

Contextual views on Paul the tentmaker

Did we forget the poor?

Johannes Mattheus Wessels¹

Abstract

One of the problems with applications of Pauline teachings to the 21st century Southern African context is the way in which elite theologians assumed that first-century Mediterranean societies were similar in most crucial aspects to twentieth-century society. At close scrutiny it is clear that the explanation of self-support and the “free offering of the gospel” from the angle of Paul’s plight for the poor has been overlooked (or only referred to by implication) in commentaries, as well as discussions on “tentmakership” in Practical Theology and even in Missiology. This study is investigating the possible role that the context of the readers played in this oversight.

Keywords: Paul, tentmaker, labour, remuneration, Corinthians, poor, New Testament, Missiology.

1. Introduction

Paul’s decision to support himself in the ministry has not only created an animated response from within the First Century congregation of Corinth, but has been a contentious issue through the history of the church, and, as this study attempts to demonstrate, is still seriously debated at the start of the 21st century AD.

From a hermeneutical point of view the reader is increasingly recognised as a “vital component in the hermeneutical process” (Punt 2004:288). In third-world academic circles there is also a growing awareness of the African context in which interpretation is exercised. As an exponent of African Theology, Ukpong (1998:189-210) convincingly showed the importance of taking the socio-economic position of modern-day readers into account. Such studies, however, have up to date focused mostly on the gospels and Acts, and not so much on Pauline literature.²

The purpose of this enquiry is to assess the development of views on Paul’s self-support, looking first at Biblical evidence thereof, and proceeding to the academic work done on this theme in the last century. In conclusion the current views on Paul’s self-support are discussed in the light of the preceding interpretations.

¹ Johannes Mattheus Wessels is a post-doctoral fellow at the University of the North West. He can be contacted at morutijo@gmail.com

² This tendency is certainly changing. In the 2016 Joint Conference of Religion and Theology in Pretoria, African scholars such as Jodamus, Nsengiyumva and Togarasei al delivered papers with a distinct Pauline focus.

2. Paul's self-support in the New Testament

The obvious place to begin with this study is to explore the responses of Paul's opponents to his self-support through looking at 2 Corinthians 11:7-9 and 2 Corinthians 12:14-18. Instead of gratitude towards Paul for not placing a financial burden on the congregation, it is evident that Paul's opponents used the opportunity to attack Paul on his self-support.

From 2 Corinthians 11:7 we can deduce that Paul's apostleship was questioned because of him not abiding by the instructions of the Lord Jesus to "live from the gospel" (1 Cor 9:14-15), but "sinning" by "lowering himself" by doing manual labour, and not accepting support from the congregation. An added component of the opponent's criticism of Paul points to the pivotal value of honour amongst the congregations in the early church. From 2 Corinthians 11:8-9 and 2 Corinthians 12:13-16 it is clear that the congregation inquired why Paul accepted support from other congregations, whilst refusing to accept any assistance from them. The opponents probably argued that they have been lowered, or made "inferior" in this regard.

Lastly it is important to note Paul's own defence on this issue: he points to the fact that he actually did not degrade the congregation, but "elevated" them, by supplying the gospel "free of charge" and therefore making the congregation financially stronger (2 Cor 11:7). He reiterates the fact that he did not want to be a "burden" on the congregation (2 Cor 11:9; 2 Cor 12:13,14,16), and "hinder" them from giving themselves to the Lord and then to Paul (2 Cor 12:14), as the Macedonians did (2 Cor 8:5).

In concluding his defence on this issue, Paul refers to himself as extending "parental love" towards them (2 Cor 12:14-15; 1 Thess 2:6-9). Like any decent parent Paul is prepared to do everything for the well-being of his children, even up to the point of total selflessness by toiling hard on behalf of fulfilling his or her children's material needs.³

In discussion of this topic it is important not to overlook Luke's recollection of Paul's actions and words in Acts, even though the historicity of Acts is disputed (Deissmann 1912:24). Luke does not only supply the information on Paul's art being that of a tentmaker⁴ or leather-worker in Acts 18:3, but in his rendering of Paul's speech in Acts 20:33-35 there is an important reference to Paul's ministry and labour.

³ Many more references refer to Paul's manual labour and self-sacrifice on behalf of the congregations (Rom 15:17-29; 1 Cor 15:8-10; 1 Cor 3:5-14; 16:1-4; Galatians 2:10; Php 2:13,25-30; 4:10-18; 1 Thess 2:7-9; 4:11-12; Phm 18-21 etc.).

