributes to the literary study of Paul's letters (form, style, genre), and while this is a reasonable approach to the study of Paul's writings, Verbrugge's focus is primarily on Paul's leadership style, rather than on the collection. The collection affords Verbrugge an occasion to evaluate Paul's leadership style; it is not for him an opportunity to plumb the depths of either the collection itself, or of its success in fostering unity between Jewish and Gentile groups in the early Church.<sup>26</sup>

#### **1.4.2 Hans Dieter Betz**

Hans Dieter Betz has gone far beyond Verbrugge's consideration of Paul's letter (s) and produced what may be the most thorough study of 2 Corinthians 8-9 in terms of rhetorical criticism and partition theory. He, like Verbrugge, does not deal with the collection in and of itself, but chooses rather to devote his attention wholly to the text, which both see as the far more profitable avenue of study (when compared to historical background studies).

Betz explores the literary aspects of 2 Corinthians 8-9 with respect to the rest of the Pauline correspondence with the Romans and Corinthians. His aim is a fuller understanding of 2 Corinthians 8 and 9 as originally separate letters. After reviewing the history of consideration of these two chapters as separate entities (partition theory) and as a whole, from Semler's work in 1776 up until his own work in 1985, Betz engages in an extensive literary, historical and theological analysis of the text. He summarises the inferences regarding the literary genre and function of chapters 8 and 9 and then relates these two chapters to the rest of Paul's correspondence with the Corinthians and the Romans.<sup>27</sup> Betz's treatment flows from his presupposition that Paul and his letters are to be understood as products of the first century Hellenistic world: its values, traditions and religions.

Recognising little of Paul as a first century Jew, Betz interprets much having to do with the collection effort through a non-Jewish lens.<sup>28</sup> Betz would have a Paul dissociated to a great extent from his Jewish heritage, an individual who operated largely according to commonly held views in the Graeco-Roman world.<sup>29</sup> Noting Paul's use of Ps. 112.9 (119.9 LXX) in 2 Cor. 9.9, Betz insists that "although Paul made use of a proof from Scripture,

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<sup>26</sup> Verbrugge, *Paul's Style of Church Leadership*, 338.

<sup>27</sup> Hans Dieter Betz, *2 Corinthians 8 and 9: A Commentary on Two Administrative Letters of the Apostle Paul*, Hermeneia: A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible, ed. G.W. MacRae (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985).

<sup>28</sup> Betz, *2 Corinthians*, 48, 59, 61, 75.

<sup>29</sup> Betz, *2 Corinthians*, 42.

what he found in the quotation were not specifically Christian ideas, but notions drawn from ancient folk religion”.<sup>30</sup>

Betz holds this position so strongly that he expresses surprise when faced with clear examples of Paul’s Jewishness:<sup>31</sup>

Paul’s language and thought seem very close to that of Greek religion, where the concept of God as provider was fundamental....If Paul’s language and thought came so close to Greek religion, he simply reflected what was the common religious sentiment of antiquity....It is difficult to determine whether Paul intended to quote Scripture (Isaiah 55:10 LXX) or whether he simply cited a proverb current in his day.<sup>32</sup>

Perhaps the most blatant instance of Betz’ inability to recognise anything other than Hellenistic thought in Paul occurs when Betz writes (and one can almost hear his astonishment), “It is remarkable that Paul could speak of human righteousness in a way not unlike that found in Jewish authors”, and cites Pr. 3:9-10 as evidence that this might be so.<sup>33</sup>

Betz pushes hard for his view of Paul as a thoroughly Hellenised individual and at best, a marginally Jewish man. What may and should be seen as normal first century Jewish thought in Paul is, for Betz, idiosyncrasy. Due to his seeming lack of attention to the role of such thought and practice in Paul’s approach to the collection, Betz supposes that virtually all of Paul’s presuppositions were of the sort “commonly held in antiquity”.<sup>34</sup> This supposition underlies his work from start to finish and serves to limit what he is able to see in and understand concerning the text. Combined with his decontextualisation of the two chapters in question (by pronouncing them separate from each other and from their placement in 2 Corinthians) Betz makes possible his portrayal of Paul the Greek, so completely at home in the Gentile world that he is virtually indistinguishable from it.

Betz’ work is based solely on what at best can only be considered as part of the picture. His desire to fit 2 Corinthians 8 and 9 into a rhetorical framework caused Betz to leave out of his picture of Paul and the collection aspects which would have modified significantly his conclusions. Those aspects (largely historical in nature) need to be explored and addressed.

### 1.4.3 Kieran O’Mahony

In *Pauline Persuasion: A Sounding in 2 Corinthians 8-9*, Kieran O’Mahony engages in a detailed rhetorical analysis and exposition of 2 Cor. 8-9, “intended as a

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<sup>30</sup> Betz, *2 Corinthians*, 112.

<sup>31</sup> Betz, *2 Corinthians*, 106-7, 110, 112, 114, 116, 118.

<sup>32</sup> Betz, *2 Corinthians*, 113. See also Dan Cohn-Sherbok, for more on Paul’s use of “a wide variety of traditional [Jewish] modes of scriptural exegesis in the proclamation of his Christian message”. *Rabbinic Perspectives on the New Testament* (Lewiston, NY: Mellen, 1990), 69, 77.

<sup>33</sup> Betz, *2 Corinthians*, 115.

<sup>34</sup> Betz, *2 Corinthians*, 47, 106.

*sounding* in Pauline persuasion”,<sup>35</sup> interacting with Hans Dieter Betz as his “major partner in dialogue for [his] thesis and [giving] a detailed refutation of his *disposition*”.<sup>36</sup> O’Mahony “takes into account the cultural background of the vocabulary (especially that of benefaction) which is so significant for what Paul wishes to achieve in chapters 8 and 9”, and supposes that “If [Paul’s] skill in rhetoric is a sound indicator—he enjoyed a solid, relatively extensive, Hellenistic education”.<sup>37</sup>

O’Mahony asks what might have constituted Paul’s formal education if he was, indeed, a conservative Jew, proposing to use 2 Cor. 8-9 as

a window, an aperture, a lens which permits its own perspective on a larger panorama. That larger panorama is the complex domain of Hellenism and Hellenistic Judaism, and their influences on him. In this concluding chapter, our purpose is to see what light our interpretation of 2 Corinthians 8-9 may shed on the cultural heritage and education of Paul, in a word, on his particular position in the broad landscape which constitutes Hellenistic Judaism.<sup>38</sup>

O’Mahony concludes that first century Jews, wherever they were found, were almost completely Hellenised, immersed as they were in a completely Hellenistic milieu:<sup>39</sup> “this is the world of Paul of Tarsus, into which he fits as a Greek-speaking Asian Jew, widely travelled and familiar with the cultural codes and praxis of the Graeco-Roman world”.<sup>40</sup>

O’Mahony’s study moves beyond that of Betz by drawing on more historical data concerning possible influences on Paul’s methods of persuasion in 2 Cor. 8-9. Because his emphasis is on those methods of persuasion, however, O’Mahony’s is primarily a rhetorical study which leaves to the side any substantive consideration of the historical background for the motivations and mechanisms for the collection itself.

## 1.5 Benefaction Studies

### 1.5.1 David Register

David Register took a step in the direction of a more balanced treatment of the collection, viewing it as a hybrid of Jewish and Graeco-Roman responses to poverty. His thesis is that “Paul’s collection...conforms closely to Jewish almsgiving schemes and differs from Graeco-Roman commodity distributions. However, the motives for giving to the project are largely drawn from the Graeco-Roman environment, though adapted and blended with Jewish scriptural sayings”.<sup>41</sup> Register considers the Graeco-Roman understanding of

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<sup>35</sup> Kieran J. O’Mahony, *Pauline Persuasion: A Sounding in 2 Corinthians 8-9* (JSNTS 199, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 7.

<sup>36</sup> O’Mahony, *Pauline Persuasion*, 69.

<sup>37</sup> O’Mahony, *Pauline Persuasion*, 8.

<sup>38</sup> O’Mahony, *Pauline Persuasion*, 175.

<sup>39</sup> O’Mahony, *Pauline Persuasion*, 174-180.

<sup>40</sup> O’Mahony, *Pauline Persuasion*, 180.

<sup>41</sup> Register, “Concerning Giving and Receiving”, vi.

reciprocity and the Jewish concept of righteousness in his study, in which his chapters are divided according to these differing attitudes toward aid to the poor and the practical consequences of these actions.<sup>42</sup>

In his conclusions concerning Paul's understanding of and attitude toward righteousness and reciprocity, Register suggests that Paul adopted neither Graeco-Roman nor Jewish views concerning them either uncritically or in their entirety. Paul's understanding, which he derived from the Old Testament was that God has a bias for and intervenes on behalf of poor/disadvantaged people who are unable to secure what they need for themselves, be that physical sustenance or righteousness. This understanding, says Register, Paul applied to relationships of rich/poor in the Corinthian church, including spiritually disadvantaged Gentiles.<sup>43</sup>

Paul, according to Register, affirmed the positive aspects of reciprocity (e.g. relationship established) and left aside the negative (e.g. unequal power, social superiority), and through it all, highlighted the equality of material and spiritual contributions, which lead to the equality of all Christians.<sup>44</sup> Paul's understanding of the collection was Jewish, but he expressed that understanding in Graeco-Roman terms. He incorporated the idea of reciprocity in order to encourage equality among all Christians. Paul responded to cultural divergence between Gentile and Jewish churches deliberately, scripturally, and contextually.<sup>45</sup>

Register adds to our understanding of the collection by examining both Graeco-Roman and Jewish attitudes and practices, but because he failed to see the paucity of actual aid to the poor in the Graeco-Roman world,<sup>46</sup> and due to the relative brevity of his treatment of Jewish motives and practice of aid to the poor,<sup>47</sup> he leaves room for a more thorough examination of these two aspects of the issue.

### 1.5.2 Stephan Joubert

In 2000, a new focused study of the collection appeared.<sup>48</sup> Stephan Joubert, who signalled Georgi's lasting influence on New Testament scholars' understanding of the collection (as evidenced by an almost complete acquiescence to his views), undertook a fresh, historically-based study of Paul's efforts on behalf of the Jerusalem Church.

If Nickle showed an imbalance in his consideration of the collection *vis à vis* its relationship to Judaism and specifically to the Temple Tax, then Joubert shows an even

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<sup>42</sup> Register, "Concerning Giving and Receiving", 8.

<sup>43</sup> Register, "Concerning Giving and Receiving", 117.

<sup>44</sup> Register, "Concerning Giving and Receiving", 118.

<sup>45</sup> Register, "Concerning Giving and Receiving", 163.

<sup>46</sup> Register, "Concerning Giving and Receiving", 14-39.

<sup>47</sup> Register devotes thirty pages to Jewish conceptions of poverty and aid to the poor (50-79).

<sup>48</sup> Stephan Joubert, *Paul As Benefactor: Reciprocity, Strategy and Theological Reflection in Paul's Collection* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000).

more extreme imbalance in his treatment of the collection as an undertaking largely, if not completely, patterned after Graeco-Roman benefit exchange. In *Paul As Benefactor*, Stephan Joubert analyses the collection within this framework of Graeco-Roman social exchange, specifically focussing on what he sees as the benefactor-beneficiary relationship between Paul's largely Gentile missionary congregations and the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem. Joubert's approach "from the conceptual framework of ancient social exchange relationships"<sup>49</sup> yields a picture of the collection which aligns it, whether in the mind of Paul, his congregations, or the Jerusalem Christians, almost exclusively with a Graeco-Roman pattern of thought and behaviour. Although there is much to be gained from a serious consideration of the Graeco-Roman influence on the collection, and Joubert has done that, we also need to look at the Jewish traditions for almsgiving and aid to the poor.<sup>50</sup>

### 1.5.3 Steven Chang

Also appearing in 2000, Steven Chang's *Fund-Raising in Corinth: A Socio-Economic Study of The Corinthian Church, The Collection and 2 Corinthians*<sup>51</sup> constituted an investigation of the "conventions of social structures and relations of the larger Corinthian society [which] could shed light on the situation in the Corinthian church and on Paul's corrective response to that situation".<sup>52</sup> His study of the collection focuses particularly "on the socio-economic situation of Roman Corinth and its Christian community within its wider imperial context", "reconsiders the extraordinary difficulty Paul had with the Corinthians with respect to his fund-raising project...", "sets the collection in the context of Paul's financial relationship with the Corinthian church",<sup>53</sup> and "explore[s] the historical question of what role the collection played in the trouble at Corinth in light of the literary question of the integrity of 2 Corinthians, and the theological question of how Paul responded to the challenge".<sup>54</sup> Chang's main interest is in the socio-economic situation of the Corinthian church and its bearing on the collection. He looks closely at first century benefaction and patronage systems<sup>55</sup> and concludes that the collection is "a debt within an alternative system of patronage dominated by God himself".<sup>56</sup> Chang's study evidences the tendency to interpret the collection using a thoroughly Graeco-Roman lens, with no hint of Jewish background or influence, other than what Chang considers the demand for the collection by the Jerusalem church leaders in Galatians 2.10. The relationship (or lack

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<sup>49</sup> Joubert, *Paul As Benefactor*, 16.

<sup>50</sup> Joubert gives only a few pages to consideration of the collection as 'almsgiving' in *Paul As Benefactor*, 95-97.

<sup>51</sup> Steven Chang, "Fund-Raising in Corinth: A Socio-Economic Study of The Corinthian Church, The Collection and 2 Corinthians", Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Aberdeen, 2000.

<sup>52</sup> Chang, "Fund-Raising", 2.

<sup>53</sup> Chang, "Fund-Raising", 3.

<sup>54</sup> Chang, "Fund-Raising", 4.

<sup>55</sup> Chang, "Fund-Raising", Chapter 6.

<sup>56</sup> Chang, "Fund-Raising", 225.

thereof) between Gal. 2.10 and Paul's collection is not questioned by Chang, as it is not questioned by a majority of scholars, but it is an issue which, if probed, might open the door to a more balanced understanding of the collection in its complex first century context.

#### 1.5.4 Gary Griffith

Last in our survey of more recent scholars who have conducted focused studies of Paul's collection is Gary Griffith, whose 2005 dissertation examines "Paul's use of *charis* in 2 Corinthians 8-9 in light of usage within the benefit exchange conventions of the Graeco-Roman world".<sup>57</sup> Griffith concludes that

in 2 Corinthians 8-9 Paul's main concern was not to persuade the Corinthians to give toward the collection. Rather, his concern was to persuade them to give themselves completely to God in submission to the power of his grace. When they did this, the Corinthians would then find themselves equipped to contribute, both from a generous attitude and from sufficient resources. Thus for Paul, the collection is an expression of the grace that the participants – both givers and receivers – had received from God.<sup>58</sup>

Taking Seneca as his dialogue partner, Griffith examines a model of benefit exchange proposed by the Stoic philosopher and compares it with expressions of giving and receiving in Paul. Griffith's work highlights the centrality of God's *charis* in Paul's conception and communication of the collection to his churches, concentrating his attention on this concept, and how it reveals the theological significance Paul assigns to the giving, rather than on the collection itself,<sup>59</sup> thereby leaving room for a study centred primarily on the historical background of the collection: its origins, influences and intentions.

#### 1.6 The Need for the Current Study

As we survey the recent history of collection studies, it is as if each of the studies up until now has highlighted some particular aspect of the collection, but in the more or less single-minded pursuit of that aspect has discounted, or failed to take into account other equally important aspects of it. Joubert notes the overwhelming emphasis of scholars on the *theological aspects* of the collection,<sup>60</sup> and commits to "the investigation of the interaction between various social and theological facets concerning the collection".<sup>61</sup> Joubert, however, also provides a study focused so strongly on the belief that the motivation for the collection was almost entirely determined by Graeco-Roman benefaction that he can see little else in the picture. Griffith, on the other hand, in his theologically focused study of the role of *charis* in the collection, shows a greater willingness to grapple with the complex and

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<sup>57</sup> Gary Webster Griffith, "Abounding in Generosity: A Study of *Charis* in 2 Corinthians 8-9" (Ph.D. Thesis. University of Durham, 2005), ii.

<sup>58</sup> Griffith, "Abounding in Generosity", ii.

<sup>59</sup> Griffith, "Abounding in Generosity", 5.

<sup>60</sup> Joubert, *Paul As Benefactor*, 1-3. *Idem* 5, where Joubert asks "whether this strong emphasis on the 'theology of the collection' does not restrict a more holistic understanding of the project".

<sup>61</sup> Joubert, *Paul As Benefactor*, 5.

nuanced effects of multiple factors in Paul's thinking on the collection, as he compares Paul's use of benefaction language with that of Seneca and finds that there are significant differences between the two. "Paul's application of χάρις in the discussion of 2 Corinthians 8-9 would show that God's grace enables believers to abound in generosity and that the collection, rather than offering an example of benefit exchange, would be a demonstration of 'surplus exchange', resulting in equality in the body of Christ".<sup>62</sup>

Recent history, then, has brought a welcome resurgence of scholarly interest in Paul's collection. Each new study adds to the discussion of its significance for and impact on the early church by attempting to clarify a given aspect of the collection, if not the entire project.

The following study will not be rhetorical in nature, nor will it be primarily theological; it will not focus on the Graeco-Roman concept of reciprocity. These sorts of studies have been done.

This study seeks to contribute to the discussion through an investigation of the motivations and mechanisms for aid to the poor in the Graeco-Roman and Jewish worlds of the first century, as well as the conventions surrounding the movement of money, followed by an assessment of their possible influence on Paul, his churches and the Jerusalem Christians, as evidenced in the collection texts.

### **1.7 The Aims of the Study**

This thesis will show that the collection itself is but one example, albeit an unusually large one, of the historically persistent Jewish concern for the poor. Because this concern seems to have been largely absent from the Graeco-Roman world, the texts bearing on Paul's collection highlight one of the growing challenges to the first century church: that of converts who, increasingly, came to faith (and so to the church) directly from their Graeco-Roman culture, rather than through the synagogue (with its religious, moral, and ethical instruction). They were people who had come to faith in Christ, but without any previous knowledge of scripture, its teaching or its demands, and their attitudes and behaviours could not help but derive more from the culture from which they had come, than from their new life of faith.

A consideration of the interaction of the sometimes competing, sometimes complementary systems of Graeco-Roman social-exchange and Jewish aid to the poor could yield a clearer picture of the collection than previously has come to light, by acknowledging a far greater complexity than heretofore has been recognised in the situation in which those first century Jewish and Gentile Christians found themselves.

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<sup>62</sup> Griffith, "Abounding in Generosity", 20.

## 1.8 The Shape of the Study

The study begins as, in Chapter 2, “Motivations and Mechanisms for Aid to the Poor: The Graeco-Roman World”, we examine the motivations and mechanisms specific to aid to the poor in the Graeco-Roman world of the first century, revealing a paucity of concern for the poor in that setting. Chapter 3, “Motivations and Mechanisms for Aid to the Poor: The Jewish World”, conducts a similar study of motivations and mechanisms for such aid in the first century Jewish world, revealing a strong and persistent concern for such aid. The motivations and mechanisms of both ‘worlds’ then are compared and contrasted in Chapter 4, “Comparison: Graeco-Roman and Jewish Aid to the Poor”, resulting in a clearer picture of the complex cultural landscape for aid to the poor in those places where Paul had asked the churches to participate in the collection, and suggesting perhaps some of the challenges to Paul in communicating the need for and significance of the collection. In Chapter 5, “Money Movement in the First Century: Graeco-Roman and Jewish Conventions”, the issue of money movement in the first-century world receives specific scrutiny, as its mention in several of the texts concerning the collection highlights the importance of understanding how such activity was perceived by all the parties involved. This chapter reveals a high degree of similarity between Graeco-Roman and Jewish practices of money movement. Chapter 6, “Paul, Aid to the Poor, and the Collection”, will consist of a close reading of the New Testament passages historically connected with Paul and the collection<sup>63</sup> (as well as other Pauline letters making direct reference or allusion to the early church’s emphasis on aid to the poor).<sup>64</sup> Special attention will be given to any reflections and/or evidence of Graeco-Roman and/or Jewish influences within those texts, in order to clarify their presence, and the nature of their influence – whether direct or indirect – on the motivations and mechanisms involved in aid to the poor, including, specifically, the collection. Chapter 7 will bring the study to a close with my conclusions and suggestions for further inquiries into Paul’s collection which have arisen in the course of the current investigation.

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<sup>63</sup> Acts 11.27-30; Gal. 2.10; Rom. 15.25-32; 1 Cor. 16.1-4; 2 Cor. 8-9.

<sup>64</sup> Rom. 2.6-7, 10; 12.2, 6-10, 13, 16; Eph. 2.10; 4.28; Phil. 2.3ff; Col. 3.12ff; 1 Thess. 4.9-12; 2 Thess. 3.13; 1 Tim. 3.1-5; 5.1-16; 6.17-18; Titus 1.5; 2.7, 11-15; 3.1, 4-8, 14. See §6.2.2.1 “Other Pauline letters”.

## Chapter Two

### Motivations and Mechanisms for Aid to the Poor: The Graeco-Roman World

#### 2.1 Definition and limitation of the topic: The centrality and importance of food

Life in the first century was difficult for many, perhaps most people. Often through no fault of their own, they found themselves in a situation of privation and, at times, at risk of starvation.<sup>1</sup> Food crises, “short term reduction[s] in the amount of available foodstuffs,” and outright famine, “a critical shortage of essential foodstuffs leading through hunger to starvation and a substantially increased mortality rate in a community or region,”<sup>2</sup> were recurring facts of life in the ancient world. The challenges to survival in the first century Graeco-Roman world were many and they were persistently real.

What, if any, structural responses (formal or otherwise) existed in this world to address the material needs of the people most adversely affected? Who might have been involved in meeting these needs and why might they have been so inclined to act? Who might (or might not) have benefited from these structures? What, if any, social affirmation or opprobrium may have attached to having been either giver or recipient and what further obligations might have been triggered by one’s involvement?

In this chapter we seek answers to these questions with the goal of shedding further light on the world in which Paul’s Diaspora<sup>3</sup> congregations existed, and from which the majority of their members came. A detailed examination of the evidence for attitudes and practices concerning responses to material need in the Graeco-Roman world may give us clearer insight into at least some of the challenges Paul may have faced as he interpreted his collection project to Christians whose ability to understand it derived substantially, if not fully, from the larger first century Graeco-Roman society, with its particular worldviews.

In our study of first century Graeco-Roman responses to the most basic human need – that of food – we shall define poverty (§2.2), describe the varied circumstances of poverty and hunger (§2.3), examine possible responses to poverty and hunger (§2.4), and consider

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<sup>1</sup> Peter Garnsey, *Famine and Food Supply in the Graeco-Roman World: Responses to Risk and Crisis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), x. See also Justin J. Meggitt, *Paul, Poverty and Survival* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1998), 5. While Garnsey’s focus is on the reality of, and responses to, food crises and famine (ix,x), Meggitt’s emphasis rests on what he considers an almost population-wide experience of “subsistence level” poverty and admits of virtually no non-élite individuals who rose above this state (7, 59, 66-67).

<sup>2</sup> But “the boundary between the two is indistinct and subject to some degree of interpretation on the part of the historian/researcher.” Garnsey, *Famine*, 6.

<sup>3</sup> By Diaspora we mean those congregations founded outside of Israel proper, in the greater Roman Empire, where the education and background of the sizeable Gentile segment of the congregations would have been thoroughly Graeco-Roman.

the place of reciprocity and equality (ἰσότης) in the process of giving and receiving aid (§2.5).

In speaking of issues of hunger and responses to it, we have chosen not to use ‘charity’ as a descriptor. “The giving of help, money, food, etc. to those in need”,<sup>4</sup> may seem a reasonable definition with which to begin, but this late 20th century understanding will not help us if what we are seeking is a proper understanding of material need and the responses to that need in the ancient world, and most specifically in the Graeco-Roman world of the first century C.E.. ‘Charity’ has overtones of pity, compassion, and goodwill. It is understood to be directed at the poorest and most down-trodden in society, and meant either to save them from imminent disaster in the form of disease or death, or to enable them to change their status, by sustaining them physically while they work their way out of their piteous circumstances and establish themselves as productive (i.e. self-sufficient) members of society. It happens that in the Graeco-Roman world, not one of these connotations of ‘charity’ applied. Perhaps because of this, we find that there is no term from that world which fully overlaps with our ‘charity’. There were, however, other material responses to real or perceived needs of others in that world, and it is those responses that this chapter will address.

## **2.2 Poverty**

### **2.2.1 The evidence and its limitations**

It is important that at the outset we acknowledge the difficulty faced by all students of the first-century world: that of sources.<sup>5</sup> We must use the sources available to us, lest we become specialists in imaginative speculation. We must also be aware of the limitations of the opinions, the ‘facts’ and figures contained within those sources. Each source is bound by time, by location, by social standing, by circumstances. Not to take these factors into account may result in a presentation of history which reflects little or none of the reality we had hoped to capture of people, places, events and trends at a given moment in time.

At best, our sources are incomplete. We do not possess all the evidence for any particular period of history.<sup>6</sup> Our sources emanate from almost exclusively élite origins, and very often focus on the city of Rome. How then can we venture to say anything about the non-élite (who, after all, made up the vast majority of any first century population), or of life outside Rome and its environs, say Asia Minor or Palestine?

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<sup>4</sup> *Collins Dictionary of the English Language*, s.v. ‘charity’.

<sup>5</sup> See Meggitt’s discussion of this problem in *Paul, Poverty and Survival*, 11-13. There Meggitt warns of over-dependence on élite sources because “these sources were the products of an extremely small clique and reflect the concerns of a group whose social practices and relationships were quite consciously distinctive, and not in any way normative”.

<sup>6</sup> This is true even in a place such as Pompeii, where much of daily life was simply “frozen” and preserved by ash and other volcanic debris.

Fortunately for us, there is a fair amount of material in inscriptions and the literary sources for these places, so central to Paul's ministry and the collection for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem. And, in the case of the New Testament, we have a non-élite source, as well.

In order to use their sources properly, we must familiarise ourselves with the élite of the first century; an understanding of their situation(s) will help to provide perspective in interpreting their commentary on life in the ancient world.

Who were the élite of the first century Graeco-Roman world? Scholarly opinions vary, but all would agree that these were the privileged minority who enjoyed the highest social standing in the society, occupied positions of power, and were not necessarily preoccupied with worries about their own economic survival.<sup>7</sup> The élite did not engage in commerce, or practise a trade, but lived off the earnings of those who worked for them and/or from the accumulated wealth that came from being connected to the emperor and the perks resulting from that connection. It is their voices we hear most clearly in the words of our Graeco-Roman literary sources.

Justin Meggitt, in his controversial and stimulating *Paul and Poverty*, contends that to rely on élite sources for background to the New Testament text is a gross misuse of the sources which results in a complete misreading of the biblical text.<sup>8</sup> A.R. Hands, however, would contend that we *must* concern ourselves with those élite sources and not assume that the values and practices attested within them had no real or descriptive value for people 'lower' than they in socio-economic terms.<sup>9</sup>

On the one hand, the researcher must acknowledge and benefit from the sources, élite or other, for they contain an abundance of information concerning the ancient world. On the other hand, the researcher must keep in mind that the élite sources may not, and probably do not always reflect an experience of life representative of the majority of the population (certainly not from that majority perspective). The challenge is to investigate the sources, to try to hear what they *are* saying, as well as what they are *not* saying. It is sometimes the case that in those places where we *do* hear the text speak, we also find those people, and those circumstances *not* represented on the printed page. We must make use of all the resources and tools available to us in order not to miss any of what can aid us in our quest for a clearer picture of Graeco-Roman material responses to that most basic of human challenges in the first century: hunger.

As we listen to the texts presented in this chapter, what we will discover is a stunning silence on the subject of hunger among the poor, and on aid to such people. Hunger

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<sup>7</sup> J. Gardner and T. Wiedemann, *The Roman Household: A Sourcebook* (London: Routledge, 1991), 68.

<sup>8</sup> Meggitt, *Paul, Poverty and Survival*, 12-13.

<sup>9</sup> A.R. Hands, *Charities and Social Aid in Greece and Rome*. London: Thames & Hudson, 1968, 15.

was, apparently, a non-issue for the wealthy, who thought primarily of themselves and people like themselves when they thought about aid in any form.

### 2.2.2 Poverty – Definition and extent

Poverty, “the condition of being without adequate food, money, etc.”,<sup>10</sup> or, with a bit of a finer point, the condition of “those living at or near subsistence level, whose prime concern it is to obtain the minimum food, shelter, and clothing necessary to sustain life, whose lives are dominated by the struggle for physical survival”,<sup>11</sup> constituted the backdrop to the great drama of the first century Graeco-Roman world. Even the well-to-do minority who did not experience poverty worried about it, as we see in Philo’s comments on what confers worth on objects:

Mines of silver and gold are the most worthless portion of the earth, utterly and absolutely inferior to that which is given up to the production of fruit. For there is no likeness between abundance of money, and the food without which we cannot live. The one clearest proof of this is famine, which tests what is truly necessary and useful. For anyone would gladly exchange all the treasures in the world for a little food.<sup>12</sup>

Here Philo, admittedly a writer whose comments most closely reflect an opinion shared by those for whom daily life did *not* consist of toil and drudgery, reveals that fear.<sup>13</sup>

Likewise the satirist Juvenal reveals late first century attitudes toward poverty, and the absence of mechanisms for aiding the poor. While couched in satire, Juvenal’s words point to the reality at which his satire is aimed.

Juvenal evinces a typically Graeco-Roman attitude toward poverty: it is a hopeless situation, in that no one will help such a person: “the last straw in his heap of misery is this, that though he is destitute and begging for a bite, no one will help him with a meal, none offer him lodging or shelter”.<sup>14</sup> Anyone unfortunate enough to be poor can expect little compassion; “of all the woes of luckless poverty, none is harder to endure than this, that it exposes men to ridicule”.<sup>15</sup>

Although poverty, in the sense of basic<sup>16</sup> material deprivation and destitution, might become reality for anyone in the ancient world, the likelihood that it would was

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<sup>10</sup> *Collins Dictionary of the English Language*, s.v. ‘poverty’.

<sup>11</sup> Garnsey & Woolf, “Patronage and the rural poor” in *Patronage in Ancient Society*, ed. Andrew Wallace-Hadrill (London: Routledge, 1989), 153.

<sup>12</sup> Philo, *De Providentia* 2.11-12.

<sup>13</sup> Meggitt situates one of the prompts to that universal fear of deprivation in the presence of beggars: “Beggars filled the cities of the Mediterranean world and loathing for them filled their inhabitants. To a population in which nearly all lived only a little above subsistence level the beggar embodied their profoundest fears”, *Paul and Poverty*, 59.

<sup>14</sup> Juvenal, *Satires* 3.208-210.

<sup>15</sup> Juvenal, *Satires* 3.153-154.

<sup>16</sup> Basic in the sense of those elements which sustain physical existence (i.e. food, clothing and shelter).

substantially less, overall, for the élite,<sup>17</sup> whose economic ‘cushion’ was sizeable,<sup>18</sup> certainly far more than for anyone else,<sup>19</sup> whose ‘cushion’ against poverty would have been markedly thinner.<sup>20</sup> The reasons for this will become clearer as we examine the evidence available to us, and for the most part those reasons will hardly be surprising.

Through the years, scholarly opinion has swung to and fro between the opinion that the early Pauline churches were peopled by the dregs of human society, those who were at the very bottom of the social ladder, and the opinion that these churches were made up of people from all levels of society, from wealthy to poor, but with very few of the abjectly poor or the super-rich. E.A. Judge, in *The Social Pattern of Christian Groups in the First Century*, alludes to, but counters the first tendency to view the early Christians as those at the very bottom of the social ladder, not only in the recent, but the far distant past, beginning with Celsus,<sup>21</sup> and Porphyry<sup>22</sup>, whose descriptions of the types of persons attracted to Christianity leave no room for doubt about their (perceived) low social location.

Abraham Malherbe,<sup>23</sup> indicating that this opinion had persisted into the twentieth century, cites Adolf Deissmann, who in 1927 wrote the following of early Christianity, “Primitive Christianity – a movement among the weary and heavy-laden, men without power and position, ‘babes’ as Jesus himself calls them, the poor, the base, the foolish, as Saint Paul with a prophet’s sympathy describes them”.<sup>24</sup> Malherbe’s alternative view of the social make-up of early Christian groups reflects the influence of the work of Gerd Theissen, whose goal was to provide “a composite picture of social stratification in one

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<sup>17</sup> Or, as Winter terms them, the ‘haves’. Bruce Winter, *Seek the Welfare of the City*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 203.

<sup>18</sup> See the three élite categories in Steven Friesen’s ‘poverty scale’ and his description of them/their wealth in “Poverty in Pauline Studies: Beyond the So-called New Consensus,” *JSNT* 26.3 (2004), 340-342, 344.

<sup>19</sup> Again, as per Winter, the ‘have nots’. *Seek the Welfare*, 203. Winter’s vocabulary may avoid the temptation of describing the first century socio-economic scene in terms of ‘rich’, ‘poor’, and ‘middle class’, which correspond inadequately to the reality of that period. Still, these terms are just vague enough that we will continue to seek terms which more closely correspond to the variegated reality of the first century. See §2.2.3 re: πνήται, and πνήται-plus.

<sup>20</sup> See the four non-élite categories on Friesen’s ‘poverty scale’ and his description of their circumstances in Friesen, “Poverty in Pauline Studies”, 341, 343-347.

<sup>21</sup> Excerpts from *Contra Celsus* by Origen, Book 3, chapters 44, 55, 59, online, available from <http://www.bluffton.edu/~humanities/1/celsus.html>.

<sup>22</sup> Porphyry Malchus wrote against Christians and their doctrines between 265 and 270 C.E., making him quite an early critic. Online, available from <http://www-history.mcs.st-andrews.ac.uk/Mathematicians/Porphyry.html>.

<sup>23</sup> Abraham J. Malherbe, *Social Aspects of Early Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), 31-32. See also Wayne Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2003), 551-52.

<sup>24</sup> Adolf Deissmann. *Light from the Ancient East* (trans. L.R.M. Strachan; London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1927), 466, cited in Malherbe, *Social Aspects*, 32.

Pauline community [Corinth] and the concrete organisational and ethical problems it engendered for the common life of Christians in an urban setting”.<sup>25</sup>

Theissen and Meeks, along with Malherbe and others, participated in what Judge characterised as the pendulum swing of NT scholarship away from a view of the early church that was composed only of the rabble, the down-trodden of society, the completely and utterly powerless, to a view of the churches as more representative of the varied social strata of the cities of the Roman Empire.<sup>26</sup> These views of the early church, and the society in which it existed were not seriously challenged until 1998, when Justin Meggitt’s *Paul and Poverty* was published, marking a new chapter in Pauline studies vis-à-vis the economic reality of the members of Paul’s congregations.

In *Paul and Poverty*, Meggitt has provided an in-depth and sometimes controversial investigation of “the specific economic *realia* of inhabitants of the first-century world”, in his attempt to answer “the question of how individuals actually encountered the various elements that constituted their economic life”.<sup>27</sup> The economic life Meggitt envisages for almost all inhabitants of the first-century world consists of poverty, and so in his mind, their experience of life must have been always difficult and often painful.<sup>28</sup>

Claiming poverty, not economic diversity as the hallmark of all Pauline congregations, and drawing on Garnsey’s definition of poverty in the first century,<sup>29</sup> Meggitt provides evidence that the overwhelming majority of people in the first century lived far below the élite members of society. His work provides an important “view from below”, largely lacking in Pauline scholarship of the 20<sup>th</sup> century<sup>30</sup> which tended to see the first century economic picture in terms imported from their time. The caution with Meggitt’s work pertains to excess. Had he been content to demonstrate that the vast majority of people in the first century were neither élite nor wealthy, and that the make-up of the early congregations reflected this reality, Meggitt’s work would have been just as helpful. By his insistence that *all* members of Paul’s churches lived at or near subsistence level and his presentation of evidence to back it up, Meggitt has thrown down the gauntlet to any inclined to see it otherwise, saying in effect, “Prove it”, but, just as with Danker’s unicameral

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<sup>25</sup> Gerd Theissen, *The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity: Essays on Corinth*, trans. John H. Schütz (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982), 2, 70-73.

<sup>26</sup> E.A. Judge, *The Social Pattern of Christian Groups in the First Century* (London: Tyndale Press, 1960), 60; *Rank and Status in the World of the Caesars and St. Paul* (Christchurch, NZ: University of Canterbury, 1982), 10; Theissen, *Social Setting*, 95; Meeks, *First Urban Christians*, 51-73.

<sup>27</sup> For Meggitt those elements always added up to unrelenting poverty. *Paul, Poverty and Survival*, 11.

<sup>28</sup> Meggitt, *Paul, Poverty and Survival*, 5-7.

<sup>29</sup> §2.2.2 “Poverty”.

<sup>30</sup> See §2.2.2, “Poverty”, for a discussion of those views.

Graeco-Roman interpretation of the New Testament material,<sup>31</sup> Meggitt's stance on the poverty of Pauline Christians is too rigidly fixed, leaving him little room for discussion of other possibilities.

Meggitt's thoroughly divergent view emerged in reaction to more recent studies of the Pauline churches which tended to work unquestioningly from the foundation laid by Judge, Theissen, and Meeks, and so focussed their attention on other aspects of the early church. Two other scholars, Peter Garnsey and Greg Woolf, preceding Meggitt, had their focus on famine and food supply,<sup>32</sup> or patronage, rather than on the collective poverty of the Pauline churches (in particular), or the ancient world (in general). They did, however, muse on both the dearth of evidence attesting the life of the poor at that time, and the possible reasons for the lack:

The current situation is indeed such that evidence attesting the life of the destitute in the ancient world either does not exist, or, should it exist, has not yet come to light. Either way, we are without evidence and are left to surmise the reasons why. It is not hard to imagine that the life of the truly poor was of little interest to those who left the epigraphic record of life as they perceived it. What interest might the privileged, those who could afford to leave behind records of their presence, have had in people whose lives consisted largely of unrelieved toil and hardship? Were the privileged even aware of the existence of the poor, or were they non-entities, as far as the well-to-do were concerned? Our questions must remain just that, lacking attestation of any sort and reminding us that throughout history, and certainly in the ancient world, the overwhelming bulk of the evidence derives from the élites of their time. Absorbed in an unremitting struggle for survival, and gathering few lasting possessions, the common person's days were spent seeking sustenance for one more day, not immortality on papyrus or in stone.<sup>33</sup>

Garnsey and Woolf's assessment of the poor person's existence (as an unending challenge to keep body and soul together) may seem overly harsh and altogether too global, but it is shared and expanded upon by Meggitt, who states unflinchingly that "the Graeco-Roman world of work was hard and mercurial for all but those cushioned by political privilege."<sup>34</sup>

### 2.2.3 Degrees of poverty

Meggitt's dismal picture of "the lived reality of the other 99% of the population"<sup>35</sup> harks back to the days of Deissmann, but perhaps Meggitt has gone even farther than he, in

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<sup>31</sup> Frederick Danker, *Benefactor* (St. Louis, MO: Clayton Publishing House, 1982); also see §2.5.1, "Reciprocity".

<sup>32</sup> See Garnsey, *Famine*, and Garnsey and Woolf, "Patronage of the rural poor in the Roman world".

<sup>33</sup> Garnsey and Woolf, "Patronage of the rural poor in the Roman world", 153, cf 155, 167.

<sup>34</sup> Meggitt, *Paul, Poverty, and Survival*, 59. He elaborates: "In their experience of housing, as well as in their access to food and clothing, the Graeco-Roman non-élite suffered a subsistence or near subsistence life. Their labour, if they were lucky enough to actually have any, did not allow them to obtain sufficient material resources for their lot to be otherwise. They could all, without exception, be accurately labelled 'poor' according to our earlier definition", 66-67. See above §2.2.2 for Garnsey and Woolf's definition of poor, which Meggitt shares.

<sup>35</sup> Meggitt, *Paul, Poverty, and Survival*, 13.

that his picture is of the entire Roman empire, while Deissmann's is restricted to the constituency of the early church. Between the work of Deissmann and Meggitt, others had seen the lived reality of most people (i.e. the 'poor') as more diverse than had they. A.R. Hands, for instance, differentiated amongst the non-élites, introducing the poor in the ancient world not as consisting uniquely of those who lacked the necessities of life, but as

the vast majority of people in any city-state who, having no claim to the income of a large estate, lacked that degree of leisure and independence regarded as essential to the life of a gentleman. In many instances such men would own small plots on which they would have to work themselves, though perhaps with the help of hired labourers or slaves....so Poverty...distinguishes herself from Beggary....It is the beggar's life to live possessed of nothing, but the poor man's life to live frugally and by applying himself to work, with nothing to spare indeed, but not really in want."<sup>36</sup>

Here we see the distinction for Hands between the 'working poor' and the beggars of the ancient world. He thus moved from a simplistic description of 'rich' and 'poor' toward a more articulated understanding of economic and social realities in the Roman Empire.

In the same spirit of subtle distinction between various experiences of economic life for the majority of people in the first century, Garnsey claimed that there was no such thing as the typical ancient peasant. They were all different, as were their circumstances, because "the means of subsistence were not equally accessible to smallholders, tenants and wage-labourers".<sup>37</sup>

Meggitt, however, so vigorously stirred the pot of scholarly views of first century economic reality in general, and of Paul's congregations in particular, that it should come as no surprise that from such stirring have arisen responses to his challenge to disprove his thesis that profound poverty characterised and indeed pervaded the Pauline congregations as it did virtually all of first century society.

Dale Martin, in response to *Paul, Poverty and Survival*, finds Meggitt's insistence on two rigidly defined categories for the whole of the first-century world 'misleading' and 'hardly a historiographical advance'. What we rather need, according to Martin, is "more (not less) nuanced analysis of ancient class and status... if we are to make sense of the variety of data related to social conflict reflected in the sources".<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Hands, *Charities and Social Aid*, 62.

<sup>37</sup> Garnsey, *Famine*, 45; cf. Amartya Sen, *Poverty and Famines: An Essay on Entitlement and Deprivation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), in which Sen argues that a person or group's vulnerability to food shortage situations is dependent upon what they have (or control) by way of "entitlements", a.k.a. purchasing power, (whether that be in the form of money or other things/services that might be exchanged for food). In other words, the poorer the person, the less purchasing power, and the greater the chance of food deprivation.

<sup>38</sup> Dale B. Martin, "Justin J. Meggitt: *Paul, Poverty and Survival*", *JSNT* 84 (2001), 54.

Gerd Theissen, in his response to Meggitt's view of the homogeneous socio-economic make-up of the Pauline congregations, discusses two phenomena missing in Meggitt's study, 'dissonance of status' and 'dissonance of rank',<sup>39</sup> which, had they been considered, may have moderated Meggitt's conclusions. He adds his further concern that Meggitt did not take into consideration sources pertaining to Jewish communities and clubs, both of which might helpfully be compared to early Christian communities.<sup>40</sup> Beyond these criticisms, however, Theissen finds Meggitt's moral vision of Pauline Christianity, that of mutualism, appealing, and his study a positive contribution to ongoing Pauline study.

So, not only challenges to, but affirmations, elaborations and refinements of Meggitt's work have emerged. Steven Friesen, in "Poverty in Pauline Studies: Beyond the So-called New Consensus", is one who has caught Meggitt's vision and sought to strengthen it by proposing a more finely differentiated scale of economic circumstances in the first century.<sup>41</sup> Friesen's idea is a good step forward from Meggitt's rather undifferentiated grouping of "poor" for almost all the inhabitants of that time period.<sup>42</sup> One might take issue with Friesen's critique of 20<sup>th</sup> century New Testament scholarship vis-à-vis poverty in that world,<sup>43</sup> or his "focus on 'explicit' financial evidence [that] cuts out some arguments that are economically relevant, especially on the problematic, less poor Christians at Corinth",<sup>44</sup> but these do not negate Friesen's contribution to a more sophisticated perception of economic realities in the first-century world.

This is not to say that there was anything approximating what we might call a middle class in the first-century world. The concept would have been largely foreign to the people of that world, and for us, too, it is largely unhelpful, as it, and we, are shot-through with modern socio-political assumptions concerning the categories we impose on contemporary socio-economic life. Without resorting to such terms, we can find in the evidence reason to believe that between the profoundly poor (οἱ πτώχοι), barely scratching out a meagre existence,<sup>45</sup> and the super-rich élite, wallowing in first century luxury, there were others, perhaps many others, who, while they only recently have merited specific labels from students of the ancient world, were counted neither among the élite, nor among the desperately impoverished, or even the moderately impoverished (termed *πενήται* by

<sup>39</sup> Gerd Theissen, "The Social Structure of Pauline Communities", *JSNT* 84 (2001), 67-68.

<sup>40</sup> Theissen, "Social Structure", 69-75.

<sup>41</sup> Steven Friesen, "Poverty in Pauline Studies", *JSNT* 26.3 (2004), 337-347.

<sup>42</sup> Meggitt, *Paul, Poverty and Survival*, 66-67, 75.

<sup>43</sup> See John Barclay's "Poverty in Pauline Studies: A Response to Steven Friesen", *JSNT* 26.3 (2004), 363-366.

<sup>44</sup> See Peter Oakes' "Constructing Poverty Scales for Graeco-Roman Society: A Response to Steven Friesen's 'Poverty in Pauline Studies'", *JSNT* 26.3 (2004), 366-371.

<sup>45</sup> Those indigent persons utterly without resources, who owned no property or tools of the trade and who experienced a precarious existence consisting of day labour and begging. William L. Countryman, *The Rich Christian in the Church of the Early Empire: Contradictions and Accommodations* (New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 1980), 25.

Countryman<sup>46</sup>). The *πενήται*, says Countryman, included the working poor, small shopkeepers, artisans, and farmers.<sup>47</sup> They might own property, have tools of the trade, and could expect a reliable income from their labour, except in times of food crisis or famine, but even then, if citizens of Rome or another of the larger Roman cities, such as Corinth, they could expect to weather the crisis better than the *πτώχοι* because of their entitlement to monthly municipal grain distributions.<sup>48</sup>

We begin to see the difficulty modern interpreters encounter when attempting to describe the various economic levels, layers or groupings present in the first century. Descriptors such as ‘rich’ and ‘poor’, ‘have’ and ‘have not’, ‘élite’ and ‘non-élite’ become increasingly limited as we consider that while they may work for those at the upper end of the spectrum, for the rest, the overwhelming majority of people, even two designations will not suffice to reflect their reality in economic terms.<sup>49</sup> Below the financially privileged élite and above the desperately poor *πτώχοι*<sup>50</sup> there were a number of people whose lives were marked by enough to ensure survival, and sometimes more than enough such that they could enjoy the rewards, so to speak, of substantial financial gain. From this point on, we shall refer to those with enough to survive (i.e. those who regularly have enough to eat to ensure survival) as *πενήται*.<sup>51</sup> While this term conveys a sense of difficulty and lack, it also captures a sense of industry, and employment which regularly produces enough – perhaps even more than enough – to survive. Those moderately successful people who managed both to ensure day-to-day survival and provide a cushion against times of food crisis or famine, we shall refer to as ‘*πενήται-plus*’.

How these in-between people, *πενήται* or *πενήται-plus*, should be designated is a matter of discussion in current scholarship. Steven Friesen has suggested that we adopt levels P4 through P6 of his poverty “scale” in an attempt to address this need for greater recognition of the economic diversity present in the population of the Roman Empire.<sup>52</sup>

Friesen agrees basically with Meggitt that only a very few people, perhaps three percent of the population, could be considered extremely wealthy and élite. The rest, they

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<sup>46</sup> Countryman, *Rich Christian*, 25.

<sup>47</sup> For Garnsey, these farmers were the peasants, those “small producers on land who, with the help of simple equipment, their own labour and that of their families, produce mainly for their own consumption and for meeting obligations to the holders of political and economic power, and reach nearly total self-sufficiency within the framework of a village community”. *Famine*, 44.

<sup>48</sup> See §2.4.3 “Corn Dole”.

<sup>49</sup> Illustrated in Friesen’s elaboration of ‘poor’ as used by Meggitt. See §2.2 “Poverty”.

<sup>50</sup> *πτώχοι* will serve to designate the profoundly poor and destitute throughout this chapter.

<sup>51</sup> We of course recognise that the terms *πτώχοι*, *πενήται*, and *πενήται-plus* are in some sense limited (as are all the other terms mentioned above).

<sup>52</sup> Friesen also engages in a critique of Pauline scholarship of the last 50 years or so with regard to issues of social structure within the early church. It is not within the scope of this chapter to engage Friesen concerning this critique (see John Barclay’s and Peter Oakes’ responses in *JSNT* 26.3 (2004), 363-366, and 367-371 respectively).

would both say, existed at something closer to or below subsistence level. At this point, Meggitt and Friesen part company, as Friesen now divides the remaining 97 percent of the population into four further levels, the highest two representing what Friesen thinks might have been individuals with a moderate surplus (7%) and those who lived near subsistence level, but in a stable situation (22%),<sup>53</sup> while Meggitt sees very little difference between the upper and lower ranges of this extremely large group.<sup>54</sup> In his more subtly differentiated view of the overwhelming majority of the population, the non-élites, Friesen seems to have taken a step forward in acknowledging the complexities of everyday first century life, in which almost one third of the population may have lived in fairly stable economic situations, 40% at subsistence level, and 28% below that level.

While we do not dispute the vast economic divide between the very wealthy 3 percent and everyone else in the Roman Empire, we will not think of the approximately 97 percent of the population in the first century as one undifferentiated group who at best experienced a precarious subsistence,<sup>55</sup> rather, we shall consider them an amalgamation of diverse economic groupings.<sup>56</sup> In adopting this position we follow loosely the broad outlines of Judge, Theissen and Meeks, as well as the spirit, if not the letter of Friesen's scale. We leave behind Meggitt's conception as far too constrictive in light of the evidence for those people who would never be counted among, or rival the wealth of, the élite people of the first century, but who did more than eke out an existence<sup>57</sup> and who were in much less danger of destitution and hunger due to food crises because they possessed more than the minimum necessary to ensure life and health: they had a 'cushion'. Wall panels from a room in the House of the Vettii at Pompeii illustrate a number of prosperous people engaging in various trades, including wine-dealers, flower-dealers, makers and sellers of perfume, fullers, goldsmiths, and (perhaps) bakers.<sup>58</sup> Modestly prosperous people existed,<sup>59</sup> even if in

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<sup>53</sup> Friesen, although he posits that these two groups "must have made up around 29% of the population", admits that it is impossible to be more precise, "given the current state of our knowledge". "Poverty in Pauline Studies", 341, 346-347.

<sup>54</sup> Meggitt, *Paul and Poverty*, 7, 66-67.

<sup>55</sup> Contra Meggitt, *Paul and Poverty*, 5, 7, 59, 66-67, 69, 99.

<sup>56</sup> As noted above in our discussion of *πενήται* and *πενήται*-plus.

<sup>57</sup> This group might include ship owners and entrepreneurs, among others. The fact that their wealth was a fraction of that of even the most modest of the wealthy élites in no way negates it as wealth. That would be tantamount to saying that because one does not make a seven figure salary, his/her £60,000 salary is therefore 'negligible' and should not be considered as wealth. Wealth in the first-century world, as today, was a relative concept.

<sup>58</sup> M. Rostovtzeff, *The Social and Economic History of the Roman Empire*, Vol. 1, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1957), plates xiv-xv, 91, 96. Keith Bradley tells of slaves who "lived in relatively secure material surroundings, enjoying wealth and power which others could come to resent. And often they were slaveowners themselves". *Slavery and Society at Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 70; cf. 75-80 for the presence of slaves at every level of Roman economic life.

<sup>59</sup> Take ship owners as an illustration of this fact. These business men could make a tidy profit and gain privileges from one successful conveyance of grain for the Roman government (see Rickman, *Corn Supply*, 87-88). Oil, other commodities, and people were also transported for profit. The risk of

very small numbers, and we need to acknowledge both their presence and their potential impact on various aspects of first century life.<sup>60</sup> Not to do so will skew the picture every bit as much as Meggitt and Friesen have accused some NT scholars of doing by making what seem to them anachronistic economic assumptions and by uncritically adopting élite sources to describe the life of everyone, including any non-wealthy, non-élite groups in the first century<sup>61</sup> (who constituted quite possibly up to 97% of the population).

### 2.3 Issues of poverty and hunger

Poverty may occur for a number of reasons. If we can find those reasons for poverty and the hunger which accompanied it in the first century C.E., we may then understand more clearly the responses, and degrees of response to hunger (which appears to have been if not a persistent problem, then a recurrent one) in the Graeco-Roman world. We turn then to an investigation of that which caused and reinforced situations of poverty, and so hunger, in the first century.

Following Friesen's call for a more articulated view of first century non-élites, and our own designations of πτώχοι, πεινήται, and πεινήται-plus for them, it is with a more subtle sense of the gradations of economic prosperity and lack thereof in the first-century world that we ask what might have caused a person to be found amongst the ranks of the profoundly poor, the πτώχοι, who, at best, just barely survived, and for whom hunger was a daily fact of life. Was it the result of natural, or perhaps humanly generated events? Was it legislated by law? Was it, quite simply, an accident of birth? Were profound poverty and its accompanying hunger permanent or periodic conditions?

#### 2.3.1 Chronic poverty and hunger

The fact that some people were poor to the point of hunger was simply a fact of life in the Graeco-Roman world. If the silence of our sources is any indication, poverty doesn't seem to have been a matter of great interest or discussion amongst those writing in the first century.

What we do find interested people recording, according to Garnsey, is the cost of living, as indicated by fifteen instances of increase in grain prices in Rome in the first

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losing a ship to pirates was minimal in the first century, but bad weather was of course a possibility. Generally speaking, the captains were very careful about when they put to sea and avoided winter travel, almost never risking a voyage between September and April. One exception would have been if the emperor 'requested' that such a trip be made, usually due to a severe food shortage (e.g. Claudius, when he "tried to encourage unwilling merchants to make dangerous winter journeys by promising compensation for any loss incurred through storm..." Rickman, *Corn Supply*, 72). See also Suetonius *Deified Claudius* 18 and Chariton's *Callirhoë* for more background on travel by ship in the first century; cf. Chapter Four "Money Movement in the First-century world", and Brian Rapske, "Acts, Travel, and Shipwreck" in *The Book of Acts in Its Graeco-Roman Setting* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 1-48.

<sup>60</sup> This is especially important for us as we consider the question of finances vis-à-vis Paul's collection project appeals in Corinth and Macedonia.

<sup>61</sup> See below §2.3.5 "Summary".

century B.C.E.,<sup>62</sup> indicating a difficulty with supply, and seventeen such price rises in the subsequent century (through the reign of Domitian).<sup>63</sup> It seems that availability of grain, at least, was a fairly constant concern for the people of Rome, and quite likely for the inhabitants of other sizeable urban centres. Garnsey points out that these recurrent food crises seem more often to have been due to problems with delivery, untimely releases of grain in insufficient quantities to meet demand, rather than lack of grain, and because “words for hunger and starvation do not appear in the inscriptions”,<sup>64</sup> he suggests that most of these food crises were low level rather than catastrophic in nature. This, however does not disprove our contention that hunger was a daily fact of life for some people, apart from the intermittent experience of notable and recorded crises.<sup>65</sup> For some, hunger was a constant possibility, even their constant reality, due to chronic impoverishment. For others, poverty and hunger might come and go along with temporary conditions of shortage.<sup>66</sup>

As we investigate possible causes of poverty and hunger in the first century, we will look at natural, as well as human factors which might affect one’s access to, interrupt or completely cut off the food supply.

### 2.3.2 Birth

To be poor,<sup>67</sup> whether *πενήται* (what we might classify as ‘working’ poor), or *πτώχοι* (abjectly poor), in the Roman Empire of the first century, was first and foremost an inherited aspect of one’s being, as would have been almost any position on the social ladder. One’s birth had a great deal to do with one’s socio-economic placement in the ancient world. To be born into a rural farming family, to an artisan, a non-citizen, a slave, beggar or prostitute might automatically confer the designation of *πενήτης*, but not necessarily that of *πτώχος*. The evidence we have does not allow us to see clearly enough where the line between sufficiency and penury was drawn, and perhaps this is because that line could move, according to the agricultural, economic or political realities at a given moment in time.

### 2.3.3 Interruption in capacity/ability to supply food

Food crisis was endemic in the Mediterranean in classical antiquity...the consequence of a sharp reduction not in the absolute level of food supply, but in

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<sup>62</sup> Garnsey, *Famine*, 198-202.

<sup>63</sup> Garnsey, *Famine*, 218-225.

<sup>64</sup> Garnsey, *Famine*, 19. These inscriptions are significant as they typically preserve the action which resolved or repulsed a crisis. Garnsey sees the absence of hunger/starvation language as indicative of situations which were not considered very serious. “So prices rose, people went hungry, some died – but there was no dramatic increase in the death rate”, 38.

<sup>65</sup> Polybius, in 1.18.6-7; 1.19.7, speaks of war-induced (Punic) famine in besieged Agrigentum, Sicily, in 262 B.C.E.; Dio, in his *History* 55.22.3; 55.26.1; 55.27.1-3; 55.31.4, speaks of famine in Rome brought on by earthquakes and subsequent flooding in 6-7 C.E. (cf. below fn. 89).

<sup>66</sup> Garnsey, *Famine*, 53-56.

<sup>67</sup> Or, for that matter, to be counted among the elites, although rarely one might have the status conferred.

food availability. The causes of famine are to be sought not only in the physical environment and conditions of production, but also in distribution mechanisms, their limitations, and their disruption through human intervention.<sup>68</sup>

Garnsey, in *Famine and Food Supply*, targets the interruption, either partial or total, of the food supply as one of the major challenges, if not *the* major challenge to individual and corporate life in the ancient world. For Garnsey, “food crisis is a consequence of the breakdown of the system of production, distribution and consumption of essential foodstuffs.”<sup>69</sup>

By delving into the distinctions between ‘food crisis’ and ‘famine’,<sup>70</sup> Garnsey provided a needed corrective to the tendency of ancient historians to speak of all incidents of food crisis as famine, thereby creating an impression of famine as the backdrop for most, if not all the history of the Roman Republic and its Empire. The distinctions between famine and food crisis affect our understanding of the root causes of hunger in the first century, but in no way minimise the challenges of the poor when faced with either.

### 2.3.3.1 Natural disasters (drought, crop failures, floods)

Garnsey notes that from the time of Aristotle there was in the ancient world an awareness of the danger and unpredictability of weather:

a constant feature of the Mediterranean region....Rainfall is very erratic, unevenly distributed between seasons, and often in short supply, especially in the southern and eastern sectors of the Mediterranean. Therefore harvest fluctuations are and were regular and crop failures inevitable, though not precisely predictable, throughout the region.<sup>71</sup>

In the event that adequate stores of grain from previous harvests had been stockpiled,<sup>72</sup> drought and crop failure might not trigger a food crisis and hunger; they certainly could, however, have been major indicators, for should crops fail in sequential seasons, there would be no opportunity, apart from importation,<sup>73</sup> to replenish the reserve stores of grain.<sup>74</sup>

Even provider countries such as Egypt, usually reliable as a source of massive amounts of grain, were vulnerable to the vagaries of nature. Pliny twice refers to levels of the Nile River below and above which grain crops would be at risk of drought or flooding,

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<sup>68</sup> Garnsey, *Famine*, 271.

<sup>69</sup> Garnsey, *Famine*, ix.

<sup>70</sup> See §2.1 “Definition and limitation of the topic”.

<sup>71</sup> Garnsey, *Famine*, 9.

<sup>72</sup> As at Thouria, in Messeina, in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C.E., according to Garnsey, *Famine and Food Supply*, 82.

<sup>73</sup> Importation posed its own set of problems, because to access the one, fairly reliable source of grain in Egypt, required the permission of the Emperor, and his first priority in terms of the food supply was the city of Rome. Should permission be denied, the remaining possible sources were significantly smaller, and perhaps unable to supply more than their own needs (if indeed they were able to do that).

<sup>74</sup> As was the case in 51 C.E., when a series of droughts led to depletion of grain supplies. Suetonius, *Deified Claudius* 18.2; Tacitus, *Annals* 12.43.

and mentions specifically an occurrence of the second “in the principate of Claudius”.<sup>75</sup> Either drought or flooding portended difficulty, if not disaster for the people who depended on Egyptian wheat and barley. Whatever the reason for the shortage, should there be no outlet from which to purchase grain, or, if indeed there was such an outlet, but the people lacked adequate financial resources to fund the purchase of grain (or alternate forms of food), poverty and hunger would quickly change from threat to reality.

### 2.3.3.2 Human disasters (war, pirates, hoarding, speculation)

War, of course, might precipitate a catastrophic plunge into poverty and hunger. Should one escape death and be taken captive, even an élite individual might face a future of material destitution. An encounter with “friendly” troops might prove the undoing of a small, but profitable farmer, whose own sustenance, and that of his dependants, were of little to no consequence in light of the alimentary requirements of the army.<sup>76</sup> For some, if not all farmers, their emergency reserves, kept against unexpected time of trouble, would be taken, requisitioned for the needs of the Roman army, thereby removing any material cushion the farmer had built up against hunger and starvation, for how could they manage until the next crop, and without seed, how could they plant again?

Piracy and the caprices of weather as well might strip even a well-to-do ship owner, not only of his cargo, but of his sole means of livelihood, for without his ship, and, in the case of insufficient funds to replace a ship so lost (whether to pirates or bad weather), the owner would be ruined,<sup>77</sup> and the city would be short of grain.

And what of those ships that did not sink, but safely delivered their precious cargo of grain to port? What of those supplies of grain safely stored in the granaries of the wealthy? Surely it could not be that the *availability* of grain might precipitate the slide into destitution and utter poverty? And yet, at times<sup>78</sup> speculators (or hoarders) drove the price of grain to astronomical levels by “stockpiling grain for export [which] denied local consumers access to the staple food at any price...a particularly flagrant form of speculation...[it] produced the most violent response”. According to Garnsey, this occurred between 14 – 37 C.E., during the reign of Tiberius.<sup>79</sup> Whoever the speculators/manipulators were, such behaviour would have meant that those without substantial monetary reserves would soon deplete what meagre assets they had and take their place amongst the πτώχοι, thereby swelling the numbers of the profoundly poor.

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<sup>75</sup> Who reigned from 41 – 54 C.E. Pliny, *Natural History*, 5.10.58; 18.47.168.

<sup>76</sup> Garnsey, *Famine*, 228, 247.

<sup>77</sup> Garnsey, *Famine*, 228.

<sup>78</sup> We know of the *Lex Julia de annonae*, prohibiting the manipulation of grain (and so attesting the practice) from the time of “the dictator Caesar or the emperor Augustus” Garnsey, *Famine and Food Supply*, 215. cf. Livy, 38.13-16.

<sup>79</sup> Garnsey, *Famine*, 76, 258, cf. Philostratus, *Vit. Apoll.* 1.15.

