

# Leadership and the gospel in the early Pauline churches

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Thesis submitted for the degree *Doctor Philosophiae* in New  
Testament at the Potchefstroom Campus of the North-West  
University

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May 2014



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Although only one person appears as the author of a thesis, a project like this truly depends on the participation and commitment of many people. With gratitude to God I joyfully acknowledge the many people who helped, encouraged and supported me through the years that I worked on this project.

Though often called upon to make sacrifices of various kinds, my wife, Vehlia, and four daughters, Zoë, Chiara, Charissa, and Amy, have never ceased to support me in this work. I am deeply grateful to God that our bond is not only in the flesh, but also in Christ, and that they could share in my own journey of discovery as I have tried to get to grips with Paul's understanding of church leadership. I thankfully acknowledge that their help has extended to practical matters too, like proof-reading and printing.

I recognize too the part that my parents and parents-in-law have played in this work. My father, Malcolm Button, who sadly passed away a few months before I completed the thesis, always showed great interest in my studies. My mother, Helen Button, as ever has been a pillar of support and encouragement. My parents-in-law, Jan and Sparrow de Jong, have likewise been supportive in so many ways.

It has been a great privilege to do this work under the guidance of my promoter, Prof. Fika van Rensburg. He has been a model of Christlike leadership, going far beyond the call of duty to ensure that I had every opportunity for academic growth, in addition to providing incisive guidance for the thesis itself. My co-promoter, Prof. Dries Du Plooy, as an expert in ecclesiology, graciously offered much insightful and helpful guidance.

There are many friends who have supported and encouraged me in this work. I particularly mention the Constantia Park Baptist Church, where I and my family have been in membership over the last year.



## ABSTRACT

### **Leadership and the gospel in the early Pauline churches.**

The aim of this study is to gain insight into the leadership processes and dynamics operative in the early Pauline churches. The study is based on Paul's Early Letters (i.e. 1 & 2 Thessalonians, Galatians, 1 & 2 Corinthians, and Romans) and uses a combination of socio-historical and exegetical approaches.

The idea that leadership in the early Pauline churches was determined by wealth, social status, and patronage is prominent in the literature, and is examined in detail. Recent research on the economic stratification of first-century Graeco-Roman society challenges the idea that leadership in the early Pauline churches was exercised by wealthy patrons.

It can be observed in the Early Letters that Paul's leadership role was the most prominent one, and that other leaders, both local and itinerant, were regarded as his coworkers. The study therefore examines Paul's thinking about his own leadership role, especially his ministry aims and methods. Two aims stand out: (a) that believers appear blameless at the return of Christ; and (b) that the body of Christ be built up. Paul saw himself as an apostle and as God's coworker; he was convinced that the gospel, as God's power for salvation, received through faith, was the means by which these aims would be accomplished. Therefore his ministry was first and foremost a ministry of the gospel which aimed to establish people in faith. Passages relating to Paul's coworkers show that they were ministers of the gospel in their own right, and that they shared in all aspects of Paul's ministry except those pertaining specifically to his apostleship.

Paul often refers to his ministry as a grace that he has received from God. The ministry of others is similarly understood in terms of grace (Rom 12:3-6). This observation leads to a study of divine equipping in the ministry of Paul and his coworkers. I conclude that, for Paul, the work of the Holy Spirit in empowering leaders and making their work effective was fundamental to authentic ministry/leadership.

Finally, theoretical perspectives from leadership studies and social psychology are used to bring conceptual unity to the exegetical results. A definition of leadership is formulated and the well-known power/interaction model of French and Raven is adapted and used to analyse leadership in the early Pauline churches. The aim is to understand both theological and socio-historical aspects of leadership and how they interacted in the early Pauline communities. I conclude that leadership in these communities entailed a social process in which the most important forms of influence were spiritual and empowering. A local leadership role had begun to develop, but was not yet formalized into an official structure.

Overall, I conclude that the gospel of Jesus Christ, as God's power for the salvation of all who believe, was the central dynamic of leadership in the early Pauline churches.

**Key words:** leadership, ministry, Pauline churches, apostleship, charisma, divine equipping, office, gospel, power/interaction model, French and Raven, socio-historical approaches.

## OPSOMMING

### **Leierskap en die evangelie in die vroeë Pauliniese gemeentes.**

Die doel van hierdie studie is om lig te werp op die leierskapdinamika en -prosesse van die vroeë Pauliniese gemeentes. Die studie word gebaseer om Paulus se Vroeë Briewe (d.w.s. 1 & 2 Tessalonisense, Galasiërs, 1 & 2 Korintiërs, en Romeine), en gebruik 'n kombinasie van sosio-historiese en eksegetiese metodes.

Die standpunt dat leierskap in die vroeë Pauliniese gemeentes bepaal was deur welvaart, sosiale status, en weldoenerskap is prominent in die literatuur. Dié standpunt word in besonderhede ondersoek. Onlangse navorsing oor die ekonomiese stratifikasie van die eerste eeuse Grieks-Romeinse samelewing bevraagteken die standpunt dat ryk weldoeners die leiers was in die vroeë Pauliniese gemeentes.

Daar kan in die Vroeë Briewe aangedui word dat Paulus se leierskaprol die mees prominente was, en dat ander leiers, plaaslik sowel as rondreisend, beskou is as Paulus se medewerkers. Die studie ondersoek dus Paulus se begrip van sy eie leierskaprol, veral die doel en metodes van sy bediening. Twee doelwitte staan voorop: (a) dat gelowiges onberispelik moet wees by die terugkeer van Christus; en (b) dat die liggaam van Christus opgebou moet word. Paulus het homself as apostel en medewerker van God beskou; hy was oortuig dat die evangelie, as God se reddingskrag wat deur geloof ontvang word, die middel was vir die bereiking van sy doelwitte. Dus was sy bediening in die allereerste plek 'n bediening van die evangelie met die doel om mense vas te laat staan in die geloof. Skrifdele oor Paulus se medewerkers wys dat hulle in eie reg ook bedienaars van die evangelie was, en dat hulle aan alle aspekte van Paulus se bediening deel gehad het — behalwe dié wat uniek van sy apostelskap was.

Paulus verwys dikwels na sy bediening as genade wat hy van God ontvang het. Die bediening van ander word ook in terme van genade verstaan (Rom 12:3-6). Dié waarneming lei tot 'n studie van God se toerusting in die bediening van Paulus en sy medewerkers. Ek lei af dat, vir Paulus, die werk van die Heilige Gees die grondslag was van egte bediening/leierskap. In dié werk bemagtig die Heilige Gees die bedienaars en maak Hy hulle bediening effektief.

Laastens word perspektiewe van die leierskapstudie en sosiale sielkunde ontgin om die eksegetiese resultate tot konseptuele eenheid te bring. 'n Definisie van leierskap word geformuleer, en die bekende mag/interaksie model van French en Raven word aangepas en gebruik om leierskap in die Pauliniese gemeentes te ontleed. Die doel is om beide teologiese en sosio-historiese aspekte van leierskap, sowel as die interaksie tussen die twee, in die vroeë Pauliniese gemeenskappe te verstaan. Ek kom tot die gevolgtrekking dat leierskap in hierdie gemeenskappe 'n sosiale proses behels het waarbinne die mees belangrike invloedsvorms geestelik en bemagtigings-geïntereerd was. 'n Plaaslike leierskaprol het begin ontwikkel, maar is nog nie in 'n amptelike struktuur geformaliseer nie.

Ten slotte lei ek af dat die evangelie van Jesus Christus, as God se reddingskrag vir almal wat glo, die sentrale dinamika van leierskap was in die vroeë Pauliniese gemeentes.

**Sleutelwoorde:** leierskap, bediening, Pauliniese gemeentes, apostelskap, charisma, geestelike toerusting, amp, besondere diens, evangelie, mag/interaksie model, French and Raven, sosio-historiese benaderings.

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

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### 1.1 THE TOPIC OF LEADERSHIP

Leadership is a popular topic in today's society; it is recognized as an important aspect of church life; and in one form or another it has always been of interest to Pauline scholars. There is a recognition in all these spheres that leadership is a vital aspect of group life. Thus, an understanding of the way leadership functioned in the Pauline churches is essential for a proper appreciation of the way the believers in these churches related to one another and to their wider society.

It is noteworthy that that the Greek terms which were commonly associated with authority and leadership positions (e.g. ἀρχών, ἡγούμενος) are seldom used to designate leadership functions in the New Testament (Clarke 2008:1-3; Du Plooy 2005:562). For this reason, the word group "ministry, minister [noun and verb]" (representing the Greek διάκονος, διακονέω) has been the historically-accepted ecclesiastical terminology for the broad phenomenon of church leadership. This observation notwithstanding, the terminology of leadership has become more common in recent years, even in Biblical scholarship.<sup>1</sup>

While it is important not to allow the term "leadership" and its associated concepts to prejudge a study of New Testament phenomena, the idea of leadership is sufficiently broad to provide a useful conceptual framework for studying a whole range of leadership/ministry phenomena in the early Pauline churches. I have therefore included it in the title of this study to show that my focus is on those activities and actions by which Paul and other members of these churches sought to guide their fellow-believers towards the accomplishment of their common objectives.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Note, e.g. the titles of studies by Clarke (2000; 2008) and Barentsen (2011).

<sup>2</sup> A more rigorous definition of leadership is provided in chapter 6 below.

## 1.1 STATE OF RESEARCH

Until about 1980 discussions regarding leadership in the Pauline churches were dominated by the view that official leadership positions and an organized church structure were developments that post-dated Paul himself. This view held that the early Pauline communities were characterized by a “charismatic ministry”.<sup>3</sup> As Burtchaell (1992:180-190) has pointed out, conclusions of historical research were, for centuries, dominated and even determined by prior commitments to ecclesiastical polity and structures, with the result that genuine historical insight into the actual practice of the New Testament churches was limited.

However, the work of the last three decades has so challenged this consensus that Marshall (2006:176) goes as far as to say, “It has become increasingly clear that the distinction sometimes drawn between an earlier charismatic ministry and a later institutional system of ‘office’ is inappropriate and should be dropped from the discussion.” The earlier consensus was challenged from the theological side by, e.g. Fung (1980), but the main impetus for the rejection of the old paradigm has come from scholars working with the socio-historical and social-scientific approaches to the New Testament. Within this perspective, the new understanding of leadership in the Pauline churches has largely been brought about by the view that they were made up of house churches led by household heads.<sup>4</sup> This view is closely woven with the work of Theissen (1999:69-119), Meeks (1982; 2003:51-73) and others who have emphasized the presence of “high status” individuals in the Pauline churches. The often-quoted assertion of Holmberg (1978:205) to the effect that earlier scholars were guilty of the so-called “fallacy of idealism”<sup>5</sup> has also been influential in moving scholarship away from the earlier consensus. Scholarship has thus moved from a perspective dominated by a particular theological interpretation of leadership in the New Testament churches — an interpretation which emphasized “charismatic ministry” over against order and organization — to a perspective which is largely governed by sociological and socio-historical interpretations.<sup>6</sup>

In spite of the widespread acceptance of the new understanding of leadership in the New Testament — and especially in the Pauline churches — there are a number of generally accepted results which need to be re-examined, and a number of further problems that need to be solved. In the first place, the “new consensus” regarding the social status of many Christians has been seriously questioned by Meggitt (1998) and Friesen (2004), who doubt the possibility of making reliable assertions about social status and argue that the Christians in the Pauline churches were much poorer than the scholarship of the new consensus generally believes. Meggitt’s work in particular has been severely

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<sup>3</sup> Burtchaell (1992:1-179) gives a lengthy and comprehensive survey of the development of this consensus from the time of the Reformation to the late twentieth century. Campbell (2004:1-19) surveys the development of the consensus from Rudolf Sohm to the time of his own writing (Sohm’s influential work, *Kirchenrecht*, was published in 1892). Exponents of the “charismatic ministry” view include Schweizer (1963), Käsemann (1964:63-94) and Von Campenhausen (1969).

<sup>4</sup> Significant works to be noted here are Campbell (2004) and Gehring (2004). Campbell (2004:117-121) accepted the conclusions of scholars who had written on the house churches and used these as a basis for his own proposals regarding eldership in the Pauline churches. Gehring’s work comprehensively surveys the research on house churches up to the time his own book was written and re-examines many of the issues in the light of fresh studies of the New Testament documents. It is common for more recent works to accept the conclusions of earlier scholars regarding the household structure of the church and its dominance of leadership patterns (e.g. Clarke 2008; Barentsen 2011).

<sup>5</sup> Holmberg used the term “fallacy of idealism” to refer to a view which assumed that the theological ideas expressed by Paul were the determining factors in the actual historical reality of the churches.

<sup>6</sup> In addition to the literature already quoted, see, e.g., White (1992:931-934), Reumann (1993:86-87), and Banks (1994).

criticized,<sup>7</sup> but he and Friesen are quite correct in pointing out the vagueness that attends much of the discussion regarding social status in the Pauline churches. Secondly, the “house church” interpretation of the Pauline churches, while it has advanced our historical understanding considerably, also embodies certain assumptions that have not been examined with sufficient rigour. One of the most abiding of these is Filson’s (1939:110) assertion that the house churches rather than the local church of the city were the basic unit. Filson made his assertion as a possible explanation of the party strife in Corinth, but he spent little more than half a page stating and defending it.<sup>8</sup> Subsequent scholarship has also tended to assume rather than argue for this particular point of view,<sup>9</sup> which clearly has significant implications for our understanding of leadership in the churches. It is therefore necessary to re-examine:

1. the social status of Christians in the Pauline churches and the bearing which social status has on leadership;
2. the nature of the house church, its relation to the household, to the local church, and to the practice of leadership in the Pauline churches.

Another issue that must be noted is the relationship of theology to interpretations of leadership in the Pauline churches. Although it need not be the case, there has been a tendency among scholars who emphasize sociological and socio-historical interpretations of the New Testament communities to move away from theological interpretations, and this includes constructions of leadership in the Pauline churches. Meeks (2003), for example, while not explicitly rejecting theological interpretations seeks to understand the Christian communities of the New Testament in terms of sociological factors like “status inconsistency”. Campbell (2004) and Gehring (2004) explain the emergence of leadership in terms of household structures and patronage.

Yet theology was a central feature of Paul’s self-understanding and of the vision by which he sought to order the churches which he gathered. Though leadership can be considered as a phenomenon in its own right, an adequate historical understanding of leadership in any community must reckon with the aims and self-understanding of that community. Barentsen (2011:30-31) has therefore recognized the need to integrate sociological and ideological/theological factors in an account of leadership in the Pauline churches, and seeks to do so using the Social Identity Model of Leadership. However, there is a need for more research which relates Paul’s theology to the practice of leadership in the Pauline churches, and which seeks to understand that leadership theologically. Even Clarke’s (2008) study, which is entitled “A Pauline theology of church leadership”, does not really address the *theological* aspects of Pauline leadership: i.e. how leadership in the Pauline churches should be understood in relation to God and his dealings with his people; how this leadership relates to Paul’s understanding of the gospel and the meaning of living as a follower of Jesus — concerns which are intensely theological.

## 1.2 SCOPE OF STUDY

The scope of this study will be restricted to the period reflected in 1 & 2 Thessalonians, Galatians, 1 & 2 Corinthians, and Romans, which I will call Paul’s Early Letters. The rationale for this restriction is that these letters represent a distinct and coherent phase in Paul’s ministry during which he was

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<sup>7</sup> Martin (2001) is particularly harsh in his criticism of Meggitt. Theissen (2001) offers a much more positive assessment although he tends to stand by the conclusions of the new consensus.

<sup>8</sup> It should be borne in mind that Filson’s article was intended to be a stimulus for more substantial research into the subject of the house churches. It did not, itself, present the findings of detailed research.

<sup>9</sup> See, e.g. Branick (1989) and Jewett (1993:23-26).

active in planting and establishing churches in the Aegean basin. Both the view that Paul's churches were characterized by "charismatic ministry" rather than formal office, and the view that social status was the basis for leadership, focus largely on these letters and this period in Paul's ministry. Because this was a developmental phase in Paul's ministry, the social and organizational structures of the churches were in the process of becoming established. Hence this phase provides a meaningful focus for investigating the emergence of leadership in the Pauline churches.

A complete diachronic and synchronic study of leadership in the Pauline churches and letters would certainly require the researcher to examine the later Pauline letters (i.e. the Prison and Pastoral Epistles). Such an enquiry would, no doubt, shed some light on the situation in the earlier period as well, and it is certainly necessary for a comprehensive revelation-historical perspective on the way leadership developed in the New Testament period. However, the later letters do represent a new historical phase in Paul's ministry, where he was less directly involved in the life of the churches (cf. Du Plooy 2005:563); they also entail a number of new scholarly issues including the authorship and dating of the letters. Therefore, if one is to give sufficient attention to the way leadership developed historically it can be helpful to focus on one phase at a time.

### 1.3 AIM AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

The aim of this study is to develop an understanding of the leadership *processes* and *dynamics* that were operative in the Pauline churches during their early phase of development. It is the kind of understanding which Ramsay MacMullen (1974:121-122) described (with reference to Julius Caesar) as follows:

On the threshold of our period and on the threshold of a civil war, a famous moment presents itself to historians. Caesar stirs his horse to a trot and splashes across the river Rubicon. It marks the boundaries of his province. To cross it in arms is treason. As he considers his decision, he passes in mental review a variety of social blocs and classes, each one with its own sympathies and antipathies: the resentment of the unenfranchised in the north of the peninsula, the loyalty of his legions, the ambitions of the business interests and small-town aristocracy. From among all these forces, if he leads, what follows? It is the following as much as his leading that makes the moment.

He must know and reflect on the train of relationships that transmits his will to the masses, from men of relatively or extremely educated, rich, and honored background in his immediate retinue to the peasant lad who must be induced to sign up under the banners of revolution — or at least induced *not* to join Pompey and the senate. He must sense the reality behind a whole dictionary of special terms — clientage, *vicinitas*, *ordo*, *gens* and *patria potestas*, *amicitia*, *fides*, *gratia* — in which contemporaries conceived what we would call Roman social relations. It is the study of the synapses that shows how waves of energy traveled through the body politic and made it move to war or peace. Without such study we know only Caesar and his horse.

As was true for the Roman body politic, the Pauline churches experienced various dynamics — social and spiritual — that influenced their members individually and corporately. Hence, although the study of leadership in the New Testament has often tended to focus on more static aspects of leadership like structure and office, it is important to move beyond those aspects and to give an account of the leadership processes and dynamics in the Pauline churches. To adapt MacMullen's description, the present study seeks to understand *how waves of energy travelled through the body ecclesiastic, moving it to growth and sanctification*. This understanding must embrace both social and theological aspects of leadership and group life.

To accomplish this aim, the following questions will be addressed:

1. Does the dominant socio-historical view of leadership in the early Pauline churches rest on a solid foundation?<sup>10</sup> Was leadership tied to social status and patronage?
2. How did Paul understand his own leadership task in relation to the churches which he gathered?
3. How did Paul understand the role of his coworkers (συνεργοί and related terms) and how did they share in his own work of preaching the gospel and leading other believers?
4. What was Paul's understanding of divine equipping and appointment as reflected in his Early Letters?
5. How did the early Pauline churches experience the leadership of Paul and his coworkers in practice? This includes the nature of leadership, influence and authority, and the question of appointment to leadership positions.

#### 1.4 CENTRAL THEORETICAL ARGUMENT

The central dynamic of leadership in the early Pauline churches was the power of God working through the gospel. Leaders in the churches, including Paul and his coworkers, ministered to their fellow-believers on the basis of the gospel, in dependence on the Holy Spirit, with the aim of guiding them to increasing sanctification and conformity with the image of Christ. Leadership in the early Pauline churches was both a theological and a social phenomenon.

#### 1.5 METHODOLOGY

This study has been done from within the Reformed tradition and more specifically the Reformed Baptist tradition. The basic convictions of the Reformed Baptist tradition are summarized in the so-called 1689 Confession, also known as the Second London Baptist Confession (see Waldron 1995).

The methodology used is grammatico-historical exegesis (Packer 1983; Fee & Stuart 2003), with special attention to both theology and socio-historical methods (Van Rensburg 2000). This methodology will be applied to the various research questions as follows:

1. *Question 1:* In critiquing the socio-historical view of leadership described in section 1.1 above, I make an extensive survey of the literature. My aim is to follow the arguments and the evidence on which they are based in order to determine whether the current consensus rests on a secure foundation. Recent socio-historical research is used to evaluate the consensus position.
2. *Questions 2-4:* To answer questions 2 to 4 above, I engage in exegesis of relevant passages in Paul's Early Letters. This exegesis seeks to be theologically aware since it is apparent that Paul's understanding of God governed his life and thought.
3. *Question 5:* This question requires a consideration of social issues as well as some theoretical reflection on the phenomenon of leadership. I therefore use insights from the social sciences (especially leadership theory and social psychology) to order the discussion.

#### 1.6 TRANSLATIONS AND TEXTS USED

Unless otherwise indicated, all Bible passages quoted in English are from the English Standard Version (ESV).

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<sup>10</sup> By "dominant socio-historical view of leadership" I refer specifically to the view described in section 1.1 above.

Unless otherwise indicated, all references to the Greek text of the New Testament are based on the fourth edition of the United Bible Societies' *Greek New Testament* (UBS<sup>4</sup>).