⁴ The Biblical foundation for the word "tentmaker" is the apostle Paul, who provided for his own needs partly by making tents (Cf Acts 18:3). The Greek term *σκηνοποιὸς* can, however, also refer to leather-worker or saddle-maker (Hock 1980:20-21).

Notable in this passage is the very explicit connection of Paul's ministry and his manual labour to the poor. It is clear that Paul was not viewed by Luke as striving for material gain or having aspirations to attain wealth by his manual labour. Instead, he is portrayed as showing through everything he did, that the weak must be helped through hard work. There is therefore no doubt that Paul's hard labour and free offering of the gospel is connected to his assistance of the weak. In Luke the meaning of "weak" have much in common with the meaning of "poor" (Hauerwas 1977:251-262).

It is therefore clear that the intertextual references to Paul's self-support paints a picture of Paul working hard and supporting himself to accommodate the poor, and offering the gospel "to them free of charge". It must be noted, however, that Paul's actions and intentions were not always perceived (especially by his opponents) to be so pure.

3. Modern views on Paul's free offering of the gospel

3.1 Adolf Deissmann and the suffering Paul

The first scholar that deserves attention is Adolf Deissmann. Deissmann (1912:62) portrays Paul as somebody with an ailing body, due to Paul describing himself as an "earthen vessel" in 2 Corinthians 4:7. He also refers to the poor living conditions he must have endured as a tentmaker, and the reference to an attack of illness in Galatians 4:13-14, not to mention the "thorn in the flesh" referred to in 2 Corinthians 12:7, and his body with scattered scars from maltreatment.

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

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

"Moreover, he abstained of his own free will from exercising a right that was generally admitted and had the authority of Jesus to commend it, the right of a missionary to be supported by the churches. What he required he earned by his own labour. He is the first artisan missionary, and he is proud of the fact. *His churches are poor, and he will not be a burden to them*⁵. . . Only in the case of those who stood very near to him did he make an exception and accept charitable gifts."

In this passage Deissmann is clearly linking Paul's initial motives for offering the gospel 'free of charge' to his care for the poor and his fear of placing a "burden" on them.

⁵ My own cursive.

The work of Deissmann needs to be understood within his immediate context in the first half of the 20th century. This century was one that has undergone several world wars and major power shifts across the world; therefore it is difficult to capture the kaleidoscope of views on Paul's self support. It is important not to neglect the way that the World Wars, as well as the poverty and politics in Germany affected the view of Paul's person.

Many of the late 20th century scholars did not really accept Deissmann's views on Paul (Pop 1974:186; Hock 1978:557). There are others, like Friesen (2004:323-361), who even calls for a re-evaluation of Deissmann's theories in the light of the comfortable situation of modern-day scholars and the ideals of Capitalism, which have caused them to lose touch with the real Paul.

3.2 Hock's Paul, coming from the "upper classes"

The person largely responsible for the (temporary) demise of Deissmann's theories was Ronald Hock, who viewed Paul's missionary activities in a very different light. Paul's reference to becoming a slave in 1 Corinthians 9:19 is, according to Hock, also a reference to his tentmaking. This should point to Paul coming from a position of power to the work of an artisan. Paul's offering of the gospel as free of charge is also explained by Hock (1978:559) in terms of practices exercised by the philosopher Socrates.

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

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

3.2.1 The development of the 'New Consensus' on Paul

The interpretation that Paul and his trade evolved from a 'New Consensus', a term which was used to indicate the assumption that a considerable number of Christians in the First Century came from the "middle or upper classes".

From section 3.1 it is evident that Deissmann and the theologians from the earlier centuries viewed the congregation in Corinth, and the other First Century con-

gregations, to be predominantly from the lower classes. This historical assumption was questioned by various scholars since the late fifties and early sixties of the previous century, amidst the renewed interest in the social and historical contexts of First Century Mediterranean societies.

Erwin Judge (1960) was one of the first exponents of the New Consensus. He questioned the earlier assumptions that the different groups in First Century Corinth consist out of poor Jewish farmers, or a local group from the lower socio-economical ranks in the city (1964:50). He further argued that a considerable number of members was from the higher ranks of Roman society (1964:50-60). He viewed Paul himself as being amongst the elite of First Century society (1960:127), and reckoned that the “dependant members of city households” were “by no means the most debased section of society”. This theory was supported by a growing number of scholars. In his commentary on social level and literary culture, Malherbe (1983:59) hypothesizes that Deissmann probably “aimed too low”.