### 2.3.4 Illness and death

One whose 'natural' or inherited designation placed him or her amongst the moderately successful (πενήται-plus) or the working poor (πενήται), might join the unhappy throng of πτώχοι due to age, illness, or death. And, should that person be the head of household, the income earner and/or food producer who became chronically ill, or incapacitated (sometimes merely due to old age), or die, then the possibility of that person and/or family unit becoming destitute increased dramatically, depending on the presence and resources of the extended family.<sup>80</sup>

### 2.3.5 Summary

Summing up then the issues of natural and humanly generated disasters, including illness and death, crop-shortages (in the countryside), and resultant food-shortages in both rural and urban locales could lead to an increase in the numbers of πτώχοι. That these food shortages occurred is well-documented.<sup>81</sup> Garnsey, who reminds us of the distinction between 'famine' and 'food crisis',<sup>82</sup> tells of two food crises in particular which are of interest to us because of their timing. One, recounted by Dio, led Claudius to construct a harbour at Ostia, so as to provide safe moorings for grain ships as they arrived at the *Portus Romanus* with their precious cargoes,<sup>83</sup> and, again, in the areas surrounding Rome, "in 51 C.E. a bad harvest and resulting food crisis were seen as signs of divine displeasure, according to Tacitus", and led to dangerous winter sails for foreign grain to supply the city.<sup>84</sup>

The timing of the two crises noted above indicates that during Paul's ministry, not once, but repeatedly, food shortages occurred which were of sufficient importance to warrant being recorded for posterity. In fact, we have records of a number of other shortages,<sup>85</sup> including one in Jerusalem and possibly throughout Judaea in the late 20's B.C.E., during which Herod the Great bought grain from Egypt to feed his people, and the 40's C.E., when Helena of Adiabene purchased grain to feed the people of Jerusalem (with the monetary aid of her son Izates, the king).<sup>86</sup> These last two examples reinforce the idea

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<sup>80</sup> Meggitt, *Paul, Poverty and Survival*, 67. Although Meggitt is referring specifically to the *plebs urbana*, the concept may reasonably be transferred to their non-élite counterparts living outside the city.

<sup>81</sup> Dio, in *History*, 55.33.1, tells how during war with Rome in 8 C.E. the Dalmatians and Pannonians "were afflicted first by famine and then by disease that followed it, since they were using for food roots and strange herbs".

<sup>82</sup> Above §2.1.

<sup>83</sup> Dio, *History*, 60.11.1-5; Suetonius, *Deified Claudius* 20.3. See also Rickman, *Corn Supply*, 74, where he notes that in the first year of Claudius' reign, 42 C.E., several coins were imprinted with legends and symbols meant to reassure people about the corn supply.

<sup>84</sup> Garnsey, *Famine*, 223, citing Tacitus, *Annals* 12.43

<sup>85</sup> See Garnsey's summary of attested food crises in the Roman Empire from 28 B.C.E. through the beginning of the third century C.E. in *Famine*, 218-227.

<sup>86</sup> Josephus, *Ant.* 15.304-16; 20.50-51; cf. Rickman, *Corn Supply*, 70.

that Rome was not alone in experiencing the challenges and destructive implications of food crises. Because of this, we can at least consider the relevance for other cities of the largely Rome-centred evidence concerning the basic facts of recurrent food-shortages in large urban settings and the governmental response to them. Wherever food crises may have been located in the first-century world of the Roman Empire,<sup>87</sup> they posed serious problems for the majority of people, and necessitated some sort of formal or informal response.

Rome was definitely the best documented location in terms of response to food crises. It also seems to have enjoyed a privileged position in the first-century world, better-shielded than most places from the effects of food shortage through the corn dole. Even so, not everyone in Rome,<sup>88</sup> not even all the citizens, could be fed through this system, and so other measures were taken, including expulsion not simply from the city, but to a distance of 100 miles.<sup>89</sup> If Rome was the *best* case scenario for widespread systematic response to food crises, then when such crises occurred elsewhere, in less-protected areas, what must *those* people have suffered?

The hard truth was that for all the *πτώχοι* and *πενήται* plus (rural or urban) of the first century, the boundary between subsistence and starvation was thin, easily breached by vagaries of weather, blight, ill health, or human greed and corruption, and once that fragile line had been crossed, return to even meagre success was not guaranteed.

“The poor survived (though doubtless for a shorter time span than their social superiors), but we are not told how. We know neither what they could do to help themselves nor what help was available from outside”.<sup>90</sup> Friesen concurs, saying that “human bodies can survive for some time at the low end of the scale, but the lives of people living below the subsistence level are usually shortened by chronic malnutrition”.<sup>91</sup> The occurrence of even one of the events on our litany of misfortunes might spell disaster for the approximately two-thirds of rural or urban dwellers in the categories of *πτώχοι*, *πενήται*, or even the more prosperous *πενήται*-plus who may have represented a little over one quarter of the population.<sup>92</sup> In spite of extreme good will amongst family members and neighbours (who often were family), the worst might happen; from the countryside, some might flee to

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<sup>87</sup> In Chapter Five “Paul, Aid to the Poor and the Collection”, our attention will turn to Jerusalem, with an eye to the specific situation of the Christian community there.

<sup>88</sup> Really, the majority of Rome’s inhabitants, according to Meggitt, *Paul and Poverty*, 51. cf. Rickman, *Corn Supply*, 8-13, 176-179.

<sup>89</sup> Dio, *History*, 55.26.1-2 (see above fn. 65); Suetonius, *Deified Augustus* 42.3, See also Garnsey, *Famine*, 69, and *Trade and Famine*, 61.

<sup>90</sup> Peter Garnsey and Greg Woolf, “Patronage of the rural poor in the Roman world”, in Wallace-Hadrill, *Patronage in Ancient Society*, 153.

<sup>91</sup> Friesen, “Poverty in Pauline Studies”, 343.

<sup>92</sup> See §2.2.3 “Degrees of Poverty” for Friesen’s more sharply defined view of these economic divisions.

an urban setting in hopes of a better life. Others, feeling trapped in what seemed a dying city, fled its confines, but overall, many probably died where they had struggled to live.

## 2.4 Responses to hunger

We shall not, except in passing, concern ourselves here with public measures directed to what we might regard as immediate and permanent solutions to social ills....Since they were...seldom carried into effect or adequate for very long, there normally remained to a lesser or greater degree in every city-state scope for private benevolence and the founding of public charitable institutions. It is to the latter that we shall in the main confine our attention, although we shall have occasion to observe that...[the ancient political thinking] tended to concentrate on the former type of solution rather than the latter.<sup>93</sup>

While Hands' promise to focus on institutional responses to 'social ills' in the Graeco-Roman world remained unfulfilled due to a lack of evidence, his assertion that ancient political thinking tended to be crisis-driven with respect to responses to hunger was better founded. As we shall see in this section, many, if not all, attested formal responses to hunger constituted an effort to avert impending crisis or diminish the effects of an existing one. Such responses, however, largely benefited a small segment of the population which least needed those measures, perhaps because that group of people could make life quite difficult for those in power.<sup>94</sup>

Hands' contention that in the Graeco-Roman world there did indeed exist something akin to charitable institutions as might have been understood in the 20<sup>th</sup> century western world proves untenable. Permanent public charitable institutions, intended to help the poorest and most disadvantaged of people, do not seem to have figured in the ancient picture.<sup>95</sup> What then did constitute possible responses to hunger in that world?

### 2.4.1 Patronage

Since our aim in this study is to shed light on the various ways the inhabitants of the Graeco-Roman world of the first century responded to the material needs of others, we will spend very little time on patronage, which, although it seems to have spread its shadow over almost every area of first century life,<sup>96</sup> was not about aid to the poor. This conclusion necessitates leaving out more, vis-à-vis patronage, than is included, a fact easily spotted by anyone with even a slight interest in patronage in the Graeco-Roman world.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> Hands, *Charities and Social Aid*, 15.

<sup>94</sup> See §2.4.3 "Corn Dole".

<sup>95</sup> Hands, *Charities and Social Aid*, 115; Garnsey explores, in the context of the Roman Republic and the Empire, "the responses of both urban and rural dwellers to food crises, actual or anticipated", and argues that "euergetism was essentially an *ad hoc* response, not a lasting solution", in *Famine*, 82, ix.

<sup>96</sup> See Hands' inclusion of Gilbert Highet's comment that it appeared at times 'as though nine out of ten Romans were living on charity at this time, five of them on public-welfare schemes run by the government, and the other four as dependents of the tenth'. Hands, *Charities and Social Aid*, 48.

<sup>97</sup> Saller, too, recognised that the scope of patronage precluded any single comprehensive study of it, as he mentions in his preface to *Personal Patronage*, vii.

In our brief consideration of personal patronage<sup>98</sup> in the first-century world, we will keep in mind Garnsey and Woolf's definition of patronage as "an enduring bond between two persons of unequal social and economic status, which implies and is maintained by periodic exchanges of goods and services, and also has social and affective dimensions",<sup>99</sup> and that this enduring bond, "involves the *reciprocal* exchange of goods and services....To distinguish it from a commercial transaction in the marketplace, the relationship must be a personal one of some duration....and it must be asymmetrical, in the sense that the two parties are of unequal status and offer different kinds of goods and services in the exchange – a quality which sets patronage off from friendship between equals."<sup>100</sup>

We have evidence of patronage as a largely urban, rather than rural, reality. This makes sense, given the concentration both of people and wealth in urban areas.<sup>101</sup> It is important to establish from the beginning that "patrons did not establish client relationships with 'the urban poor' whom they considered greatly inferior. They did so with those who possessed the same status as they did, but not their wealth, or with those who were their former slaves but were now their freedmen. If they were clients, then it gives an indication of their moderately high social register..."<sup>102</sup>

Saller refers to Seneca concerning the issue of superiority/inferiority as he explains that not every potential or even actual client found that position easy to admit:

a client, by publicising his patron's *beneficia*, also advertised his inferiority. If the client was not attempting to compete for honour as an equal, the acknowledgement of subordination need not have presented any problems....Aristocrats sometimes rejected gifts from those whose equality or superiority they refused to concede....if compelled by need to accept...some men refused to acknowledge their debt publicly, and so showed themselves to be *ingrate*. Such men may also have attempted to repay their debts immediately and so to absolve themselves of any obligation...some benefactors preferred to forego repayment rather than accept the return and hence sacrifice the symbol of their superiority.<sup>103</sup>

Whatever the nature of the client's need, and whatever aversion he might need to overcome, the fact of receiving a gift from one's superior was the catalyst for an ongoing relationship of dependency and obligation. Both patron and client engaged in a dance of

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<sup>98</sup> As differentiated from systemic patronage. For an introduction to that related subject, see Terry Johnson and Christopher Dandeker's "Patronage: relation and system", in *Patronage in Ancient Society*, ed. Andrew Wallace-Hadrill, 219-242.

<sup>99</sup> Garnsey and Woolf, "Patronage of the rural poor in the Roman world", 153-154.

<sup>100</sup> Saller, "Patronage and friendship in early Imperial Rome: drawing the distinction" in *Patronage in Ancient Society*, ed. Andrew Wallace-Hadrill, 49.

<sup>101</sup> Garnsey, *Famine*, 58. Garnsey adds that "the peasant's first line of defense consisted of kinsmen, neighbours and friends in his own rural community. Patronage afforded supplementary insurance against disaster. For some it might even have functioned as an alternative to such a network of horizontal relationships, if the patron was active and accessible." cf. 276.

<sup>102</sup> Winter, *Seek the Welfare*, 45.

<sup>103</sup> Saller, *Personal Patronage*, 127-128, referring to Seneca, *De Beneficiis*, 2.21.5, 2.23.1, 6.42f, 2.17.6. Cf. *Ben.* 1.1.7, 1.15.1-4, 2.18.5-8, 2.23.2-3.

giving and receiving, mutually stirring, prodding, at times manipulating each other to keep the dance going (i.e. perpetuate the interaction). And on either side, patron's or client's, the dance might last a lifetime or longer, as such relationships might endure from generation to generation.<sup>104</sup>

No matter who the patron or client might be, clients enhanced the image and standing of the patron by showing that the patron was a person of worth (i.e., rank and wealth). Patronage, says Wallace-Hadrill, pervaded all of society. Those above looked at those below in order to assess a client's worth. Those below looked at those above to reassure themselves that they were linked to reliable people of good standing.<sup>105</sup>

The personal patronage for which we have evidence seems to have been preoccupied with the very few at the top of the first century socio-economic ladder. We may imagine that the principles of patronage permeated the rest of the enormous population not numbered among the élite or citizens, but here especially we seem to see the harsh truth: the client must be able to contribute *something* to the relationship, and so, the very poor, the πῶχοι, were left out of the loop of first-century personal patronage.

#### 2.4.2 Benefactors

In *Seek the Welfare of the City*, his 1994 study of Christians as active beneficent participants in the first century, Bruce Winter highlights the critical importance of benefactors in the first-century world, when he claims that “the welfare of the city in the Graeco-Roman world depended on the ongoing contributions of civic-minded benefactors. They paid for public works from their private resources in order to enhance the environs of their cities and, in times of famine, to ensure the supply of grain at a cost affordable to every citizen.”<sup>106</sup> With this last sentence as our working definition for a benefactor, we shall explore the first-century world in which benefaction was such a fixture, to see more clearly how it operated as a response to the material needs of people.

Since the time of Aristotle, “the title ‘benefactor’ bestowed enormous status”.<sup>107</sup> Beginning there, Winter presents, from ancient<sup>108</sup> epigraphic and literary records,

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<sup>104</sup> Referring to Pliny, *Ep.* 4.17.4f., Saller alludes to this bond that could extend beyond death when he states that “it was the protégé’s duty to protect his friend’s family and reputation after his death...”, *Personal Patronage*, 27. Cf. Cicero, *De Officiis*, 2.28.62.

<sup>105</sup> Although the evidence available would seem rather to indicate that patronage remained the unique purview of the wealthy, Wallace-Hadrill claims that society, although it may consist of fairly well-separated classes, ranks, or orders, cannot stem the spread of ideas and values throughout the society. Because of this, Wallace-Hadrill maintains that those ideas of patronage informed life at every level of the first century Graeco-Roman world. “Patronage in Roman society”, in *Patronage in Ancient Society*, 83.

<sup>106</sup> Winter, *Seek the Welfare*, 26.

<sup>107</sup> Winter, *Seek the Welfare*, 39. See also Hands, *Charities and Social Aid*, 36.

<sup>108</sup> Winter explores the history of benefaction beyond the bounds of the first century C.E. reaching back before even the first century B.C.E. in his quest. We will largely restrict our exploration to the first century C.E., give or take 50 years.

“evidence...[that] will demonstrate that there were established conventions for the acknowledgement of benefactors. Rulers praised and honoured those who undertook good works which benefited the city. At the same time they made the conventional promise to honour publicly those who in the future would undertake similar benefactions”.<sup>109</sup>

In this section we will look specifically at forms of benefaction that constituted responses to the material needs of people, and we shall see that benefaction which responded to human need consisted largely of a response to the most basic, universal, and perpetual need of all, for food.

As we investigate benefaction in its various forms, we will seek answers to several related questions. We will want to know who were, or might have been the benefactors in the Graeco-Roman world of the first century, and who the recipients of their liberality. What qualified one to be either giver or recipient, and how were both to play their parts in the drama of benefaction in the first century Graeco-Roman world? Answers to these questions will shed further light on our investigation of material need and responses to it in the life of first century people.

Emperors and kings naturally head our list, and so we begin with their activity and perception of themselves as benefactors. Rome was the focus of the emperors’ attention, for the emperors were especially intent on maintaining order and retaining the good will of the hundreds of thousands who called the city home. Rome *was* an enormous city,<sup>110</sup> teeming with people who, should they become disgruntled, might cause untold social, financial and political trouble.<sup>111</sup> Augustus recognised this, even though he became fed-up with the people’s ‘unreasonable’ complaints for more grain in light of what he considered his great generosity:

When the people complained of the scarcity and high price of wine, he rebuked them sharply...Again, when the people demanded largess he had in fact promised, he replied: ‘I am a man of my word’; but when they called for one which had not been promised, he rebuked them in a proclamation for their shameless impudence....<sup>112</sup>

Suetonius goes on to tell us that Augustus considered terminating the subsidized grain sales, “I was strongly inclined to do away forever with distributions of grain, because through dependence on them agriculture was being neglected; but I did not carry out my

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<sup>109</sup> Winter, *Seek the Welfare*, 26.

<sup>110</sup> One of the reasons there was such trouble with adequate food supply was that Rome was growing so rapidly. Rickman estimates the free population in the beginnings of the first century C.E. at between 750,000 and 1,000,000. These figures do not include slaves, whose numbers he estimates at between 100,000 and 200,000. Clearly these numbers represent a food-supply challenge that was both serious and ongoing. Rickman, *Corn Supply*, 8-13.

<sup>111</sup> Cf. Finley, *Ancient Economy*, 39-40; Garnsey, *Famine*, 259.

<sup>112</sup> Suetonius, *Deified Augustus* 2.42.

purpose, feeling sure that they would one day be renewed through desire for popular favour.”<sup>113</sup>

Keeping the populace of Rome fed, and so, under control, had to have been a major consideration for every emperor since Augustus, and ensuring an adequate and affordable supply of food in a world rife with food shortages and the occasional famine<sup>114</sup> would have constituted no small part of their strategy for maintaining a peaceful *urbs*.

Tacitus tells us of Tiberius, who claimed to have outdone Augustus in benevolence.<sup>115</sup> According to Suetonius, in times of shortage Tiberius ordered cutbacks in entertainment, placed restrictions on prices for household items, imposed limitations on what foods might or might not be displayed in the marketplace, and practised ‘unusual’ personal frugality at home: “He often served at formal dinners meats left over from the day before and partly consumed, or the half of a boar, declaring that it had all the qualities of a whole one”.<sup>116</sup> Such a ‘snapshot’ of what the élite (whether the emperor or Suetonius who offers us this glimpse) considered frugality demonstrates how far removed they were from, and apparently untroubled by,<sup>117</sup> the difficulties of the tens of thousands of Rome’s non-élite (for whom Tiberius’ ‘leftovers’ would no doubt have seemed a feast).

Claudius figures also in Suetonius’ memory, as always having given “scrupulous attention to the care of the city and the supply of grain”, but this scrupulous care seems to have lapsed in 44 C.E., “when there was a scarcity of grain because of long-continued droughts”, for he was “stopped in the middle of the forum...and ...pelted with abuse and at the same time with pieces of bread...”. If his scrupulous attention had slipped, “after this experience he resorted to every possible means to bring grain to Rome, even in the winter season”.<sup>118</sup>

All the emperors felt a personal responsibility for the corn supply to Rome, as did Herod the Great<sup>119</sup> for Jerusalem in the late 20’s B.C.E., when he bought corn from Egypt to relieve the people of that city who were suffering as the result of famine.<sup>120</sup> As important as it was to the emperors to ensure sufficient food supplies to Rome, so it was to Herod to feed

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<sup>113</sup> Suetonius, *Deified Augustus* 2.42.

<sup>114</sup> Garnsey, *Famine*, “The Infrequency of Famine”, 17-39, devotes a chapter to this discussion. See also Bruce Winter, “Acts and Food Shortages” in David W.J. Gill and Conrad Gempf, eds., *The Book of Acts in its Graeco-Roman setting*, vol. 2 of *The Book of Acts in its First Century Setting* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 61-65.

<sup>115</sup> Tacitus, *Annals* 6.13.

<sup>116</sup> Suetonius, *Deified Tiberius* 3.35.

<sup>117</sup> Tiberius may have been untroubled by the want of the people, but was annoyed that government officials had not suppressed their clamour (32-33 C.E.); see Tacitus, *Annals* 6.13.

<sup>118</sup> Suetonius, *Deified Claudius* 18-19. Cf. Garnsey, *Famine*, 223, where he tells of the impending shortage of grain following Gaius Caligula’s death in 41 C.E. as the first food supply challenge to Claudius.

<sup>119</sup> For a fuller discussion of Herod’s benefaction, see §3.10.2 “Josephus”.

<sup>120</sup> So, also Helena of Adiabene in the 40’s C.E. She imported dried figs and grain for the people of Jerusalem during a food shortage. See §3.10.2 “Josephus”.

the inhabitants of Jerusalem, no mean city itself in terms of size and, therefore in terms of possible political reverberations due to food shortage.

It was not, however, only emperors who concerned themselves with the material needs of people. There were others among the élite of the ancient world who made large gifts to communities of people. A number of these gifts had to do with buildings and other architectural structures, but other than providing for payment of construction labourers (who then would buy food with their pay), they do not qualify as material responses to hunger, and so we shall leave them aside in favour of benefactions having to do with averting or alleviating that particular problem. Garnsey says that “there are thousands of inscriptions celebrating the generosity of local benefactors who gave grain, oil and wine, or sold it cheap, contributed to funds for the purchase of extra stocks, and served as grain commissioners [*cura annonae*]. The spirit of patriotic munificence was contagious and it touched people of modest wealth, not just the highest ranking notables”.<sup>121</sup> We shall examine a few examples here.

#### 2.4.2.1 Tiberius Claudius Dinippus

One of those people whose benefactions were recorded not once, but a number of times, is Tiberius Claudius Dinippus of first century Corinth. In addition to sponsoring the Neronea Caesarea games, he seems to have served on several occasions during the mid first century C.E.<sup>122</sup> as *curator annonae*, a liturgical<sup>123</sup> position of honour and considerable responsibility for assuring an adequate flow of grain into the city in times of real or threatened food shortage.<sup>124</sup>

The third volume of Latin inscriptions, gathered between 1896 and 1926 by the American School of Classical Studies at Athens, contains six inscriptions to Tiberius Claudius Dinippus for, among other things, his work as *curator annonae*. One of these inscriptions was “EX D D (*ex decreto decurionum*)...authorised by a decree of the local senate”<sup>125</sup>, making it an official governmental response to his benefactions, rather than a private individual or group’s response. Only rarely did the Corinthian government get involved in these graven tributes;<sup>126</sup> they were much more likely to have been undertaken by an individual or group. The actions of Tiberius Claudius Dinippus must have been highly esteemed for him to have merited such an honour.

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<sup>121</sup> Garnsey, *Famine*, 261.

<sup>122</sup> *Corinth: Results of Excavations conducted by the American School of Classical Studies at Athens*, Vol.VIII. II: Latin Inscriptions: 1896 – 1926, Allen Brown West, ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1931), (# 86), 72-73.

<sup>123</sup> See §2.4.4.1 for more on liturgies.

<sup>124</sup> A full discussion of the corn dole follows in §2.4.3 “The Corn Dole”.

<sup>125</sup> West, *Corinth* (#.89), 75.

<sup>126</sup> *Corinth: Results of Excavations conducted by the American School of Classical Studies at Athens*. Vol.VIII.III: The Inscriptions: 1926 – 1950, John Harvey Kent (Princeton: The American School of Classical Studies at Athens, 1966), (# 165), 76.

Of the remaining five inscriptions honouring Tiberius Claudius Dinippus, three give no hint of attribution (due at least in part to their fragmentary condition)<sup>127</sup>, but the last two do, designating the Atia and Aurelia tribes as responsible for the inscriptions honouring their benefactor.<sup>128</sup> The inscription from the Atia tribe<sup>129</sup> is intact, and reads as follows:

TI • CLAVDIO • P • F • FAB • DINIPPQ	To Tiberius Claudius Dinippus, son of
IIVIR • IIVIR • QVINQ • AVGVV •	Publius, of the tribe of Fabia
SACERDOTI • VICTORIAE	Duumvir, Quinquinalic Duumvir [52-53
BRITANN • TRIB • MIL • LEG • VI •	C.E.], Augur,
ANNONAE • CVRATORI •	Priest of the Victoria Britannica [Cult]
AGONOTHETE • NERONEON	Military Tribune of Legion VI [40's C.E.]
CAESAREON • ET • ISTHMION	Curator Annonae
ET • CAESAREON • TRIBVLES	Sponsor [of the] Neronean,
TRIBVS ATIAE <sup>130</sup>	And Isthmian and Caesarean Games
	Of/from the Atia Tribe

Six inscriptions might seem quite a lot for one governmental appointee in first century Corinth, but twelve such inscriptions would seem to point toward an unusually high degree of preserved gratitude. When the American School of Classical Studies at Athens produced another volume of inscriptions from Roman Corinth, in it were six more inscriptions they had uncovered, all honouring Tiberius Claudius Dinippus as *curator annonae*,<sup>131</sup> and for other public posts he occupied.<sup>132</sup> This man must have made quite a positive impression on the people of Corinth during his career, including his time as *curator annonae*.

#### 2.4.2.2 Other benefactors (*cura annonae*) in Corinth

Beyond the dozen inscriptions for Tiberius Claudius Dinippus, at least three others have been found in Corinth, all directed toward other individuals who each served as *curator annonae*, and dating from the later first century C.E. up until 125 C.E. at the latest. They include an inscription honouring M. Antiochus Achaicus, “an unusually prominent Corinthian who was elected to every municipal office and was wealthy enough to have served as *curator annonae*” sometime after the career of Tiberius Claudius Dinippus. The

<sup>127</sup> West, *Corinth*, (## 87, 88, 91), 75 – 77.

<sup>128</sup> Allen Brown West, *Corinth*, (# 86, 90), 71-74, 76.

<sup>129</sup> We cannot tell whether any one of the roles assumed by Tiberius Claudius Dinippus might have outweighed the others in its significance for the Atia Tribe, but whatever weighting they may have given to a specific item in this graven list, his role as *curator annonae* figured amongst them.

<sup>130</sup> Allen Brown West, *Corinth*, (# 86), 72.

<sup>131</sup> See §2.4.3.1 “*Curator Annonae*”.

<sup>132</sup> Kent, *Corinth*, (# 158-161), 74-75.

marble on which it is engraved is fragmented, making the name of the honourand (for whom only -CHA- remains) an educated guess.<sup>133</sup>

Next we have an unnamed and very fragmentary inscription for a *curator annonae* in Corinth. So fragmentary is this inscription that aside from 'N', all that remains is "CUR • annonAE • II Vir".<sup>134</sup>

Our final example of an honorary inscription from Corinth praises Antonius Sospes, curator of the grain supply in Corinth, "not far from the year 125 C.E.",<sup>135</sup> and although it is a bit later than the first century, when considered along with our other inscriptions it demonstrates an ongoing commitment both to the office of *curator annonae*, and to the practice of honouring the people who so served with an inscription.

### 2.4.2.3 Kleanax of Kyme

A lengthy and informative inscription honouring one of these first century C.E. benefactors, Kleanax, and his son, Sarapion, is but one of the many honorific inscriptions from the cities of Asia Minor demonstrating the ubiquitous nature of benefactors in Graeco-Roman society. The forty-eight lines of text in honour of Kleanax were inscribed "on a fragmentary *stèle*...originally erected in the Aeolian city of Kyme<sup>136</sup>...somewhere between 2 B.C.E. and 2 C.E.". <sup>137</sup> The inscription first tells us that Kleanax was remembered as having "on both sides of his family...nobility of birth [εὐγένησαν] from his ancestors and an agreeableness unsurpassable in love of honour [φιλοδοξία] for his country", <sup>138</sup> thereby demonstrating his social standing and suitability to hold the offices both of priest of Dionysos Pandemos and of *prytanis*<sup>139</sup>, and that it was because of the way he never "left aside care for the people, administering the best things for the city in both word and deed...his prytanaic love of honour, [that] praise has been ascribed (to him) by the people". <sup>140</sup>

Mixed in with the subsequent details of his attention to priestly duties, we find quite a bit of information as to the regularity with which and to whom Kleanax provided a meal of some sort:

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<sup>133</sup> Kent, *Corinth*, (# 164), 76.

<sup>134</sup> Kent, *Corinth*, (# 169), 76.

<sup>135</sup> Kent, *Corinth*, (# 170), 78-79.

<sup>136</sup> Aeolia consisting of the area located along the Aegean coast of Asia Minor, and including the regions of Thessaly, Boetia, and the island of Lesbos.

<sup>137</sup> This as per R. Hodot, in *New Documents Illustrating Early Christianity* 7:236.

<sup>138</sup> *New Documents*, 7:233, (ll. 4-6).

<sup>139</sup> πρυτάνις as "president of a board of πρυτάνεις"; "office or government of πρυτάνεις". See also Plutarch, *Moralia* 813D, *SIG* 1015.2, *IG* 12(2).68; Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon with a Revised Supplement* 1996. 9th ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), sv. πρύταν – ἀρχης. The term seems to designate an elevated rank of some sort, not just any governmental worker.

<sup>140</sup> *New Documents* 7: 233, (ll. 9-11).

Alone and as the first to [have undertaken] the duty [as priest] and summoning by written proclamation the citizens [πολείταις] and Romans [Ρωμαίοις] and nearby residents [παροίκοις] and foreigners [ξένοις] he gave a banquet in the sanctuary of Dionysos and feasted them sumptuously – he arranged the feast year after year;<sup>141</sup> and summoning a crowd of people to the wedding of his daughter, he held a banquet.<sup>142</sup>

Granted, his daughter’s wedding banquet was a one-off event, but the lines following inform us that Kleanax’s generous habits were just that – habitual – as we read that “for these reasons, the people, having in mind these good deeds also, forgot none of his other activities to which they had grown accustomed”.<sup>143</sup> While he may not have been the *curator annonae* (for this was not mentioned in the lengthy list of his accomplishments), Kleanax fed the town folk often enough that he was commemorated largely for this service.

In Kyme, it seems, thanks to Kleanax, and, after him, his son, periodic feasts and gifts of food/drink would have beneficently punctuated everyone’s life. All people, rather than the citizens alone (as would have been true for an institution like the corn dole),<sup>144</sup> participated in and benefited from these occasions, a highly unusual occurrence for it to have been recorded by the town council (στρατηγοί).

Kleanax went so far as to raise his son to go and do likewise in carrying on the family business of benefaction and was successful in so doing or the *strategoí* would hardly have added his name to the *stèle*: “Sarapion... a protector and helper, one who in many ways has already displayed zeal toward the city through his own manly deeds...meriting also that by public consent [his] name should be added [to the inscription]”.<sup>145</sup>

The inscription goes into lengthy detail concerning the many ways Kleanax benefited his city. He maintained

“continuous goodwill [εὐνοίαν] toward the people...distributed sweet wine [ἐγλύκισσε] to everyone in the city...sumptuously feasted in the *prytaneion* for several days many of the citizens and Romans...(distributed) the porridge of milk and flour [χονδρόγαλα] to all the freemen [ἐλευθέρους] and slaves [δοίλους] in the city; and in the (Festival of) the Lark he as the first and only one, by proclamation to the citizens and Romans and residents and foreigners dined them in the *prytaneion*...and he provided laurels for the processions; and for the priests [εἵρεας] and the victorious athletes [εἰρονείκαις]...and the magistrates [ἄρχαις] and many of the citizens he gave a banquet...sacrificing oxen...after which he also held a feast, [having summoned in the] agora by proclamation, Greeks and Romans and nearby residents and foreigners....<sup>146</sup>

<sup>141</sup> ἐνιαύσιος can mean “one year old”, or “annual”, or “for a year”. Of the three, given the context of the inscription, annual seems the likely candidate. Liddell & Scott, sv. ἐνιαύσιος.

<sup>142</sup> *New Documents* 7:234 (ll. 16-19).

<sup>143</sup> *New Documents* 7:234 (ll. 20).

<sup>144</sup> See §2.4.3 “Corn Dole”.

<sup>145</sup> *New Documents* 7:234 (ll. 22, 24-25).

<sup>146</sup> *New Documents* 7: 235 (ll. 29-44). The ellipses indicate repetitious or otherwise extraneous text, not gaps in the inscription which seems remarkably intact. Any seeming misspellings in the Greek were present in the document.

Clearly, we see in Kleanax a superb example of first century benefaction in the form of food. Kleanax as benefactor fulfilled all the basic requirements of the role as we see it operating at this time in the Graeco-Roman world: membership in the correct social strata (i.e. elevated/élite), love of honour (in this case φιλοδοξία<sup>147</sup> was used, a term similar in meaning to the perhaps more familiar φιλοτιμία<sup>148</sup>), and sufficient wealth to take on the offices of priest and *prytanis*, both of which included numerous expenditures of money: for the penteteric (occurring every five years) performance of the mysteries, ensuring various sacrifices throughout the year, periodic distribution of wine and food, and, on several, perhaps many occasions, provision of sumptuous spectacles and banquets. Kleanax was honoured in the usual ways, with a gold crown, bestowed on him during the festival of Dionysos, and a sizeable *stèle* with our fulsome inscription, no doubt situated in a public place to be seen by many, and which has survived to bear witness to good Kleanax, even in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

What is interesting in Kleanax is that his benefaction inscription makes overt references to the inclusion of certain social groups ordinarily left unmentioned, if not explicitly excluded from such benefits. In none of our other examples of first century benefaction do we find mention of benefits for people lower in society than the citizens (*plebs*),<sup>149</sup> and even then, in the case of the corn dole, and quite possibly other incidences of benefaction, there existed a quota, or cap on citizen participants. This stands to reason, since even the wealthiest of first century benefactors would hardly have impoverished him/herself in serial benefactions, or even one all-embracing display of generosity. Kleanax earns our attention for what seems to have been an example of the latter sort: unexpected all-inclusive, or ‘global’ (in a local, city-bound sense) and repeated benefaction. Kleanax may not have given the same food to everyone on occasions when he invited all the people,<sup>150</sup> but everyone seems to have received something on those occasions, fitting what Aristotle termed proportional equity,<sup>151</sup> or giving to each what befitted his/her station in life, rather than giving the same thing to every person.<sup>152</sup>

<sup>147</sup> Liddell & Scott, s.v. φιλοδοξέω.

<sup>148</sup> Liddell & Scott, s.v. φιλοτιμέομαι.

<sup>149</sup> *Plebs* representing all Roman citizens not of noble birth, as per A. Ernout and A. Meillet, *Dictionnaire Etymologique de la Langue Latine: Histoire des mots*, 4<sup>th</sup> edition, vol.2 (Paris: Librairie C. Klincksieck, 1960), sv. *plebs*.

<sup>150</sup> Kleanax distributed porridge to slaves and freemen on the occasion of the ceremony for the dead, but probably served something quite different when he gave a banquet for citizens, Romans, residents and foreigners in the *prytaneion* (*New Documents 7*: 235 (ll.35-38)).

<sup>151</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 5.5.6; cf. 5.9.10ff.

<sup>152</sup> See below, §2.5.2 “*Isotes*”.

### 2.4.3 The Corn Dole

We turn now to the corn dole itself, a specific manifestation of governmentally sponsored benefaction, to see how it worked in the first century.

The dictionary description of ‘dole’ as “a small portion or share...given to a poor person”,<sup>153</sup> does not quite fit what in the ancient world constituted the greatest governmental response to periods of food crisis and eventually became a permanent governmental fixture.<sup>154</sup> As we shall see, although the portions were small, barely sufficient to support an individual for one month, the intended recipients of the grain supplied by the Roman government would not have been specifically the poor.<sup>155</sup> Grain crises had always been an intermittent part of life in the ancient world.<sup>156</sup> Dealing with their challenges in the very large cities of the Roman empire became a regular feature of the Roman government, although not for humanitarian, so much as political reasons.<sup>157</sup> Be that as it may, beginning in 123/2 B.C.E., grain would have been imported to Rome and then either sold at a lower subsidized price or, after 58 B.C.E., given away free to citizens.<sup>158</sup>

Because much of our evidence describes the historical situation in Rome, we will focus largely on that city, although, as we have already seen in the inscriptional evidence, at least some other cities of the Roman empire, including Corinth,<sup>159</sup> Carthage,<sup>160</sup> and at a later time, Alexandria,<sup>161</sup> also had an official to deal with their need for sufficient supplies of grain. As we have seen, much of the evidence documents the office in Rome, but evidence also attests the existence of the office of *curator annonae* elsewhere in the first century.<sup>162</sup>

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<sup>153</sup> *Collins Dictionary of the English Language*, s.v. ‘dole’.

<sup>154</sup> “Throughout the Principate it was considered expedient to maintain a free monthly distribution of grain to the 150,000 resident, adult, male, citizens (about one fifth of the population of the city)”. Meggitt, *Paul, Poverty and Survival*, 51. cf. Sallust, *Orationes* “The Speech of Macer” ll.19-20, and Henriette Pavis D’Escurac, *La Préfecture de l’annône: service administratif impérial d’Auguste à Constantin* (Bibliothèque des écoles françaises d’Athènes et de Rome, 1976), 170, 173-174, 186.

<sup>155</sup> Pace Finley, *Ancient Economy*, 171.

<sup>156</sup> For a brief, but helpful discussion of the incidence of food shortages, see Garnsey, *Famine* 5-6.

<sup>157</sup> In Finley’s words, “‘Blessed are the poor’ was not within the Graeco-Roman world of ideas”. *Ancient Economy*, 38. Finley also writes that “not even the state showed much concern for the poor. The famous exception is the intensely political one of the city of Rome...where, from the time of Gaius Gracchus, feeding the populace became a political necessity...” (40). Most scholars agree that the grain distributions in Rome were primarily politically motivated. See also Rickman, *Corn Supply*, 156-197, and Sallust, *Or. et Ep.* “The Speech of Macer” ll.19-21”.

<sup>158</sup> Rickman, *Corn Supply*, 172-3. Most of our evidence concerns the city of Rome, but it must be acknowledged that the effects of Roman ‘corn’ policy impacted not only its residents, but other areas in the Empire from whence the grain came, and where grain was needed.

<sup>159</sup> §2.4.2.1 “Tiberius Claudius Dinippus”.

<sup>160</sup> Garnsey, *Famine*, 259.

<sup>161</sup> Our evidence dates from the third century C.E. Garnsey, *Famine*, 252-253.

<sup>162</sup> In first century Egypt, Hermopolis also had a corn dole system, and later, in the third century, that city, Oxyrrhyncus, and Alexandria all had a corn dole. “A number of Lycian cities had lists of ‘receivers of distributed grain’, but the frequency...is unknown; in any case they appear to have been financed by private benefactors”. Garnsey, *Famine*, 79-82, 84.

Through subsidisation, and at times donation of the grain supply, by the first century such governmental responses had become part of the ebb and flow of harvests, the measures taken when crop yields were weak. These responses in turn fostered an expectation by the populace of such provision, a sense of entitlement which, if it did not occur (or if in times of questionable harvest they suspected that what came to be known as the corn dole might not be given), led to their disapproval.<sup>163</sup> That disapproval could become quite aggressive, as in the case of Claudius, who was assaulted with chunks of bread by people worried about the *possibility* of insufficient grain.<sup>164</sup>

Although there had been grain distributions before 58 B.C.E., it was in this year that those distributions, rather than be subsidised, were made free of cost to the recipients. Those persons, Finley reminds us, who were “resident citizens were eligible regardless of means, and no one else”.<sup>165</sup> Rickman puts a finer point on the eligibility requirements, when he says that what was necessary, beyond full citizenship<sup>166</sup> and residency in Rome,<sup>167</sup> was a minimum age of eleven, or perhaps fourteen years.<sup>168</sup> Meeting the requirements resulted in the aforementioned sense of entitlement, an expectation of specific treatment under certain conditions. What Claudius experienced in the Forum in 44 C.E. was the result of this sense of entitlement. The people were not yet hungry; they had sufficient food to pelt the *emperor* with some of it. These were the actions of people who felt they were owed something which was theirs by virtue of their standing as citizens, and made bold to demand it.

If non-citizens had participated in the incident at the Forum, it would have been for reasons other than entitlement: frustration or desperation at the thought of higher prices for grain, or of no grain at all for them to purchase, perhaps, but not possessing citizen status, they knew that they were not entitled to receive free grain from the corn dole. Of course, neither did simply having citizen status confer entitlement with respect to the corn dole. Ever since a cap had been imposed on the number of people eligible to participate,<sup>169</sup> many more remained off the list than remained on it, although one *might* get onto the list when an existing recipient died.

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<sup>163</sup> Seneca, *Brevitate Vitae*, 18.3 – 18.6.

<sup>164</sup> Suetonius, *Deified Claudius* 18-19.

<sup>165</sup> Finley, *Ancient Economy*, 170.

<sup>166</sup> Seneca, *Ben.* 4.28.2.

<sup>167</sup> Rickman, *Corn Dole*, 182ff. Cf. Cicero, *Pro Archia* 4.9.

<sup>168</sup> Rickman, *Corn Dole*, 184, citing Suetonius, *Deified Augustus* 41.2, who says that Augustus “did not even exclude young boys, though it had been usual for them to receive a share only after the age of eleven”.

<sup>169</sup> We have no numbers until the mid-40’s C.E., when “Caesar...whittled down the list from 320,000 to 150,000”. Garnsey, *Famine*, 211; Suetonius, *Deified Julius*. 41.3.

Beginning in the first century B.C.E., when an individual eligible for the corn dole died, that place might be taken by another eligible person. This *subsortitio*,<sup>170</sup> or substitutionary process for accessing the corn dole, was intended to, and seems actually to have succeeded in limiting the number of recipients, although when we consider the numbers, which may have ranged from 150,000 to 200,000 or even more people, it boggles the mind to think that those in charge could have any means of guaranteeing that only eligible parties benefited, although Rickman maintains that a new method of keeping records district by district, made it possible.<sup>171</sup> Even with this massive undertaking, because the population of Rome had always greatly surpassed the number of citizens eligible for the dole (and was constantly growing), the number of people ineligible for free grain remained enormous,<sup>172</sup> and so beyond the need for free grain to distribute was an ongoing need for grain to sell at a price many if not most people could afford.

The corn dole evolved into a well-organised undertaking with a clear goal (to supply adequate amounts of grain to feed a city's citizens, whether by outright gift or by subsidising the cost of grain), and a clear plan for achieving that goal. However, whatever hunger was attenuated by means of the corn dole, it remained partial in nature and restricted to a percentage of citizens. Although subsidisation provided for the remaining citizens possessed of funds to purchase grain, it, too, left unaddressed the alimentary needs of everyone else: the poor, whether citizens or not. And, in the event that there just was not sufficient grain to be found to cover the demand, the government was faced with a serious problem.

Finley wrote concerning governmental responses to hunger that "primarily...one dealt with the poor, when circumstances made it essential to deal with them, by getting rid of them at someone else's expense".<sup>173</sup> He was not speaking cavalierly, but may have been thinking of Augustus, who, according to Suetonius, "in a time of great scarcity when it was difficult to find a remedy"<sup>174</sup> expelled just about everyone other than physicians, teachers, and some household slaves, from Rome so as not to have to feed them.<sup>175</sup>

#### **2.4.3.1 The *Curator Annonae***

The *curator annonae* (superintendent of the grain supply), the Greek equivalents *sitones*, (grain commissioner), and *sitophulakes* (grain warden),<sup>176</sup> were individuals

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<sup>170</sup> Rickman, *Corn Dole*, 179; cf. Willem Jongman, in Hubert Cancik and Helmut Schneider, *Brill's Encyclopaedia of the Ancient World: New Pauly*, Vol. 1-4 (Leiden: Brill, 2002-), s.v. *cura Annonae*, 1007.

<sup>171</sup> Rickman, *Corn Dole*, 176.

<sup>172</sup> Rickman, *Corn Dole*, 8-11, in which discussion he estimates the population of Rome at about 1,100,000.

<sup>173</sup> Finley, *Ancient Economy*, 171.

<sup>174</sup> Suetonius, *Deified Augustus* 42.3.

<sup>175</sup> Suetonius, *Deified Augustus* 42.3.

<sup>176</sup> Garnsey, *Famine*, 15; cf. *Der Neue Pauly*, Stuttgart: (Verlag J.B. Metzler, 2001), 601.

nominated to the office,<sup>177</sup> the duties of which entailed ensuring adequate supplies of grain for his city. The *curator annonae*'s responsibilities included identifying and negotiating with grain producers in places as far away as Africa and Egypt, recruiting and negotiating with owners of cargo ships, providing adequate storage facilities in a workable location vis à vis incoming ships and distribution to the public, subsidising the cost of the grain from his own funds, if the emperor did not do so himself, and setting the price of excess grain to be sold to those citizens not included in the *plebs frumentaria*.<sup>178</sup> And although initially this position existed on an 'as needed' basis, sometime between 8 and 14 C.E., in Rome, at least, it became a permanent position.<sup>179</sup>

Bruce Winter, in his article, "Secular and Christian Responses to Corinthian Famines", outlines how one became and then functioned as *curator annonae* in the first century. "A time-honoured convention existed in the East during times of food shortages whereby one of its wealthy citizens was encouraged or pressurized into accepting the costly honorary public office of curator of the grain supply".<sup>180</sup> Right away one gets the impression, from the quasi-voluntary nature of the 'invitation', that any person who accepted the position might be tempted to turn it to his or her own advantage by buying grain in advance at very low cost and then selling it at the governmentally regulated price, thereby turning a tidy profit, given the massive amounts involved.<sup>181</sup>

The basic idea, however, beyond the provision of giveaway grain, was for the *curator annonae* "to have grain sold at a reduced price and thereby manipulate the market in favour of the consumer....dumping grain had the immediate effect of depressing the price...".<sup>182</sup>

The grain could, and usually did come from a number of sources, the closer the better, due to shipping costs. Primarily, however, the grain for Rome came from Egypt. It came as well from Rome itself, as not only were "rich citizens...persuaded to subscribe to a fund for the purchase of grain", but also to release their stored (and often hidden) grain to the *curator annonae*.<sup>183</sup> One may wonder at the motivation(s) to participation of such people, and Winter offers two basic possibilities:

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<sup>177</sup> Which, for the privilege of occupying, the nominee would have to pay. For more on the liturgical system, see above § 2.4.4.1 "Liturgies".

<sup>178</sup> Cancik and Schneider, *New Pauly*, s.v. *cura annonae*, 1007-1008.

<sup>179</sup> Rickman, *Corn Dole*, 63.

<sup>180</sup> Bruce Winter, "Secular and Christian Responses to Corinthian Famines" *Tyndale Bulletin* 40 (1989), 96.

<sup>181</sup> Winter, "Secular and Christian Responses", 97.

<sup>182</sup> Winter, "Secular and Christian Responses", 96.

<sup>183</sup> Winter, "Secular and Christian Responses", 97. See also Dio Chrysostom, *Discourses* 46, in which Dio Chrysostom responds to what seem to be accusations that he has not contributed to the appeal either for money or for grain at a time when the price of grain was rather elevated (46.8-10). In his justification for not contributing, he alludes to his grandfather's benefactions (46.3), and his own previous "liturgies, in fact no one in the city has more of them to his credit than I have. Yet you

It was in the interests of the rich...not merely from love of honour, but out of self-interest...the alternative would be rioting and plundering of their goods and stores...the tranquillity of their city and their personal safety rested on the city securing grain at a reasonable price...[and] 'the public generosity of the wealthy was an institution devised by the rich in their own interests. As the grain stocks of the community were in their barns, they could time their release to suit themselves.'<sup>184</sup>

Thus, as with the emperors, when it concerned the 'donors' to the *curator annonae*'s municipal grain supply, self-preservation and profit seem to have been as important as any interest in civic pride, honour, or the desire to be remembered after death.

And, because participation in the corn dole as a *recipient* was based on one's citizenship, rather than one's needs, access to grain at reduced, or no cost, also was restricted to such people. Grain was distributed monthly<sup>185</sup> to citizens who, duly enrolled, possessed official tickets (*tesserae numulariae*). This situation left the working poor and destitute at great disadvantage, concerning both access to and cost of grain. Any citizen not on the list of those eligible to receive the corn dole would be forced to buy whatever grain might be available, and at whatever price. Because the price of grain may or may not have been regulated, an individual's monetary reserves might soon be depleted. Slaves, however, might be sheltered from hunger not only by their citizen-owner's grain allotment, but in general, by the owner's relatively more comfortable financial situation and desire to keep them alive.

We come then, to the details of the monthly allotment of grain, which, according to Willem Jongman, at "5 *modii* (c. 33kg.) per month was almost sufficient for two people".<sup>186</sup> Jongman gives no source for his figures here, which, if it were meant for two people, would amount to approximately 550 grammes per recipient per day. If we take his numbers, as the high end of the ranges (generally given in ancient measurement), and Goldstein's assessment of a *modius* at about 4 kg. (amounting to 20 kg. per month, and therefore 0.33 kg. per person, per day)<sup>187</sup> as the low end, then we can see how great is the disparity between the two measures.<sup>188</sup> Measuring a bit differently, if we take the *modius* as roughly

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yourselves know that many are wealthier than I am" (46.6) At the end of this discourse, he concedes that if no untapped sources of liturgies (i.e., financially able men who have never performed liturgies) can be located, then someone (perhaps even he) will have to be chosen by the local authorities of Prusa, the city in view here (46.14).

<sup>184</sup> Winter, "Secular and Christian Responses", 97, citing Garnsey, *Famine*, 272.

<sup>185</sup> Suetonius, *Deified Augustus* 40.2; *Deified Nero* 11.2.

<sup>186</sup> Jongman, *Brill's New Pauly*, sv. *cura Annonae*, 1007. Cf. Sallust, *Orat.* "The Speech of Macer" II.19-20", where that amount is assessed as "an allowance actually not much greater than the rations of a prison".

<sup>187</sup> A.M. Goldstein, ed., *Measuring and Weighing in Ancient Times* (Haifa: University of Haifa, 2001), 107.

<sup>188</sup> Contra Rickmann, who puts 10,000 *modii* at 70 – 80 tons (*Corn Dole*, 17). If 1 ton = 2,000 lbs., and if 1kg. = 2.2lbs., then 1 *modius* is equivalent to 0.64 – 0.77 kg. This seems unusually small. For bushel measurements, see *Corn Supply*, 173.

equivalent to one peck in volume, and we know that one peck is equivalent to 8 litres, then we can imagine 5 *modii* as about 40 litres. According to Goldman's figures, if one 1 litre of grain is roughly equivalent to 525 g. then we arrive at a figure of c. 21 kg. for the monthly allotment of grain.<sup>189</sup>

On the basis of Goldman's figures and Jongman's assertion that the allotment was meant to cover two persons for one month, we can calculate the daily individual portion at about 350 g.<sup>190</sup> Were we to use Jongman's more generous reckoning for the weight of 5 *modii* of grain, however, the amounts of grain given still would have needed to be supplemented with other food.

350 g. of grain per day would not have been an unreasonable amount for an individual who otherwise might starve to death, but in Rome, and wherever the corn dole functioned in the first century, the people receiving this allowance were not those who were desperately poor and in such danger. They were often quite well-prepared to feed themselves, their biological family and their household. The majority of people, the working poor (οἱ πενήται), and especially the desperately poor (οἱ πώχοι) would have had to purchase grain, a hardship at any time, but especially so in times of crisis or famine. At such times, the decreased availability, and the cost of any available food would have posed serious threats to the health, and indeed survival, of many people in the first century.

The corn dole in itself would never succeed in meeting the alimentary needs of the people who had the greatest need; it did not target them nor did it seemingly even consider doing so. The reasoning of the wealthy, in their attempts to address food shortages and famine, seems to have been to focus their preventive and/or corrective energies on that segment of the population which seemed to pose the greatest threat to their own welfare and position of power in the society, and in the process, they included themselves as recipients of whatever commodity was on offer.<sup>191</sup> Garnsey concurs: "the system of supply and distribution developed for Rome took the edge off the suffering of the populace. I claim no more for it than this, nor do I ascribe to those who introduced and operated it any higher motive than that of maintaining a docile people".<sup>192</sup>

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<sup>189</sup> Goldstein, *Measuring and Weighing*, 107.

<sup>190</sup> The equivalent of 5-6 Tesco granary rolls for each person, at 58 g. per roll.

<sup>191</sup> As in the story of the consular, L. Calpurnius Piso Frugi, who presented himself for the distribution of grain and when asked why, replied that although he was against the seizing of private (i.e., his) grain stores to feed the populace, since his had been taken, he was asking for his share. Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations* 3.20.48. The surprise was not because of his wealth, but his opposition to the practice of taking private grain to supply the dole. Rickman, *Corn Supply*, 159.

<sup>192</sup> Garnsey, *Trade and Famine*, 64.

## 2.4.4 Special benefactions

### 2.4.4.1 Liturgies/*leitourgia*/λειτουργία

Beyond the position of *curator annonae*, other wealthy people could be asked or encouraged to donate either grain or money to purchase grain; they might even be threatened with loss of property or bodily harm if they resisted.<sup>193</sup> We recognise that liturgies could be solicited for many reasons, but we confine ourselves here to those intended for the supply of food.

Although this type of giving originally had been voluntary, by the first century C.E. liturgies had become quasi-compulsory, if not completely so;<sup>194</sup> an individual *could* volunteer to take on a liturgy-based position, but this was not the norm as far as we know. And although responsibility for the corn dole was not the only liturgy-based post, it was the most prominent one, the one solely focused on food, and therefore, the one on which we have concentrated our attention.

A λειτουργία was a compulsory service of a limited duration for the state...It was imposed on the subjects of a monarchy or city-state by virtue of the overriding interest of a state or community...Rome [following in the footsteps of previous rulers]...made use of liturgies in the administration of her empire....An important innovation by Rome, however, was the extension of the liturgical system to include official posts...it was not until the first century C.E. that official positions began to be made liturgical (compulsory).<sup>195</sup>

In his discussion of why they made a job as lowly as donkey-driver a liturgical post, Llewelyn demonstrates the importance Rome attached to transport, and although transport might seem to be irrelevant to our interest in how liturgies played a part in material responses to human need, there is a connection, because not only did those donkeys “facilitate the official communication which was vital to the efficient administration of the empire...[they were] necessary for the supply of food to the great urban centres of the empire and to its armies”.<sup>196</sup> Whether the donkey driver was benevolently or patriotically-minded mattered little in the first-century world of the Roman Empire; when Rome called, the donkeys and their drivers had to answer the call.

Those called upon to serve the state in liturgical positions, and the government that asked or demanded they do so, knew that the effort was only temporary; they intended it that way. “By opting for contributions that were irregular, semi-voluntary and enhanced their reputations, rather than regular and obligatory transfers which would bring no credit on the giver, the rich effectively pre-empted the possibilities for instituting a regular state-

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<sup>193</sup> Cicero, recounts using his powers of persuasion to effect ‘donations’ to the grain supply when he was governor of Cilicia (51-50 B.C.E.). *Ad Atticus* 5.21. Garnsey recounts a similar event in 246 C.E. in *Famine*, 259.

<sup>194</sup> Finley, *Ancient Economy*, 153.

<sup>195</sup> Llewelyn and Kearsley. *New Documents*, 7:93.

<sup>196</sup> Llewelyn and Kearsley. *New Documents*, 7:96.

funded supply or distribution scheme”.<sup>197</sup> Liturgies were not the same as the corn dole in Rome. They were a way to bandage a social illness (hunger) at those times when it reached crisis stage; they were not meant to heal it.

#### 2.4.4.2 *Epidoseis*/ ἐπιδόσεις

Following closely on the heels of liturgies were the intermittent donations<sup>198</sup> taken for extraordinary expenses. *Epidoseis* (ἐπιδόσεις), formally unsolicited funds,<sup>199</sup> were donations that might help to defray the costs of a banquet, or games, or some other public service. In the ancient world, suggests Hands, “No surplus was normally kept in hand to meet contingencies...and because there *were*...a series of contingencies (not least a failure of the corn supply), each tended to live with a succession of financial crises. [From such a situation came]...the appeal for subscriptions (ἐπιδόσεις) to special funds, directed to the wealthy class in general”.<sup>200</sup>

In the case of *epidoseis*, only those taken for the purposes of feeding people (e.g. banquets/feasts) are of interest here, and since such events were usually quite irregular and episodic in occurrence, they hardly merit classification as a material response to human hunger. We do no more than mention them at this point.

#### 2.4.5 Family and neighbours

How did the majority of people in the first century survive in times of crisis and famine? In cities, how did those who were not citizens manage? If they were ineligible for the corn dole or subsidised grain prices and lacked sufficient funds to purchase needed food, what could they do? These were the people who could not participate in the patronage system because they had nothing of interest to bring to the equation – not social status, not influence, not even a decent reciprocal gift – how did they manage in difficult times?

Did ordinary people, who were not numbered among the privileged and the wealthy help each other cope with hunger by sharing from what they had, by pooling their resources in order to produce and/or procure food? They very probably did, although the nature of the evidence is such that we can see only what those who were the privileged and wealthy said about what such ordinary people did. In order to find any such evidence, we must turn toward the continent of Africa and survey the evidence from the one place in the ancient world where evidence exists (outside the Christian scriptures) for the everyday lives of the

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<sup>197</sup> Garnsey, *Famine*, 272-273. See also Hands, *Charities and Social Aid*, 15.

<sup>198</sup> Whether they were truly donations, in the sense of being voluntary in nature, is an open question, but given our evidence for liturgies, it would not be surprising to find that *epidoseis* were, at least sometimes, coerced from their donors.

<sup>199</sup> Although the expression “formally unsolicited” might, with reason, be viewed somewhat suspiciously. See Winter, “Secular and Christian Responses”, 96.

<sup>200</sup> Hands, *Charities and Social Aid*, 39.

non-élite, but even there, in Egypt, we find no evidence of everyday acts of kindness in response to hunger. For the moment, then, we can only imagine that it happened.<sup>201</sup>

## 2.5 Response to benefaction and patronage: the centrality of reciprocity and the role of ἰσότης

### 2.5.1 Reciprocity

At every turn in our study of responses to hunger in the Graeco-Roman world, we have seen that reciprocity is always part of the equation. The benefactor must be thanked by way of public praise, a crown, an inscription. The patron must be praised, must receive whatever support, whatever gifts the client can offer. Whether those gifts are personal or communal in nature, the one who gives must be honoured.<sup>202</sup> The benefactor or patron, in response to the reciprocation of his/her giving, maintains the rhythm of *do ut des*, in theory an endless cycle.

Cicero comments on the desire that one's 'beneficence', or 'service to others' (which for him consisted not of food for hungry people, but of the giving of his legal counsel) endure:

The favour conferred upon a man who is good and grateful finds its reward, in such a case, not only in his own good-will but in that of others. For, when generosity is not indiscriminate giving, it wins most gratitude and people praise it with more enthusiasm, because goodness of heart in a man of high station becomes the common refuge of everybody. Pains must, therefore, be taken to benefit as many as possible with such kindnesses that the memory of them shall be handed down to children and to children's children, so that they too may not be ungrateful.<sup>203</sup>

Seemingly flying in the face of this scenario of ongoing reciprocity, A.R. Hands presents examples from Cicero and Seneca illustrating their contention that giving is something to be initiated without thought of reciprocation.<sup>204</sup> He then, however, goes on to say that "further attention to the context reveals to what a large extent...there remains basic to the discussion the assumption that the gifts, benefits or favours in question are to be conferred upon somebody who *can* make a return, so that a return, even though it may no longer decently be asked for, is confidently expected".<sup>205</sup>

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<sup>201</sup> As does Garnsey, claiming that "the peasant's first line of defense consisted of kinsmen, neighbours and friends in his own rural community", *Famine*, 56, 276.

<sup>202</sup> Seneca, *Ben.* 2.25.3; 2.35.1.

<sup>203</sup> Cicero, *De Officiis* 2.20.69.

<sup>204</sup> Cicero by asserting that "'we are truly liberal and beneficent if we do not make a profitable business out of doing good'", and Seneca, who similarly states that, "'he who has given in order to receive has not given'; or again, more paradoxically, 'often he who has returned a favour is ungrateful; it is the man who has not returned it who is grateful.'" Hands, *Charities and Social Aid*, 30, citing Cicero, *De Finibus* 2.35.117, and Seneca, *Ben.* 4.14.1.

<sup>205</sup> Hands, *Charities and Social Aid*, 31. Hands also found it "difficult to estimate the degree to which there operated...that genuine regard for others characteristic of a charity or scheme of social aid." He found that "the same people would...contribute on exactly the same basis to a fund for rebuilding the

Requital is indeed a major consideration in giving, but, says Plutarch, if one's aim in giving is focused primarily on the return – of favours, or tangible gifts – the giving itself becomes more of a business transaction, entered into at some level for the return it would generate, and so loses its value as a gift. Such an attitude was to be avoided, said the philosophers, who presuppose requital as the norm.

For Plutarch and others of the first century Graeco-Roman writers, one of the ways of ensuring that giving would convey a benefit was if it occurred between people related by friendship,<sup>206</sup> for then, as a result of that enduring relationship, it was bound to be reciprocated.<sup>207</sup> Seneca comments on the obligatory nature of (reciprocal) giving between friends when he posits that “He who does not return a benefit, sins more, he who does not give one, sins earlier”.<sup>208</sup>

And while it was usual for benefits to be bestowed and requited in ongoing relationships between friends, it may also have been possible to requite a benefit on a one-time basis, without setting in motion an unending cycle of reciprocity. But, whether one offered a one-time gift, or the giving was offered on a recurrent basis, a response was required from the recipient or recipients.

“Ingratitude is the cardinal social and political sin in the Graeco-Roman world, and failure to memorialize benefactions conferred by generous people is its flipside”.<sup>209</sup> So says Danker; Seneca<sup>210</sup> and Cicero<sup>211</sup> concur.

So, although bestowing a benefit may have been optional, requiting one was not, and failure to show gratitude was tantamount to a violation of the giver's rights.<sup>212</sup> The gratitude felt by the one who had received a benefit was manifested in the response made to the giver. The original giver now became the recipient of some visible and/or audible form of thanks and/or praise which would indicate the more important and intangible gratitude of the one on whom the original gift had been bestowed.<sup>213</sup>

Danker sees “two dominant motivational factors [at work as the ancients considered and then planned their] responses to benefaction. These factors involve (1) stimulation to

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city walls or the financing of a war...and clearly they received and expected to receive the same public commendation for both types of contribution.” 42, 43.

<sup>206</sup>“Friendships seek to effect a thorough-going likeness in characters, feelings, language, pursuits, and dispositions...Friendship seeks for a fixed and steadfast character which does not shift about, but continues in one place and in one intimacy.” Plutarch, *Moralia* 2.97A-B; the entire essay “On Having Many Friends”, comprises 2.93-97; cf.6.490.F-491.A; 1.64B, “How to tell a flatterer from a friend”; Cicero, *De Officiis* 1.17.53-58.

<sup>207</sup> Hands, *Charities and Social Aid*, 31.

<sup>208</sup> Seneca, *Ben.* 1.1.12-2.4.

<sup>209</sup> Danker, *Benefactor*, “Response to Benefactors”, 436, 438.

<sup>210</sup> Seneca, *Ep.* 3.1.1

<sup>211</sup> Cicero, *De Officiis* 1.15.48-49.

<sup>212</sup> Cicero, *De Officiis*, 1.15.48.

<sup>213</sup> Cicero, *De Officiis*, 1.15.47.

further benefactions and (2) appropriateness of gratitude”.<sup>214</sup> Danker gives examples of responses to benefactors/patrons which demonstrate the various ways responses to benefaction accomplished this dual purpose of putting the giver under further obligation and expressing gratitude in a fitting, sometimes over-the-top manner.<sup>215</sup>

How might such responses be manifested? Danker suggests an extensive list of possibilities for “the culminating feature of grateful response in the Graeco-Roman world...the awarding of some tangible item or the granting of some exceptional privilege”, some of which we have already seen attested in the cases of Tiberius Claudius Dinippus and Kleanax.<sup>216</sup> These rewards include, but are not limited to a crown, a statue, one’s portraits on a gilded shield, seats of honour at public events, financial advantages vis-à-vis the city, and ongoing public recognition in the form of an inscription or annual renewal of honours.<sup>217</sup>

In addition to the substance of the award, Winter focuses on the *public* recognition of civic benefactors, which occurred in the theatre. He notes the common references to recognition given in the form of an inscription, a crown, and a place of honour, and adds that all were bestowed with appropriate words of praise which designated the benefactor as a “truly noble person who put the interest of the state above his own”...[a person of] ‘virtue and benevolence’ or ‘virtue and righteousness and benevolence’.<sup>218</sup> Whatever the benefactor’s strongest motives, the public praise reflected the most noble of possibilities in that culture.

Hands captures some of the deep-seated cultural aspects of reciprocity in his contention that the assurance of a return or requital of benefaction lay primarily in the cultural aversion people had for dishonour/disgrace.<sup>219</sup> His contention is perhaps the ‘other side of the coin’ of motivation to giving in the Graeco-Roman world of the first century:<sup>220</sup> the desire for recognition as a ‘good and noble’ person.<sup>221</sup> It is also possible that the evidence may just as well represent the ancients’ habit of recording the more positive examples of benefaction, rather than those of benefactors who gave under duress of some sort. One tends to see motives, a somewhat subjective realm at any time, in terms of one’s own basic mindset, so that those who tend toward optimism in their estimation of the human

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<sup>214</sup> Danker, *Benefactor*, “Response”, 437, 440, 450.