## 1.7 CHAPTER BREAKDOWN

The study is divided into the following chapters:

1. Introduction;
2. Critical review of a paradigm: wealth, social status, patronage and leadership;
3. Paul's understanding of his own ministry;
4. Paul's coworkers;
5. Divine equipping and appointment;
6. The experience of leadership in the early Pauline churches;
7. Conclusion.

## CHAPTER 2

### CRITICAL REVIEW OF A PARADIGM: WEALTH, SOCIAL STATUS, PATRONAGE, AND LEADERSHIP

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#### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

The past fifty years of New Testament scholarship have witnessed intensive research into the social aspects of the first-century Christian communities.<sup>1</sup> One of the conclusions of this research has been that the early Christians were not, as earlier believed, dominated by the lower classes.<sup>2</sup> Scholars vary in the degree to which they attribute higher socio-economic status to the early believers, but there is a large degree of consensus (sometimes referred to as the "new consensus") that the New Testament

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<sup>1</sup> See, e.g. Still & Horrell (2009) for a review of work in this field since the publication of Meeks's (2003[1983]) seminal work.

<sup>2</sup> It will be seen in this chapter that the application of the concept of "class" to the New Testament world is frequently anachronistic.

churches included people of (relatively) high wealth and social status, and that these people had a dominant influence in the churches.<sup>3</sup>

From about 1980 onwards, the research on wealth and social status has been combined with an investigation into the New Testament “house churches”. This has led to a fairly consistent picture of the Pauline communities in the various centres of the Roman Empire. The general view is that the church in each locality was composed of a number of house churches, each headed by a (more or less) wealthy patron, who exercised leadership in the (house) church on the basis of his or her wealth, social status, and consequent ability to provide for the needs of the Christian community.<sup>4,5</sup>

This chapter will, firstly, review the scholarship that has led to this picture of leadership in the Pauline communities. Consideration will be given to:

1. the economic and social status of the Pauline communities;
2. research on the house church;
3. application of socio-historical research<sup>6</sup> to the question of leadership in the Pauline communities.

It will be seen that this research has led to something of a paradigm for understanding leadership in the Pauline churches. This paradigm has been and remains prominent in New Testament studies, and will be referred to in this chapter by terms such as “the socio-historical paradigm of leadership” or “the dominant construction of leadership”.

Following the review, the paradigm will be critically evaluated. In particular, recent work on the economic and social status of the Pauline communities and on patronage will be brought to bear. The idea of the house church will also be examined. I conclude that the dominant paradigm is in need of modification or revision.

## 2.2 REVIEW OF RELEVANT RESEARCH

### 2.2.1 The economic and social status of the Pauline communities

#### 2.2.1.1 *The work of E.A. Judge*

In 1960, Judge (1960-1961:4) noted: “For many years now there has been going on a desultory argument over the social status of the first Christian communities. Do they represent a movement of the lower classes, or not?” Judge’s own work addressed this question, although in a pioneering

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<sup>3</sup> See section 2.2.1.3 below for further comments and references to works which identify this position as a “new consensus”.

<sup>4</sup> Detailed references will be given throughout this chapter.

<sup>5</sup> Although this understanding of leadership in the Pauline churches is widely accepted, it has not gone unquestioned. Horrell (1999:318) notes: “In the absence of substantive evidence it should not be assumed that all leading roles — co-workers, prophets, teachers, etc. — were filled only or even primarily by heads of household, although such persons were clearly sometimes in dominant positions.”

<sup>6</sup> In this chapter I use the term “socio-historical” to include a range of approaches to the social history of the New Testament. Whereas it is possible to speak theoretically about a pure socio-historical approach (which doesn’t make explicit use of any social-scientific theories) and a sociological or social-scientific approach (which uses social-scientific theories as its departure point and framework for analysis), in practice most scholars use an approach which is somewhere between these two poles (Garrett 1996:90; Van Rensburg 2000:569-571). Since most of the writers surveyed here are based more in a historiographical than a sociological or social-scientific approach (though their research is informed, to a greater or lesser extent, by such theories) it is appropriate to characterize their work as socio-historical.

and provocative, rather than an exhaustive and definitive way. Nevertheless, later scholars have accepted many of his conclusions, and it is therefore important to review his work.

Judge's (1960) essay entitled *The social pattern of the Christian groups in the first century* includes a chapter which sought to understand the "social constituency" of the Christian groups. In this chapter Judge (1960:51) noted that it was difficult to recover the social stratification of the Christian groups, not only because of the "difficulties of the Christian sources", but also because "the patterns of contemporary society in general need further clarification if the Christians are to be fitted into them." Judge (1960:52) notes — as obvious but pointless — that the Christian groups did not draw on the "upper orders of the Roman ranking system". He then proceeds to reason as follows:

1. The early followers of Jesus in Jerusalem, as described in the early chapters of Acts, included a foreign (Greek and Roman) component, who were "people of means". This is evidenced by the fact that they "ensured the solvency of the new community (Acts iv. 34-37)" (Judge 1960:53).
2. The Apostle Paul was "himself one of the distinguished circle of foreign Jews in Jerusalem". In addition to this, he enjoyed a high standing in the republican society of his homeland. He thus possessed an unusual set of social qualifications, which explains his "constant sensitivity to the humiliations he suffered from time to time" (Judge 1960:57-58).
3. Paul's sensitivity comes to the fore in his correspondence with the Corinthian believers, and his statement that not many of the Corinthians were wise, mighty or noble (1 Cor 1:26) implies (a) that there were at least some such people amongst the Corinthian believers; and (b) that "in their own opinion, and presumably also in that of their contemporaries, they were anything but a collection of unintelligent nonentities" (Judge 1960:59).
4. Judge (1960:60) then draws the following conclusion:
 

Far from being a socially depressed group, then, if the Corinthians are at all typical, the Christians were dominated by a socially pretentious section of the population of the big cities. Beyond that they seem to have drawn on a broad constituency, probably representing the household dependents of the leading members. The interests brought together in this way probably marked the Christians off from the other unofficial associations, which were generally socially and economically as homogeneous as possible. Certainly the phenomenon led to constant differences among the Christians themselves, and helps to explain the persistent stress on not using membership in an association of equals to justify breaking down the conventional hierarchy of the household (e.g. I Cor. vii. 20-24). *The interest of the owner and patron class is obvious in this. It was they who sponsored Christianity to their dependents* (emphasis added).<sup>7</sup>
5. The most underprivileged classes — i.e. the peasantry and persons in slavery on the land, as opposed to household dependants — were left largely untouched by Christianity. Hence, until the time of Pliny, "we may safely regard Christianity as a socially well backed movement of the great Hellenistic cities" (Judge 1960:60-61).

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<sup>7</sup> These last two sentences are significant for the way socio-historical research is applied to the question of leadership in the Pauline churches.

In addition to this article, Judge (1960-1961) published an article entitled “The early Christians as a scholastic community”.<sup>8</sup> This article also seeks to understand the social position of Paul and his communities; however, Judge’s (1960-1961:135) aim is not to determine the Christians’ social status as such, but to “open up in the most provocative way a case for regarding St. Paul, in his social position at any rate, *as a sophist*” (emphasis added). He states that his discussion by no means settles the question, and notes further that the contemporary view of the Pauline communities must have been “that of a school of disciples under the instruction of a rabbi, or a devout sect committed to the study and preservation of the law, or finally of a society formed to attend upon the teaching of a travelling preacher” (Judge 1960-1961:135-136). Some of the discussion in this article is important for subsequent scholarship on church leadership. The following points should be noted:

1. Judge (1960-1961:5-7) notes that modern theories of social class — whereby the focus of people’s identity and corporate action is to be found in that group which shares their own socio-economic status — are anachronistic as far as the Roman world is concerned. Rather, the social structure revolved around the institutions of *amicitia* (friendship) and *clientela* (clientship), the former between social equals and the latter between those of different status. Clientship, whereby the non-office holding classes were tied to one of the senatorial families created a bond between patron and client, and this was the only means of protection for the underprivileged (in contrast to the class identity and class action of many modern societies). As a result, the lines of loyalty ran vertically (within vertically organized social hierarchies) rather than horizontally (between members of the same “class”). Non-Roman communities were familiar with this system at least at the diplomatic level.
2. Judge (1960-1961:7-8) continues with the following line of reasoning:
 

The observation that many of the Christians were found in stations that would rank them today in the lower classes may be perfectly correct, but it would not allow us to say that they constituted a movement of the lower classes, unless we were satisfied that such classes existed at the time as recognized and self-conscious entities, and that they indulged in movements. Conversely, if it is true that ancient society was organized on a different basis, we must concentrate on seeing whether Christianity as a social phenomenon cannot also be successfully described in the same terms. If the argument outlined above is correct, we should have to say that *Christianity was a movement sponsored by local patrons to their social dependents* (emphasis added).
3. Philippi represented a turning point in the ministry of Paul. On his so-called first missionary journey, he and Barnabas had sought to appeal to the masses, and had found the Jewish leaders and upper classes acting against them (Acts 13-14). However, from the second missionary journey onwards, Paul laid claim to his privileges as a Roman citizen and began to enjoy the support of the wealthier and leading members of society. Thus Lydia, “a person of substance”, was converted and became a supporter of Paul, while it was “popular outcry” that led to his arrest (Acts 16:14-15,22; Judge 1960-1961:127-128).
4. From this point onwards Paul’s mission was sponsored and supported by people of status and means. After surveying Acts and the Pauline Letters for evidence of such support, Judge (1960-1961:128-130) concludes that up to forty people can be identified

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<sup>8</sup> The article was published in two parts.

who either did or would probably have sponsored Paul's activities. The references to "the church in so and so's house" indicate the importance of the patronal household to Paul. There is thus a "general impression that in the most distinguished period of his mission Paul depended heavily upon the hospitality and sponsorship of *a select circle of patrons*. They provided him with his platform" (Judge 1960-1961:131, emphasis added).

It is worth making a few comments on Judge's work.

1. As noted above, Judge's work was pioneering and suggestive. At the time that he wrote, he believed that the prevailing view of the Christian movement was that it was a "movement of the lower classes" (Judge 1960-1961:4). His own reflections on the primary sources, as an ancient historian, led him to consider the possibility that the Pauline communities included some people of means and that they were vertically organized (based on the principle of patronage). It would therefore be inappropriate to endow Judge's views with the status of a well-tested or well-established theory; they were intended to provoke fresh thinking and give new direction for future research.
2. One of the most important points that Judge makes is that the modern concept of class is misleading when applied to ancient society. In the light of this it is curious that Judge himself uses the term "class" so frequently in his analysis (e.g. "The interest of the patron class is obvious" — Judge 1960:60, emphasis added).
3. As is inevitable when a new line of research is being opened up, many of Judge's terms and concepts lack precise definition. For example, the idea of a "patron class" is applied to Paul's communities without clarifying what this class is or how they fitted into the broader society. Similarly, Judge speaks about certain people "sponsoring Christianity" to their dependents; it is not clear what this means.
4. Judge paints a clear picture with broad brush strokes. However, when the detail is examined it appears that there are parts of this picture that may not be supported by the evidence. For example, Mary, Tryphena, Tryphosa and Persis are described in Romans 16:6,12 as women who worked hard, or laboured (for Paul, or for the Roman Christians, or "in the Lord"). On the basis of 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13, Judge (1960-1961:129) assumes that this activity is equivalent to being in charge, and that the named women were among the Christian movement's sponsors — an assumption that needs to be clarified and tested.
5. The crucial step in Judge's argument is his transferral of the principle of patronage — as a practice whereby the "non-office holding classes" were tied to senatorial families in Rome — to the Pauline communities. This is a big leap! Judge (1960:52; 1960-1961:7) himself observed that the Christians were not drawn from the upper orders of the Roman ranking system and raised the question of whether the principle of patronage could be applied in a non-Roman context. His working hypothesis is that it can, and he gives a plausible account of the Pauline communities on this basis. However, the hypothesis does need to be tested: the social location of the Pauline communities needs to be described more carefully, and it must be ascertained, on the basis of evidence emanating from their own circles, whether they applied patronage at all, or with some modifications due to their own ideology and belief system.

### 2.2.1.2 G. Theissen's "Social stratification in the Corinthian community"

G. Theissen's (1999[1982]:69-119) essay entitled "Social stratification in the Corinthian community" is another contribution that has proved influential in subsequent research.<sup>9</sup> In this article, Theissen seeks to evaluate the evidence for individuals of elevated social status within the Corinthian church. He identifies four criteria which may serve as indicators of such status, namely statements about holding office; statements about houses; statements about assistance rendered to the congregation; and statements about travel (Theissen 1999[1982]:73).

**With regard to office-holding**, Theissen (1999[1982]:73-74) notes that Crispus (Acts 18:8) is identified as the synagogue ruler in Corinth. He then adduces evidence from a number of inscriptions to show that synagogue rulers "had to assume responsibility for the synagogue building", and that they were known to undertake repairs using their own funds. One inscription indicates that a certain Theodotus built the synagogue and associated lodging in Jerusalem (Theissen 1999[1982]:74).

Also on the subject of office-holding, Theissen (1999[1982]:75-83) discusses at length Paul's reference to Erastus, described as οἰκονόμος τῆς πόλεως in Romans 16:23. Although the title as given in Romans is ambiguous with regard to status, the discovery in Corinth of an inscription which mentions the name Erastus raises the possibility that the Erastus of Romans 16:23 was, in fact, an aedile in Corinth.<sup>10</sup> Since the city had two aediles (elected annually), who, with the duovirs, constituted the four most senior office-bearers in the city, identifying the Christian Erastus with the Erastus of the inscription would mean that he had exceptionally high status. Theissen concludes that the Greek title οἰκονόμος τῆς πόλεως should not be identified with the Latin aedile, but suggests that it may have been the Greek equivalent of a lesser office (e.g. quaestor), and that it could have been a stage in Erastus' *cursus honorum* which ultimately led to his being elected as aedile. Although his detailed analysis only indicates this as a possibility, Theissen's subsequent discussion seems to assume that it was in fact the case:

"We can assume that Erastus belonged to the οὐ πολλοὶ δυνατοί. To have been chosen aedile he must have been a full citizen — and in a Roman colony that would mean Roman citizenship. His spending for the public indicates that he could claim a certain amount of private wealth" (Theissen 1999[1982]:83).<sup>11</sup>

<sup>9</sup> This essay was first published in German in 1975, and in English in 1982. Although the article is now relatively old, it is important to survey it, both because of its influence on subsequent scholarship and because its arguments and conclusions are fairly typical of the socio-historical construction of church leadership.

<sup>10</sup> The inscription reads [*praenomen nomen*] *Erastus pro aedilit[at]e s(ua) p(ecunia) stravit* ("Erastus laid [the pavement] at his own expense in return for his aedileship") (Theissen 1999[1982]:80, inscription originally published in Kent 1966:99).

<sup>11</sup> It is noteworthy that the careful weighing of the evidence, which leads only to a possible identification of the two Erasti, gives way to an acceptance of that identification in subsequent discussion. Further conclusions about the social level of the Pauline communities are then based on this identification. Scholars who have used Theissen's work on Erastus have also been willing to accept this identification somewhat uncritically. E.g. Meeks (2003[1983]:59) states, with regard to Theissen's proposal, that "[t]his conclusion, though far from certain, is persuasive." It may well be asked how an argument can be persuasive when its conclusion is far from certain! It is interesting that Theissen (2001:78-79), in a later article, states: "We will never be able to state with absolute certainty whether the much debated aedile Erastus on a Corinthian inscription is identical with Erastus . . . who is named in Rom. 16.23, or whether we can definitely exclude

Theissen's **second criterion of elevated social status in the Corinthian church is references to "houses" or households.** After noting that Crispus (Acts 18:8) and Stephanas (1 Cor 1:16) were baptized along with their "houses", Theissen (1999[1982]:83-87) seeks to show that a "house" must have included slaves. Theissen is apparently presuming that ownership of slaves is an indication of wealth. The conclusion is that

Reference to someone's house is hardly a sure criterion for that person's high social status; but it is a probable one, particularly if other criteria point in the same direction (Theissen 1999[1982]:87).

**References to services rendered constitute the third criterion of elevated social status.** Theissen (1999[1982]:87) notes that the word group διακονεῖν, διάκονος, διακονία ("to serve", "servant", "service") is used in connection with Stephanas (1 Cor 16:15) and with Phoebe (Rom 16:1). He notes that similar terms are used in connection with the collection for the poor in Jerusalem (2 Cor 8:4; 9:1,12), and infers that the help provided by Stephanas to the congregation must also have been of a material nature. With regard to Phoebe, Theissen (1999[1982]:88) argues that the help which Paul asks the Roman Christians to provide for her in return for her help for Paul was probably material (since *πρῶγμα*, used in Rom 16:2, frequently refers to business "in the economic sense of that word"); hence "her services too consisted of 'earthly' things". Theissen (1999[1982]:88) does, however, urge care with these arguments, "since even slaves can be called 'servers'".

Another form of service noted by Theissen (1999[1982]:89-91) is the provision of hospitality by Gaius, Aquila and Prisca (Priscilla), and Titius Justus. Gaius appears to be a person of high social status due to his hosting of the whole Corinthian congregation (Rom 16:23),<sup>12</sup> and due to the fact that other people frequent his house, including Tertius (who wrote down the Letter to the Romans) and apparently also Erastus (Theissen 1999[1982]:89). Aquila and Prisca provided hospitality to both Paul and Apollos in Corinth, and to a "house-congregation" in Ephesus (Theissen 1999[1982]:89-90). Theissen (1999[1982]:90) is non-committal about their wealth/social status, although he does suggest that they were "scarcely insolvent". As for Titius Justus, "[w]e have no information about [his] social status . . . [i]t can only be assumed that it was not inferior to that of Aquila and Priscilla, as Paul would hardly have made claims on anyone who would have found it a greater burden than they had" (Theissen 1999[1982]:90-91).

Theissen's (1999[1982]:91) conclusion regarding "services" is as follows:

Like houses, these services rendered to the mission and to the congregation constitute no absolutely certain criterion. The willingness of the new congregations to make sacrifices should not be underestimated. Nevertheless, such services are a good criterion if, independently of the willingness to make sacrifices, they entail certain presuppositions (as in the case of Gaius) or if they can be supplemented by further criteria. For example, Phoebe, Aquila and Priscilla, along with Stephanas, make journeys, and Stephanas managed a "house."

This quote introduces Theissen's **fourth criterion of high social status: references to travel.** Theissen (1999[1982]:91) notes that the New Testament gives evidence of several Corinthians making journeys, mainly between Corinth and Ephesus. They are: Aquila and Prisca (Rom 16:3; 1 Cor 16:19; Acts 18:18-19); Phoebe (Rom 16:1-2); Erastus (Acts 19:22); Stephanas with Achaicus and Fortunatus (1 Cor 16:15-18); Chloe's people (1 Cor 1:11); and possibly Sosthenes (1 Cor 1:1). Theissen (1999[1982]:91) does

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this possibility." Theissen (2001:79-80) also suggests in that article that Erastus may not have been a Christian at all.

<sup>12</sup> Theissen (1999[1982]:89) reasons that the Corinthian congregation was large, since the Lord refers to it as a *λαὸς πολὺς* according to Acts 18:10.

acknowledge that these references to travel are not a certain indicator of high social status, since dependent workers, sailors, companions of the wealthy, and others can travel; “we must rely on supplemental information and the coalescence of several criteria”. However, “such criteria are always given . . . except in the case of Chloe’s people” (Theissen 1999[1982]:91). Theissen (1999[1982]:92) goes on to state: “Even if journeys as such are no certain criterion, their frequency is worth noting. Of seventeen persons (or circles of people) named, we find nine engaged in travel. That cannot be an accident.”

Theissen summarizes these investigations as follows:

1. There are, at a maximum, sixteen Corinthian Christians known to us by name, excluding “Chloe’s people”.
2. Of these seventeen (including Chloe’s people as a group), nine belong to the upper classes according to the four criteria discussed.
3. In the case of Aquila, Prisca and Stephanas, three criteria apply: houses, services rendered and travel.
4. In four cases, two criteria apply: offices and travel for Erastus and Sosthenes; office and “house” for Crispus; services rendered and travel for Phoebe.
5. In two cases only one criterion applies: Gaius and Titius Justus both rendered services.
6. Of these named Corinthians, only the small group named “Chloe’s people” are probably of inferior social status.
7. The status of Achaicus, Fortunatus, Tertius, Jason, Lucius and Sosipater is uncertain, and the last two may not have belonged to the Corinthian community.

And so Theissen (1999[1982]:95) concludes: “The result is clear. The great majority of the Corinthians known to us by name probably enjoyed high social status.”

Finally, it is important to note that Theissen provides something of a sociological interpretation of the conclusions he has reached. Noting that the Pauline communities included people from different social strata, he theorizes that they developed an ethos of “Christian love-patriarchalism”:

This love-patriarchalism takes social differences for granted, but ameliorates them through an obligation of respect and love, an obligation imposed upon those who are socially stronger. From the weaker are required subordination, fidelity, and esteem. . . . with [this ethos] the great part of Hellenistic primitive Christianity mastered the task of shaping social relations within a community which, on the one hand, demanded of its members a high degree of solidarity and brotherliness and, on the other, encompassed various social strata. . . . *Members of the upper classes could find a fertile field of activity, so that ancient Christianity never lacked for distinguished leadership figures* — beginning with Paul. But the lower strata were also at home here. They found a fundamental equality of status before God, solidarity and help in the concrete problems of life, not least from those Christians who enjoyed a higher station in life (Theissen 1999[1982]:107-108, emphasis added).