The contribution of Theissen (1978:31-95), who distinguished between socio-political, socio-economical, socio-ecological and socio-cultural factors regarding the strata of First Century Society, announced a next phase in the New Consensus. Theissen (1982:146) expanded the theory of Judge also into the social nature and composition of the congregation in Corinth. He interprets 1 Corinthians 1:26-28 to confirm a class struggle within Corinth, and views the “wise”, “powerful”, and “noble” members as dominating the congregation.

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

Meeks’ argument contends that Paul’s negative portrayal of the income that the super apostles received in 2 Corinthians 11:20 has triggered their questioning of his self-support. Meeks (1983:72) is probably anachronistic in this interpretation. The possibility that accusations in 2 Corinthians form the reason for an issue that Paul already addressed in his first letter, is rather slim. Meeks also mentions 2 Corinthians 12:16-18 as evidence that the Corinthians felt that Paul exploited them with his collection for the Jews in Jerusalem.

Also relevant is Meeks’ (1983:66) theory that “Paul’s refusal of support from the Corinthians is not absolute, for there are indications that he expected them routinely to help with travel expenses” (1 Cor 16:6, 2 Cor 1:16). Meeks’ argument is based on the use of *προπέμπω* as not only referring to the lexical meaning of

‘sending somebody forward’, but having the added semantic component of equipping somebody for his journey (Louw & Nida 1988:191, Malherbe 1977:230). This would have involved “some financial outlay” (Meeks 1983:66).

Marshall (1987:vii) takes an in depth look at the reasons for Paul’s refusal to accept salary from the angle of the relationships of friendship and enmity between Paul and the Corinthians. In Marshall’s treatment of Paul’s relations to the Corinthians typical conventions of the Roman elite is dealt with, being patronage, reciprocity, wealth and friendship. Marshall (1987:233-258) gives ample attention to Paul’s refusal to accept the “offer” of the Corinthians, and also to his “variance” in accepting remuneration from other churches.

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

- He did not wish to place an obstacle in the way of the gospel of Christ (1 Cor 9:12b).
- He did not want to burden anyone (2 Cor 11:9; 12:13-14).
- He loved them (2 Cor 11:11; 12:15).

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

In the next decade the focus on patronage, benefaction, reciprocity, and wealth (evident in Marshall’s work) triggered a flurry of research into the individuals of higher status in the First Century Mediterranean (cf. Wessels 2015:43). A good example of these investigations is found in the work of Winter (1994), *Seek the welfare of the city*. Winter utilises several portions from the undisputed Pauline letters as departure points to illustrate Paul’s attitude towards Christian benefaction.⁶

The connection with eating sacrificed meat in an idol’s temple (1 Cor 8, 10), together with the reference to the sport in 1 Cor 9:24-27, leads Winter (1994:166) to the conclusion that some believers were specially invited to public feasts at the Isthmian games, and therefore were of high status. Winter (1994:165-166) therefore views Paul’s referring to the ἐξουσία (right) of some congregation members as indicating their “civic privilege”. He then proceeds to argue that Paul contrasts this use of ἐξουσία by not using his own ἐξουσία (1 Cor 9:4-6, 12, 18) to ask for money but exercising his right as an ἐλεύθερος (freedman), and offering the gospel ἀδάπανος (free of charge).

⁶ Rom 13:3-4, Php 1:27-2:18, 1 Cor 6:1-11, Gal 6:11-18, 1 Cor 7:17-24, 1 Cor 8 - 11:1 and Rom 16:3.

The approach of Winter is a good example of how Paul's self-support is interpreted in terms of making a statement to the "strong", being the "civic privileged". The 'New Consensus' was, however, never accepted by all. As one of the early critics of the New Consensus, Gager (1979:177) commented on Grant's choice of topics to reflect "in many ways his own and his readers' social location as well-to-do, moderate, middle-class Americans". The lack of attention to the poor was also pointed out by Gager (1979:177): "In treating alms, tithing, and endowments, more attention might have been directed to the eventual recipients of these benefices...". Gradually more and more voices arose for viewing the *Sitz im Leben* of 1 Corinthians also in terms of the poor.