<sup>215</sup> Danker, *Benefactor*, “Response”, 450-451.

<sup>216</sup> T. Claudius Dinippus of Corinth was the subject of a number of honorific inscriptions, public praise by the local government and several tribes §2.4.2.1. Kleanax of Kyme also was honoured with an inscription, a gold crown and public praise during a yearly festival. See above §2.4.2.3.

<sup>217</sup> Danker, *Benefactor*, “Response”, 467-468.

<sup>218</sup> Winter, *Seek the Welfare*, 31-32.

<sup>219</sup> *adoxia/infamia*, in Hands, *Charities and Social Aid*, 34.

<sup>220</sup> In light of the bountiful supply of evidence for this practice of honouring benefactors. See Winter, *Seek the Welfare*, 29-32.

<sup>221</sup> Winter, *Seek the Welfare*, 31-33.

race may consider that nobility of intention is possible, while the more pessimistic among us may see in the very same action a baser motivation.<sup>222</sup>

### 2.5.2 *Isotes*/ἰσότης

The several meanings of ἰσότης<sup>223</sup> and its derived forms seem to have stayed fairly constant from the time of Aristotle to the first century C.E., where we encounter it in many of our sources touching on relationship and response to human need.

Aristotle, in *Nicomachean Ethics*, speaks of ἰσότης in relation to reciprocity between two people, saying, “In the interchange of services, Justice in the form of Reciprocity is the bond that maintains the association: reciprocity, that is, on the basis of proportion, not on the basis of equality” [ἀναλογίαν καὶ μὴ κατ’ ἰσότητα].<sup>224</sup> Aristotle seems to be saying that although people are *not equal in all things*, they could engage in certain acts of exchange (of services).<sup>225</sup> So, then, for Aristotle absolute ἰσότης in terms of equality of status was not necessary for *all* social interaction, but it was necessary for friendship to exist. Was it also necessary for aid to the poor to occur?

Aristotle maintained that equality could be interpreted in more than one way, and summed up his thinking thus, “some think that if they are *equal in something* they are *wholly equal*.”<sup>226</sup> Aristotle did *not* believe that everyone was created equal in a way that conferred on them the right to participate at every level of society (including the giving and receiving of aid). For Aristotle, there were lines which divided people into categories of possibility and exclusion, and citizenship constituted one of those dividing lines. Non-citizens, therefore, were excluded from participation in governance, and they were ineligible for aid from people unlike themselves (i.e. those who were both citizens and wealthy).

Not much seems to have changed by the first century B.C.E., where, here and there throughout *De Re Publica* and *De Legibus*,<sup>227</sup> Cicero speaks of the type of person fit to rule as one having leisure and education - two prerequisites to wisdom.<sup>228</sup> He does not even mention non-citizens, perhaps because for him they were non-players in public life. Cicero

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<sup>222</sup> We see a bit of this, perhaps in Winter, who seems more of an optimist in this area of benefaction, and Hands, who comes across as a bit more pessimistic. Taken together, these viewpoints are helpful, reminding us that motives are rarely, if ever without alloy. They caution us to be both judicious and humble in our estimation of the motives of others, and especially so in the case of people who cannot participate in the discussion, as is here the case.

<sup>223</sup> Gustave Stählin, in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Gerhard Kittel, ed. Vol.III (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), s.v. ἴσος, ἰσότης, ἰσότημος (343-355), is at times confusing. In the interest of clarity, we have opted to survey the sources themselves.

<sup>224</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 5.5.6; cf. Griffith, “Abounding in Generosity”, 192-196.

<sup>225</sup> Seneca argues that indeed, under certain conditions a slave may benefit a master and vice-versa. *Ben.* 3.18.1-28.6.

<sup>226</sup> Aristotle, *Politics* 5.1.6-7.

<sup>227</sup> Cicero, *De Re Publica* 1.1.1, 1.9.14, 1.19.31-1.20.33; 3.3.4-6; 5.2.3-5.6.8; *De Legibus* 1.22.57-1.24.63; 3.6.14, 3.13.29-30, 3.18.40-42.

<sup>228</sup> Wisdom being necessary in one who would rule. Most people had neither leisure nor education, and therefore, no access to wisdom, because they were working to make a living.

seems to have shared prevailing attitudes toward civic life based on an Aristotelian understanding of *ισότης*.<sup>229</sup> It could exist between people of élite status and privilege, but it also could exist in fragmentary form outside those categories, allowing non-élite citizens to participate in certain aspects of civic life, including the corn dole.<sup>230</sup>

In terms of aid extended to those citizens, whatever aid might be given, and in what form, depended on the recipient's circumstances. One would have tailored the aid to fit the person's prior circumstances. An individual, therefore, who was used to luxury might expect to receive aid consistent with that lifestyle. Someone of more modest means should expect aid in line with that level of living. One did not tamper with the fate assigned to people, but one might help to maintain it.

In the first century C.E. such assumptions seem to have continued, as demonstrated in Philo's restatement of Aristotle's position on proportional equality and justice.<sup>231</sup> He refers to Moses as an example of such practice, "When Moses would portion out virtue, like a country, to virtue's inhabitants he bids the more have more and the less to lessen their possession (Numbers 35:8), for he holds it right not to adjudge smaller shares to the greater, since they will be devoid of knowledge, nor greater to the less, since they will not be able to contain the greatness of their shares".<sup>232</sup>

Even in the Stoics, whose writings may leave modern readers convinced that they were egalitarians (due to a misapprehension of terms such as 'worthy' and 'like'), we see the extension of aid given on the basis of *ισότης* on the basis of shared status. Seneca, in his lengthy treatise on benefits, comes back to this idea of the worthy giver and recipient, "The benefit that it is a delight to have received, yea, with outstretched hands, is the one that reason delivers to those who are worthy, not the one that chance and irrational impulse carry no matter where—one that it is a pleasure to display and claim as one's own. Do you give the name of benefits to the gifts whose author you are ashamed to admit?"<sup>233</sup>

Plutarch, whose philosophy was influenced by Aristotle, gives the following description of true friendship which makes the giving of aid possible:

For these reasons it is not a fit thing to be thus unsparing of our virtue, uniting and intertwining it now with one and now with another, but rather only with those who are *qualified to keep up the same participation*, that is to say, those who are *able, in like manner, to love and participate*. For herein plainly is the greatest obstacle of all to having a multitude of friends, in that *friendship comes into being through*

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<sup>229</sup> Cicero, *De Officiis*. 2.15.52 – 16.56.

<sup>230</sup> See §2.4.3 "The Corn Dole".

<sup>231</sup> Philo, *Quis rerum divinarum heres*, 143-145; cf. Gregory E. Sterling, "The Bond of Humanity: Friendship in Philo of Alexandria," in John T. Fitzgerald, *Greco-Roman Perspectives on Friendship* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1997), 203-222.

<sup>232</sup> Philo, *Her.* 194.

<sup>233</sup> Seneca, *Ben.* 1.15.4; cf. 1.1.1-3; 1.14.1; cf. 1.2.4-5. See also Gary W. Griffith, "Abounding in Generosity: A Study of *Charis* in 2 Corinthians 8-9", Ph.D. Thesis (University of Durham, 2005), 50-59, for his extensive treatment of Seneca's thinking on the giving and receiving of benefits.

*likeness...in our friendship's consonance and harmony there must be no element unlike, uneven, or unequal, but all must be alike to engender agreement in words, counsels, opinions, and feelings, and it must be as if one soul were apportioned among two or more bodies.*<sup>234</sup>

Plutarch goes on to describe this friendship which he considers both precious and rare: "Friendships seek to effect a thorough-going likeness in characters, feelings, language, pursuits, and dispositions...Friendship seeks for a fixed and steadfast character which does not shift about, but continues in one place and in one intimacy. For this reason a steadfast friend is something rare and hard to find."<sup>235</sup>

ἰσότης, then, formed the basis for many, if not most relationships in the ancient world; certainly it seems to have done so for the élites who wrote about it, and in the case of bestowing aid to one in need, ἰσότης in the dual sense of the shared status of citizen was considered by those same people to be *the* central prerequisite,<sup>236</sup> and any aid offered would have been in proportion to one's prior circumstances (what Aristotle called analogous).

It is not unreasonable to think that non-citizens as well may have shared this thinking, resulting in a parallel reckoning of both friendships (based on shared ethnic and/or religious background, trades, economic level, or other criteria), and proportional aid to those in need.

To sum up, while 'equality' and 'equity' are commonly used to translate ἰσότης, in order to rightly apprehend their sense in the ancient world, from Aristotle onward, we must differentiate between the two aspects of the word. It is only as we understand ἰσότης from this dual perspective that we can appreciate how the ancient (élite) writers considered friendship based on ἰσότης (as equality of status) the key to aid in the Graeco-Roman world of the first century (reserving it only for citizens), and how then, in recognition of a variety of circumstances due to wealth and education, any aid given would differ according to the recipient's usual standard of living.<sup>237</sup>

## 2.6 Conclusion

We have seen that in the first century Graeco-Roman world, there were a few extremely wealthy people, and that, comparatively speaking, poverty was a fact of life for many, if not most people. Ongoing debate concerns the magnitude of poverty in that world, and whether there existed any people who, as we have argued, while far-removed from the élite wealthy, enjoyed the relative comforts that even moderate financial success might bring.

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<sup>234</sup> Plutarch, *Moralia*, 2.96D.8-E; 6.490.F-491.A.

<sup>235</sup> Plutarch, *Moralia*, 2.97A-B, 93F, 94E; cf Edward N. O'Neil, "Plutarch on Friendship" 107.

<sup>236</sup> Cicero, *De Officiis* 2.17.58-59. As well, the giver would have had a sense that such action was either necessary or expedient. See Garnsey, *Famine*, 272.

<sup>237</sup> Cf. Griffith, "Abounding in Generosity", 56.

Whatever the gradations of wealth, or the lack thereof, the first century was a period of uncertainty and difficulty for many. Those at the lower end of the socio-economic ladder, citizens and non-citizens alike, lived with the knowledge that hunger and ruin were ever near, and the small but powerful elite group at the top were ever watchful for fear that they might lose everything to a hungry, frustrated, and desperate populace. The powerful and wealthy needed some means of keeping the hunger and frustration under control. The corn dole seems largely to have functioned as this control.

Beyond the corn dole, a primary response to hunger in the first century, when we looked for evidence of other responses to hunger at this time we found liturgies and *epidoseis*. Patronage and friendship also took their more personal places in this list. What seems quite clear, as a result of our investigation, is that much of the response to hunger and basic human need, whatever form it took, seems not to have had as its target the desperately poor, the πτώχοι, whose lives were lived on the knife-edge of privation, and for whom such help could have made the difference between misery and reasonable existence.<sup>238</sup> The focus of all the varied responses to human need seems rather to have been first and foremost on those people who already benefited from their elevated socio-economic standing in the first-century world – the elite wealthy. And, while this focus alone does not mean that truly poor people never benefited from the trickle-down effects of the diverse forms of benefaction and patronage, it does mean that often they did not, and however they may have attempted to cope, or to help each other, they continued to live lives of largely quiet desperation and want.

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<sup>238</sup> Finley, *Ancient Economy*, “To be sure, the ancient world was not wholly lacking in charitable acts, in the narrow modern sense. Normally, however, generosity was directed to the community, not to the needy, whether as individuals or groups”, 39.

## Chapter Three

### Motivations and Mechanisms for Aid to the Poor: Jewish

#### 3.1 Care for the Poor in Scripture: The Law

Scripture provides a rich starting point for our survey of Jewish impulses to care for the poor. A primary theme in scripture is that all of life, including care for the poor, is motivated by and depends on God's action in caring for his people in their need.

Whatever other influences there may have been on the values and behaviour of Jewish people in the first century, the Hebrew Bible must take centre stage, for it provides the historical foundation for ethical behaviour, including aid to the poor. Influences from the dominant Graeco-Roman culture in which Jews lived almost certainly interacted with scripture and perceptions held of scripture. Varying degrees of combination and rejection resulted as individuals and communities of Jews, including the early Christians, determined why and how to behave ethically and morally.

##### 3.1.1 Exodus

In Exodus, "I am the Lord your God", or a statement similar to it, is present in the passages touching upon dealing with and giving to the poor; often it is accompanied by the simple statement to the people to whom the words were addressed: "you were a slave in Egypt".<sup>1</sup> God's self-designation and designation of the people provide the starting point for giving to the poor in scripture. This evocative phrase would stir up memories of their own helplessness and need, and of God's deliverance and provision, in the wilderness and in the new land, of the necessities of life, and could act as motivation for their own care for the poor.

The Lord spoke to Moses and said, 'I have heard the complaining of the Israelites; say to them "At twilight you shall eat meat, and in the morning you shall have your fill of bread; then you shall know that I am the Lord your God".' (Ex. 16:11-12) On the sixth day, God provided enough food to tide the people over the Sabbath, when they were to perform no work, and the extra manna remained fresh for them the following day.<sup>2</sup>

In Ex. 21:1-11, a passage dealing with indentured servants,<sup>3</sup> 21:2 reads, "he shall serve six years, but in the seventh, he shall go out a free person, without debt". Implicit in this verse is debt serious enough to force a poor individual to 'sell' himself into servitude to another Hebrew. Explicit in this text is the limited nature of any such arrangement, and the proviso that at termination, the debtor, and any family members who pre-dated his entry into

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<sup>1</sup> Ex. 22:20-25. See also Lev. 25:35-38; Deut. 8:7-10; 10:17-19; 14:28, 29; 15:10, 11; 16:11,12; 23:19-25; 24:17; 26:10-13.

<sup>2</sup> Ex. 16:22-30.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Philo, *Specialibus Legibus* 2.79; 4.4; *De Virtutibus* 122.

service, would be debt-free and have the opportunity to start over.<sup>4</sup> In the event that during his time of service, the person married (presumably another servant), and (perhaps) had children, or if one's prospects beyond the indentured arrangement seemed bleak,<sup>5</sup> the released person might opt for the 'safe' choice of remaining with the master in permanent servitude (21:5-6).

At first glance, the impulse to engage in this sort of 'care' for the poor might appear to be rather self-serving, a means of providing the creditor with an unending stream of free labour. On second glance, however, this seems unlikely. It is quite possible, given the nature of the commitment, that the kind of debt represented by the selling of oneself into servitude was massive. One did not take such action for minor obligations.<sup>6</sup> It simply would not have been advantageous to the creditor for anything other than a fairly long-term agreement. On the other hand, setting a limit of six years on the term of service in repayment for debt meant that no matter how great the debt, a maximum of six years' service would clear the balance sheet. Beyond the agreed upon time, the indentured male servant could return to his former status, and at all times, whether indentured or independent, he would have remained a Hebrew brother to him, a concept we see echoed in the deuteronomic literature.

If we continue to follow the instruction in the following verses (21:7-11), however, we see that for the daughter sold into such a situation, the outcome would be quite different. It appears that in these cases, the young woman was destined to become the wife, or concubine, either of the man who bought her, or his son. In such circumstances, 'releasing' the young woman would be closer to repudiation than release, but if the 'purchaser' should experience 'buyer's remorse', then someone from the young woman's family might redeem her; she may not be sold out of her family (21:8). In the event that the purchaser takes another wife, (21:9-11) he must provide for fair physical treatment of wife number one, he must not diminish her "food, clothing, or marital rights",<sup>7</sup> but if he mistreats her in these ways, then she who was sold to satisfy a debt, 21:11 tells us, "shall go out without debt, without payment of money", presumably to her own family, but not necessarily; it was a very different experience of 'freedom' for a spurned woman than for a man who had completed six years of indentured service.

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<sup>4</sup> Cf. Ze'ev W. Falk, *Hebrew Law in Biblical Times: An Introduction* 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 2001), 93-97.

<sup>5</sup> Had those prospects not seemed bleak, then theoretically the released person might hope to buy back his wife and any children born to them. Realistically, however, in an agrarian society in which most people likely lived from harvest to harvest, and depended on the previous harvest both to supply food for the coming months and seed for the next crop, getting started again would have been a daunting prospect, making servitude perhaps seem a more secure option.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Amos 2:6.

<sup>7</sup> "The third element, traditionally 'conjugal rights', is better translated 'oil', as suggested by comparative evidence" (S. Paul, *JNES* 28 [1969] 48-53, cited in *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, Raymond E. Brown, Joseph A Fitzmyer and Roland E. Murphy, eds. (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1990), 53.

Aid to the poor in this instance seems to have involved great risks for the woman, but when compared to an independent existence in ancient society, which seems almost impossible over time, it attempted, theoretically, to afford the woman some measure of protection from hunger and from domestic mistreatment.

Ex. 23:10-11, sandwiched into a list of behaviours centred on the right treatment of one's neighbours, several of which concern the ethical treatment of the poor, provides instruction on the seventh, or Sabbath, year, when the land was to be left uncultivated, and whatever it produced on its own was specifically for the poor to gather. More specifically, 23:11 includes vineyards and olive groves in this cycle of rest and availability of produce to the poor.

Crop rotation and planning for fallow fields constitute ages-old agricultural practices, designed to prevent the depletion of the soil and thereby ensure good crop yield. Ex. 23:10 seems to allow for this 'rolling' sabbath, even if its primary motivation concerns the meeting of human need rather than the good of the fields.<sup>8</sup> It is interesting to note that the instruction extends to vineyards and olive groves, both of which will continue to produce fruit during the seventh year, but neither of which benefit from the farmer's neglect. Here we seem to see a measure of care for the poor which exceeds what might be considered part of the natural cycle of agricultural life and enters the realm of deliberate designation of produce as free for all (the needy). The seventh year could actually occur every year, with very few exceptions, because a farmer might leave uncultivated only a small portion of his land each year, planting in the rest as usual.<sup>9</sup> The beauty of this was that there would always be grain, olives and grapes<sup>10</sup> growing on their own, so to speak, for the poor to harvest and use. How much this amounted to would vary from place to place, and we do not have any records to help us, but it would be *something*, and it would be *ongoing* with the passing of the seasons.

### 3.1.2 Leviticus

Turning from Exodus to Leviticus, we find that the instruction deliberately to leave fields, orchards and vines uncultivated one out of every seven years also appears there; however, in Lev.25:2-7 the command acquires somewhat of a different twist in that it seems to specify that *all* the land is to be left untended, rather than the less-defined instruction of Exodus 23, which leaves the door more overtly open to the idea of crop and field rotation.

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<sup>8</sup> Contra Borowski, who reverses the motivations, Oded Borowski, *Daily Life in Biblical Times* (Atlanta: SBL, 2003), 144.

<sup>9</sup> So Borowski cites from Anthony Philips, "'fallowing cannot have taken place simultaneously throughout Israel, but must have been staggered by a system of rotation'. I suggest that each farmer left a seventh of his land fallow each year, thus providing rest for the land and food for the poor. During fallowing no plowing took place....The institution of a universal Sabbatical Year was ordained only in Leviticus 25, which is exilic or post-exilic". *Amos* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 104, cited in Borowski, *Daily Life*, 144.

<sup>10</sup> Grain, grapes and olives may have been a representative, rather than exhaustive list of cultivated produce that might be included in the seventh year scheme.

Lev. 25:6 makes mention of the produce of this seventh year as available to the farmer and his household, but says not a word about such produce aiding the poor by providing food for them from the fallow fields.<sup>11</sup>

This passage is found just prior to the Mosaic instruction on the Jubilee year, which the Israelites were told to observe every fifty years, with an emphasis on fairness in business dealings with other Israelites, and continues after it, providing assurances to the people that in the seventh year, and the year following, when they will have to wait for several months to harvest the crops they plant at the beginning of the eighth year, God will provide sufficient to see them through. We cannot know, but in the event that the Israelites tried to follow this teaching, or did not, they may have adjusted this instruction to allow for the crop rotation we may see reflected in Ex. 23:10-11. Several observations, however, by Josephus, support the widespread observance of the ban on deliberate cultivation of crops.<sup>12</sup>

During the other six years when presumably regular cultivation and harvesting of crops occurred, mechanisms (and motivation for them) were described for providing food for the poor Israelite and any poor foreigners living in the community. Leviticus 19:9-10 presents gleanings in this way: “When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap to the very edges of your field, or gather the gleanings of your harvest. You shall not strip your vineyard bare, or gather the fallen grapes of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the poor and the alien: I am the Lord your God”.<sup>13</sup> The mechanism is presented in general terms; precise measurements are not given, perhaps because in the usual course of harvest, that which fell to the ground, remained at the perimeter of fields, or was left on the tree/vine, regularly amounted to quantities which seemed sufficient to meet the needs of the local poor (by default). The other possible reason for a lack of designated amounts is that in small communities where people and their circumstances were well-known, and the community undertook regular care for its poor, what the owner and reapers left for the poor to harvest would (by design) cover their need.

A bit less obvious, perhaps, is the consideration in the mechanism of gleaning for the dignity of the poor. Rather than prescribe a system by which the poor would present themselves with outstretched hand for poor-aid, in gleaning we see an opportunity for the impoverished person to participate in the normal work of harvest and preparation of food from a stock of ‘raw’ materials. In this way, the poor remained in the social loop of work, even if they possessed no land of their own.<sup>14</sup> This would not, of course apply to the elderly

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<sup>11</sup> Cf. Philo, *Migr.* 32; *Fug.* 173-4; *Mut.* 259-260; *Spec. Leg.* 2.105; *Virt.* 97.

<sup>12</sup> See §3.1.4 “The Sabbath Year”.

<sup>13</sup> This instruction is repeated in Lev. 23:22. Cf. Philo, *Somn.* 2.23-25, 29-30; *Virt.* 90-91.

<sup>14</sup> Philo also evinces concern for the dignity of the poor (*Virt.* 91), and rails against greedy people, who “dare to appropriate her benefactions, and as though they themselves caused everything, refuse to share anything with anybody” (*Virt.* 91).

or infirm, but in these cases, it would have been normal for others to have provided for them, and in the absence of family, the community stepped in. We might well ask, in light of so many socially prescriptive instructions, whether the hearer was expected to extrapolate from the explicit to the implied behaviours, and in the case of giving to and caring for the poor, to adjust the mechanism to the individual circumstances of the local poor.

“You shall not oppress your neighbour or rob him. The wages of a hired servant shall not remain with you all night until the morning”. The placement of Lev.19:13 may be strategic in nature, coming as it does in a grouping (19:9–18) consisting of instructions on how to engage in ethical relationships with the people of one’s community. The majority of these instructions deal with determining not to take advantage of one’s neighbours, but to treat them justly, whether or not they are poor.<sup>15</sup> 19:13 provides a cross-over mechanism in that it may or may not refer to a poor person, but it really doesn’t matter; an employer must pay the employees when the pay has been promised, because not to do so can either put that worker (and any dependents) in a position of material vulnerability, or worse, may deprive that person of the means of immediate sustenance.<sup>16</sup> Again, as in much of the Levitical material, mechanism is followed by motivation: “I am the Lord your God”.<sup>17</sup>

The concern for ethical treatment of other Israelites who fell into poverty seems to be affected by the impoverished person’s relationship to land. Those persons who have not gone so far as to sell their land, but whose poverty forces them to seek the help of kin are to be provided for as follows: “You shall support them; they shall live with you as though resident aliens. Do not take interest in advance or otherwise make a profit from them, but fear your God; let them live with you. You shall not lend them your money at interest taken in advance, or provide them food at a profit” (Lev. 25:35-38).<sup>18</sup> No time limit is stipulated, but immediately following we find instructions concerning treatment of family members whose financial situation worsens to the point that they decide to sell themselves into servitude with their kin. In this case, the financially solvent relative may keep relatives as ‘hired or bound’ servants (25:40) until the following Jubilee year, which could be up to 49 years in the future (25:40-41). While in service, they are not to be sold as slaves are sold; neither are they to be treated harshly (25:42-43). When the line was crossed between the temporary need and profound poverty just alluded to we do not know, but that it could be crossed seems likely. If we glance back at 25:25-28, we may just glimpse the dividing line:

If anyone of your kin falls into difficulty and sells a piece of property, then the next of kin shall come and redeem what the relative has sold. If the person has no one to redeem it, but then prospers and finds sufficient means to do so, the years since its

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<sup>15</sup> Cf. Philo, *Spec. Leg.* 4.197.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Philo, *Spec. Leg.* 4.195f.; *Virt.* 88.

<sup>17</sup> Lev. 19:14.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Philo, *Spec. Leg.* 2.71-74, 122; *Virt.* 82-87, 122-123.

sale shall be computed and the difference shall be refunded to the person to whom it was sold, and the property shall be returned. But if there is not sufficient means to recover it, what was sold should remain with the purchaser until the year of jubilee; in the jubilee it shall be released, and the property shall be returned. (NRSV)

The selling of property seems to have marked an important boundary between hope for some measure of financial restoration in the near future and a lack of such hope symbolised by the selling of oneself into servitude which, with a cap of forty-nine years, might effectively cover the remainder of one's life. Even should that be the case, by so doing, even a desperately impoverished person would thereby secure the return of the land lost to any children or grandchildren in the jubilee year (25:28, 41).

Following all of Leviticus' instruction to moral and ethical behaviour,<sup>19</sup> we find God's promised responses to compliance and non-compliance with it. The placement at the beginning of the promises to bless the obedient with sufficient, even abundant provision of food is interesting, and perhaps significant. Could its positioning (first) be an acknowledgement that without food, all other aspects of life pale in comparison?

If you follow my statutes and keep my commandments and observe them faithfully, I will give you your rains in their season, and the land shall yield its produce, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit. Your threshing shall overtake your vintage, and the vintage shall overtake the sowing; you shall eat your bread to the full, and live securely in your land (26.3-5).<sup>20</sup>

Only after having held out the positive responses the people could expect for compliance does the text present the negative response the people can expect for non-compliance to the levitical instruction. It does so in terms of ever-increasing punishments, including land, trees and vines that do not produce (26:20), livestock that are destroyed (26:22).<sup>21</sup> The text is punctuated by a hint that such deprivation might be averted by turning back to God,<sup>22</sup> but continued disobedience will bring intensification of the punishment, to the point that there is never enough food: "ten women shall bake your bread in a single oven, and they shall dole out your bread by weight; and though you eat, you shall not be satisfied" (26:26). 26:27-29 reveals that non-compliance pushed to the extreme would result in hunger to the point of cannibalism,<sup>23</sup> a truly dreadful prospect for the Israelites. This highlighting of punishment by hunger for failing to give to and care for the poor figures prominently in the

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<sup>19</sup> Instruction which included, but was not limited to care for and give to the poor, and provided both motivation, "I am the Lord your God", and basic mechanisms for fulfilling what was required.

<sup>20</sup> 26:10 (NRSV) further elaborates the promise of abundant food: "You shall eat old grain long stored, and you shall have to clear out the old to make way for the new". Cf. Philo, *Praem.* 101-104; Deut. 11:13-15.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Philo, *Praem.* 105-106; Deut. 11:16-17.

<sup>22</sup> A turning signalled by following the instructions given in the book, including those concerned with care for and giving to the poor.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Philo, *Praem.* 134.

warnings of chapter 26, and indicates something of the importance in Leviticus of providing for the poor who could not provide, either in part, or at all, for themselves.

### 3.1.3 Deuteronomy

Turning to Deuteronomy, we survey its discussion of, and instruction concerning care for and giving to those members of the community<sup>24</sup> who could not meet their own material needs (specifically related to food). This discussion shares commitment to provide for the destitute and the diminished with what we have already seen in Exodus and Leviticus, but we shall observe that the instruction of Deuteronomy exhibits further development of the basic call to care for the poor.

The first instance of deuteronomic instruction concerning care for and giving to the poor provides an example of this development. Deuteronomy 14:27-29 covers familiar 'poor aid' territory, with respect to widows, orphans and resident aliens, but adds a new category of recipient (the Levites) and another opportunity to give (the third year tithe):

As for the Levites resident in your towns, do not neglect them, because they have no allotment or inheritance with you. Every third year you shall bring out the full tithe of your produce for the year, and store it within your towns; the Levites, because they have no allotment or inheritance with you, as well as the resident aliens, the orphans, and the widows in your towns, may come and eat their fill so that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work that you undertake.

Of the categories of those who are to be cared for with food, the Levites are the only group among them whose 'poverty' derives from their careers;<sup>25</sup> whilst the others experience poverty due to loss of familial presence and provision, the Levites need such care because their assignment is to "stand and minister in the name of the Lord...in the place that the Lord will choose", rather than to cultivate the land, which they are prohibited from owning. Deprived of the ability to grow crops or flocks, they eat from the sacrifices<sup>26</sup> and the first fruits,<sup>27</sup> and they receive the first fleece of worshippers' sheep.

Chapter 26 consists largely of instruction concerning the disposition of first fruits (26:1-11)<sup>28</sup> and the third year tithe (26:12-15), but while 26:12 specifies that the latter tithe of produce is to be given to "the Levites, the aliens, the orphans, and the widows, that they may eat their fill within your towns", in the case of first fruits, a yearly offering brought as a thanksgiving for the way "the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm...and he brought us into this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with

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<sup>24</sup> Covered by this provision were the usual categories of widow, orphan, and resident alien (non-Israelites). Additionally in Deuteronomy we find the Levites included (14:27-29).

<sup>25</sup> Deut. 18:1-8.

<sup>26</sup> "Whether an ox or a sheep; they shall give to the priest the shoulder, the two jowls, and the stomach" (18:3).

<sup>27</sup> "Your grain, your wine, and your oil" (18:4).

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Philo, *Somn.* 2.272-273; *Spec. Leg.* 1.131-34, 2.42, 215-219, 222; 4.98-99; *Virt.* 95.

milk and honey”,<sup>29</sup> in 26:11, only the Levites and aliens are mentioned as recipients of the first fruits, along with the one who offered it. It seems reasonable that the inclusion of aliens as first tithe recipients, and the general inclusion of the resident alien as recipient of poor aid, traces back to the motivation for giving the first tithe: the Israelite experience as aliens in the land of Egypt, where they were treated harshly. By sharing the first fruits offering with the landless aliens and Levites, the now-landed Israelites extend to them the consideration withheld from them in Egypt.<sup>30</sup>

Gleaning as aid to the poor is discussed in 24:19-22, where sheaves dropped or left behind during harvesting, grapes and olives are mentioned, but unlike Exodus 19:9-10, there is no corresponding mention of leaving the edges of grain fields for the poor. Perhaps noting the sheaves was sufficient (for the rest to be understood by the farmer, for whom harvests came, after all, on an average of twice per calendar year). The motivation is as in Exodus and Leviticus, except that here the reason for giving to the poor is given in the following terms: “Remember that you were a slave in Egypt”, in 24:22, an abbreviated version of 24:18, where this exhortation is followed by “and the Lord your God redeemed you from there”.

Chapter 16 discusses appropriate behaviours during the three major festivals of the Jewish year: Pesach, Shavuot, and Sukkot,<sup>31</sup> all of which had a food component, and the instruction concerning two of these festivals (Shavuot and Sukkot) contain explicit instructions to “rejoice...you and your sons and daughters, your male and female slaves...the Levites...the strangers, the orphans and the widows resident among you” (16:11, 14). Is this aid to the poor? It may not be a regular daily or weekly administration of such giving, but it does amount to an instance of giving food to the poor at times when they otherwise would be starkly reminded of their insufficiency; the poor Israelites by their inability to appear before the Lord with an offering,<sup>32</sup> and the resident aliens excluded by their ‘otherness’. Such instructions concerning their inclusion in the festivals covered them by their attachment to particular communities and households within them.

Moving away from what might be considered direct aid to the poor, we turn to two other instances of interaction with the poor which are not far removed from such aid, and which may well prevent the need for it.

You shall not withhold the wages of poor and needy labourers, whether other Israelites or aliens who reside in your land in one of your towns. You shall pay them their wages daily before sunset, because they are poor and their livelihood depends on

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<sup>29</sup> Deut. 26:8-9.

<sup>30</sup> Deut. 26:5-7.

<sup>31</sup> These were festivals at which all Israelite men were to appear (16:16). Cf. Philo, *Spec. Leg.* 131-144; *Leg. All.* 3.11-12.

<sup>32</sup> Deut. 16:10, 16-17.

them; otherwise they might cry to the Lord against you, and you would incur guilt (24:14-15).<sup>33</sup>

In this rendition of the instruction seen also in Lev. 19:13, again we see the deuteronomic tendency to greater specificity – here in both mechanism and motivation – with regard to the types of people designated as poor (Israelites and aliens), when to pay them (before sunset), and the reasons for so doing (they are poor, living hand-to-mouth, and to withhold their only means of sustenance renders the employer guilty of sin before the Lord).

The second instance of dealings with the poor which address both the need for immediate and long term aid concerns the relationship of employer-creditors and debtor-employees, or indentured servants:

If a member of your community, whether a Hebrew man or a Hebrew woman, sells himself or herself to you and works for you six years, in the seventh year you shall set that person free. And when you set a male slave out from you a free person, you shall not send him out empty-handed. Provide liberally out of your flock, your threshing floor, and your wine press, thus giving to him some of the bounty with which the Lord has blessed you. Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God redeemed you; for this reason I lay this command upon you today. But if he says to you, 'I will not go out from you', because he loves you and your household, since he is well off with you, then you shall take an awl and thrust it through his earlobe into the door, and he shall be your bondsman forever. You shall do the same with regard to your bondswoman. Do not consider it a hardship when you send them out from you free persons, because for six years they have given you services worth the wages of hired labourers; and the Lord your God will bless you in all that you do (15:12-18).

If we think back to Exodus 21:1-11, we can see that the deuteronomic instruction is noticeably different in its details concerning both male and female indentured servants. Men and women are to be treated equally – they both work as servants – there is no hint of the females being sold as wives or concubines: a permanent situation. Not only is any person so-contracted to be released from service after a maximum of six years, but the means to restart an independent agricultural life is to be provided by the employer. We have evidence of multiple motivations to such behaviour, beginning in 15:15 with the by now expected call to employers of indentured servants to remember their own servitude in Egypt and redemption by the Lord their God, whether personally or historically, and to behave obediently in response to God's goodness to them. This motivation is followed by another, in 15:18, which deals specifically with the instruction to set up the person(s) about to be released from service with the means to begin life in a household unattached to a master. As the former servant departs, the now former master is told to reflect on all the benefits accrued from that person's

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<sup>33</sup> Cf. Lev. 19:13; Josephus, *Ant.* 4.227; 231-239, and Louis H. Feldman, *Judean Antiquities 1-4: Translation and Commentary* Vol.3 of *Flavius Josephus: Translation and Commentary*, Steve Mason, ed. (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 418-420.

work during the previous six years, and to anticipate that “the Lord...will bless [him] in all that [he does]”.

Immediately prior to the material concerning indentured servants, admittedly the most extreme of measures to respond to poverty, we take note of 15:7-11, instruction concerning the need for generosity of spirit, and of sustenance:

If there is among you anyone in need, a member of your community in any of your towns within the land the Lord your God is giving you, do not be hard-hearted or tight-fisted toward your needy neighbour. You should rather open your hand, willingly lending enough to meet the need, whatever it may be. Be careful that you do not entertain a mean thought, thinking, ‘The seventh year, the year of remission, is near’, and therefore view your needy neighbour with hostility and give nothing; your neighbour might cry to the Lord against you, and you would incur guilt. Give liberally and be ungrudging when you do so, for on this account the Lord your God will bless you in all your work and in all that you undertake. Since there will never cease to be some in need on the earth, I therefore command you, ‘Open your hand to the poor and needy neighbour in your land’.

The point here seems to be that attitude matters not only in terms of the quality of interaction between giver and recipient, but can mean the difference between giving and refraining from giving aid to the poor. This instruction counsels interior and exterior generosity in lending to the poor in one’s community, even when such behaviour might result in diminished return to the lender. The motivation for acting in this way is two-fold: first, not doing so will incur guilt before the Lord, and second, doing so will bring a continuation of God’s blessings on the giver.<sup>34</sup>

Earlier in the same chapter (15:4-5), we see what at first glance seems a curious statement, “there will, however, be no one in need among you, because the Lord your God is sure to bless you in the land that the Lord your God is giving you as a possession to occupy, if only you will obey the Lord your God by diligently observing this entire commandment that I command you this day”. It seems to contradict much of the rest of the chapter, including the section on generosity just discussed, as well as the section dealing with the treatment of people in indentured servitude due to poverty.

Upon further consideration, however, because the absence of poverty is based on the absence of disobedient (i.e. sinful) behaviour vis-à-vis the deuteronomic law, the writer provides for a scenario in which obedience has not been complete, leading to the perennial presence of some degree of poverty. Even in a best-case scenario, in which there had been obedience, death, illness, and unforeseen disaster might create a situation of poverty for one or more members of the community, and the writer has provided instruction for these as well.

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<sup>34</sup> Had the person not experienced such blessings before the opportunity to practise generosity of heart and hand with a needy neighbour arose, would that person have been approached for help? It seems reasonable that a person of some means would be concerned over repayment of what may have been substantial aid in the form of a loan.

In Deuteronomy we so far have seen largely positive instruction concerning the treatment of the poor in the community; only twice (15:9; 24:15) do we find warnings of avoiding guilt as negative motivation to aid the poor. In 28:46-51, however we come to a section filled with dire warnings of punishment for those who fail to heed the instructions of the deuteronomic law. Aiding the poor is not separated out from the rest of the law; it is an integral part of it, and the punishment for disobedience to the law seems a grim and grisly reflection of pitiful situations of poverty the condemned did not address (28:48). A foreign nation will invade the land (28:50-51). The people will be reduced to cannibalism (28:53-55). And, as if that were not the awful epitome of the punishments meted out, 28:68 warns that afterward “you shall offer yourselves for sale to your enemies as male and female slave, but there will be no buyer”. It is a bleak picture, devoid of hope, painted by the writer in this chapter whose first fifteen verses contain promises of blessing for obedience to the instruction given in the book, but the sixteenth to the sixty-eighth verses portend certain doom for the disobedient.<sup>35</sup>

In Deuteronomy 28, the motivation to aid the poor (in the form of dire warnings) echoes that of Leviticus 26. Could it be that the further away from their own experience of servitude and oppression in Egypt the Israelite people moved, the more they needed by way of explicit laws and incentives (positive and negative) to comply?

What we see in Deuteronomy, with respect to the instruction (motivations and mechanisms) on aiding the poor, consists largely of instruction found in Exodus and Leviticus, except that where in Deuteronomy the instruction has been modified, most often it has acquired detail and provisos not seen in the other material, and contains what seems an increased emphasis on extending compassion to the poor, along with any tangible aid.

So, what concepts do we see emerging from these three books in the area of caring for and giving to the poor? First we see the notion that God initiated the idea (by caring for and providing for his people when they were in great physical need), and then predicated all their giving to the poor on his own. Second, God promised to bless his people in tangible and intangible ways for caring for and giving to the poor. Third, there were measurable guidelines given for all forms of care for and giving to the poor (when, where, what to give, how much, how often, to whom). Fourth, in addition to the quantifiable aspects of care for and giving to the poor, there were also qualitative demands made on the people’s care for and giving to the poor (gladly, generously, with consideration for the dignity and kinship of the recipient, keeping in mind God’s provision in one’s own history). Fifth, care for the poor in one’s daily employ was to be in the form of prompt payment of wages, and in the case of an indentured

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<sup>35</sup> Cf. Philo, *Praem.* 138ff.

servant, in equitable treatment and (in Deuteronomy) a “severance” package to enable the newly independent person to make a successful return to farming.

### 3.1.4 The Sabbath Year

That the Sabbath Year was observed in Israel in the first century C.E.<sup>36</sup> is several times attested outside of scripture, in the Qumran literature and by Josephus. 1QM 1.5-9 instructs the ‘sons of light’ that “During the years of remission they shall not equip (them) to march...for they are a Sabbath of rest for Israel”.<sup>37</sup> Josephus describes the fall of Jerusalem to Herod and Sossius in 37/36 B.C. as having occurred when “they were distressed by famine and the lack of necessities, for a sabbatical year happened to fall at that time”,<sup>38</sup> and tells how Alexander the Great responded to a request by the Sidonians of Shechem for him to “remit their tribute in the seventh year, saying that they did not sow therein”.<sup>39</sup> Alexander refuses, saying that he already had “given these privileges to the Jews”.<sup>40</sup> The third instance recounted by Josephus indicates that Julius Caesar ruled “that they shall pay a tax for the city of Jerusalem...every year except in the seventh year, which they call the sabbatical year, because in this time they neither take fruit from the trees nor do they sow”.<sup>41</sup> In addition to these, Instone-Brewer signals “a certificate of lending...which was drawn up ‘in this Year of Release’ dated 55/56 C.E.”,<sup>42</sup> which would situate it and especially the following Sabbath Year (62-63 C.E.) in proximity to Paul’s gathering and transportation of the collection for the Jerusalem church (55-56 C.E.). Whatever other motivations Paul may have had in undertaking the collection, the effects of the Sabbath Year alone could account for most if not all of the need Paul intended to meet with the funds collected.

This attestation of the practice (and not merely the idea) of the Sabbath Year in the first century C.E. and in the centuries prior to it reinforces our contention that from the time of its institution by God through Moses, four specific agricultural activities were forbidden during this year: sowing, reaping, pruning and picking grapes.<sup>43</sup> It also indicates that observance of Sabbath Year prohibitions resulted in hardship for many people over *two* years, especially if the Sabbath Year followed on the heels of a poor harvest. Not only would there have been less to eat, but there would have been a series of 3 crops missed before a deliberate crop could be sown. The question arises of how much more difficult life would have been for the poor at such times, and it is not difficult to imagine the answer: exponentially so, and in

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<sup>36</sup> See above, §3.1.1, n.9..

<sup>37</sup> Baillet, *DJD* VII.59, #496, pl.12 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), pl.12.

<sup>38</sup> Josephus, *Ant.* 14.475.

<sup>39</sup> Josephus, *Ant.* 11.343-344.

<sup>40</sup> Josephus, *Ant.* 11.344.

<sup>41</sup> Josephus, *Ant.* 14.202.

<sup>42</sup> *DJD* II.100-104, #18, pl.29. in David Instone-Brewer, *Traditions of the Rabbis from the Era of the New Testament [TRENT]* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 186, n.219.

<sup>43</sup> Ex. 23:10-11; cf. Lev. 25:2-7.

the case of the Jews in Jerusalem, unimaginably so, as their access to fields would have been more restricted. Cities concentrate people, who must rely heavily on the importation of food and other raw materials. During times of deprivation, either voluntary or outwardly-imposed (e.g. a siege), city-dwellers would be at a distinct disadvantage in terms of food.

Wealthy city residents may have relied on stocks of food laid up for the difficult days of the Sabbath Year, but the poorer people would have been less able to do this and very quickly would have felt the pinch of penury. The village dweller at least could forage for food in the untended fields and countryside,<sup>44</sup> hunt for edible creatures in the countryside, or go fishing. The city dwellers would soon have depleted the surrounding areas, and unless they opted to leave the city, would surely have experienced serious deprivation over the course of the year. How this affected the practice of care for and giving to the poor, we do not know for sure, but we can know that if everyone had less, then however generous the heart of the giver, there would have been less to share with the poor.

## 3.2 Psalms & Proverbs

### 3.2.1 Psalms

Psalm 41:1-3 contains words of God's blessing for the individual who gives to the poor, echoing what we have seen in the biblical material already; if one follows the instructions of God's law, then the response will be one of provision: of life, food, shelter, protection, etc. "Happy are those who consider the poor; the Lord delivers them in the day of trouble..." (41:1).

Psalm 81:10-16 was "probably associated with the feast of Tabernacles"<sup>45</sup> and, in vv.8-16, a section reminiscent of Deuteronomy 28, verse 10 sits ensconced in an admonition preceding the disobedience and punishment in verses 11-12, but which ends with another plea for God's people to return to God's laws, and so to God's blessings of provision, characterised by "the finest of the wheat, and with honey from the rock" (81:16): "I am the Lord your God, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt. Open your mouth wide and I will fill it". Here is one more<sup>46</sup> example of God as the one who gives to and cares for the poor: here, his people.

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<sup>44</sup> Instone-Brewer gives a concise and helpful discussion of 'arum', also known as 'Solomon's Lily', or 'Palestinian Lily', "the only crop which could be harvested and sold throughout the Sabbath Year...arum would have been virtually the only local food on sale". Whether during the Sabbath Year or not, "arum must have been a lifesaver for many poor people...It is significant that Jesus pointed to this plant to illustrate God's care for the poor" [Mt. 6:28-29; Lk. 12:27]. *TRENT*, 200.

<sup>45</sup> So Kselman and Barré, in *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary* Raymond Brown, ed. s.v. Psalms, (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1990), 539. Others say that Passover is just as likely; so Mitchell Dahood, *Psalms: Introduction, Translation, and Notes*, vol.1 Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 1965), 263; some suggest that Passover is the only possibility; so Louis Jacquet, *Les Psaumes et le Coeur de l'Homme: Étude textuelle, littéraire et doctrinale*, Tome 2 (Belgium: Duculot, 1977), 584.

<sup>46</sup> The first being found in Ex.20:2, and repeated in the material concerning giving to and care for the poor in the Books of the Law. For a review of this material, see above, §3.1 "Care for the Poor in Scripture: The Law".

Psalm 132:15, a psalm of ascents, a ‘pilgrimage’ psalm, sung on the way up to Jerusalem and Mount Zion,<sup>47</sup> alludes to themes of blessing for obedience to God’s laws, found earlier in Exodus, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy, “if your sons keep my covenant...their sons also, forevermore, shall sit on your throne (132:12)”. In verses 13-18, the blessing is further elaborated, signalling God’s choice of Zion “for his habitation” (v.13), and thereby bestowing the blessing of God’s presence on the human inhabitants of the city, as well as God’s promise of material, along with spiritual benefits, “I will abundantly bless its provisions; I will satisfy its poor with bread” (v.15).<sup>48</sup> [LXX (131.15) “τοὺς πτωχοὺς αὐτῆς χορτάσω ἄρτων”]

Verses 15-16 of Psalm 145 are part of a song of praise to God, celebrating God’s goodness, righteousness, grace, mercy, patience, steadfast love and compassion (vv.7-9). One of the specific ways God demonstrates these things is in his provision of food through the normal channels of agriculture. “You give them their food in due season” (v.15) would seem to indicate this.<sup>49</sup> Various food sources were harvested at particular times: their due season. In providing for harvests there is the provision of sufficient food for follow-on giving to the poor. What God does, the people can do, as God enables. While not explicitly stated in this text, it is present in Psalm 41:1, and alluded to in 81:10 and 132:15.

These few psalms, then, which touch on giving to and caring for the poor, do so by portraying God as the origin of all provision: of freedom from slavery in Egypt, of food and water in the wilderness, of a land in which to live, of the laws mandating care for and giving to the poor. They contain allusions, or direct reference to the expectation of human participation in God’s provision for the poor, and they join the growing body of biblical material concerned in some way with the motivations and mechanisms of giving to the poor in ancient Israel.

### 3.2.2 Proverbs

John Collins, speaking of Proverbs as Jewish Wisdom literature in *Jewish Wisdom in the Hellenistic Age*, states that

<sup>47</sup> *The New Jerome*, 524.

<sup>48</sup> Jacquet, *Les Psaumes et le Coeur de l’Homme*, 537, says “Jerusalem devient et restera à tout jamais le foyer de l’Abondance matérielle et spirituelle pour Israël, le centre de dispensation des Biens messianiques”. “Jerusalem becomes and will forever remain for Israel the heart of material and spiritual abundance: the focal point for bestowal of messianic blessing”. (translation mine)

<sup>49</sup> Jacquet, *Les Psaumes et le Coeur de l’Homme*, 696: “Toutes les créatures... tous les vivants... attendant de Dieu, comme du ‘Pourvoyeur assuré’, ne pouvant décevoir, leur nourriture. Et, en fait, Il la leur donne, en temps opportune et avec largesse, ‘en bon Père de famille’... Abondance (cf. 16b) n’exclut pas une opportune discrimination dans la distribution des vivres; l’intérêt même des beneficiaries le commande...” “All creatures... every living thing... depend on God, who like a guaranteed Source, cannot disappoint [those waiting for ] their food. In fact, He gives it to them lavishly and at just the right time, as a good ‘Father of the family’... Abundance does not preclude a beneficent discrimination in the distribution of food: the very well-being of His beneficiaries requires it”. (translation mine) Jacquet here indicates that in giving, one should give with concern for the individual needs of the poor as God provides for the individual needs of every living creature.

the subject matter of Proverbs... stands in sharp contrast to most of the biblical tradition. The people of Israel and its history and destiny are not even mentioned. The focus here is on the life of the individual and the family. Nothing is said of a revelation in history or of mighty acts of deliverance from Egypt. Neither is there any mention of Moses or the covenantal law. The sage does not claim divine inspiration in the manner of a prophet, nor does he report visionary experiences. The subject matter is drawn from everyday life, and should in principle be accessible to anyone.<sup>50</sup>

While we might concur with some of Collins' observations concerning the uniqueness of Proverbs vis-à-vis the biblical texts not included under the rubric of 'Wisdom',<sup>51</sup> on the occasions when care for and giving to the poor are the subject, our proverbs do not stand in sharp contrast to other biblical tradition, and although they may not directly mention the Exodus, or any other great event or memorable teaching, their substance recalls the basic thrust of the biblical coverage of the poor: their situation, the ethical treatment due them in the form of material aid, consideration and justice.

Our canonical collection of Proverbs speaks very little to the specific subject of aid to the poor; what these proverbs do have to say is both brief and clear: every solvent person<sup>52</sup> has a responsibility toward the poor. To meet their basic needs renders the giver happy (אשׁח), and will result in 'repayment' from the Lord. Not to attend to the needs of the poor equals sin. We have three examples of such commentary:

14:20-21 pairs the saying, "the poor are disliked even by their neighbours, but the rich have many friends",<sup>53</sup> with a pronouncement on what seem to be the neighbours: "those who despise their neighbours are sinners, but happy are those who are kind to the poor". This behaviour is even said to affect one's relationship with God their Creator in 14:31, "Those who oppress the poor insult their Maker, but those who are kind to the needy honour him".

19:17 seems to echo the positive portion of the preceding proverb: "Whoever is kind to the poor lends to the Lord, and will be repaid in full".<sup>54</sup>

Chapter 31 is a different sort of commentary from the proverbs we have thus far considered. Rather than a collection of often unrelated opinions on life, it is more a speech on the importance of priorities and choices in moral behaviour. First King Lemuel's mother warns him about how *not* to behave, precisely because he is a king: don't run with a

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<sup>50</sup> John Collins, *Jewish Wisdom in the Hellenistic Age* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1997), 2.

<sup>51</sup> "The sages do not aspire to originality. Rather they reflect the consensus of their culture, and pass on the commonly accepted assumptions about reality. The biblical wisdom books do not give us the full range of ancient Israelite ideas about reality. They pay little attention to mythological beliefs, although the author of Job, at least, was familiar with them. They virtually ignore the cult. It is reasonable to believe, however, that what they give us was widely shared in Israelite society". Collins, *Jewish Wisdom*, 225. It seems unreasonable to expect any of the biblical books to "give the full range of ancient Israelite ideas about reality", but that he mentioned this may point up the tendency of readers/students of scripture to at times to act as if a particular book does exactly this.

<sup>52</sup> Solvency means that one is able to meet his/her own needs, as well as the needs of one's household.

<sup>53</sup> Cf. Ben Sira 13:15-14:10.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. Ben Sira 29:8-13.

promiscuous crowd, don't develop a craving for alcoholic beverages, because to do so will destroy him as a leader, and diminish, or even destroy his ability to rule and guard the rights of the afflicted (31:1-5).

Next, Lemuel's mother tells him that what he *should* do is to save the 'strong drink' for those who in their misery need a soporific or amnesiac (vv.6-7), those dying or in great pain, and too poor to procure any relief from their hopeless conditions. Lemuel is to relieve the suffering of the poor by providing pain relief to them. Beyond this material aid in very specific circumstances, Lemuel is also advised to "speak out for those who cannot speak, for the rights of all the destitute. Speak out, judge righteously, defend the rights of the poor and needy" (vv.8-9). No specifics are given as to what those rights might be, but it is likely that they were common knowledge, even when they were not practised. Perhaps they had to do with gleaning and festival times, or indentured service; we do not know for sure, but if the poor needed an advocate, we can be reasonably sure that all those people who could have participated in care for and giving to the poor did not. Beyond this, we may imagine that not only were there those who neglected to give, there were very likely also those who exploited the poor to the detriment of these needy people, and for their own gain. Lemuel's mother lets him know where his responsibilities lie in the first 9 verses of Chapter 31.

When, following all this maternal advice on the behaviour of the king, Lemuel's mother launches into her description of the ideal woman, she includes care for the poor as one of the attributes: "She opens her hand to the poor, and reaches out her hands to the needy" (v.20). Apparently for the writer of this chapter, care for and aid to the poor are responsibilities shared by men and women alike. It is the only time in our small assortment of proverbs touching on care for and giving to the poor, that we see a woman held up as a model of this behaviour. Here in Chapter 31 of Proverbs we see for the first time the ideal woman described in some of the same terms that might be used of a man,<sup>55</sup> and for these attributes, among others, including quite clearly her care for the poor, she is praised, in her family and in her community,<sup>56</sup> held up both as one to be emulated by other women, and as one to be sought by a man seeking a wife.<sup>57</sup>

### 3.3 The Prophets

We find references to care for and giving to the poor in the prophetic literature in Nehemiah, Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Amos.

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<sup>55</sup> She engages in business often relegated to the world of men (v.16), is shrewd in it (v.18), and knows her market (v.24).

<sup>56</sup> We may imagine that among those community members who praised this kind of woman would be the poor and needy to whom she had given aid.

<sup>57</sup> As wife and mother, this woman is deserving of her family's esteem and open approval: "Her children rise up and call her happy; her husband too, and he praises her" (v.28), *and* the praise of the wider community (v.31).

### 3.3.1 Nehemiah

“Then [Nehemiah] said to them, ‘Go your way, eat the fat and drink sweet wine and send portions of them to those for whom nothing is prepared, for this day is holy to our Lord; and do not be grieved, for the joy of the Lord is your strength’” (Neh. 8:10). The occasion is the reading of ‘the book of the law of Moses’ during Sukkot, which the people were celebrating for the first time since they had returned from the Babylonian exile. This might seem simply to be a reference to the command in Deut. 16:11, 14 to include the Levites, resident foreigners, widows, and orphans in the feasting of Sukkot, but given the prophet’s antipathy for foreigners, and subsequent legislation cutting ties to them,<sup>58</sup> this may be a modified, foreigner-free version of it. In any case, it attests the instruction to give feast-worthy food to those Israelites who otherwise would have none.

### 3.3.2 Isaiah

Isaiah 25:4 praises God for being “a refuge to the poor, a refuge to the needy in their distress”, and looks forward in 25:6 to the time when on Mount Zion “the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wines, of rich food filled with marrow, of well-aged wines strained clear”: here, God’s ultimate act of caring for the poor is described as including a sumptuous feast.

A similar, if more muted statement of God’s promise to provide for the poor and needy can be found in 41:17, in which there is the assurance that when these people “seek water and there is none, and their tongue is parched with thirst, I the Lord will answer them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them”.

Isaiah also contains, in Chapter 58, a description of behaviour to which God will respond with blessing, as including just treatment of the poor, including sharing one’s bread with the hungry, bringing the homeless poor into one’s house, clothing the naked, and not avoiding needy family members (vv.6-7). Caring for the poor in the ways just mentioned will result in God’s acceptance of an individual or group’s religious activity in prayer and fasting; this action is, in fact, a prerequisite to God’s response: “Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer; you shall cry for help, and he will say, ‘Here I am’” (v.9a).

Isaiah 58:9b-10 indicates that along with offering one’s food to the hungry and satisfying the needs of the afflicted, the Israelites must deal with the issue of indentured servitude and, possibly, slavery, when it says, “if you remove the yoke from among you...”. Whether this concerns the abuse of this avenue for debt reimbursement, leading to widespread enslavement of other Israelites, or perhaps addressed the terms of the time of service, we do not know, but here we have a small glimpse of the extreme option in Israelite communities to offer oneself in service for up to six years as the fulfilment of a serious debt. In all areas of

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<sup>58</sup> Neh. 13:1-3, 23-27, 30.

care for the poor, then, according to Isaiah's text, subtly in Chapter 41 and more bluntly in 58, we see indications of the neglect and exploitation of poor Israelites, including, at times, family members, by other members of family and community.

### 3.3.3 Ezekiel

Ezekiel contains a warning of judgment related to failing to aid the poor and needy. In a devastating indictment of Jerusalem,<sup>59</sup> and promise of punishment<sup>60</sup>, 16:49 specifies that the sins of "Jerusalem's sisters, Samaria and Sodom were not as egregious as those of Jerusalem. Samaria's sins are not mentioned by name, but the nature of Sodom's sin is specified: "She and her daughters had pride, excess of food, and prosperous ease, but did not aid the poor and needy". The very next verse says simply, "therefore I removed them when I saw it", but v.51 drives home the magnitude of their sin: "Samaria has not committed half your; you have committed more abominations than they, *and have made your sisters appear righteous* by all the abominations that you have committed". For Sodom to appear in such favourable terms in comparison with Jerusalem underscores the degree of condemnation poured out on Jerusalem. Ezekiel thus emphasises the importance of caring for the poor and the gravity of failing to do so. In the process, Ezekiel adds to our picture of ancient Israelite motivations for giving to the poor, and it is the flip side of blessing presented as he paints a picture of severe judgment in the wake of what seems arrogant neglect of the poor.<sup>61</sup>

### 3.3.4 Amos

The several references to care for and giving to the poor in the Book of Amos involve themes of judgment and punishment for neglect and abuse of the poor and, in terms reminiscent of Ezekiel, Amos 2:6-8 states that punishment will surely come to the nation of Israel, characterised as those "who sell the righteous for silver, and the needy for a pair of sandals" (v.6). Although commentators do not specify the exact nature of this offence against the poor, this verse perhaps refers to the practice of indentured service, even slavery, for what really are relatively trivial debts. Continuing, we read that Israel "tramples the head of the poor in the dust of the earth, and push the afflicted out of the way" (v.7). At the very least this may indicate neglect of the needs of the poor even when such people were physically present in daily life, but the use of the terms 'trample' and 'push' indicate a degree of deliberate disdain for the poor and their difficult circumstances.

The second half of the verse, "father and son go in to the same girl", may be a reference to the practice of selling one's daughter as a means of paying off a debt. The daughter then becomes the wife or concubine of the man who purchased her, or of his son.

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<sup>59</sup> Ez. 16.

<sup>60</sup> Ez. 16:35-43.

<sup>61</sup> This is not to say that Ezekiel portrays Jerusalem as beyond all hope of redemption. Beyond the severe punishment there is the promise of restoration (vv.53-63).

Could this be a perversion of that custom in which the two men abuse the young woman so sold? Given its presence in this list of offences against the poor, this seems a reasonable possibility.<sup>62</sup>

The next verse speaks of people who “lay themselves down beside every altar on garments taken in pledge; and in the house of their God they drink wine bought with fines they imposed” (v.8). While the reference to the cloak concerns the instruction not to keep such a pledge overnight<sup>63</sup> is quite familiar, and the fines speak of further unjust treatment of the poor, the reference to the altar seems a bit more obscure, although there may be a hint of the rationale for its presence in the list in the opening verses of Isaiah 58, where religious activity seems to have continued and even flourished at the same time as sinful behaviour.<sup>64</sup>

The preceding list of offences and punishment of the offenders find their echo in 5:11-12:

Therefore because you trample on the poor and take from them levies of grain, you have built houses of hewn stone, but you shall not live in them; you have planted pleasant vineyards, but you shall not drink their wine. For I know how many are your transgressions, and how great are your sins—you who afflict the righteous, who take a bribe, and push aside the needy in the gate.

This passage seems quite subtle in its description of the punishment awaiting those who mistreat and neglect the poor and their needs, but the imagery is quite potent. The ‘houses of hewn stone’ represent wealth and security, built and amassed to impress and protect at the expense of the poor, who have been forced to hand over inordinately large percentages of their crops to greedy landowners, thereby ensuring that the poor farmer will remain impoverished to the point that he and his family will never know an existence other than the one that underwrites the person/persons living in the house of hewn stone. It seems that there is nothing to interrupt this cycle of profitable abuse and pitiful powerlessness, but then we read that the day of the seemingly secure landowner, the person exercising power over the poor, will soon come to an end. Amos warns the wealthy who have no consideration for the poor or their needs to change their wicked ways, to “seek good and not evil, that you may live; and so the Lord, the God of hosts, will be with you, *just as you have said*. Hate evil and love good, and establish justice in the gate; it may be that the Lord, the God of hosts, will

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<sup>62</sup> So Pietri Bovati and Roland Meynet, *Le Livre du Prophète Amos* (Paris: Cerf, 1994), 77. Compare Shalom M. Paul, who claims that she was “not a harlot or a slave, but just a young woman’ . . . just one more member of the defenceless and exploited”, in *Amos* (Hermeneia, ed. Frank Moore Cross.) (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 82-83. Francis I. Andersen and David Noel Freedman, see her as a cult prostitute, but their argument is not convincing. *Amos: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 1989), 318.

<sup>63</sup> Ex.22:26; Deut.24:17. This law meant to ensure that the poor person would have the minimal protection of the outer coat during the night-time hours.

<sup>64</sup> See §3.3.2 “Isaiah”.

be gracious to the remnant of Joseph” (5:14-15). If not, then the people who oppress the poor, who do not care for them, meet their material needs or give them justice, will experience the wrath of God in war and turmoil which will strip them of everything, a terrible promise presented in detail in the following chapters (6-9).

Mistreatment of the poor, failure to meet their material needs and the common practice of taking advantage of their poverty to enrich oneself is again presented by Amos as symptomatic of the Israelite nation’s slide into sinful behaviour in 8:4-6:

Hear this, you that trample on the needy, and bring to ruin the poor of the land, saying ‘When will the new moon be over so that we may offer wheat for sale? We will make the ephah small and the shekel great, and practice deceit with false balances, buying the poor for silver and the needy for a pair of sandals, and selling the sweepings of the wheat’.

Greed fairly oozes from this passage, which intimates that there were rich who begrudged the poor the food which they were bound by law to share with them at festival times. They are portrayed as eagerly anticipating the end of each festival, when they could return to profitable business as usual. Not content with this, which was in theory acceptable behaviour, these people cheated their customers, on the one hand, and their debtors, on the other.

They cheated customers and debtors alike by using doctored scales to register amounts favourable to the seller only, and by selling poor quality grain. Not only did this result in diminished buying power for the customer, it meant that the poor person who dutifully brought produce to fulfil his or her obligation would be required to bring more than was actually required – the scales would see to that. Should this pattern continue, and apparently it did, any ‘lean’ crop yields would add to the burden to produce both for the insatiable landowner and for the farmer’s family, who had to subsist on whatever was left after payment to the landowner, and eventually, the farmer would be forced to offer himself, and perhaps his family, as slaves to the landowner. In any case, the text implies that the debts which led to this last extreme were often paltry, in contrast to the terms of service which, given the overall tenor of this passage were probably quite demanding and likely harsh.

We note the presence of what seems almost an afterthought in 8:6, “selling the sweepings of the wheat”. This may be a simple reference to the substandard quality of the wheat. It would, however, follow that here we have a succinctly worded additional indictment of people who were so arrogantly scornful of the poor and their plight that they sold what should have been gleaned, and they sold the chaff left after the grain had been winnowed. This becomes, then, a double-indictment of greed so pronounced that it does not even attempt to disguise itself as something else. A field where gleaning was not allowed would have been well-known in the community. In Amos’ eyes, the wickedness of the rich is great, and it has at its origin the profound failure to care for the poor, which has escalated into treatment of the

poor that reduces them to the status of ‘commodity’. The divine verdict? “The eyes of the Lord God are on this sinful kingdom, and I will destroy it from the face of the earth—except that I will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob...all the sinners of my people will die by the sword...” (9:8-10).