Theissen has thus presented a picture of Pauline communities as groups which included people of both higher and lower social status. The status differences were not ignored or obliterated, but they were ameliorated: those of lower status were expected to show “subordination, fidelity and esteem” to their social superiors, while the latter were to provide help in the “concrete problems of life”. Clearly, Theissen believes that the leadership of the communities came from the upper classes. It will be seen that this view is echoed time and again by later scholarship.

I will provide a fuller evaluation of the perspective represented by this publication later in the chapter (section 2.3.1), but it is appropriate to make a few comments at this point.

1. This contribution from Theissen is one of the earlier, seminal publications in the recent socio-historical study of the New Testament. It is to be expected, therefore, that it would lack the sophistication and precision that are more typical of a field that has been under investigation for a longer period of time and has had the opportunity to mature.
2. Nevertheless, this article advanced the study of the Pauline Christians' social location in a significant way. By identifying criteria that might serve as objective indicators for high social status, Theissen pointed the way to a reliable methodology for assessing the Pauline communities' social location. His discussion on the social location of synagogue rulers is a good example of how this method can yield positive results.<sup>13</sup>
3. One of the weaknesses of Theissen's work is that he fails to distinguish between wealth and social status. Meeks (2003[1983]:51-73) was much more careful to point out that social status has many dimensions of which wealth is only one. More recent work in the field has given more attention to this distinction.<sup>14</sup>
4. Another way in which Theissen's analysis needs more depth is in recognizing and identifying a range of economic and social statuses. He does at times speak about "various strata",<sup>15</sup> suggesting that such a range exists, but in general, and in his detailed analysis, he works only with the binary construct of wealthy/high status versus inferior status. It will be seen that the work of Friesen (2004) and Longenecker (2009a; 2009b) have provided a very helpful way of addressing this issue — at least as far as economic status is concerned — but their work has yet to make a significant impact on studies of leadership in the Pauline churches.
5. The most significant weakness of Theissen's essay is the way he draws conclusions from his historical investigations. His discussion shows much insight into many of the linguistic and historical details that are important for his study, and he is often careful to caution against inferring high status when the evidence is uncertain.<sup>16</sup> Yet, even when he has sounded the caution, he frequently goes on to assume high status anyway. This was seen in the case of Erastus,<sup>17</sup> and also in the case of travel as a status indicator. By the time Theissen has pieced all his uncertain conclusions together into a coherent picture of the Pauline communities, and has outlined his theory of love-patriarchalism, it is easy for the reader to forget about the uncertainties and to remember the overall picture as the reality.

### 2.2.1.3 Subsequent developments

As noted in the introduction to this chapter, the view that the early Pauline communities included a number of dominant high-status individuals developed into something of a consensus in New Testament scholarship.<sup>18</sup> Naturally there have been variations in the positions taken. Noteworthy

<sup>13</sup> See above for details.

<sup>14</sup> See, e.g. Friesen (2004); Longenecker (2009a); Longenecker (2009b).

<sup>15</sup> E.g. Theissen (1999[1982]:106).

<sup>16</sup> See above, *passim*.

<sup>17</sup> See note 011 above.

<sup>18</sup> See, e.g. Friesen (2004:324-326) for the characterization of this view as a "new consensus". Friesen observes that Meeks (2003[1983]:73) and Malherbe (1983:31) had already understood this to be the consensus view two decades earlier. Malherbe (1983:31) actually stated that "a new consensus may be emerging". Friesen

are those works which argue for the presence of members of the elite in the Pauline churches<sup>19</sup> — a position which goes a step further than Judge (1960:52), who stated that the Christian groups did not draw on the upper orders of the Roman ranking system. Nevertheless, it is fair to say that the pioneering work of Judge and Theissen set the tone and direction for much of the subsequent scholarship on the socio-economic status of the Pauline churches. It will be seen in sections 2.2.2 and 2.2.3 that the results of this work became accepted and foundational for a number of studies on the house churches and on leadership in the Pauline churches.

### 2.2.2 The Pauline house churches

The currently dominant view of leadership in the Pauline churches is usually coupled with an understanding of the Pauline churches which sees them as composed of a number of “house churches”. It is important, therefore, to review the development of this understanding of the house churches. Two authors will be considered here: Filson and Gehring, whose publications represent, respectively, the earliest and most recent work in the field over the last century.

#### 2.2.2.1 *Floyd V. Filson’s seminal article*

In 1939 Floyd V. Filson published an article in which he noted the importance of houses as a meeting place for the Christians of the early centuries AD. His contention in the article was that “the New Testament church would be better understood, if more attention were paid to the physical conditions under which the first Christians met and lived. In particular, the importance and function of the house churches should be carefully considered” (Filson 1939:105-106). After noting how the Book of Acts and archaeology both give evidence for the use of houses as Christian meeting places, Filson (1939:109) outlines “five ways in which a study of the house churches furthers understanding of the apostolic church”. These five ways are:

1. “The house church enabled the followers of Jesus to have a distinctively Christian worship and fellowship from the very first days of the apostolic age”(Filson 1939:109).
2. “The large part played by the house churches affords a partial explanation of the great attention paid to family life in the letters of Paul and in other Christian writings” (Filson 1939:109).
3. “The existence of several house churches in one city goes far to explain the tendency to party strife in the apostolic age” (Filson 1939:110). Under this heading Filson states that the house church, rather than the city church, was the basic unit of the church (cf. Gehring 2004:182).
4. “A study of the house church situation also throws light upon the social status of the early Christians”, since the need for a large enough house meant that there must have been “persons of some means” (Filson 1939:111).

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himself argues that the views of the so-called new consensus were held already by early scholars such as Deissmann (1957). Martin (2001:52-53) evidently agrees that such a consensus exists. Theissen (2001:66) disagrees with the idea of an “old consensus” or of a “new consensus”, stating that “[t]he latter was rather a renewed socio-historical interest with different results”. Nevertheless, the epithet “new consensus” is appropriate: (a) because of the consistently clear picture that is presented of the New Testament churches as communities which included people of high status who had a dominant influence on the churches (something that was not the case before the renewed socio-historical interest mentioned by Theissen); and (b) because of the widespread acceptance of this picture among New Testament scholars, albeit with variations.

<sup>19</sup> Scholars who have argued for an elite presence in the churches include Winter (1994) and Gill (1993; 1994).

5. “The development of church polity can never be understood without reference to the house churches. The host of such a group was almost inevitably a man of some education, with a fairly broad background and at least some administrative ability. . . . The house church was the training ground for the Christian leaders who were to build the church after the loss of ‘apostolic’ guidance, and everything in such a situation favored the emergence of the host as the most prominent and influential member of the group” (Filson 1939:111-112).

Filson’s article is short — only eight pages — and it constituted a call for in-depth research into the house churches. It contained a few valuable hypotheses rather than a thorough or detailed defence of any particular thesis.<sup>20</sup> Four decades passed before Filson’s call was heeded.

#### 2.2.2.2 Roger W. Gehring: *House church and mission*

From about 1980 onward a number of important studies on the New Testament house churches began to appear. Some of the earlier works were those of Banks (1994[1979]),<sup>21</sup> Elliott (1981), Klauck (1981) and Branick (1989).<sup>22</sup> Once this work had begun, the house church soon became one of the standard ways of understanding the Pauline communities.<sup>23</sup> Gehring’s (2004) work draws together and builds on much of what was written up to the time of its publication, and provides a helpful understanding of the state of research on the house church at the beginning of the twenty-first century.<sup>24</sup> Some of the salient features, especially those which are relevant to the current study on leadership, are outlined below.

Although Gehring’s work is dependent on much that has preceded him, he believes that “an extensive scholarly examination of the significance of the *oikos* for the formation and organization of the house church has yet to be done” (Gehring 2004:17). His aim therefore is to “examine to what degree the social life, the organizational and leadership structures, and the ecclesiological self-understanding of early Christians were patterned after the household model” (Gehring 2004:22).<sup>25</sup> Gehring doesn’t state explicitly what he means by “household model”, but it would appear that he has in mind a group which is presided over by the head of a household, and whose members either belong to or are closely associated with that household (cf. Gehring 2004:20; see also Branick 1989:22,26-27).

One of the important issues that needs to be addressed in relation to the house churches is the distinction between a purely architectural perspective and an ecclesiological perspective: it is one thing to observe that the early Christians met in homes — an almost self-evident fact — but another to identify “house churches” and then to understand the religious and social life of those house

<sup>20</sup> Chapple (1984:228) comments that “There is much that is speculative in [Filson’s discussion of house church leaders], as Filson makes little attempt to ground his conclusions in exegesis, but relies instead on the general plausibility of the inferences he draws from some very general historical observations.”

<sup>21</sup> The original edition was published in 1979.

<sup>22</sup> Gehring (2004:5-16) reviews most of these, as well as some other works.

<sup>23</sup> See Gehring (2004:16) for a list of monographs, articles and commentaries in which the house church is significant.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Campbell (2007:667,671): “Building on the extensive work done in this area by many scholars, especially in the last twenty-five years, Gehring sets out to provide the most comprehensive review yet of the evidence for household churches. . . . there is nothing very new here. It is a definitive statement of what has become a consensus view”. The recent work of Barentsen (2011:23) accepts Gehring’s conclusions.

<sup>25</sup> A comparison of these two statements, along with an examination of Gehring’s overall approach, leads to the conclusion that he is thinking specifically of the “house church” when he speaks of the “organizational and leadership structures, and the ecclesiological self-understanding of early Christians”.

churches. In this regard Gehring (2004:26) observes that “[o]ne problem with this issue is that as yet no clear *ecclesiological* definition has been formulated on what the term ‘house church’ means” (original emphasis). In order to advance the discussion Gehring then proposes a working definition of the house church, which, he believes, would command general agreement. This definition consists of the following elements:

- (a) A group exists that has developed its own religious life, including regular gatherings for worship.
- (b) The content of these regular gatherings for worship includes evangelistic and instructional proclamation, the celebration of baptism and communion, prayer, and fellowship.
- (c) Elements such as (unclearly defined) organizational structures can be considered further indications of a house church in the full sense. The more these elements are evident in the gatherings of a certain group, the more certain we can be that we are dealing with a house church (Gehring 2004:27).

Gehring (2004:27) also notes the following distinction between a house church and a local church:

A *house church* is a group of Christians that meets in a private home. A *local church* consists of all the Christians that gather at a geographically definable location (e.g., town or city). The terms “local church” and “house church” refer to the same group only if there is just one single house church gathering at that specific location.<sup>26</sup>

In chapter 2 of *House church and mission*, Gehring examines the use of houses for missional outreach in the ministry of Jesus and his disciples. Through a study of the gospels he observes that Jesus tended to establish a base in a household where his message had been accepted, and to work from that household base to reach out to the town and the surrounding region (Gehring 2004:28-48). This is seen for example in his use of Peter’s house in Capernaum and of Martha’s house in Bethany (Gehring 2004:35-44). This pattern was continued in the mission of the disciples, and is reflected in the mission discourse of Matthew 10:9-11 and Luke 10:4-8. The mission of Jesus thus depended on two distinct forms of discipleship: itinerant preachers who were responsible for proclaiming the kingdom, and sedentary disciples who enabled them to do their work by providing them with room and board (Gehring 2004:48-61).

In chapter 3, Gehring explores the use of houses in the primitive Jerusalem church, in Judea and Samaria, and in Antioch of Syria. Noting that houses feature quite prominently in the life of the Jerusalem church (e.g. Acts 1:12-14; 12:10b-17; 5:42), he asks whether the houses referred to in these passages represent house churches. By examining the kind of activities that are recorded for the houses, and reasoning about what other activities might have taken place in them, Gehring (2004:62-80) concludes that the elements of early Christian worship — prayer, breaking of bread, preaching and teaching — were observed in the houses and that they were therefore *house churches* in the full sense (based on the definition quoted above).<sup>27</sup> Gehring (2004:105-109) also notes that the house-to-house and village-to-village pattern established in the ministry of Jesus was used by Peter in Joppa (Acts 9:43); the pattern was probably also used by Peter and John in Samaria (Acts 8:25). He concludes, further, that there were multiple house churches in Antioch of Syria, a conclusion based

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<sup>26</sup> It may be observed that this definition carries an inherent ambiguity: the Christians gathering at a “geographically definable location” would also have met in a private home (as the Corinthian church evidently met in Gaius’ house — Rom 16:23). This ambiguity has at times confused the discussion.

<sup>27</sup> It is interesting to observe that, in two instances (the upper room of Acts 1 and Mary’s house in Acts 12), Gehring (2004:66,74) refers to the architectural structure as the house church, while in another instance he refers to the “house groups” as house churches (Gehring 2004:80). This seems to be a symptom of the lack of clarity regarding the ecclesiological (rather than the architectural) nature of the house churches.

on the city-wide organization of the church reflected in Acts 13:1,<sup>28</sup> and on the assumption that the Jewish-Gentile meals referred to in Galatians 2:12 must have taken place in separate house churches (Gehring 2004:109-113).

An important part of Gehring's discussion in this chapter concerns the leadership of the house churches, especially in Jerusalem. This discussion relates to his later discussion on the leadership structures in the Pauline churches and is therefore important for the present study. Gehring notes that the apostle Peter appears as the leader of the Jerusalem church in the early chapters of Acts. As he puts it, "Peter was simultaneously the head of the entire Jerusalem church and leader of the house church in the upper room" (Gehring 2004:96). It will be seen in the discussion below (section 2.2.3) that the socio-historical model of leadership regards the household structures as determinative for leadership structures in the church. In the light of this it is significant that Gehring (2004:96) makes the following comment on Peter's leadership:

At any rate, Peter was certainly not a typical housefather figure in the sense required by our *oikos* model. It is clear that this house church does not fit neatly into the *oikos* scheme, whereby the house owner is also patron and/or leader of the house church. To some extent the concept of the Twelve collides with the *oikos* structure here.

This quote shows that Gehring is willing to question whether the *oikos* model really explains the New Testament house churches. Importantly, he does distinguish at this point between the implications of the model and the evidence of the New Testament itself, but as he proceeds the model gradually begins to dominate over the evidence. He goes on to state:

An interesting observation is that the householder of the house containing the upper room is not once mentioned by name. We can assume that someone was its owner (Joseph of Arimathea?) and made it available to the congregation as a meeting place, but we do not know whether this person had a leading role, if any, in this house church. *We can assume* on the basis of the *oikos* model that this person did have an important function, even if it was merely the role of a patron to the congregation meeting in his or her house. *Here again the texts are silent* (Gehring 2004:96, emphasis added).

The force of the model is again apparent in Gehring's (2004:99) discussion of the house of Mary (Acts 12:12-14); he states: "[w]e can . . . assume that [Mary] also played an important role with a possible leadership function in the group that met in her house." The statements quoted above illustrate an important aspect of Gehring's discussion. On the one hand he seems to find the so-called *oikos* model persuasive, and wishes to *assume* certain things about leadership on the basis of it. On the other hand, he repeatedly observes that the texts seem to give no evidence for these assumptions.<sup>29</sup> In spite of this recognition, Gehring moves increasingly towards an acceptance of this model as the explanation for leadership in the churches of Acts. In concluding the chapter he states:

There seems to be some indication that house churches already played a significant role in the development of leadership even in the primitive church in Jerusalem. The homeowners, as the heads of the household and hosts of the house church, may well have had more authority and

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<sup>28</sup> Gehring (2004:111) states that the "mention of these men at least implies that the church had grown beyond the initial phase of development, where the congregation consisted of merely one house church or perhaps only a few".

<sup>29</sup> Another instance of this comes after a consideration of Campbell's (2004[1994]:20-96,151-163) thesis "that the first Christians met in private homes and that therefore we can assume leaders automatically emerged from the structure of the ancient *oikos* for these house churches" (Gehring 2004:104). Gehring (2004:104) notes that this thesis "remains a conjecture".

influence, because of their social position, in the group that met in their house. After all, the community met in *their* home, which was more than [sic] just a building. They met in the social context of the *oikos*, that is, the extended family with its built-in authority structures. We can assume that some of the hosts became the leaders of the church that met in their home (Gehring 2004:117).

The usual caution about the lack of evidence is now much weaker: Gehring (2004:117) ends the paragraph from which the above quote is taken by stating, “Here again, however, the evidence is *not totally conclusive*” (emphasis added).<sup>30</sup>

There is one more aspect of this chapter of Gehring’s book that must be noted, namely the relationship between the use of houses in Jerusalem and that in the Pauline churches. Gehring (2004:114) notes that there were similarities between the house-to-house regional approach of Jesus and the practice of the Pauline mission. He believes that these are best explained by assuming some kind of connecting link by which the tradition of Jesus’ mission discourse was passed on to Paul. Such a link could well have come through the Hellenists who are prominent in Acts 6. They could well have been one of the key agencies by which this and other traditions were passed on from Jesus via Jerusalem and Antioch to Paul (Gehring 2004:114).<sup>31</sup> The link between the Pauline practice and that of Jerusalem may perhaps be confirmed by the linguistic connection between the Pauline phrase ἡ κατ’ οἶκον ἐκκλησία (Rom 16:5; 1 Cor 16:19; Col 4:15; Phm 2) and the phrase κατ’ οἶκον (κατ’ οἴκουσ in the plural), which occurs in Acts 2:46; 5:42; 8:3; 20:20 (Button & Van Rensburg 2003:8-9).

In chapter 4 of *House church and mission* Gehring discusses the use of houses in Pauline missional outreach. He opens the chapter by setting the direction for his investigation: “That houses played a decisive role in the Pauline mission is to be expected . . . Can this be historically demonstrated for Pauline congregations?” (Gehring 2004:119).

Gehring begins his discussion by considering some passages in the Pauline Letters and in Acts which relate to the use of houses in the Pauline mission. He notes that the Pauline Letters contain the four New Testament instances of the house church formula, ἡ κατ’ οἶκον ἐκκλησία, and concludes that, since three of these occur in the undisputed Pauline letters, “[w]e can thus readily assume the existence of these house churches without any further historical investigation” (Gehring 2004:120).<sup>32</sup> Gehring (2004:121-130) then discusses sections from the passages in Acts which recount Paul’s mission work in Philippi (Acts 16:14-15, 29-34), Thessalonica (Acts 17:1-9), and Corinth (Acts 18:1-4, 7-8). Each of these passages is evaluated in terms of its historical reliability, and each is found to be reliable. It can therefore be concluded that the Lukan account of Paul’s use of houses in these cities is trustworthy. In particular, Gehring concludes (a) that, according to Acts 16, the homes of Lydia and the jailer were important for the development of the church in Philippi, and that house churches were formed in their homes; (b) that the house of Jason in Thessalonica was important for the development of the church there, and that “nothing speaks against the assumption that . . . Jason . . . became the host and patron of a house church at that location” (Gehring 2004:127); and (c)

<sup>30</sup> Gehring seems to be making a circular argument, assuming what is to be proved: the stated aim of his study is *to determine to what degree* the life of the New Testament church was patterned after the *oikos* model (see above, p.13); but here he is making assumptions *on the basis of* the *oikos* model — against the evidence that he himself has adduced.

<sup>31</sup> Button & Van Rensburg (2003:23) make a similar suggestion regarding the link between Jerusalem and Paul as far as the practice of household gatherings is concerned.

<sup>32</sup> The house churches are understood as “Christian fellowship groups that were formed in and/or around an *oikos*” (Gehring 2004:119). Gehring has not, however, shown that these “house churches” answer to his own definition of a house church (see above, p.13).

that the houses of Aquila, Titius Justus and Crispus played an important role in Paul's missional outreach in Corinth.

Having considered the occurrences of the house church formula in the Pauline Letters, and the historical statements in Acts, Gehring (2004:130) proceeds to consider the "textual references to house churches" in the cities of Philippi, Thessalonica, Corinth, Cenchreae, Ephesus, Rome, Colossae, and Laodicea. Although this statement suggests that there are explicit references to house churches in the Pauline Letters, this is not the case (other than the four instances of the house church formula). Gehring therefore relies on a predetermined model of the house church and looks for points of correspondence between this model and the Pauline Letters. Where such points of correspondence are found, Gehring generally concludes that a house church could or did exist.

One of the most common criteria sought by Gehring is evidence of (relatively) high wealth and social status.<sup>33</sup> Thus Lydia is shown to be relatively wealthy; further, Gehring notes the use of μένω in Acts 16:15 and asserts that this word implies table fellowship in Luke's writings. Hence it is concluded that a house church was established in Lydia's house in Philippi (Gehring 2004:131-132). Similarly, a house church was formed in the house of the Philippian jailer who "[a]pparently . . . lived in a relatively large two-story house" (Gehring 2004:132). Jason of Thessalonica "must have been 'a man of means'" and was a patron of the church (Gehring 2004:133-134). Phoebe was an affluent patroness who "played the role of hostess to the local church in Cenchreae" and may have been the patroness of a house church in Cenchreae (Gehring 2004:142-143). With regard to Corinth, Gehring (2004:142) concludes that there was "a plurality of house churches, which gathered quite often in different homes, alongside the whole church at that location, which met less often but regularly."