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

Important for understanding Paul's plight for the poor, is Mitchell's arguments, who argues that the rich elite tried to gain honour by suing the poor, who were not able to pay for court cases (Mitchell 1993:580). He proceeds to argue that this case was probably coming forth from Chloe's people, being slaves and freedmen according to Meeks (1983:59), and not from matters forwarded to Paul in writing by the elite community leaders. Drawing on the sociological law theory of Black (1976:17-20), Mitchell (1993:582-583) argues that the slaves and freedmen probably protested against being brought before a court, being too poor to afford their own defence.

In conclusion to his article Mitchell (1993:583-584) not only views Paul to have taken the side of the weak, but he uses 1 Corinthians 4 and 9 as evidence that Paul "calls for a suspension of the normal social activity of the strong" in conflicts. Although still in line with the New Consensus, Mitchell's article does move in the direction of interpreting the Corinthian conflict in terms of economics and not only social status. It also disputes that the law cases were not always due to issues between people of equal rank. Law cases also involved differences between the rich and poor in Corinth, and therefore 1 Corinthians 6:1-11 may be viewed from the perspective of Paul's sympathy with the poor.

The almost gullible way in which scholarship accepted the First Century Mediterranean society to consist of several elite and a large middle class in the 1990's, left the proponents of the New Consensus exposed to criticism. Such a corrective came from the pen of Meggitt (1998): *Paul, poverty and survival*. Although being (by own admittance) more "destructive" than "constructive", Meggitt (1998:179) sys-

tematically questions all the core assumptions about the socio-economic composition of First Century society, the material resources of the congregants themselves, the absence of elite and wealthy individuals in the congregations, and consequently the personal situation of the apostle Paul before and after his conversion to Christianity.

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

Meggitt’s contribution is important for reassessing poverty in First Century Corinth. Although his publication was surely not the final word about the presence or absence of elite in the Corinthian congregation, he stimulated an important field of research. The new focus upon poverty in the Early Church is also evident in the work South-African Scholars such as Draper (2011:1-10), examining the moral and economic underlays of the *Didache*.

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

From the above it is clear that an investigation into Paul’s ministry from a socio-economic angle is more than relevant in terms of the current New Consensus debate. To have a good overview of the role of the reader in terms of the *Wirkungsgeschichte*, two other angles of interpretation are investigated: the collection, and research done from the field of Missiology.

3.2.2 Paul and the Collection

The renewed interest in socio-historic studies during the latter part of the twentieth century also drew renewed attention to Paul’s collection for the poor in Jerusalem. The influence of the New Consensus, however, was still very evident, especially in

title of the book of Joubert (2000), *Paul as benefactor*. This work does not only make interesting reading in terms of the chronology of the Collection, but it discusses the differences between patronage and benefaction in depth. In Joubert's opinion patronage has its roots in the Roman culture, whilst beneficence is from Greek origin. He views the essence of patronage to be social control, focused on a specific group, *contra* beneficence, being of a selfless and a more communal nature (Joubert 2000:68).

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

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

The phrase "stark contrast" probably refers to the first impression that Paul is on the one hand refusing money, and on the other hand asking for it (*albeit* not being for his own profit). The comment, however, is peculiar in the light of his article on "Paul's economic vision on work", published earlier in the same year (Punt 2000a:251-371). In this article Punt (2000b:364) takes into consideration the reasons for Paul's self-support, also referring to 1 Corinthians 9. He does not only connect Paul's labour to the poor, but also quotes Everts (1993:299): "(the gospel) ... was the controlling force in his requests for and refusal of money". A closer investigation into Everts' article reveals that he on the one hand states the contrast between the Collection and Paul's self-support, but on the other hand emphasises the consistency of Paul's attitude towards "money and missions" (Everts 1993:297).

Lastly it is important to give a cursory glance at research concerning the acceptance of the Collection in Jerusalem. The main problem is the fact that the Collection is not mentioned upon Paul's return to Jerusalem and his subsequent arrest (Joubert 2000:215). The reference to Paul and his delegation being received warmly (*ἀσπάζομαι*) in Acts 21:7, traditionally motivated some scholars to believe that the Collection was accepted favourably (Chacko 2000:182). There is, however, an

opposing view, stating that the Collection was not received favourably at all (Roloff 1981:312). This view is in a sense taken to the extreme by Wedderburn (2001:149) who concludes that the non-acceptance of the Collection by James and the elders in Jerusalem, and the arrest of Paul eventually led to a “breakdown between the Judean churches and Paul”.