Amos gives as motivation for caring for and giving to the poor the desire to live, and the desire to be considered ‘salvageable’ by God in the day of judgment of the wicked, to be part of the faithful remnant (5:15), and to participate in the new society in which all shall benefit from the produce of the land, and all will have a place to live in the land (9:11-15). The message and the motivation are grim for those who have exploited the poor, and a strongly-worded encouragement to continue to those who already practise ethical and compassion treatment of the poor; they escape God’s condemnation and punishment. We have no more elaboration on the consequences of *right* behaviour vis-à-vis the poor in Amos. His message is primarily one of condemnation.

### **3.4 Ruth, Esther and Job**

#### **3.4.1 Ruth**

Of all the books in the Hebrew Bible, it is the Book of Ruth that gives us the clearest picture of gleaning.<sup>65</sup> This aspect is mostly neglected by the commentaries, where it is barely mentioned, except as neglected by Israel in the time of the judges, and then, merely as a convenient backdrop for the real drama of the story.<sup>66</sup> Whatever other aspects of the story merit investigation, for our purposes, the Book of Ruth serves as a ‘field white unto harvest’<sup>67</sup> with respect to the ancient practice of gleaning. The second chapter is devoted to Ruth’s experiences gleaning in the fields of Boaz, “a kinsman on her husband’s side, a prominent rich man”, according to 2:1. “She came and gleaned in the field behind the reapers” (2:3); that she was neither local nor an Israelite is not noted as a problem, and we know that she identified herself to the reapers, because in 2:6-7, they report to Boaz her identity, her request to “glean and gather in the sheaves behind”, and her hard work, remarking that “she has been on her feet from early this morning until now, without resting even for a moment”.

In 2:8-9, hints of possible harassment of gleaning women, as well as the physically demanding nature of the task appear in Boaz’ advice to Ruth to stay with the young women from his household while she continues to glean. He assures Ruth that his young men (the

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<sup>65</sup> For other clear pictures of gleaning in scripture, one must turn to the gospels where in Matthew 12:1ff, Mark 2:23ff, and Luke 6:1ff, Jesus and his disciples are portrayed as engaging in the practice, when “they began to pluck heads of grain and to eat them”. See below, §3.7 “The Gospels”.

<sup>66</sup> So E.F. Campbell, “The Ruth story does not represent the style of life which exercises caring responsibility as a foregone conclusion for God’s people”. *Ruth* [Anchor Bible] (New York: Doubleday, 1979), 29, 31, 111, 113; André Lacocque, “On n’enforce pas des portes ouvertes” (“One does not break down an open door”. Translation mine). *Le livre de Ruth* [Commentaire de l’Ancien Testament] XVII (Genève: Labor et Fides, 2004), (28). Cf. Y.Z. Lipowitz, *Ruth: The Scroll of Kindness*, (Jerusalem: Feldheim, 2001), 83-85, 90-93, 90-99, 103.

<sup>67</sup> To borrow from John 4:35.

reapers?) will not bother her and invites her to drink from the water drawn for his workers. We are told that Ruth expressed surprise at his consideration for a foreigner, and his response is that she has left her land to live in Bethlehem among the Israelites as she cares for Naomi, and that “the Lord [should] reward [her] for [her] deeds...”, following which Ruth notes again his kindness, “even though I am not one of your servants”. (2:10-12).

After sharing in the meal, and pocketing what she had left over (2:14), Ruth returned to her gleaning, and Boaz instructs his workers to allow her to pick up stalks near the harvested bundles (sheaves) of wheat and to leave a bit extra in her path (2:15-16). Ruth worked until evening and returned home with an *ephah*<sup>68</sup> (21 litres) of barley, plus her left-over lunch, already cooked and ready for Naomi to eat (2:17-18). Her mother-in-law was duly impressed with the results of her daughter-in-law’s efforts, and with the owner of the field, whose workers apparently were so slipshod that they left such great quantities of barley stalks on the ground (2:19)!

We learn that Ruth worked, gleaning in Boaz’ fields, during first the barley and then the wheat harvests (2:23), a period of anywhere from one to two months, beginning in late April-early May.<sup>69</sup> Working with the minimal figures for measurement,<sup>70</sup> if Ruth were able to average one *ephah*<sup>71</sup> of grain per day of work, and an *ephah* weighed approximately 3.2 kg.,<sup>72</sup> then she and Naomi could reasonably have amassed a 76.3 kg. supply of barley and wheat sufficient for six months, figuring 500g. per person per day. This would have represented a significant source of food throughout the year, although it would have been gathered in a short period of harvest.

So the Book of Ruth attests to the practice of gleaning in ancient Israel, and has provided us with helpful details concerning possible amounts gathered during the harvest periods for barley and wheat.

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<sup>68</sup> An *ephah* could range from 21.5 – 43.2 litres. We have opted for a minimal approach to the measure so as not to give an unrealistic estimate of the amount gleaned. See *Measuring and Weighing in Ancient Times*, A.M. Goldstein, ed. (Haifa: University of Haifa, 2001), 101, 106-107 for more measures.

<sup>69</sup> While no length of time is given for the wheat harvest, the duration of the barley harvest is fixed at two weeks by Philip J. King and Lawrence E. Stager, *Life in Biblical Israel* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 94. The longer period of a month per harvest for barley and wheat is provided by Borowski, *Daily Life*, 28. Borowski’s calculations are based on the Gezer calendar (or manual), a list of agricultural activities dating from the 10<sup>th</sup> century B.C., 31-44 (esp. 36).

<sup>70</sup> Twelve working days each for barley and wheat harvest, and one *ephah* weighing 3.2 kg. If we were to work with the maximal measurements, the amount gathered would be doubled and provide enough bread for two people for twelve months.

<sup>71</sup> An *ephah*, at 3.2 kg. would not have made a great difference to the farmer’s overall crop yield, even if the field were quite small. Much more than this amount could easily fall during the reaping process.

<sup>72</sup> A bundle of grain which weighs 3.2 kilogrammes would not be overly bulky, even with its dry stalk attached. It would have been an armful, or a clothful. More than this amount might have posed a problem for transporting it from field to home.

### 3.4.2 Esther

If Ruth shines a spotlight on gleaning as a manifestation of aid to the poor, the Book of Esther offers only one small glimpse of giving to the poor, and it involves festival-related gifts of food. Esther 9:18-23 describes the activities which constituted the first celebration and sets them for subsequent observances of Purim. There were days of feasting and gladness for Jews (the fourteenth and fifteenth of Adar, depending on where one lived), at which time they sent “gifts of food to one another”, according to 9:19, and then again in 9:22 we read that the formal record, drawn up by Mordechai, specified that these were “days for sending gifts of food to one another and presents to the poor”.<sup>73</sup> It is a small thing, perhaps, in the big picture of a hard life of poverty, but even so, it is something to add to our growing picture of mechanisms (in the form of festival-related giving) for Jewish aid to the poor.

### 3.4.3 Job

We come now to what may be our most extensive scriptural witness to giving to and caring for the poor. In Job’s story we see no fewer than seven points at which reference is made to the subject of such aid, and in every instance a link is made between reward and acclaim for aiding the poor, and correspondingly, punishment and condemnation for not doing so.

In Job 22:5-10, Eliphaz condemns Job for not caring for the poor; although there is no evidence that this is true, he is trying to find a reason for the rolling disaster that Job’s life has become:

Is not your wickedness great? There is no end to your iniquities. For you have exacted

pledges from your family for no reason, and stripped the naked of their clothing. You have given no water to the weary to drink, and you have withheld bread from the hungry. The powerful possess the land, and the favoured live in it. You have sent the widows away empty-handed, and the arms of the orphans you have crushed. Therefore snares are around you...

Perhaps Eliphaz makes these charges because he knows how common it is for the rich to ignore or blatantly mistreat the poor. Job’s response in 24:2-6, 9, 21 includes observations that seem to confirm the reality of such behaviour by the wicked, but unlike Eliphaz, he asks why such people often prosper for a while:

The wicked remove landmarks; they seize flocks and pasture them. They drive away the donkey of the orphan; they take the widow’s ox for a pledge. They thrust the needy off the road; the poor of the earth all hide themselves. Like wild asses in the desert they go out to their toil, scavenging in the wasteland food for their young. They

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<sup>73</sup> These two gifts “completed the celebration”, says Adele Berlin, *Esther: The Traditional Hebrew Text with the New JPS Translation* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2001), 88-89. Cf. Carey Moore, *Esther: Introduction, Translation, and Notes* [Anchor Bible] (New York: Doubleday, 1971), 94. This aspect of the text seems to be passed over lightly, as here, or completely by commentators.

reap in a field not their own and they glean in the vineyard of the wicked. . . . There are those who snatch the orphan child from the breast and take as a pledge the infant of the poor. . . . they harm the childless woman, and do no good to the widow.

Job knows that this is possible, but in 29:12-16 he recalls and regrets former days when all seemed well with his life, filled with his own virtuous activity vis-à-vis the poor, mentioning specifically all the categories of those eligible for such aid, including the orphan (29:12), the widow (29:13), the infirm (29:15), and the stranger (29:16). It is the first time in the biblical material that the infirm, here the blind and the lame, join the standard list which included the other three categories.

Not only does Job long for those earlier times, but he cannot understand why, if he has acted virtuously toward the poor and needy, he now suffers what seems a terrible punishment: "Surely one does not turn against the needy, when in disaster they cry for help. Did I not weep for those whose day was hard? Was not my soul grieved for the poor? But when I looked for good, evil came. . . ." (30:24-26).

Job's lament continues in the following chapter; it is filled with his ongoing plea for God to recognise his good heart and good behaviour in every area of life as he once again inventories his interactions with the poor as a series of conditional statements:

If I have withheld anything that the poor desired, or have caused the eyes of the widow to fail, or have eaten my morsel alone, and the orphan has not eaten from it. . . . if I have seen anyone perish for lack of clothing, or a poor person without covering. . . . if I have raised my hand against the orphan. . . . then let my shoulder blade fall from my shoulder, and let my arm be broken from its socket.

Poor Job just cannot understand how he went so wrong by doing so much good, and in his attempts to make sense of things, left more than one list of specific ways he aided the poor and needy in his community. His 'friends', however, feel that they understand quite well what is going on with Job. They, too, know that goodness is rewarded by God's blessing, and that wickedness will incur God's wrath. First is Eliphaz<sup>74</sup>, followed by Elihu, who in 34:26-28 asserts that God punishes those who disregard the poor, thereby implying that Job has "had no regard for any of [God's] ways, so that [it] caused the cry of the poor to him, and he heard the cry of the afflicted".<sup>75</sup>

In their 'counsel' to Job, we see the reflection of these commonly held beliefs about caring for the poor, and the conviction that he must have ignored some opportunities to do so along the way. Whatever one's position on the historicity of Job himself, in Job's story we have evidence of mechanisms for aiding the poor, and motivations, positive and negative, for

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<sup>74</sup> Job 22:5-10.

<sup>75</sup> This is almost word for word the negative motivation for giving to, and treating fairly the poor, found in Lev. 19:13 and Deut. 24:14-15.

doing so, and these motivations and mechanisms would have been familiar to those first readers/hearers of Job.

### 3.5 The Post-biblical Literature: Tobit, Ben Sira, Testament of Job, Pseudo Phocylides

The post-biblical books of the Apocrypha, according to David deSilva,

contribute to a fuller, more reliable picture of the Judaism of 200 B.C.E. to 100 C.E. The issues with which Jews in Palestine and abroad were wrestling during this period demonstrate continuity with issues that can be found in the Hebrew Scriptures but always represent a later stage of development and often some important modifications of what we see in the older literature. The books of the Apocrypha close that gap.<sup>76</sup>

Additionally, deSilva believes that these texts “bear witness to the esteem in which the Torah was held and to the promotion of (and motivations for) the strict observance of its laws...[and] provide insight into important developments in Jewish theology and ideology, preparing the reader for what he or she will encounter in the New Testament”.<sup>77</sup> We must, however, be cautious not to assume that this literature tells *all* about *all* Jews from this period in history. They give us windows into that time, but we cannot know whether they represent the totality of perspectives from that time. They do represent those (witnesses to Jewish life) which have survived to help inform us.

In the post-biblical literature, the subject of giving to the poor is treated primarily in *Tobit* and *Ben Sira* (a.k.a. *Ecclesiasticus*).<sup>78</sup> Through the eyes of the writers, we see, if not always actual practice, then, as in the canonical scriptural literature, ideals presented (concerning almsgiving among other issues), as well as indications of the success or failure to achieve the ideal, a viewpoint shared by deSilva when he notes, “the book of Tobit reaffirms Deuteronomy’s basic explanations of prosperity and suffering”,<sup>79</sup> and again, with a bit more elaboration, “Tobit’s theological contributions are...mainly conservative, reinscribing the theology found in Deuteronomy and the eschatology announced by the prophets”.<sup>80</sup>

#### 3.5.1 Tobit

Tobit may be classified as ‘romantic’ narrative, in the sense that it communicates, “for the sake of entertainment or spiritual edification, and for its own sake as story...the adventures or experiences of one or more individuals in their private capacities and from the viewpoint of their private interests and emotions. The sapiential (wisdom) aspects of Tobit are

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<sup>76</sup> David A. deSilva, *Introducing the Apocrypha: Message, Context, and Significance* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 20.

<sup>77</sup> deSilva, *Apocrypha*, 20.

<sup>78</sup> Wisdom of Solomon contains a very brief reference to God’s provision of food in 16:2, where it is said of God, “instead of...punishment, you showed kindness to your people and you prepared quails to eat, a delicacy to satisfy the desire of appetite” (cf. 16:21), but these are the only references to provision of food and are unlinked to any human aid to the poor.

<sup>79</sup> deSilva, *Apocrypha*, 78.

<sup>80</sup> deSilva, *Apocrypha*, 80.

at home in this genre, since instruction was one of its aims”.<sup>81</sup> In fact, there is so much instructional material concerning ethical behaviour that the author’s intention seems clearly to have been “to promote or reinforce a set of values...that would sustain the Jewish minority culture in the midst of the Gentile world”.<sup>82</sup>

Almsgiving continued to hold an important, even central place in Jewish life somewhere between 250—175 B.C.,<sup>83</sup> with Tobit an important example of this emphasis. At the very beginning of the narrative Tobit describes himself as one who has “walked in paths of truth all the days of my life...given alms to my brothers and fellow countrymen...to the brothers of my race; I gave bread to the hungry and clothes to the naked; and I buried, when I saw them, the bodies of my countrymen thrown over the walls of Ninevah” (1:3, 16). For Tobit, aid to the poor was reserved uniquely for other Jews.

One of Tobit’s ways to aid the poor was to send his son, Tobias out at the feast of Shavuot, to find any poor Jews among the exiles in Ninevah, where Tobit lived, so that as scripture instructs, they might share their meal with them (2:1-3a). The next act of material aid Tobit performed (before he even got to eat with whomever his son had brought home for dinner) was to bury a fellow Jew who had been murdered and thrown into and left in the market place, his burial forbidden by the king (2:3b). Already having suffered the loss of everything, “except...wife Anna and...son Tobias” (1:20) for engaging in such activity, Tobit repeats it and when he rests from his considerable labours, “sparrows on the wall; their fresh droppings fell into my eyes and produced white films” (2:10a). Tobit goes blind. His nephew Ahikar takes care of him (2:10b) and his wife goes to work (2:11). Poor Tobit has been reduced to what would have been considered a miserable existence by his contemporaries. When one day Anna returns home with the gift of a young goat, Tobit’s strain shows: “Where did you get this kid? It surely isn’t stolen, is it? Return it to the owners; for we have no right to eat anything stolen” (2:12-13). Tobit is not accustomed to being on the receiving end of what he so enthusiastically has done for others, and he finds the experience difficult both to envisage and to accept. He struggles, and so he worries that others may also misinterpret the gift (2:14a). Finally his wife must remind him of two facts: the charity he tries to reject is that which he has offered countless times to others, and everyone knows that he is deserving of the aid he now receives (2:14b).

Tobit, however, rather than give thanks to God for the care he has received, agonises over his sins, and the sins of his ancestors (3:3), which have led to his just punishment (3:4-5). He then asks to die, “for it is better for me to die than to see so much distress in my life...”

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<sup>81</sup> deSilva, *Apocrypha*, 70, citing B.E.Perry, *The Ancient Romances: A Literary-Historical Account of their Origins* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), 44-55.

<sup>82</sup> deSilva, *Apocrypha*, 70.

<sup>83</sup> deSilva, *Apocrypha*, 69.

(3:6). His wish to die because of his reduced circumstances reflects the sentiments of Ben Sira 40:28-30: “live not the life of a beggar; better to die than to beg. When one has to look to a stranger’s table, one’s life is not to be considered a life. The delicacies offered bring revulsion to one’s spirit, and to the intelligent inward torture”.

Tobit does however, remember some money he had left with a family member in a far-off place, and sends his son off to retrieve it. Before Tobias leaves, Tobit gives him some advice for the road of life. After reminding Tobias of his primary filial duty to bury him and care for Anna properly and respectfully before burying her with him, Tobit returns to the subject of almsgiving in 4:7-11, instructing Tobias as follows:

To all those who act righteously, give alms from your possessions, and let not your eye be evil when you give alms. Never turn your face from any poor person, and God will never turn his face from you. Give alms, lad, in proportion to what you have. If you have much wealth, then give more; and if you have little, don’t be afraid to give alms from the little you have. For you will be storing up good treasure against the day of adversity; after all, almsgiving delivers from death and postpones your going into the Darkness. In the sight of the Most High, almsgiving is a worthy offering for all who give it.<sup>84</sup>

Carey Moore, in *The Anchor Bible: Tobit*, tells us that this passage “tracks along with the “deuteronomistic theology of the book, the Gospels, and rabbinic teaching”.<sup>85</sup> While this may be largely true, with regard to the specific details of this passage, there is a significant difference between Tobit and both the rabbinic material and the gospels; in them the element of postponing death through aid to the poor is missing; what we see, rather, and only in the gospel material, is that the rich who neglect the poor in life, will suffer in death (Luke 16:19-31).

The idea in Tobit of giving in proportion to what one has, “If you have many possessions, make your gift from them in proportion; if few, do not be afraid to give according to the little you have” (4:8), is common to the Old Testament, gospels, and the rabbinic material.<sup>86</sup> It is also present in Paul’s instructions concerning the collection for Jerusalem in 2 Corinthians 8:11-12.

Later, in Tobit 12:8-9, Raphael (the angel: 5:4; 12:15)) reminds Tobit and his son Tobias (along with the reader), in terms reminiscent of 4:7-11, that

prayer with fasting is good, but better than both is almsgiving with righteousness. A little with righteousness is better than wealth with wrongdoing. It is better to give

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<sup>84</sup> Tobit 4:14-16 continues the instruction on care for and giving to the poor. Cf. Philo, *Hypoth.* 7.6 “He must not grudge to give fire to one who needs it or close off running water. If the poor or the cripple beg food of him he must give it as an offering of religion to God”; *Virt.* 82-87; Prov. 19:17; Ps. 41:1ff.

<sup>85</sup> Carey A. Moore, *Tobit* [Anchor Bible] (New York: Doubleday, 1996), 166.

<sup>86</sup> Contra Moore, who, while he sees it in the Gospels and rabbinic material, does not see the concept of proportionality in the OT. The instruction on gleaning, however, is by its very nature proportional. One who owns one field can have gleaners on one field; two fields mean more gleaning, etc. Likewise with the poor tithe. Rendered every third year, it amounted to a tenth of whatever one’s land had produced.

alms than to lay up gold. For almsgiving saves from death and purges away every sin. Those who give alms will enjoy a full life, but those who commit sin and do wrong are their own worst enemies.

A similar sentiment appears in Ben Sira 3:30-31: “As water extinguishes a blazing fire, so almsgiving atones for sin. Those who repay favours give thought to the future; when they fall they will find support”. Here are echoes of the scriptural notion of reward for charitable activity and punishment for neglect, or worse, unjust behaviour. Surely this notion was critical to both Ben Sira and the writer of Tobit. Indeed, Tobit’s very last words with his children as he lay dying at the appropriately great age of one hundred and twelve years<sup>87</sup> concerned almsgiving, and highlighted its importance: “So now, my children, see what almsgiving accomplishes, and what injustice does—it brings death!” (14:11a).

### 3.5.2 Ben Sira

Ben Sira lived from roughly 250 – 180 B.C. His writing which has survived situates his literary career in the beginning years of the second century, with his *Wisdom* produced somewhere near the end of his life.<sup>88</sup> A scribe by trade, “he has been called the last of the wise men of Israel and the first of the scribes....devoted...to the diligent study of the Law, the Prophets, and the other Writings—all of which we now call Sacred Scripture”.<sup>89</sup> Accordingly, *Wisdom* represents a lifetime of study and consideration of Scripture, combined with some seventy years or so of interaction with the world in which he lived, its social, economic, and political values.

Patrick Skehan sees Ben Sira’s purpose in writing as persuasive in nature, rather than polemical; he hoped to convince his fellow “Jews and well-disposed Gentiles that true wisdom is to be found primarily in Jerusalem and not in Athens, more in the inspired books of Israel than in the clever writings of Hellenistic humanism”, going on to say that Ben Sira read and utilised Hellenistic thought where “these could be reconciled with the Judaism of his day”.<sup>90</sup> *The Wisdom of Ben Sira* is, according to Skehan, “a kind of handbook of moral behaviour or code of ethics that a Jew of the early second century B.C. was expected to observe”.<sup>91</sup> It might be more accurate to say that this was a compilation of what Ben Sira expected of Jews in his day.

Skehan presents *The Wisdom of Ben Sira* as illustrating “how fully he reflects the mentality of second century B.C. Palestinian Judaism: its limitations and its grandeur, which

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<sup>87</sup> Tobit 14:1-2.

<sup>88</sup> Patrick W. Skehan, (translator) and Alexander A. Di Lella, (introduction and commentary) *The Wisdom of Ben Sira: A New Translation with Notes* (Anchor Bible) (New York: Doubleday, 1987), 10.

<sup>89</sup> Skehan, *Wisdom*, 10.

<sup>90</sup> Skehan, *Wisdom*, 16.

<sup>91</sup> Skehan, *Wisdom*, 4.

are obvious to everyone who reads the book attentively”.<sup>92</sup> In making this claim, Skehan seems to have mistaken this sample of Jewish thought for the whole of Jewish thought in this time period. Certainly *The Wisdom of Ben Sira* illustrates *one* strain, but we cannot with certainty say that it represents the entirety of Jewish thought and practice at this time.

As *The Wisdom of Ben Sira* deals with the subject of poor-relief, it reflects the tendency characteristic of Wisdom literature to emphasise the horizontal plane of obligation and expectation amongst people. Milton Horne, speaking of the biblical book of Proverbs, but reflecting generally on wisdom literature, reinforces this emphasis on the horizontal when he comments that “although the sages ultimately attribute wisdom’s origins to the deity, wisdom is described and fleshed out as human skills of intellection, reflection, speech, and timely action. The human experiences gained through such skills are passed on authoritatively to succeeding generations”.<sup>93</sup>

The practice of giving and its benefits to the giver figure as central features in the material touching on caring for and giving to the poor in *Ben Sira*, where the writer instructs his readers in 7:32-36 to be kind and generous to the poor because, as this activity benefits its recipient, so also it benefits the giver: “To the poor also extend your hand, that your blessing may be complete; Give your gift to anyone alive, and withhold not your kindness from the dead; avoid not those who weep, but mourn with those who mourn; neglect not to care for the sick—for these things you will be loved”.

These benefits include non-specified blessing, an increase in God’s love for the giver, the guarantee of God’s protection<sup>94</sup> and the promise of God’s forgiveness for sin.<sup>95</sup> The fact that these benefits are found in the exhortations to give, and correspondingly, warnings for failing to give alms,<sup>96</sup> brings to mind the biblical material on caring for and giving to the poor, but without any references to God as model for such giving. The vertical aspect of giving may still be present in *Ben Sira*, but the focus seems to have shifted to an emphasis on human action as catalyst to *affect* a God who seems no longer to be viewed as the starting point and model for all care for the poor. The image of a good God who is the first to bless seems to have given place in *Ben Sira* to a God who waits to be blessed before blessing in return. “Do not be impatient in prayer; do not neglect to give alms”.<sup>97</sup> “A man’s almsgiving is like a signet ring to him, he cherishes a man’s generosity like the pupil of his eye”.<sup>98</sup> Even more,

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<sup>92</sup> Skehan, *Wisdom*, 7.

<sup>93</sup> Milton Horne, *Proverbs – Ecclesiastes* (Macon, Georgia: Smyth & Helwys, 2003), 13.

<sup>94</sup> Sir. 29:13 “Better than sturdy shield or weighty spear, it will fight for you against the enemy”; cf. Proverbs 19:17.

<sup>95</sup> Sir. 3:30 “As water quenches flaming fire, so alms atones for sins”.

<sup>96</sup> Sir. 12:3 “No good will come to a man... who refuses to give alms”.

<sup>97</sup> Sir. 7:10 seems to show the subtle linking of charity with obtaining some favour from God.

<sup>98</sup> Sir. 17:22 may imply that if one engages in charity, then God will love that one more.

charity is presented as a means for atoning for sin.<sup>99</sup> These are variations of biblical themes, but rather than presenting them as responses to God's prior beneficent activity, they seem more designed to spur God on to a desired response.<sup>100</sup>

If on the one side of charity is the giver, then on the other side is necessarily the recipient, and as we have seen, Ben Sira cautions strongly against falling into that category.<sup>101</sup> His harsh statement is balanced, however, by a number of passages in which the poor (presumably some of whom have been reduced to begging) are described in more positive terms. "Poverty is only evil in the opinion of the ungodly".<sup>102</sup> "It is not right to despise one who is intelligent but poor..."<sup>103</sup> "Give a hearing to the poor..."<sup>104</sup> Even so, one who would give is urged to give to the "worthy" poor. "If you do good, know for whom you are doing it, and your kindness will have its effect. Do good to the just and reward will be yours, if not from him, from the Lord. No good comes to him who gives comfort to the wicked, nor is it an act of mercy that he does. Give to the good person, refuse the sinner; refresh the downtrodden, give nothing to the proud..." (12:1-7).<sup>105</sup>

Ben Sira suggests that the worthy poor might be "those who work and struggle and hurry, but are so much the more in want...others who are slow and need help, who lack strength and abound in poverty, but the eyes of the Lord look kindly upon them; he lifts them out of their lowly condition and raises up their heads..."<sup>106</sup> In some ways, Ben Sira echoes the scriptural material, and in others, he is more reminiscent of Seneca, who says that we should be more careful of those to whom we give, because when we are not, "we give, or rather throw, away without any discrimination",<sup>107</sup> and declares that "the benefit that it is a delight to have received, yea, with outstretched hands, is the one that reason delivers to those who are worthy, not the one that chance and irrational impulse carry no matter where—one that it is a pleasure to display and claim as one's own. Do you give the name of benefits to

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<sup>99</sup> Sir. 3:30. See above, §3.5.1 "Tobit".

<sup>100</sup> So 3:30-4:10, which begins with "As water quenches flaming fire, so alms atones for sins", proceeds to list a number of right behaviours toward the poor, and ends with "Then God will call you a son of his, and he will be more tender to you than a mother". Cf. 7:32-36. Cf. James R. Harrison, *Paul's Language of Grace in its Graeco-Roman Context*, WUNT II/172 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 114, n. 80.

<sup>101</sup> Sir. 40:28-30.

<sup>102</sup> Sir. 13:24b.

<sup>103</sup> Sir. 10:23, 30-31.

<sup>104</sup> Sir. 4:8a.

<sup>105</sup> See, however, 14:3-10, where the reader is instructed not to be a miser, because such a one is "an evil person; he turns away and disregards people" and 18:15-18, where s/he is equally instructed to give "ungrudgingly", without "reproach" or "harsh words" to the recipient, for fear of spoiling one's gift, as "a word is better than a gift".

<sup>106</sup> Sir. 11:11-13. Cf. 31:4 "The poor toils for a meagre subsistence, and if he ever rests, he finds himself in want".

<sup>107</sup> Seneca, *De Beneficiis* 1.1.1-3.

the gifts whose author you are ashamed to admit?”<sup>108</sup> He also echoes Plutarch: “It is always an excellent thing not to make an intimate acquaintance of the man who is ready with his embraces, but rather, of our own motion, to embrace those of whom we approve as worthy of our attention and useful to us”.<sup>109</sup>

We note then the synthesis of scriptural material and themes with those of the ambient cultural setting in Ben Sira’s *Wisdom*, vis-à-vis care for and aid to the poor, indicating that in this strain of Judaism, at least, there was some degree of openness to such mixing.

The post-biblical texts of Tobit and Ben Sira reveal an evolution of perspective vis à vis almsgiving (giving to the poor). As we have seen, they share much in common with a number of the OT texts which discuss caring for the poor as rooted in God’s self-designation as *initiator* of and model for all human giving. This sentiment may be behind the instruction on almsgiving in Tobit and Ben Sira, but it is nowhere clearly articulated. Their anthropocentric focus is shared with Proverbs.<sup>110</sup>

This lack of direct linkage (of human giving to the poor as predicated on God’s prior activity as giver), along with a strong focus on the practice of ‘almsgiving’ in the post-biblical literature, may have led to a view of giving to the poor more as a form of insurance intended to protect oneself from the possibility of physical deprivation and eternal darkness (i.e. death),<sup>111</sup> and to better one’s standing in the temporal and eternal realms, rather than first a response to (and grounded in) God’s prior blessings, and second a means to continued blessings. This shift may be indicative of the basic human tendency to forget the momentous experiences of personal and corporate histories.<sup>112</sup>

By this time, the Jews had come a long way from their experience of slavery in Egypt, their release and desert wanderings; perhaps the collective memories of God’s provision for them in their time of need had grown dim. If that were in any way the case, then it would be reasonable to reflect on Hellenistic influences at the time that Tobit and Ben Sira, were written.

The relative silence concerning God as initiator and model for human care for and giving to the poor would not have been remarkable in such a setting. Although Seneca speaks of God as providential benefactor,<sup>113</sup> otherwise the Hellenistic literature maintains a fairly consistent anthropocentric focus on giving, and particularly on the emperor as engaging in

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<sup>108</sup> Seneca, *De Beneficiis* 1.15.3-4.

<sup>109</sup> Plutarch, *Moralia* 94E.

<sup>110</sup> See above §3.2.2 “Proverbs”. Cf. §3.4.3 “Job”

<sup>111</sup> Tobit 4:7,9,10; 12:9; 14:10,11.

<sup>112</sup> This continues to be the case. In recent years, the U.S.A. have experienced the events of 9/11, and Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. For many people, behaviours which had changed as a result of those awe-inspiring events very quickly reverted to whatever had been their prior norm.

<sup>113</sup> Seneca, *De Providentia*. Cf. Cicero, *Catiline* 3.14.

*providentia (pronoia)*.<sup>114</sup> Rather than indicate an active disregard for God, this absence may simply demonstrate one of the ways Jews living in primarily Hellenistic settings<sup>115</sup> had been influenced by the surrounding culture,<sup>116</sup> which was pervaded by the philosophy and practice of patronage and benefaction, both of which were profoundly anthropocentric.<sup>117</sup>

### 3.5.3 Testament of Job

The “Testament of Job” might be considered a fantastic reflection of and expansion on the biblical text, making multiple and liberally exaggerated references to giving to the poor and hungry as it has Job claim to have practised it.<sup>118</sup> In it, an indefatigably magnanimous Job reminisces about how he happily set aside livestock, goods and food specifically to give to “the helpless, to the destitute, and to all the widows” (9:5-6), and how he “maintained (many) food tables for strangers, for widows, and the poor” (10:1-7).

So infectious was Job’s enthusiasm for charity that others wished to emulate him in it, even though they themselves were poor. Job doled out money to local poor people eager to serve the poor in distant cities, glad to aid them in their undertakings:

There were also certain strangers who saw my eagerness, and they too desired to assist in this service. And there were still others, at the time without resources and unable to invest a thing, who came and entreated me, saying, ‘We beg you, may we also engage in this service. We own nothing, however. Show mercy on us and lend us money so we may leave for distant cities on business and be able to do the poor a service. And afterward we shall repay you what is yours.’

When I heard these things, I would rejoice that they would take anything at all from me for the care of the poor. And receiving their note eagerly, I would give them as much as they wished, taking no security from them except a written note. So they would go out at my expense (11:1-10).

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<sup>114</sup> Martin P. Charlesworth, “Providentia and Aeternitas” *Harvard Theological Review* 29 (1936): 108-118.

<sup>115</sup> Most Jews outside Jerusalem fall into this category, even in Jerusalem, although Jews were the overwhelming majority and exercised greater influence over the culture, and that influence would perhaps have evolved somewhat differently than in those other places. So Martin Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism: Studies in their Encounter in Palestine during the Early Hellenistic Period*. Vol.1 (London: SCM, 1974), 56. See also John J. Collins and Gregory E. Sterling, eds. *Hellenism in the Land of Israel* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame, 2001), especially the following essays on the interaction of Judaism and Hellenism in the first century BC and AD: Martin Hengel, “Judaism and Hellenism Revisited” (6-37); John J. Collins, “Cult and Culture: The Limits of Hellenization in Judea” (38-61); Eric S. Gruen, “Jewish Perspectives on Greek Culture and Ethnicity” (62-93); Gregory E. Sterling, “Judaism between Jerusalem and Alexandria” (263-301).

<sup>116</sup> Although L.V. Rutgers would contend that “one pattern in particular...seems to recur constantly: Jews availed themselves of the trappings of Greco-Roman society, but they did so in order to express an identity that was patently and unmistakably Jewish”. *The Hidden Heritage of Diaspora Judaism* (Leuven: Peeters, 1998), 39.

<sup>117</sup> In that one act of participation almost inevitably led to another, and this would be repeated time and again, until something, perhaps death, broke the chain. For more on this, see Ch. 2 “Motivations and Mechanisms for Aid to The Poor: The Graeco-Roman World”.

<sup>118</sup> R.P. Splitter, trans., “Testament of Job”, in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vol. 1. ed. James H. Charlesworth (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1983), 839-68. All subsequent references from the Testament of Job are taken from Charlesworth, *OTP*.

And, when they failed, Job would cancel their obligation to him as if it were a privilege (11:11-12). This Job was such a generous man that when a poor man came and asked for what amounted to a free meal by saying that he wished to serve the poor at Job's table because he had not sufficient means of his own, Job not only assented, he insisted on paying the person after the meal (12:1-4).

Job was so generous in his provision for the poor that when his servants became tired and ill-tempered, to the point of complaining and cursing (the subject of which was Job's unremitting kindness to the poor which kept them constantly occupied), yet Job "was quite kind" (13:5).

When disaster struck Job, questions revealing the assumption of a link between charitable activity and reward were asked, "Have we not known about the many good things sent out by him into the cities and the surrounding villages to be distributed to the poor, besides those established at his house? How then has he fallen into such a deathly state?"(30:5). "Are you the one who appointed 3,000 camels for the transport of goods to the needy? Where then is the splendour of your throne? Are you the one who appointed the thousand cattle for the needy to use when ploughing? Where then is the splendour of your throne?" (32:2, 3, 7).

Not to be deterred, Job insists:

once again [I] sought to do good works for the poor. And all my friends and those who had known me as a benefactor came to me. And they queried me, saying, 'What do you ask of us now?' And remembering the poor again to do them good, I asked them, saying, 'Let each one give me a lamb for the clothing of the poor who are naked.' So then every single one brought a lamb and a gold coin. And the Lord blessed all the goods I owned, and he doubled my estate (44:2-5).

The link between giving to the poor and reward here are quite clear: the one who engages in such giving will be blessed by God. That blessing will be both earthly and spiritual, but the emphasis in this text is clearly on the tangible nature of the rewards.<sup>119</sup>

When Job is on his deathbed, he entreats his children, "Above all, do not forget the Lord. Do good to the poor. Do not overlook the helpless"(45:1-2). When Job dies, his brother, Nereus,

with the seven male children accompanied by the poor and the orphans and all the helpless, [we] were weeping and saying:

'Woe to us today! A double woe!  
Gone today is the strength of the helpless!  
Gone is the light of the blind!  
Gone is the father of orphans!  
Gone is the host of strangers!

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<sup>119</sup> At least with respect to the seven sons. The daughters each received a special sash which imparted to them the power to speak in the "angelic dialect" and this, according to the dying Job in 46:3, was "an inheritance better than that of your seven brothers".

Gone is the clothing of widows!  
Who then will not weep over the man of God?  
And as soon as they brought the body to the tomb, all the widows and  
orphans circled about forbidding it to be brought into the tomb. But after  
three days they laid him in the tomb in a beautiful sleep, since he received a  
name renowned in all generations forever (53:1-7).

Of the post-biblical material, “The Testament of Job” is the richest in material concerned with giving to the poor and hungry. Although the scale of giving is fantastic, several aspects of this giving are plainly lifted up and most likely reflect realistic attitudes and aspirations of the day (1<sup>st</sup> century B.C.E.—1<sup>st</sup> century C.E.). First we see the link between giving to the poor and material blessing. In the Testament, one begets the other, so that following his devastation, because Job’s first financial efforts were charitably inspired, they led to God’s blessing, and to a doubling of his former holdings. Second to be noticed in the text is the pervasive nature of Job’s giving, manifested in many areas of his life. Job seems to have provided aid to the poor and hungry at every opportunity.

### 3.5.4 Pseudo Phocylides

P.W. Van der Horst assigns Pseudo Phocylides to a date after the second century B.C. because of the obvious familiarity of the writer with the LXX and with Stoic ethics,<sup>120</sup> situating the writing more precisely between 50 – 100 C.E.,<sup>121</sup> and thereby making it contemporary with the New Testament documents.

Situating “The Sentences” within Jewish wisdom literature, Collins observes, Pseudo Phocylides makes no overt reference whatever to Judaism. This literature may still

have been addressed primarily to Jews, but it also seems to be very congenial to interested Gentiles. To a great degree, it explores common ground between Jews and Gentiles. The common ground that it explores, however, is on a fairly high intellectual and moral level. . . . The appeal of the wisdom writers is to educated, cultured Hellenes, who were philosophically sophisticated. Whether or not they hoped to attract such Greeks to Judaism, they sought to understand their religion in such a way that they themselves could be both faithful Jews and cultured Hellenes.<sup>122</sup>

Although he also suspects that the writer may have been hoping to gain the sympathy of Greeks, even more than to demonstrate to fellow-Jews the consistency of Jewish thought with the prevailing views of the surrounding Graeco-Roman culture, Van der Horst cautions that we do not yet have enough evidence to make a decision as to the author’s intent.<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> P.W. van der Horst, trans., “Pseudo-Phocylides”, in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1983), 2:565; cf. Walter Wilson, *The Mysteries of Righteousness: The Literary Composition and Genre of the Sentences of Pseudo-Phocylides* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1994), 45.

<sup>121</sup> Charlesworth, *OTP*, 2:567; Wilson, *Mysteries*, 64-65.

<sup>122</sup> Collins, *Jewish Wisdom*, 157.

<sup>123</sup> In Charlesworth, *OTP*, 2:565-566.

Pseudo-Phocylides displays a mix of Jewish and Greco-Roman attitudes toward giving. Giving to the poor (as in destitute) is a Jewish concept; as we have seen, specific, practical concern for the needs of the poor is not attested in the Graeco-Roman literature,<sup>124</sup> while the need for immediacy in giving, “at once...not tomorrow,”<sup>125</sup> is clearly seen in Graeco-Roman writers such as Seneca.<sup>126</sup> Pseudo Phocylides’ listing of several categories of recipient, “the needy...the homeless...the blind...the shipwrecked,”<sup>127</sup> is reminiscent of, but extends beyond the scriptural recipient categories of orphan, widow, sojourner. Pseudo Phocylides’ instruction on giving to the poor concludes on a decidedly Greco-Roman note by encouraging recipients of such giving to “surpass benefactors with still more benefactions.”<sup>128</sup>

In whatever community Pseudo Phocylides lived and wrote,<sup>129</sup> he felt the need to explicate his conception of a moral life, specifically with respect to giving to the poor. The result for us is that whether the target audience was Greeks or Jews, or both, and we do not know which it was, in the Sentences of Pseudo Phocylides we have an example of the overlap of Jewish and Graeco-Roman/Hellenistic thinking, and perhaps practice, in the first century.<sup>130</sup>

### 3.6 Qumran (Dead Sea Scrolls)

What has Qumran, a seemingly communistic association of like-minded men (and perhaps women),<sup>131</sup> to do with the question of giving to the poor? How could poverty or want have been a factor in their community (and, by extension, in other DSS/Essene communities)? Interestingly, the subject is treated in the literature that has emerged from Qumran, and so we turn to it with the expectation that it, too, will shed some light on our variegated picture of Jewish motivations and mechanisms vis à vis aid to the poor in the first century C.E.<sup>132</sup>

<sup>124</sup> Contra Wilson, who claims that “the way that the author carries forward the argument is by-and-large consistent with the more widespread body of thought in ancient ethics that maintained that justice not only entails obedience to the law and the avoidance of harmful deeds but also ought to encourage positive actions motivated by a sense of fairness and compassion”. *Mysteries*, 83, and n. 28, 86. This statement not only reads human compassion into the culture, but also reveals a misapprehension of ‘equity’ (ἐπιείκεια) and ‘equality’ (ισότης) in the wider Graeco-Roman literature. Cf. §2.5.2 “*Isotes*”; Philo, *Virt.* 6, 94.

<sup>125</sup> Pseudo Phocylides, l.22.

<sup>126</sup> Seneca, *De Beneficiis* 2.2.1-2.

<sup>127</sup> Pseudo Phocylides, l.23.

<sup>128</sup> Pseudo Phocylides, l.80.

<sup>129</sup> This is a matter on which scholars disagree. Van der Horst says we cannot know, Collins opts for Alexandria (*Jewish Wisdom*, 159), and John Barclay thinks his location may be outside of Egypt. *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora: From Alexander to Trajan (323 BCE – 117 CE)* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), 336.

<sup>130</sup> Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora*, 345.

<sup>131</sup> The terms “Qumran Community”, “Covenant Community” and “Covenanters” will be employed when speaking of the group, and members of the group(s) represented by the Dead Sea Scrolls. There is, however, room for disagreement concerning the relationship (if any) between the Qumran community and the Essenes (as Josephus, Philo and Pliny describe them), but here I follow the majority opinion which sees at least some relationship between the two.

<sup>132</sup> All quotations from and references to the Dead Sea Scroll sources in this section will be based on Geza Vermes’ *The Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, Revised and Extended 4<sup>th</sup> Edition, Sheffield, UK:

Of specific interest to our study is the work of Catherine M. Murphy,<sup>133</sup> whose focus centres upon the significance and administration of wealth in the Qumran Community which claimed for itself as a whole the designation 'poor'. Murphy examines what it meant for the sectaries of Qumran to have goods in common, and asks to what extent they gave up their individual control of wealth to the community (or to representatives thereof). And, although Murphy's primary aim is to examine the understanding and treatment of wealth in this very specialised community of the first century, her work intersects with that of this study at the point at which it considers care for the poor of the Qumran community, as well as in its discussion of the social dimensions of aiding the poor:

Against what social customs, practices and institutions might the community of goods have been articulated? What was "common" when possessions were shared? Are we to imagine a community of equals or a hierarchical order of patronage and benefaction, similar to that operative in the outside culture but motivated by a different ideology? Finally, what were the rationales undergirding the practice?<sup>134</sup>

Murphy's aim was to restore the concept of the community of goods to its Jewish context, as it grew out of the commands in Torah "to love God with one's whole strength and...one's neighbour as oneself".<sup>135</sup> Framing this in terms of covenant, Murphy presents the idea of shared goods as one which at once harked back to Israel's past, with an idealised view of their wilderness experience, and looked forward, to a future in which the renewed temple would be a reality and their apocalyptic hopes of redemption would be realised.<sup>136</sup> In doing this, Murphy sets out, in a helpful manner, the motivation and mechanism of caring for the poor in the framework of the Qumran Community.

So Murphy investigates giving to the poor in the Qumran community as an aspect of their policy of shared wealth, which itself was presented "in terms of covenant fidelity and sacrificial offering", and she sees in the texts evidence concerning the nature of the wealth, its administration and its effect on all who participated in the community.<sup>137</sup>

Unlike our other examples of Jewish giving to the poor,<sup>138</sup> the Qumran participants did not practice proportional giving. The contribution of *all* one's holdings into the community showed the person's faithful adherence to the covenant,<sup>139</sup> and was inspired by

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Sheffield Academic Press, 1995, with occasional references to *Discoveries in the Judaean Desert (DJD)*, 1956-2005.

<sup>133</sup> Catherine M. Murphy, *The Disposition of Wealth in the Literature and Practice of the Qumran Community and Its Relevance for the Study of the N.T.*, Ph.D. diss., Notre Dame University, 1999 (UMI, 2001), and *Wealth in the Dead Sea Scrolls and in the Qumran Community* (Leiden: Brill, 2001).

<sup>134</sup> Murphy, *Disposition of Wealth*, 2.

<sup>135</sup> Murphy, *Disposition of Wealth*, 14; Lev. 19:18.

<sup>136</sup> Murphy, *Disposition of Wealth*, 14-15.

<sup>137</sup> Murphy, *Disposition of Wealth*, 17; cf. *Wealth*, 103.

<sup>138</sup> Including, as we shall see, Paul's policy for the Christians participating in the collection for Jerusalem in 2 Cor. 8-9.

<sup>139</sup> Cf. Jesus' interaction with the rich young ruler in Mat. 19:16-21; Mk. 10:17-22; Lk. 18:19-24.

Deuteronomy 6:5.<sup>140</sup> The goal of total donation was that the pooled wealth of the community be available for use “according to God’s righteous counsel;”<sup>141</sup> this wealth represented one’s heart, soul and strength, and, additionally, one’s judgment, counsel and Torah observance (of purity and service). That shared wealth could represent all this was the result of the community’s “arrogation of interpretive authority...[as] the Rule elevates itself to the level of the Torah itself”.<sup>142</sup>

Murphy examines the nature of the giving. Was it voluntary or mandatory? The word used to describe the “newly arrived”<sup>143</sup> is מתנבִּיִּם (*mitnad'vim* = volunteers/constrained ones). One might see the action of the aspirants in very different ways, depending on which of the meanings one ascribes to the Hebrew term, although by “volunteering” to join the community, one then took on the constraints of the community, so perhaps there is not an enormous gap, but rather a cause and effect relationship between the meanings for מתנבִּיִּם. As they voluntarily were constrained to donate their wealth (in stages, and in so doing, all of themselves as well, body and soul) the aspirants took steps toward absorption into the community, and therefore toward becoming themselves an acceptable free-will offering: first to the community, and then, with the whole of the community, to God.<sup>144</sup> Murphy, emphasising the voluntary nature of the initiate’s association during the first two years claims that the initiate could opt to stop the process, withdraw from the community, reclaim his holdings (even though he would thereby demonstrate his enduring state of unrighteousness).<sup>145</sup> This claim is hard to see in the text itself, where the emphasis seems clearly to be on the prerogative of the Community, and not on the volition of the aspirant:

Every man, born of Israel...shall be examined by the Guardian at the head of the Congregation...if he is fitted to the discipline, he shall admit him into the covenant that he may be converted to the truth...and he shall instruct him...after...one full year...he [is] examined...and if it be his destiny, according to the judgement of the priests and the multitude of the men of their Covenant, to enter...his property and earnings shall be handed over to the Bursar..., who shall register ...and shall not spend it...But when a second year has passed, he shall be examined, and if it be his destiny, according to the judgement of the Congregation, to enter the Community, then he shall be inscribed...his property shall be merged and he shall offer his counsel and judgement to the community.<sup>146</sup>

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<sup>140</sup> Murphy, *Disposition of Wealth*, 31, although she does not specify the text at this point, she does so in §3.3.1.2 of *Wealth*, 120-125.

<sup>141</sup> Murphy, *Disposition of Wealth*, 37; cf. *Wealth*, §3.3.1.3, 125-130.

<sup>142</sup> Murphy, *Disposition of Wealth*, 50-51 *Wealth*, 137.

<sup>143</sup> Not yet full members, as the process of becoming full participants in the community could be completed only after a two to three year of “trial” or “novitiate”, during which the aspiring member proved his worthiness and became acquainted with the ways of the group.

<sup>144</sup> Murphy, *Disposition of Wealth*, 51-55, reflecting on 1 QS IX.1b-5; cf. *Wealth*, 3.3.2, 137-140.

<sup>145</sup> Murphy, *Disposition of Wealth*, 56-57, re: 1QS VI.12-23; cf. *Wealth*, 141.

<sup>146</sup> 1QS VI.12-23.

One might infer from this that because the Community could end the intake process during the first two years, so too could the initiate, but if such were the case, it is not clear in the Rule.

Once fully incorporated into the Community (body, soul, and “bank account”), the member became part of a group that saw itself as one with Torah, and one in resources. They saw themselves as holy, living in a state of purity reserved usually for priests in the outside Jewish world, where there was a division between clergy and the laity.<sup>147</sup> That which they brought, their “judgement, righteousness, perfection of the way, and wealth...are all presented explicitly as offerings or as soothing aromas rising to God. The members of this community are themselves the priests and the victims of its sacrificial system, offering themselves freely to a way of life stylised as sacrificial”.<sup>148</sup> Might we then have a glimpse of their interpretation of Deuteronomy 10:12-14 in this inclusion of self in the giving of every other possession to God through the community, as well as a possible point in common with Paul’s description of the Macedonian Christians in 2 Cor. 8:5?

In the Damascus Document, we find further illumination of the Covenanters’ concept of shared wealth and provision for all. This document differs from 1QS in that while 1QS seems to refer only to a physically separate community, the Damascus Document implies that there are “Covenant communities” within ordinary towns; they were comprised of men and women, families, as well as single people, all of whom worked and carried on with the daily commitments of life. It is in this document that we see frequent references to the presence of these “others”, the “ordinary” setting in which the “covenanters” lived, and the effect on life of those others as well as the challenges of living in the same area with them each day.<sup>149</sup>

The Covenant communities (Qumran, Damascus, et al.) saw themselves as family, referring to members as brothers and using kinship language in their documents to describe those to whom material help was due: “They shall love each man his brother as himself; they shall succour the poor, the needy, and the stranger”.<sup>150</sup>

Material aid was to be extended only to other members of the family;<sup>151</sup> the money collected monthly for this purpose was for them and them alone, to be administered, according to the Damascus Document, by “the Guardian and the Judges, and from it they shall give to the fatherless...succour the poor and the needy, the aged sick and the homeless, the captive taken by a foreign people, the virgin with no near kin, and the ma[id for] whom no

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<sup>147</sup> Murphy, *Disposition of Wealth*, 59-60; cf. *Wealth*, §3.3.2.3, 143-147; cf. 1QS V.6.

<sup>148</sup> Murphy, *Disposition of Wealth*, 64, commenting on 1QS IX.5; *Wealth*, 148.

<sup>149</sup> CD V.10; vVI15-VII.10; VIII.5; .5-10; XVI.10; XI.10; XII.1-10, 15-20; XIV.15.

<sup>150</sup> 1CD VI.20.

<sup>151</sup> This exclusivity, echoing that usually found in the post-biblical literature (except perhaps the Testament of Job), with its emphasis on worthy Jewish recipients, attests a tightening (with the exception of Nehemiah) of the boundary-crossing poor-aid of the Hebrew Bible, which, while it was first to be extended to other Jews, could also be extended to Gentiles.

man cares...”<sup>152</sup> From this we gather that charity was usually administered by representatives of the Community, the Guardian and the Judges, and not necessarily by individual members to one another. Here is a difference with our other Jewish sources; in addition to organised charity administered on behalf of the group, in the larger Jewish world outside the DSS communities, we find that encouragement, even legislation concerning responsibility to engage in personal acts of aid to the poor are attested.<sup>153</sup> It is unfortunate that the text is incomplete just at the point where the issue of personal aid might be clarified, and so we do not really know whether their rule admitted individual aid to the poor.

The question arises as to why there would have been need for aid to the poor in a community where goods and wealth were not merely *seen* as commonly held, but actually were held and administered by one or more representatives of the community.

While all were expected to work and contribute to the common fund, and at the beginning this was perhaps the case with all who joined, it was also possible that there were poor and destitute people who presented themselves as candidates for membership, or travelling Covenanters in need of food and shelter along the way, and that provision was made for them through the above-mentioned fund. Even had every initiate been able-bodied, with the passing of time, inevitably sickness and disability, age, infirmity, and death would emerge as factors in their shared life. The (town-based) Damascus Community left evidence that they had made provision for such eventualities, as quite probably did the more geographically isolated communities such as Qumran;<sup>154</sup> their practices did not go unnoticed. Josephus remarked, “In all other matters they do nothing without orders from their superiors; two things only are left to individual discretion, the rendering of assistance and compassion. Members may of their own motion help the deserving, when in need, and supply food to the destitute”.<sup>155</sup> Josephus’ remarks concerning *personal* aid to the poor by the Essenes find no corresponding documentation either in the Damascus Document (CD) or the Rule of the Community (1QS). His comments may have applied to the town-based groups, but they seem to fly in the face of the emphasis on whole group involvement in the life of the community.<sup>156</sup> Josephus obviously knew that aid occurred; the question remains as to how it occurred and who usually administered such aid.

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<sup>152</sup> CD XVI.14-15. “Interestingly, neither the alien nor the widow is mentioned...” (Murphy, *Disposition of Wealth*, 153; *Wealth*, 83-84). Cf. M. *Ketubot* 6.5-6.

<sup>153</sup> See §3.1 “Scripture & the Practice of Care for the Poor: Exodus, Leviticus, Deuteronomy”, §3.5 “The Post-biblical Literature: Tobit, Ben Sira, Testament of Job, Pseudo Phocylides”, §3.7 “The Gospels”, and §3.11 “Rabbinic Material”.

<sup>154</sup> CD XIV.14-15, although the Qumran Community left no literary evidence of such practice.

<sup>155</sup> Josephus, *Wars* 2.134. See 2.119-127 for further comments on their sharing with the materially needy.

<sup>156</sup> So Murphy, *Wealth*, 453-454.

The Covenant community looked to God, in the here and now and in the future, as the One who provided<sup>157</sup> both physical and spiritual (i.e. knowledge) sustenance, and declared:

Bless, my soul, the Lord for all his marvels, for ever. And may his name be blessed. For he has delivered the soul of the poor, and has not despised the humble, and has not forgotten the misery of the deprived. He has opened his eyes toward the distressed, and has heard the cry of the fatherless, and has turned his ears towards their crying. He has been gracious to the humble by his great kindness, and has opened their eyes to see His ways, and their ears to hear His teaching....<sup>158</sup>

“The community that anticipate[d] the eschatological reversal [was] to live as if it had already happened in their midst”.<sup>159</sup> They imitated God, “the ultimate benefactor who now bestows knowledge but will bestow material blessing on his poor ones in the future eschatological restoration”.<sup>160</sup> As they provided for those who were not (or were no longer) able to contribute to the communal coffers, the community presaged the future and, they believed, were practising a purer (i.e., infinitely more just) form of care for the poor than that administered by the Jerusalem Temple, which they viewed as irretrievably corrupt. If that institution was hopelessly flawed, then how could any of its activities be any different? The Covenant community, in their practice of shared wealth of, and aid for the poor members, believed that they were bringing “a kind of sacrifice more pleasing to God and more reflective of God’s own beneficent care for the people”.<sup>161</sup> It was an exclusivistic, collective aid, carefully administered (after serious consideration) to members whose behaviour met the standards of the community. The Qumran conception of care for the poor, therefore, has as its distinguishing features the very clear boundaries of the group, which comprises only a (seemingly small) subset of the Jewish people, and the mandatory nature of the contributions for this care, separate from the rendering of the totality of one’s assets upon initiation,<sup>162</sup> and fixed at two days’ wages per month.<sup>163</sup>

This break-away group of Jews in the first century affords us yet another view of aid to the poor, this time within their ranks. It is a view which demonstrates both the continuity and discontinuity of their motivations and mechanisms with contemporary and historical Jewish theory and praxis, and it reinforces our understanding that concern for and aid to the poor pervaded the first century Jewish world.

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<sup>157</sup> 4Q448 A.9 “He redeems the poor from the land of the oppressors...” *DJD* XI, 409-410; 4Q521 II.6: “Over the poor His spirit will hover...”; II.12: “For He will...bring good news to the poor...” *DJD* XXV, 11. Cf. Murphy, *Wealth*, 453 and above §3, pp. 1, 10-13.

<sup>158</sup> 4Q434, *DJD* XXIX, 270-278.

<sup>159</sup> Murphy, *Disposition of Wealth*, 213; *Wealth*, 250.

<sup>160</sup> Murphy, *Disposition of Wealth*, 217.

<sup>161</sup> Murphy, *Disposition of Wealth*, 337-339; *Wealth*, 450.

<sup>162</sup> 1QS VI.12-20.

<sup>163</sup> Murphy, *Wealth*, 84-85.

### 3.7 The Gospels<sup>164</sup>

Continuing our survey of Jewish motivations and mechanisms for aid to the poor in the first century C.E., the gospels now appear in our historical framework, after the post-biblical, but before the rabbinic materials and roughly contemporaneous with Josephus, Philo, Tacitus and Juvenal. All four gospels yield information pertaining to care for and giving to the poor. Their information sheds yet more light on our already well-attested picture of Jewish concern for the poor at this time by including the texts dealing with the life and teachings of Jesus. His first followers continued to esteem and teach adherence to Jewish moral and ethical standards, including aid to the poor. In this section, we shall see not only the perpetuation of this concern, but in certain cases, a critique of it at the levels of motivation and/or praxis, as well as direct references to Jesus as provider, where we might have expected to see reference to God.

#### 3.7.1 Matthew

The first mention of such activity in Matthew's gospel occurs in 6:1-4, where Jesus warns those listening to:

Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your father who is in heaven. Thus, when you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. And your father who sees in secret will reward you.

An initial assessment of this text might conclude that all rightly-motivated, and therefore valid giving must occur in absolute secrecy. On closer consideration, another possible interpretation may emerge. The allusion to trumpets and hypocrites (v.2) points to the Graeco-Roman theatre,<sup>165</sup> in which the actors were called ὑποκριταί, and their entrance on stage was heralded by trumpets and applause.<sup>166</sup> Jesus' picture, then, is that of a deliberate staging of the act of giving in order to focus maximum attention and recognition on the giver.<sup>167</sup> Jesus intimates that one may choose how to give (giving being assumed by Jesus as

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<sup>164</sup> We might well have gone beyond the gospels to the New Testament letter of James to look for evidence of Jewish concern for aid to the poor, but have not done so due to the limitations of the thesis length.

<sup>165</sup> There was a theatre commissioned by Herod, at Sepphoris, making it likely that Jesus' listeners in Galilee would have been familiar with what went on there.

<sup>166</sup> Craig Blomberg, *Matthew*, New American Standard Commentary (Nashville: Broadman, 1992), 116; R.T. France, *Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), 130; Robert H. Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on His Literary and Theological Art* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 101-102; and Craig S. Keener, *Matthew (A Commentary on His Literary and Theological Art*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 135, agree that ostentation in giving nullifies its benefit.

<sup>167</sup> So Francis W. Beare, *The Gospel According to Matthew* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1981), 165. Contra W.F. Albright and C.S. Mann, who say that *hypocrites* simply means 'overscrupulous', *Matthew*:

usual) and in so doing, choose one's reward.<sup>168</sup> Rather than demanding absolute secrecy in giving, Jesus seems to be overstating the case to drive home his point that God cares about the primary motivation for one's giving: immediate, predictable reward, or unpredictable, but assured reward by God, and preservation of the dignity of the recipient (through a quiet exchange of giving and receiving). Motivation for giving matters to God as much as the act itself.

Matthew next refers to gleaning in 12:1-8, where Jesus' disciples are judged sinful for eating some handfuls of grain picked on the Sabbath (v.1). We simply note that the gleaning aspect is not at issue here; it is taken for granted as a mechanism of aid to the poor.<sup>169</sup>

The two Matthean accounts of Jesus' feeding of the multitudes both preface his actions with his motivation: compassion for the people (14:14; 15:32). In each case, Jesus' compassion becomes embodied in the actions of healing and feeding, and in the case of feeding the multitudes, he enlists the participation of the disciples, "You give them something to eat.... 'We have only five loaves and two fishes'.... 'Bring them here to me'... He broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds" (14:16-19; 15:34-36).

These 'feeding' texts reflect what may be a subtle reminder that God who initiates all giving, will provide,<sup>170</sup> but that individual people bear responsibility to bring what they have, beginning with their compassion, to the enterprise of care for and giving to the poor.<sup>171</sup> When they do, God makes what they bring more than enough.<sup>172</sup>

When, in 19:16, a young man comes to Jesus asking "what good deed must I do to have eternal life?" the answer he receives sounds surprisingly curt and general, "why ask me...keep the commandments". That he asks Jesus which commandments he must keep is telling.<sup>173</sup> Whether or not they were scrupulous in keeping them, most Jews were well aware of the Decalogue, and its follow-on, "love your neighbour as yourself", and they knew that none of the commandments were optional. In light of Jesus' response to the young man's retort that he had "kept all these", we might wonder how minimal his observance was,

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*Introduction, Translation and Notes*, Anchor Bible (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1971), CXII – CXIII; 73.

<sup>168</sup> So France, *Matthew*, 131, and Keener, *Matthew*, 136.

<sup>169</sup> So Beare, *Matthew*, 269; France, *Matthew*, 202; Gundry, *Matthew*, 222; Keener, *Matthew*, 224. See also Mk. 2:23; Cf. Larry W. Hurtado, *Mark*, New International Bible Commentary (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1983/1989), 47; Lk. 6:1-5, where Luke adds an extra touch of reality in his description of the freeing of the grain from its husks, a tiny detail which reflects everyday first century practice.

<sup>170</sup> Blomberg, *Matthew*, 233; Keener, *Matthew*, 254.

<sup>171</sup> Cf. Keener, *Matthew*, 254.

<sup>172</sup> Contra Beare, who views this narrative as "of course preposterous, if it be taken literally, as an account of an actual event" (*Matthew*, 326-328). He considers both 14:16-19 and 15:34-36 "two versions of what is essentially a single legend or cult-myth" (347). Cf. Albright, *Matthew*, 178-179.

<sup>173</sup> Albright would say that "the question...makes the man appear somewhat stupid". (*Matthew*, 231-232)

especially in the area of caring for and giving to the poor as an important aspect of loving one's neighbour.<sup>174</sup>

Jesus' words here (19:18-19) cover the same territory as Leviticus 19, but in a greatly shortened form. In Leviticus, care for and consideration of the poor figure prominently in the law's requirements. Is Jesus reminding the young man of the extent of those requirements to love one's neighbour?<sup>175</sup> Jesus goes further than mere memory jogging, however, when he challenges the sincerity of the young man's initial inquiry by giving him the opportunity to go beyond the minimum requirements of the law and be "perfect", by selling his many possessions, giving the proceeds to the poor, and becoming one of Jesus' disciples (19:21). It is not what the young man hopes to hear and he leaves, unhappy, but still in possession of his many assets (19:22). Of course, Jesus told the man to give all he had, rather than a portion, to the poor. We can only speculate on what the man's response would have been had Jesus asked him to give some lesser part to the poor. Jesus goes beyond the formal requirement, perhaps, to get at the heart of the matter: most people have difficulty with the concept of giving to the poor at all. If this is true of the *idea*, then how much more is it true of the reality?