Gehring believes that house churches definitely met in the homes of Gaius,<sup>34</sup> of Aquila and Prisca,<sup>35</sup> and of Titius Justus (if he is not to be identified with Gaius); the homes of Stephanas, Erastus and Crispus are possible venues for house churches. With regard to Rome, Gehring (2004:145-146) observes that Romans 16 refers to five different groups in the city. One of these, in the home of Prisca

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<sup>33</sup> The idea of wealthy home owners or renters is at the heart of the house church model. In this regard the house church model is very much dependent on the work of scholars like Judge and Theissen (discussed above), who have emphasized the presence of wealthy, high status believers in the Pauline churches. See further the discussion below.

<sup>34</sup> Gaius is said to be host of the *whole* church in Corinth (Rom 16:23), raising the question of whether his home should be regarded as the venue of a *house* church. In this regard, Gehring (2004:142, n.134) states that "[e]ven if the whole church at that location came together at Gaius's house, it still would have been a house church." This statement highlights the ambiguity created by Gehring's defining the house church in terms of architectural location (a private home), and the local church in terms of geographical location — criteria which are not mutually exclusive (see above, p.13 and n.26). According to Gehring (2004:27), "[t]he terms 'local church' and 'house church' refer to the same group only if there is just one single house church gathering at that specific location", which means that, according to his own analysis, the whole church of Corinth meeting in Gaius' house could not have been a house church. It is unclear at this point whether the house church is conceived of in ecclesiological or architectural terms.

<sup>35</sup> Gehring leaves the question of Aquila and Prisca's status undecided, allowing that they could have supplied either a Roman atrium house or a workshop apartment for church meetings. Although the New Testament does not state that this couple hosted a house church in Corinth, Gehring (2004:135, n.91) believes "we can assume that they did here what they had previously done in Ephesus and Rome; cf. 1 Cor 16:19; Rom 16:5". This statement contains a factual error: Aquila and Prisca hosted house churches in Ephesus and Rome *after*, not before their time in Corinth. It must be left as an open question whether or not they hosted a house church in Corinth as well.

and Aquila, is referred to using the house church formula (Rom 16:5), and Gehring considers it highly probable that the two groups mentioned in Rom 16:14-15 are also house churches. The fact that there is no evidence for a city-wide organization of the believers in Rome means that “one would be inclined to assume the existence of separate house churches in Rome even if there were no textual evidence” (Gehring 2004:146). House churches in Ephesus, Colossae<sup>36</sup> and Laodicea are explicitly attested by the house church formula in 1 Corinthians 16:19, Philemon 2, and Colossians 4:15 respectively (Gehring 2004:144,151,154).

At this point it may be accepted that certain houses (e.g. Lydia’s house and the house of Titius Justus) were used by Paul in his missional outreach. This conclusion is confirmed by a section in which Gehring (2004:179-190) discusses in greater detail the way Paul used houses and households to promote the work of his mission. In that section he does show that houses and households provided important support for Paul in his travels, letter-writing, and outreach. Whether these houses should be regarded as the locations of house churches (as defined) is another question. Gehring seems too quick to equate households with house churches. Even the section in which he addresses the question of the worship services in the Pauline house churches does little to show what actually happened in these gatherings: most of his discussion pertains to issues that apply to the local church as a whole (Gehring 2004:171-179).

An important issue with regard to the house churches concerns their relationship to the whole church in their city. Filson (1939:110) hypothesized that the house church, rather than the city church, was the basic unit. In a similar vein, Branick (1989:22-27) regards the house church as the prior unit, with the city church coming into being as house churches multiplied and networked together into some sort of city-wide federation. It must be admitted that the positions of Filson and Branick are hypotheses or assumptions more than evidence-based conclusions. Gehring (2004:159) also addresses this question and notes that “the issue regarding the relationship of the individual [house] churches to the local church as a whole or of the local church to the universal church has still not been clarified”. In addressing the issue he discusses Paul’s ecclesiological assertions with regard to the universal church and the local church, as well as Paul’s understanding of the church as the body of Christ. He concludes that each individual congregation has the “dignity and justification to be an independent church” (Gehring 2004:164). This assertion is derived from Roloff’s (1990:412) discussion of the word ἐκκλησία, in which he states that the local church represents the universal church in its totality. Furthermore, Gehring claims that Paul does not recognize any fundamental difference between the local church and the house church, so that “[e]ven in the smallest house church, ἡ ἐκκλησία τοῦ θεοῦ is present in its full sense. . . . it appears that Paul advocates greater rights for the individual church [including, apparently, each house church] as opposed to the whole worldwide church” (Gehring 2004:165).

Unfortunately Gehring’s answer to the question is inadequate. In the first place, the idea of the universal church being fully present in and represented by the local church is based on an overinterpretation of the participle οὔση in the phrase τῆ ἐκκλησία τοῦ θεοῦ τῆ οὔση ἐν Κορίνθῳ in 1 Corinthians 1:2. Whereas Schmidt (1964-1976:506), Roloff (1990:412) and others wish to elevate the participle into a statement of existence (so that the phrase somehow speaks about the universal church being present in Corinth), it is in reality equivalent to a simple relative pronoun (see Thiselton 2000:74 for discussion). Secondly, the claim that the house church holds the same position as the complete local church is an assumption that needs to be proved. Finally, even if Gehring’s claim can be accepted, its actual meaning is unclear. As a theological assertion, the statement that “Paul

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<sup>36</sup> Gehring (2004:151-152) accepts that Philemon’s house church was in or near Colossae.

advocates greater rights for the individual church as opposed to the worldwide church” is very vague. When it comes to clarifying the social structure of the Pauline churches — and especially the relationship between the house churches and the local church — the statement has limited usefulness. Apparently Gehring takes it to imply that each house church was an independent unit; but a proper examination of the actual social history is necessary to prove that point. It must be concluded, therefore, that the house church literature has not provided a properly substantiated answer to the question of the relationship between the local church and the house churches in its city.<sup>37</sup>

Gehring’s treatment of houses in the Pauline mission includes a section on socio-economic status (Gehring 2004:165-171). Here he essentially follows the scholars of the “new consensus” in accepting that there was a group of leading individuals who often had a demonstrable high status. These included the “patrons — the homeowners or renters” (Gehring 2004:167-171). In response to Schöllgen (1988), who claims that we know too little about the social conditions of the New Testament world to arrive at dependable conclusions regarding social status, Gehring (2004:171) claims that we do at least know that these “patrons” existed. Further, he states that “it is not necessary to prove that these householders belonged to the upper levels of society. Even the questions whether they were homeowners or renters and how large their houses were are all intriguing but not decisive for our study”(Gehring 2004:171). All that is important is the knowledge that the Christians met for worship in their homes. The view that the New Testament house churches were hosted by Christians of (relatively) high social status is an important part of the house church paradigm (see, e.g. Filson 1939:111; Branick 1989:58-77), and although Gehring underplays it here it does feature prominently in his exposition in general. In particular, it proves to be central to his discussion of leadership.

Probably the most important section of Gehring’s book, as far as the present study is concerned, is the one in which he deals with leadership structures in the Pauline churches (Gehring 2004:190-210). This will be discussed in the following section (2.2.3).

To sum up, the house church model, as proposed by Filson and expounded by Gehring and other scholars understands the Pauline city churches to be composed of house churches, each of which was hosted by a patron who supplied the building in which the meetings occurred. Central to the model is the view that the house church was incorporated into the social structure of the patron’s household. The household also supplied the core of the house church’s membership. The house churches are regarded as the basic cells of the local church and are generally seen to be separate from if not independent of each other. The local church is seen as a sort of federation of house churches. Some critical remarks regarding this paradigm have been made above, and it will be evaluated more comprehensively in section 2.3.2 below. The house church model has significant implications for the understanding of leadership in the Pauline churches; attention will now be focussed on that topic.

### **2.2.3 The socio-historical construction of leadership in the Pauline communities**

Among scholars who have published work on the Pauline churches from the socio-historical perspective, there is a remarkably consistent view of church leadership. It was seen above that Theissen (1999[1982]:107-108), already in the 1970’s, propounded a theory of love-patriarchalism in which the wealthy, high-status members of the congregations naturally assumed the leadership

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<sup>37</sup> See Button & Van Rensburg (2003) for a defence of the view that the city-wide church is the primary unit, with house churches being understood as integral parts of it.

functions.<sup>38</sup> This view was endorsed and expanded in subsequent publications by many scholars, including Meeks (2003[1983]), Chapple (1984), Branick (1989), Wanamaker (1990), Campbell (2004[1994]), Gehring (2004), Witherington (2006) and many others. I now present the main elements of this view, and the arguments used to support it.

Wanamaker (1990:194-195) speaks for most when, in commenting on 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13, he explains the leadership function in the church of Thessalonica as follows:

In commenting on this verse Marshall (148f.) claims, "In the NT church honor is not given to people because of any qualities that they may possess due to birth or social status or natural gifts but only on the basis of the spiritual task to which they are called." This is a theological statement articulating an important principle, but it bears little correlation with the actual situation prevailing in the Pauline churches based on the evidence available in the apostle's writings.<sup>39</sup> Theissen (*Social Setting*, 96) concludes after a careful survey of the evidence for Corinth that "in all probability the most active and important members of the congregation belonged to the οὐ πολλοὶ σοφοί, δυνατοί, and εὐγενεῖς [cf. 1 Cor. 1:26]." The few who were wise, powerful, and well-born were, according to the evidence from 1 Corinthians and Romans 16, those who exercised real influence in the community. Meeks (*First Urban Christians*, 57-73), who refines and extends the approach of Theissen, comes to essentially the same conclusions from a study of the whole of the Pauline corpus and relevant sections of Acts (cf. Holmberg, *Paul and Power*, 99-102).

If my interpretation of προῖσταμένους in the previous verse is correct, then the situation that prevailed at Corinth and elsewhere also existed at Thessalonica. It was the relatively better off and those with relatively higher social status who could afford to toil and care for the community at their own expense, serving as its patrons and protectors (cf. the implied social position and function of Stephanas in 1 Cor. 16:15-18 and of Philemon in the letter written to him). Theissen (*Social Setting*, 107f.), borrowing an idea from E. Troeltsch, maintains that already in Paul's writings a type of Christian "love-patriarchalism" can be observed.

The key arguments used to support this view can be classified as follows:

1. the power of the *oikos*;
2. the role of the household head;
3. the nature and role of patronage in general;
4. the meaning of προῖσταμαι in 1 Thessalonians 5:12.

These arguments are now presented.

### 2.2.3.1 *The power of the oikos*

It is widely accepted that the Pauline churches' architectural necessity of meeting in private houses had significant social implications. In addition to being a place to meet, houses provided the social structure for the churches, which included their leadership. Branick (1989:21) states that "[t]o the degree that the church was assumed into the household, it was incorporated into a structure of authority, in which the father functioned in place of the ruler." In similar vein, Campbell (2004[1994]:126) claims that the "church in the house came with its leadership so to speak 'built-in'. . . . The householder was *ex hypothesi* a person of standing . . . accustomed to the obedience of

<sup>38</sup> See section 2.2.1.2 above.

<sup>39</sup> Chapple (1984:234-235) maintains that, even though the leaders' ministry was rooted in social factors, it still derived its efficacy from the Spirit's "directing and empowering presence".

slaves and the deference of his wife and children.” Gehring (2004:194) speaks for many when he states:

Only those who were relatively wealthy were able to own (or rent) a house large enough to accommodate assembly needs of the congregation. Such affluent individuals were correspondingly educated. The position of the householder, his responsibility and protective duties, and his authority over his social dependents (family members and slaves) are all significant in this context. This far-reaching legal, economic, and religious independence and power of the ancient *oikos*, which grew out of the position of the head of the household, led E. Dassmann to the conclusion that the householder having “had special authority in the house church was only natural”.

The use of phrases like “was natural”, “can be assumed”, “was accustomed to” — as found in the above quotes — is characteristic of this discussion. The view that the householders in question were people of standing is also important. In terms of actual historical study which substantiates the idea, the following points may be noted:

1. The “new consensus” regarding the wealth and social location of the New Testament Christians claims to have demonstrated that a number of Christians in the Pauline churches were high status individuals. This is accepted by scholars who support the view of leadership that is being presented here.
2. The hierarchical structure reflected in the *Haustafeln* (Eph 5; Col 3) is claimed as support for the idea that household heads exercised authority in the church (Campbell 2004[1994]:119). This is not directly relevant to the present discussion (since the present concern is with Paul’s Early Letters), but in any case the *Haustafeln* address relationships within the household, not within the church. They do not prove that the authority structure of the household was carried over into the house churches.
3. In substantiation of the statement quoted above, Gehring (2004:194, n.409) refers to Judge (1960:30-39), who begins his discussion of the topic with the following comment:

For a picture of the household community of the Greeks in its untrammelled autonomy, one has to go back to the Homeric poems. But in an area where republican institutions had never been established, the autonomy of the household under its despotic head was still taken for granted in New Testament times (Judge 1960:30).

Judge illustrates this claim by an extended discussion of the role that the emperor’s household played in the first century AD, and how people across the Empire were bound by an oath of loyalty to the emperor. With regard to New Testament practice, Judge (1960:36) refers to the household of Cornelius (Acts 10), who had “[s]ervants and batmen at his disposal for his own religious ends”. This example does give some insight into the functioning of a particular household, but it doesn’t prove that the household’s authority structure was carried over into a church or house church. Indeed, if one were to pursue this example a little further, one would have to recognize that, when it came to religious leadership and teaching, Cornelius readily submitted to Peter — who certainly did not enjoy any particular social standing in the community concerned. The chasm between the situation represented in the Homeric poems and that of the New Testament churches remains large, and mere assumption will not substantiate the historical descriptions which are so boldly asserted.

### 2.2.3.2 *The role of the household head*

The role of the household head is closely connected with the nature and “power” of the household. Gehring (2004:194) expresses a widely-held view of the leadership role exercised by the household head as follows:

Because the first Christians met in private homes, house church leaders provided by the structure of the ancient *oikos* were available from the very beginning. These were individuals who served the believers meeting in their homes as leaders in a pastoral and patronal sense. The householders were clearly predestined to carry out pastoral tasks — the Jewish and Greco-Roman housefathers, with their education and experience as teachers in their own families, were relatively well equipped for a teaching, leading responsibility in the church and, as a result of their experience in the financial management of their own houses, for an administrative task.<sup>40</sup>

It may be noted that Gehring has, in this passage, provided a rationale for believing that the household heads automatically became the house church leaders: they filled this position because of their education, their teaching experience in their own families, and their financial management of their own households. This is much the same rationale as that provided by Filson (1939:112) sixty-five years earlier.

Some aspects of this argument relate to the issue of patronage, which is discussed below (sections 2.2.3.3 and 2.3.3). However, it is useful to analyse the logic of the argument presented by Gehring; it can be broken down as follows:

Premise 1 (implied):	Anyone who was educated and experienced as a teacher in his own family (whether Jewish or Graeco-Roman) was relatively well equipped for a teaching and leading responsibility in the church.
Premise 2:	The householders, who were Jewish and Graeco-Roman housefathers, were educated and experienced as teachers in their own families.
Interim conclusion:	The housefathers were relatively well equipped for a teaching and leading responsibility in the church.
Premise 3 (implied):	Nobody else was well equipped for teaching and leading in the church.
Conclusion:	The householders were clearly predestined to carry out pastoral tasks [i.e. it was they alone who carried out these tasks].

Premise 1 is the warrant which underlies Gehring’s argument; it is necessary to state it explicitly to show the logic of the argument. Premise 3 is also necessary if the final conclusion (“The householders were clearly destined to carry out pastoral tasks”) is to be derived from the statement that the householders “were relatively well equipped for a teaching, leading responsibility in the church”. The argument as it stands is valid (i.e. the premises imply the conclusion), so what remains is to evaluate the truth of the premises (and thus determine whether the argument is sound).

Premise 1 is clearly false. It is true that education and experience in teaching one’s own family could help to equip a person for a leading and teaching role in the church. But these on their own were by no means adequate. It will be seen in chapters 3 and 4 that leadership in the church was rooted in the ministry of the gospel and directed towards the spiritual and ethical transformation of believers. Paul’s discussion in 1 Corinthians 1:18-2:16 shows that the teachings of the gospel contrasted sharply with the kind of wisdom that was highly regarded in the Graeco-Roman and Jewish communities.

<sup>40</sup> For other scholars who express a similar view see, e.g. Filson (1939:112); Campbell (2004[1994]:126).

One who was educated in the wisdom of those communities would therefore need to learn, understand and internalize the principles of the gospel before being able to function as a teacher within the church. This was by no means a natural or automatic process; it could be accomplished only by the power of the Holy Spirit illuminating a person's mind and understanding (1 Cor 2:8-16). The extensive discussion on divine equipping in chapter 5 also confirms this conclusion.

Premise 2 may be accepted as true, but section 2.3.1 will show that "the householders" should not be viewed as belonging to a social class distinct from all the other members of the church.

Premise 3 is false. Galatians 6:6 states that one who receives teaching should contribute to the support of those who teach. This means that at least some of those who exercised a teaching role in the Pauline churches did not belong to a group of people who possessed such wealth and status that they could support themselves while exercising leadership within the church (i.e. the "household heads" as conceived of by the socio-historic view of leadership).

It can be concluded that Gehring's argument is unsound and therefore fails to support his conclusion.

### 2.2.3.3 *The role and nature of patronage in general*

References to patronage are widespread in discussions of the house churches and of leadership in the Pauline churches. "House church patrons" has become a standard way of referring to the hosts of the house churches, and the idea of patronage is almost always used to substantiate the claim that the wealthier members of the churches were the ones who exercised leadership. Gehring (2004:195), for example, states the following:

The leadership role of the householder was also well established in the system of patronage and sanctioned as a custom common throughout the Empire. This system was understood and accepted both by those who exercised this authority and by those who benefited from it. Through their position as patrons or householders, they also enjoyed a certain honor socially and were thus equipped for leadership tasks involving community affairs.

Campbell (2004[1994]:121) likewise believes that "[i]t is natural to suppose that those who thus acted as patrons on behalf of the church in the wider community would also have been looked to for leadership within the life of the church." Witherington (2006:160)<sup>41</sup> too sees patronage as the basis for the house church hosts giving advice and admonition to those who gathered in their homes.<sup>42</sup>

The work of Judge is often looked to for substantiation of the connection between leadership and patronage (see section 2.2.1.1 above). Both Chapple (1984:228) and Gehring (2004:195, n.414) quote his work and observe that an increasing number of scholars have adopted his insights.

While many writers accept that patronage was operative in the Pauline churches, that acceptance is often qualified. It is observed that certain aspects of patronage in the wider society, such as honour-seeking on the part of patrons, were not characteristic of the Christian communities. This leads some scholars to conclude that patronage amongst the early Christians was not to be understood in a "technical", "formal" or "legal" sense (Chapple 1984:223; Gehring 2004:199).

In order to evaluate these arguments it is important to identify the assumptions which underlie them. The important ones (some of which are unstated but implied) are:

1. The leadership role of the householder was well established in the system of patronage.
2. Anyone who hosted a house church became the patron of those who met in his home.

<sup>41</sup> See section 4.2.2, page 82 below.

<sup>42</sup> Wanamaker (1990:193) also holds this view.

3. Anything which was accepted as a custom common throughout the Empire became a pattern followed by the churches.
4. The kind of leadership exercised by the “house church patron” was the same as that which was exercised by patrons in the wider society.

These assumptions and the arguments built on them show that the reasoning is far from clear. Firstly, assertions are made about patronage and leadership without defining either. The result is that it is often difficult even to understand the meaning of what is being asserted, let alone to evaluate the assertions. For example, what does it mean to say that “the leadership role of the householder was . . . well established in the system of patronage” (see the quote from Gehring above)?

As will be seen below (section 2.3.3), patronage was not usually a relationship between the householder and members of his household, but between one person and another person of lower social status. Being a patron was not the same thing as being a householder or a *paterfamilias*. (Was every householder automatically a patron?) Secondly, and related to the importance of defining terms, a problem arises when it is stated that the patronage which was found in the churches was not to be understood in the formal or technical sense. If this is so, what does it mean to claim that the institution of patronage determined leadership structures in the churches? What means is there of knowing which aspects of patronage carried over into the Christian communities? And if the patronage practised within the churches differed from that in the wider society, what point is there in appealing to it as a custom which was commonly accepted throughout the Empire?

Returning to the assumptions listed above, the following evaluation may be made:

1. Assumption 1 seems to confuse the patron with the *paterfamilias*.
2. The discussion on house churches (section 2.3.2) and patronage (section 2.3.3) below will show that Assumption 2 cannot be substantiated.
3. Assumption 3 is false. Although the societal customs and practices had their influence on the churches, much of the burden of Paul’s letters is to teach the believers to live differently from the people around them. Some passages which show this are 1 Corinthians 1:18-4:21; 6:1-11; 2 Corinthians 10-13; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-5.
4. Assumption 4 is false (see comments on Premise 1 in section 2.2.3.2 above).