It is therefore clear that the relevance of the Collection for Paul’s self-support, and him “labouring free of charge”, has often been underestimated, or totally neglected in research, and therefore deserves attention in this study.

3.2.3 Paul’s labour from a missiological perspective

During this era there is a revival of interest in Paul’s missionary praxis and his occupation as tentmaker from a missiological perspective. The study of Kritzinger (1979:135-185) portrays some differences compared to the argumentation as Hock (1978:564), and his other contemporaries. Kritzinger (1979:183-185) mentions five reasons why Paul reverted to tentmaking and did not accept money for his labour:⁷

- He did not want to lay a burden on the congregations.
- He did not want to be associated to those preachers who misused their right on maintenance and became parasites.
- He wanted to portray an example of manual labour to the congregation.
- There were certain principles that he wanted to reiterate, for instance the principle of giving being better than receiving.
- He is making this sacrifice mainly from a missionary point of view, i.e. becoming “everything to everybody to save at least some”.

Although Kritzinger approaches this issue within a Missionary paradigm, the sensitivity and interest for the socio-economic situation of at least some members in the Corinthian congregation is strangely missing here. The referral in the first reason to Paul as not wanting to “lay a burden” can at most be interpreted as an indirect indicator of his sympathy with their economic situation.

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

⁷ My own translation.

to relate it to man, and specifically to the poor, which in South Africa means largely black people” (Van Niekerk 1982:121).

This deficiency, was dealt with in part by the extensive work of David Bosch (1991), *Transforming mission*. Bosch (1991:420-457) not only integrates the social aspects of mission in his model, but also starts his book with an elaborated discussion on the New Testament models of mission. In his discussion of Paul’s self-consciousness he links Paul’s famous paradox in 2 Corinthians 12:10b to his “decision to support himself through the work of his own hands and not to accept any financial support from the churches he has founded”. Bosch (1991:133) gives the credibility of the gospel, as well as the aim to win as many as possible, and the necessity to preach the gospel as reasons for Paul’s approach.

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

3.2.4 African views on Paul, labour and compensation

Although *Transforming mission* was a publication of an international standard,⁸ substantial criticism was brought in against it, amongst which was the review of Mofokeng (1990:168-180), branding it as a “Euro-American” publication, not really in touch with theology from an African perspective. It is therefore important that the view of indigenous African scholars in relation to the theme of this article should not be neglected.

Until recently the main contributions of African New Testament Scholarship were focused on the gospels (Manus 2003:205). Recently the appearance of the *Africa Bible commentary* (2006) proves that there is a growing interest in Pauline studies and the rest of the New Testament as well. Such an African perspective on Paul and Peter is clear in the comparison that Obed Dube (2004:37-49) makes between the apostles’ divine experiences and calling.

Exploring the similarities and dissimilarities of their calling experiences, Dube (2004:46) concludes that Paul’s diverse cultural background, his Jewish train-

⁸ Besides receiving several South African awards, it has been listed as one of the top 100 books of the 20th century by the journal *Christianity Today*.

ing, his tentmaking skills, and his celibacy gave him an advantage over Peter and other apostles. He applies Paul and Peter's calling to the need for African scholars to "undergo the same process of transformation as did Paul and Peter" (Dube 2004:48). He pleads for African Christian workers to "reflect faithful commitment to honouring the God they worship" with their lives. He proceeds to state that God is not "couched in racism and favouritism", but that he is "above culture while he utilizes culture". Although criticism can be brought against the fact that Dube works uncritically from Acts as a source of historical information on Paul, his application does shed new light on the similarities between the struggles of Paul and Peter and the battles that African Christian workers face in working within cross-cultural and global contexts.

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

In listing the required responses from the church to the HIV/AIDS pandemic, Dube (2002:542) refers to the self-emptying act of Jesus in Matthew 20:28. She challenges the church to "give up its glory" and realize its mission in the world as serving the "poor, the suffering, the powerless, the hopeless, the vulnerable youth, women and the stigmatized PLWHA (people living with HIV/AIDS)". Another contribution from Dube (2002:545) pleads for a re-interpretation of texts from the perspective of HIV/AIDS and the poor, for highlighting Scripture portions such as the narrative of Job and John 9 that illustrates that not all illness comes from God.