Jesus' assessment of the situation in 19:23-24 reveals the degree to which people who know the law may struggle to do its bidding, or attempt to avoid its demands, even when they have the means to comply with those demands. This text highlights the importance of care for and giving to the poor, as well as the ongoing temptation to hold back in this area; accumulating wealth is tempting in that it seems to promise security – at least in the short-term. That the disciples knew this temptation is revealed by their amazed, "then who can be saved?" (19:25). Aid to the poor was no mere trifle in the law; it consisted of substantial (if proportional), ongoing involvement of every able Jewish person, an involvement for which all will be held accountable by God.<sup>176</sup>

The final judgment is the setting for Matthew's next text touching on care for and giving to the poor. The centrality of care for and aid to the poor is clear as we read that those admitted to eternal life in the kingdom will be people who have cared for and given to the poor (the least) among them throughout their lives (25:34-36, 46);<sup>177</sup> by practising material

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<sup>174</sup> So Keener, *Matthew*, 300.

<sup>175</sup> Blomberg highlights Jesus' focus on the Decalogue as "external and observable behaviour that others can evaluate" (*Matthew*, 297).

<sup>176</sup> And, says Keener, whatever the commitment costs us, "Jesus promises to more than make up for our sacrifices" (*Matthew*, 303).

<sup>177</sup> So Albright, (*Matthew*, 306), Beare, (*Matthew*, 494-495), France, (*Matthew*, 355, but part of the believing 'family' only) and Gundry, (*Matthew*, 511, 513), but Blomberg sees only itinerant preachers in view as the 'little ones' (*Matthew*, 378), and while Keener agrees, he admits that the idea tracks along with Jewish teaching on treatment of the poor (*Matthew*, 361-362).

care and consideration for the poor, the king says, “you did it to me” (25:40).<sup>178</sup> The inverse is also true; eternal punishment awaits those who have turned away, rather than aid the poor among them (25:41-43, 46). In failing to feed, welcome, clothe, visit and comfort the poor, says the king, they failed to do these things for him (25:42-45).

His last word on the subject of giving to the poor comes in Matthew’s account of a woman who poured expensive ointment on Jesus’ head as he reclined at Simon the Leper’s table in Bethany, just prior to the crucifixion (26:6-13).<sup>179</sup>

The Matthean material demonstrates that both motivation and performance matter when giving to the poor occurs. For Matthew, aid to the poor is a natural part of everyday life, an integral component of the life that pleases God, but mere compliance will not suffice; consideration for, compassion and generosity toward the poor, along with trust that God will reward must motivate the giver.

### 3.7.2 Mark

In Mark’s gospel four<sup>180</sup> narratives can be found similar to those in Matthew’s gospel, which relate to aid to the poor. In Mark’s two feeding narratives, 6:30-44 and 8:1-9,<sup>181</sup> the motivation of compassion (6:34; 8:2),<sup>182</sup> and the reminder of God’s provision in earlier wilderness settings<sup>183</sup> again appear as the backdrop for Jesus’ care for the hungry people, whether Jews or Gentiles,<sup>184</sup> around him. On the surface, these two accounts seem very similar to those found in Matthew’s gospel, but tucked neatly into 6:36 is a small, but significant detail which adds a touch of historical reality to the text.

After Jesus tells the disciples to give the people something to eat, their response is an incredulous, “Are we to go and buy two hundred *denarii* worth of bread, and give it to them to eat?” According to the guidelines from Mishnah *Peah*,<sup>185</sup> for one day’s sustenance, a poor person would receive a loaf of bread worth 1 *pondium*.<sup>186</sup> This meant a loaf made from 0.5 to

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<sup>178</sup> So Gundry, *Matthew*, 514.

<sup>179</sup> Mk. 14:3-9 contains a similar account, but mentions nard as the ointment. Cf. Jn. 12:1-12. See below §3.7.4 “John”, for a fuller discussion of the scene.

<sup>180</sup> See above §3.7.1 “Matthew”, n. 167.

<sup>181</sup> Cf. Mk. 8:14-21; Matt. 16:1-12. When in these two instances Jesus chides the disciples for worrying about their own lack of bread, he reminds them of his provision of more than enough for thousands of people. The implication is that if he can provide (and has done) for so many, then why are the twelve of them worried?

<sup>182</sup> Compassion expressed as “pity which expresses itself in action”: teaching, healing, and feeding. C.E.B. Cranfield, *The Gospel According to Saint Mark* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1959), 216-217.

<sup>183</sup> Morna D. Hooker notes OT links with the exodus and Elisha in *The Gospel According to Saint Mark* (London: Black, 1991), 164.

<sup>184</sup> Ben Witherington mentions that this time it was Gentiles who were fed. In *The Gospel of Mark: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 235-236.

<sup>185</sup> See below, §3.11 “Rabbinic Material”, for more on the admissibility of rabbinic material in first century Jewish studies.

<sup>186</sup> Pace Hooker, who posits bread dimensions of 1 in. by 8 in. round (how does she know?), and says that we can’t know about the money’s worth (164). If, however, we know how much an item such as

1 litre of flour. If only the minimum were realised, a poor person's loaf of bread, meant to sustain an individual for a day (two meals), would weigh approximately 500 grammes. 1 *denarius* would purchase twelve such loaves, and two hundred *denarii* would provide 2400 loaves. If each loaf were divided into three parts, 7,200 people would have approximately 175 grammes of bread (a Tesco whole-wheat bread roll weighs 58.5 g. One third of a loaf would equal about three of these). The sum of two hundred *denarii* did not simply mean "a lot of bread"; rather, this amount would have been reasonable to feed such a large crowd (5,000 men, plus any women and children present), even without the fish.

Jesus tells the disciples to "go and see" (6:38) how many loaves they *have*, in effect telling them to focus on what they do have, rather than on what they don't, and then he takes what they bring and makes it more than enough (6:42-43).

Turning to the Markan version of Jesus' encounter with the rich young man (10:17-21), we note the addition, "Jesus, looking at him, loved him", just prior to Jesus' challenge to divest himself of his wealth, reinvest the proceeds in care for the poor, and become a disciple. Jesus' love precedes the young man's response of shock, rejection and grief. The twin demands of total aid to the poor and complete allegiance to Jesus were too much for him to accept.<sup>187</sup>

The ensuing conversation between Jesus and the disciples (10:22-31), echoes the scriptural assurances that not only will God provide the means to give, he will reward, now and in the age to come, those totally committed to Jesus and the gospel (10:29-30).<sup>188</sup> Conversely, those people who retain their riches and restrict their allegiance to levels which ensure their comfort and/or status in this life, will find themselves last (10:31) in God's eyes.

The material pertaining to aid to the poor in Mark's gospel, though largely similar to Matthew's accounts, contains small, but noteworthy differences, first in the feeding narrative of 6:30-44 and the amount of bread needed to feed such a large group, and then in Jesus' encounter with the rich young man (10:17-21), where the man's rejection of Jesus' demands occurs in the context of Jesus' prior love for him. In every case in Mark, we have the same emphasis on the importance both of motivation and of mechanisms involved in care for and aid to the poor.

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flour or a loaf of bread cost, then we *can* know the amount of bread this amount of money could have bought. One *denarius* was worth twelve *pondia*, and 1 *pondium* would buy a 'poor-man's loaf', according to *M. Peah* 8.7.

<sup>187</sup> Even though, according to Cranfield, Jesus himself is the reward and answer to his question, *Mark*, 330.

<sup>188</sup> Witherington says that Jesus is speaking against the rabbinic material that says it is acceptable to be wealthy, as long as one is generous (*Mark*, 283). According to Witherington, Jesus is speaking not against the concept of wealth; rather he decries the hoarding of wealth for self-comfort when one is aware of legitimate human needs he or she might meet. Hooker would say that this is "a case of self-interest vs. single-hearted love of God", *Mark*, 242.

### 3.7.3 Luke

Luke, with ten references to the poor and their care, refers more to our subject than any of the gospel writers. Beginning with the Magnificat, in which Mary, with echoes of scripture sounding throughout, sings her praises to God who keeps his promises, “He has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty” (1:53), Mary (and Luke), without elaboration, contend that God has provided for the poor, and that those who have preferred (and continue) to look after themselves only are excluded from his provision. This text operates on more than one level, but certainly it reinforces the very concrete scriptural emphasis on care for and giving to the poor as part and parcel of the God-honouring life, and promises reward for obedience and punishment for neglect.<sup>189</sup>

When he is asked by the crowds what they should do (3:10-11), John the Baptist’s response is to share with the poor from what they have. Stein points out this text’s “clear OT roots (Job 31:16-20; Is. 58:7; Ezek. 18:7)”, and notes it as emblematic of Luke’s insistence that “proper faith must involve a social concern for the poor and unfortunate”.<sup>190</sup>

Luke contains a single feeding narrative, which he begins by informing the reader that when crowds followed Jesus to Bethsaida, a large village/small town on the northern end of Kinneret (Sea of Galilee),<sup>191</sup> “welcoming them, he spoke to them about the kingdom of God, and healed those who needed to be cured” (9:11).<sup>192</sup> We see no explicit mention of compassion; here it is implied, as Jesus welcomes them<sup>193</sup> with his words, with his healing, and later with a simple, if voluminous, meal. The disciples, as in the other two synoptic gospels, are incredulous when told to give the people something to eat; what they have is so obviously inadequate to meet the need (9:13-14).<sup>194</sup> Jesus takes what they have, says a blessing over it and gives it back to them to distribute, “and all ate and were filled. What was left over was gathered up...” (9:17). Luke, as do Matthew and Mark, insists that God will

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<sup>189</sup> So Darrell Bock: “Luke raises a theme here that he will return to again and again: God’s desire to minister to the poor. Luke will stress a ministry of social concern for those in need and warn those who are wealthy not to hoard what God has given to them. He warns about a reversal of roles in the judgment for those who do not hear this admonition”. *Luke*, IVP New Testament Commentary Series (Downers Grove, 1994), 47. Cf. Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke (1-9)* 2 vol. Anchor Bible (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1981), 469, and Robert H. Stein, *Luke*, New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman, 1992), 93, who both recall the OT roots of the verse..

<sup>190</sup> Stein, *Luke*, 133. cf. Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 469.

<sup>191</sup> John J. Rousseau and Rami Arav, “Bethsaïde, Ville Perdue et Retrouvée” *Revue Biblique* (100), 1993, 419; cf. John J. Rousseau and Rami Arav, *Jesus & His World: An Archaeological and Cultural Dictionary* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 22.

<sup>192</sup> My translation.

<sup>193</sup> What Luke Timothy Johnson calls “unique to Luke...the theme of hospitality struck in 9:5 is here continued”. *The Gospel of Luke*, Sacra Pagina series, no. v.3. (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1991), 146.

<sup>194</sup> Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 766, considers this a story, rather than an actual event and sees Jesus’ response as “more unsuitable than the Twelve’s suggestion of dismissal...it is used to advance the story”, and, while Stein, *Luke*, 273, understands the number of men present as a way to make the story more orderly, Fitzmyer, 766, sees it as a way to “heighten the miracle”.



take that which individuals bring to meet what seem insurmountable needs of the poor, and God will make however little or much one has ‘more than enough’ for the situation.

“But give as alms those things that are within”. The sense of 11:41, part of a scathing critique by Jesus of surface adherence to the law (i.e., doing good without a corresponding wholeness of heart), has proven elusive, or at least problematic to scholars, who have concluded that “true piety begins when we give special attention to issues of the heart”,<sup>195</sup> that “the ‘love of God’ should lead [one] to the doing of ‘justice’ by sharing [one’s] possessions with the needy”.<sup>196</sup> Stein links repentance for greed with a proper stance toward giving to the poor: “Luke argues the need for a correct attitude toward and use of possessions. In the context of greed an appropriate cleansing of the inner heart is through repentance leading to generosity/alms for the poor”.<sup>197</sup> Whichever stance one takes, Jesus clearly views almsgiving as a normal part of daily life, and intimates that when one acknowledges God’s generous provision, rather than guards against the diminution of one’s material holdings, one’s heart and hands are freed to true generosity and so sincerity in the act.

Loud echoes of the theme that God will provide, through human and divine means, can be heard in Jesus’ words concerning genuine material need and God’s provision in 12:22-33.<sup>198</sup> Jesus reassures his disciples that because God knows their needs, they do not have to choose between giving to the poor and saving up their money. They can give, motivated by the confidence that God who feeds the birds and clothes the flowers will provide what they need (12:23, 26-29) as they provide aid to the poor.<sup>199</sup>

Luke’s narrative concerning whom to invite to dinner or a banquet would certainly have turned Graeco-Roman social convention on its ear, because in that system, the equality of social status<sup>200</sup> and ability to reciprocate<sup>201</sup> were of primary concern in choosing those to whom one would extend hospitality. Jesus’ proposal to invite the poor and outcasts of society to dinner, would have been completely alien to a Graeco-Roman mind-set.<sup>202</sup> Here, however, the audience is Jewish, and our study thus far demonstrates just how strong and enduring remained Jewish concern for the plight of the poor. Jesus seems to be reminding his host and the other guests of a central concern which, in his opinion, they have neglected.

Remarking on the people in the picture, and those missing from it, Jesus comments on the self-interest involved in only inviting mealtime guests who are sure to reciprocate with a

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<sup>195</sup> Bock, *Luke*, 217.

<sup>196</sup> Johnson, *Luke*, 192.

<sup>197</sup> Stein, *Luke*, 340

<sup>198</sup> Cf. Matt. 6:19-33.

<sup>199</sup> Beyond the concept of God’s provision, say Fitzmyer (983), Johnson (200-201) and Stein (356), lies the promise of reward.

<sup>200</sup> See §2.5.2 “*Isotēs*”.

<sup>201</sup> See §2.5.1 “Reciprocity”.

<sup>202</sup> See Chapter 2 “Motivations and Mechanisms for Aid to the Poor: The Graeco-Roman World”. So Johnson, *Luke*, 224-225.

meal or favour of some sort. If one wishes to extend true hospitality, then this involves including those who are not able to reciprocate: the people who ordinarily would be left out of such social occasions. Jesus' words echo the teaching in Deuteronomy 16:11, 14, where the servants, the foreigners, the widows and the orphans are to be included in the feasting at *Shevuot* and *Sukkot*. Just as God promised to bless such behaviour in Deuteronomy, so will he repay Jesus' listeners "at the resurrection of the just" (14:14) if they will include in their care and consideration those who cannot "do" anything for them in return.<sup>203</sup>

Luke's is the only gospel to tell the story of the rich man who neglected the poor (represented by Lazarus) during his life, and so suffers after death (16:19-31). "There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. And at his gate lay a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, who longed to satisfy his hunger with what fell from the rich man's table..." (16:19-20). This narrative presents a very clear example of the enduring principle of punishment for those who *can* care for and give to the poor, but who instead choose callously to disregard them.<sup>204</sup>

In 18:19-24, Luke includes the narrative of the rich young ruler Jesus challenges to follow him and give his wealth to the poor. The repeated appearance of certain narratives which focus on care for and giving to the poor in the various gospels is a strong indicator of the centrality of the points they make: self-focussed wealth separates the wealthy from God, and the kingdom of God. Wealth dedicated to the service of God in care for and giving to the poor brings reward from God – now and in the age to come.<sup>205</sup>

Our final word on motivations and mechanisms for aid to the poor in Luke's gospel comes from one who for his fellow Jews would have represented a very sinful man indeed: the chief tax collector, *Zacchaeus*. He had not become wealthy through his scrupulous care for and giving to the poor; he probably contributed to the problem of poverty in his area of operations, as he squeezed as much as he possibly could out of each and every person on the tax lists.<sup>206</sup> With *Zacchaeus*, Jesus never says a word about what he has done, or what he should do; he barely enters the house when the chief tax collector and abuser of many people whose poverty he has deepened "stood there [publicly, it seems, and on his doorstep!] and said to the Lord, 'Look, half my possessions, Lord, I will give to the poor; and if I have

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<sup>203</sup> So Bock, *Luke*, 251; Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 1049; Johnson, *Luke*, 227; Stein, *Luke*, 389.

<sup>204</sup> Bock sees the rich as called to minister to a world in pain (*Luke*, 274) and recalls "Deut. 24:10-22...with its call to be generous and remember what it was like to be a slave in Egypt. So God's people were to care for the stranger, the fatherless and the widow" (*Luke*, 277). Curiously, given the depiction of the rich man's post-mortem suffering, Fitzmyer claims, "the story *says* nothing of judgment, but inculcates only the reversal of fortunes...[and]...Jesus' words are not meant as a 'comment on a social problem' but as a warning to people like the brothers of the rich man. They face a crisis in their lives and do not realise it" (*Luke*, 1128-1129).

<sup>205</sup> Reminiscent of Tobit 4:7-10 and Ben Sira 3:30-31. Cf. Bock, *Luke*, 300.

<sup>206</sup> Contra Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 1220-1221, 1225; and Johnson, *Luke*, 286, who claim that *Zacchaeus* was already more than abiding by the minimum standards of the law vis à vis the poor.

defrauded anyone of anything, I will pay back four times as much”’. Every Jew present at that moment, everyone whose overpayments (with interest) are returned to them, and the poor of Jericho know that Zacchaeus is sincere. He puts his money behind his words of repentance and his money talks – as loudly as it did when it shouted out his wealth and power, but now in far more attractive tones. Luke shows us the motivation (repentance) behind, and the mechanism (extravagant giving and direct reimbursement) of Zacchaeus’ giving to the poor, and his giving back of all his ill-gotten gains. Jesus simply clarifies Zacchaeus’ reward: “‘Today salvation has come to this house, because he too is a son of Abraham”’ (19:9).<sup>207</sup>

Luke’s concern for the poor is a major focus of his gospel; eight of his twenty-four chapters contain direct references to one or another aspect of divine and human activity vis à vis the poor. In this gospel Luke has shown us that God has provided for the poor, that reaping and gleaning are a part of everyday life. He presents Jesus as welcoming people: with his words, with his healing, and when they need it, with a meal which his friends help to provide. Luke reminds us that God will take however much or little people bring to the effort to meet (even the most unimaginably great) needs of the poor, and will make it ‘more than enough’ to meet the need; that people do not have to choose between giving to the poor and having enough to meet their own needs, because they can give from what they have, confident that God will provide for them as well as for the poor. Luke shares with his readers Jesus’ proposal to invite the poor and outcasts of society to dinner, a concept completely alien to a Graeco-Roman mind-set, and which constituted a strong criticism of the customs of his host (and, by extension, his guests), as it echoed the spirit of Deuteronomy 16:11, 14 (to include the poorest of the community at festive times). Luke presents the enduring principle of punishment for people of means who choose to ignore the poor. He reinforces the notion that self-focussed wealth separates from God and the kingdom of God, that wealth dedicated to care for the poor brings reward from God – now and in the age to come, and finally, that repentance for neglect and abuse of the poor is possible; it will be costly, and it will bring salvation to the penitent.

#### **3.7.4 John**

When John’s gospel turns to the first of its two references to provision for human need, it recounts the feeding of the multitude (6:1-13), and we learn that this occurred just before *Pesach* (Passover), the feast during which Jews remember how the Lord delivered them from slavery, providing for their needs in the desert and in the new land. There is no mention of Jesus’ compassion or welcome in John’s account. When Jesus speaks, it is to

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<sup>207</sup> Stein contends, along with Bock, and many others, that Jesus did not vindicate Zacchaeus, but saved him. *Luke*, 469; Bock, *Luke*, 307.

Philip, of whom he asks, “Where are we to buy bread for these people to eat?” (6:5).<sup>208</sup>

Philip replies that even two hundred *denarii* “would not buy enough bread for each of them to get a little” (6:7). In John’s specific version of events, Simon Peter’s brother Andrew informs Jesus that he has a boy “who has five barley loaves and two fish. But what are they among so many people?” (6:9). Barley was the grain of the poor; wheat was the preferred grain, and was more expensive; John reveals the relative poverty of the donor when he reveals the type of flour in his bread. It is John’s specificity in detail, especially with respect to the participants, which distinguishes this often repeated narrative of Jesus’ care for the multitudes who had followed him up a hill across from Capernaum.<sup>209</sup>

The second reference John’s gospel makes to care for the poor occurs in John 12:1-8. It is now only six days before *Pesach*, and Jesus is having dinner in Bethany. His formerly dead friend, Lazarus (12:1), and his sisters, Martha (who serves, as was her way), and Mary, are there.<sup>210</sup> While they are at table, Mary takes some of the very costly perfumed ointment she has bought, rubs it on Jesus’ feet, and then wipes the excess with her hair, an act of extreme devotion and intimacy; her actions provoke a response, but probably not the one the reader might expect. Instead of righteous indignation at such suggestive interaction between a woman and a man, the objection raised is to the money Mary has supposedly wasted. When Judas objects, therefore, it is on the pretext that Mary should have sold her ointment and given the money for it to the poor (12:5). John, in one of his intermittent ‘asides’ to the reader, lets us in on a secret Judas does not realise is known – his theft from the common purse of Jesus and the disciples – the falseness of his words is recognised by others in the room (12:6).<sup>211</sup> “Jesus said, ‘Leave her alone. She bought it so that she might keep it for the day of my burial. You always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me’” (12:7-8).

With respect to care for and giving to the poor, both motivation and mechanism are present here in the form of Judas’ criticism of Mary and Jesus’ response. Judas’ words indicate that Jesus and the disciples practised giving to the poor, and Jesus’ response confirms this as he comments that such giving is an everyday, ongoing part of life,<sup>212</sup> but this is a special occasion. One does not think to give to the poor only when one possesses an unusual surplus, because this activity should occur regardless of such moments.

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<sup>208</sup> Cf. Mt. 15:33 and Num. 11:13.

<sup>209</sup> Jn. 6:16-17.

<sup>210</sup> This differs a bit from the accounts in Mt. 26:6-13 and Mk. 14:3-9, where the owner of the house is mentioned, but not the guests, and where, of Mary’s act of devotion, it is said that “wherever the gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in memory of her”.

<sup>211</sup> Raymond Brown notes that in his description of Judas as “not...concerned for the poor”, John uses the same language as in 10:13, where he describes the hireling as one who “has no concern for the sheep”. *The Gospel According to John (i-xii)* Anchor Bible (Garden City, New York: 1966), 448.

<sup>212</sup> Jn. 12:8. Cf. Deut. 15:11.

John's narratives are rooted in real life, containing realistic references to food,<sup>213</sup> money and its buying power<sup>214</sup>, and personalisation of the participants.<sup>215</sup> Beyond this, they speak to motivation behind aid to the poor; there is concern for their hunger in an unusual situation (6:5), ongoing concern for the poor as part of daily life (12:8), and the problem of self-interest connected with the gathering and administration of money for the poor (12:5-6). John's two references to aid to the poor, though they may seem minimal, add to and complete our stock of gospel evidence attesting first century Jewish aid to the poor.

The references to care for and aid to the poor in the gospels perform an important function in this extensive study of Jewish motivations to and mechanisms for aid to the poor as continued within the nascent Christian movement. These references situate the gospel material securely in the historical trajectory of Jewish giving, characterising aid to the poor as proportional to one's means, and describing some of the mechanisms of daily and unusual aid: gleaning, distributing food and clothing, providing shelter, giving money to the poor in the streets and outside the synagogue and inviting them to meals. Noted also are motivations to such aid.

Motivation for one's giving may consist of the hope of an immediate, predictable reward, or else the preservation of the dignity of the recipient (through a quiet exchange of giving and receiving) and eventual reward. People give because God has given. Because God had brought the people out of Egypt, where they were aliens and strangers,<sup>216</sup> they then were to include the strangers, the poor and outcasts at festive meals. One's motivation for giving matters to God as much as the act itself; it grows out of compassion, love for one's neighbour as oneself, the belief that by aiding the poor, one is aiding the Lord, and the understanding that self-focussed wealth separates from God (and the kingdom of God), but wealth dedicated to the service of God in care for and giving to the poor brings reward from God – now and in the age to come.

We can see quite clearly from the portrayal by the gospel writers of aid to the poor that they had knowledge of policy and practice in the first century which correspond to policies and practices attested by Juvenal, Tacitus, Philo and Josephus, and which point in the direction of some of the policies and practices attested in the rabbinic material.

### **3.8 Inscriptions**

Inscriptions may perhaps be thought of as the ancient world's equivalent to contemporary (21<sup>st</sup> century) advertising: ubiquitous, employing stock catch-phrases, and intended to elicit specific behaviour based on praise of an individual or group. These records,

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<sup>213</sup> Jn. 6:9.

<sup>214</sup> Mt. 6:36; Jn. 6:7; 12:5.

<sup>215</sup> Philip (Jn. 6:5,7) and Andrew (6:8); Lazarus, Martha and Mary (12:1-3) and Judas (12:4-5).

<sup>216</sup> The Exodus narrative was central to Jewish understanding of God and their own identity, even after so long a time. Whether that memory resulted in a given action is a different issue.

inscribed in stone, often partial, due to deliberate damage or that which comes with the passage of time and exposure to the elements, furnish the student of ancient history with a wealth of information concerning life, in our case, 2,000 years ago.

The drawback of inscriptional evidence is that, although it could take the form of crude, unprofessionally struck (i.e. without monetary cost) graffiti, more often than not, inscriptions were commissioned by people possessed of money over and above that needed to nourish and shelter life.<sup>217</sup> This fact indicates that the inscriptional evidence will of necessity derive from people who were not desperately poor, but able to take both the time and financial resources to commission an inscriptional response to a favour done.

Having established this as the basic situation in the first century C.E., it is hardly surprising that we find no clear-cut examples of inscriptions concerning aid to the poor. Donations to synagogal building projects abound, but not a single inscription (as yet) to the one(s) who donated food, money or shelter to the poor in the Jewish community.

The first evidence we have of such inscriptions dates from the third and fourth centuries, too late for consideration in this study.<sup>218</sup> For the moment, it seems, and until such time as first century inscriptional evidence comes to light, we cannot look to it for help in establishing the existence and nature of Jewish motivations and mechanisms for caring for and giving to the poor.

### **3.9 Outsider Evidence of Jewish Care for the Poor**

#### **3.9.1 Juvenal**

The satirist, Juvenal (60-140 C.E.), likely shared the general Graeco-Roman disdain for the poor. In his third satire, his protagonist, Umbricious (whether real or invented), represents Juvenal's desire to leave Rome, with which he had a love-hate relationship. Among his complaints, the prosperity of others, which angers Umbricious; "he is afraid of being ousted from traditional privileges by immigrants, and feels that, irrespective of his merits, [his nationality] should secure him favour".<sup>219</sup> Because he worked in satire, it is not always easy to see where Juvenal's sympathies lie, but we do see a presentation of a number of elements of Roman elite culture, and in one brief demand we see both an attitude toward and an indication of a Jewish mechanism of aid to the poor: "Tell me where you place your

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<sup>217</sup> Louis H. Feldman and Meyer Reinhold, *Jewish Life and Thought among Greeks and Romans: Primary Readings* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), xvi.

<sup>218</sup> To see these third and fourth century inscriptions and their translations into either French (Frey) or English (Williams), their provenance and date, see Jean-Baptiste Frey, ed., *Corpus Inscriptionum Iudaicarum [CIJ]*, vol.1, (Rome: Pontificio Istituto di Archeologia Cristiana, 1936-52) (reissued with a critical prolegomenon by Baruch Lifshitz; New York: Ktav, 1975), #37, #203, #204, #256, #365, and Margaret H. Williams, *The Jews Among the Greeks & Romans: A Diasporan Sourcebook* (London: Duckworth, 1998), II.104, VI.38, VI.27. See also Joyce Reynolds and R. Tannenbaum, for their suggestion that the structure referred to in the inscription was used, in part, as a soup kitchen: *Jews and God-Fearers at Aphrodisias* (Cambridge: Cambridge Philological Society, 1987), 27, 78-80.

<sup>219</sup> E. Courtney, *Commentary on the Satires of Juvenal* (London: Athlone, 1980), 151, 153. Cf. Juvenal, *Satires* 3.58-75.

pitch [for begging]. In what prayer-house shall I find you?”<sup>220</sup> Juvenal’s portrayal of the local synagogue as a gathering point for beggars, and people who gave to them is rather unflattering, yet it provides evidence of giving to the poor specifically by Jews.

### 3.9.2 Tacitus

Tacitus also provides a window into two aspects of Jewish motivations and mechanisms for care for the poor. Though not a satirist, Tacitus is a harsh critic of the Jews when he comments on their observance of the Sabbath year: “They say that they first chose to rest on the seventh day because that day ended their toils; but after a time they were led by the charms of indolence to give over the seventh year as well to inactivity”.<sup>221</sup>

Labelling Jewish rites and customs “base and abominable, and [owing] their persistence to their depravity”, Tacitus rails against the trend of conversion to Judaism by “other peoples” that he perceives, and their custom of being “extremely loyal toward one another...always ready to show compassion, but toward every other people they feel only hate and enmity”.<sup>222</sup>

### 3.10 Philo & Josephus

Philo and Josephus provide two more windows into Jewish motivations and mechanisms for aid to the poor in the first century. In their writing we see a convergence of Jewish traditions and Graeco-Roman thought, first, as Philo thinks through various Jewish motivations and mechanisms for aiding the poor (i.e. destitute), and second, as Josephus recounts two noteworthy instances of giving food (and in one case financial) aid for the poor in Jerusalem.

#### 3.10.1 Philo

Philo covers much of the same ground concerning motivations and mechanisms for aid to the poor as does scripture, referring to legislation on eligibility to receive such aid,<sup>223</sup> reaping and gleaning,<sup>224</sup> prompt payment of day-labourers,<sup>225</sup> indentured servants,<sup>226</sup> concern

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<sup>220</sup> Juvenal, *Satires* 3.290-296 (Ramsay); cf. Cleomedes, *De Motu Circulari*, 2.1:91, in Menachem Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism*, Vol. II (Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1974), 157-158.

<sup>221</sup> Tacitus, *Hist.* 15.4.

<sup>222</sup> Tacitus, *Hist.* 15.5.

<sup>223</sup> Philo, *Somn.* 2.273; cf. Ex. 23:11; Lev. 19:9; 23:22; Deut. 14:27-29; 16:11, 14; 26:1-12.

<sup>224</sup> Philo, *Somn.* 2.23-25, 29-30; *Virt.* 90. Cf. Ex. 19:9-10; Lev. 19:9, 23:22; Deut. 24:19-22.

<sup>225</sup> Philo, *Virt.* 15.88; *Spec. Leg.* 4.195f. Cf. Lev. 19:13; Deut. 24:14-15.

<sup>226</sup> Philo, *Spec. Leg.* 2.79, 122; 4.4; *Virt.* 122-123. Cf. Ex. 21:1-11; Deut. 15:12-18.

for the dignity of the poor,<sup>227</sup> seventh/Sabbath year,<sup>228</sup> fiftieth year,<sup>229</sup> reward for obedience and punishment for failure to obey.<sup>230</sup>

Demonstrating his familiarity with Graeco-Roman thought forms, Philo casts God as divine benefactor,<sup>231</sup> attributing good harvests to him,<sup>232</sup> and all wealth, “God the Giver of wealth rains down his virgin and deathless boons”.<sup>233</sup> Speaking of Moses’ instruction in Deut.15:8, to lend to a poor brother “sufficient for his need, whatever it may be”, Philo alludes to the Graeco-Roman principle of *ἰσότης* as that which fits the circumstances,<sup>234</sup> when he interprets that text as teaching that:

We must not grant everything to everybody, but what corresponds (in kind) to the need (or business) of those who want [sic] something. . . . With the kind of help to be given has been joined the amount to be given. . . . *for the sake of maintaining due proportion, a thing which has great advantages.* ‘Do not,’ says right principle, ‘give all you can, but as much as the man in want is capable of receiving.’ . . . And so in His desire that we should enjoy benefit from the gifts which He bestows, God proportions the things which He gives to the strength of those who receive them.<sup>235</sup>

While in this last instance Philo may very well be advocating just treatment of the poor by those better off than they, he also may be echoing what seems to have been a widely held opinion in the Graeco-Roman world that everyone had their place, and one should not upset the social order imposed by fate through inordinate generosity.<sup>236</sup> This seems to be at variance with the abundance of God’s provision, as found in the biblical record (e.g. quail and manna, abundant harvests), which is made without respect to the social status of recipients.

Philo clearly alludes to, and abjures, a common occurrence in the Graeco-Roman world when he typifies Jewish legislation in Ex. 23:10-11 (to care for and aid to the poor during the seventh/Sabbatical year) as that which “*teaches the rich to give liberally and share what they have with others and encourages the poor not to be always dancing attendance on the houses of the wealthy, as though compelled to resort thither and make up their own deficiency*”.<sup>237</sup> (italics mine)

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<sup>227</sup> Philo, *Virt.* 91. Cf. Lev. 19:10. *Spec. Leg.* 4.197. Cf. Lev. 19:9.

<sup>228</sup> Philo, *Mig.* 32; *Mut.* 259-260; *Fug.* 173-4; *Spec. Leg.* 2.71-74, 86-109; *Virt.* 97-98. Cf. Ex. 23:10-11; Lev. 25:2-7; Deut. 15:7-11.

<sup>229</sup> Philo, *Spec. Leg.* 2.122; *Virt.* 99-100. Cf. Lev. 25:8-12, 40.

<sup>230</sup> Philo, *Praem.* 101-107, 134, 138. For blessings, cf. Leviticus 26:3-13; Deut. 11:13-15; 14:27-29; 15:4-6, 10, 18; 28:1-14; for punishments, cf. Lev. 26:14-39; Deut. 11:16-17; 15:9; 24:15; 28:15-68.

<sup>231</sup> Philo, *Spec. Leg.* 2.218.

<sup>232</sup> Philo, *Spec. Leg.* 2.171.

<sup>233</sup> Philo, *Post.* 32.

<sup>234</sup> See §2.52 “*ἰσότης*” for the full range of first century meanings for this term.

<sup>235</sup> Philo, *Post.* 142-45.

<sup>236</sup> Philo reveals his position in *Virt.* 6: “Under the grip of poverty multitudes have been laid low, and like exhausted athletes have fallen to the ground enfeebled by lack of manliness. Yet in the judgement of truth *not a single one is in want, for his needs are supplied by the wealth of nature, which cannot be taken from him*”. (italics mine). Here Nature, according to Philo, not individuals, has provided plenty for the poor.

<sup>237</sup> Philo, *Spec. Leg.* 2.107.

Here Philo has cast care for the poor in the terms of Graeco-Roman patronage; clients gather each morning to receive whatever their portion might be, and to seek access to the patron to plead their particular case. In these two examples of Philo's recasting of Jewish traditions in Graeco-Roman cultural terms, we see evidence of interaction between the two cultures, persistent Jewish focus on care of and giving to the poor (and commitment to communicate the worthiness of such behaviour), even in a culture for which such behaviour might be seen as unusual, or even aberrant.<sup>238</sup>

### 3.10.2 Josephus

In the *Antiquities*, Josephus provides two first century glimpses of giving to the poor by notable individuals who are also Jewish, either by birth or by conversion. In each instance, the giving is on a grand scale, and the donor a remarkable historical figure.

Better known, perhaps, for architecture and amazing building projects, political astuteness, or sometimes murderous paranoia, than for his affinity to and participation in Jewish community life,<sup>239</sup> Herod is not an historic figure one naturally links with aid to the poor.<sup>240</sup>

Josephus, however, goes into some detail to describe the first of two such instances when Herod extended himself financially and politically by giving aid to the people of Israel and in time of famine, to Syria. It was 25-24 B.C., and the country was experiencing

continual drouths [sic], and as a result the earth was unproductive even of such fruits as it usually brought forth by itself....the fruits of that year were destroyed and those which had been stored up had been consumed, there was no hope of relief left, for their bad situation gradually became worse than they had expected. And it was not only for that year that they had nothing left, but the seed of the crops that survived was also lost when the earth yielded nothing the second year.<sup>241</sup>

Herod, says Josephus, melted down gold and silver decorations in his palace to make coins, and used this money to purchase grain from Egypt. The grain, however, could not simply be purchased; because Egypt's grain supply was formally destined for Rome, special permission had to be obtained for grain to be purchased for other locations. Herod enlisted the help of Petronius, prefect of Caesar, and was able to import the grain for Israel and Syria:

His generosity was so well-timed as to bring a good harvest, so that enough food was produced for them all. In sum, when the time drew near for harvesting the land, he

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<sup>238</sup> Cf. Philo, *Spec. Leg.* 4.159, where, in explaining why, in Deuteronomy 17:15, Moses said that a ruler should be an Israelite and not a foreigner, Philo highlights the difference between the two cultures, claiming that a Jewish ruler, "instead of taking the wealth of others would give liberally to the needy by making his private substance common to all".

<sup>239</sup> For a fascinating treatment of Herod's loyalties, see David M. Jacobson, "Herod the Great Shows His True Colors", *Near Eastern Archaeology* 64, no. 3 (2001): 100-104. Jacobson claims that "at heart [Herod] was an 'unrepentant' pagan, who paid mere lip service to his adopted Jewish faith", 103.

<sup>240</sup> Although, see Peter Richardson's *Herod: King of the Jews and Friend of the Romans* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1996), for a largely sympathetic portrayal of Herod, his family life and career.

<sup>241</sup> Josephus, *Ant.* 15.300-302.

sent into the country no fewer than fifty thousand men, whom he himself fed and cared for, and in this way, when he had helped his damaged realm recover by his unflinching munificence and zeal, he also did not a little to relieve the neighbouring peoples, who were in the same difficulties. For there was no one who asked for aid in his need and was turned away without getting such help as he deserved.<sup>242</sup>

By providing food, and seed to sow another crop, Herod's popularity index amongst the Jews rose sharply, "for the unexpected greatheartedness which he showed in this time of difficulty brought about a reversal of attitude among the masses, so that he was thought to have been at bottom not the kind of person that their earlier experiences indicated but the kind that his care for them in their need made him out to be".<sup>243</sup>

In this instance, Herod had scored well with the people through his provision of food, but Josephus soon reminds his readers that Herod "kept his subjects submissive in *two* ways...by fear...and by showing himself greathearted in his care of them when a crisis arose....He cultivated their local rulers, making them the more grateful to him because of the nice timing of the gifts which he presented to each of them".<sup>244</sup> According to Josephus' manifestly cynical view of him, for Herod, control of the people, rather than genuine concern for them, was the goal of any aid, food or other.

This desire for control marks Herod's giving to the poor and hungry as rather closer to Graeco-Roman than Jewish motivations for such activity, and his distribution of grain "in very exact proportions"<sup>245</sup> may be reflective of corn dole protocol, although there is no further comment given. That Herod was aware of the corn dole is sure, for if he knew of the prohibition on free purchase of Egyptian grain, he also surely knew its destination and intended purpose.

Just about four years later, in 20B.C., Herod engaged in another instance of giving to the poor when he returned one third of the taxes they had paid, "under the pretext of letting them recover from a period of lack of crops, but really for the more important purpose of getting back the goodwill of those who were disaffected".<sup>246</sup> The effects of famine and drought apparently had endured, and Herod uncharacteristically (for one seemingly so enamoured of fund-sapping building projects) forewent fully one third of tax revenues for at least one year. Josephus makes no comment on his motivation, beyond that of regaining the goodwill of the people, seeming to reinforce that Herod's primary objective was to maintain his people under his control.

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<sup>242</sup> Josephus, *Ant.* 15.311-313.

<sup>243</sup> Josephus, *Ant.* 15.316.

<sup>244</sup> Josephus, *Ant.* 15.326-327.

<sup>245</sup> Josephus, *Ant.* 15.309.

<sup>246</sup> Josephus, *Ant.* 15.365; cf. Richardson, *Herod*, 222-223.

In addition to Herod, Josephus documents the aid given to Jerusalem in 45 C.E. by Queen Helena of Adiabene, a convert to Judaism<sup>247</sup> who, while on pilgrimage to the temple there, discovered that “the city was hard pressed by famine and many were perishing from want of money to purchase what was needed”.<sup>248</sup> Helena, as had Herod, procured grain from Alexandria, presumably by permission from Rome; additionally, she had dried figs sent from Cyprus, and then distributed it all “among the needy. She has thus left a very great name that will be famous forever among our whole people for her benefaction”.<sup>249</sup>

Her son Izates, also a convert, contributed to the relief effort by sending “a great sum of money to leaders of the Jerusalemites. The distribution of this fund to the needy delivered many from the extremely severe pressure of famine”.<sup>250</sup> Here we see a reference which agrees with the traditions (in the rabbinic sources) concerning organisation and administration of care for the poor amongst the Jews. Certainly the aid sent by Izates seems distinct from the aid administered directly by Helena to those in need; his being channelled through “the leaders of the Jerusalemites”. Given the paucity of evidence for organised schemes of aid to the poor prior to the rabbinic material, these few words provide a thread, slender though it is, of possible continuity in this area of Jewish care for and aid to the poor.

Josephus concludes his description of Helena and Izates’ aid to the poor of Jerusalem with a promise to recount more of their benevolent activities, “I shall leave to a later time the further tale of good deeds performed for our city by this royal pair”. Josephus, however, either did not keep his promise, or else the record has not yet emerged, and so the nature of these good deeds remains unknown. Given their mention at this juncture, it would not be unreasonable to think that they, too, involved food aid.

Josephus’ *Antiquities* provide us with examples of Jewish giving from two unexpected sources: a king often remembered for his preoccupation with power and property development, and two royal converts from what now is northern Iraq, Helena and her son Izates.

In the former accounts, of Herod’s provision of grain and remittance of taxes, Josephus is careful to give his opinion that the aid given by Herod must be balanced by his underlying (and primary) motivation: maintenance of control over the population. By keeping both sides of the Herod ‘equation’ before his readers, Josephus ensures their awareness of the confusion disseminated along with the aid Herod provided.

In the latter, Josephus alludes to a communal structure for aid to the poor, as well as an individual approach to it, and affirms that Helena’s name will be long-remembered with

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<sup>247</sup> Josephus, *Ant.* 20.34-47.

<sup>248</sup> Josephus, *Ant.* 20.50; 101.

<sup>249</sup> Josephus, *Ant.* 20.51-52.

<sup>250</sup> Josephus, *Ant.* 20.53.

thanksgiving by the recipients of her aid. This aid, unlike Herod's, seems not to have had political strings attached, thus illustrating how two monarchs engaged in much the same activity could have very different motivations for so doing.

Philo, on the other hand, has created a record of his attempts to explain and justify a Jewish "philosophy" of aid to the poor to a Graeco-Roman audience. He sometimes recasts the motivations and mechanisms for such aid in language and images familiar to that audience, seems to weave together Graeco-Roman concepts of *ἰσότης* and social place with Jewish concern for the poor, and offers Jewish community-based aid to the poor as an alternative to the patron-client scheme. In his writing, Philo demonstrates some of the ways Jewish motivations and mechanisms were informed by the ambient Graeco-Roman culture.

Philo and Josephus, then, in their very different approaches to the subject, add valuable evidence to our picture of Jewish motivations and mechanisms for giving to the poor in the first century C.E..

### 3.11 Rabbinic Material

The rabbinic literature constitutes a potentially rich mine for the student of Jewish aid to the poor to explore. Based on scriptural exposition over time, and expressed in the context of Jewish culture, rabbinic material was always "in process".<sup>251</sup> The longer a concept was discussed, the greater the possibility that it may become removed from the original meaning in scripture and the more likely to be affected by interaction and/or confrontation with any other culture present on a daily, or at least regular basis. Until recently scholars held one of two opinions concerning the admissibility of the rabbinic literature with respect to the first century C.E.: they either rejected it completely on the grounds that its late composition made it far too late to retain any connection to the practices of the first century, or they unquestionably accepted it. The question naturally arises as to whether rabbinic<sup>252</sup> material, in part or in whole, is admissible as evidence for motivations and mechanisms for Jewish aid to the poor in the first century C.E.

This is a valid question, as the earliest rabbinic literature we have dates to 200 C.E. (140-200 years later than our setting). Even given this situation, and we must honestly say

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<sup>251</sup> Feldman & Reinhold, in *Jewish Life and Thought among Greeks and Romans*, suggest: "those rabbis who preserved the statements of their teachers and other predecessors did so with reverence and with care". They also maintain that "the Talmud is a kind of Congressional Record, full of debates, 319 of which are never fully resolved; and one must, in any case, differentiate between a rabbinic opinion and a law".(xvi). Instone-Brewer would agree, but warns that "caution is always needed, because although the whole ethos of scholarship in rabbinic circles involved accurate memorizing and transmitting of earlier teaching, mistakes and innovations are nevertheless found throughout these traditions". Instone-Brewer, *TRENT*, 5.

<sup>252</sup> With regard to how to refer to "the predecessors of the rabbis before 70 A.D.....Outside rabbinic literature, in the NT and Josephus, they are called 'Pharisees' (*Perushim*, פרושים, 'separatists'), though later rabbis tended to regard this as a disparaging title, and the NT suggests that they used the title 'Rabbi'(Mt.23:7-8), which was honorific enough also to be used of Jesus". Instone-Brewer, *TRENT*, 3-4.

that it would be better to have earlier documents, thereby rendering what now must be supposed *tangible*, we can say with confidence that *some* of what we confront in the Mishnah<sup>253</sup> likely reflects traditions of the first century (perhaps even earlier). David Instone-Brewer has addressed the issue of whether we can determine earlier practice of traditions recorded at a much later date. He believes that it is indeed possible to do this, and offers the following in support of the admissibility of at least some of (the traditions represented in) the rabbinic material to considerations of first century Jewish life<sup>254</sup>:

The editors of the legal material did not preserve all points of view, since a consensus was usually reached, but they aimed to preserve the different opinions that formed the route toward this consensus. Therefore the earliest strata of debate were preserved mainly when they served to explain the basis of later decisions, or where early rulings had remained unchanged, but they discarded rulings which had been superseded by later debate or case law.

Instone-Brewer attempts to ‘tease out’ the earlier strands of thought from each of the rulings of the tractates of the Mishnah, “to find the earliest traditions, which is in some ways contrary to the aims of the early editors of rabbinic material, who wished to preserve the *conclusions* of scholarly debate rather than their *origins*,”<sup>255</sup> and to present, in a helpful and thoughtful manner, those traditions which accurately reflect their early (pre-70 C.E.) origins.

Again and again in the Hebrew Bible, as previously set forth, aid to the poor figures importantly. It appears in the Torah, in the wisdom literature, and in the prophets. This aid to the poor, as we also have seen, receives lengthy consideration in the post-biblical literature. In the first century C.E., such aid continued to be both a public and a private matter; the rabbinic traditions concerning it drew on all these sources for their content (excluding, perhaps, the epigraphic material), and the aid was impacted to some degree by Graeco-Roman thought and practice, as we have seen in some of the pertinent gospel texts.

### 3.11.1 Tractate *Peah*

Tractate *Peah* is dedicated largely to material aid to the poor in the area of agriculture. It begins with a designation of such aid as one of “the things which have no measure: *peah* [harvest leftovers for the poor], and *bikkurim* [first-fruits],<sup>256</sup> and appearance [offerings],<sup>257</sup> and deeds of charity (acts of lovingkindness), and study of Torah. These are the things of which a man eats the fruit in this life, and the capital [comes] to him for the future

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<sup>253</sup> “The Mishnah and Tosefta preserve the earliest rabbinic material. They consist of early traditions which have been sorted according to the development of debates up to about 200 CE”. Instone-Brewer, *TRENT*, 5.

<sup>254</sup> In our case, our focus is on Jewish motivations for and mechanisms of caring for and giving aid to the poor.

<sup>255</sup> Instone-Brewer, *TRENT*, 5.

<sup>256</sup> Cf. Deut. 26:1-11.

<sup>257</sup> These may have been the offerings for the three mandatory appearances an Israelite man was to make at *Pesach*, *Sukkot*, and *Shavuot* (Deut. 16:16-17; cf. Ex. 23:14-17).

life...<sup>258</sup> Instone-Brewer posits that ‘and study of Torah’ was a later ‘add-on’ when Torah study was ‘greatly emphasized’, and that were the phrase removed, the saying would conform to “the normal structure of three plus a fourth...popular since the time of Proverbs 30 and Amos 1:11-2:6”.<sup>259</sup> It fits the pattern in both those passages.

Tractate *Peah* derives from Lev. 19:9-10,<sup>260</sup> (i.e. corner of the field/gleaning); Deut. 14:28-29<sup>261</sup> (i.e. poor tithe), and the concept of *hesed* (i.e. lovingkindness). *Peah* highlights the relative importance of seasonally-determined aid to the poor in the rabbinic view of life. This importance is emphasised as well in Tractate *Abot*, where, in a reflection of pre-70 C.E. Judaism, Torah, Temple service (which of course disappeared with the destruction of the Temple in that year), and almsgiving (*tsedaqah*) are called the three “pillars of the world”,<sup>262</sup> and R. Eleazar, in his exegesis of Prov. 21:3, went so far as to say that *tsedaqah* was “as important as all the other commandments put together”.<sup>263</sup> *Tsedaqah*, which, in the rabbinic literature, was oriented toward its human manifestation, was said to “hasten the redemption”, ensure “wealth, wisdom, and learned sons,”<sup>264</sup> and “atone for sins”.<sup>265</sup>

Aid to the poor as a sign of and contributor to human righteousness (*tsedaqah*) is a recurring theme in Jewish literature. It is present from the Hebrew Bible<sup>266</sup> through the rabbinic material, although in scripture, *tsedaqah* consistently refers both to God’s just actions and to *any* human activity that comes into line with God’s justice; in scripture *tsedaqah* is not confined to the practice of giving to the poor, although it does encompass it. With the passing of time, and as we approach the first century C.E.,<sup>267</sup> the scriptural concept of righteousness as described above surely continued to figure in the impulses to give to the

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<sup>258</sup> *Mishnah Peah* 1:1.

<sup>259</sup> Instone-Brewer, *TRENT*, 107.

<sup>260</sup> Cf. Lev. 23:22.

<sup>261</sup> Cf. Deut. 26:12-13.

<sup>262</sup> *Abot* 1.2, cf 2.8. In post-70 C.E. Judaism, the Jerusalem Temple destroyed, only Torah and *tsedaqah* (good deeds/almsgiving) remained as “pillars” in practice; the Temple remained a pillar in theory alone.

<sup>263</sup> *B.B.* 9.

<sup>264</sup> *B.B.* 10.

<sup>265</sup> *B.B.* 8; *Git.* 7.; cf. Tobit 4:7-10 and Ben Sira 3:30-31.

<sup>266</sup> J.A. Ziesler, in his study of righteousness in the ancient world, *The Meaning of Righteousness in Paul: A Linguistic and Theological Enquiry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), maintains that δικαιοσύνη, “like *tsedaqah* in the MT, in LXX can be used for a wide variety of ways of acting, but all within the covenant. This includes legal uprightness in judging and lawgiving, and also graciousness, kindness, whether on God’s part or man’s”. (69). Cf. David Roy Register, “Concerning Giving and Receiving” (M.Phil. Thesis, University of Sheffield, 1990), 50-57, and Gottlob Schrenk, in *TDNT*, s.v. δικαιοσύνη, 2:195-96.

<sup>267</sup> In the LXX, “when δίκαιος and cognates are not used, the most common rendering by far is ἐλεημοσύνη: it is used for *tsedaqah* 9 times...in 3 further cases ἐλεος is used. We have now accounted for 12 of the 23 cases, and this is interesting as showing that the Rabbinic tendency to give *tsedaqah* the meaning ‘benevolence’, ‘charity’ or even ‘almsgiving’, was extant as early as this, and was not purely a Palestinian phenomenon. Do we also infer that δίκαιος and δικαιοσύνη, while they were regarded as adequate for righteous activity in general, were not considered suitable for this aspect of it – perhaps because in secular Greek the judicial meaning tended to colour the wider one?” Ziesler, *Righteousness*, 59;cf. 60, 72, 85. Cf. Schrenk, *TDNT*, 2:180, 185.

poor, but in the post-biblical sources we see as well a tendency toward a narrower understanding of righteousness as *something that could be quantified in the practice of aiding the poor*,<sup>268</sup> rather than as one aspect (important though it was), of the big picture of God's righteousness and the human response to and reflection of it in *every* area of life.<sup>269</sup> In fact, this aid, in the form of almsgiving, came to be almost synonymous with righteousness (*tsedaqah*) in the rabbinic material.<sup>270</sup>

*Peah* not only provided a mechanism for the practice of agricultural aid to the poor, it went further, refining those mechanisms by setting the parameters for eligibility to receive such aid. With regard to gleaning, one must not own any land or any of the crop in question, presumably because the owner would already benefit from harvesting it. In the case of the daily and weekly community-based food/money distributions, to qualify for assistance from either the *kuppah* (קופה, plate) or the *tamchuy* (תמחוי, basket), applicants had to prove (or at least to claim) that they could not provide two meals each day for a week (for the *kuppah*), and (for the *tamchuy*) strangers passing through had to prove that they lacked the means to buy two meals (three if over a Sabbath) and lodging for the night.<sup>271</sup>

In addition to individually assessed set tithes, the corporate community regularly provided for their poor through the *kuppah* and the *tamchuy*.<sup>272</sup> At least the *kuppah* seems to be in view in Acts 6:1, "Now during those days, when the disciples were increasing in number, the Hellenists complained against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution of food".<sup>273</sup> Here we have what may be an indication that the *kuppah* and (by association) the *tamchuy* were indeed operant in the first century C.E., and perhaps much earlier.<sup>274</sup>

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<sup>268</sup> Ziesler, *Righteousness*, 113-15.

<sup>269</sup> Ziesler, *Righteousness*, 105, 111.

<sup>270</sup> "Charity and Charitable Institutions", n.p. [cited 21 August 2006]. Online: <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/charity>. In the early rabbinic literature *tsedaqah* became primarily linked with almsgiving. So Ziesler, "Man's righteousness is his benevolence in general and his almsgiving in particular (including other acts of charity)"; even so, he feels that "it is too simple to identify *tsedaqah* with almsgiving or even with benevolence, but the tendency is certainly in that direction. This is not a change of meaning for the noun, for such a note is already found in the OT", (*Righteousness*, 114). "We may say that *tsedeq* is used more for righteousness in general, and *tsedaqah* more for compassion, kindness, and charity", *Righteousness*, 115.

<sup>271</sup> *Peah* 8.7; cf. "Charity and Charitable Institutions". Online: <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com>.

<sup>272</sup> *Peah* 5.4-6; 8.8-9. Instone-Brewer sees no reason to consider this *material* as pre-70 C.E., but in the first case, the requirements echo the descriptions of the landless poor of the OT, and those working land not their own, perhaps as indentured servants (Ex. 21:1-11; Lev. 25:35-38; Deut. 15:12-18), and the presence of a very similar system in Acts 6:1 also points in the direction of an early date for this tradition by Instone-Brewer's own method of looking to parallel sources for evidence of a tradition's recognition outside the rabbinic community, *TRENT*, 34.

<sup>273</sup> Instone-Brewer, *TRENT*, 160.

<sup>274</sup> For an argument in favour of an earlier than 3<sup>rd</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> century C.E. institutionalisation of charitable practices (although how much earlier and whether they concern Jewish practice are debatable issues, given that the inscription cited is thought by some scholars to be third century C.E. and its origins unsubstantiated), see J. Reynolds and R. Tannenbaum, *Jews and Godfearers at Aphrodisias* (Cambridge: Cambridge Philological Society, 1987), 20, 27.

The gathering, or collecting, of donations for aid to the poor may have taken place regularly, or on an “as needed” basis.<sup>275</sup> Donations for the *kuppah* (with respect to which there was probably a general idea of the community’s ongoing local needs) were likely taken on a regular basis, and for the *tamchuy* (where the need would vary from none at all one day to great on another) as the need arose.<sup>276</sup> Food, clothing and money may all have been acceptable for the collections.<sup>277</sup>

According to Peah,<sup>278</sup> two people were appointed to collect, perhaps weekly, for the *kuppah*, seeking from families or individuals a donation according to their means. Three appointees were responsible for its weekly distribution. The less predictable *tamchuy*, which met the food, housing and clothing needs of people “passing through,” required three people to collect and distribute. This number, according to *Sheqalim*, complied with a rule concerning minimum oversight of community financial matters.<sup>279</sup>

Liability<sup>280</sup> for providing agricultural aid to the poor is defined by the person exempt from it: one whose “field was harvested by non-Jews (or Samaritans), harvested by thieves, withered by ants (or eaten by locusts), [or] broken down by the wind or cattle is exempt from Peah...”<sup>281</sup> Peah gave guidance on the minimum amount of food aid to be given: “One should not give [less] to the poor who moves from place to place than a loaf [worth] a *pondium* from [wheat costing] four *seahs* for a *sela*. [If he stays for] the night, one should give him provisions for the night. [If he stays for] the Sabbath, one should give him food for three meals”,<sup>282</sup> as well as the conditions under which gleaning is to occur (e.g. number of times per day the poor may glean, what constitutes ‘gleanable’ produce),<sup>283</sup> and when such aid might be given (e.g. as the grain is harvested, but *after* the farmer has harvested the grapes and olives, so as to protect the vines and trees from damage by the gleaners).<sup>284</sup>

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<sup>275</sup> The only indication of the enforcement of aid contributions is a warning that the stingy person might be flogged, and their property appropriated for the amount due (*Ket.* 49). That there is only one reference to such a practice indicates perhaps that it served mostly as a reminder of the obligation for everyone to participate in aid to the poor.

<sup>276</sup> Nickle, *Collection*, 93-4. See also Emil Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ* Vol. II. Rev. ed. by G. Vermes and F. Millar (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1973), 437.

<sup>277</sup> We are not sure whether people gave money, food or clothing to these “funds,” but some combination of them, or money alone, makes sense. Cf. <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/charity>.

<sup>278</sup> Peah 8.7.

<sup>279</sup> *Sheq.* 5.2. It is interesting to note the concern in both *Sheqalim* and *Peah* for propriety in dealing with financial matters. This concern will be revisited in Chapter Five “Money movement in the first century: Graeco Roman and Jewish Conventions”, and Chapter Six “Paul, Aid to the Poor and the Collection”. See also §5.7.3 “Accommodation”, and <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/charity>.

<sup>280</sup> The pre-requisites for eligibility show signs of a later elaboration by their inclusion of so many detailed categories. See Instone-Brewer, *TRENT*, 38.

<sup>281</sup> Peah 2.7-8:

<sup>282</sup> Peah 8.5-7.

<sup>283</sup> Peah 5.7-6.6; 6.7-7.2.

<sup>284</sup> Peah 4.5; 8.1.

*Peah*, then, contains information pertaining to material aid offered at very specific times in the year, rather than throughout the year. In *Peah* we see mechanisms with Old Testament origins, which with time developed greater precision in and elaboration of the details. The theme of fairness to giver and recipient is emphasised throughout, linked always to what an individual has, in terms of field, orchards and vineyards, rather than a standard amount, and according to Instone-Brewer, the earlier strands of *Peah* are represented by their general nature, an indication, perhaps of the confidence that the givers of agricultural aid would designate reasonable portions for the poor as they were able. In this material, we see indications of age-old practices which seem to have continued at least into the first century C.E.

### 3.11.2 *Shebiit*

Tractate *Shebiit* concerns agricultural practices during the Sabbath Year which, as we have seen in the OT material, was expected to occur every seventh year. Its existence, questioned by many over the years, has been discussed more fully in §3.1.4 “The Sabbath Year”.

### 3.11.3 *Shekalim*

*Shekalim*, concerned with Temple Tax revenues and all other money and objects offered to the Temple, concentrated on the administration of these donations, from their collection to their disbursement. Unfortunately, much of the discussion of aid to the poor in this tractate seems to reflect a much later time than that of the first century. Its sometimes lengthy and highly detailed descriptions of procedure seem to indicate reflections on how such things might have occurred in the past, rather than provide descriptions of contemporary practice. So, we cannot consider it hard evidence when in *Shekalim* we see a description of the “Chamber of the Discreet” in the Temple as the place where ‘secret’ giving (by “those who fear sin”) and receiving of aid for the poor could occur.<sup>285</sup> That there was such a chamber in the Temple seems reasonable, as does the idea that some of its proceeds may have been destined to provide material aid for poor Jews in the city. To go further than this, however, would be unwise from an evidentiary point of view. This tractate seems to illustrate Instone-Brewer’s criterion of simplicity as one possible indication of early date (and conversely, that highly developed and detailed sayings indicate a later, post 70 C.E. date, when the discussions became more academic than practical in nature).

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<sup>285</sup> *Shekalim* 5.6 claims that this chamber was separate from the placement of the other fourteen offering boxes (which were prominently placed in a circle in the Temple), indicating a literal interpretation of the term “discreet” for both the giver and the recipient of charity. Whether they were indeed so placed remains a matter of speculation until such time as hard evidence be uncovered.

### 3.11.4 *Sifre* Deuteronomy

The same reasoning applies to *Sifre* Deuteronomy,<sup>286</sup> in which are designated different levels of recompense for different degrees of participation in giving to the poor, allowing reward even if one had not promised to give, had not prompted others to give, but had only spoken well (concerning charitable giving).<sup>287</sup> It warned against outright refusal to extend charity; those who did so rejected the yoke of heaven and were considered sinners, even if the ones who were refused aid did not accuse them,<sup>288</sup> and advised that in giving charity, one should always give to the recipient that which was appropriate to him – usually some sort of food.<sup>289</sup>

The rabbinic material, reflects the development over a lengthy stretch of time (time that includes the monumental disaster of 70 C.E. and the disappearance of the Jerusalem Temple: focal point of much of the material) of motivations and mechanisms for living a religiously rigorous Jewish life. These motivations and mechanisms were considered by Jewish sages (academics?) who lived well after the first century wherein our interest lies. The later date of these people does not, in and of itself, prove that their material came exclusively from that later time, but it should cause us to be extremely careful in our consideration and use of these materials. We need to remember that all materials we consult for this survey of motivations and mechanisms concerning care for and giving to the poor in the first century Jewish world are representative of a part of the picture and as such, may not tell us the whole story. Even so, the emerging picture of aid to the poor in first century Judaism has become remarkably clear and coherent in itself, as well as with respect to prior and subsequent Jewish history.

### 3.12 Conclusion

In this chapter we have searched in the primary sources for evidence of Jewish motivations and mechanisms for caring for and giving to the poor. Our investigation began in the scriptural record of the OT, and moved through the post-biblical literature of Tobit, Ben Sira, Testament of Job and Pseudo Phocylides, before focussing on the Dead Sea Scrolls communities. Beyond Qumran (and related groups), our attention shifted first to the four gospels, then to the inscriptional record, Juvenal and Tacitus, Philo and Josephus (including their descriptions of emergency food relief by Herod and Helena of Adiabene). Our investigation concluded with an examination of the rabbinic materials of the Mishnah.

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<sup>286</sup> According to Instone-Brewer, this *Sifre* Deut. reflects traditions from the second/third centuries (*TRENT*), 9.

<sup>287</sup> *Sifre* Deut. 15.9.117, in Joseph Bonsirven, *Textes Rabbiniques des Deux Premiers Siècles Chrétiens* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1955), 176. For an English translation, see *Sifre: A Tannaitic Commentary on the Book of Deuteronomy*, trans. Reuven Hammer (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986) 15.10 *Piska* 117.

<sup>288</sup> *Sifre* Deut. 15.10.117.

<sup>289</sup> *Sifre* Deut. 15.11.117.

The sources are numerous, as are references in them to Jewish concern for the poor. Their arrangement has followed a roughly historical trajectory, with the exception of the OT texts, which we approached in canonical order, and what has emerged from our study is that from a very early date, care for the materially poor was central to Israelite life. Throughout the Bible, evidence for aid to the poor exists in a variety of genres and it is consistent. At no time do we see a diminished emphasis on the importance of care for the poor; rather, at times we note a heightened focus on the centrality of care and giving to the poor to individual, as well as communal life.