Even these preliminary comments show that the arguments used to support the connection between church leadership and patronage are weak. More general considerations regarding patronage will be discussed in section 2.3.3 below.

#### 2.2.3.4 *The meaning of προΐσταμαι in 1 Thessalonians 5:12*

The term προΐσταμένους in 1 Thessalonians 5:12 has played a remarkably prominent role in the discussion of leadership in the Pauline churches, and a large number of scholars understand the word to be a reference to patronage. Various arguments are used to arrive at this conclusion.

There is widespread agreement that the word could refer either to caring or to leadership. Chapple (1984:217-232) provides an extensive discussion in which he argues that it is not necessary to choose between the two meanings, and that they are usually both present. He uses two examples (one from a papyrus and one from an inscription) which, he claims, use the term προΐσταμαι with reference to people who exercised both care and authority. His interpretation is that the notion of responsibility binds together the ideas of authority and caring, since those who have authority must exercise a caring function and those who care are exercising responsibility and thus gain a *de facto* authority. He then goes on to suggest that concept of patronage suitably combines the caring and leading functions. To support the idea that προΐσταμένους in 1 Thessalonians 5:12 could indicate

the exercise of patronage, Chapple (1984:221-222) refers to the *Roman Antiquities* (2.9-11) of Dionysius of Halicarnassus, who describes the patronage system introduced by Romulus to the infant Roman state; Dionysius uses the word to refer to the protecting activity of the patrician patrons over their plebeian clients.

Gehring (2004:198-199) essentially follows Chapple's line of reasoning and states:

The rigid alternative between "caretaker" and "ruler," however, is unnecessary. In classical Greek as well as in the NT, both connotations are intended by the term. One does not need to choose between leading and helping; the help that is given here is the protection and material support of a patron. The following translation of the term unites all of these elements: "to act as patron or protector".

Green (2002:249) expresses a similar view in these words: "But in antiquity, 'leadership' and 'rendering aid' were not neatly separated ideas. Those who exercised leadership within the towns and villages, as well as in the Empire itself, were those who served the population as benefactors." This is a description of patronage at work, and Green (2002:249) refers to Jason (Acts 17:5) as a patron of the church.<sup>43</sup>

Wanamaker (1990:192-193) and Witherington (2006:160) agree that *προϊσταμένους* in 1 Thessalonians 5:12 should be understood to refer to "patrons" of the Thessalonian church, but they see this as an extension of the caring function, not of the leadership function (see also Fee 2009:205, who regards the patronage interpretation as "sociological fine-tuning" of the idea of "caring").

Scholars who adopt this interpretation of 1 Thessalonians 5:12 frequently point to Jason (Acts 17:5-9) as an example of this kind of patronage at work in Thessalonica: Jason had a home in which the Christians were meeting, and he exercised a protecting function over the community by putting up the security demanded by the authorities.

In response to these viewpoints it may be noted that there is a good deal of linguistic confusion involved in the idea that *προϊσταμένους* in 1 Thessalonians 5:12 means both "caretaker" and "ruler". It is the exception, not the rule, that a word should carry two of its possible meanings in any one instance of its use.<sup>44</sup> The examples cited by Chapple (and Gehring following him) in support of this idea are not convincing, and to reason that the concept of patronage combines both ideas is to misunderstand the nature of patronage, which is a far more specific concept than just a combination of leading and caring (see section 2.3.3 below). The interpretation which takes *προϊσταμένους* to refer to patronage as an extension only of caring also misunderstands the institution. If *προϊσταμένους* did actually refer to patronage, that would be a *third* meaning, not a combination of leading and caring or an extension of caring. The discussion on patronage (section 2.3.3 below) will show that it is unlikely that Paul is referring to patrons in 1 Thessalonians 5:12.

<sup>43</sup> See also Campbell (2004[1994]:121).

<sup>44</sup> Cf. Cotterell & Turner (1989:175): "Whereas most words are polysemous, it cannot be emphasized too strongly that this should not be taken to mean that a word is normally capable of a full range of meanings in its use in any one utterance. The context of the utterance usually singles out (and perhaps modulates) the *one* sense, which is intended, from amongst the various senses of which the word is potentially capable. Of course occasionally we come across accidental, or even deliberate, ambiguity; and occasionally we get deliberate *double entendre*, or word-play as in the familiar pun. . . . But these are the exception, not the rule. . . . When an interpreter tells us his author could be using such-and-such a word with sense *a*, or he could be using it with sense *b*, and then sits on the fence claiming perhaps the author means *both*, we should not too easily be discouraged from the suspicion that the interpreter is simply fudging the exegesis.

### 2.3 CRITICAL EVALUATION OF THE PARADIGM

The essential features of the socio-historical paradigm of leadership were presented in section 2.2 above, and critical remarks on the paradigm's arguments were made throughout the presentation. It is now necessary to consider additional research which has an important bearing on the paradigm, and to evaluate it in a more comprehensive way.

#### 2.3.1 Socio-economic status

It is clear from the discussion above that the current paradigm of leadership in the Pauline churches is dependent on the view that a distinct group of wealthy, high status individuals were prominent among the churches' members. Some scholars have, to a greater or lesser degree acknowledged that there was a range of socio-economic statuses among these individuals, but when leadership is discussed this range is largely ignored. The discussion proceeds as though there is a clearly identifiable group of "wealthy patrons" who automatically assumed leadership responsibility on the basis of their wealth and status. They are the home-owners or renters, they are educated, they are the leaders. The spotlight is focussed on them, and a clear picture is presented of their role in society and in the church. The other Christians remain in the shadows. By not saying anything about these others the impression is created that they were poor, without honour, uneducated, dependent, and ill-equipped to lead. As has been pointed out in the discussion above, this picture relies on many assumptions, and the sharp binary construct has more to do with scholarly hypothesis than with genuine evidence. It may be asked how the picture would change if more attention was given to the range of statuses present in the Pauline churches, and to what extent it is possible to do this.

As indicated above, the "new consensus" regarding socio-economic status in the Pauline churches became well-entrenched in New Testament scholarship during the 1980's and 1990's. However, Justin Meggitt's (1998) publication of *Paul, poverty and survival* represented a strong challenge to the consensus. Meggitt (1998:5) adopts the definition of "the poor" given by Garnsey and Woolf (1989:153) as "those living at or near the subsistence level, whose prime concern is to obtain the minimum food, shelter and clothing necessary to sustain life, whose lives are dominated by the struggle for physical survival." With regard to the Empire in general he concludes that the "distribution of what little income was available in the Mediterranean world was entirely dependent upon political power: those devoid of political power, the non-élite, over 99% of the Empire's population, could expect little more from life than abject poverty" (Meggitt 1998:50). With regard to the Pauline churches, Meggitt (1998:75-154) scrutinizes the various claims and arguments of the "new consensus" and concludes that the Pauline Christians "*shared fully in the bleak material existence that was the lot of the non-élite inhabitants of the Empire*" (Meggitt 1998:153, original emphasis).

Meggitt's work was certainly noticed as a challenge to the reigning consensus, but his own thesis was not well accepted.<sup>45</sup> Although he provided a valuable re-examination of the primary source material, the key weakness of his approach was his own binary classification of rich/poor without any recognition of the range of economic statuses within the non-élite 99% of the Empire's population. This deficiency has, however been addressed in a few valuable articles by Friesen (2004) and Longenecker (2009a & 2009b).

Friesen (2004:333-334) expressed concern that studies on the Pauline churches had analysed them in terms of a composite social status, with the result that economic status disappeared from view. It was indeed recognized as one of the dimensions of social status, but when social status was

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<sup>45</sup> See Martin (2001) and Theissen (2001) for reviews of Meggitt's work. Theissen is appreciative of Meggitt's contribution, although he does not finally agree with him. Martin is much more critical.

considered as a complex whole — including variables like *ordo*, age, sex, occupation, etc. — the scarcity of information meant that nothing more could be recovered than an impressionistic sketch. Friesen (2004:334) notes: “That sketch is based on very little information, and it is fraught with arbitrary conjectures that are gradually elevated to the status of conclusions.”<sup>46</sup> In response Friesen proposed that it would be helpful to produce an analysis which focuses on economic status alone. As the basis for such an analysis Friesen (2004:341) set out a “poverty scale” which describes seven levels of wealth/poverty — labelled as PS1 to PS7 — into which the inhabitants of the Roman Empire could be classified. It is significant that Friesen included seven levels in his scale: while he expressed appreciation for Meggitt’s work, he recognized that the simple binary of rich/poor was inadequate to describe the economic realities of the Roman Empire and of the Pauline communities. After defining the poverty scale, Friesen (2004:340-358) sought to estimate the percentages of the Empire’s population that should be assigned to each level of the scale. He also considered where the Pauline Christians, named and unnamed, might fall on the scale.

Longenecker (2009a; 2009b) recognized the value of Friesen’s poverty scale and sought to extend its use as a heuristic device for understanding the economic level of the Pauline congregations. He adopted the scale, but observed that Friesen’s own analysis of how the population might have been distributed among the levels was skewed towards the low end of the scale, partly as a result of Friesen’s dependence on the classical scholar M.I. Finley.<sup>47</sup> In the interests of terminological neutrality, Longenecker renamed Friesen’s scale, calling it an “economy scale”, but he retained Friesen’s seven levels and their definitions. He also re-evaluated the percentage allocations on the basis of the latest research into the Roman economy, and found that some of Friesen’s percentages needed to be revised upwards. The resulting scale, with its definitions and a comparison of the percentage allocations by Friesen and Longenecker, is presented in Table 2.1.

It is important to note certain features of the percentage allocations by Friesen and Longenecker. The table shows that Longenecker’s percentages are higher for ES4 and ES5 (by 10 and 3 percentage points respectively), and lower for ES6 and ES7 (again by 10 and 3 percentage points). This highlights Longenecker’s concern to expose what he called the “middling groups”. Longenecker (2009a:254) judged Friesen’s analysis to be little more than a “nuanced binary system”, given that he assigned such a large percentage of the Empire’s population (two thirds, or 68%) to the two lowest levels and only 7% to the middle group. For the purposes of the present study, Longenecker’s percentages are accepted as more consistent with the latest research. It should also be noted that the middle group, ES4, was probably a fairly elongated group in itself. At its upper end it included some groups of relatively high wealth and influence, notably the *apparitores* and the *Augustales*.<sup>48</sup> Friesen’s descriptor, “moderate surplus” — is an inadequate characterization of these groups, although it is suitable for those at the lower end of the group (Longenecker 2009a:264-267). Hence Longenecker (2009a:267; 2009b:45) divides the ES4 section of the scale into two: ES4a and ES4b.

As far as the Pauline Christians are concerned, Longenecker (2009a:270) notes that, apart from the elite levels (ES1 to ES3), Friesen’s classification of their economic levels is much the same as his classification of the society at large. For his own part, he estimates that the number of urban

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<sup>46</sup> The discussion on economic and social status above (esp. section 2.2.1) shows that Friesen is largely correct in this judgement.

<sup>47</sup> Longenecker observed that even the term “poverty scale” shows a bias in the economic analysis.

<sup>48</sup> The *apparitores* worked for civic magistrates as “scribes, messengers, lectors, and heralds”. Although their origins were humble, they attained a measure of economic security. The *Augustales* were generally freedmen who, due to their economic resources, had been co-opted by decurial patrons to enhance civic life (Longenecker 2009a:264-265).

**Table 2.1** Friesen and Longenecker's Economy Scale.

<i>Scale</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Includes</i>	<i>% (Friesen)</i>	<i>% (Longenecker)</i>
ES1	Imperial elites	imperial dynasty, Roman senatorial families, a few retainers, local royalty, a few freed persons	0.04	3
ES2	Regional or provincial elites	equestrian families, provincial officials, some retainers, some decurial families, some freedpersons, some retired military officers	1	
ES3	Municipal elites	most decurial families, wealthy men and women who do not hold office, some freedpersons, some retainers, some veterans, some merchants	1.76	
ES4	Moderate surplus	some merchants, some traders, some freedpersons, some artisans (especially those who employ others), and military veterans	7	17
ES5	Stable near subsistence level (with reasonable hope of remaining above the minimum level to sustain life)	many merchants and traders, regular wage earners, artisans, large shop owners, freedpersons, some farm families	22	25
ES6	At subsistence level (and often below minimum level to sustain life)	small farm families, labourers (skilled and unskilled), artisans (esp. those employed by others), wage earners, most merchants and traders, small shop/tavern owners	40	30
ES7	Below subsistence level	some farm families, unattached widows, orphans, beggars, disabled, unskilled day labourers, prisoners	28	25

Christians in ES4 was not more than 9% of their total number. In this way he emphasizes the difference in socio-economic status between the Christians and the wider society. With regard to prosopography there is not a significant disagreement between Friesen (2004:348-358) and Longenecker (2009b:47), who suggests the following classification:

1. those who seem to fall within ES4 include Erastus,<sup>49</sup> Gaius and Phoebe;
2. those who seem to fall within ES4/ES5 include Chloe, Stephanas, Philemon and Crispus;
3. those who seem to fall within ES5 include Prisca and Aquila.

<sup>49</sup> Longenecker (2009b:47, n.22) does not equate Erastus with the Corinthian aedile known to us from the famous inscription, but regards his position as similar to that of the *Augustales*; as such he would have had moderate wealth.

In order to provide an overall classification of the Pauline Christians, Longenecker (2009b:48-52) examines Paul's "rhetorical construction" of the economic level of his communities. He concludes that Paul "seems to address his communities as if they were comprised of people primarily belonging to ES5" (Longenecker 2009b:51).

Further insight into the socio-economic location of the Pauline believers, especially those at the ES4/ES5 level, is provided by Horrell's (2004) study of two excavated houses east of the theatre in Corinth. The ground floor of each house is approximately 10m by 5m in size, and is divided into two rooms roughly equal in size. Each house probably had a second and possibly a third storey, as inferred from the quantity of building rubble in the excavation (Horrell 2004:364-365). The houses appear to have been used commercially for the preparation of food. Horrell is careful to note that there is no evidence that these houses were in fact used for any Christian gathering, but they do provide insight into the domestic space that was available in first-century Corinth. It is particularly relevant that these buildings represent "the kind of space that might well have been occupied by small traders and business folk, not too different in social level, perhaps, from artisans like Prisca and Aquila, and Paul himself" (Horrell 2004:367).<sup>50</sup> An upper storey in one of these buildings could, at a push, have accommodated up to 50 people.<sup>51</sup>

Horrell (2004:365-369) warns against any assumption that the Corinthian Christians did actually meet in one of these houses (or others like them). Nevertheless, using disciplined imagination the excavations help to provide a concrete picture of the kind of domestic space available to the Corinthian Christians, especially at the ES4/ES5 level. Horrell (2004:369) also draws attention to Murphy-O'Connor's (1983:153-161) imaginative construction of the Lord's Supper scenario of 1 Corinthians 11, whereby Murphy-O'Connor suggests that the Corinthian church may have met in a luxurious villa like the one excavated in Anaploga (an elite part of Corinth). He notes that the idea of the Corinthian Christians meeting in such a villa is highly speculative and less plausible than their meeting in a more modest house such as the ones illustrated by the excavations he discusses. The conclusions of Friesen and Longenecker regarding the economic location of the Pauline Christians would support this view.

What are the implications of this understanding of economic stratification for the socio-historical construction of leadership in the Pauline churches?

Very few if any of the Pauline Christians had vast reserves of wealth. Apart from a very small number who may have been located in ES4a, even the wealthier members were at the boundary of ES4 and ES5. Their economic status is characterized as somewhere between "stable near subsistence level" and "moderate surplus". This situation should not be judged by modern standards where even lower middle class and relatively poorer people have some disposable income available for luxuries like books, extra furniture in the house, electronic gadgets, and so on. In the ancient world, even those with incomes of three, four or five times subsistence level would have spent a large portion of their resources on a better diet (including items like oil, wine and meat), better clothing and housing. This kind of expenditure profile would certainly have placed them in ES4/ES5, but would not have made them wealthy, even if a few luxuries are added (oil lamps, mosaics, etc.).<sup>52</sup> It

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<sup>50</sup> This description makes it possible to locate the occupants of these houses in ES4/ES5. Horrell himself does not use the poverty/economy scale of Friesen and Longenecker.

<sup>51</sup> Horrell (2004:368) notes the interesting similarity between this possibility and the meeting in Troas, where Eutychus fell from a third-story window (Acts 20:8-9).

<sup>52</sup> See Jongman (2007) for a discussion of consumption in the Roman Empire, including considerations of how that consumption varied amongst different sectors of the population (i.e. elite, poor, slaves, etc.).

is therefore unlikely that the flow of resources within the Christian communities was in one direction only, namely from wealthy patrons to the remaining undescribed church members. It is far more likely that the resources necessary for the community's life would have been distributed among a number of the members. One might have had a house suitable for meetings, another might have had some spare cash, another might have had greater access to food, and so on. One member could at the same time be a contributor and a beneficiary of another member's contributions.<sup>53</sup>

In this regard it is interesting to note that, of the four instances of named house churches in the Pauline Letters (indicated by the house church formula in Rom 16:5; 1 Cor 16:19; Col 4:15; Phm 2), two of them refer to a house church in the home of Prisca and Aquila. This couple is placed by Longenecker (2009b:47) in ES5,<sup>54</sup> which implies that there were probably other believers in their local (city) churches with similar and higher levels of wealth, showing that those who hosted house churches needn't have been the wealthiest of the believers in a particular city.

It is thus quite possible — even likely — that there were church members with houses that could have been made available to the churches for meeting, but whose houses were not used. In such a case these members would have met in the homes of other members, who may have had a similar or even lower socio-economic status. The socio-historical construction of leadership requires that the members meeting in the homes of other home owners/renters be regarded as clients of their hosts and subject to their authority and leadership on the basis of social status. This situation would have been impossible in the scenario under consideration. The socio-historical construction of leadership therefore requires that all house church hosts had higher socio-economic status than all other people meeting in their homes. A little thought regarding the actual conditions prevailing in the churches (as outlined in this section) shows that such a situation is unlikely.

In light of the work by Friesen and Longenecker, it is difficult to maintain that there was a clearly definable group of people in the churches whose wealth and status were so distinctly superior that the functioning of the churches was largely dependent on them. Once the range of economic statuses is recognized and understood, it is difficult to speak simply about “wealthy house church patrons”, or “the patron class” (Judge 1960:60), or “the relatively better off . . . who could afford to toil for the community at their own expense” (Wanamaker 1990:195), or generally to refer to a distinct class of people who alone provided the material needs and spiritual leadership of the Christian communities.

### 2.3.2 The house church model of the Pauline churches

It was seen in sections 2.2.2 and 2.2.3 above that the dominant socio-historical construction of leadership in the Pauline churches is closely related to the house church model. The survey of Gehring's work outlined that model, seeking to identify the arguments and evidence which are used to support it. Some critical remarks were made in the course of the survey, but it is important now to evaluate the model as a whole. In order to do so, the discussion below will address three key areas of the house church model, namely:

- the assumed definition of “house church”;
- the purported incorporation of house churches into the social structure of the household, and the leadership of the house church “patrons”;

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<sup>53</sup> It would be desirable to substantiate this picture with more direct evidence. However, it is more consistent with the general information available to us than is the sharp binary classification of the socio-historical leadership paradigm.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. Gehring (2004:137). Branick's (1989:60-61) characterization of Prisca and Aquila as fairly wealthy (he speaks of the “ease with which this couple obtains property”) goes beyond the evidence.

- the relationship between the house church and the local church.

Regarding the definition of “house church”, it was noted above (p.17) that Gehring sought to establish an ecclesiological — as opposed to architectural — understanding of the house church. It is essential to do this if the house church model is to be properly established, but it is not clear that Gehring has been successful in doing so. It is noteworthy that the New Testament contains only four explicit references to “house churches”, all of them in greetings of Pauline letters (Rom 16:5; 1 Cor 16:19; Col 4:15; Phm 2), and that it contains no explicit or clearly implied definition of the “house church”. In light of this, it is not self-evident that the Gehring’s definition of the house church is accurate. Before it can be concluded that a particular entity is a house church according to Gehring’s definition, it is necessary to address the following:

1. It must be shown that the entity had a fairly fixed membership.
2. The meaning of the phrase “own religious life” must be clarified. Does this mean, for example, that the house church was relatively autonomous from the local church?
3. It must be shown that the entity did in fact have its “own religious life”, whatever is meant by that term.
4. It must be shown that the entity did in fact gather regularly, and that its gatherings included evangelistic and instructional proclamation, the celebration of baptism and communion, prayer, and fellowship.
5. It must be shown that the entity did have some sort of organizational structure.<sup>55</sup>

In a study which aims to move beyond the mere existence of house churches, and to examine their social life and actual practices, the foundation must be an unambiguous identification of groups that can be called house churches (according to the definition given), and there must be enough data to support the intended investigation. Unfortunately, Gehring has a strong tendency to assume that whenever there was a recorded or possible use of a house there was a house church (as defined); in many instances he doesn’t even attempt to show that each element of his definition was actually in place before concluding that a house church existed, even though he provides the definition in order to supply criteria for identifying house churches (Gehring 2004:26).<sup>56</sup> This approach leaves the reader with the distinct impression that a historical description is being created on the basis of inadequate evidence, and that Gehring’s overall argument lacks the logical structure and coherence it needs to be convincing. Formulating a definition does not prove that the defined entity actually existed.