In increasingly secular states theologians often find glory in questioning the morals of the church, and "emptying oneself of glory" would then mean precisely the opposite of what Dube (2002:541-542) suggests: holding on to morals anchored in the Word of God. Was John the Baptist not laying down his glory in opposing the immoral king Herod's deeds (Matt 14:1-5, Lk 3:19-20)? A recent 'non-religious' study by Allen & Heald (2005:1141-1154) has shown that churches sticking to their moral principles contributed to major success against the HIV/AIDS pandemic in Uganda, versus the failed government policy in Botswana.

A text re-interpreted from an African angle, is found in Manus (2003:55-66); it is an exposition of Galatians 6:1-6. In his interpretation he (2003:59-61) uses Yoruba folklore to interpret the *crux interpretum* in these verses, where a king reprimands his sons for not respecting one another, while reigning together over

their respective provinces. Manus (2003:64) then interprets Galatians 6:1-6 as a call to mutualism and solidarity, and also views the climax of the pericope as the obligation of the Christian Community to “provide material needs and even the ‘good things of life’ to support those who teach the Word, the good news of the kingdom”.

As a last thought on this pericope Manus (2003:65) appeals for exegetes in Africa to “respond to ‘Bread and Butter’ issues”, and that it must be “allowed to address the African Hunger situation, international food aid and charity, health-care problems, the ravage of HIV/AIDS, imbalances of the education sector amongst various ethnic groups, the empowerment of African rural woman, the cry for justice and peace, human rights, wars, and the ethical dimensions of Africa’s indebtedness to World Powers ...”. In the light of the preceding views on Paul’s labour and remuneration it is important that more research is done in the field of poverty and its implications for pastoral ministry in Africa.

3.3 Developments in the 21st century

In 21st century research Paul’s reasons for not accepting any form of remuneration from the congregation in Corinth is still an area of contention (Horrel 1997:587-603). One of the reasons for this lack of present consensus can be found in the evolving paradigm which views Pauline ministry from a socio-economic, rather than from a position of social status. In the study of Aejmelaeus (2002:344-376), the question of salary between Paul and the super apostles in Corinth, challenges almost all of the traditional reasons provided for Paul’s refusal of accepting salary from the congregation in Corinth. Interpreting Paul’s attitude from the angle of the patron-client system, is according to Aejmelaeus (2002:352-354) not relevant in the light of recent viewpoints on the economic status of the congregation in Corinth.

Standing ‘on the shoulders of Meggitt’, Friesen (2004:323-361) has explored poverty in the New Testament milieu further by not only giving attention to the way in which Pauline studies became progressively irrelevant to the local contexts in the second half of the twentieth century, but also providing a model with which poverty in the First Century can be measured. The radical estimates of people living in poverty supplied by Meggitt (1998:50) was reduced to at least two-thirds by Friesen (2004:347); it can be assumed that at least two thirds of the population, and probably also the congregation in Corinth, lived on or below the subsistence level.

Oakes (2004:367-371) suggests an even more detailed analysis than Friesen, and Barclay (2004:365) asks why no-one does “bring into this discussion comparative data from contemporary ‘third world’ urban churches of the poor”. The support for Meggitt’s critique of the ‘New Consensus’ was significantly strengthened by the research of Longenecker. Longenecker (2009:243-278) did not only refine the poverty scales, but made a major contribution to the view of Paul as an advocate

of the poor in his work *Remember the Poor* (2010), where he focuses on Galatians 2:10.⁹

This thrust scholarship towards the problem of relevance, which is not only pointed out from within a discipline such as New Testament scholarship (Punt 2000a:351-371; Friesen 2004:331), but also from the outside (Naudé 2005:339-358). Amidst the criticism of being ensnared in superfluous theoretical research ignoring present-day contexts (Punt 2000a:352-353), Biblical Studies needs research which responds to the twenty-first century society in all its aspects (De Silva 2000:312; Wessels 2014:162-163). It does, however, have to be aware that it escapes the previous pitfalls of Marxist interpretation (Friesen 2004:264).

Interestingly Kritzinger (2001:46-58) shows his growing awareness (see 3.2.1) of the impact of poverty and the importance of the sustainability of the ministry in a third-world context. He does not only point out the implication of Paul's exhortation in 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12 for impoverished communities, but also refers to the Dutch Reformed Church's lack of enthusiasm when the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa decided on "tentmaking ministry" as a viable solution to the problem of poverty in the church.