Beyond scripture, the consistency of Jewish focus on concern for the poor in the evidence is remarkable. As the various primary sources came under scrutiny, that focus became clearer and stronger, indicating that historically, care for and giving to the poor constituted a major component of daily Jewish life. The first century seems to have been no exception; the gospels attest and reaffirm the continuation of the historical Jewish emphasis on and preoccupation with care for the poor; Graeco-Roman observers and critics of Judaism remark on what they perceive as the oddness of Jewish care for the poor; Jewish commentators, writing for a non-Jewish audience, attempt to recast this enduring trademark of Jewish life in terms familiar to and welcomed by non-Jewish people. Finally for our time period, and moving into the years beyond the first century, the earliest rabbinic material staunchly maintains the historically strong focus on aid to the poor.<sup>290</sup>

The evidence reveals both the motivations to care for the poor and the mechanisms for so doing. As we have seen, the major motivations for aiding the poor relate to the Jewish conception of God: as *initiator* of all such giving as Creator, and as redeemer of the Israelites from Egypt; as *provider* to both giver and recipient, in the desert and in the land; and as *judge/rewarder* of obedience in giving (especially in the post-biblical material).

Mechanisms involved in Jewish aid to the poor were numerous, reflecting in their variety the pervasive nature of concern for the poor. These mechanisms ranged from the remarkably major to the remarkably minor, the deliberately planned and/or legislated and the incidental, of the moment sort.

At harvest time the agricultural mechanisms operated, as gleaning took centre stage, along with firstfruits for the Levites and tithes for the poor. The yearly festivals of *Shevuot* and *Sukkot*, linked to harvest, provided occasions for legislated aid to the poor.

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<sup>290</sup> Indeed, the record shows that Julian the Apostate, who lived in the mid-fourth century ordered that hostels be built in every city, grain and wine be distributed to the poor. In Julian's actions and reactions, it is possible to see the continuation (several centuries later) of the strong current of active care for and aid to the poor in the Jewish and Christian world of the first century AD; we can also see the enduring Graeco-Roman lack of concern for the poor and destitute. *Ad Arsacium Archiereum Galatiae*, in Stern, *GLAJJ*, 550.

The tithes gathered by the Levites, in the individual communities, constituted the food supply intended to meet whatever aid to the local (or visiting) poor became necessary during the following year. The distribution of this grain could have been regular, on a weekly basis, or irregular, on an occasional basis.

Begging was a sanctioned mechanism of aid to the poor, especially in the case of physical impediments such as blindness or mobility impairment. The presence of beggars, at the gates of the city, in the precincts of the Jerusalem Temple or local synagogue, and in other places of public gathering, served as an immediate reminder of the ongoing personal and corporate Jewish responsibility in caring for and giving to the poor.

The Dead Sea Scrolls material indicates that affiliate groups maintained aid mechanisms similar to the community-based care of the wider Jewish world of the first century; however, in their 'world' only bona fide members of the community were eligible for such aid, which seems to have been corporately, rather than individually bestowed.

The final mechanism of aid to the poor consists of emergency relief in times of severe food shortage, most often caused by famine.

The evidence demonstrates that, in theory and in practice, the Jewish world of the first century maintained the historical emphasis on the centrality of care for and giving to the poor.

We have seen examples of benefaction language in Josephus and Philo, the post-biblical material, and in the gospels. In most cases, the language used seems to be an attempt to communicate as positively as possible what seems to have been a largely alien concept in the Graeco-Roman world. Where we see examples from the world of benefaction and patronage (e.g. in the gospels) very often we also see a negative assessment of the motivations and mechanisms. Where we see a positive assessment, we also see a re-casting of the example into something like a Jewish motivation to and/or mechanism for poor aid. This is in no way surprising, as the differences between Jewish and Graeco-Roman understandings of the place of the poor (in terms of consideration and treatment) have become manifestly clear. [Should I lay out the differences here?]

Given the disparity of thought and practice in this realm alone, that the apostle Paul should have encountered challenges in the collection for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem seems a given. The background of the majority of the Christians outside of Judaea/Israel was thoroughly Graeco-Roman. Certainly there were Jewish Christians, some of whom had been born Jewish, some who were such by virtue of conversion, and others (mostly, if not all men) who were influenced by Judaism to a greater or lesser degree, but who had not 'met the *mo'el*' (been circumcised) and assumed responsibility for observing *all* the Jewish laws. These Christians, however, became the minority as more and more Gentiles embraced Jesus as Lord and entered the local faith communities. These Gentiles hadn't had

the benefit of exposure to the teaching of the synagogue and life of its members, which would have given them some grounding in scripture and ethical matters. Small wonder that questions and opposition arose as the idea of the collection was introduced. How to interpret the collection and its implications to largely if not thoroughly uninitiated (in Jewish terms) Christians constituted a daunting task for the apostle, as did the challenges he faced vis à vis the conveyance of the collection from its donor church communities in the Diaspora to its destination in Jerusalem. The final challenge in this monumental undertaking by Paul lay in the uncertainty of its reception by the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem. Does Paul leave us any indication of *his* interaction with, and response to these challenges? Armed with our background material on aid to the poor in the Graeco-Roman and Jewish contexts, can we see behind the scenes, so to speak and come away with a fuller picture of the collection, its unfolding, and its diverse participants? It is to such matters as these that we now turn our attention.

## Chapter Four

### Comparison: Graeco-Roman and Jewish Aid to the Poor

#### 4.1 Introduction

We have investigated the backgrounds of the two basic constituencies with whom Paul interacted, and who (he hoped) would interact with each other at the level of the collection and beyond. We now turn our attention to some of the possible areas of difference between the two groups' understandings and practices of aid to the poor before turning to a consideration of the scriptural texts directly addressing the collection project, to look for evidence of challenges Paul may have faced in interpreting the project to the Corinthian and Jerusalem Christians, as well as evidence of his response(s) to those challenges.

We begin with a summary of those Graeco-Roman motivations to aid to the poor for which we have found evidence.

#### 4.2 Comparison of motivations for aid to the poor

##### 4.2.1 Graeco-Roman

In our study of Graeco-Roman motivations for aid to the poor, perhaps the most striking aspect to emerge is the almost total silence on the plight of the desperately poor. Whatever (preserved) conversation took place about giving aid seems largely to have concerned individuals who shared the same social stratum (i.e., always a citizen<sup>1</sup> and usually an élite<sup>2</sup> one), and who were able to reciprocate any gift with one comparable to it (or even better in some way). This reciprocity<sup>3</sup> demanded that the giver enter into an ongoing relationship of give and take with the recipient, and so one of the motivations to give would have been the desire to be linked over time, perhaps over a lifetime, with that other person. In order to participate in this cycle of giving and receiving, the recipient had to bring something desired by the giver. Without a realistic expectation of return, there was no encouragement, on the part of those able to do so, to give. Should one decide to give to a person outside one's social milieu, as in benefaction, the desire for maintenance of the social order was often, if not usually, involved, and the giving reflected its centrality; one gave for reasons of political expediency, perhaps to win or maintain recognition as a person of importance in the society, to secure the allegiance of a particular group, perhaps to prevent anticipated or threatened social unrest, or (attempt to) quiet what there already was of it.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> §2.2.3 "Degrees/Grades of Poverty", §2.2.2 "Poverty – A definition and acknowledgement of its pervasive yet largely undocumented presence in the ancient world, §2.4.1 "Patronage", §2.4.2 "Benefaction", but §2.4.2.3 (for the one exception found in Kleanax of Kyme), §2.4.3 "Corn Dole".

<sup>2</sup> Cf. §2.2.2 "Poverty".

<sup>3</sup> §2.4.1 "Reciprocity".

<sup>4</sup> §2.4.2 "Benefaction".

The concept of social order, the focus on maintaining the status quo in terms of the balance of power and control of resources (i.e. food, clothing, shelter and the means to procure them), was of central importance in the first century Graeco-Roman world. This is perhaps best illustrated by the concept of ἰσότης,<sup>5</sup> often understood as ‘equality’, but with the specific relational connotation of “equal by acknowledgement of the same rights”.<sup>6</sup> Sometimes, however, when used in conjunction with aid, ἰσότης connoted that which was appropriate to a person, given his or her place in the social order,<sup>7</sup> rather than the recipient’s equal status with the giver. Ἰσότης, then, does not necessarily constitute proof that in the first century Graeco-Roman world all people were considered ‘equal’, but it does support the system of social stratification in which people were separated by birth, wealth, and education, and it undergirds institutional and individual inequities toward the desperately poor. After all, if fate had assigned one to a miserable existence, then what good could come from disturbing that cosmic balance?

Our final motivation for material aid to others in the Graeco-Roman world is well-illustrated in the Terrence Rattigan play, “Man & Boy”. The protagonist, a failed international businessman/speculator, when reminded by his son of all the practical good he had been responsible for in Eastern Europe, replies that none of it was for the people in those countries. It was all so that the world should know that *he* had done it, that they should acknowledge *him*.<sup>8</sup> Here we have a perfect 20<sup>th</sup> century example of a primary motivation for aiding others in the first century Graeco-Roman world: love of honour, or φιλοτιμία.<sup>9</sup> Whatever other of the reasons given above for providing assistance to another human being may have been present, φιλοτιμία would almost certainly have played a part. To be known as one who could and did give to others was an integral part of life for the very few, very wealthy, privileged citizens, but to give to the desperately poor does not seem to have been much of a concern at all, at least not one worthy of note, because they could not even return *τίμη* of any value.

#### 4.2.2 Jewish

When we examine Jewish motivations for aiding the poor, the situation is quite different from that in the Graeco-Roman setting. We find abundant and varied evidence attesting pervasive and enduring Jewish concern for the local, even the alien, poor.

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<sup>5</sup> §2.5.2 “*Isotēs*”.

<sup>6</sup> Stählin, *TDNT*, III:346.

<sup>7</sup> §2.5.2, “*Isotēs*”.

<sup>8</sup> David Suchet, performance, *Man & Boy*, by Terrence Rattigan, Cambridge Arts Theatre, 7 Oct. 2004.

<sup>9</sup> §2.4.1, “Patronage”, §2.4.2, “Benefaction”, §2.4.2.1, “Tiberius Claudius Dinippus”, §2.4.2.2, “Other Assorted Benefactors”, §2.4.2.3, “Kleanax of Kyme”, §2.4.4, “Corn Dole”, §2.5.1, “Reciprocity”.

Beginning our summary of motivations, the fact of God's deliverance from slavery in Egypt, and provision (of the necessities of life) for Israel in the wilderness and the land<sup>10</sup> provided an enduring basis for much Jewish aid to the poor, even in the first century; God began the giving; what God has done for you, you are to do for each other out of gratitude for that prior and ongoing giving. Trust in God's promise of continuing provision furnished more motivation to provide for others.

In a number of texts concerning Jewish giving to the poor, we noted the ideal that one who gives is to recognise him/herself in the recipient<sup>11</sup> and to give in such a way that the recipient's dignity is preserved, along with physical life.

Along with positive motivation for aiding the poor, we also find a negative one: guilt-avoidance, or averting God's punishment for not aiding the poor.<sup>12</sup> Whether positive or negative, Jewish motivations so far speak of accountability and consequences for one's attitude and one's behaviour as one gave – or did not.

The two-way nature of giving, as in benefits derived from Levites, day-labourers, and indentured servants, provided yet another source of motivation for aid in the form of timely payment of wages and compassion for their plight: landless, living day-to-day, separated from their own land.<sup>13</sup>

In addition to the afore-mentioned motivations, the post-biblical literature provides its own, sometimes unique motivations to Jewish giving: forgiveness of sins, postponement of death, an increase in God's love, the assurance of God's protection, and the promise that the giver will always benefit as does the recipient of the aid.<sup>14</sup>

The Dead Sea Scroll communities' literature places a heavy emphasis on aid to the poor as an example of faithful adherence to the covenant, and as presaging the future kingdom where all will be in perfect balance for the righteous.<sup>15</sup>

Giving to the poor as an expression of one's worship of God is hinted at in the gospels,<sup>16</sup> as is giving to the poor as evidence of repentance,<sup>17</sup> and in both the gospels and the rabbinic literature, genuine giving to the poor makes possible entry into the kingdom of God.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> §3.1.1 "Exodus"; §3.1.2 "Leviticus"; §3.1.3 "Deuteronomy"; §3.2.1 "Psalms"; §3.7.1 "Matthew"; §3.7.2 "Mark"; §3.7.3 "Luke"; §3.10.1 Philo.

<sup>11</sup> §3.1.3 "Deuteronomy"; §3.7.1 "Matthew".

<sup>12</sup> §3.1.2 "Leviticus"; §3.1.3 "Deuteronomy"; §3.3.3 "Ezekiel"; §3.3.4 "Amos"; §3.4 "Job"; §3.5.1 "Tobit"; §3.5.2 "Ben Sira".

<sup>13</sup> §3.1.2 "Leviticus"; §3.1.3 "Deuteronomy"; §3.10.1 "Philo".

<sup>14</sup> §2.5.1 "Tobit"; §2.5.2 "Ben Sira"; §2.5.3 "Testament of Job".

<sup>15</sup> In this, the DSS differ from the gospel and rabbinic material in that for the former group, giving to the poor occurs *within* the kingdom, among the righteous, while the latter two understood that giving to the poor could make possible *entry into* the kingdom. §3.6 "Qumran".

<sup>16</sup> §3.7.1 "Matthew".

<sup>17</sup> §3.7.3 "Luke".

<sup>18</sup> §3.7.1 "Matthew"; §3.7.3 "Luke"; §3.11.1 "Tractate Peah".

When in the gospels we encounter a group of Jews who seem motivated by clearly Graeco-Roman expectations of a return beneficial to them,<sup>19</sup> we also encounter Jesus' unmistakable condemnation of such behaviour. His clear reiteration of Torah's instruction to include the poor and needy in one's feasting, knowing that although they could not return the favour in any way, God can, provides a motivation different, and at times opposed to their own; it was different, in that someone other than the recipient "returned" the favour, and it was opposed, in that such invitations were not to be primarily about the return, but about the sharing of prior blessing.

In all but one instance<sup>20</sup> in our investigation into Jewish motivations for aid to the poor, the evidence supports giving in proportion to one's means. Because of this, everyone with *some* means can participate as a giver, leaving very few, if any, always and only as recipients.

To sum up our findings on the topic of motivation for aid to the poor, evidence for such motivations is conspicuously lacking in the Graeco-Roman world, and what we do see is almost exclusively oriented to a small privileged segment of the society. In Judaism, however, such evidence is both abundant and diverse.

### **4.3 Comparison of mechanisms for aid to the poor**

If the evidence attesting motivations for aiding the poor is so starkly different in these two groups, what then might we say concerning the evidence of mechanisms for implementing such aid? Will the contrast be as great, and if so, how might that inform our task in Chapter Six, where we hope to form a picture of the possible challenges to the Corinthian Christians, the Jerusalem Christians, and to Paul, as he interpreted the collection to both groups?

#### **4.3.1 Graeco-Roman**

Keeping in mind that it is possible for ordinary acts of kindness to the poor and needy to have occurred in the Graeco-Roman world, but not to have been recorded (because they were of no importance to people with the means to effect an inscription); still, we must address ourselves to the evidence at hand. It is scarce, and what we have is greatly influenced, if not governed, by the same constraints/conventions which rule the motivations just presented.

Giving between individuals was restricted largely to other citizens,<sup>21</sup> which guaranteed a certain level of social and financial elevation amongst the participants, and giving was always engineered so as to guarantee a return to the giver, so to inaugurate an

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<sup>19</sup> By inviting to dine only those who might be of benefit to them by association, by political/financial influence, even if only by returning the favour of inviting them to dinner. §3.7.3 "Luke".

<sup>20</sup> The encounter of Jesus and the rich young man/ruler. 100% is demanded of him (Matt. 19:16-22; Mk. 10:17-22; Lk. 18:18-22).

<sup>21</sup> §2.5.2 "Isotēs".

ongoing cycle of obligation which might continue for a lifetime. In the case of an individual's giving to a group, such as a city, or a town, the principle remained the same; an appropriate return must be made, in the hope of encouraging further gifts from the benefactor. The needs of the desperately poor were not, overall, in the picture; the needs of one's social equals, or potentially useful subordinates were, and even these needs were addressed in a rather limited number of ways.

The first mechanism for meeting the needs of the 'poor' in one's own socio-economic stratum consisted of patronage.<sup>22</sup> This approach, usually requiring recognition by one party that he<sup>23</sup> was the socially inferior of the two, operated as daily, or perhaps less frequently, the 'client' (the inferior party) appeared before the 'patron' (the controlling partner in the arrangement), and would receive some form of help, usually monetary, in exchange for a service rendered, or for the promise of a favour at a propitious moment.

Beyond patronage was benefaction,<sup>24</sup> in which an individual would donate (in our case) money for food, or the food itself, for a large group of people, perhaps even a city. In most instances for which we have evidence, such giving was oriented toward the citizenry of a town, thereby excluding those who most would have benefited from the donation. Our one attested exception is for an unusually generous man named Kleanax, who, throughout his life, persisted in effecting food-fests, often for the entire population of the city of Kyme, and when he had hosted his last "all-Kyme feast", Kleanax left a like-minded son to carry on the tradition.<sup>25</sup>

Other than Kleanax, we found little indication of mechanisms for aiding the desperately poor in Graeco-Roman society, but there remain two areas of interest to us in our investigation; they are related and may yet yield evidence of such aid.

First we turn to the corn dole.<sup>26</sup> This monthly distribution of free grain targeted a percentage of the population in at least several large cities<sup>27</sup> of the Roman Empire, the most famous of which is Rome. Eligibility, restricted to citizens, was not a guarantee of admissibility, as the number of recipients was capped at a maximum of 200,000 in a city at least 4 times that large. Many of the people most in need of such grain were excluded from its distribution, so it seems that the corn dole would, in and of itself, have been of little to no help to the poor non-citizen.

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<sup>22</sup> §2.4.1 "Patronage".

<sup>23</sup> While we have evidence of female patrons/benefactors, such as Julia Severa and Junia Theodora, I have as yet not seen any to support the idea of female clients, perhaps because the women found other ways to obtain needed resources.

<sup>24</sup> §2.4.2 "Benefactors" §2.4.4.1 "*Leitourgia*"; §2.4.4.2 "*Epidoseis*".

<sup>25</sup> See §2.4.2 "Benefactors".

<sup>26</sup> §2.4.3 "Corn Dole".

<sup>27</sup> §2.4.3 "Corn Dole".

In addition to the free grain, there was, in times of crisis and famine, a system of subsidised grain, overseen by a *curator annonae*,<sup>28</sup> whose job consisted of procuring sufficient grain to guarantee the free distributions and supply the market, the only means by which those not covered by the dole, either directly or by association, might access grain. Such access was again regulated by means and social status; those who were of limited status and means had limited access, and those of low status and no means had none.

Having come to the end of our small list of mechanisms for material aid to others which, as we have seen, was not especially focussed on the poor, we must conclude that the evidence available attests a remarkable lack of concern at the motivational level, a lack reflected in a corresponding dearth of mechanisms for aid to what was undeniably the greater percentage of the population in the Graeco-Roman world.

#### 4.3.2 Jewish

It remains to recap the array of mechanisms attested in the first century Jewish world, where the abundance of motivations is matched in the literature by a diversity of mechanisms.

Indicative of the degree of concern for the poor are the mechanisms for treatment of day labourers,<sup>29</sup> who were to be paid promptly, and indentured servants,<sup>30</sup> who were to be treated fairly, retained for a limited time, and (in Deuteronomy) provided with the means to successfully resume an independent economic life after their time of service.

Exacting interest on loans to the poor was banned<sup>31</sup>, a mechanism which might avert the final slide into desperation and destitution; the defence of and respect for the rights of the poor<sup>32</sup> was incumbent on all people, especially those in positions of power.

Gleaning<sup>33</sup> constituted a provision for the poor which required their participation as workers at every harvest; so too did the Sabbatical<sup>34</sup> and Jubilee<sup>35</sup> years, but these last two served also to signal the end of periods of indentured service and various sorts of debt.

Inclusion of the poor at feast times<sup>36</sup> throughout the year constituted an intermittent, yet significant mechanism of provision for the poor, affording them opportunities to participate in the mainstream of society.

The system of tithes<sup>37</sup> ensured that each community would have funds of money and materials on hand for distribution to the poor throughout the year.

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<sup>28</sup> §2.4.3 “Corn Dole”.

<sup>29</sup> §3.1.2 Leviticus; §3.1.3 “Deuteronomy”.

<sup>30</sup> §3.1.1 “Exodus”; §3.1.3 “Deuteronomy”; §3.10.1 “Philo”; cf. §3.2.2 “Proverbs”.

<sup>31</sup> §3.1.2 “Leviticus”; §3.1.3 “Deuteronomy”; §3.10.1 “Philo”.

<sup>32</sup> §3.1.1 “Exodus”; §3.2.2 “Proverbs”.

<sup>33</sup> §3.1.2 “Leviticus”; §3.1.3 “Deuteronomy”; §3.3.4 “Amos”; §3.4.1 “Ruth”; §3.4 “Job”; §3.7.1 “Matthew”; §3.7.3 “Luke”; §3.10.1 “Philo”; §3.11.1 “Tractate *Peah*”.

<sup>34</sup> §3.1.1 “Exodus”; §3.1.4 “The Sabbath Year”.

<sup>35</sup> §3.1.2 “Leviticus”.

<sup>36</sup> §3.3.1 “Nehemiah”; §3.3.2 “Isaiah”; §3.4.2 “Esther”; §3.5.1 “Tobit”.

The provision of clothing, shelter, food and alms by an individual directly to the poor, or by commissioning and funding another person to give on one's behalf represents another mechanism for giving to the poor. The corporate mechanism for food-based aid to the poor consisted of the *tamchuy* and *kuppah*,<sup>38</sup> which provided regular and extraordinary relief from hunger.

Two other mechanisms attested in the post-biblical literature of aid to the poor involved the relief of pain/suffering by soporifics,<sup>39</sup> and proper burial at death.<sup>40</sup>

#### 4.4 Summary and conclusions

Thus, the pictures of concern for the poor, motivationally and practically speaking, could hardly be more different in the first century Graeco-Roman and Jewish settings. The reality of life in the first century for the poor in a Jewish context may have been difficult, but admitted of encouragement and material support by individuals and the greater community. Life for the poor in the greater Graeco-Roman setting seems to have been largely devoid of any such encouragement or support, and in fact seems to have encouraged non-involvement (in terms of aid) with anyone outside one's own social stratum, so as not to upset the 'balance' of society.

Here then, we gain insight into the backgrounds of the participants in Paul's collection for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem: those Christians in the Diaspora congregations, many of whom came from a thoroughly Graeco-Roman background and environment,<sup>41</sup> those in the Jerusalem community, with their Jewish history, and Paul. It remains for us to consider how what we have discovered in our work until now may have influenced these participants in terms of understanding of and cooperation in the collection. For this we turn to the relevant New Testament texts.

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<sup>37</sup> §3.1.3 "Deuteronomy"; §3.11.1 "Tractate *Peah*".

<sup>38</sup> §3.11.1 "Tractate *Peah*".

<sup>39</sup> §3.2.2 "Proverbs".

<sup>40</sup> §3.5.1 "Tobit".

<sup>41</sup> The Jewish members also would have been exposed to and affected by some, if not all, of these. See Tessa Rajak, 'The synagogue within the Greco-Roman City', 164, 170-71, in Steven Fine, ed. *Jews, Christians, and Polytheists in the Ancient Synagogue: Cultural interaction during the Greco-Roman period* (London: Routledge, 1999), and her *The Jewish Dialogue with Greece and Rome: Studies in Cultural and Social Interaction* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 375-76.

## **Chapter Five**

### **Money Movement in the First Century: Graeco-Roman and Jewish Conventions**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

Through investigation into the backgrounds of motivations and mechanisms for aid to the poor in the first century, we have become aware of the clear differences in perception and practice between the Graeco-Roman and Jewish worlds. We now ask whether analogous differences in perception and practice concerning the handling and movement of money may have existed.

If, as we shall argue, Paul was successful in gathering donations from a number of his largely Gentile churches for needy Christians in Jerusalem, then questions might naturally arise concerning the handling and movement of that money. Because it would have represented the giving over time of more than one group of people, and indeed, because it was accompanied, first to Corinth and then to Jerusalem, by individuals from each of the contributing congregations, we may reasonably imagine that the amount of the collection, in the minds of the contributing groups, was substantial. It therefore follows that everyone involved, Paul and the participating churches, would have had an interest in the proper handling and safe transport of their gift to Jerusalem. It is to the subject of money movement in the first century world that we now turn our attention, with the expectation that our questions will both find an answer and clarify further the collection texts.

It is important to acknowledge at the beginning that there is an underlying assumption by some that, in the ancient world, the difficulties involved in moving large amounts of money over great distances precluded such activity. In this chapter we investigate the question of money movement in the first century Graeco-Roman world, looking in the sources for evidence of any such movement, such as reasons for which money might move (§5.2, 5.4), amounts of money moved (§5.3), how money may have been gathered (§5.5), who might accompany money as it was moved (§5.6), what means might have been employed for money movement (§5.7), and how frequently money may have been moved (§5.8).

All parties involved in the collection, Paul, the diaspora churches, and the church in Jerusalem, would have had a keen interest in the appropriate handling and transport of the money. As a result of this study, we will be able see more clearly any of that interest as it appears, or is reflected in the N.T. texts pertaining to the collection.

## 5.2 Sources of money movement

To answer this question we first must ascertain whether money actually was necessary in places distant from the source of the revenue, and if it was, we then must ask the reasons for which such money would have been necessary.

### 5.2.1 Government

If indeed money did move in the first century Roman world, then the government<sup>1</sup>, and in particular the military<sup>2</sup>, would have been responsible for the largest sums of money liable to such movement. Provincial outlays of money may have occurred for salaries of any employees (civilian and military), equipment, construction and maintenance. Money may have been needed to repay debts, to encourage allies (to remain friendly), to purchase bullion. If revenues acquired through means such as taxation, rents, extortion and looting did not suffice for local needs, then money would have to be imported. If, however, revenues exceeded local needs, then the surplus might be liable to move, if not home to Rome, then to another provincial holding in need of a monetary transfusion.<sup>3</sup>

### 5.2.2 Commerce

Beyond the government as greatest potential mover of money, there were others who may have been responsible for the moving about of smaller, yet still sizeable sums of money. Although not in the same league as the mighty Roman government and its military machine, merchants would belong in this group, as they would need reserves of money with which to purchase stock, provision themselves for long journeys, procure lodging along the way, and pay any tolls and customs dues.

### 5.2.3 Immigration

Immigrants are a likely group of money movers. Many of these immigrants may have been veteran soldiers retiring from service and settling in an area different from the one in which they served, or, also likely, moving as a group into an area of unrest in order to ensure peace, as in Batanea, at the behest of Herod.<sup>4</sup>

### 5.2.4 Jewish taxes, tithes and gifts to the Jerusalem Temple

At least one group of people would have been responsible for the yearly movement of large sums of money. The Jews were to collect and send the Temple Tax from every corner of the world to Jerusalem. If this were done, then it would constitute a substantial amount of money moved; even if we do not know the exact numbers of Jews for whom the tax was due

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<sup>1</sup> Kenneth W. Harl, *Coinage in the Roman Economy, 300B.C. to A.D. 700* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1996), 73, 78.

<sup>2</sup> Harl, *Coinage*, 226.

<sup>3</sup> Harl, *Coinage*, 86; cf. 238, 252-53.

<sup>4</sup> B. Isaac, *The Near East under Roman Rule* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 128; Josephus, *Ant.* 17.23-27; cf. Isaac, *Near East*, 131.

in any given year, at ½ shekel<sup>5</sup> (1 *didrachmon*) for every male aged 20 to 50, the result would be impressive.

Individuals at times may have moved hefty sums of money over substantial distances. Monetary bequests and outright gifts from family and friends in far-off places could have occasioned such movement.

Such are the most likely agents of large-scale money movement in the Roman Empire of the 1<sup>st</sup> century C.E. Is there evidence that any of them actually fulfilled the role we imagine for them?

At present the sources attesting money movement are less numerous than we might hope. There are in fact relatively few extant primary documents with which to work. These are, however, sufficient to suggest a clearer picture of first century C.E. money collection and movement than any that until now have been proposed. We always keep in mind that new sources of information may have yet to be uncovered. Because of this reality, any proposal has a provisional quality and may be considered as one further step toward clarification and greater understanding of the collection and movement of money in the ancient world. With this in mind, we proceed to the question of whether in fact large sums of money were moved.

### 5.3 Scale of money movement

Discoveries of coin hoards,<sup>6</sup> shipwrecks and individual coins scattered throughout and even beyond the bounds of the Roman Empire bear witness to the reality of coin movement in the first century world. What these coins tell us about life in the ancient world, economic and otherwise, is part of an ongoing discussion, but at the very least they indicate both the fairly pervasive presence of coined money and its movement throughout the first century world.

Opinions differ more concerning the degree rather than the reality of first century money movement. The most notable exception to this is Rostovtzeff, who, most probably due to his limited sources, gave no indication that he was aware of the transport of precious metals (in the form of either coin or bullion) between the provinces and Rome. He did, however, recognise the importance of commerce between Rome and the provinces and beyond, claiming interprovincial trade as “the main source from which the wealth of the large maritime and river cities all over the Empire was derived”.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Scripture states both that it was set at 1/3 shekel (Neh. 10:33-34) and at ½ (Ex.30:11-16). Cf. *Shekalim* 2.3. *Hebrew-English Edition of the Babylonian Talmud*, trans. M.H. Segal, vol.6 (London: Soncino, 1983).

<sup>6</sup> Leo Kadman, “Temple Dues and Currency in Palestine in the Light of Recent Discovered Coin Hoards”, *Israel Numismatic Bulletin* 1:1962, found at <http://israelvisit.co.il/begged-ivri/shekel/teachings/kadman.htm>.

<sup>7</sup> Rostovtzeff, M. *The Social and Economic History of the Roman Empire*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Revised by P.M. Fraser. Vol.1 (Oxford: Clarendon, 1957/1971), 153-158.

Even given his recognition of long-distance trade, Rostovtzeff could not imagine long-distance money movement. And, again at a disadvantage due to as yet unknown sources, he reported that “among the main reasons for the successful development of banking operations [was] the scarcity of coined money which made the introduction of a credit-transfer both for money and for natural products highly desirable and even indispensable”.<sup>8</sup> Without attestation, Rostovtzeff was left with an unsubstantiated claim for a hypothetical system of credit which, more than forty years later, remains unattested. His belief that coins were a scarce commodity in the Roman Empire has been disproved, and as more and more coin evidence is discovered throughout the vast reaches of what once was the Roman Empire, we are beginning to consider the logistical and fiscal implications of large-scale money movement throughout the period of Roman rule.

As no one now seems to dispute that in the Roman world monies were moved, the question currently centres on whether that movement was an integral and therefore regularly recurring part of the Roman financial picture, or was, rather, sporadic (and therefore unusual) in nature. A.H.M. Jones suggests that, with the possible exception of Asia and Egypt, the revenues of the provinces barely met, let alone exceeded their expenses. He concedes, however, that overflow monies may have been shipped from Asia and Egypt to Rome. If these regions produced any surplus cash, he allows that it would have been paid into the *aerarium*.<sup>9</sup>

Joining Jones in his scepticism that large scale money movement may regularly have occurred is F. Millar, who has difficulty imagining the Romans capable of the technical engineering such movements would require: “The whole problem of the extraction of value from a subject population, its deployment within the region in which it was levied as taxation, or its possible export to Rome or elsewhere in the Empire, presents fundamental difficulties which need to be faced”.<sup>10</sup>

Millar along with Jones, poses the question of whether the provinces were capable of producing surplus revenue. “It cannot even be quite certain *a priori* that it was not a net tribute-exporting region. It is not an impossible notion that the Roman Empire expended more there than it raised in revenue”.<sup>11</sup> Millar goes on to ask how, if such surpluses occurred, the money in question would have been moved, and cautions that “silver (the Roman *denarius*)

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<sup>8</sup> Rostovtzeff, *Social and Economic History*, 180.

<sup>9</sup> A.H.M. Jones, *Studies in Roman Government and Law* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1960), 103, 105.

<sup>10</sup> Fergus Millar, *The Roman Near East: 31BC—AD337* (Cambridge: HUP, 1993), 49.

<sup>11</sup> Millar, *Roman Near East*, 50.

[was] the most likely medium. We should not underestimate the purely physical problems involved".<sup>12</sup>

The belief that the Romans would have been hard-pressed to move large sums of money is an interesting one. Their sailing ships came in all sizes, from small coastal craft to massive freighters; they carried tons of grain, oil and other goods.<sup>13</sup> The Roman army transported heavy equipment, provisions and livestock overland and by sea. The Roman emperors travelled with a royal household's worth of "stuff" and the personnel necessary to deal with it. Why then should we imagine that the movement of coins or bullion would have posed an unusual challenge to them? Was it because sailing was risky business? Was it because both the fear of death and/or the loss of precious were so strong that shippers were reluctant to take coin cargo on board? If this fear applied to coin, then why not to precious grain? Surely grain was lost when a ship sank. And in terms of the food supply, the potential effects of this loss were just as serious as those which would perhaps have ensued from the loss of a cargo of coins. To maintain for these reasons that coin was not regularly moved, and in sizeable amounts, does not make sense at a time when the evidence points ever more clearly to such movement.

Kenneth Harl has added his voice to the discussion concerning the monetary dealings of the Roman Empire. He speaks quite decisively to the question of monetisation of the Empire, and, more specifically of interest to us, to money movement, the regular first century occurrence of which he is convinced.<sup>14</sup> "Imperial expenditures put vast numbers of Roman coins back into provincial markets, while taxation removed only part of this money back to Rome. Commerce dispersed the rest of the coins over a superb network of roads, canals, and sea lanes linking the Roman world. A cycle of Roman expenditure and commerce kept most Roman coins in perpetual circulation".<sup>15</sup>

Keith Hopkins believes, along with Harl, that

the whole Roman empire was integrated into a single monetary economy, [maintaining that] for roughly a hundred and fifty years (C.E. 50-200), increases and decreases in the volume of coins, minted by each emperor, were similarly reflected in different and widely separate regions of the empire. Apparently an effective mechanism for distributing the coins throughout the empire existed, so that several regions (and if these, then surely others also) got roughly the same ration of coins stamped, for example, with the head of Trajan compared with coins stamped with the head of Domitian. What was this mechanism? We know that state expenditure was concentrated in the city of Rome and on the frontiers [where the most troops were stationed, and had, therefore, to be paid and maintained]. [This] suggests that it was

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<sup>12</sup> Millar, *Roman Near East*, 50. But Leon Casson, *Ships and Seamanship in the Ancient World* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1995/1971), Chapter 9, "Appendix", 183-200, shows that much earlier than the first century C.E., ships of enormous size and capacity were in regular use.

<sup>13</sup> Casson, *Ships*, Chapter 9, "Sailing Ships", 169-182.

<sup>14</sup> Harl, *Coinage*, 73, 86, 228, 296. Cf. Christopher Howgego, "The Supply and Use of Money" (*JRS* 82, 1992), 6.

<sup>15</sup> Harl, *Coinage*, 86.

the flow of money taxes and tax-stimulated trade which redistributed state-issued silver coins throughout the empire.<sup>16</sup>

Hopkins offers several theories concerning taxes and tax-rates, but these are not of interest to us. What is of interest is Hopkins' strong case for the movement of monies around the Roman empire in the first century C.E.

We get a more grudging acknowledgement of the place of money in the Roman Empire (and so its movement) from R. Duncan-Jones,

The Empire of the Principate was not fully monetised, and the state collected much of its revenue in kind. Big private estates, like small peasant farms, were said to aim at self-sufficiency and to avoid the market-place where they could. But at the centre, there is little sign that the government could do without money, except when it distributed some of its grain revenue to a privileged elite. Money was of the utmost importance for the state's biggest spending commitment, maintaining a large army.<sup>17</sup>

Duncan-Jones is cautious about the possibility of coin movement out of the local sphere. Although against the idea of a "large and unified" economy, he admits "it is sometimes envisaged that taxes paid in coin found their way back from the provinces to Rome, and were sent out again to pay the troops in the provinces".<sup>18</sup>

Arguing for the relative immobility of coin, Duncan-Jones believes that "the distinctive regional configurations of coin-types undermine the hypothesis of heavy inter-regional trade based on transfer of coin".<sup>19</sup> Harl, however, seems to have the stronger case in this department, although, as we have previously stated, our purpose is to show that long-distance transport did indeed occur in the first century Roman world, not to show proof of a carefully constructed monetary system. We leave that discussion for others to pursue, having established that large quantities of money were indeed moved in the Roman Empire.

Our task is to ascertain whether large-scale money movement did indeed occur in the first century Roman world and if it did, to then enquire into the circumstances of that movement. If, on the other hand, we find that large scale movement of money was more of an aberration than a regular component of life, then we must ask what impact such information might have on our understanding of those monies we are told were moved: money such as that collected for the Temple Tax, and, of special interest for us, money collected by Paul for the poor of the Jerusalem Church.<sup>20</sup>

Let us then survey the evidence.

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<sup>16</sup> Keith Hopkins, "Taxes and Trade in the Roman Empire" (*JRS* 70, 1980) 113. Cf. Harl, *Coinage*, 78, 80.

<sup>17</sup> R. Duncan-Jones, *Money and Government in the Roman Empire* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 3-4.

<sup>18</sup> Duncan-Jones, *Money and Government*, 176.

<sup>19</sup> Duncan-Jones, *Money and Government*, 178.

<sup>20</sup> I Cor. 16:1-4; II Cor. 8,9; Rom. 15:25ff; Gal. 2:10.

## 5.4 Occasions of Money Movement

### 5.4.1 Roman

Sallust, writing in the first century B.C.E., makes mention of “Albinus [who] meanwhile renewed hostilities and hastened to transport to Africa provisions, money for paying the soldiers, and other apparatus of war”.<sup>21</sup> Dio, also writing of first century B.C.E. events, notes that Flaccus was accused of taking from “the soldiers’ allowance for food and from the booty”.<sup>22</sup>

The military had money with it as a matter of course. Pay for the soldiers, and booty were the two most common reasons for this. The two were in fact often linked. Dio notes that “in particular they [the soldiers] collected money from all sources, even from the temples; for they took away the votive offerings that could be converted into money...both money and soldiers came to them also from Gallia Tolgata...”<sup>23</sup> and that upon the capture of Egypt in the first century B.C.E.,

Out of all this wealth the troops received what was owing them, and those who were with Caesar at the time got in addition a thousand sesterces on condition of not plundering the city. Repayment was made in full to those who had previously advanced loans, and to both the senators and the knights who had taken part in the war large sums were given. In fine, the Roman empire was enriched and its temples adorned.<sup>24</sup>

Suetonius recounts how

In Gaul [Julius Caesar] pillaged shrines and temples of the gods filled with offerings, and oftener sacked towns for the sake of plunder than for any fault. In consequence, he had more gold than he knew what to do with, and offered it for sale throughout Italy and the provinces at a rate of three thousand sesterces the pound. In his first consulship he stole three thousand pounds of gold from the Capitol, replacing it with the same weight of gilded bronze. He made alliances and thrones a matter of barter, for he extorted from Ptolemy alone in his own name and that of Pompey nearly six thousand talents, while later on he met the heavy expenses of the civil wars and of his triumphs and entertainments by the most bare-faced pillage and sacrifice.<sup>25</sup>

Suetonius here has told us that the military was in possession of large amounts of money from the Roman authorities (whether the money came from local government coffers or from Rome, we do not know). He also has given evidence that fraud and extortion provided funds for support of the military (at least). Following on this military connection to the movement of money, we hear from Plutarch who, in chronicling the above-mentioned Pompey’s exploits, describes that general’s departure for war: “Accordingly, after making all

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<sup>21</sup> Sallust, *Jug.* 36.

<sup>22</sup> Dio *Hist.* 31.104.

<sup>23</sup> Dio, *Hist.* 48.12.4.

<sup>24</sup> Dio, *Hist.* 51.17.7; Suetonius, *D. Aug.* 44.

<sup>25</sup> Suetonius, *D. Iul.* 54. See also Dio, *Hist.* 57.3, and Cicero, *Pro Sestio*, 43.93-94, for indications that extortion and fraud were money-raising methods not unique to Julius Caesar.

his preparations with great speed, Pompey left Memmius, his sister's husband; as governor of Sicily, while he himself put out to sea with a hundred and twenty galleys, and eight hundred transports conveying provisions, ammunition, money, and engines of war".<sup>26</sup>

Without overtly mentioning the military, Cicero discusses the measures he has taken to safeguard money on its way somewhere, "I propose to take sureties at Laodicea for all public moneys [sic], so that both the state and I may be insured against transport risks".<sup>27</sup> Cicero himself transported money, and although we do not know the amount, it was important enough for him to have made mention of it, "I expect to reach Laodicea on 31 July. I shall stay only a very few days, to collect the sum due on my Treasury draft. Then I shall proceed to join the army..."<sup>28</sup>

Suetonius tells how Galba never left without taking a second carriage with at least 1 million sesterces in it<sup>29</sup> and, while he does not specify the number of Augustus' companions so that we might conveniently compute the amount he would have had to leave the house with, Suetonius does say enough that we understand the amount to have been relatively large:

When [Augustus] had begun the journey, he went on to Astura and from there...took ship by night since it chanced that there was a favourable breeze....Then after skirting the coast of Campania and the neighbouring islands, he spent four more days at his villa in Capreae....As he sailed by the gulf of Puteoli...an Alexandrian ship...the passengers and crew...lavished upon him good wishes and highest praise....Exceedingly pleased at this, he gave forty gold pieces to each of his companions...<sup>30</sup>

Tacitus also wrote of Augustus. His history includes several references to money and the military. Two of these concern money destined for soldiers (from Augustus' will) and the use made of a soldier's pay.<sup>31</sup> They do not speak directly to movement, although one might reasonably infer that in order to effect the transfer, any such money would necessarily have been moved to wherever the soldiers were stationed. The third speaks both to the large sum of money and to its movement, as we hear the decision:

that the legacies claimed should be paid and doubled...[but that ] the monetary grant was held back until the men should have reached their proper quarter for the winter. [The response of the soldiers was that] the fifth and twenty-first legions declined to move until the sum was made up and paid where they stood, in the summer camp, out of the travelling chests of the Caesar's suite and of the prince himself.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Plutarch, *Pomp.* 11.2.

<sup>27</sup> Cicero, *Ad Fam.* 2.17.4.

<sup>28</sup> Cicero, (Letter 68 in LCL) 1.3.5.

<sup>29</sup> Suetonius, *Galba* 8.2.

<sup>30</sup> Suetonius, *D. Aug.* 97-98.

<sup>31</sup> Tacitus, *Ann.* 1.8; cf. *Hist.* 1.24

<sup>32</sup> Tacitus, *Ann.* 1.36-37; Suetonius, speaking of Augustus (31 B.C.E.), "after Actium, he was disturbed by the news of a mutiny of the troops...after the victory, who demanded their rewards and discharge.... He delayed at Brundisium only twenty-seven days – just long enough to satisfy all the demands of the soldiers." *D. Aug.* 17.

## 5.4.2 Jewish

There is abundant attestation as well of the movement of Jewish money to Jerusalem: payment of the Temple Tax, a yearly requirement of all Jewish males above the age of twenty (in pre-70 first century C.E.). Not only the Temple Tax created monetary movement toward Jerusalem; in addition, gifts of gold and silver, coin and bullion, were given to the Temple by Jews,<sup>33</sup> proselytes,<sup>34</sup> God-fearers, and even pagans<sup>35</sup> from throughout the ancient world.

But no one need wonder that there was so much wealth in our temple, for all the Jews throughout the habitable world, and those who worshipped God, even those from Asia and Europe, had been contributing to it for a very long time. And there is no lack of witnesses to the great amount of the sums mentioned, nor have they been raised to so great a figure through boastfulness or exaggeration on our part, but there are many historians who bear us out...<sup>36</sup>

Not everyone liked the idea that so much money went to Jerusalem from outside Palestine. Some of what we find as evidence of the yearly movement of large sums of money destined for the Temple bears witness to difficulties surrounding the transfer. In 59 B.C.E. Cicero successfully defended Lucius Valerius Flaccus, who had seized gold being taken to Jerusalem for the Temple Tax and had been charged with theft of “Jewish gold....When every year it was customary to send gold to Jerusalem on the order of the Jews from Italy and from all our provinces, Flaccus forbade by an edict its exportation from Asia....The senate often earlier and also in [his] consulship most urgently forbade the export of gold”.<sup>37</sup> Interestingly and not a little ironically, Cicero set the stage for the edicts discussed in the following paragraph when he recorded in *de Legibus* that “whoever carries off what is sacred or what is entrusted to what is sacred shall be considered as equal to a parricide”.<sup>38</sup>

The attempt by outsiders to prevent the transfer of Jewish money to Jerusalem from the provinces was, if not a perennial problem, a frequent one.<sup>39</sup> In his *Jewish Antiquities*, Josephus notes the complaints of Jews<sup>40</sup> concerning injustices touching on Jewish sacred money, and, beginning most likely in the 20's B.C.E.<sup>41</sup> the responses issued by an official, king, or emperor to those complaints. The sympathetic responses included “that their sacred money be not touched, but be sent to Jerusalem, and that it be committed to the care of the receivers at Jerusalem”.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Josephus, *Ant.* 3.194-6; 12.51-53; 18.312; cf *Ant.* 12.60-84; 14.110; *Wars* 7.218; Philo, *Emb. ad Gaius* 311-317; *Heres* 186; *Spec. Leg.* 1.77-8; *Matt.* 17:24.

<sup>34</sup> Tacitus, *Hist.* 5.5.

<sup>35</sup> Philo, *Leg. ad Gaium* 157-8, 291, 317-319.

<sup>36</sup> Josephus, *Ant.* 14.110-113. See also Philo, *Heres* 186.

<sup>37</sup> Cicero, *Pro Flacco* 28.67.

<sup>38</sup> Cicero, *De Leg.* 2.9.22; 2.16.41.

<sup>39</sup> Josephus, *Ant.* 14.113; 18.312-13.

<sup>40</sup> Josephus, *Ant.* 16.25-57.

<sup>41</sup> Josephus, *Ant.* 14.213-214; 16.160-173.

<sup>42</sup> Josephus, *Ant.* 16.163.

## 5.5 Occasions of money collection

### 5.5.1 Roman (taxes)

Publicani, or tax-collectors in the 1<sup>st</sup> century C.E. were no longer autonomous groups, but employees supervised directly by the Roman government.<sup>43</sup> They were often members, and sometimes the local leaders of the subject peoples from whom the taxes were extracted<sup>44</sup> (although a member of the military might be appointed).<sup>45</sup> By the first century C.E., instead of promising the government a lump sum, which they would then be obliged to raise, as in the 1<sup>st</sup> century B.C.E.,<sup>46</sup> the collectors would pledge a percentage of the amounts gathered.<sup>47</sup> This most likely created an atmosphere of suspicion, both on the part of the person taxed (who would suspect that the amount demanded was well over the standard), and on the part of the government (who would suspect that the amount delivered was well under the agreed-upon percentage of the amount taken in by the collector).

Tax-collectors had the right to sue tax-payers; they could take a pledge from them as well. The converse was also true. A person who felt that injustice had been perpetrated by the tax-collector could bring suit against the group (*socii* or *magistri*) responsible for the tax-collector.<sup>48</sup> Be that as it may, the tax-collectors, or farmers, as they were known, collected relatively large sums of money, a portion of which they would turn over to the governmental representative in their particular area.

Where did the money go once it had been delivered to the local government? Financial records were kept by the governor (or his staff) although few have survived for our inspection. The governor had to render to Rome an account of his financial activities in the province for which he was responsible. We know that when a governor left his post, those in his employ who remained hoped that any financial surplus would be divided amongst them—something that did not always happen, if ever it did.<sup>49</sup>

What of taxes collected ‘in kind’? These were payments made in produce of various sorts, but often in the form of grain.<sup>50</sup> They might be accepted and transported to another location, especially if they consisted of grain, because Rome had an almost unrelenting need

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<sup>43</sup> E. Badian, *Publicans and Sinners: Private enterprise in the service of the Roman Republic* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1972), 11, 77; Hopkins, ‘Taxes and Trade’, 122.

<sup>44</sup> Cicero, *De Prov. Cons.* 4.9-5.11; *Pro Sest.* 39.93; Dio, *Hist.* 39.55.5; 57.3; 58; Josephus, *Ant.* 14.202-3, 206.

<sup>45</sup> E. Mary Smallwood, *The Jews under Roman Rule: From Pompey to Diocletian* (Leiden: Brill, 1981), 151; Graham Webster, *The Roman Imperial Army of the First and Second Centuries A.D.* 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Norman, Oklahoma: Oklahoma University Press, 1985), 118, 269-70; Millar, *The Roman Near East*, 49; Aubert, *Business Managers in Ancient Rome*, 330; Goodman, *The Roman World*, 82-3, 101, 120, 138; Isaac, *The Near East under Roman Rule*, 163, 332.

<sup>46</sup> Tenney Frank, ed., *An Economic Survey of Ancient Rome*, vol.4 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1938), 454; Smallwood, *Jews*, 32-33, 41.

<sup>47</sup> Aubert, *Business Managers*, 329.

<sup>48</sup> Aubert, *Business Managers*, 327.

<sup>49</sup> A.H.M. Jones, *Studies in Roman Government and Law*, 104.

<sup>50</sup> Frank, *Economic Survey*, 45; Goodman, *Roman World*, 101, 146; Isaac, *Near East*, 164, 324.

for it.<sup>51</sup> If so, then no money would necessarily be involved. If, however, the tax-collector was to render money for whatever he accepted in kind, then he would have to sell the produce to procure coins and then most likely would have exchanged his supply of smaller coin for larger denominations. Two important outcomes ensued from this exchange. The first, that of reducing the bulk of coin and making it easier to move, was related to the second, that of enhancing security by reducing the visibility of the money.

Smaller denominations of coins would have been exchanged for larger denominations of silver or gold. The most efficient means of transporting a large quantity of precious metal would of course have been to melt it down into ingots, which could then be stacked in relatively little space.<sup>52</sup> The purpose for which the money was sent likely determined the form in which it travelled. Coin went perhaps for salaries and immediate purchasing needs, while ingots more likely would be destined for shipment to Rome and/or a mint. Configuring the shipment would then have been the final 'local' step in the collection process before shipping.

### 5.5.2 Jewish (Temple Tax, Gifts)<sup>53</sup>

The Temple tax was gathered yearly and, according to the evidence, accounted for the movement of great sums of gold and silver. We do not know what form the below-mentioned gold took. Was it coins? Was it ingots? Chances are that it was in coin form, but we really do not know. According to Cicero,

there follows the odium that is attached to Jewish gold...When every year it was customary to send gold to Jerusalem on the order of the Jews from Italy and from all our provinces, Flaccus forbade by an edict its exportation from Asia...The senate often earlier and also in my consulship most urgently forbade the export of gold. But to resist this barbaric superstition was an act of firmness, to defy this crowd of Jews...for the welfare of the state was an act of the greatest seriousness. 'But Gnaeus Pompey when Jerusalem was captured laid his victorious hands on nothing in that shrine...'...that illustrious general was hindered by...his sense of honour. Where, then is the ground for an accusation against Flaccus...the business was openly proposed and published, as...administered by excellent men? At Apamaea a little less than a hundred pounds of gold was openly seized and weighed...at Laodicea a little more than twenty pounds...at Pergamum a small amount. The accounting for the gold is correct. The gold is in the treasury...Even while Jerusalem was standing and the Jews were at peace with us, the practice of their sacred rites was at variance with the glory of our empire, the dignity of our name, the customs of our ancestors. But now even more so...<sup>54</sup>

This gold would have been collected by leaders of the local Jewish community in silver *didrachma*, which then would have been exchanged for even more

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<sup>51</sup> See Garnsey, *Famine and Food Supply*, for an excellent study of this subject.

<sup>52</sup> Casson, *Ships*, 199; Howgego, "The Supply and Use of Money" *JRS* 82 (1992): 9-11.

<sup>53</sup> Magen Broshi, "The Role of the Temple in the Herodian Economy" *JJS* 38 (1987): 34. Nehemiah 10:33-34; Ex.30:11-16; *Shekalim* 1.3, cited in Jean Juster, *Les Juifs dans L'Empire Romain*, 2 vols. (Paris: Paul Geuthner, 1914), 377. Smallwood, *Jews*, 124-127.

<sup>54</sup> Cicero, *Pro Flacco* 28.67-69.

precious and more compact gold coins. Later Jewish sources relating what may have been first century practice note that “as there were chests in the Temple so were there chests in the province,”<sup>55</sup> indicating that Diaspora Jews would have brought their coins to a local collection point, perhaps in the synagogue.

After local collection, we have just a couple of indications in the sources that intermediate collection points existed for the purpose of further consolidation of the Temple Tax revenues, any extra monetary gifts and the people<sup>56</sup> accompanying it to Jerusalem.<sup>57</sup>

## 5.6 Escorts during money movement

### 5.6.1 Military

There are indications that military escorts were available and used to ensure the integrity of the money as it moved from one location to another. The secondary literature seems to assume this as a given for any large-scale movement of money, but actually, the only money movement for which such an escort was assured was that of military or governmental money.<sup>58</sup> Any other money transported in bulk would not automatically have been accorded such security measures. Rostovtzeff proposes that “a tariff of duties payable for escort, compiled about C.E. 90 and found at Coptos, attests a lively traffic on the desert route between Coptos and Berenice....The soldiers probably belonged in part to the personnel of the war-fleet which protected this commerce....Each caravan was escorted by armed troops in the Roman service...” Unfortunately Rostovtzeff does not provide first century documentation for his extended contention and does its reliability further damage by basing it on much later sources (3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries C.E.) and admitting that “it is, however, uncertain when [such practice] was established.”<sup>59</sup>

Graham mentions the employment of *cohortes equitatae* for ‘escort duty’.<sup>60</sup> Plutarch, in *Agesilaüs and Cleomenes*, portrays *Agesilaüs* as a man who “shrank from no injustice that brought him money...in fear of the victims of his injustice and hated by all men, he kept an armed bodyguard (*μαχαίροφῶρος*) and would go down to his magistracy under their protection”<sup>61</sup> and a document concerning tax-collection, from about 99 C.E. indicates that there was a paid armed attendant, a ‘sword bearer’ (*μαχαίροφῶρος*), who accompanied the four tax-collectors while they pursued their duties.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> *Shekalim* 2.1.

<sup>56</sup> Juster, *Les Juifs*, 380ff.

<sup>57</sup> Josephus, *Ant.* 14.112-13.

<sup>58</sup> Harl, *Coinage*, 80.

<sup>59</sup> Rostovtzeff, *Social and Economic History*, 155,157.

<sup>60</sup> W. Graham, *The Roman Army* (1985), 150.

<sup>61</sup> Plutarch, *Agesilaüs and Cleomenes* 16.

<sup>62</sup> #391, in Bernard D. Grenfell, A.S. Hunt and D.S. Hogarth, *Fayûm Towns and their Papyri* (London: Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1900), 248-49.

We have here an indication that guards could be hired as temporary employees, an indication, perhaps, that traders and other individuals or groups would thereby introduce a measure of professional security when they moved large sums of money. Because all the other first century references we have to ‘sword-bearers’ are military in nature,<sup>63</sup> this may be an indication that the escorts in question were current or former military men.

### 5.6.2 Religious

According to tractates *Peah* and *Sheqalim*, a minimum of two people were required to safeguard the integrity of money: in its collection, its conveyance, and its distribution.<sup>64</sup> It may have been money for aid to the poor in the local community, it may have been the Temple tax, gathered throughout the Jewish world and transported to Jerusalem, or it could have been offerings and alms also gathered outside of Israel and sent to the holy city for the benefit of needy Jews living there.

### 5.7 Circumstances of travel

Although he concedes that the “lion’s share” of travellers were related to “trade and government” (including the military), according to Lionel Casson, whose *Travel in the Ancient World* provides an engaging and wide-ranging study of coming and going in the first century C.E., everyone was travelling at this time.<sup>65</sup> Aside from military and governmental movement, health concerns, sporting events, summer holidays, pilgrimages and even tourism constituted the main reasons for travel.<sup>66</sup> Travel in and of itself was a normal feature of first century life. Casson paints an almost idyllic picture as he describes

the first two centuries of the Christian Era [as] halcyon days for a traveller. He could make his way from the shores of the Euphrates to the border between England and Scotland without crossing a foreign frontier, always within the bounds of one government’s jurisdiction. A purseful of Roman coins was the only kind of cash he had to carry; they were accepted or could be changed everywhere. He could sail through any waters without fear of pirates, thanks to the emperor’s patrol squadrons. A planned network of good roads gave him access to all major centres, and the through routes were policed well enough for him to ride them with relatively little fear of bandits. He needed only two languages: Greek would take him from Mesopotamia to Yugoslavia, Latin from Yugoslavia to Britain. Wherever he went, he was under the protective umbrella of a well-organized, efficient legal system. If he was a Roman citizen and got into trouble, he could, as St Paul did, insist upon trial at Rome.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Plutarch, *Sulla* 8.2.2; Arrianus Flavius, *Fragmenta* #156:2B:840-883 (TLG); Josephus, *Wars* 3.93; *Ant.* 18.45.3.

<sup>64</sup> *Peah* 8.7; *Sheqalim* 5.2; 1 Cor. 16.3-4; 2 Cor. 8.17-22; cf. 2 Cor. 9.3; Acts 20.4; 21.15-17. See also §3.11.1 “Tractate *Peah*” and §3.11.3 “Tractate *Sheqalim*”.

<sup>65</sup> Lionel Casson, *Travel in the Ancient World* (Baltimore & London: Johns Hopkins, 1994), 127-130. See also Ramsay, ‘Roads and Travel in the NT,’ *HDB* 5 (1904), 375-402; Epictetus, *Diss.* 3.9.24; Dio Chrysostom, *Orat.* 7.2.7.

<sup>66</sup> Casson, *Travel*, 130-147.

<sup>67</sup> Casson, *Travel*, 122.

Still, our options seem and indeed are rather limited when it comes to means of transportation in the first century C.E. One might walk, ride or float. The situation would not change greatly were freight to be added to the picture. Freight might be carried on one's person, carried on an animal, or carried on a boat/ship. None of these options are the obvious choice, however, as each one carries with it both benefits and limitations, and all three means were open to the threat of brigandage or piracy, an ongoing problem, even though the Romans had taken great strides toward suppressing its activity.<sup>68</sup>

### 5.7.1 By foot

Were one to walk to one's destination, physical stamina and the size of one's burden (which would have to be small) would be important factors, along with the question of lodging and meals. Condition of roads, indeed the presence of roads would affect not only the ease, but also the speed with which one might accomplish one's journey. In the Roman Empire, roads were numerous and usually well-built,<sup>69</sup> although the highest quality amongst them tended to be found in Italy; even so, wherever there were found, Roman roads were built to be passable in almost all weather,<sup>70</sup> thereby making year-round travel a definite possibility. Still, warmer weather was the preferred time for travel.<sup>71</sup> The system of high-grade roads was, of course developed to benefit the military,<sup>72</sup> but those benefits, including the security afforded by the military presence along the way,<sup>73</sup> extended to civilian travellers as well.

A traveller, if relatively unencumbered by baggage,<sup>74</sup> might make up to 50 miles per day, although 15-20 seem to be a more realistic estimate<sup>75</sup>, especially if the journey were largely on the back roads of the Empire.<sup>76</sup> Milestones along the way, a custom that endures in various locales at present, would indicate direction and progress to the traveller.<sup>77</sup> To travel

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<sup>68</sup> Alan K. Bowman, E. Champlin, A. Lintott, eds. *The Cambridge Ancient History* 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Vol.X, 'The Augustan Empire, 43B.C.E.—C.E.69' (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 715; Adolph Büchler, *The Economic Conditions of Judaea after the Destruction of the Second Temple* (London: Jews' College, 1912), 55; Casson, *Travel*, 121, 149; M.P. Charlesworth, *Trade Routes and Commerce*, 40-41; F. Grant, *The Economic Background of the Gospels*, 44; Harl, 80; Isaac, *The Near East under Roman Rule*, 128,133; Safrai, *The Economy of Roman Palestine*, 287-8; Smallwood, *The Jews under Roman Rule*, 44, 86, 97-8, 164, 196, 259; Josephus, *Wars* 2.238; *Ant.* 15.10.1; 16.9.1; 17.23-7; Dio Chrysostom, *Orat.* 46.2; Epictetus, *Diss.* 4.1.91-93; Chariton, *Callirhoë* 1.14.8, 3.9.11-3.10.2; Lucian, *Alexander the False Prophet* 44; Seneca, *De Ben.* 4.17.4; Suetonius, *D. Aug.* 49.3; Mat. 21:13, 26:55; Mk. 11:17, 14:48; Lk. 10:30, 22:52; Jn. 10:1,8.

<sup>69</sup> Casson, *Travel*, 65-66.

<sup>70</sup> Casson, *Travel*, 167,172

<sup>71</sup> Dio Chrysostom, *Orat.* 36.1; Lucian, *Demon.* 35.

<sup>72</sup> Aubert, *Business Managers*, 368; cf. Casson, *Travel*, 163-4.

<sup>73</sup> Given that the civilian traveller(s) were not accosted by a member(s) of any military groups present!

<sup>74</sup> Travellers who were messengers, or poor, formed the majority of civilian foot traffic (Casson, *Travel*, 25-26).

<sup>75</sup> Casson, *Travel*, 189.

<sup>76</sup> Casson, *Travel*, 67.

<sup>77</sup> Casson, *Travel*, 173.

completely alone was ever a risk, and travel companions provided security along with companionship.<sup>78</sup>

Would a lone traveller, or one walking in a small group be inclined to carry large sums of money on his person? Logic would seem to preclude such a thing, but the traveller would have had to have carried some money to cover the expenses of any lodging and/or food, and we have at least one example of individual transport of gold which went terribly wrong and resulted in an horrific outcome.

Josephus, recounting events during the reigns of Titus and Antiochus Epiphanes tells us of individual attempts to hide and transport personal money in the form of gold coins. “They would swallow the gold coins to prevent discovery by the brigands...[but when] one of the refugees was discovered picking gold coins from his excrements; these pieces...they had swallowed before their departure, because they were all searched by the rebels...the Arab rabble with the Syrians...cut open...and search[ed] their intestines”.<sup>79</sup> Granted, this is an extreme example, but were one caught by bandits, the chances of emerging from the encounter unscathed, or even alive were quite slim. The most secure way to travel on foot, and perhaps by water as well, was to attach oneself to others. The larger the group, the greater the sense of security. This could account in part for the sizeable groups heading for Jerusalem at the time of the feasts,<sup>80</sup> or to the coast for summer holidays.<sup>81</sup> If one had no other option than to travel alone, then one took precautions and tried not to look too inviting (i.e. wealthy) a target for the less than honest.

Travel by foot was quite slow. Relatively speaking, little could be transported in this way.<sup>82</sup> It could be costly if one were forced to stay in paid accommodations and buy one’s food, and was somewhat more dangerous if undertaken individually. Walking was, however, generally speaking, more easily undertaken at any time during the year and there was virtually no risk of drowning en route.

### 5.7.2 By animal

If pack animals were involved in travel, then the load transported might increase in size commensurate with each beast’s capacity to bear, but the animals’ health would be a consideration, as would the availability of fodder (whether foraged or purchased). If grass and greenery were plentiful, then animal feed costs would be minimal at most, weakening somewhat the financial argument for the superiority of sea over land transport claimed by

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<sup>78</sup> Philostratus, *V. Apoll.* 4.37; Epictetus, *Diss.* 4.1.91-98; Dio Chrysostom, *Orat.* 10.1.

<sup>79</sup> Josephus, *Wars* 5.421.

<sup>80</sup> Juster, *Les Juifs*, 380-1; Jn. 12:20; Acts 2:5-10; Josephus, *Wars* 2.280; cf. 2.10; *Ant.* 17.213, 254; 20.106.

<sup>81</sup> Casson, *Travel*, 138.