A second key aspect of the house church model is that the house churches were incorporated into the structure of the household, and that this structure determined the leadership of the house churches. One of the main aims of Gehring’s (2004:22) study was to establish this understanding of the house church (see p.17 above). Gehring’s examination of the use of houses in the Gospels and in Acts showed that the meetings in these houses were led by disciples of Jesus who were called to preach and teach. These disciples were generally not the ones who supplied the hospitality that enabled them to carry out their teaching function. Although Gehring wished to assert the so-called *oikos* model, whereby it was the hosts who exercised leadership, he admitted that, at least in the case of Acts, the evidence does not support this assertion (see pp. 19-20 above). As far as the Pauline

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<sup>55</sup> Although Gehring states that his definition would command general agreement, he does not at this point substantiate this statement by references to other works.

<sup>56</sup> See, eg. Gehring’s (2004:122,124) claim that there were house churches in both Lydia’s and the Philippian jailer’s houses. See further the discussion in section 2.2.2 above.

churches are concerned, Gehring and others have made a greater effort to prove that the house church hosts were automatically the leaders of the (house) churches (see section 2.2.3 above), especially by linking church leadership to patronage. The discussion below (section 2.3.3) will show that the evidence does not support the supposed connection between being a “house church patron” and being a leader in the church.

Finally, the supposed relationship between the house church and the local church must be considered. The house church model views the house churches as the basic units of the church in each city, with the city church being some kind of federation of the house churches (see p.22 above). This was hypothesized by Filson in 1939 and assumed by later scholars such as Branick. Gehring recognized the need to address the question in more detail, but I argued (p.22) that he also failed to provide an adequate answer to the question. When the actual evidence of the Pauline Letters is considered it is found that the emphasis is heavily on the local (city) church rather than on the house church. The only clear and explicit references to house churches are in the greetings which use the house church formula (Rom 16:5; 1 Cor 16:19; Col 4:15; Phm 2), whereas the letters are always addressed to the church in the particular city (or in the case of Rome to all the believers in the city).

In order to understand the relationship between the house church and the local church it is important to interpret the house church formula (ἡ κατ’ οἶκον ἐκκλησία — Rom 16:5; 1 Cor 16:19; Col 4:15; Phm 2). The crux of interpretation in this Greek phrase is the function of the preposition κατὰ. While it is clear that the preposition indicates the relationship between ἐκκλησία and οἶκον it is not clear what this relationship is. Most translations interpret the preposition as indicating a spatial (locational) relationship between the two nouns — “the church *in* the house of X” (e.g. ESV; NIV; NRSV) — although, as Meeks (2003:75) notes, it would have been more natural for Paul to write ἡ ἐν οἴκῳ ἐκκλησία if that was his intended meaning. The preposition κατὰ more naturally indicates a distributive relationship, and this use is found in the phrases κατ’ οἶκον, κατ’ οἴκου, and κατὰ τοὺς οἴκους in Acts 2:46; 5:42; 8:3; 20:20, where the phrases can be translated “house by house”. Thus, in the house church formula, it was not *a* church that met in the home of Aquila and Priscilla, Nympha, or Philemon, but *the* church (of the city/town) which held meetings in the named homes. Thus the house church formula could be translated: “the church-gathering in the home of X”, where “church” refers to the local church of the city or town.<sup>57</sup> Du Plooy (1982:101-102) comes to a similar conclusion: “[The preposition κατὰ] clearly indicates that it was the local church which in part or as a whole met in specific houses. . . . It was the custom from the beginning that the churches [i.e. the local churches] gathered ‘housewise’ . . . It is therefore clear that the so-called house congregations are not a third concept of church alongside the local and universal church.”<sup>58</sup> Some scholars would understand the factions of 1 Corinthians 1:12 to be connected with house churches, but even if that is the case it is Paul’s aim to stop them from acting independently and in opposition to one another. He wishes all the members of the Corinthian church to act as a unit. This is confirmed in 1 Corinthians 16:15-16, where all the members of the church are expected to submit to the same leaders; they are not exhorted to submit to the leaders of their own separate house churches. Thus the house

<sup>57</sup> See Button & Van Rensburg (2003:1-11) for more complete discussion of this interpretation. Gehring (2004:155-159), after considering a locational interpretation of κατὰ in ἡ κατ’ οἶκον ἐκκλησία settles for a distributive interpretation.

<sup>58</sup> Original: “Dit dui duidelik daarop dat dit die plaaslike kerk was wat gedeeltelik of in sy geheel in bepaalde huise byeengekom het. . . . Dit was van die begin af die gebruik dat die kerke as ’t ware ‘huisgewyse’ vergader het . . . Dit blyk duidelik dat die sogenaamde huisgemeentes nie ’n derde kerkbegrip naas die plaaslike en universele kerk is nie.”

church model's view of the house churches as independent units, each under their own leadership, cannot be substantiated by the historical evidence.

How then should the house churches be understood? It can be accepted that Christians met in houses, and that house churches (however defined) did exist. However, the idea of house churches as independent units which constituted the "basic cells" of the local church does not conform to the evidence. The local church was not a federation of house churches; it was itself the basic unit which expressed certain aspects of its corporate life through the house churches.<sup>59</sup> Leadership pertained to the local church as a whole, not to the house churches as individual units.

The dominant socio-historical construction of leadership loses much of its credibility if the house church model is judged to be in error. Much of the framework on which it depends is simply removed.

### 2.3.3 Patronage

In order to evaluate the influence of patronage on leadership within the churches it is important, first, to define patronage and to gain an understanding of how it operated in the society of the day. A generally accepted definition is that of Saller (1982:1) in which a patronage relationship is defined in terms of three elements:

1. it involves the reciprocal exchange of goods and services;
2. it is distinguished from a commercial transaction in that the relationship is a personal one of some duration;
3. the relationship is asymmetrical in that the two parties differ in their social status and they each offer different goods and services.<sup>60</sup>

It is often noted that patronage becomes important in a society where many of the resources are controlled by an elite group, with the result that access to those resources requires personal favours from the members of that elite group (Saller 1982:4; DeSilva 2000:96). Johnson & Dandeker (1989:222) extend the concept of patronage from a relationship to a "system of relations, such that complex chains of asymmetrical 'friendship' relations constitute the primary form of resource allocation in the reproduction of society as a whole". In this system the individual relationships may exhibit ambiguity and departure from the ideal, but the system serves to maintain the power structures of the society as a whole.

A number of studies have investigated the literary and inscriptional data on patronage in the Roman Empire, and examples of the phenomenon are well known.<sup>61</sup> A patron could provide for his client a great variety of goods and services including financial assistance, access to influential people of even higher status than himself, advocacy support in legal processes, guidance on how to advance in public life, appointment to important positions, and many others. The client in return would give the patron political support and enhance his public honour by attending the morning *salutatio* and through other means (Saller 1982 *passim*). An individual could also become the patron of a community like a city, in which case the patron would provide certain benefactions to the city (such as public works, games, etc.) in return for an influential position and an inscription erected in his honour. In this way a wealthy person could publicize his *cursus honorum* and increase his honour in the eyes of the community.

<sup>59</sup> See Button & Van Rensburg (2003) for further discussion of this point.

<sup>60</sup> This definition is widely accepted; see, e.g. Wallace-Hadrill (1989:3-4).

<sup>61</sup> See, e.g. Saller (1982), Wallace-Hadrill (1989) — a collection of essays; Chow (1997).

Patronage of communities is well illustrated for the city of Corinth. For example, the Erastus inscription referred to earlier in this chapter (see p.12, n.10 above) shows how Erastus (whoever he may have been) donated a pavement to the city, and in turn was honoured with the office of aedile and the right to erect an inscription immortalizing his donation and appointment. Another example is the following:

[Members of the tribe - - - - -] (erected this monument) to Tiberius Claudius Dinippus, [son of Publius, of the tribe Fabia], who was duovir, [duovir quinquennalis], augur, priest of Brittanic Victory, [military tribune of Legion VI] Hispanensis, chief engineer, curator of the grain supply three times, [agonothetes] of the Neronea [Caesarea and of the Isthmian and Caesarean games] (Kent 1966:74).

Here it is seen how members of a certain tribe in the city of Corinth wished to honour Tiberius Claudius Dinippus, and did so by erecting an inscription detailing his *cursus honorum*. It may be that T. Claudius Dinippus had provided some particular benefits for the tribe, but it is perhaps more likely that there was an ongoing patronage relationship between Dinippus and the tribe concerned, and that there was an ongoing “asymmetric exchange” of goods and services between them. This inscription records just one side of one particular exchange: the honour given to Dinippus by the tribe. The Erastus inscription records both sides of such an exchange. (See Chow 1997 for further examples and discussion).

These inscriptions and hundreds of similar ones show that individuals and communities had a profound sense of dependence on wealthy patrons. The patrons, in turn, were willing to spend large sums of money for the reward of public office and honorific inscriptions — such was their hunger for public esteem.<sup>62</sup> In evaluating evidence like this from the Roman colonies, Clarke (2000:58) concludes:

It has become apparent that significant personal wealth, demonstrated through patronage, was a necessary prerequisite for civic leadership. Such leadership had a strong component of self-interest where reputation, both in the present and in perpetuity, was a guiding principle.

Most of the extant evidence for patronage concerns the Roman elite (Saller 1982:vii), and it must be asked whether the phenomenon also occurred amongst the common people. In this regard the voluntary associations are enlightening, since their members were not usually drawn from the elite groups. Knowledge of the voluntary associations comes mainly from inscriptions, many of which have been found.<sup>63</sup> These inscriptions demonstrate that there was a remarkable correspondence between the practices of voluntary associations and those of public city life as far as patronage is concerned: the type of benefaction and honour-seeking that was such a prominent aspect of life in cities like Corinth was also characteristic of the voluntary associations. This can be seen in the following inscription from Philippi:

Publius Hostilius Philadelphus, for the honour of aedileship polished the inscription with his own (money) and inscribed the names of the members who made gifts: Domitius Primigenius [gave] a bronze statue of Silvanus along with the shrine; etc.<sup>64</sup>

<sup>62</sup> Hence MacMullen (1974:125) states: “What motive in turn inspired the candidate [i.e. the patron]? Simply the love of status, *Philotimia*. No word, understood to its depths, goes farther to explain the Greco-Roman achievement.”

<sup>63</sup> See Waltzing (1970) for a large collection of inscriptions relating to the voluntary associations.

<sup>64</sup> Original in Latin: “P. Hostilius Philadelphus ob honore(em) aedilit(at)is titulum polivit de suo et nomina sodal(ium) inscripsit eorum qui munera posuerunt. Domitius Primigenius statuam aeream Silvani cum aede. etc.” (Mommsen 1958:120).

It appears, therefore, from the inscriptions that the voluntary associations enabled people who did not have the opportunity of gaining prominence through patronage in public life to do so within the more limited sphere of the voluntary association. Their benefactions also allowed the members of the associations to enjoy banquets and other benefits which they could not afford on their own. Kloppenborg (1996:26) sums up the situation:

the collegium provided a social setting in which persons who normally could never aspire to participation in the *cursus honorum* of the city and state could give and receive honors, enjoy the ascribed status that came with being a *quinquennalis* or *mater*, have a feeling of control over at least the destiny of the collegium, and enjoy regular banquets.<sup>65</sup>

With this clearer picture of what patronage was and how it was expressed in civic life and in the voluntary associations, a better judgement can be made regarding its prominence in the Pauline churches. In the first place, the impact of the socio-economic level and stratification of the Christian communities needs to be considered (cf. section 2.3.1). Using the economy scale of Friesen and Longenecker, it was found that the members of the Pauline churches were chiefly found in ES5, with a few in ES4 and a larger number in ES6-ES7. It was also argued in the discussion on socio-economic status above that the material needs of the community were probably not supplied only by “wealthy” members in a unidirectional manner. This is admittedly a scholarly construction of the actual situation, but if it fairly represents the historical situation, at least in its broad outlines, it would indicate that the patronage model does not accord well with the socio-economic framework of the churches and their mode of operation.

Secondly, it may be observed directly in the Pauline writings, and in the New Testament in general, that there are no statements about potential patrons that even approach the mindset of patronage which is seen in the cities and the voluntary associations.<sup>66</sup> Prisca and Aquila, named as hosts of house churches in Ephesus (1 Cor 16:19) and in Rome (Rom 16:5) are nowhere called patrons, nor are they given the kind of public honours normally accorded to patrons. Paul calls them his fellow workers in Christ Jesus, and does not thank them for material gifts but for risking their necks for his life (Rom 16:3-4). The account of Jason (Acts 17:5-9), which is so often used to lend plausibility to the idea that wealthy home owners were the patrons and leaders of the churches, is not a convincing example of patronage. It is true that Jason provided a meeting place for the believers in Thessalonica, but this need not indicate that he was a “man of means”, as is so often stated. The house could have been modest, no bigger or more luxurious than that of a person at ES4 or ES5, and quite possibly smaller than the buildings discussed by Horrell (2004) (cf. the discussion in section 2.3.1 above). The provision of security is also not an action typical of a patron — who would more probably have been expected to act as an advocate for the Christian community or to influence the authorities in its favour (Saller 1982:29,130). Jason appears more as a helpless fellow-victim than as a patron in the Acts account. This is confirmed by the statements that he *and some of the brothers* were dragged before the city authorities, and that security was taken from Jason *and the rest* (Acts 17:5,9).<sup>67</sup>

In the third place, the nature of leadership in the Pauline churches was completely different from that which was found in public life and in the voluntary associations. Indeed, it is only by using the broadest definition of leadership that both can be brought under the same heading. Whereas

<sup>65</sup> See also Clarke (2000:59-77).

<sup>66</sup> See Longenecker (2009b:53-56) for comments on why it would have been unappealing for a wealthier person (say at the level of ES4a) to become a benefactor of a Christian group.

<sup>67</sup> Of course, the narrative is not detailed enough to draw definite conclusions either way, but there is enough to question the assumption that it represents Jason as a patron.

leadership in the wider society was characterized by a quest for the status and honour that could be derived directly and indirectly from formal positions (*duovir*, *aedile*, etc.), leadership in the churches was characterized by hard work on behalf of the church members (1 Thess 5:12-13). This hard work consisted in deeply personal relationships, combined with pastoral care that was directed towards spiritual and moral transformation in preparation for the day of Christ. It is well illustrated in Paul's description of his own relationships with the believers in 1 Thessalonians 2:9-12,19-20:

Surely you remember, brothers, our toil and hardship; we worked night and day in order not to be a burden to anyone while we preached the gospel of God to you.

You are witnesses, and so is God, of how holy, righteous and blameless we were among you who believed. For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory. . . .

For what is our hope, our joy, or the crown in which we will glory in the presence of our Lord Jesus when he comes? Is it not you? Indeed, you are our glory and joy.

I discuss Paul's leadership/pastoral care, as exemplified in these verses, in detail in chapter 3 of this study; in chapter 4 I argue that his own leadership was the pattern for other leaders, both itinerant and local. A comparison of this kind of leadership with that which was linked to patronage shows that it would be hard to imagine two approaches more at variance with one another.

To sum up, the assertion that the widespread institution of patronage established the leadership role of the household head, or of the wealthy members of the congregation, cannot be sustained in the light of a more detailed understanding of patronage and of the actual practice of the New Testament churches. The work of Judge, to which appeal is sometimes made to substantiate this kind of assertion, was examined in section 2.2.1.1 above, where I argued there that his proposals were preliminary and exploratory. He did not offer a detailed explanation of patronage or a careful comparison of historical evidence for patronage with the actual practice of the New Testament churches.<sup>68</sup> Patronage cannot, therefore, be considered a good model for leadership within the Pauline churches.

## 2.4 CONCLUSION

The foregoing examination of the dominant socio-historical construction of leadership in the Pauline churches has shown that it is based on a number of key assumptions:

1. The Christian communities included a number of wealthy, high status individuals who exercised a dominant influence in the churches. (The discussions tend to rely on a binary classification of socio-economic status.)
2. The basic unit of the local church in any particular city was the house church. The house churches were hosted by wealthy, educated people who became the leaders of the house churches because of their wealth, education and social status. The social structure of the household determined the leadership structure of the house church.
3. The institution of patronage played a prominent role in the churches and ensured that the wealthy house church hosts would become leaders in the house churches.

A historical examination of how this view developed shows that many of the assumptions — especially those related to the social location of the Pauline Christians — were based on the early

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<sup>68</sup> It is noteworthy that the work of Judge which is surveyed in this chapter was written two decades before Saller's (1982) definitive work on patronage.

work of scholars like Judge and Theissen. Although the conclusions of those scholars were preliminary, and needed to be clarified and tested much further, they became entrenched in later scholarship to the point where they were accepted without question. Some of the more recent research on the socio-economic status of the Pauline Christians allows for the construction of a more accurate picture of their situation. This research focuses on economic status and indicates that there were perhaps a few relatively wealthy believers (ES4a), but that most (probably including the named house church hosts Prisca and Aquila) were “stable above subsistence level” (ES5) with a few possessing “moderate surplus resources” (ES4) and some living at or slightly below subsistence level (ES6 or ES7).

In a similar way, the house church model includes many assumptions which have not been adequately tested. Much of the evidence which Gehring (one of the chief proponents of the model) himself adduces speaks against the dominance of household heads as leaders of the house churches. Although the house church model presents a somewhat coherent picture of the house churches, it attaches itself to the New Testament record in an uncritical way: references to house churches and households are assumed to be references to house churches *as defined in the model* without carefully checking whether this is in fact the case. Although house churches did exist (as shown by the house church formula in some of the letters’ greetings), they should not be considered as independent units with their own leadership derived from the household in which they met. Rather, the local church should be seen as the basic unit; the house churches were one of the channels through which its corporate life was expressed. Leadership pertained to the local church as a whole.

The discussions regarding patronage also lack clarity and precision. Many assertions and deductions are made without properly defining or explaining patronage and how it actually worked. When patronage is examined in more detail and is compared with the New Testament evidence, it is seen that the institution is unlikely to be a good explanation for leadership in the Pauline churches.

Overall it may be concluded that the socio-historical model of leadership discussed here does not accord well with the available evidence, both general and specific. The model relies on too many untested assumptions and has failed to test its hypotheses rigorously enough. This is a negative conclusion in that it states what *was not* the case rather than what *was* the case. However, it is necessary to deal with a view that has been so dominant in the literature before a new model can be developed. This new model will be developed in the following chapters.

## CHAPTER 3

### PAUL'S UNDERSTANDING OF HIS OWN MINISTRY

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#### INTRODUCTION

The aim of this chapter is to investigate Paul's understanding of his own ministry. This investigation is important for two reasons: (a) Paul leadership role was still the most prominent one in the early

Pauline churches; and (b) as will become clear in chapter 4, Paul's own ministry was the starting point for his development of other leaders in the churches — other leaders were initially thought of as Paul's coworkers. It is therefore impossible to understand Paul's thinking and practice with regard to leadership in general if his thinking about his own leadership role is not understood.

Various recent studies have sought to understand aspects of Paul's thinking about ministry in general, and about his own ministry in particular.<sup>1</sup> These studies have tended to show that Paul's view of leadership contrasted sharply with the prevailing views of the contemporary culture. Valuable as these studies are, there remains a need to provide a more comprehensive view of Paul's understanding of ministry whereby its nature and purpose are seen together.<sup>2</sup> Naturally, such a study would justify a monograph on its own, and doing full justice to it is beyond the scope of this chapter. However, this chapter does aim to survey these important aspects of Paul's view of his own ministry in order to clarify the core elements of his thinking on the subject, and to grasp how they relate to one another and how they directed his own practice of ministry.

The approach to be followed in this investigation is to survey Paul's Early Letters with a view to identifying and explaining his statements about his own ministry. The survey is organized around three main questions:

1. What was the nature of Paul's ministry?
2. What was Paul's goal in ministry?
3. How did Paul expect to accomplish his ministry goal?

It will be seen that, as an apostle, Paul saw himself as God's coworker in calling out and working for the transformation of God's people, by the power of the gospel and of the Spirit, with a view to their eschatological salvation.

## 3.2 THE NATURE OF PAUL'S MINISTRY

Paul's life was radically changed by his encounter with Jesus Christ on the Road to Damascus. In that encounter the risen Lord called him to an apostolic ministry which consumed the remainder of his life. From the time of his Damascus Road encounter onwards, Paul understood himself to be God's coworker for the salvation of the Gentiles. Paul's thinking about the nature of his ministry can thus be understood in relation to the concept of apostle (including the significance of his call) and the meaning of his role as God's coworker.

### 3.2.1 Paul the apostle

There can be little doubt that the concept embodied in the Greek word *ἀπόστολος* was crucial to Paul's understanding of his ministry. Out of a total of 80 occurrences of this word in the New Testament, 23 are in the Early Pauline Letters (11 are in the other Pauline Epistles, 28 in Acts and 18 in the rest of the New Testament).<sup>3</sup> In Romans, First and Second Corinthians, and Galatians, Paul introduces himself as *ἀπόστολος*; Romans 1:1-5 shows that his identity as a person is defined by his apostolic calling; and in Galatians Paul seeks to substantiate his claim to apostleship as the basis of his strategy for persuading the Galatian believers not to follow the Judaizers. One may reasonably conclude, therefore, that a solid understanding of Paul's concept of apostleship will give a great deal of insight into how he thought about the nature of his own ministry.