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

Last but not least, is the growing interest in the self-emptying act of Jesus (cf. Dube in 3.2.4). Paul's 'Christ hymn' in Philippians 2:5-11 is often cited in the context of self-emptying, or *kenosis*. Using the example of missionaries still prepared to live amongst the people in their circumstances, Frederiks (2005:211-222) points to *kenosis* as becoming a new model for missionary strategy.

It is therefore evident that there is currently an emerging paradigm which is re-evaluating the relevance of studies on poverty and labour in the First Century Mediterranean such as those done by Deissmann (1912) and Agrell (1976).

4. Conclusion

It has become clear that there never was a totally homogenous stance on Paul's self-support. Paul's work and his offering of the gospel as 'free of charge' has been shown in 1.2 to be closely interrelated. In retrospect it is necessary to look at the

⁹ It is noted that the challenge to the 'New Consensus' is still an area of scholarly debate, but the contributions of Meggitt, Longenecker and other scholars in this regard is now recognised and well established (Last 2015:91).

reasons forwarded for Paul offering the gospel 'free of charge', and supporting himself in Corinth. The different proposals are the following:

- "Plying a trade" was a normal practice amongst the Jews (Hock 1980:28).
- He was reluctant to enter into a client relation within the framework of patronage (Marshall 1987:402-402).
- He acted spiteful and with irony in the light of the continuing divisions in the congregation (Aejmelaeus 2004:366).
- He distinguished himself from the Cynics who often reverted to begging, and to show himself as an example for those who do not want to work (Grant 1977:68; Punt 2000b:362).
- He wanted to present himself as self-sufficient, it being a Stoic virtue (Fitzgerald 1978:189).
- He was a "community organiser" missionary, not functioning within the same parameters as other missionaries, as well as having more flexible skills than those who were fishermen of trade (Theissen 1982:28-29).
- He protested against the "abuse" of the "super-apostles", who exploited the Corinthians for their money, and using "irony" as a means to do so (Schrage 1988:230).
- He used his trade as a "springboard" for evangelism in the "marketplace" (Hock 1978:560).
- He did not want to be a burden to the congregation (Kritzinger 1979:183-185).
- He attempted to illustrate the laying down of one's "rights" in contrast with the strong in 1 Corinthians 8 and 10 (Winter 1994:174-177).
- He adopted a servant attitude in line with Jesus' command in Matthew 20:28, also "shaming himself", as is evident in his catalogues of hardships in 1 Corinthians 4:12, 2 Corinthians 4:8-9, 6:4-10, 11:23-28, 12:10 (Wolff 1989:145-150).
- He wanted to demonstrate his love towards the congregation (Aejmelaeus 2004:374).
- He wanted to practically demonstrate to the congregation that giving is better than receiving (Kritzinger 1979:183-185).
- He had to make sure that the collection for Jerusalem is not misinterpreted as a collection for himself (Agrell 1976:110-111).
- He did not want to be perceived as a burden to the congregation (Kritzinger 1979:183-185).
- He looked to open the door, "especially for the poor" (Deissmann 1912:208, Agrell 1976:110-111), so that people can enter the church irrespective of their socio-economic status, and be saved (Robbins 1996:87-88).

Of all the reasons mentioned above, this article mainly focuses on the last reason for Paul's self-support, which is Paul's plight for the poor. It has also been shown that in none of the sources consulted a definite connection of Paul's self-support as a sacrifice on behalf of the Jerusalem collection has been made. I believe this to be an additional field of study that does deserve attention.

To my view the article provides sufficient proof for a positive reading of Paul's decision to support himself in the ministry. Paul indeed aimed to 'elevate' the congregation (especially the poor) through this decision. The 'profit' of Paul's endeavours in terms of people accepting the message that he conveyed through his example is evident in the rapid growth of numbers amongst the Christians in the First Century AD.

Paul's example of parental love and sacrifice through his manual labour still stands as an example to modern day servants of the Lord in several ministries. In bringing the gospel to poor, unreached communities, is still a valid and effective way of bringing the gospel with integrity. Paul's environment also had a distinct influence on his self-support. The question still remains whether we are more in touch with our 21st century environment than the elite were in the First Century Mediterranean context. In the current Southern African context, where so many people do not have the funds to support a spiritual worker, we must increasingly consider tentmaking as a viable solution for sustainable ministry to the poor.

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