<sup>82</sup> If we estimate a limit of 20-25 pounds (9-11 kilos) of weight per person, then, once one has factored in the necessities of travel, the actual cargo transported might be as little as 10 pounds (4 kilos).

much of the current literature.<sup>83</sup> Mules were, in fact, the most common of pack animals in the ancient world,<sup>84</sup> and this mode of transport the most common for overland haulage of goods, including money.<sup>85</sup> Because mules for transport were ubiquitous, a group trailing them would not automatically attract attention to itself. The nature of one's cargo need not be known to all. From household moves to commercial transport, mules did much of the land-based hauling.<sup>86</sup> In spite of longer journey times, the possibility of animal "breakdown" (i.e. lameness, illness or death), or ambush, the risks were substantially lower than on the water, and as long as one's cargo were not too much for a mule to bear, many chose this option rather than brave the sea. The consistent exceptions to this would have been the transporters of grain and timber, which were, by their natures, far too voluminous to transport efficiently by land. Only ships were adequate to the task.<sup>87</sup>

For the traveller on foot, as for the one on an animal, traffic jams were a real possibility. Should the governor or emperor take to the roads, ordinary traffic could be held up for hours, but if the military were on the move in significant numbers, the unofficial traveller might be stuck for days, depending on the road and/or path options available.<sup>88</sup>

### 5.7.3 By water

Travel and transport by ship might seem to offer the best option, but this mode of transportation also had its limitations.<sup>89</sup> Casson states that "it was infinitely less wearing to pass the days lolling on a deck than walking or riding a mule or mule-drawn carriage".<sup>90</sup> First century Romans were, however, nervous about travel by sea.<sup>91</sup> It could be so unpredictable. For starters it was generally available only from May to October, meaning that winter sailing was not an option, except as very risky business. Winter held the increased threat of storms,

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<sup>83</sup> W.H. McNeill in Morris Silver, *Economic Structures of Antiquity* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1995), 64, but 65,85; Casson, *Travel*, 129-30; H.H. Scullard, *From the Gracchi to Nero: A History of Rome from 133B.C. to A.D. 68* (London: Methuen: 1963/1979, 343; M.P. Charlesworth, *Trade Routes and Commerce in the Roman Empire*, 84; F. Meijer and van Nijf, eds., *Trade, Transport and Society*, 133; Rostovtzeff, *Social and Economic History*, 146.

<sup>84</sup> Meijer and van Nijf, *Trade*, 135; Safrai, *Economy*, 289; Silver, *Economic Structures*, 82.

<sup>85</sup> Cicero, *Verr.* 2.3.183.

<sup>86</sup> Strabo, 16.1.27; 2.10.

<sup>87</sup> *CAH*, 721-2; Josephus, *Wars* 5.36.

<sup>88</sup> Casson, *Travel*, 130.

<sup>89</sup> Rostovtzeff, *Social and Economic History*, 328-329, shows a mosaic of "a merchant ship landing a cargo, probably of metal bars, in a shallow harbour. Two workmen are wading through the shallow water, each carrying one ingot. On the shore two other men are weighing the ingots in a large pair of scales. The mosaic furnishes a good illustration of the conditions of navigation in the shallow Syrtis". He also shows a mosaic of "two fast ships with a cabin at the stern, an elaborate system of sails, and nine pairs of oars each. They were probably messenger and police boats of the African fleet (*naves tesserae*)". Here we have possible attestation of bullion movement, a highly risky (but, if successful, profitable) nautical undertaking, and an example of the possible swiftness of sea-travel. But, Casson, *Ships*, pl.191, dates the first mosaic as 3<sup>rd</sup> century C.E. and identifies the metal as lead.

<sup>90</sup> Casson, *Travel*, 149; Chariton, *Callirhoë* 1.11.8; 1.13.7; 1.14.6; 8.2.6-7.

<sup>91</sup> Chariton, *Callirhoë* 1.13.11.

and cloudy weather made it tough to navigate by the sun and stars.<sup>92</sup> Still, “a never-ending flow of merchants, shipowners, bankers, buyers, and their various agents kept the ports and sea lanes humming. Businessmen were to be found on the roads as well, but in fewer numbers”.<sup>93</sup>

During the sailing (i.e. summer) months,<sup>94</sup> should one want to travel by water, there was the question of how to procure passage. Was an exit permit needed? If so, the traveller must obtain one. Then, unless one owned or had access to a ship, and this was not the case with most travellers, one went to the marina and asked around until a ship could be found that was sailing a) to the appropriate place, and b) with sufficient available space for both traveller(s) and his/their possessions.<sup>95</sup> Once passage had been secured, the traveller would have to be ready to sail at whatever moment the captain deemed propitious.<sup>96</sup> Did one move on board with one’s possessions as soon as a deal had been struck, or was there a last-minute mad dash to embark? We do not know from the sources, and how long the process took from enquiry to ship sailing could vary a great deal. And often, just before shoving off, the ship’s officers would make a sacrifice in hopes of securing a good passage.<sup>97</sup>

Because vessels were working boats or freighters,<sup>98</sup> and not passenger carriers, they generally did not supply travellers with shelter,<sup>99</sup> food or drink, apart from water.<sup>100</sup> Travellers, therefore, had the added worry of bringing along what they hoped would be adequate provisions for the journey. Weather’s caprices<sup>101</sup> could complicate one’s journey, “no matter how careful a skipper was in picking the right season and winds for a sailing”.<sup>102</sup> What should have taken days might stretch into weeks or even months.<sup>103</sup> Once disembarked, there was still the problem of transporting one’s freight from water’s edge to final destination. Still, sailing, with its much greater capacity for freight, might seem the swiftest,<sup>104</sup> least

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<sup>92</sup> Casson, *Travel*, 150, cf. Meijer and van Nijf, *Trade*, 165-67; Chariton, *Callirhoë*.

<sup>93</sup> Casson, *Travel*, 129.

<sup>94</sup> For an excellent overview of the seasonal nature of ancient sea-travel, see Casson, *Ships*, 270-273.

<sup>95</sup> Chariton, *Callirhoë* 3.3.17-18; Dio Chrysostom, *Orat.* 7.2; Epictetus, *Diss.* 3.9.14; Lucian, *Alexander the False Prophet* 55-57; Casson, *Ships*, 175-182. See also S. McGrail, “The Shipment of Traded Goods and of Ballast in Antiquity”, *Oxford Journal of Archaeology* 8 (1989), 353-58, re: goods taken on board ships as ‘filler,’ perhaps even as ‘ballast,’ thereby lowering the cost of their transport.

<sup>96</sup> Casson, *Travel*, 152-53.

<sup>97</sup> Casson, *Travel*, 154, *Ships*, 181-82.

<sup>98</sup> Casson, *Travel*, 158; *Ships*, 199-200.

<sup>99</sup> Although for some accommodations below, or shelter on deck, see Casson, *Ships*, 177, 180-81.

<sup>100</sup> Unless a V.I.P. or very rich, the traveller had to provide for personal needs and would sleep on deck. See Casson, *Travel*, 153-54, 158.

<sup>101</sup> For more on the speed of ships, see Casson, *Ships*, 281-96, where he deals with the vagaries of wind power and its effects on the ancient sea-voyage.

<sup>102</sup> Dio *Hist.* 66.20.1; Casson, *Travel*, 149.

<sup>103</sup> Josephus, *Wars* 2.203.

<sup>104</sup> Pliny, *Nat. Hist.* 19.3-4; Achilles Tatius 3.1.3.6; Chariton, *Callirhoë* 1.11.1; 8.6.1. Cf. Scullard, *Gracchi*, 343.

involved option, and, given the right conditions, it could be quite a pleasant and efficient way to travel.<sup>105</sup>

Strabo paints an overall positive picture of travel by sea, but all too often the sources tell a different story, and even Strabo recounts “a peculiar circumstance on the return trip from Iberia...that the east winds on that sea, as far as the Gulf of Sardinia, blew at a fixed time each year; and...this is why he [Poseidonius] barely reached Italy...in three months; for he was driven out of course in both directions”.<sup>106</sup> Rather than instances of uncomplicated journeys from point A to B, we tend to see chronicled the aberrations in nautical travel, as attested by Luke’s account in Acts of Paul’s journey by sea and resultant shipwreck.<sup>107</sup>

#### 5.7.4 Accommodation

Overnight accommodation was at the very least an occasional, and at most an ongoing need for the overland traveller. The very well-to-do might have their own places along the way. They and their friends would make use of them when en route, but if not, the wealthy might camp in elegant tents, waited on by their servants.<sup>108</sup> If absolutely necessary, the wealthy would turn to the local authorities for help in locating accommodation, but “the ordinary traveller with no claim on official hospitality, no well-to-do friends to put him up at their various abodes or provide letters of recommendation that might secure him such accommodation, and no staff of servants and pack train to handle elegant camping equipment, had no alternative—he put up at an inn”.<sup>109</sup>

To someone from New England, land of cozy inns and good dining, to hear the prospect of staying at an inn described as the last option on the list seems strange, but in the ancient world, the inn was of a far different sort than the lovely haven of the American countryside. In the first century C.E. if one worked for the government and had need of lodging while on the road, there was the *cursus publicus*, the government-run inn.<sup>110</sup> For those bearing a diploma, lodging and food were free of charge. Occasionally these places might house a paying civilian, but this was definitely the exception, rather than the rule. Paul and his companions on the way to Jerusalem with the collection would have had no right to stay in one. It is most likely that they would have been part of the flow of pilgrims and stayed in tents, or perhaps in homes along the way.<sup>111</sup>

“The country inn furnished the traveller the basic minimum: food, a night’s lodging, and, if he was using hired vehicles or animals, a change of either or both. But even in a major

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<sup>105</sup> Suetonius, *D. Aug.* 97-98.

<sup>106</sup> Strabo, *Geography* 3.2.5.

<sup>107</sup> Acts 27. See also Seneca, *Ep.* 45.2; *De Otio* 8.4; Epictetus, *Diss.* 2.6.20, 2.19.15-16, 3.9.3, 16.22-23; Dio Chrysostom, *Orat.* 7.2; Chariton, *Callirhoe* 3.3.9-12; 3.4.14; Meijer and van Nijf, *Trade, Transport and Society*, 168, and Ernst Haenchen, *Acts of the Apostles* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1971), 702.

<sup>108</sup> Casson, *Travel*, 198.

<sup>109</sup> Casson, *Travel*, 200.

<sup>110</sup> Casson, 200.

centre, as it happens, he could not look for very much more....The transient...most often put up at an inn, and even the respectable inns...included prostitutes among the services offered...<sup>112</sup>

There existed ever lower grades of inn<sup>113</sup>, and the unlucky traveller might find that the only alternative to one of these unsavoury places was the great outdoors—this might present the traveller with no choice at all. Casson provides us with a hint as to what one might expect when the ‘guest’ in a low-grade inn. He does this as he explains special legislation concerning their managers, as follows:

*caupones*, along with ships’ captains and owners of livery stables, were the subject of special legislation, since a traveller was completely at their mercy, and the law was aware that, as a group, they were hardly noted for scrupulous honesty. Ordinarily Roman law allowed a person who had been robbed to look for satisfaction only from the thief—which admittedly made things hard since a thief first had to be caught. However, a guest at an inn or a passenger on a ship whose baggage had been stolen had the right to institute proceedings against the innkeeper or the ship’s captain; the one was legally responsible for the acts of his maids and servants, the other for those of his sailors. There must have been some bounds set to their liability; after all, if the victim happened to be a courier entrusted with, say, a bagful of gems, this could be disastrous for some poor *caupo* whose only mistake was to assign to bedroom cleaning a slave who was not proof against temptation. Roman law allowed a proprietor of general storage facilities to post notices to the effect that ‘he did not receive gold, silver, or pearls at his risk’; probably innkeepers, then as now, could do the same.<sup>114</sup>

If lodgings, with their tiny rooms or dormitory hall, noise and propensity for crime and prostitutes, were a grim proposition for the average person, then what of the early Jewish/Christian traveller? Restaurants were as bad, if not worse. Not many who could would choose to eat in a commercial eating establishment. They were raucous, dirty and full of rowdy, if not criminal types.<sup>115</sup>

Why did Jewish and Christian people travel with a minimum of two others when carrying money?<sup>116</sup> Safety of the traveller (and) that transported would have been of great concern. If we consider the lodging and eating conditions, it would make sense. Three travelling together might also provide moral support in the face of temptation, which came in the form of murals, and statues, not to mention the behaviour, in many inns and restaurants.<sup>117</sup>

Should one have the means and the inclination, one might avoid traffic jams, stubborn mules and uncertain sleeping arrangements by taking the water route.

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<sup>111</sup> Acts 9:43; 10:48; 16:15; 18:1-3; 21:4, 7-8, 16.

<sup>112</sup> Casson, *Travel*, 203-4.

<sup>113</sup> Innkeepers are not always described in complimentary terms. See Apuleius *Met.* 1.8-9 where an innkeeper is characterised as a witch, *CIL* III 14206, no.21, where an innkeeper is called ‘vicious,’ and Valerius Maximus 1.7.10, even in a dream!

<sup>114</sup> Casson, *Travel*, 204.

<sup>115</sup> Casson, *Travel*, 211ff.

<sup>116</sup> See above, §3.11.1; see also I Cor. 16:1-4 and II Cor. 8:18-21.

<sup>117</sup> Casson, *Travel*, 215-218.

## 5.8 Frequency of money movement

Overall, where it concerns the government and military, we may imagine, in the absence of evidence, that there could have been a regular pay schedule and accompanying shipment of funds, but it is just as likely, given some of the unhappiness surrounding “non-pay” days in the military,<sup>118</sup> that shipment of money was somewhat sporadic. It did not always reach its destination at the proper moment, whether because of weather-related travel delays, human error or blatant theft we do not necessarily know. Until such time as more evidence comes to light, however, we can but speculate on this matter.

Regional tax collectors kept records of their dealings with the public and with those to whom they reported. In them we see what may be hints at procedures in place or the regular movement of money. We have attestation from the mid 2<sup>nd</sup> century of a certain Heron, who promised to make monthly instalment payments to the authorities, and of other individuals who paid their taxes by instalments.<sup>119</sup> In the absence of evidence, we may suppose that the tax-collector as well made intermittent payments, perhaps also monthly, to the authorities.

The Temple tax would have been delivered on a yearly basis. It was received just before one of three major feasts: Passover, Pentecost, or Tabernacles/Booths.<sup>120</sup> If it arrived late, it was still acceptable, but because of participation in the feasts themselves, people accompanying the money would have done their best to arrive before the deadline.<sup>121</sup>

Individuals, it seems, whether merchants or private citizens, would have moved money as the need arose and as they were able; we have no evidence of anything different.

## 5.9 Summary and conclusion

In this chapter we set out to ascertain the historicity of money movement in the first century world. Not only did we establish money movement as an historical fact, we discovered that it was quite a commonplace activity, not only on the part of the Roman government, but also as carried out by other groups and individuals. We then undertook an investigation into the participants involved in and the circumstances surrounding such movement. What has emerged is a clearer picture of the paired aspects of first century money movement and travel, both of which are of import for our understanding of the collection and the New Testament passages associated with it. Paul’s words, and perhaps the concerns reflected in and addressed by Paul’s words may be seen more clearly as we examine them

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<sup>118</sup> Tacitus, *Ann.* 1.36-37.

<sup>119</sup> *p. Tebtunis* 3.34, 41, 44-46, 48-49; 3.52(a)-54, in Grenfell, Hunt and Hogarth, *Fayûm Towns*, 145.

<sup>120</sup> Nickle, *Collection*, 81. Although “The offering of tithes during festival-pilgrimages is clearly attested only in Tobit 1:6-8”, according to Fabian Eugene Udoh, *Tribute and Taxes in Early Roman Palestine (63BCE—70CE): The Evidence from Josephus*. Dissertation, Duke University, 1996. (Ann Arbor, Mich.: UMI), 313. See also J.M.G. Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora*, 419.

<sup>121</sup> Josephus, *Ant.* 16.28, 45, 162-72; 18.312-313; Philo, *Spec. Leg.* 1.69, 77-78; 156-7, 216, 291, 311-16; Cicero, *Pro Flacco* 67.

against their natural/contextual backgrounds, with respect to money movement, as well as to motivations and mechanisms for aid to the poor.

## Chapter Six

### Paul, Aid to the Poor, and the Collection

#### 6.1 Introduction

The evidence has shown that aid to the poor was understood quite differently by Jews and non-Jews in the first century C.E. Given that Paul's audience for the collection consisted substantially, if not largely of people whose history and background were non-Jewish, Paul faced the need to interpret such aid in light of his understanding of its ongoing centrality to the God-pleasing life: Jewish and Christian. Thus we turn our attention to the New Testament texts commonly accepted as relating to the collection and ask how they may be more helpfully understood as Paul's attempt to offer his interpretation of the collection in light of and in response to those differences in perception and practice.<sup>1</sup> In the process, consideration also will be given to the possibility that one or more of those texts may not in fact refer to the collection of 2 Corinthians 8-9, and the possible implications of such a conclusion.

Beyond the issue of differing views on aid to the poor lies the question of appropriate handling and care of money, its collection and its movement. Here the evidence demonstrates a substantial degree of sharing between the Jewish and Graeco-Roman worlds. Many of Paul's comments concerning appropriate behaviour *vis à vis* the handling of collection money, when examined against the backdrop of practices in either world, as we have seen in Chapter 5, take on a simpler, more straightforward meaning.

#### 6.2 Related New Testament texts

##### 6.2.1 Acts 11.27-30

These three short verses tell of a Jewish prophet from Jerusalem, Agabus, who, while in Antioch, predicted an 'empire-wide' (ὄλην τὴν οἰκουμένην) 'great hunger' (λιμὸν μεγάλην), often rendered 'famine' in English translations. Although famines<sup>2</sup> were fairly rare in the ancient world, food crises were much more common, and in the 40's C.E., during the reign of Claudius, we know of at least one in the Mediterranean world.<sup>3</sup> We have seen how Herod provided grain for the city,<sup>4</sup> how Queen Helena and her son Izates, rich and powerful leaders, sent aid to the people of Jerusalem.<sup>5</sup> In Acts 11.27-30, however, the aid sent comes not from the rich and powerful, but from ordinary folk, the Christians in Antioch who decided that they each would give something, according to their ability, to help the Christians in

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<sup>1</sup> We look to the New Testament texts related to the collection and ask how it may have been interacting with social systems, such as patronage and benefaction, rather than imposing one of those systems on the texts and attempting to fit them into that system's constraints, as does Stephan Joubert, in *Paul As Benefactor*, 23.

<sup>2</sup> See Chapter 2 "Motivations and Mechanisms for Aid to the Poor: The Graeco-Roman World" for definitions of 'famine' and 'food crisis'.

<sup>3</sup> See Chapter 2 for more on food crises and famines in the ancient world; cf. §2.3.3.1 "Issues of Poverty and Hunger: Natural Disasters".

<sup>4</sup> In 25-24 B.C.E. Josephus, *Ant.* 15.299-316.

<sup>5</sup> §3.10.2 "Josephus".

Judaea during a time of food shortage (i.e. exorbitant prices for any available grain and other food). This tiny scrap of text yields great benefit to our study.

First, the Acts account tells us that the Antioch church was 'born' as Jewish believers fled from Jerusalem and shared the gospel with other Jews (11.19). Some of these Jewish believers, however, from Cyprus and Cyrene, shared the gospel also with Gentiles who then believed (11.20-21). From very early on, then, the church in Antioch was a mixture of Jews and Gentiles. The leaders at this point were Jews; they brought with them a set of Jewish values and corresponding practices. When Barnabas was sent from Jerusalem to Antioch (11.22-24), he saw "the grace of God and was glad". Barnabas "exhorted them all to remain faithful to the Lord with steadfast purpose". It was possible that as Barnabas surveyed the situation, he realised that here were a number of new believers who, though sincere in their faith, lacked the basic Jewish underpinnings for godly living. Because they had not come to faith as Jews, Jewish converts, or God-fearers (i.e. through the synagogue), these new believers did not necessarily, even probably, have a grounding in Hebrew scripture and ethics.<sup>6</sup> Barnabas' encouragement and subsequent action may have been linked by his belief that the non-Jewish Antiochene believers would, in their ignorance, have great difficulty remaining 'faithful with steadfast purpose'.<sup>7</sup> Whether for this reason or another, Barnabas decided to go to Tarsus and fetch Paul, who returned with him to Antioch, where they taught these new believers for about a year (11.25-26).

It would not be unreasonable to think that what Barnabas and Paul gave them was a solid foundation in the scripture and Jewish ethics, so that their faith in Jesus would be firmly rooted in these two 'soils' and grow strong.<sup>8</sup> One of the historical (and central) ethical demands of all Jews was to care for the poor in their midst. Surely the Jewish contingent in the church, Barnabas, and Paul, would not have neglected to teach the Antioch believers this

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<sup>6</sup> So Gregory J. Allen, *Reconciliation in the Pauline Tradition: Its Occasions, Meanings, and Functions*, Ph.D. diss, Boston University, 1995 (Ann Arbor, Mich.: UMI), 25-26, and David A. deSilva, *The Credentials of an Apostle* (BIBAL Monograph Series 4, North Richland Hills, Texas: BIBAL Press, 1998), 49; but Munck saw as a problem the situation of God-fearing Gentiles who needed to unlearn what they had been taught of scripture in the synagogue, because "they could easily drop into habitual Jewish ways of thought", in *Paul and the Salvation of Mankind* (London: SCM, 1959), 132.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), 708, where he rightly states that Christian Jews taught Gentile believers how to live a God-pleasing life and how to follow Jesus (a sort of Christian *halakha*).

<sup>8</sup> Terence L. Donaldson argues that "The early Christian mission, Paul's included, cannot be accounted for in its entirety by already-present Jewish patterns. But, at the same time, early Christianity being in no way hermetically sealed off from its Jewish environment, it is completely to be expected that Jewish patterns would contribute to the shape of the movement, the new energy of the Christ-experience flowing at least initially along channels already present within Judaism. Paul's new world of meaning is the product of an interaction between a powerful religious experience and a framework of native convictions, with emphasis on both parts of the equation". In *Paul and the Gentiles: Remapping the Apostle's Convictional World* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997), 259; cf. 159.

crucial aspect of the God-pleasing life.<sup>9</sup> Here in Acts, it seems, we have evidence that basic instruction included this foundational principle of aid for the poor,<sup>10</sup> and that it was a lesson well-learned.<sup>11</sup>

In Antioch, it was the church members, and not the leaders,<sup>12</sup> who took the decision to help the Christians at risk in Judaea. Because of the circumstances of the Jewish believers' arrival in Antioch (i.e. persecution following Stephen's death, 11.19), the Christians there had an idea that life generally was not easy for Christians in Jerusalem and surrounding areas. The Antioch Christians chose to extend the same aid they practised on a regular basis in their *local* faith community<sup>13</sup> to people they had never seen, but with whom they felt a kinship, in part because of their knowledge (if not experience) of persecution in Jerusalem, as well as their own gratitude for the sharing of the gospel with them (11.19-26). That sharing had changed their lives, had been recent, and much of its content was distinctly Jewish, including the notion of caring for the poor. In this budding Christian community, the mixed congregation took upon itself the gathering of money (*διακονίαν*) and then sent it to Jerusalem with their two teachers, Barnabas and Paul, as a service to fellow believers in that city.

The action of Acts 11.27-30 was not the collection of 2 Cor. 8-9.<sup>14</sup> It was the outgrowth of an abiding Jewish insistence on concern for the poor, which we have seen demonstrated in Chapter Three, combined with deep gratitude for the sharing of the gospel

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<sup>9</sup> In terms of Jewish teaching and influence, of all the Pauline congregations, the Antioch church had perhaps the heaviest initial weighting of pious Jewish Christians, and any Gentiles incorporated into the community would likely have been well-schooled *out* of their prior unacceptable Graeco-Roman ways of seeing and operating in the world, and *into* this new mindset and praxis.

<sup>10</sup> This teaching would have touched on other foundational aspects of godly life according to scripture and Jewish tradition, including the Noachide laws for Gentiles. *Pace* Nicholas Taylor, who, seeing no evidence that this was so, determines that it did not occur. See *Paul, Antioch and Jerusalem: A Study in Relationships and Authority in Earliest Christianity*, JSNT Supplement Series 66 (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992), 199. Silence does not necessarily mean rejection or deliberate eschewal of a concept or action; sometimes silence means that the concept or action is a given and, therefore, needs no commentary.

<sup>11</sup> Although he does not recognise aid to the poor as an integral part of Jewish life, Bruce has gleaned that for Paul, "[remembering the poor] was in his mind throughout his evangelization..." *Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976/1996), 318.

<sup>12</sup> Contra Bruce, who suggests that "in later years the organizing of financial relief from Gentile Christians to the Jerusalem church was a major concern of Paul's; it may well be that he had played a leading part in organizing this gift in Antioch". *Paul*, 151; cf. Jürgen Becker, who agrees with Bruce, and claims that this offering is part of Paul's later collection, in "Paul and His Churches", in *Christian Beginnings: Word and Community from Jesus to Post-Apostolic Times* (Louisville: Westminster, 1987), 190.

<sup>13</sup> To the elderly, the orphaned and the widow; perhaps also to the newest believers, who were no longer pagan, nor had they become Jews, and found themselves in a difficult situation socially and so, financially. Cf. C.K. Barrett, *The Acts of the Apostles* vol.1 ICC (Edinburgh. T&T Clark, 1994), 548.

<sup>14</sup> Contra John Squires, in *Eerdmans Commentary on the Bible*, James D.G. Dunn, Editor (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), s.v. "Acts", 1238. Cf. J.D.G. Dunn, *The Acts of the Apostles*. Peterborough, UK: Epworth, 1996; Gerd Lüdemann, *Early Christianity according to the Traditions in Acts* (London: SCM, 1989), 138-139.

which had transformed their lives.<sup>15</sup> The action met a very practical need in Jerusalem, but beyond the down-to-earth aid, one year on, the money would have served as further confirmation of the reports (11.22) to the Jerusalem church that something very odd, but very good, was happening in Antioch. Gentiles were showing signs of God's power at work in and through them. The aid sent at this time, and the representatives who brought it told them so. Paul's collection that took place at a later date, although on a larger scale, however, was not substantially different from this earlier one.

The recognition and understanding which we have gained<sup>16</sup> of the pervasive concern for and practice of aid to the poor which had flowed from Judaism into the fledgling Christian movement, can help us to distinguish between ordinary/usual aid (such as daily/weekly distributions of food and clothing),<sup>17</sup> and extraordinary aid (like this collection). This recognition and understanding will help to simplify our task of understanding the Apostle Paul and his later collection, which again involved Diaspora Christians (Jewish and Gentile) in aid to the poor of the church in Jerusalem.

## 6.2.2 Galatians 2.10

This one small verse has been responsible for much discussion of the collection presented in 2 Cor. 8-9, 1 Cor. 16.1-4, and Rom. 15.25-31, and alluded to, perhaps, in Acts 24.17. Assuming that the expression, "remember the poor" alluded to the collection, the overwhelming majority of scholars past and present have considered, and continue to consider, that the offering gathered in a number of largely Gentile congregations, and which was transported to Jerusalem by Paul and appointed representatives of the churches, was specifically requested or commanded by the leaders of the Jerusalem church.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Cf. Dunn, *Paul the Apostle*, 710; contra Jürgen Becker, *Paul: Apostle to the Gentiles*, trans. O.C. Dean, Jr. (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1993), 267.

<sup>16</sup> Above, Chapter 3, "Motivations and Mechanisms for Aid to the Poor: The Jewish World".

<sup>17</sup> See §3.7.2 "Matthew"; §3.7.3 "Mark"; §3.7.4 "Luke"; §3.11.1 "Peah".

<sup>18</sup> C.K. Barrett, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (London: Black, 1973), 25; Maurice Carrez, *La Deuxième Épître de Saint Paul aux Corinthiens*, Commentaire du Nouveau Testament, deuxième série, VIII (Genève: Labor et Fides, 1986), 179; F.F. Bruce, *Paul*, 318-324; Chang, *Fund-Raising*, 182-83, 221; Georgi, *Remembering the Poor*, 38-39; Dunn, *Paul the Apostle*, 706; Victor P. Furnish, *II Corinthians Anchor Bible* (NY: Doubleday, 1984), 398-453; R.P.C. Hanson, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians: Introduction and Commentary* (London: SCM), 1954; Martin Hengel, *Acts and the History of Earliest Christianity* (London: SCM, 1979), 118; Bengt Holmberg, *Paul and Power: The Structure of Authority in the Primitive Church As Reflected in the Pauline Epistles* (Lund: CWK Gleerup, 1978), 35-36, 39; Joubert, *Paul As Benefactor*, 103-4; William Kelly, *Notes on the Second Epistle of Paul, the Apostle, to the Corinthians: with a new translation by William Kelly* (London: G. Morrish, 1882), 175; Ralph P. Martin, *2 Corinthians* Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 40 (Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1986), 251; Frank J. Matera, *II Corinthians: A Commentary* (Louisville/London: Westminster John Knox, 2003), 181-82; Jerry M. McCant, *2 Corinthians* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 77; John McRay, *Paul: His Life and Teaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 187; Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, *The Theology of the Second Letter to the Corinthians* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 75-76; Nickle, *Collection*, 59-60; Norman, R. Petersen, *Rediscovering Paul: Philemon and the Sociology of Paul's Narrative World* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 147; R.H. Strachan, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, The Moffatt New Testament Commentary (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1935), 131; cf. Eung Chun Park *Either Jew*

If we investigate possible reasons for this assumption, we find two likely candidates: first, a knowledge ‘gap’ concerning Jewish theory/practice of ethics which carried over into the Christian experience,<sup>19</sup> and second, a presumption of more or less continual power struggles amongst the earliest leaders in the nascent Christian movement (i.e. Paul and the Jerusalem leaders), all of whom were seeking to position themselves as dominant (or conversely, cognisant of and submissive to the ascendant group).<sup>20</sup> Lack of knowledge in the first instance opens the theoretical ‘door’ wider to the second.<sup>21</sup> Once one becomes aware that aid to the poor was a given of, and central to the upright life, Jewish or Christian, then it becomes much more difficult to argue that Gal. 2.10 is a demand, or even a request of Paul and the Gentile churches to produce an ‘offering’, ‘tribute’, or even a reciprocal gift.<sup>22</sup>

As we will argue just below, Gal. 2.10 functioned more as a reminder to Paul to continue to convey to his church members this central aspect of the godly life about which Gentiles who came into the church without first having come through the synagogue likely would have been ignorant.<sup>23</sup> Not only would they have been ignorant, but they probably would have been uninterested in what surely would have seemed to them a strange, if not ridiculous habit.<sup>24</sup> When we recognise the validity of these two bits of information, then in Gal. 2.10, one central piece of ‘evidence’ for power struggles between Paul and Jerusalem

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or Gentile: *Paul’s Unfolding Theology of Inclusivity* (Louisville: William J. Knox, 2003), 53; Margaret E. Thrall, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, Vol.2: Commentary on II Corinthians VII–XIII, The International Critical Commentary, J.A. Emerton, C.E.B. Cranfield, G.N. Stanton, General Editors (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000), 506, 509; N.T. Wright, *Romans*, ed. Leander E Keck, *New Interpreter’s Bible Volume 10: Full texts and critical notes of the New International Version and the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible in parallel columns* (Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 2002), 756. Steven Chang leaves “the significance of the collection to the Galatian conflict [as] an open question”, in *Fund-Raising*, 182.

<sup>19</sup> As per Georgi, who in discussing Gal. 2.10, claims that because “Paul chose the present tense subjunctive *μημυνεωμεν*... This indicates that he meant to refer to continued action. But neither in this or any other passage dealing with the actual economics of conducting the collection is there proof that the Gentile Jesus congregations were to pay a regular levy or tax to Jerusalem. In all his congregations Paul carried out but one collection.” *Remembering the Poor*, 40. Georgi has missed the reality of charity as part and parcel of the early church’s life, as he does when he says further that “it must not be overlooked, however, that Paul refers to his zeal as if it were a thing of the past— notwithstanding the fact that at the time the Epistle to the Galatians was written, the great gathering of funds within the Pauline congregations was yet to come.” 43. cf. Munck, *Paul and the Salvation of Mankind*, who claims that “we do not know ... what Paul is referring to when he says that he was eager to help [the poor in the Jerusalem church]”, 287; or even Nicholas Taylor, who calls for consideration of “the possibility that the obligation to remember the poor was an aspect of the right of the Jerusalem church to regulate Christian life in Antioch”, and this for reasons of the Jerusalem church’s own security. In *Paul, Antioch and Jerusalem*, 120–21, 198.

<sup>20</sup> So Holmberg, *Paul and Power*, 42, 50, 155, 204.

<sup>21</sup> So Calvin J. Roetzel, *Paul: The Man and the Myth* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999), 117.

<sup>22</sup> As John Knox attempts, unsuccessfully, to do, in *Chapters in a Life of Paul* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1987) 37–38.

<sup>23</sup> For more on the reality of Graeco-Roman ignorance of aid to the poor, see above, Chapter 2.

<sup>24</sup> This was but one aspect of the pervasive communal nature of Jewish and Christian life, much of which was considered strange by those in the surrounding culture, says John G. Gager, *Kingdom and Community: The Social World of Early Christianity* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1975), 130.

falls to the wayside,<sup>25</sup> and Paul's comment in 2.6, that the Jerusalem leaders "added nothing to me" can more readily be understood as "beyond the usual requirements for Gentiles" (i.e. what has been referred to as the Noachian Law, as per Acts 15.29), requirements with which Paul would agree, especially if those concerning meat offered to idols, that which was strangled, and blood, had to do with tacit or express assent to, and/or participation in idol worship itself.<sup>26</sup>

When Paul claims that nothing was added to him, he speaks rightly, because remembering the poor already was part of life for the members of his churches, as it was and always had been for the Jewish believers prior to and following their belief in Jesus. That Paul mentions the need to "continue to remember the poor" demonstrates his assent to the centrality of this long-standing command to provide aid to those who, without it, would suffer. That the Jerusalem leaders mention it specifically, attests their commitment to this practice, their concern that if Paul considers circumcision an unnecessary component of the Christian life, he might aid to the poor, as well, and their insistence that this practice, unlike circumcision, was a non-negotiable. After all, no one ever died from not having been circumcised, but people could, and did die from hunger. The first could be waived; the second, never.

To question the assumption, however, that Gal. 2.10 is at the very least a request, and at the most a stringent demand, is still rather unusual, but some are doing just that.<sup>27</sup> I suggest that we must first take into account the attested historical prominence of concern for the poor in the Jewish world if we are to make proper sense of Gal. 2.10 and its importance for, or dissociation from the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15.<sup>28</sup> We will not delve into all the intricacies of that meeting, as it is not the focus of our study, but we will discuss the sense of Gal. 2.10 *vis à vis* the collection of 2 Cor. 8-9, as there is a relationship of sorts between them, although it is not a direct one.

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<sup>25</sup> Contra Betz, *2 Cor. 8 and 9*, 73-75, 123; Georgi, *Remembering the Poor*, 45-46.

<sup>26</sup> See above, fn. 17. for just some of the many who until now have thought otherwise concerning this verse. This proposal also dismisses Eung Chun Park's claim that the Acts 15 account and Paul's in Gal.2.1-10 disagree and therefore call into question their historicity. *Either Jew or Gentile*, 36-37.

<sup>27</sup> In addition to B.Longenecker (see below §6.2.2.2 "Remember the Poor"), W.M. Ramsay, *St. Paul the Traveller and the Roman Citizen* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1895), 57; and Thrall, *2 Corinthians*, 509, are among the few to deny any causative connection between Gal. 2.10 and the collection.

<sup>28</sup> It is possible that at the same time as the events of Acts 11.19-30, the Jerusalem church already knew about the Gentiles who were repenting and believing. Initially at peace concerning this phenomenon, they sent Paul, Barnabas and any other representatives of the Antioch church on their way with their blessing. The Jerusalem Conference, at a later date, and perhaps after the letter to the Galatians was written, seems to have been triggered by a *renewal* of the circumcision question (i.e. the Jewish question), and represented a *revisiting* of the question that had been more informally dealt with in the past (concerning the questions surrounding Jew-Gentile association within the Church). To pursue this exceeds the bounds of the current study, but it is a subject that bears revisiting, especially in light of the effect of understanding the centrality of aid to the poor in the early church on our understanding of Gal. 2.10 and questions raised concerning Gal. 1-2.

Clearly, concern with and concrete measures for aid to the poor constituted a central focus of Jewish life from early in its history.<sup>29</sup> Not only were people encouraged to aid the poor, they were required to do so, a fact attested in and outside of scripture. After the fall of the Temple in 70 C.E., when the sacrificial system became defunct, almsgiving and deeds of lovingkindness, which had always occupied a place of prominence, *remained* as one of the defining characteristics and practices of Judaism, and this focus, both in theory and in practice, carried over into the life of the early Christian communities. Paul certainly would have been eager to continue to remember the poor; after his conversion he still considered caring for one another in the community of faith a non-negotiable of life for Jews and non-Jews alike.<sup>30</sup>

### 6.2.2.1 Other Pauline Letters

Was “remembering the poor” a novel concept, or one that Paul had left behind in the course of his mission, only to pick it up again at the behest of the Jerusalem leaders, during the exchange Paul remembers in Gal. 2.10? If so, then it should only appear in his correspondence following that interaction. The texts say otherwise.

In other Pauline letters,<sup>31</sup> we find direct and indirect references to the truth of Paul’s (and the early church’s) historic and ongoing conviction concerning aid to the poor. In Galatians Paul admonishes the Christians there to “not grow weary of doing good...especially to those who are of the household of faith” (Gal. 6.9-10), a point echoed in 2 Thess. 3.13.<sup>32</sup> Filial love is highlighted as a virtue, and affirmed by Paul in the Thessalonian Christians, as “what you are doing to all the brothers/sisters throughout Macedonia” (1 Thess. 4.9-12). In the letter to the Ephesians, Paul tells those Christians that they are “God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works” (Eph. 2.10), that all (and he uses the example of one who formerly was a thief) should “labour, doing honest work with his/her own hands, so that he/she might have something to share with anyone in need” (Eph. 4.28).

“Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourself. Let each of you look not only to [your] own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which was also in Christ Jesus...” (Phil. 2.3ff). Might not those ‘interests’ have included the basic needs of life? In a similar vein, we find

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<sup>29</sup> See above, Chapter 3 “Motivations and Mechanisms for Aid to the Poor: The Jewish World”.

<sup>30</sup> So Dunn, *Paul the Apostle*, 709, Cf. Joubert, *Benefactor*, 159.

<sup>31</sup> While we can easily make our case by reference to the undisputed Pauline texts, we include the disputed texts as well, as they, too, bear witness that in the early church there was an enduring insistence on aid to the poor as central to the life of the Christian. We might even go beyond them to the other N.T. letters, as the theme of aid to the poor is attested throughout the New Testament (cf. §3.7.5 “James”).

<sup>32</sup> While it might be argued that this repetition is a sign that someone other than Paul is writing, given the centrality of ‘remembering the poor’ to the Christian life in the early Church, we may also posit that the reason it shows up more than once in Paul’s letters to largely Gentile groups, is due to its importance and their ignorance of such behaviour. See above, Chapter 2 “Motivations and Mechanisms for Aid to the Poor: The Graeco-Roman World”.

included in the instructions for community life in the church at Colossae, “Put on, then, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassion, kindness...” (Col. 3.12ff). Rather than existing solely as incorporeal spiritual concepts, both compassion and kindness could be observed in actions of everyday life, including perhaps especially those involved in aid to the poor.

In both letters to Timothy emphasis is placed on the responsibility to care for one’s indigent family members, widows being the example given; however, in the absence of family, the believing community, serving as *de facto* family and assuming its attendant responsibilities, must care for such persons (1 Tim. 5.1-16). In the final instructions of this first letter to Timothy, we hear the particular charge to the rich members of the Christian community in Ephesus: “not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share...” (1 Tim. 6:17-18). And in negative fashion, Timothy is warned that one of the several difficulties he will face in ministry is that “people will be lovers of self, lovers of money...heartless...not loving good...having an appearance of godliness, but denying its power”. He is told to avoid such people (2 Tim. 3.1-5). Another church leader, Titus, is advised to continue to put the churches on Crete “in order” (Titus 1.5), a task which included teaching the Christians there, through instruction and through modelling, to be eager, ready for, and devoted to good works (2.7, 14; 3.1, 8, 14).<sup>33</sup> In his teaching, Titus is told to make sure that the people understand what is involved in the Christian life, to insist on the grace, the goodness and lovingkindness of God as source and foundation of that life, “so that those who have believed in God may be careful to devote themselves to good works. These things are excellent and profitable for people” (Titus 2.11-15; 3.4-8).<sup>34</sup>

In his letter to the Romans, Paul touches on the judgment of God according to one’s behaviour, including the ‘doing of good’ (Rom. 2.6-7, 10), an expression which here, and in the above cases, while not limited to aid to the poor, would encompass it.<sup>35</sup> Later Paul touches

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<sup>33</sup> Implying, then, that Cretans were ignorant of this aspect of Christian life, which of course they would be, having lived in a Graeco-Roman environment, with its attendant worldview (which did not promote care for the poor). See above, Chapter 2 “Motivations and Mechanisms for Aid to the Poor: The Graeco-Roman World”.

<sup>34</sup> Jerome Quinn has difficulty seeing the down-to-earth nature of good works, managing only twice to link them specifically to care for the poor (258), and even then, ‘the poor’ constitute a highly specific group: “The Christian people...are to contribute ‘the’ urgent necessities of life – food, drink, clothing, money – to those who lack such things. In the context, the Pauline emissaries are such persons and ought to be the object of the ‘fine deeds’ of the churches that they visit in their apostolic ministry”. *Titus*, Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 1990), 243.

<sup>35</sup> So Douglas Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 136. See also Dunn, *Romans 1-8* (*Word Biblical Commentary*, 38: Dallas: Word Books, 1988), 85; K. Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1933), 61-62 but Franz J. Leenhardt considers this “transcendent” in its goals, “excluding any intra-social ambition”, *L’Eptre de Saint Paul aux Romains* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1961), 46.

on knowing and doing what is good in God's eyes, entreating the Roman Christians, "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect" (Rom. 12.2), and making clear what he means by this in 12.3 – 15.7. Included in his explication we find exhortation to use the gifts of grace God has given (12.6) to (among other things) serve (12.7), give generously, and perform acts of mercy cheerfully (12.8). Christians are to show genuine love to each other as brothers and sisters, to 'contribute to the needs of the saints', 'seek to show hospitality', and 'associate with the lowly' (12.9-10, 13, 16), all of which are pertinent to material aid to the poor.<sup>36</sup>

In light of the evidence in the Pauline corpus<sup>37</sup>, which amply attests the ongoing commitment to Christian love expressed as material aid to other Christians, it seems reasonable that the thrust of Gal. 2.10 need not, and in fact does not concern the collection *per se*; rather, it concerns aid to the poor as central to the life that pleases God. This life reflects God's own prior giving of Jesus (Gal. 4.4-7). All its giving grows out of the 'love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control' that characterise the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5.22-23), and the individual will continue to do what is good whenever s/he has the opportunity (Gal. 6.9-10). Generosity and the ongoing 'doing of good', therefore, are non-negotiables for Gentiles professing faith in Christ Jesus, just as they have been and continue to be non-negotiables for Jews, both traditional Jews and those professing faith in Jesus.

#### 6.2.2.2 "Remember the Poor"

A recent paper concerning the meaning of 'remember the poor' was presented at the 2004 British New Testament Conference<sup>38</sup> by Bruce Longenecker<sup>39</sup>, who suggests that the consensus view of 'remember the poor' has missed the point on several levels, including its mis-identification of Gal. 2.10 with the collection project and the purpose thereof,<sup>40</sup> its

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<sup>36</sup> So J.D.G. Dunn, *Romans 9-16 (Word Biblical Commentary, 38B; Dallas: Word Books, 1988)*, 711. Given Paul's lengthy treatment of the God-transformed life of the individual and the believing community (Rom. 12.1 – 15.7), and his attention to 'doing good', especially in the twelfth chapter of the letter, it should not be too surprising to find Paul writing about the collection in chapter 15. See also Dunn, *Romans*, 38B, 728-32, 743, 746-47.

<sup>37</sup> Both those documents universally accepted as genuinely Pauline and those sometimes referred to as disputed.

<sup>38</sup> 22<sup>nd</sup> Annual Conference, Edinburgh, Scotland, 3 Sept. 2005.

<sup>39</sup> Bruce Longenecker, "'Remember the Poor' (Gal. 2.10). A 'Non-Centripetal' Reading of an Apostolic Stipulation", (paper presented at the annual meeting of BNTS, Edinburgh, 2 September, 2004).

<sup>40</sup> B. Longenecker, "Remember the Poor", Thesis 2.

incorrect assessment of the label 'poor' with the whole of the Jerusalem church,<sup>41</sup> and its related assumption of great economic distress in the Jerusalem church as a whole.

While Longenecker's last suggestion,<sup>42</sup> that the Jerusalem church as a whole, and over time, was not economically 'at risk' or seriously impoverished, may reasonably be challenged, his first two proposals seem to be on very firm footing.

Longenecker's (and my) position on Gal. 2.10 alleviates the need to understand how 'remember the poor' may be heard as a request or demand by the Jerusalem leaders for ongoing financial aid. Once 'remember the poor' in this verse has been removed from any specific consideration of the collection, then the idea that Paul's project spanned a year, perhaps a bit more, seems eminently more reasonable than any alternative timelines,<sup>43</sup> and the nagging doubts concerning the validity of such a project, not to mention the decreasing likelihood of its realisation or its timeliness over a period of many years, fade away.

An understanding of 'remember the poor' which restores it to its rightful and historical place of prominence in the individual and corporate lives of God's people also restores simple clarity and coherence to what often has been considered a difficult verse. In addition, this verse serves as yet another reminder of the substantial continuity of Jewish thought and praxis *vis à vis* the poor in the earliest Christian communities, whether Jewish, mixed, or Gentile,<sup>44</sup> and in Paul's comprehensive approach to life and ministry.

So then, 'remember the poor' in Galatians 2.10 serves as a reinforcement of the reality of daily life for the earliest Christian communities; they practised aid to the poor as a non-negotiable expression of their commitment to God, and in imitation of his prior giving to them (seen most clearly in the gift of his son, Jesus the Messiah).

### 6.2.3 Romans 15.25-32

Here in Romans 15, Paul's few words concerning the collection follow his much larger discussion of the 'strong' and the 'weak' (begun in chapter 14), and their relationships with each other in the church. The progression seems to imply that these categories run along the lines of Jew and Gentile,<sup>45</sup> and when in 15.5-7 Paul speaks of living in "harmony with one another...so that together [they] may with one voice glorify...God", it is hard not to think that

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<sup>41</sup> Or equally mis-identifies 'the poor' and 'the saints' as spiritually-charged designations for people who saw themselves as occupying a unique niche in the early church, as does Nicholas Taylor, *Paul, Antioch and Jerusalem*, 116-20; cf. B. Longenecker, "Remember the Poor", Thesis 1.1,2.

<sup>42</sup> B. Longenecker, "Remember the Poor", Thesis 3.

<sup>43</sup> Which raise all sorts of thorny issues concerning Pauline dating, and further confuse the picture(s) of his activities in the N.T. documents.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. Rom. 12.13; Gal. 6.9-10; 1 Tim. 5.16; 6.18; 2 Thess. 3.6-12; Tit. 2.7, 14; 3.1, 8, 14; Heb. 14.16; Jam. 2.14-17.

<sup>45</sup> So, Dunn, *Romans*, 845. See also the discussion of anti-Jewish sentiment and legislation in first century Rome in James C. Walters, *Ethnic Issues in Paul's Letter to the Romans* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1993), 39-40.

it is precisely these two ethnic groups he is exhorting to “welcome one another as Christ has welcomed [them]”.<sup>46</sup>

When Paul introduces the subject of the collection to the Christians in Rome, he does so just prior to taking his epistolary leave of them, and weaves it into his plans for an upcoming visit to them. In 15.25, Paul speaks briefly and specifically about the project, calling it *διακονῶν τοῖς ἁγίοις* (a service to the saints/believers) in Jerusalem, and again in 15.27, he speaks of the collection as a way to *λειτουργῆσαι* the Jerusalem Christians. This term would readily have been understood by the Romans as performing a public beneficence which, while not necessarily forced upon the donor, might be<sup>47</sup>, and *λειτουργῆσαι* bore that connotation, along with the expectation of public recognition and reward for having complied. Interestingly, Paul chose to combine this expectation-laden term with the humbler *διακονῶν*, often used of one whose lot in life it was to serve others (willingly or not), without expectation of recognition or reward.

Between these two terms for service, in 15.26, we find that Macedonia and Achaia were *pleased* to perform the service represented by the collection.<sup>48</sup> Paul chooses to lead with this observation, a choice which merits our attention, because Paul might just as well have begun with their obligation<sup>49</sup> to perform the service. It was, after all, an obligation, and obligation was a concept which his Roman audience would have understood quite readily. Paul, however, chooses to refer first to the attitude of those obliged, rather than to their state of obligation.

It may seem surprising that Paul speaks in this way *of Gentiles to both* Gentile and Jewish Roman Christians, but the members of the Roman church were experiencing the effects of their own attitudes toward each other – attitudes which derived from the inability of Jew and Gentile alike to look at and consider anyone in the other ethnic group as family, rather than alien. Paul wanted them all to hear *first* (and perhaps most importantly) that in Macedonia and in Achaia, Gentile Christians were *pleased* to render service to Jewish Christians. Paul repeats (15.27) that the Gentile Christians there were pleased to help their Jewish brothers and sisters, and, as if in passing, says that they *were obligated* to do so; it was those Jewish Christians who had served them<sup>50</sup> by sharing what the Gentiles most needed:

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<sup>46</sup> Dunn, *Paul the Apostle*, §25.3. See also Dunn, *Romans*, 841, 851-52; and Douglas Harink, *Paul among the Post-Liberals* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2003), 249.

<sup>47</sup> Plutarch *Moralia*, 10.796.E. See above §2.4.4.1.

<sup>48</sup> Paul’s success in persuading the Corinthians in his second letter to them is noted by Jerome Murphy-O’Connor, “The fact that the Corinthians subscribed to the collection indicates that [Paul] was well received (Rom. 15.26)...he wrote Romans at Corinth”. “1 and 2 Corinthians”, in *The Cambridge Companion to St. Paul*, J.D.G. Dunn, ed. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 90.

<sup>49</sup> Cf. Donaldson, *Paul and the Gentiles*, 191.

<sup>50</sup> First, informally, as Jewish Christians fled the persecution reported in Acts 11.19ff, and then formally, following the Jerusalem Council recorded in Acts 15

their spiritual blessings (i.e. the gospel of Christ Jesus, scripture, moral/ethical guidelines).<sup>51</sup> Now the Gentile Christians could serve the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem by sharing what they most needed: material help.<sup>52</sup>

In this fifteenth chapter of Romans, Paul moves back and forth between the situation in the church in Rome and the situation of the churches involved in the collection, focussing on both the obligatory aspect of relationship between Jew and Gentile (15.1, 27), which entails pleasing one's neighbour for that neighbour's good (15.2), and one's motivation for assuming such obligation. That motivation, says Paul, is Jesus, who "did not please himself" (15.3), but "became a servant *to the circumcised* to show the truthfulness of God, in order *to confirm the promises to the patriarchs*, and *in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy*" (15.8-9). Neither side can claim superiority here, nor can they claim φιλοτιμία as proper motivation,<sup>53</sup> because neither group would be included were it not for Jesus, who did not please himself, but became a servant for the good of Jew and Gentile alike. And, unlike what Paul is asking of the Roman Christians, Jesus gave his *life* so that they might all be welcomed by God. Could they not give a little culturally in order to welcome each other and so *together* glorify God (15.6-7)?<sup>54</sup>

After citing a bit of scripture,<sup>55</sup> Paul prays for his hearers to trust in God who can supply the joy and peace that will make them able to "abound in hope", assures them that in his eyes they are filled with goodness and knowledge, and have the ability to teach (15.13-14). But then Paul circles round to revisit the subject he seemed just to have left, this time putting it in personal terms. Jewish Paul, because of God's grace, is a minister (λειτουργόν) of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles. He is serving as a priest (ιερουργούντα) of the gospel, so that the offering of the Gentiles (ἡ προσφορά τῶν ἐθνῶν) might be acceptable, sanctified (15.15-16). One can see the same progression as in his previous argument. God's grace reaches Jews (Paul) who respond to him and it, and are made acceptable; through those Jews, God's grace reaches Gentiles, who respond to him and it; what they then offer God, themselves and their stuff, is acceptable.

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<sup>51</sup> "The Jerusalem community acted as a constant reminder...to every communit[y] of their common origin...the resurrection of Jesus from the dead". Dieter Georgi, *Remembering the Poor*. 52. See also Harink, *Paul among the Postliberals*, 236-37, 249; Dunn, *Romans*, 38B, 879.

<sup>52</sup> Cf. Moo, *Romans*, 905-6.

<sup>53</sup> See above, §2.4.2 "Benefactors", esp. T. Claudius Dinippus and Kleanax of Kyme, and §2.4.3 "Corn Dole", esp. *curator annonae*.

<sup>54</sup> This cultural gap existed, affirms James Walters: "In the aftermath of the Claudian edict, [as] the Jewish and Christian communities moved farther and farther apart". "Jewish Christians were under unique pressure as the Christian and Jewish communities increasingly defined themselves in contrast to one another". (79) "It is Paul's prayer for the Christians in Rome that they discover such 'harmony' among themselves that God may be praised with 'one voice' (15.5-6), 92. *Ethnic Issues in Paul's Letter to the Romans*, 77-92. See also Alan F. Segal, "The Costs of Proselytism and Conversion", 336-369, SBL 1988 Seminar Papers.

<sup>55</sup> 2 Sam.22.50; Ps. 18.49; Deut. 32.43; Ps. 117.1; Is. 11.10.

Paul can and does take pride in what *Christ* is doing through him in this process (15.17-18). Again, he leaves no room for self-serving attitudes of superiority or φιλοτιμία (his own or of his hearers). If Paul, who has plenty of Jewish reasons to feel himself superior<sup>56</sup>, cannot, then how can any of them? For Paul, the heart of the matter is what *Christ* has accomplished *through* him, through his words and his behaviour, and what Christ has done is to “bring the Gentiles to obedience”, not obedience to Paul, but to God (15.18). The rest is secondary – real, perhaps – but secondary.

The chapter, from the first verse onward, interacts with what seems Paul’s fleeting reference to the collection for the poor in the Jerusalem church, transforming what appears to be an add-on into a hard-to-resist argument for the Roman Christians to live as one church, unified in their diversity, rather than as two uneasy housemates.

Paul here has discussed the Achaian and Macedonian Gentiles’ participation in the collection, at the very least, to address this issue. He has taken the familiar and rather exclusivistic Graeco-Roman understanding of *do ut des*,<sup>57</sup> (reflected in his use of λειτουργία), and by mixing into it his understanding of διακονία, based on the example of Christ, now beckons those *Roman* Gentile Christians into a new realm of doing good to Jewish people whose giving to them (past and potential) might never occur in any of the ways most familiar to them. Similarly, Paul beckons the *Jewish* Christians in Rome to welcome Gentiles with whom their only point of agreement seemed to be faith in Christ.<sup>58</sup> Until this internal shift occurs in and among them, it is pointless for Paul to ask the Roman Christians to reach out beyond their local setting. How could they participate in the collection which both recognised and embodied Jewish-Gentile interdependence, gratitude, and solidarity in the wider church, when they were not experiencing a healthy measure of these things in the local churches in Rome?

In the case of Rome’s Christian community, Paul has argued that mutual recognition and acceptance of each other as brothers and sisters would constitute appropriate thanks (12.1-15.7).<sup>59</sup> He seems clearly to be writing to the Roman Christians *about* the collection in order to address the very real, and for him absolutely essential need for the same sort of mutual

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<sup>56</sup> Cf. Rom. 3.1-2; 11.1; Phil. 3.4-6.

<sup>57</sup> In its negative sense of giving for the specific purpose of eliciting a return, rather than the return being the by-product of the service rendered for the sake of the relationship.

<sup>58</sup> So Dunn, *Paul the Apostle*, 709, cf. Allen, *Reconciliation*, 58.

<sup>59</sup> Griffith argues that “only in 2 Cor. 8-9 does he focus on it as a work of grace....in Romans 15.25-28 Paul portrays the Gentile churches’ participation...as repayment of an obligation...”. *Abounding in Generosity*, 132. See also Cranfield, “Paul clearly regarded [κοινωνία] as being in no way equivalent to that which the Jerusalem church had rendered to the Gentiles: material succour, however lovingly and generously supplied, could never repay the debt owed by the Gentile churches”. *Romans*, 774; cf. Barrett, *2 Corinthians*, 27.

recognition and acceptance by Gentile and Jewish believers in Rome<sup>60</sup> as he hopes for between Christians in the Diaspora churches and those in Jerusalem.<sup>61</sup>

Paul continues to speak about the transfer of the collection to the Jerusalem congregation, telling the Romans that after he delivers the gift<sup>62</sup> he will come to them “in the fullness of the blessing of Christ”, which may mean blessing in Jerusalem *and* blessing in Rome,<sup>63</sup> indicating Paul’s expectation of a good experience with the believers in Jerusalem and in Rome – his hopes will be realised – they *will* all recognise and accept each other as brothers and sisters in the family of the church, and *that* acceptance will be itself “the fullness of the blessing of Christ”. Paul’s request (15.30-32) that the Roman Christians pray for his service (δῶκον) to be well-received by the Christians there seems more a corollary of 15.29 than an indication of Paul’s deep anxiety over possible rejection of the collection.<sup>64</sup> In fact, if this section of the letter *is* meant to urge the Roman Christians, Jew and Gentile, to engage in something analogous to the collection by living *with* each other, and not in a sort of church ‘apartheid’,<sup>65</sup> then asking for their prayers for the collection’s reception, especially, seems a final effort to engage them – if they pray for this in Jerusalem, how can they not receive each other? He also asks them to pray for his protection while in Jerusalem, a place where he has not spent a lot of time since his pre-Christian days.

Paul addresses these two issues in his request: first, he is very concerned about the non-believing Jews in Jerusalem, perhaps because they have long memories and may be waiting to make trouble for the Apostle, who once had been one of them, but perhaps also because of the growing hostility of the dominant Jewish community in Jerusalem toward the Christ-following Jewish community there.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Cf. Dunn, *Paul the Apostle*, 707, 709; Harink, *Paul among the Postliberals*, 239, 249.

<sup>61</sup> Cf. Harink, *Paul among the Postliberals*, 236-7; cf. Ben Witherington, III, *Community & Conflict in Corinth: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 420.

<sup>62</sup> Delivery, if Paul and the delegates travelled amongst the crowds headed to Jerusalem for one of the feasts, would have coincided with Passover, Pentecost or Tabernacles. Travel by sea would have been quickest, but only feasible for the last two feasts, due to weather conditions. See §5.7.3 “Circumstances of travel: by water”; cf. Acts 24.11, 17, which become more understandable because Felix would have been aware of the feast times and, therefore, the normality of Paul going there to worship, bringing alms and offerings.

<sup>63</sup> So Moo, *Romans*, 907, but Joubert intimates that the blessing will come when Paul “would publicly lay claim to his hard-earned position as benefactor of Jerusalem”. *Benefactor*, 153.

<sup>64</sup> Contra Betz, for whom, in Rom. 15.30-31, “Paul felt that time was running out. Why was Paul in such haste? We do not know....Paul seems to have expressed the fear that it is already too late, as indeed it was”. *2 Cor. 8 and 9*, 95; Richard A. Horsley, as well, maintains that in general, “in the correspondence collected in 2 Corinthians...Paul is obsessed with the threat posed to his own apostolate by Jewish “super-apostles” (2 Cor.8; 9; cf. Rom. 15:25-27). *Paul and Empire* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity, 1997), 6.

<sup>65</sup> That relationships in the church may have been at that point is quite likely, given Paul’s prior exhortation, which extends from Romans 12.1 to 15.15. Cf. Barrett, *2 Corinthians*, 27.

<sup>66</sup> So Becker, “Paul and His Churches”. In *Christian Beginnings*, 181.

The second issue is that of Paul's concern that the collection be received by the Jerusalem congregation. Paul voices natural concern over the reception of the collection in Jerusalem; after all, if, as we have argued, it had not been requested or demanded, then the Christians there would not know that it was coming, and so, their immediate response to the largely Gentile group of representatives might be one of surprise, but not necessarily dismay.<sup>67</sup> To assume that Paul is deeply afraid of rejection by the Jerusalem Christians is not necessary,<sup>68</sup> unless one assumes an ongoing (i.e. permanent) state of acrimony between Paul and the Jerusalem church,<sup>69</sup> and/or that Paul was under some sort of obligation (friendly or forced) to gather funds and bring them to Jerusalem. One may infer these as possibilities, but it is not necessary to do so. If relations with Paul were at best tense and contentious,<sup>70</sup> or at worst, as Taylor would have it, non-existent,<sup>71</sup> we might question why there would be any evidence of further interaction (formal or informal) between Jerusalem and the various Diaspora congregations (Acts 11.22, 27; 15.1-2, 22; 16.4; 19.21; 21.17; 1 Cor. 16.3; Gal. 1.18-19; 2.1-12).<sup>72</sup>

The issue at hand was serious.<sup>73</sup> Could, and would Jewish and Gentile Christians accept each other, not based on issues of ethnic particularity (such as circumcision or the eating of certain meat), not in a discussion at a distance, but in their homes and hearts?<sup>74</sup> The collection was the lesser (but by no means unimportant) part of that equation, and it cut both

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<sup>67</sup> The likelihood that Paul's collection and its delegates were welcomed/received by the Jerusalem Christians is strengthened by the prior sending and reception of the gift from Antioch (Acts 11.29-30). That gift, too, was from what seems to have become a Gentile-majority church.

<sup>68</sup> Petersen tries to, but cannot quite determine the source of his angst, *Rediscovering Paul*, 145.

<sup>69</sup> Or indeed, between Paul and almost anyone in a position of authority in the early church. Cf. Ferdinand Christian Baur, *Paul, the Apostle of Jesus Christ: His Life and Work, His Epistles and His Doctrine*, Vol. 1 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London: Williams and Norgate, 1876), 361, and Vol.2, 182; *The Church History of the First Three Centuries* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1878), 74-75; Betz, *2 Cor. 8 and 9*, 73-75; A. Andrew Das, *Paul and the Jews*, Library of Pauline Studies (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004), 61; F.J. Foakes-Jackson, *The Life of Saint Paul: The Man and the Apostle* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1927), 220-21. Joubert, *Paul as Benefactor*, 106, 114, 124-125, 153, 209. Knox, *Chapters in a Life of Paul*, 37; Steve Mason, "Determining the Gospel through Rhetorical Analysis in Paul's Letter to the Roman Christians", in *Gospel in Paul*, Ann L. Jervis & Peter Richardson, eds. (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1994), 286; William Sanday and Arthur Headlam *The Epistle to the Romans* (New York: Scribner's, 1911), 415.

<sup>70</sup> So Joubert, "James and the elders were opposed to Paul's circumcision-free gospel", *Benefactor*, 213.

<sup>71</sup> Taylor contends as well that "whatever primacy he recognised in the Jerusalem church, Paul was travelling to Jerusalem not in submission but in self-vindication", *Paul, Antioch and Jerusalem*, 216.