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<sup>1</sup> E.g. Savage (1996); Hooker (1996); Clarke (2000); Bolt & Thompson (2000); Winter (2002); Thompson (2007).

<sup>2</sup> Thompson's (2007) study is a valuable contribution towards meeting this need.

<sup>3</sup> Statistics are derived from the Libronix Digital Library System using the text of UBS<sup>4</sup>.

### 3.2.1.1 *Scholarship on apostleship*

There is a long and complex history of scholarship on the origin and meaning of the word ἀπόστολος as it is found in the New Testament.<sup>4</sup> It is not necessary to recount this history in detail; useful surveys, including bibliographies may be found in the articles by Kirk (1974-1975), Herron (1983), and Agnew (1986). Agnew (1986:77) moves towards a definition which would command general agreement by describing an apostle as one who “through a vision of the risen Lord, has become an official witness to his resurrection and who has been commissioned by him to preach the gospel in a way fundamental to its spread” (Agnew 1986:77; cf. Barnett 1993:46,50). At the heart of the concept is the sense of God sending a messenger, such as one of the Old Testament prophets (Agnew 1986:94-96).

Some scholars wish to broaden Paul’s concept of apostleship to mean a “(charismatically effective) herald of Christ and itinerant missionary” (Schnackenburg 1970:298; cf. Thiselton 2000:669-673, esp. 672). However, this broader view does not square with Paul’s usage. Note, in particular, the following points:

1. Paul had a strong sense of his own calling as an apostle; this call came to him during his Damascus Road experience — i.e. at the time when he first became a disciple of Jesus Christ. There can be no other way of interpreting Galatians 1:1,13-17.<sup>5</sup>
2. Paul’s apostolic call consisted in a commission to preach Christ among the Gentiles (Gal 1:16). Therefore, from the very first, Paul embarked on his mission to the Gentiles under a sense that he was fulfilling Christ’s apostolic commission. He had not simply become an itinerant missionary.
3. If, as Schnackenburg (1970:295) suggests, Paul was willing to use the term ἀπόστολος in 1 Thessalonians 2:7 in a broad sense to refer to Christian missionaries, this would imply that he had no real sense of a special apostolic call at that stage in his mission. His statements in Galatians 1 would then be a later re-interpretation of the Damascus Road Christophany, and he would have opened himself to the charge that this call was so weak that he did not even recognize it at the time. This would have nullified his whole line of reasoning in Galatians 1.<sup>6</sup> It is best to take the plural in 1 Thessalonians 2:7 to refer to Paul and Silvanus, both of whom qualified as apostles in the narrow sense.<sup>7</sup>
4. Galatians 1:1-28 indicates that Paul had a strong sense of apostolic calling which was not shared even with some of his close coworkers.

Kirk (1974-1975:261) views apostleship less broadly than does Schnackenburg: for him an apostle is one “specially commissioned by the Lord for church planting”. Here the Lord’s special commission

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<sup>4</sup> The articles by Agnew (1986), Kirk (1974-1975), and Herron (1983) include useful surveys of the debate, with bibliographies.

<sup>5</sup> Note especially Gal 1:15-17: “But when he who had set me apart before I was born, and who called me by his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son to me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with anyone; nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me, but I went away into Arabia, and returned again to Damascus.” Cf. Bruce (1990: 92-93).

<sup>6</sup> Kim (1981: 57-59) clearly expounds this argument.

<sup>7</sup> It is generally recognized that there is no reason to believe that Silvanus could not have seen the Risen Lord Jesus (Schnackenburg 1970:295; Wanamaker 1990:99).

<sup>8</sup> “Paul, an apostle — not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead — and all the brothers who are with me” (Gal 1:1-2).

is recognized, but an important element is nevertheless missing: the dimension of being entrusted with a revelation of the gospel that forms the basis of ministry.

### 3.2.1.2 Paul's apostolic call in Romans and Galatians

Careful consideration of Paul's statements in Romans 1:1,5; 15:15-16, and in Galatians 1:1,11-16 shows that, for Paul, apostleship was a special call to ministry which included a revelation of the gospel. One of the key differences between apostles and non-apostles was that apostles were entrusted with such a revelation whereas non-apostles were not.

In Romans 1:1 Paul makes a clear connection between his call to apostleship and a life devoted to the gospel. Verse 5 of the same chapter indicates that the purpose of his apostolic ministry was to bring the Gentiles into the obedience of faith:

Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, . . . through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations (Rom 1:1,5).

The relationship between apostleship, the gospel, and the goal of ministry is more explicit in Romans 15:15-16:

But on some points I have written to you very boldly by way of reminder, because of the grace given me by God [i.e. the grace of apostleship] to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles in the priestly service of the gospel of God [the gospel is the means of achieving the goal], so that the offering of the Gentiles may be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit [the goal: sanctification of the Gentiles] (Rom 15:15-16).

These passages show that Paul did not conceive of his apostleship apart from the gospel. Galatians 1:15-16 develops this idea in much greater detail and demonstrates that a revelation of the gospel was at the heart of Paul's apostleship. One of the most notable features of Paul's description of his apostolic call in Galatians 1:15-16 is the way he deliberately alludes to the call of Old Testament prophets. Some of the more important parallels are:

1. The words ἐκ κοιλίας μητρὸς (translated as "before I was born" in the ESV) are a definite allusion to Isaiah 49:1 and possibly Jeremiah 1:5 (Sandnes 1991:61-64).
2. The word ἀφορίσας ("set apart") in Galatians 1:15 (cf. Rom 1:1) is generally acknowledged to indicate that Paul experienced a prophetic call (Kim 2002:104-106; Sandnes 1991:61-64; Bruce 1990:92).<sup>9</sup>
3. Form critical studies recognize the elements of prophetic call narratives in Galatians 1:15-16 (Sandnes 1991:58-59).

Paul thus understood that his apostolic call placed him in a position similar to that of the Old Testament prophets and of Isaiah's *Ebed Yahweh*. Such a position implied a divine sending with a commission to deliver a message that God had revealed. The essential distinction between a true and a false prophet was that a true prophet had received a message from God and was sent to deliver that message (cf. Jer 1:9; 23:28,32). This principle seems to be in Paul's mind in Galatians 1:1<sup>10</sup> and in

<sup>9</sup> Note, again, the way the idea of being "set apart" or "consecrated" appears in Isaiah 49:1 and Jeremiah 1:5.

<sup>10</sup> "Paul, an apostle — not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father . . ." (Gal 1:1).

Galatians 1:11-12<sup>11,12</sup>. Thus, a crucial aspect of apostleship for Paul was the responsibility of being entrusted with a revealed message from God. This principle is confirmed by the way Paul speaks about his gospel as something revealed by God.

### 3.2.1.3 *The gospel as revelation*

Apart from Galatians 1:12, which makes a definite link between Paul's gospel and revelation, there are clear indications in Romans and 1 Corinthians that Paul thought of the gospel as something which was known only by revelation from God. In 1 Corinthians 1:18-2:11 Paul acknowledges that the gospel message<sup>13</sup> did not make sense to unbelievers. In fact, it was foolishness to them. Their way of thinking did not give credence to a message such as the gospel (1 Cor 1:23; 2:6,8-9). Hence the gospel is characterized as μυστήριον (1 Cor 2:1,7) — i.e. as a message which can be known only by revelation.<sup>14</sup> This reality creates a sharp contrast between unbelievers, who cannot understand the gospel, and believers, to whom the gospel has been *revealed* (1 Cor 2:10). (Note the emphatic position of ἡμῖν δὲ ἀπεκάλυψεν; cf. Thiselton 2000:255).

The theme of revelation is also very strong in Romans. Snodgrass (1994:291-292) notes 30 terms used in the letter to convey the idea of revelation, and concludes that “[f]or Paul the gospel is a theology of revelation” (Snodgrass 1994:298). The doxology of Romans (i.e. Rom 16:25-27) most clearly expresses the character of the gospel as something revealed by God: “. . . according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages but has now been disclosed . . .” (Rom 16:25-26). It is true that modern scholarship generally regards this doxology as a later addition, but Snodgrass (1994:292-296) shows a number of clear connections that the doxology has with the rest of Romans, as well as with 1 Corinthians 2:6-16.<sup>15</sup> Whether or not the argument is strong enough to accept the authenticity of the doxology, the point is that Romans clearly portrays the gospel as a message revealed by God.

### 3.2.1.4 *Conclusion on apostleship*

For Paul, being an apostle meant being called to a prophet-like ministry based on the gospel, which was revealed to him at the time of his call. Apostleship was not simply a task (e.g. itinerant missionary), nor was it merely a commission to plant churches. It included the receiving of a revelation (of the gospel) and the responsibility of calling out and establishing the people of God (focussing, in Paul's case, on the Gentiles) on the basis of that revelation.

## 3.2.2 **God's coworker**

Another concept fundamental to Paul's thinking about his own ministry is that of being God's coworker. Paul refers to himself explicitly as God's coworker in 1 Corinthians 3:9 and 2 Corinthians

<sup>11</sup> “For I would have you know, brothers, that the gospel that was preached by me is not man's gospel. For I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ” (Gal 1:11-12).

<sup>12</sup> Sandnes (1991:63-68) argues that Paul makes his defence in Galatians 1 against the background of the Old Testament concepts of prophetic call and sending, and true versus false prophecy. The implied accusations that he was not sent (Gal 1:1), and that his message was of human origin (Gal 1:11-12) are accusations that he was like the false prophets of the Old Testament. Thus Paul is concerned to identify himself with the true prophets and to assert that his message was indeed received by revelation from God (Gal 1:12,16).

<sup>13</sup> Various referred to as ὁ λόγος ὁ τοῦ σταυροῦ (1:18); τοῦ κηρύγματος (1:21); τὸ μυστήριον τοῦ θεοῦ (2:1).

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Thiselton 2000:207-208,240; O'Brien 1993: 621-622; Moo 1996:714.

<sup>15</sup> See also Moo (1996:936-940) for issues regarding the doxology's authenticity.

6:1.<sup>16</sup> There are a number of other key passages which also show that the idea of being God's partner in the work of ministry was central in his thinking.

### 3.2.2.1 1 Corinthians 3:5-7

In 1 Corinthians 3:5-7 Paul describes his and Apollos' work as planting and watering respectively. This is perhaps the classic Pauline statement on the relationship between divine and human effectiveness in the work of ministry. Paul is here addressing the Corinthians' attachment to human leaders by stating in categorical terms that the work of those leaders does not determine the results of gospel ministry. The agricultural metaphor clearly expresses the reality that human agents, "like agricultural laborers, perform tasks which remain *conditions for growth* (not *sources of growth*)" (Thiselton 2000:302, original emphasis). "What harvest would have sprung up from the labour of the two workers without the life which God alone could give?" (Godet 1957 1.175).

### 3.2.2.2 1 Corinthians 2:1-5

First Corinthians 2:1-5 records Paul's claims to have known nothing but Christ and him crucified when he first came to Corinth. These verses are part of a longer passage (1 Cor 1:18-2:16) in which Paul deals with the problem created by the Corinthian culture vis-à-vis rhetoric and popular philosophy.<sup>17</sup> The words *ὑπεροχὴν λόγου ἢ σοφίας*<sup>18</sup> (1 Cor 2:1) allude to the attention-seeking approach of sophists and rhetoricians in Corinth, which Paul deliberately rejected (Thiselton 2000:204-205; Winter 2002:155-162). Paul had decided, rather, to proclaim nothing but Jesus Christ and him crucified (1 Cor 2:2). The reason for choosing this approach is given in 1 Corinthians 2:4-5:

and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, *but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God* (1 Cor 2:4-5).

The key phrases in this passage are italicized. The first phrase ("but . . . Spirit and of power") refers to a persuasion that depends not on "convincing appeal", but ultimately on the power of the Holy Spirit (Thiselton 2000:219-220). The second phrase ("that your faith . . .") shows that the only faith which Paul regarded as genuine was that which had its origin in the power of God. This passage thus implies that Paul was not prepared to practise any kind of ministry in which the power of God was not the determining factor.

### 3.2.2.3 2 Corinthians 2:14

Second Corinthians 2:14-7:1 constitutes a lengthy discussion on the nature of ministry as Paul understands it. This passage begins with the statement that God "leads us in triumphal procession (*θηριαμβεύοντι*) and through us spreads (*φανερῶντι*) the fragrance of the knowledge of him everywhere" (2 Cor 2:14). There has been much discussion with relatively little consensus on the precise meaning of the metaphor implied in the word *θηριαμβεύοντι*.<sup>19</sup> It is nevertheless clear that God is the subject of both participles in this verse (*θηριαμβεύοντι* and *φανερῶντι*), and therefore he is the one ultimately responsible for the actions expressed. In particular, it is God who makes known

<sup>16</sup> The noun *συνεργός* is used in 1 Corinthians 3:9 (see discussion in section 4.3 below), and the participle *συνεργῶντος* is used in 2 Corinthians 6:1 (see section 3.2.2.7 below).

<sup>17</sup> See Thiselton (2000:147-286) for extensive bibliographies and discussion of the text, its background, and scholarship thereon. Winter (2002) and Pogoloff (1992) discuss the rhetorical background in detail.

<sup>18</sup> Thiselton (2000:208) translates this phrase with "high-sounding rhetoric or a display of cleverness".

<sup>19</sup> See, for example, Harris (2005:244); Barnett (1997:147-148); Hafemann (1990:7-83) for discussions of the debate.

the “fragrance of the knowledge of [Christ]” (τὴν ὄσμην τῆς γηώσεως αὐτοῦ) *through* Paul (δι’ ἡμῶν<sup>20</sup>), who is merely God’s agent.

#### 3.2.2.4 2 Corinthians 3:1-6

In response to challenges relating to the issue of commendatory letters, Paul states in 2 Corinthians 3:1-6 that the Corinthians themselves are his letter of commendation. With an allusion to the writing of God on the tablets of stone (Exod 31:18), Paul describes the Corinthians as a letter of Christ, inscribed not with ink (οὐ μέλανι) but by the Spirit of the living God. There could be no clearer statement that the Corinthians’ faith was the result of divine activity. It should not be missed, however, that Paul was intimately involved in the process. His role is expressed by the phrase διακονηθεῖσα ὑφ’ ἡμῶν, variously translated as “the result of our ministry” (NIV), “cared for by us” (NASB; Furnish 2005:182), “delivered by us” (ESV).<sup>21</sup> Whatever the precise meaning of the imagery may be, it is clear that Paul was involved in the Corinthians’ coming to faith and that his role was subservient to God’s role. The use of διακονέω also introduces the theme of ministry which is developed in 2 Corinthians 3 (Harris 2005:263). The importance of Paul’s part in the work is also seen from the fact that this is a proof that *his* ministry is genuine.

#### 3.2.2.5 2 Corinthians 4:1

After discussing the glory of new covenant ministry in 2 Corinthians 3, Paul concludes: “Therefore, having this ministry by the mercy of God, we do not lose heart (οὐκ ἐγκακοῦμεν)” (2 Cor 4:1). With these words Paul expresses his sense of responsibility at having been entrusted with the ministry of the new covenant. Such a sense of responsibility draws attention to the fact that the ministry comes from God, but it also shows that Paul’s active involvement was required. This requirement is particularly apparent from the phrase οὐκ ἐγκακοῦμεν at the end of the verse. In 2 Thessalonians 3:13 and Galatians 6:9 the same verb indicates discouragement and slackness with respect to doing good, and that seems to be the sense here too (cf. Harris 2005:323; Thrall 1994-2004:298-299). It is a strong statement of Paul’s commitment to pursue the work of ministry with all vigour, as illustrated in his efforts to visit the Thessalonians and to send Timothy to them when he was concerned about the progress of their faith (1 Thess 2:17-3:5).

#### 3.2.2.6 2 Corinthians 4:7-15; 12:8-10

“Power through weakness” is a well-known theme in Paul’s treatment of his own ministry, especially in 2 Corinthians.<sup>22</sup> Discussions of this topic are found in 2 Corinthians 4:7-15 (where Paul explains that God places the treasure of the gospel in clay jars), and in 2 Corinthians 12:1-10 (where Paul tells how God gave him a thorn in the flesh). Without going into details regarding Paul’s exposition of this theme, it is clear that he considers weakness to be an unavoidable aspect of his ministry precisely so that the power of God may be seen in it. This implies that God’s power — as well as evidence of God’s power — was a critical factor in the ministry; if that were not so, weakness would not have been necessary.

<sup>20</sup> Whether the plural pronoun refers to Paul alone or to Paul and one or more coworkers, it certainly includes Paul.

<sup>21</sup> Some commentators carry the letter-writing metaphor over into the participle διακονηθεῖσα and suggest that Paul thinks of himself as an amanuensis who wrote the letter at Christ’s dictation (Harris 2005:263).

<sup>22</sup> Savage (1996) provides a detailed treatment of this theme, comparing the Corinthian culture’s love for displays of status and power with Paul’s commitment to a lifestyle and ministry characterized by outward weakness. See also Clarke (1993; 2000).

## 3.2.2.7 2 Corinthians 5:18-6:1

In 2 Corinthians 5:18-6:1 Paul describes what is central in God's work of salvation: God has acted in Christ and is now reconciling the world to himself.<sup>23</sup> Interwoven with that description, however, is a powerful statement concerning the ministry in which Paul is involved:

All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled (καταλλάξαντος) us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation (τὴν διακονίαν τῆς καταλλαγῆς); that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation (τὸν λόγον τῆς καταλλαγῆς). Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ (ὑπὲρ Χριστοῦ οὖν πρεσβεύομεν), God making his appeal through us (ὡς τοῦ θεοῦ παρακαλοῦντος δι' ἡμῶν). We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God (καταλλάγητε τῷ θεῷ) (2 Cor 5:18-20).

In the context of his conflict with the Corinthians, Paul desires to show the glory of his ministry. That glory consists precisely in the fact that the ministry is an expression of God's work of salvation through Christ. Although God's work of reconciliation was, in a certain sense, completed with the death and resurrection of Christ (hence the aorist καταλλάξαντος), that work needed to be applied to the lives of individuals. Thus the work of ministry was not just some humanly-initiated appendage to God's work of salvation; it was an integral part of God's work of reconciling people to himself. The phrase ὑπὲρ Χριστοῦ οὖν πρεσβεύομεν, which evokes the image of diplomatic service, is a strong statement of the conjunction of divine and human in the ministry of Paul: "Paul, . . . does not seem to mean that the apostles come in Christ's absence, but that they come at his behest and therefore with his authority and in his service. . . . the emphasis lies upon apostleship as the agency of Christ's being present to his people and of his calling them to obedience" (Furnish 2005:350; cf. Harris 2005:445-446). The next phrase — ὡς τοῦ θεοῦ παρακαλοῦντος δι' ἡμῶν — expresses Paul's conviction that God himself was active in Paul's proclamation of the gospel.<sup>24</sup>

Paul's sense of being God's coworker comes to explicit expression in 2 Corinthians 6:1, where Paul states, Συνεργοῦντες δὲ καὶ παρακαλοῦμεν κτλ. Commentators generally agree that the connection between παρακαλοῦντος (2 Cor 5:20) and παρακαλοῦμεν in this verse indicates that τῷ θεῷ should be understood with συνεργοῦντες, thus: "as God's fellow workers . . ." (Furnish 2005:341; Thrall 1994-2004:451; Harris 2005:457).

## 3.2.2.8 1 Corinthians 15:10 and Romans 15:18

In describing his ministry to the Corinthians and to the Romans, Paul states clearly and simply that the real power behind his work as an apostle came from God and from Christ:

But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me (1 Cor 15:10).

For I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me to bring the Gentiles to obedience — by word and deed . . . (Rom 15:18).

<sup>23</sup> Commentators point out that, since Paul's use of καταλλάσσω in 2 Corinthians 5:18 is unusual if not unique, there is a strong emphasis on God's initiative and activity in the work of reconciliation (Porter 1994:16; Furnish 2005:335; Thrall 1994-2004:430; Harris 2005:436).

<sup>24</sup> The construction ὡς followed by the genitive absolute expresses the motivation of the subject of the main verb (in this case πρεσβεύομεν, whose subject is Paul), and the sense is therefore "we are ambassadors on Christ's behalf, being convinced that God is making his appeal through us" (BDF 425[3]); Harris 2005:446.

### 3.2.2.9 Conclusion: Paul as God's coworker

Paul understood himself to be God's coworker in the work of ministry. Part of the essential nature of his ministry was that it involved both his work and the work of God. This does not mean that Paul had a role parallel to that of God — something like two horses pulling in the same harness. Rather, Paul understood that God's power produced all the fruit of his ministry, so that any meaningful results from the ministry were to be understood as having been accomplished by the power of God alone. Paul's contribution was essential; he realized that the work would not be accomplished without his own tireless labour. Yet he knew that he was never more than a labourer who created the conditions for growth, or an instrument whom God used to accomplish his own saving purposes.