<sup>72</sup> Certainly later church history is replete with stories of rupture and permanent alienation. In the N.T., however, when sharp disagreements arose and led to a parting of the ways, there is often evidence of reconciliation, renewed relationship and further ministry. This is Paul's bias; it seems to have been James' bias, but it doesn't seem to be ours, as the consensus view considers Paul's interactions with the Jerusalem church as largely, if not completely prickly, marked by frequent wrangling, and posturing (for affirmation and/or power). Cf. Holmberg, *Paul and Power*, 41; Joubert, *Benefactor*, 104, 106, 114, 118; Steve Mason, "Determining the Gospel", 286; Moo, *Romans*, 910-11; Johannes Munck, *Paul and the Salvation of Mankind*, 87, 94.

<sup>73</sup> Joubert, *Benefactor*, 153.

<sup>74</sup> James Walters treats just this issue, in *Ethnic Issues in Paul's Letter to the Romans*, 60-64; cf. 78-79.

ways; in the collection, its transportation, its delivery and reception, Jews and Gentiles alike had to turn their intellectual assent to the idea of oneness in Christ into their lived reality. What Paul asks the Roman Christians *to pray*<sup>75</sup> will happen in Jerusalem, he asks them *to do* in Rome.<sup>76</sup>

#### 6.2.4 1 Cor. 16.1-4

On the surface, these four verses appear to be a simple set of instructions and intentions Paul is sending to the Corinthian Christians. We understand that he already has described the giving in the Galatian churches, and bids the Corinthians do likewise (1 Cor. 16.1). Briefly reiterating those instructions, Paul tells them to save up what they can, according to their means, and to do it weekly, rather than wait to give when Paul arrives (16.2). Three possible reasons for this come to mind. First, the taking up of a collection to aid the poor in the early Christian communities may have occurred weekly, as in Jewish communities,<sup>77</sup> and so the regularity of the offering would not have been alien to them. Second, when one puts a little aside each week, the total amassed can be surprising, especially when compared to one-off giving.<sup>78</sup> Third, when one puts something aside on a weekly basis, that person thinks about, and possibly prays for, the person or group for whom the giving is intended, thereby fostering a sense of kinship over time, as well as a heightened sense of participation in the undertaking.<sup>79</sup> Was Paul as interested in this third aspect as he was the second (taking the first as a given)? Given our contention that he viewed the money collected and the representatives of the Gentile churches *together* as the gift he accompanied and presented to the Jerusalem church,<sup>80</sup> it seems quite possible, if not probable.

Moreover, Paul uses an interesting term in 16.2, *λογεία*, translated ‘collection’ or ‘gathering’ in the English translations. *Liddell & Scott* render it first “a collection of taxes or voluntary contributions”, providing examples from PTeb. 58.55 (2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C.E.) and P.Oxy. 239.8 (1<sup>st</sup> century C.E.)<sup>81</sup>; only afterward do they term *λογεία* a collection for charity and note 1 Cor. 16.1-2. Paul likely uses the term knowing that it could be understood in one of two distinct ways, but by giving these instructions, he meant to ensure that the money put

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<sup>75</sup> Cranfield, “What Paul is entreating them to do is simply to pray for him and with him, not half-heartedly or casually, but with earnestness, urgency and persistence”. *Romans*, 777.

<sup>76</sup> Cf. Paul J. Sampley, “Romans in a Different Light: A Response to Robert Jewett”, in Vol. III of *Pauline Theology: Romans*, eds. David M. Hay and E. Elizabeth Johnson (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 114-15; also Walters, *Ethnic Issues*, 92.

<sup>77</sup> See above §3.11.1 “Tractate Peah”.

<sup>78</sup> Cf. Anthony C. Thiselton, who sees this as a pastoral strategy rooted in Paul’s sensitivity toward the disparate financial means of members (while anticipating a large sum). *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 1324.

<sup>79</sup> Keck, *NIB*, Vol. 10: 759; cf. Barrett, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (London: Black, 1971/1994), 387.

<sup>80</sup> See, Donaldson, *Paul and the Gentiles*, 256.

<sup>81</sup> Henry George Liddell, *A Greek-English Lexicon with a Revised Supplement 1996*. 9th ed. (Oxford: OUP, 1996), *λογεία*.

aside would become, in the minds of the Corinthians, a voluntary contribution, rather than an exaction of something akin to a tax. In so doing, Paul adds another layer of meaning to the collection project in Corinth. In one brief verse he organises the giving so that relationship and investment of self can develop in the people participating, and indeed he specifies that this is not a tax<sup>82</sup>, but a voluntary, self-regulated donation.

Keeping in mind that in 16.1-4 Paul seems to be responding to questions raised concerning the collection,<sup>83</sup> v.3 seems a confirmation of church-specific representation, and since Paul already has informed the Corinthians that they should do as the Galatian churches have done, it seems reasonable to think that they, too, would have appointed representatives to accompany their gift to Jerusalem. Why the representatives from participating churches? Was it, as Nickle and others have claimed, that Paul needed protection from slander?<sup>84</sup> Was it as Betz has argued, that “despite all the positive things Paul had to say about the Corinthians, he still felt it wise to treat them cautiously”,<sup>85</sup> because, as Bruce claims, they were suspicious of Paul’s motives and wanted to keep him honest?<sup>86</sup> Was it that the Gentile churches wished to put on a show of ecclesial strength in numbers, and so impress upon the Jerusalem Christians the ascendancy of the Gentile branch of the early Christian movement?<sup>87</sup> Did Paul have “his” representatives, and the churches have “theirs”, as if those people were their minions?<sup>88</sup> Was the presence of the representatives, coupled with the monetary gift, an acknowledgement of their inferior status with respect to the Jerusalem church,<sup>89</sup> or as per Munck, Nickle and others, an engineered eschatological pilgrimage of the Gentiles?<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Pace Nickle, who sees the collection as analogous to the Temple Tax, in *Collection*, 83-89.

<sup>83</sup> Barrett, *2 Corinthians*, 227.

<sup>84</sup> “of zealous Jews who would regard his collection as a misappropriation of funds which otherwise would go to the Temple in Jerusalem”, says Nickle, *Collection*, 21, 61; John K. Chow *Patronage and Power: A Study of Social Networks in Corinth*, JSNTS 75 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992), 186.

<sup>85</sup> Betz, *2 Cor. 8 and 9*, 75-77; L.W. Hurtado, “The Jerusalem Collection and the Book of Galatians” *JSNT* 5 (1979), 47. cf C.K. Barrett, *1 Corinthians*, 387; Chow, *Patronage and Power*, 186; and Christophe Senft, *La Première Epître de Saint Paul aux Corinthiens*, Commentaire du Nouveau Testament (Neuchâtel/Paris: Delachaux & Niestlé, 1979), 216.

<sup>86</sup> Bruce, *Paul*, 322; Holmberg, *Paul and Power*, 42; A.E. Harvey, *Renewal through Suffering: A Study of 2 Corinthians 8-9*, 86.

<sup>87</sup> “It remains possible, nevertheless, that Paul did recognise the desirability of establishing a formal relationship with Jerusalem of some kind... representatives of the Jerusalem church were prepared to travel elsewhere to exert their influence on church practice.... If this was Paul’s thinking, it would account for the comparatively large number of Gentile delegates, who would be able to assure their churches of the terms of association with Jerusalem, should itinerant members of that church attempt to cause trouble”. Thrall, *2 Corinthians*, 515.

<sup>88</sup> So Norman, R. Petersen, *Rediscovering Paul*, 115; cf. Taylor, *Paul, Antioch and Jerusalem*, 200-203.

<sup>89</sup> So Betz, *2 Cor. 8 and 9*, 121-22. Cf. Bruce, *Paul*, 322; Bruce, *Paul*, 322; Verbrugge, *Paul’s Style of Church Leadership*, 332.

<sup>90</sup> Munck only came to this explanation of the presence of the representatives after confessing that he found it “difficult to see why so many [were] travelling”, in *Paul and the Salvation of Mankind*, 303-308. So, too, Nickle, *Collection*, 28, 100, 139, and Calvin J. Roetzel, *Paul: The Man and the Myth*, 117-

Rather than any of these previously considered possibilities, I would suggest that v.3 points to two other likely reasons for the presence of church-specific representation of the collection. The first reason is based on the conventions surrounding the movement of money in the first century. In the Graeco-Roman world, when substantial amounts of money were moved, they were accompanied by one or more armed guards, often former military men. Their presence ensured the safe delivery of the money to its destination by shielding it from external bandits, and discouraging any internal larcenous activity on the part of the accompanying administrators of the money. In the Jewish world as well, money collection, movement and administration were safeguarded, it seems, by guidelines calling for a minimum of two, sometimes three, people of good reputation to be involved at all times, so that temptation would always have a witness (and so, a restrainer).<sup>91</sup> As well, substantial amounts of money destined for the temple in Jerusalem often were transported by people inserted amongst the thousands of Jews travelling to that city for one of the great feasts.<sup>92</sup> Paul likely is following this familiar custom, based on common sense, which would resonate with both groups of Christians, those in the Diaspora churches and those in Jerusalem.<sup>93</sup>

In light of these findings, Paul's final comment on the collection in v.4 seems plain enough. Paul thinks that he *will* go to Jerusalem,<sup>94</sup> and of course the representatives will travel with him (i.e. they will all go together). To find a deeper or more complex reason (than safety and a shared purpose) for them to travel as a group would necessitate a total dismissal of the conventions surrounding money movement attested in the first century.<sup>95</sup>

The second reason for human, as well as financial representation of the various churches has to do with my contention that Paul worked toward greater unity amongst the various branches of the Christian 'family', not only symbolically through the collection itself, but concretely and humanly, by its delivery at the hands of (mostly) Gentiles to Jews. While on a previous visit, Titus had been accepted (if grudgingly by some) by the leaders of the Jerusalem church (Gal. 2.3-5). Some pressure had been put on him to be circumcised, but

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118; but Margaret Thrall disagrees, based on Paul's intention to continue travelling after his Jerusalem visit, in *2 Corinthians*, 513.

<sup>91</sup> See §5.6.2 "Escorts for money movement: Religious". See also Paul W. Barnett, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 423-25.

<sup>92</sup> For instance, money collected in late March-early April, June and September, depending on where the dues were coming from (*m.Sheq.* 1.1-3a, in Instone-Brewer, *TRENT*, vol. 2, forthcoming), would then be transported to Jerusalem so as to arrive in time for Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles, all occasions of pilgrimage by Diaspora Jews. (*m.Sheq.* 3.1, also in *TRENT*, vol. 2, forthcoming). Cf. §6.2.3, fn. 62.

<sup>93</sup> Pace Joubert, who concludes that concerning "how these procedures took place, we are left in the dark." *Paul as Benefactor*, 186.

<sup>94</sup> Cf. Barrett, *1 Corinthians*, 387. Contra Holmberg, *Paul and Power*, 38-39; pace Nicholas Taylor, who argues first that the Jerusalem church had no idea that the collection was coming, then contends that the failure of that church's leadership to tell Paul not to come at that time (for safety issues) with said collection indicates the poor state of their relationship. His argument is unconvincing. *Paul, Antioch and Jerusalem*, 195.

<sup>95</sup> See above, Chapter 5 "Money Movement in the First Century World".

ultimately, this was not insisted upon, and Paul says that the Jerusalem leaders extended to him and to Barnabas the right hand of fellowship (2.9), indicating their acceptance of what Paul and he were up to in ministry to the Gentiles. Indeed, it may have been at this point that the question of the necessity of circumcision for Gentile Christians (among perhaps other questions) was discussed and decided, and the reminder to continue the normative Jewish practice of aid to the poor was given.<sup>96</sup>

Now, however, with the delivery of the collection, would the Jerusalem Christians welcome not just an isolated Gentile, but this larger group of Gentile Christians as they stood on their doorstep, so to speak? Paul moved the issue of unity to a crisis point when at the moment of delivery the theoretical ‘oneness in Christ’ either would be actualised in welcome, or fall to pieces in hostility (or even just polite reserve).<sup>97</sup> For Paul, and, we may imagine, for the Jewish Christian leaders in Jerusalem (because of their common Jewish/scriptural background), one’s motivations for aiding the poor (one’s attitude, one’s ‘heart’) validated or invalidated the gift in God’s eyes.<sup>98</sup> On this occasion, in a very graphic way, Paul is going to let the Gentile representatives and the money they bring act as evidence (for the efficacy of the gospel in their lives) to the Jewish Christians who, until that moment, likely will have faced the question of oneness with Gentiles only in their minds.<sup>99</sup>

#### 6.2.5 2 Corinthians 8-9

The most extensive text dealing with Paul’s collection is, of course, 2 Corinthians 8-9. Those who have made the collection (and so, these chapters) the specific focus of their scholarly work are relatively few in number, beginning with Nickle, and Georgi, and most recently Joubert, Chang, and Griffith,<sup>100</sup> but they all share a common trait, that in all their consideration of the collection and its participants, they have said relatively little in substantive terms concerning the interplay of the Jewish and Graeco-Roman backgrounds surrounding concern for and aid to the poor.<sup>101</sup> What they do say is often brief to the point of

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<sup>96</sup> If so, then the unhappiness recorded by Paul in Galatians 2 would have preceded the events of Acts 15, necessitating a shift in our thinking concerning the Jerusalem Council, and subsequent letter. It becomes then a revisiting of the questions surrounding Gentile inclusion in the Christian community, rather than a one-time cabal, the deliberations, conclusions and decrees of which would have constituted the first time such subjects had been seriously discussed amongst Judaeo-Christian leaders and/or those in the Diaspora churches.

<sup>97</sup> cf. Klaus Berger, *Identity and Experience in the New Testament*, trans. Charles Muenchow (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003/1991, German language edition), 93.

<sup>98</sup> So Witherington, *Community & Conflict*, 427.

<sup>99</sup> Cf. Joubert, *Benefactor*, 153.

<sup>100</sup> See above §1.3.1 “Keith Nickle”, §1.3.2 “Dieter Georgi”, §1.5.2 “Stephan Joubert”, §1.5.3 “Steven Chang”, §1.5.4 “Gary Griffith”.

<sup>101</sup> Nickle deals with Jewish charitable practices briefly, covering the Old Testament material in one scant paragraph (and three footnotes), in which he claims that “although there was sufficient scriptural basis and established precedent within Judaism for the legal foundation of charitable giving, Paul did not employ it. His use of Old Testament references in connection with the collection were for the purpose of illuminating his argument rather than to authenticate it” (91), and “Charitable concern within Judaism had become legalistically controlled by the time of Paul....it complemented the

neglect, and based upon what cannot be substantiated: an ongoing bitter rivalry between the Christians in Jerusalem and Paul/Pauline Christians in the Diaspora,<sup>102</sup> and a misapprehension of Paul as more Hellenist than Jew.<sup>103</sup> John Koenig sums up Paul's self-understanding in this way:

His view of himself and the world was not finally derived either from the philosophical schools of Stoicism and Neoplatonism or from the popular thinking about cult-gods that shows up in the Graeco-Roman mystery religions. When Paul talks about his moorings, he boasts of his Jewish heritage and his learning in Judaism (Gal. 1.14; Phil. 3.5f.). Even after his conversion, he continues to think of himself as a Jew (2 Cor. 11.21-26; Rom. 11.1, 13f.).<sup>104</sup>

In addition, all except for Joubert get involved in partition theories which serve only to complicate further already sufficiently complicated theories on the collection. Even Joubert posits that chapters 1-9 of 2 Corinthians constitute a separate and later letter than chapters 10-13. Such questions are not the focus of this study, which accepts that chapters 8-9 belong together, and therefore should be considered together, finds none of the arguments for their partition to date persuasive, and lives with any tensions involved in taking 2 Corinthians in its canonical (i.e. internal) sequencing.<sup>105</sup>

We will now examine 2 Cor. 8-9, with a view toward motivations and mechanisms (Graeco-Roman and Jewish) therein reflected, looking for indications and evidence of these neglected aspects of the text *vis à vis* its subject(s), readers, and author. What emerges will

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inclination to support the less fortunate which had developed into a cherished expression of personal righteousness". *Collection*, 94. Georgi claims that, rather than provide a practical framework for behaviour, "Israelite and Jewish traditions...provide the necessary *symbolic* frame of reference" for "Paul's provocative thoughts and actions", in *Remembering the Poor*, 118. Georgi here has missed any real continuity between Jewish and Christian theory and praxis. Meggitt likewise dismisses the real possibility of material support within the diaspora Jewish communities, asserting that they possessed no "systematic forms of poor relief", *Paul, Poverty and Survival*, 172, and when Joubert treats almsgiving and care of the widow, orphan, etc., he does so cursorily, giving little attention to the evidence attesting it. Four brief paragraphs are all the attention it merits, followed by his stated intention *not* to investigate any interplay between Jewish and Graeco-Roman influences: "the collection will be approached as a venture by Paul...to give concrete expression to his role as 'benefactor' of the believers in Jerusalem". *Benefactor*, 95-97.

<sup>102</sup> So Nickle, *Collection*, 27, 28, 44, *et passim*. Georgi betrays a bit of this attitude in his comments on the covenant and its attendant blessing, which for Paul, "are now destined for the Gentiles...the forerunners of liberated humanity, the witnesses to the Jews to the presence of God's eschatological salvation—not the other way round". *Remember the Poor*, 101. Joubert, *Benefactor*, 107, 114-115, 118, 124-125, 153, 205. See also Betz, *2 Cor. 8 and 9*, 93-95, 122. Cf. F.F. Bruce, *Paul*, 322, and Holmberg, *Paul and Power*, 39-41.

<sup>103</sup> So Becker, who asserts that "naturally [Paul] is no pious Jewish Christian. His lifestyle is emphatically Gentile Christian", in *Apostle to the Gentiles*, 452.

<sup>104</sup> John Koenig, *Jews and Christians in Dialogue: New Testament Foundations* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1979), 38. Cf. Brian Rosner, "Paul's Ethics" in *Cambridge Companion to Paul* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 214-216, 221.

<sup>105</sup> *Pace* John Barclay, who offers an attractive, but ultimately unconvincing alternative sequence consisting of ch. 8-9 first, followed by 10-13, and finally 1-7. *Eerdmans Commentary on the Bible*, James D.G. Dunn, Editor (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), s.v. "2 Corinthians", 1365.

illuminate these three areas, and serve to clear up some of the confused speculation about the role of the collection (and aid to the poor) in the life of the early church.

Paul chooses to begin his treatment of the collection with a reference to the grace of God (χάρις τοῦ θεοῦ) given to the churches in Macedonia, using words reminiscent of Acts 11.23, where Luke, too, is writing about the conversion of, and giving of the Holy Spirit, to Gentiles in Antioch. Paul, in keeping with all other N.T. occurrences of χάρις,<sup>106</sup> is reminding the Corinthians of their shared experience of God's grace (which resulted in their inclusion in the Christian community), *and* the behaviour which flows out of that experience, behaviour including *regular* giving to help the poor, and in this instance, *extraordinary* giving for the poor in the Jerusalem church.<sup>107</sup>

It is interesting to note that in Macedonia, as previously in Antioch, abundant giving was an off-shoot of suffering;<sup>108</sup> the Antioch church had formed as persecuted Jewish Christians fleeing from Jerusalem shared the gospel with other Jews they met along the way, who then shared the gospel with Gentiles. Would those Gentile Christians in Antioch ever have heard the gospel if not for that initial persecution? Now Paul (vv. 1-2) is saying that the Macedonian Christians, who are undergoing an unspecified 'severe test of affliction', have given such a generous gift that the words Paul uses to describe it (ἐπερίσσευσεν εἰς τὸ πλοῦτος τῆς ἀπλότητος αὐτῶν) are difficult to render adequately in English; each of the components seems to intensify the others. The result is a phrase bursting with abundance – of heart and of hands – of intention and execution – abundance which is only partially captured by "have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part".<sup>109</sup>

In the Graeco-Roman world, giving was the purview of the wealthy, whose giving is attested as largely benefiting fellow elites who had passed a stringent 'worthiness' test.<sup>110</sup> In the Jewish world, everyone who could was responsible to aid the poor, and the giving was in proportion to one's means.<sup>111</sup> Here (in Macedonia) we have people from the Graeco-Roman world acting out of character for their natural heritage, but very much in character with respect to their adopted (i.e. Jewish) heritage. A profound shift had taken place in them.

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<sup>106</sup> So Gary Griffith, who reminds us that one hundred such occurrences can be found in the Pauline material, ten of them in 2 Cor. 8-9, but in every case, "in the New Testament we only encounter grace when it is active and manifest in accomplishing God's works in and through his people". "Abounding in Generosity", 110.

<sup>107</sup> Griffith similarly has argued that "divine grace, poured out upon the Macedonians, enabled *human* grace....[charis is] not in the first place (the human) generosity of the Macedonians, but the *divine* grace of God given to Macedonians, which they allowed to work in them and through them in this way". "Abounding in Generosity", 114-15. Cf. Barrett, *1 Corinthians*, 218.

<sup>108</sup> See above §6.2.1; cf. Griffith, "Abounding in Generosity", 123-24; Barrett, *1 Corinthians*, 219.

<sup>109</sup> Cf. Griffith, "Abounding in Generosity", 116, 118; Furnish, *2 Corinthians*, 400.

<sup>110</sup> §2.5.2 "Isotes/ἰσότης".

<sup>111</sup> §3.5.1 "Tobit"; §3.7.1 "Matthew"; §3.10.1 "Philo"; cf. *Peah* 8.7.

Beyond what in Jewish terms might be expected, the Macedonians' giving was more than proportional, and it was proactively voluntary – they *asked* to be part of the collection. This may mean that their circumstances were perceived by Paul as so difficult that he had not asked them to give, making their eager and extravagant participation even more impressive (vv. 3-4).

Lest the Corinthians mistake the Macedonians' motives, 8.5 contains a not-so-veiled allusion to Graeco-Roman motivations for giving as Paul claims that the Macedonians "gave themselves first to the Lord, and then to us by the will of God". φιλοτιμία (love of honour) was perhaps the strongest motivator to giving in the Graeco-Roman world.<sup>112</sup> Closely related to φιλοτιμία was the expectation of reward, which could take many forms, but whichever form it took, public acknowledgement and approval were always involved.<sup>113</sup> Here Paul commends the Macedonians for *not* acting out of such motivations, but instead making their actions foundationally a response to God. Paul seems to be saying that instead of doing something (i.e. making, or offering to make a donation to the collection) because they thought that it would please Paul and enhance their standing in his eyes, the Macedonians opted to give in order to please God; Paul's approval was also welcomed, but secondary.<sup>114</sup> Perhaps the Corinthians had not completely grasped this concept and were continuing to engage in activities so as to attract the favourable attention of individuals and groups,<sup>115</sup> and Paul's words here are a gentle rebuke of what he considers wrong-headed thinking on motivation for doing good, in this case, giving to other (poor) Christians.

Paul says that the Macedonian Christians understood that their giving must flow out of a prior and enduring commitment of self to God and his priorities in daily life. As they did this, not only the money they gave constituted the gift, they did as well; because they already had given themselves to God, they became a sort of living gift.<sup>116</sup> Perhaps what we have here is an allusion to the self-giving of Christ, who had given *himself* in order to benefit them (2 Cor.8.9), an anticipation of Paul's exuberant thanksgiving in 9.15, and a hint of Paul's understanding that genuine Christian giving (in this case, aid to the poor), renders both the one giving and that which is given as 'gift'.

Grace appears again in 8.6; could it be a corollary to the grace Paul refers to in 8.1? If so, then Paul's mention of Titus' involvement with the Corinthians, completing among them

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<sup>112</sup> §2.4.2.3 "Kleanax of Kyme"; §4.2.1 "Contrasts in Motivations to Aid to the Poor: Graeco-Roman".

<sup>113</sup> §2.5.1 "Reciprocity".

<sup>114</sup> Cf. Allan Menzies, *The Second Epistle of the Apostle Paul to the Corinthians* (London: MacMillan, 1912), 58.

<sup>115</sup> As did Phainios in C.E. 41/42, whose wish, when he bequeathed 8,000 *denarii* to Gytheion, was that "his 'philanthropic and kindly act would be known to all...to achieve immortality in making such a just and kindly disposal...'" *SEG XIII* 258.

<sup>116</sup> Cf. H.L. Goudge, "The gift to the Christians of Jerusalem was part of the offering up of the Gentiles (cf. Rom. 15.16, and 2 Cor. 8.5)" *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (London: Methuen, 1927), 89.

“this act of grace”, could infer that they had not yet appropriated *God’s* grace by giving themselves “first to the Lord”; rather, they still may be operating on the principle of φιλοτιμία. Paul, however, doesn’t harangue them, doesn’t shame them into compliance; rather, he urges the Corinthians to carry through on their earlier desire to give to the collection, again alluding to φιλοτιμία, but this time in a more positive manner, reciting for his listeners/readers their prior and ongoing accomplishments in faith (πίστει), speech (λόγῳ), knowledge (γνώσει), and earnestness (πάσῃ σπουδῇ), areas prized in their cultural setting. Somewhat surprisingly, he adds to the list the love that exists between the Corinthians and himself,<sup>117</sup> and ends with a prod to match these other accomplishments with the fulfilment of their promise to give.

At the same time, Paul uses what may be a common Jewish approach to reasoning, *qal veh omer* (from the lighter to the heavier, and vice-versa),<sup>118</sup> in 8.7: if they already have shown their exceptional capacity for faith, speech, knowledge, zeal, the love of Paul and friends, it should not pose a problem for them also to exercise their exceptional capacity in the grace (of the collection). Compared to these other weighty things, how much of a challenge really is the collection to people with such a track record of excellence? Paul sets before them a comparison. If the Macedonians, who do not have all the advantages of the Corinthians, are so enthusiastic *vis à vis* the collection, then he expects that knowledge to spark in the Corinthian Christians commensurate enthusiasm, something about which they, apparently, are normally quite proud.

Paul picks up his theme of grace, applying it first (8.1) to conversion, then (8.4) to the collection, and now (8.9-10) to Jesus. In what seems a clear refutation of the Graeco-Roman values of φιλοτιμία and ἰσότης, Paul states that the Lord Jesus Christ gave up everything that he had a right to retain and which distinguished him from the people to and about whom Paul is writing, and that because Jesus did so, his loss became their gain. He gave up his wealth, prestige, reputation, his life, and became poor, probably one of the most dreaded conditions in the ancient world, to benefit people who were not even in his league (who was?). Who in the Graeco-Roman world would say that doing such a thing was appropriate to those people benefited thereby? It certainly didn’t correspond to either φιλοτιμία or ἰσότης.

The Corinthians, Paul continues, are beneficiaries of the Lord’s upside-down giving. They had not done anything to deserve the grace of Jesus, but having received it and benefited from it, they must continue it in miniature by giving some, not all of what they have, to the collection, which, indeed, a year ago they had wanted to do (8.9-10).

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<sup>117</sup> And any other people whom the Corinthians would know and identify as part of Paul’s retinue (e.g. Titus).

<sup>118</sup> For more on Paul’s possible use of rabbinic exegetical methods, see Dan Cohn-Sherbok, *Rabbinic Perspectives on the New Testament* (Lewiston, NY: Mellen, 1990).

At this point, we will turn from the text to a consideration of what may have caused the Corinthians to ‘put the brakes’ on their weekly deposits into their household collection container. Given that the majority of Corinthian Christians Paul was addressing were Gentiles steeped in Graeco-Roman culture and ethics, it may seem surprising, after surveying some of their possible questions/objections, that they did not balk at the project from the very beginning.<sup>119</sup>

First, in a world where it was assumed that fate consigned most people to abject poverty, the fact that some people were poor to the point of hunger was simply a fact of life – why attempt to address something that was a part of the way things were meant to be? Whatever the reason for the hunger, it was their lot.<sup>120</sup> Perhaps they had angered God, who was punishing them.

Second, in a world permeated by patronage<sup>121</sup> and benefaction,<sup>122</sup> peppered with inscriptions and statues hailing those people who had provided funding for public and private works (perhaps a building, games, or the grain supply) and in which congregations may have been conceived of as associations, the Corinthians might ask why the Jerusalem church did not have a local patron or benefactor to help them in their time of need.

The Corinthians also may have thought of the collection as conferring on them the status of ‘patron’ to the Jerusalem church, with everything that could mean (Jerusalem as their ‘client’, unequal status, obligations, reciprocity, ongoing relationship, little prospect of return).<sup>123</sup> If such were the case, would that have seemed more an attractive proposition, or a millstone around their collective neck?

How might the Corinthian Christians have perceived being in such a relationship with people from another ethnic group, another culture, another country?<sup>124</sup> ἰσότης<sup>125</sup> as denoting equality of status between people presents a third potential stumbling block to participation by the Corinthians in the collection for the poor in the Jerusalem church. They and the Jerusalem Christians had little if anything in common, the Jerusalem Christians were so far away, and

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<sup>119</sup> It may be that their initial enthusiasm for the collection, ignited by Paul’s teaching and personal persuasiveness during an earlier sojourn in Corinth, had, after his departure, waned, or their understanding of it had become unclear, and they were in need of Paul’s reminder (2 Cor. 8-9) of the significance of the collection. We see suggestions of this pattern of forgetting and/or distorting, followed by a revisiting/reclarification of Paul’s teaching in many of the issues he addresses in 1 Corinthians.

<sup>120</sup> §2.3 “Issues of Poverty and Hunger”.

<sup>121</sup> §2.4.1 “Patronage”.

<sup>122</sup> §2.4.2 “Benefactors”.

<sup>123</sup> §2.4.1 “Patronage”. James Harrison also recognises this danger, suggesting that “presumably, Paul had to frame his theological arguments for the Jerusalem collection with great sensitivity, given the social intricacies of the reciprocity system”. *Paul’s Language of Grace in its Graeco-Roman Context* (WUNT II/172. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 20.

<sup>124</sup> These certainly were issues for the Gentile and Jewish Christians at Rome. See §6.2.3 “Romans 15.25ff”.

<sup>125</sup> §2.5.2 “*Isotes*/ἰσότης”.

they apparently were poor; how could there be ἰσότης between them? If it could, what might such equality might look like between the two groups?

There was also the issue of ἰσότης as linked to giving. For the Corinthians, this would have meant not giving generously, or to equalise everyone's economic status, but giving that which is appropriate to the recipients' status in life. Following this logic, then, one should give meekly to the poor, because that was what they were accustomed to. In addressing the issue of ἰσότης, Paul would have needed to interpret this word in a new way for the Graeco-Roman Christians, vis-à-vis the Jewish Christians. What does equality amongst Christians mean? How do ἰσότης and χάρις relate to each other?

A fourth reason the Corinthians interrupted their giving to the collection may have been their suspicions about the reality of the need. If there were a food shortage, then would not Jerusalem's equivalent to a *curator annonae*<sup>126</sup> deal with it? Why should the Corinthians take on the burden of helping to supply food?

Fifth in this list of potential objections to participation in the collection was the question of where the wealthy folk of Jerusalem were. Willing or not, let *them* be pressed into service by way of a liturgy<sup>127</sup> or *epidoseis*.<sup>128</sup> Why ask us?

Sixth, if all else fails, families<sup>129</sup> help each other. Where are the Jerusalem Christians' families? They are on the scene; we are not.

The final reason for an interruption in their giving, and for questions put to Paul concerning what he was asking them to do in the collection, almost certainly involved the issue of reciprocity.<sup>130</sup> What possible interest could the Corinthians have in the troubles of those people so far away and so very unlike them? What had the Jerusalem Christians ever done, what could they ever do for the Corinthians that the Corinthians would consider worth their trouble?

The sizeable range of possible reasons for opting out of the collection makes the Macedonians' enthusiastic giving all the more remarkable, and Paul's remarks in 8.10-15 all the more understandable.

The Corinthians already have benefited, as we have seen, from the Lord's self-giving,<sup>131</sup> and they will benefit from their own giving to the collection. Like the Lord, their giving must be willing and compassionate (8.9-10), but unlike his giving, theirs will be proportional (8.12). In his exhortation to them to finish what they have promised to do, Paul

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<sup>126</sup> §2.4.3 "Corn Dole"; cf. §2.4.2.1 "Tiberius Claudius Dinippus", and §2.4.2.2 "Various *cura annonae* in Corinth". As far as we know, Jerusalem did not have a *curator annonae* in times of food shortage.

<sup>127</sup> §2.4.4.1 "Liturgies/*leitourgia*/λειτουργία".

<sup>128</sup> §2.4.4.2 "*Epidoseis*/ ἐπιδόσεις".

<sup>129</sup> §2.4.5 "Family and Neighbours".

<sup>130</sup> §2.5.1 "Reciprocity".

<sup>131</sup> Cf. Harrison, *Paul's Language of Grace*, where he discusses χάρις "as a description of God's beneficence", 112, 224-225.

would have had in mind the various meanings the word ἰσότης carried in the first century Graeco-Roman setting.<sup>132</sup> Paul works with this concept of ἰσότης, familiar to the Corinthians,<sup>133</sup> and often linked with patron-client relationships in which the participants might try to outdo one another in giving; leading, as one might imagine, to costly situations which were at best uncomfortable, and at worst disastrous. Yet, because of their obligatory nature, one could not easily extricate him or herself from such relationships, and so the cycle continued. That at least some among the Corinthians fear this<sup>134</sup> we know from the following verse (8.13), and Paul wants to correct any impression that this is the sort of relationship the collection will set in motion.<sup>135</sup>

The Corinthians do not have to bankrupt themselves for their giving to have its effect (8.13).<sup>136</sup> Margaret Sim, in a paper presented at the British New Testament Conference, 2004,<sup>137</sup> has suggested that Paul is responding directly to what one (or more) of the Corinthians has said concerning the collection: “wealth for them; trouble/suffering for us” (ἄλλοις ἄνεσις ἡμῖν θλίψις), refuting what seems the negative rendering of the idea of reciprocity (What’s in it for us? Nothing but trouble).<sup>138</sup> Paul responds that this is incorrect thinking, the point is that there be ἰσότης, perhaps in the sense of what is appropriate and fair to offer to other members of the Corinthians’ spiritual family, the church, rather than what is appropriate in the Graeco-Roman sense noted above. 8.14 continues Paul’s response to the matter of reciprocity. What each group has, the other group needs.<sup>139</sup> The Corinthians have the financial wherewithal to ease the financial need of the Jerusalem Christians;<sup>140</sup> the Jerusalem Christians represent the starting point of the gospel, and their history is the history of God’s gracious activity in the world. The Jerusalem Christians have shared the gospel with them and so the Corinthians, too, have entered into the history of God’s saving activity in the world through faith in Jesus. For Paul, this interaction constitutes ἰσότης,<sup>141</sup> and this ἰσότης

<sup>132</sup> §2.5.2 “*Isotes/ἰσότης*”.

<sup>133</sup> Rather than “clearly endorse” whatever their current understanding of it, Paul gives a particular interpretation of ἰσότης. *Pace* McCant, *2 Corinthians*, 85.

<sup>134</sup> Chow, “Patronage and Power”, in *Paul and Empire*, 124-25.

<sup>135</sup> cf. Peter Garnsey and Richard Saller, “Patronal Power Relations”, in *Paul and Empire*, Horsley, Ed., 97.

<sup>136</sup> So Barnett, *2 Corinthians*, 413. Cf. Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 407.

<sup>137</sup> “Intentionality in Paul: a study of 2 Corinthians 8:13”.

<sup>138</sup> As does Murphy-O’Connor, *The Theology of the Second Letter to the Corinthians*, 85.

<sup>139</sup> Chang sees the suggestion of material equality in vv. 13-14 and 16, in *Fund-Raising*, 193; Barclay does not say that it will lead to material equality, but does see a hint that “material support from Jerusalem, as and when the Corinthians needed it” will come, in “2 Corinthians”, *Eerdmans Commentary*, 1366.

<sup>140</sup> Contra Meggitt, who asserts strongly that none of the members of Paul’s churches, including the apostle, were anything other than poor, and that the Gentile churches were, in a way, hoping through participation in the collection to ensure their own ongoing economic stability. See *Paul, Poverty and Survival*, 160-161. Cf. 5, 66-7, 69, 75, 99.

<sup>141</sup> So Barnett, *2 Corinthians*, 414-15. See also Barrett, *2 Corinthians*, 227. But, Meggitt, *Paul, Poverty and Survival*, 158.

guarantees that abundance (περίσσευμα) shared (whatever its form) results in a wider spread of abundance.

Paul's comments in 8:13-14 are interesting, for in them he seems to be saying that the *λοότης* which will result from the collection will be both monetary and spiritual in nature. This would have been an unusual concept for the Corinthians; how could the gift represented by the money they gave be reciprocated by thanks given to someone other than them (i.e. to God)? Paul includes an allusion to Exodus 16.18 in 8:15, a verse concerning God's provision of food in the wilderness. Paul does not say that everyone was equally able to participate in gathering, but that everyone had enough,<sup>142</sup> rounding off this section of his letter by reinforcing his Jewish understanding of God as the one who sets the standard for giving,<sup>143</sup> as the one who began the process of giving, and as the one who calls and empowers his people to do for each other as he does,<sup>144</sup> and to do so out of gratitude for the prior and ongoing gracious giving of God.<sup>145</sup>

In 8.16-17 Paul seems again to pick up his theme of giving oneself first to God and then to people (8.5) as he commends Titus. Titus' openness to the Corinthians derives from his prior openness to God. It is God who has put enthusiasm for the Corinthian Christians into Titus' heart, the evidence for which is his acceptance of Paul's appeal to participate in the collection, and to do so by offering to go to Corinth.

Much speculation has occurred over Paul's mention in 8.18-19 of the brother *ἐπαίνοος* (recognised approvingly/famous)<sup>146</sup> "among the churches for his proclaiming the gospel", as one of those appointed by participating churches to travel with Paul and the others accompanying the collection on its way to Jerusalem. Was he imposed on Paul by congregations suspicious of Paul's motives in the collection, whether motives pertaining to the money itself, or to questions of power and authority?<sup>147</sup> Betz asks these questions, but beyond such issues, points to the unnamed status of this man, along with the other brother, as indication of Paul's desire to signal their lesser status *vis à vis* Titus, and ultimately, himself. Betz further notes that these two unnamed individuals' involvement in the movement of the

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<sup>142</sup> Contra Menzies, *Corinthians*, 61-62.

<sup>143</sup> So Harrison: "In the view of Paul, the death of Christ surpasses in scope all contemporary Graeco-Roman beneficence precisely because it was conditioned by *ἀγάπη* rather than by reciprocity". *Paul's Language of Grace*, 225.

<sup>144</sup> "Thus, when believers give, it is really God giving through them..." Barclay, "2 Corinthians" *Eerdmans Commentary*, 1367. Cf. Harrison, who states that "according to Paul, acceptance of divine beneficence imposes an obligation to live worthily of the Benefactor". *Paul's Language of Grace*, 246, 297; and Griffith, "Abounding in Generosity", 48, 167.

<sup>145</sup> Cf. Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989), 88-91.

<sup>146</sup> Liddell & Scott, s.v. *ἐπαίνοος*.

<sup>147</sup> See Barrett, *2 Corinthians*, 228. Cf. Jean Héring, who sees his presence, along with that of Titus, as indicative of Paul's desire to be as little involved with the collection as possible, in order to avoid scandal, especially as it involved large sums of money. *La Seconde Epître de Saint Paul aux Corinthiens*, Commentaire du Nouveau Testament. Neuchâtel/Paris: Delachaux & Niestlé, 1958), 70.

collection, along with that of Titus, seems to have been in line with standard practice in the early Christian communities.<sup>148</sup>

Once again, we refer back to usual first century practice for clarity concerning the transport of significant amounts of money. Escorts representing the senders and/or paid guards were always present.<sup>149</sup> 8.20-23 elaborate on standard practice as Paul states that the presence of all the collection representatives reflects his agreement with both Jewish and Graeco-Roman expectations for ethical money movement, “we intend that no one should blame us about this generous gift that we are administering, for we intend to do what is right not only in the Lord’s sight but also in the sight of others”.<sup>150</sup> In addition to the representatives of the various participant churches, Paul includes two of his own, Titus and “our brother whom we have often tested and found eager in many matters...”. Affirming them all as appropriate choices to ensure the integrity of the collection from its starting point in the various congregations to its delivery in Jerusalem, Paul reminds the Corinthians that each one has been deputised either by himself or by their churches, all of which together are the “glory of Christ”,<sup>151</sup> and that therefore, these men are trustworthy.

On the basis, then, of 8.16-23, in v.24 Paul exhorts the Corinthians to confirm the selection of these representatives by welcoming them and cooperating with them in this multi-church undertaking. Returning to the idea of φιλοτιμία in 9:2-4, he reminds the Corinthians of their enthusiasm of the previous year, an enthusiasm so pronounced that Paul had spoken confidently of it to the Macedonians, many of whom were moved to follow suit in what seemed, initially, an astonishingly generous imitation of the Christians at Corinth, but which itself became the benchmark for genuine participation in giving to the project. After reassuring the Corinthians that he is aware of their initial enthusiasm, Paul says that in light of it, they do not need him to preach to them – not only have they heard the need, they have made an enthusiastic, if yet to be finalised, response to it. Paul’s words are intended as the impetus which will spur them to realise their promise, turning intention into accomplished act.

Paul appeals to the Corinthians’ sensitivity to honour and shame in 9.4, as the Macedonians’ participation, in their generous giving and by the presence of their representatives amongst the group which would travel to Jerusalem by way of Corinth, makes it imperative that Paul alert the Corinthians to the prospect of visitors from a place where they and their (intended) actions have been vaunted.<sup>152</sup> Not to do so would spell disaster for everyone concerned; the two groups would be shamed, one by failing to fulfil a promise, and

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<sup>148</sup> Betz, *2 Cor. 8 and 9*, 76-78; cf. Joubert, *Benefactor*, 186.

<sup>149</sup> See above §5.6.2 “Escorts during money movement: Religious”.

<sup>150</sup> Héring affirms that “Paul had organised this...in such a way so as not to have his honesty doubted”, *Corinthians*, 71 (translation mine).

<sup>151</sup> C. Barrett, *2 Corinthians*, 230; cf. Betz, *2 Cor. 8 and 9*, 82.

<sup>152</sup> So Barclay, “2 Corinthians” *Eerdmans Commentary*, 1366.

the other by having been manoeuvred into giving by an example that turned out to be untrue, and Paul, caught between them, would face (at least) the suspicion of having engineered the generosity by means of false information.

Paul, then, interacts with the concept of φιλοτιμία first by showing that rightly motivated giving flows first from one's commitment to God, and second from one's love of honour, as he shows sensitivity to, and sympathy for, the Corinthians' potential embarrassment, offering them an alternative which would preserve the image that he (Paul), the Macedonians, and the Corinthians themselves have of them.

Following in this apparent vein of sensitivity to honour and shame, rather than go immediately to sort things out in Corinth, Paul stays behind, but sends the aforementioned 'brothers' to work with the Corinthian Christians in completing what earlier they so enthusiastically had agreed to do. Does he sense, perhaps, that other congregational participants, their sincerity and motives, will be perceived by the Corinthians differently than might he, the visiting leader with whom their interactions have at times been difficult and painful?<sup>153</sup>

Paul's stated reason for sending the brothers to collect the money (9.5) may contain a clue as to his thinking: "that it may be ready as a voluntary gift and not as an extortion".<sup>154</sup> We have seen how in the Graeco-Roman world voluntary giving to a project or event was quite likely to have been voluntary in name only. Those looking for a donation were not shy about applying pressure to the hesitant, even unwilling donor in order to achieve their goal – a sizeable sum in money or in kind (agricultural, perhaps). And, once a donation, whether self-generated or the result of social/political pressure, was made, it was almost certain that now the donor would be lobbied for a repeat performance of the giving.<sup>155</sup> At times this could, and probably did amount to extortion. Paul's juxtaposition of the twice-mentioned 'gift' (τὴν προεπηγγελμένην εὐλογίαν) and 'extortion' (πλεονεξίαν) may indicate the need he felt to underscore the different nature of their giving from that which was usual in their setting, and his delayed arrival may have signalled his desire not to do anything which might appear coercive in their eyes.

In 9.6ff, Paul seems to reach back to the brief challenge raised in 8.13 and elaborate on his previous response to it using agricultural terms. Although the people to whom his

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<sup>153</sup> Verbrugge goes too far in contending that "Paul could not be forthright with the Corinthians about his thoughts on the Collection, particularly if he held the Collection to be an obligation", and "there is no doubt" that Paul's emphasis (in 2 Cor. 8 and 9) on the voluntary nature of the collection is due to the deterioration of Paul's relationship with the Corinthian church. *Paul's Style of Church Leadership*, 295-96, 368.

<sup>154</sup> Thrall, *2 Corinthians*, 571-72, and Furnish, *2 Corinthians*, 439, see it as Paul's suspected 'greed', while Griffith sees it as the Corinthians', "Abounding in Generosity", 159-60. While 'greed' and 'extortion' are not mutually exclusive, the latter term seems better suited to convey the sense of forced compliance/participation than does the former.

<sup>155</sup> §2.4.3 "Corn Dole; §2.4.4.1 "Liturgies".

words are addressed live in an urban setting, in the first century very few people would have been unaware of where grain and other produce came from. Images of sowing, and the subsequent growth process were commonly used and understood in the first century world. Paul takes these images and grafts them onto the theme of giving which begins in one's own heart, not in an external demand; the amount of which giving is self-determined, not outwardly imposed; the nature of which giving is positive, not grudging,<sup>156</sup> and all this because the impetus for the giving is God's prior and ongoing provision of "every blessing in abundance" (9.8).<sup>157</sup> Griffith points out *vis à vis* 8.1-2 that "Paul's discussion allows for ambiguity regarding the Macedonians' involvement, whether it was as a result of their own effort or God's work within them".<sup>158</sup> This observation seems to hold as well for 9.6-10, where there also is ambiguity regarding God's work and that of the Corinthians, only in this case, unlike the case of the Macedonian Christians, the work has not yet been realised.

The nature of the return in such giving can be affected by the character of the giving. Paul claims that just as stinginess perpetuates itself, so too do generosity and righteousness (9.6, 10). 9.6-11a echo with scriptural references and allusions which, while perhaps new to the Gentile Corinthian Christians, would have been more familiar to any Jewish believers in the Corinthian church. Central to this section is the idea of giving to the poor (9.8,9; Psalm 112.9) as an attribute of righteousness,<sup>159</sup> as is the prior and foundational concept of God as the first and forever reliable provider of everything people need to live (Is. 55.9), so that (following on Psalm 112.9) they may give to those in need.<sup>160</sup>

The Gentile Christians with little or no prior exposure to the synagogue and its teaching concerning giving to the poor would have been able to identify with at least some of what Paul was attempting to explain, as the idea of one's giving having a corresponding return was familiar in both the Graeco-Roman and Jewish worlds of the first century,<sup>161</sup> so Paul would not at this point have been introducing a concept completely alien to his Gentile hearers.<sup>162</sup> There were, however, concepts and practices contained in Paul's elaboration on giving and its effects in 9.9-15 that would have been alien to those Gentile Christians.

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<sup>156</sup> So Barnett, *2 Corinthians*, 412.

<sup>157</sup> Barrett, *2 Corinthians*, 237. See also Griffith, who asserts that Christians can do this in faith that God will provide, in "Abounding in Generosity", 73; and Berger, *Identity and Experience*, 75.

<sup>158</sup> Griffith, "Abounding in Generosity", 123.

<sup>159</sup> Barrett, *2 Corinthians*, 238.

<sup>160</sup> Contra Betz, "The remarkable thing about the entire passage 9:6-14 is the lack of explicitly Jewish and Christian ideas. Of course, Paul spoke of human needs and divine rewards, but he did so in this-worldly terms, and in keeping with the ancient concept of gifts and the giving of gifts in general." *2 Cor. 8 and 9*, 105.

<sup>161</sup> §2.5.1 "Reciprocity"; §3.4.1 "Ruth"; §3.4.3 "Job"; §3.5.1 "Tobit"; §3.5.2 "Ben Sira"; §3.5.3 "Test. of Job".

<sup>162</sup> "It is possible to speak of reciprocity with regard to God's grace, not that God reciprocates what we have done, but that the recipients of his grace reciprocate by responding with moral behaviour, by passing on 'grace' to others through giving, and by returning 'grace' to God in the form of thanksgiving." One can never produce a return that will match or eclipse God's gift of grace, but one

Giving to the poor seems to have been so alien a concept that very few Graeco-Roman writers even mention it, let alone endorse it.<sup>163</sup> Earlier we discovered that the overwhelming majority of evidence we have on the subject of giving in the Graeco-Roman world portrays giving as highly selective and designed to benefit those who least needed it.<sup>164</sup> Only one inscription concerning the activities of Kleanax of Kyme<sup>165</sup> indicates provision of food across all social/economic strata. How odd it must have been for many of the Corinthian Christians to hear that God expected them to interfere with the implications of one's status bestowed by virtue of one's birth.

Related to this idea of giving to the poor, and familiar in both Graeco-Roman and Jewish settings is the idea that one will be rewarded for giving to others. In the Graeco-Roman world, rewards might take a number of forms, but all involved praise and enhanced social standing for the donor. φιλοτιμία, 'love of honour',<sup>166</sup> constituted a primary motivation for giving in that world. In the Jewish world, God's blessing,<sup>167</sup> forgiveness of sins,<sup>168</sup> or immediate and short-term reward might also be in view,<sup>169</sup> but Paul suggests that for Christians, as for Jews, one's motivation for giving is to be first and foremost thanksgiving to God for his giving<sup>170</sup> – in the natural world (9.8-10) – and in Jesus (9.15).

Paul's final verses (11-15) in chapter 9 centre on thanksgiving and sharing, which seem to have a reciprocal aspect for Paul as he links them to both givers and receivers, as well as to God (as initial supplier, and recipient of the thanks).<sup>171</sup> Perhaps Paul is thinking of the scripture passages describing how at feast times the Israelites were to provide for those who had little or nothing,<sup>172</sup> so that they all might come to worship the Lord with something in their hands.

Beyond this possibility, however, Paul emphasises the nature of the relationship between the Christians in the largely Gentile churches with which he was involved and the

can "offer a heartfelt response nonetheless". Griffith, "Abounding in Generosity", 48; cf. Dunn, *Paul the Apostle*, 707-709.

<sup>163</sup> §2.2 "Issues of Poverty and Hunger". Joubert even argues that Paul was not primarily motivated by the poverty of Jerusalem Christians when conceiving and explaining the collection. *Paul as Benefactor*, 146.

<sup>164</sup> §2.4.1 "Patronage"; §2.5.4 "The Corn Dole"; §2.5.2 "Isotes/ισότης".

<sup>165</sup> §2.4.2.3 "Kleanax of Kyme".

<sup>166</sup> §2.4.2 "Benefactors", §4.2.1 "Contrasts in Motivations to Aid to the Poor: Graeco-Roman".

<sup>167</sup> §3.1.3 Deuteronomy; §3.2.1 "Psalms"; §3.3.2 "Isaiah" §3.4.3 "Job"; §3.5.2 "Ben Sira"; §3.5.3 "Testament of Job"; §4.2.2 "Contrasts in Motivations to Aid to the Poor: Jewish".

<sup>168</sup> §3.5.2 "Ben Sira"; §4.2.2 "Contrasts in Motivations to Aid to the Poor: Jewish".

<sup>169</sup> §2.4.1 "Ruth"; §3.4.3 "Job"; §3.5.2 "Ben Sira"; §3.5.3 "Test. Of Job"; §3.7.1 "Matthew"; §3.7.2 "Mark"; §3.7.3 "Luke"; §3.10.1 "Philo"; §4.2.2 "Contrasts in Motivations to Aid to the Poor: Jewish".

<sup>170</sup> §3.1.3 "Deuteronomy"; §3.2.1 "Psalms"; Lk. 12.23, 26-29.

<sup>171</sup> So David Pao, *Thanksgiving: An investigation of a Pauline theme* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2002), 38. Pao extends the concept of thanksgiving as "a way of life [which] characterises the covenant people. When God is acknowledged to be the one who created his people, he is also claimed to be their Lord and master". In this acknowledgement lies acceptance of the composition of that people – Jew and Gentile alike. *Thanksgiving*, 56.

<sup>172</sup> §3.1.3 "Deuteronomy".

Jewish Christians in Jerusalem, as if they already are an integrated whole<sup>173</sup>. There is an ‘already, but not yet’ quality to Paul’s writing at this point in the letter, as he speaks to the Corinthians of their participation in the collection as if it were an accomplished fact, and the resultant thanksgiving of the recipient Jerusalem Christians as already occurring – thanksgiving for the money and for the givers it and its conveyors (i.e. the representatives of the churches and Paul) represent (9.11, 12).

The “obedience” of their confession (9.13) meant not that [the Corinthians’] confession is a demonstration of their obedience, but that by their confession – their submission to the power of the grace of God – God, through his grace would enable them to be obedient to him. ...[as they] give themselves to the Lord with a willing spirit so that his grace may abound in them, the outcome and evidence. . . will be their generosity.<sup>174</sup>

Their participation in the collection, through donation of money, and human representation in Jerusalem will, according to Paul, provide evidence of the work of the grace of God in the Gentile Christians as they act compassionately toward the Jerusalem Christians,<sup>175</sup> evidence that will confirm their membership in the fledgling Church.<sup>176</sup> This participation, by givers and recipients, and corresponding welcome, which Paul sees as already having occurred with God, must occur within the hearts and minds of both Gentile Christians and Jewish believers in Jerusalem. Paul knows that unless this takes place, there will be unity, and, therefore effective witness to the gospel of Jesus, only in fragmentary and surface form.

Once this human affirmation (i.e. acceptance) has occurred, Paul envisages what Dunn terms “a circle of grace—from God as grace, to humans and through humans as generous action, and back to God as thanks”.<sup>177</sup> This circle exists because God first has provided what is needed for anyone to enter – his Son – and *God’s* provision makes it possible for the *people* to receive God’s grace, enter the circle and embrace each other (physically, as well as intellectually/spiritually) as members of the family of God.<sup>178</sup> In the context of this family, sharing is the norm, be it material (in the form of money, or those

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<sup>173</sup> So Harrison, *Paul’s Language of Grace*, 308.

<sup>174</sup> Griffith, *Abounding in Generosity*, 253; cf. Mitchell, “Rhetorical Shorthand in Pauline Argumentation: The Functions of ‘The Gospel’ in the Corinthian Correspondence”, in *Gospel in Paul*, 88.

<sup>175</sup> The first century Mediterranean world was subject to fairly frequent food shortages, the effect of which was intensified for Jews when followed by a Sabbath year. If Paul and the delegates had come to Jerusalem in 67 C.E. (a Sabbath year, a fact Paul would have known far in advance), the collection would have arrived at an especially opportune moment in terms of real need.

<sup>176</sup> Das, *Paul and the Jews*, 61.

<sup>177</sup> Dunn, *Paul the Apostle*, 708. See also Griffith, for whom “the discussion [of 8-9] demonstrates ‘divine χάρις’ transformed into ‘human χάρις’ passed on from one believing community to another. In the end, χάρις is returned to God in the form of thanksgiving for his divine gift forming an *inclusion* and thus completing the ‘circle of χάρις’”. *Abounding in Generosity*, 112; cf. James Harrison, *Paul’s Language of Grace*, 270-272; and Barnett, *2 Corinthians*, 443.

<sup>178</sup> Contra Barrett, who contends that “the motive is theological. . . . The real significance of the Corinthians as benefactors is not in themselves but in God”, thus reducing them to insignificance in human terms, *2 Corinthians*, 241.

essentials money makes possible), or spiritual (in the form of prayers and encouragement, either oral or written); it is first a response to God's grace; this grace then is acted out in the human arena (9.13, 14).<sup>179</sup>

Paul's final exclamation in this chapter (9.15) follows naturally from all this; the indescribable gift is God's grace, extended and embodied in his Son, Jesus, and evidenced in the configuration of the circle of grace, made up of all who receive God's grace and recognise that grace in every other member of the circle, whatever their socio-ethnic distinctives.<sup>180</sup> The grace extended by God and received by individuals is then mutually recognised in, and extended each to the other; this in itself will bear witness to God's grace to all who yet remain outside the circle (as they all once did).

### 6.3 Summary and conclusion

These final lofty thoughts of Paul grow out of what seemed initially a very earthly undertaking – the collection. This reflects Paul's Jewish roots: one's beliefs about God can ultimately be seen in one's behaviour toward others. The collection was a significant object lesson meant to illustrate what its participants believed about God's mercy and grace, and the nature of Christian community on a local and global scale.

We can also see Paul's attempts to address the socially-linked 'gaps of knowledge' affecting the Corinthian (and possible other Gentile) Christians' understanding of and participation in the collection.

In the collection, Paul was nothing if not persistent in his efforts to effect a family 'union', in which its diverse members might meet and merge on the basis of God's grace in Christ. The various social/ethnic differences between them would still be present, but no longer would these be issues that separate; rather, they now would constitute evidence of acceptable human variety.<sup>181</sup> The collection, that experience of giving and receiving of one another, along with material aid, was a memorable instance of how that could happen.

Paul's collection was, therefore, an example of usual practice in early Christian congregations: provision for the poor and helpless in their midst, whether on a regular, ongoing basis, or as an unusual, occasion-driven response. The collection for the poor among the Jerusalem congregation is an example of aid to the poor for which we have a generous amount of detail in the New Testament texts.<sup>182</sup> Those texts reveal that the details surrounding the collection's gathering and conveyance followed usual conventions for the first century in both the Graeco-Roman and Jewish worlds. They also appear to indicate that in the case of

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<sup>179</sup> Cf. Barrett, *2 Corinthians*, 241; Harrison, *Paul's Language of Grace*, 349.

<sup>180</sup> Cf. Barclay, "2 Corinthians" *Eerdmans Commentary*, 1367; Griffith, "Abounding in Generosity", 222; Pao, *Thanksgiving*, 85.

<sup>181</sup> Cf. Harrison, *Paul's Language of Grace*, 351.

<sup>182</sup> For the gospel texts, see Chapter 3 "Motivations and Mechanisms for Aid to the Poor: The Jewish World". See also James; cf. Barnett, *2 Corinthians*, 450.

aiding the poor, *difference* is the hallmark between those Christians who had been educated for any length of time in Judaism (whether from birth, as a proselyte or God-fearer), and those Christians for whom the synagogue and Jewish ethics were not the precursor to faith and membership in the church. The former group would have embraced the motivations and mechanisms for aid to the poor as familiar; such aid would have been an expected component of life. The latter group would have found this concept of aid to the poor, in theory and practice, unfamiliar, if not thoroughly unreasonable.

These differences, made more visible through this study, provide us with a reasonable basis for a fair and balanced reading of the collection texts; they free us from perpetuating interpretations of those texts which sometimes reflect more of the interpreter's acceptance of prevailing theories than they do the cultural and historical realities of the original setting and its inhabitants.<sup>183</sup> What we have discovered about first century Graeco-Roman and Jewish motivations and mechanisms for aid to the poor has shed light on the collection and the people involved with it, and although we do not see beyond the barely open door of the Jerusalem church,<sup>184</sup> in the texts concerning the collection,<sup>185</sup> we do see a bit more clearly the direction Paul hoped those early believers would take.

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<sup>183</sup> As in the majority reading of Gal. 2.10, which sees "remember the poor" as a request and/or demand for monetary aid specifically for the Jerusalem church, and the resulting view of ongoing tension, if not outright conflict, between Paul and that church.

<sup>184</sup> That is, beyond the mention in Acts 21.17ff. of the arrival and welcome in Jerusalem of Paul and the group bringing the collection.

<sup>185</sup> Romans 15.25-32; 1 Cor. 16.1-4; 2 Cor. 8-9.

## Chapter Seven

### Conclusion: Paul, Aid to the Poor and the Collection

My stated aim at the beginning of this thesis was to situate the collection within the larger picture of aid to the poor in the first century world, and to highlight its specifically Jewish origins. Several key learnings have resulted. First is the surprising divide that existed between perceptions of aid to the poor in the first century Graeco-Roman and Jewish worlds, where in the first instance, it was an alien concept, and in the second, a central tenet and practice of the godly life.

Second is that Paul is very aware of Graeco-Roman thinking and draws on it as it affects the individual and corporate life of the members of his churches. For Paul, if not for the Corinthians, the collection is not a political ploy; it is about what Christ has done, what Christ has confirmed, and what Christ makes possible for them to now do and be. He has dealt previously with other issues of faith and behaviour in the Corinthian church, as we see in his first letter to the Corinthians (and in other Pauline letters). The matters to which he addresses himself are perennial problems to the Gentile Christians, whose cultural background often stood in opposition to biblical/Jewish ethics in the areas of sex, money, personal, legal and civic relationships. Paul was consistent in addressing those areas of life where one's faith in Christ meant a break with familiar, socially accepted ways of thinking and behaving, and doing so on the basis of Christ's self-giving. At the same time, Paul drew on concepts in the non-Jewish world which represented shared or analogous perceptions and/or behaviour. Aid to the poor, and the collection as a subset of that aid, constituted an important instance of one such issue. Paul's interactions with the Corinthians concerning the collection were not political manoeuvring, they were his response to yet another cultural misunderstanding within that Christian community.

For Paul, and for the greater first century Jewish world (Christian or not), aid to the poor was, along with adherence to scripture, temple service, circumcision and food laws, a central identity marker. It, along with scripture, circumcision and food laws, remained central to Jewish identity. Faith in Christ, scripture and aid to the poor remained as identity markers for all Christians, while circumcision and the food laws were observed by some Jewish Christians. As the result of our investigation into Jewish motivations and mechanisms, this thesis has demonstrated the importance of aid to the poor as central to Jewish and Christian identity, and uncovered the surprising neglect of this crucial aspect of Jewish identity in the scholarly material.

The third of the key learnings to emerge from this study concerns the handling and movement of money in the first century. As different as perceptions of aid to the poor seem to

have been in the Graeco-Roman and Jewish worlds, there was, apparently, a high degree of similarity with respect to guarding the integrity of money as it moved. Paul was also aware of these shared standards for money movement and demonstrates his sensitivity in his instructions for the collection's gathering and transport from the churches to Jerusalem.

The fourth and final key learning from this investigation into the collection in light of first century motivations and mechanisms for aid to the poor concerns Paul's relationships with the Corinthian Christians and with the Jerusalem church leaders. By demonstrating that the collection was a notable instance of aid to the poor commonly practised in the first century Jewish and Christian communities, the focus shifts away from politically-charged perceptions of Galatians 2.10, which see the Jerusalem leaders imposing a financial obligation as an entrance requirement on Paul and his churches.

"Remember the poor" refers back to the historic, habitual Jewish concern for the poor which continues in the Christian church, and not to the collection. The admonition to "remember the poor" is an indication that the Jerusalem leaders, too, are aware that the prevailing tendency in the Graeco-Roman world is to forget the poor, not to remember them. Because aid to the poor is central to the godly life, and perhaps because circumcision has been waved for Gentile Christians, the Jerusalem leaders are emphasising the non-negotiable nature of this practice.

Several possibilities for further investigation have arisen in the course of this study. The first concerns Gal. 2.10. Taking this verse out of consideration with respect to the collection removes a significant piece of any politically-charged interpretation of Paul's relationship with the Jerusalem church and, by extension, with his other churches. There is then a need to revisit the question of those relationships and the practice of leadership in the nascent Christian movement of the first century.

A second area of interest which might be further explored in light of a revised view of Gal. 2.10 might focus on the relationship of Galatians and the Acts of the Apostles. If 2.10 does not refer to the collection, then the focus might also need to shift on various other aspects of the supposed conflicts between Paul's account of his ministry and the Acts version of events relating to him.

A third avenue of fruitful investigation involves a reconsideration of the central place of aid to the poor within the early church and the implications of its centrality for Christian faith communities today.

The Apostle Paul undertook a difficult conversation on the subject of using one's money to aid the poor and he did so with people who had little to no background for understanding, much less consenting to such behaviour. Paul persisted, working through the motivations and mechanisms, based on Jewish scriptural/traditional precedents and the self-giving of Christ, and made his point. The collection was a notable inter and cross-cultural

instance of such aid to the poor gathered in Paul's churches, transported by their representatives, and received by the Jerusalem church as a usual expression of tangible Christian compassion and concern.

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