## 3.3 PAUL'S GOAL IN MINISTRY

Paul's letters show that he was anything but aimless in his ministry,<sup>25</sup> and therefore it will be impossible to understand his thinking and practice without a clear idea of what he understood to be the goal of his labour in the gospel. In this section four of Paul's Early Letters will be considered with a view to gaining insight into his missionary goals as he understood them. It will be convenient to begin with 1 Thessalonians, since this letter has some relatively simple but powerful statements showing what the apostle was aiming for in his ministry generally, and in his relationship with his converts in particular. It will become evident that the other letters considered here confirm the picture of 1 Thessalonians in this regard.

### 3.3.1 First Thessalonians: blameless on the day of Christ

First Thessalonians 3:13 states clearly that Paul prayed for God to strengthen the hearts of the Thessalonian believers so that they would be "blameless in holiness" (ἀμέμπτους ἐν ἀγιωσύνη) at the return of the Lord Jesus. This prayer is echoed by the doxology at the end of the letter, where Paul prays: "Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless (ἀμέμπτως) at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thess 5:23). The question naturally arises whether this blamelessness which Paul prays for is God's gracious declaration that comes through faith (cf. Rom 5:1-2,9-10) or whether it is based on the believers' actual conduct. Several considerations lead to the conclusion that Paul is speaking here about blamelessness in the conduct of the Thessalonian Christians:

1. The word ἄμεμπτος is frequently used to refer to moral conduct — often when a person's whole life is in view (Green 2002:180). This sense is confirmed by the use of the word on funeral epitaphs (cf. Horsley 1987:141).
2. There can be no question that Paul uses the word ἀμέμπτως to describe his own behaviour in 1 Thessalonians 2:10,<sup>26</sup> and that behaviour formed the basis for Paul's appeal to the Thessalonians to live lives worthy of God (1 Thess 2:12).

<sup>25</sup> The author of the Book of Acts evidently understood Paul to be a man with a clear sense of purpose — which he pursued with steadfast determination (cf. Acts 20:22-24; 21:10-13; 26:15-20).

<sup>26</sup> This assertion is strengthened by the likelihood that this section of the letter contains Paul's defence of his conduct against false charges that had been made against him to the Thessalonian Christians (Weima 2002:210-212; Weima 1997; cf. Green 2002:133).

3. The blamelessness which Paul prays for in 1 Thessalonians 3:13 is blamelessness in holiness (ἐν ἀγιωσύνη). The term ἀγιωσύνη usually refers to ethical behaviour (cf. 2 Cor 7:1; Louw & Nida 1996:1.744; Green 2002:180).<sup>27</sup>
4. The prayer of 1 Thessalonians 3:12, which leads into that of the following verse concerns the Thessalonians' ethical behaviour — “may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all” — and this suggests that the blamelessness is dependent on such ethical transformation.<sup>28</sup>

It may seem that there is a tension between this emphasis on ethical transformation and justification by faith, so prominent in Galatians and in Romans. Indeed, it has been claimed that the doctrine of justification is absent from 1 Thessalonians (Schnelle 1986:218; cf. Kim 2002:85). Kim (2002:86-88), however, has made a good case for the view that, in 1 Thessalonians no less than in Romans or Galatians, Paul views salvation in terms of acquittal at the final judgement on the basis of the atoning work of Christ (see 1 Thess 1:10; 4:14; 5:9-10). If Kim is right, then 1 Thessalonians shows no evidence of any tension in Paul's mind between justification by faith and the aim of ethical blamelessness at the coming of Christ. This conclusion is confirmed by a closer examination of the statements regarding blamelessness.<sup>29</sup>

Both of the “blamelessness” passages cited above show that it is God who produces this blamelessness in the Thessalonian believers: in 1 Thessalonians 3:13 Paul prays for God to strengthen the believers' hearts with a view to blamelessness, and in 1 Thessalonians 5:24 he states explicitly, “He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it.” This implies that blameless behaviour is not a meritorious work which earns God's acquittal on the day of judgement; rather, it is the work of God in his people. As such it is part of God's saving work, just as justification is part of God's saving work. Recognizing this, one can understand why Paul places primary emphasis on the believers' faith (1 Thess 1:3; 3:2,5-6,10), for it is by trusting in God's saving power that holiness is produced in their lives.<sup>30</sup> Instructions regarding obedience in particular areas of life (1 Thess 4:1-12) should be understood within the framework of trusting in God for complete salvation.

The depth of Paul's pastoral passion for the Thessalonian Christians is powerfully expressed in the statement that they are his hope, joy, and crown of boasting before the Lord Jesus at his coming (1 Thess 2:19). That passion led Paul to make strenuous efforts to return to them (1 Thess 2:17-18) and, when that was not possible, to send Timothy to strengthen their faith (1 Thess 3:1-5). Paul would have considered his efforts futile if the Thessalonians had not remained faithful to Christ (1 Thess 3:5), and his expressions of pastoral zeal culminate in the prayer for blamelessness on the day of Christ (1 Thess 3:13). Thus it is evident that Paul worked hard so that the believers would be blameless at the Parousia of the Lord Jesus; this blamelessness would make them his joy and crown of boasting.

<sup>27</sup> Weima (1996:99-102) shows that holiness of conduct is one of the central themes of 1 Thessalonians.

<sup>28</sup> Wanamaker (1990:140) notes the “implicit parenetic character” of 1 Thessalonians 3:12-13 and points out that they introduce the theme of the following chapters — namely holiness and the Parousia.

<sup>29</sup> It is still necessary to consider how God's free, gracious acquittal on the basis of faith relates to the need for ethical blamelessness on the day of Christ. See section 3.4.2 below for further comments on this issue.

<sup>30</sup> cf. Grundmann (1964-1976:573): “those who are justified by faith . . . have received the gift of the Holy Spirit whose fruit and operation is pleasing to God. Thus ἀμεμπτος can be both a motif of admonition and a sum of life's purpose”.

### 3.3.2 Galatians: a new creation

Galatians emphasizes the way that faith in Christ fulfils and thus supersedes the way of salvation found in the Old Testament law (e.g. Gal 3:16-19,23-24; 4:1-5). Accordingly, Paul in this letter presents gospel faith as characteristic of the new eschatological age. A number of important statements show that eschatological thinking was prominent in Paul's mind as he approached the pastoral problems of the Galatian Christians,<sup>31</sup> and Paul also describes his pastoral goal in terms of the new creation.

The Letter to the Galatians contains one of Paul's most passionate statements of his pastoral goal: "my little children, for whom I am again in the anguish of childbirth until Christ is formed in you!" (Gal 4:19). This statement should be understood in relation to Paul's eschatological thinking, and especially in relation to the idea that those who are united to Christ through faith are being renewed according to the image of God (Ridderbos 1997:224-225). It is clear, therefore, that Paul passionately desired the transformation — the re-creation — of his Galatian converts. This theme is developed in greater detail in Galatians 5:16-18,22-25, where the Spirit is the agent of transformation in the lives of the believers. Beale (2005:1-30) has made a good case for interpreting the "fruit of the Spirit" passage as the fulfilment of Old Testament promises of a fruitful new creation — hence the statement, ". . . neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation" (Gal 6:15). As in the case of 1 Thessalonians, Paul's pastoral concern in Galatians has the final judgement in view: "Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life" (Gal 6:7-8).

Paul's passionate defence of justification through faith apart from the law in Galatians (e.g. Gal 2:16; 3:10-11) has sometimes been felt to stand at odds with any appeal for ethical transformation.<sup>32</sup> Yet a careful reading of the letter shows no tension between the uncompromising defence of justification apart from works and the ethical imperative of the latter chapters. The point is that Paul is deeply concerned for the Galatians — to the point where he fears that his efforts for them might prove to have been in vain (Gal 4:11; cf. Thompson 2007:62). He also realizes that they will never experience the transformation demanded by the coming judgement if they abandon the faith of the gospel and rely on the "flesh" or on the "works of the law" (Gal 3:3). The appeal for the Galatians to return to the true faith of the gospel is thus essential if Paul's stated vision of ethical transformation is to be realized. This highlights the harmony between gospel faith and the fruit of the Spirit.

It is easy to trace the correspondence between Paul's pastoral goal as it is expressed in Galatians and in 1 Thessalonians. In both cases the apostle looks forward to the final judgement and seeks the sanctification of his converts in preparation for that day. This sanctification is always the work of God — simply stated in 1 Thessalonians 5:23, and expressed as the work of the Spirit in the new creation in Galatians.<sup>33</sup> Furthermore, it is gospel faith in both cases which leads to sanctification.

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<sup>31</sup> The frequent references to the Spirit (e.g. Gal 3:2; 5:16-18,22-25) and the explicit statement about the new creation (Gal 6:15) show that, in Galatians, Paul thought strongly in terms of the presence of the eschatological age. (The presence of the Spirit is widely recognized as one of the most important characteristics of the new age — e.g. Parsons 2001:110; Dunn 2006:477.) See further the remaining discussion in this section.

<sup>32</sup> Hence Bruce's (1990:42) comment: ". . . those who derive their understanding of Paulinism exclusively, or even mainly, from this letter are apt to present a lop-sided construction of the apostle's teaching — to become 'more Pauline than Paul', like Marcion in the second century."

<sup>33</sup> Galatians 4:19; 5:16-18,22-25.

### 3.3.3 First Corinthians: building on the foundation

Paul's first canonical letter to the Corinthians provides rich insight into his pastoral goals, for the letter addresses a number of practical problems in sufficient detail to show how Paul's pastoral vision guided his actual pastoral work. In a statement closely analogous to 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24 (this time in the introduction to the letter), Paul expresses confidence that the Lord Jesus Christ (or perhaps God) will establish the Corinthian believers to the end, "guiltless (ἀνεγκλήτους) in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor 1:8). Thiselton (2000:101-102) correctly points out that the adjective ἀνεγκλήτους draws attention to the verdict which God will pronounce rather than to a quality of the Corinthians' lives (cf. Fee 1987:43); nevertheless, one cannot avoid enquiring into the basis on which that verdict will be pronounced. Thiselton (2000:102) himself relates the verdict to justification by grace; Barrett (1987:39) similarly sees in this verse a reference to justification: "The goal (of acceptance at the day of Christ) is sure, notwithstanding man's unfaithfulness and, in particular, many Corinthian moral failures, because God, . . . is faithful." However, the close parallel between 1 Corinthians 1:8-9 and 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24<sup>34</sup> makes it virtually certain that the reference here is to ethical blamelessness. The point is precisely *not* that the Corinthians will be acquitted on the day of judgement irrespective of their faithfulness, but that God will establish them (βεβαιώσσει) *so that* they will be blameless on that day. It is in this work of sanctification that God's faithfulness is seen.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>36</sup> There is still a great deal of progress to be made in the Corinthian believers to prepare them for Christ's return (cf. Thompson 2007:124-125), but Paul is confident that God will bring his work in them to completion. Thus Paul's pastoral goal is to see the Corinthian believers thoroughly prepared for the day of Christ through God's work of sanctification. This interpretation is borne out by the rest of the letter.<sup>37</sup>

The well-known passage which compares the church to a building (1 Cor 3:10-17) is often considered in relation to the question of eternal rewards, and attention is almost always focussed on the builders in the metaphor. However, it is not often noticed that this passage has important implications for Paul's understanding of the church's readiness for the day of judgement. As Thompson (2007:128) notes, "Paul's discussion discloses his pastoral theology." Paul is looking forward not only to the testing of those who build on the foundation (primarily ministers of the gospel), but also to the testing of the work (i.e. the church) itself. The church may prove to have been built with gold, silver and precious stones, or with wood, hay and stubble; it may even be destroyed (1 Cor 3:12,17). The day (1 Cor 3:13) — i.e. the day of judgement — will show the quality of building that has gone into the church. It is the high value which Paul places on the church — and the decisive role of the day of judgement — that makes the work of ministers so important and renders them accountable for the way the church fares on the Day. There is surely a connection between what Paul says here and the vision of believers being blameless on the day of Christ: if the believers are blameless then the church will survive the test because it will be shown to be made of gold, silver and precious stones. It is important to note that it is not only individual members of the community, but the community as a whole which will be tested on the day of judgement.

<sup>34</sup> Note especially the parallel between 1 Corinthians 1:9 (πιστὸς ὁ θεός, δι' οὗ ἐκλήθητε κτλ) and 1 Thessalonians 5:24 (πιστὸς ὁ καλῶν ὑμᾶς, ὃς καὶ ποιήσει.)

<sup>35</sup> Cf. the ὃς καὶ ποιήσει of 1 Thessalonians 5:24, which refers to God's work of sanctification mentioned in the previous verse and represents the outworking of God's faithfulness.

<sup>36</sup> Thompson (2006:124) comes to a similar conclusion regarding 1 Corinthians 1:8 on the basis of parallels with Philippians 1:6,10 and 1 Thessalonians 3:13.

<sup>37</sup> See the remaining discussion in this section.

Throughout the remainder of 1 Corinthians Paul brings the need for blamelessness at the final judgement to bear on the various pastoral issues faced by the church in Corinth. He constantly reminds the members of the church that certain forms of behaviour cannot lead to eternal life and that God will, if necessary, discipline his people in order to prepare them for the judgement. Some examples of this reasoning are:

1. In 1 Corinthians 5:5 Paul instructs the Corinthian church to deliver a sexual offender over to Satan “for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord”. It is unlikely that Paul is speaking here about the physical death of the offender (*pace* Barrett 1987:126); rather, Paul is instructing the church to expose the offender to the power of Satan outside the protection of the church, with the aim of provoking him to repentance. This will result in his salvation “in the day of the Lord”.<sup>38</sup>
2. After dealing with the immoral man (1 Cor 5), and with the problem of lawsuits amongst believers (1 Cor 6:1-8), Paul sternly warns the Corinthians: “Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God?” (1 Cor 6:9). This is followed by a list of vices which are included in the term “unrighteous”. Paul is clearly warning the Corinthians that anyone who persists in such practice will not be considered blameless on the day of judgement and will not inherit eternal life. Yet the warning does not prevent Paul from expressing confidence in the restoration of any offenders: καὶ ταῦτά τινες ἦτε· ἀλλὰ ἀπελούσασθε, ἀλλὰ ἡγιάσθητε, ἀλλὰ ἐδικαιώθητε κτλ. The contrast between the Corinthians’ past and their present (resulting from the work of God) is highlighted by the threefold ἀλλά, which has a strongly adversative sense (cf. Barrett 1987:141). Paul is here expressing his confidence that the work of God will ultimately overcome the force of remaining sin,<sup>39</sup> thus confirming the assurance expressed in 1 Corinthians 1:8-9.
3. The discussion of strong and weak (1 Cor 8) leads on to Paul’s description of the way he surrenders his own rights (1 Cor 9), culminating in the statement that he disciplines his body lest he, after preaching to others, should forfeit the prize (1 Cor 9:27).<sup>40</sup> Paul seems here to be referring to eschatological salvation (Barrett 1987:218).<sup>41</sup> This leads on to a lesson from Israel’s history whereby the Corinthians are warned to avoid all forms of idolatry which could, as in the case of Old Testament Israel, lead to destruction (Barrett 1987:218-229).
4. In 1 Corinthians 11:27-32 Paul places the Corinthians’ (mis)behaviour at the Lord’s Supper in an eschatological light. He urges the members of the church to recognize that their disregard for the Lord’s Supper could have implications for the final judgement, but also points out that God himself was disciplining them so as to bring them back to obedience and to prevent them from suffering final condemnation (cf. Thompson 2007:132).

<sup>38</sup> See Thiselton (2000:395-400) for detailed argumentation.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Thiselton (2000:454): “But the new forces . . . are decisive and *will* crowd out and disperse the old *inevitably*” (original emphasis).

<sup>40</sup> There has been a great deal of discussion regarding the integrity of 1 Corinthians 8:1-11:1, but it is probably correct to regard this section as a unified argument (Thiselton 2000:717-718; Fee 1987:357-363).

<sup>41</sup> Thiselton (2000:717) is unwilling to be specific about eschatological salvation in this verse. However, the context — especially 1 Corinthians 9:25 (referring to an imperishable wreath) and the warnings of 1 Cor 10:1-12 — seems to indicate that Paul has eschatological salvation (or the loss of it) in view.

The above discussion shows that Paul's pastoral goal as it is revealed in 1 Corinthians is in complete harmony with the evidence of 1 Thessalonians and Galatians: Paul had a passion to see believers thoroughly sanctified and therefore blameless on the day of Christ, ready to receive God's eschatological salvation. First Corinthians further reveals that Paul was guided by this vision as he dealt with the details of particular pastoral problems.

In addition to this goal of leading believers to holiness in preparation for the return of Christ, 1 Corinthians also reveals the centrality of community formation in Paul's pastoral ministry. His desire was not only to minister to the believers directly himself, but to see the whole church being built up into a united community, or body (to use Paul's own metaphor), in which each member ministered to the others so that all could be built up. This goal appears in various ways throughout the letter:

1. Paul was deeply disturbed by the report of divisions in the church, and a large section of the letter (1 Cor 1:18-4:21) was devoted to helping the Corinthian believers put their divisions aside. The metaphor of the building, that Paul uses in 1 Corinthians 3:10-17 (also referred to in this section above), shows that Paul wanted to see the church being built up as a temple indwelt by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 3:16).
2. In the discussion on food offered to idols (1 Cor 8), Paul acknowledges that there is no inherent reason why a believer could not partake of such food (since idols don't actually exist — 1 Cor 8:4-6). Yet, the greater concern was the spiritual well-being of a fellow-believer who misunderstood the issue and whose conscience taught him that it was wrong to eat such food (1 Cor 8:13). If such a person were to go against his conscience and eat food that had been offered to idols, he would be "destroyed" (1 Cor 8:11). Therefore those who understood the issue, and whose consciences allowed them to eat the food, should be willing to refrain in love for their fellow-believers — for "'knowledge' puffs up, but love builds up" (1 Cor 8:1). It is the building up which is important.
3. The discussion on "spiritual things" (τὰ πνευματικά) in 1 Corinthians 12, with the metaphor of the body that is so prominent, shows that Paul understands the church to be an interactive unit in which each member has a role to play "for the common good" (1 Cor 12:7).<sup>42</sup> Paul was deeply concerned about attitudes that marginalized certain members and their contribution to the body. He wanted each member to be recognized and to contribute for the benefit of all.
4. 1 Corinthians 14 deals with the highly contested issue of "tongues" and prophecy, and there is much in this chapter which is unclear.<sup>43</sup> However, one thing that is clear is Paul's concern that contributions to public worship should edify, it should build up: the 1 Corinthians 14 includes five references to building up (three to building up the church [either using the noun οἰκοδομή or the verb οἰκοδομέω] — 1 Cor 14:4,5,12; one to building up the other person [ὁ ἕτερος οὐκ οἰκοδομεῖται] — 1 Cor 14:17; and one general reference [πάντα πρὸς οἰκοδομὴν γινέσθω] — 1 Cor 14:26).<sup>44,45</sup>

<sup>42</sup> See section 5.4.1 below for a detailed discussion of this passage.

<sup>43</sup> Note Thiselton's (2000:902) comment: "Hardly any statement about chs. 12 and 14 remains uncontroversial".

<sup>44</sup> Cf. Thiselton (2000:1074) "Each stage of argument in 14:1-25 focuses on the building up of the other."

<sup>45</sup> See Ridderbos (1997:429-432) for a discussion of the church as a building and as the body of Christ in redemptive-historical context. Ridderbos points out that these two metaphors are closely connected and sometimes merge.

### 3.3.4 Second Corinthians: appearing before the judgement seat of Christ

The second canonical letter to the Corinthians reflects a similar pastoral goal to that of the three letters discussed above. This goal is implied in 2 Corinthians 1:14, which echoes 1 Thessalonians 2:19-20; 3:13; 5:23-24 and 1 Corinthians 1:8-9. The key passage in 2 Corinthians, however, is surely 2 Corinthians 5:10:

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.

τοὺς γὰρ πάντας ἡμᾶς φανερωθῆναι δεῖ ἔμπροσθεν τοῦ βήματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ, ἵνα κομισῆται ἕκαστος τὰ διὰ τοῦ σώματος πρὸς ἃ ἔπραξεν, εἴτε ἀγαθὸν εἴτε φαῦλον.

At the centre of Paul's thought in this verse stands the reality of a judgement in which all Christians must appear before Christ. On this point commentators are agreed (e.g. Martin 1986:114-116; Furnish 2005:275-277,305; Thrall 1994-2004:394-395; Harris 2005:405-410). Most present day commentators understand that this judgement applies to Christians rather than to all people, and that its outcome relates not to eternal salvation but to "rewards" in some form or other (see above references). However, a strong case can be made for the universality of this judgement in which the outcome is indeed eternal salvation. The following points are significant:

1. Even if the "we . . . all" at the beginning of the verse refers only to Christians, this does not mean that the judgement itself is restricted to Christians. In fact, Paul's response to this judgement, expressed in the next verses, is to persuade people to be reconciled to God:

Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade others. . . . that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God (2 Cor 5:11,19-20).

Paul certainly aimed to persuade unbelievers to be reconciled to God; the flow of thought in 2 Corinthians 5:10-20 shows that he exercised this ministry of persuasion in the light of the judgement described in verse 10, and so this judgement must have believers and unbelievers in view.

2. The preceding discussion on Paul's pastoral goal (section 3.3 above) shows that Paul frequently urged believers to holy living on the assumption that the reward of eternal life would follow such holiness.
3. Harris (2005:406) argues that "Where Paul applies the principle of recompense according to works to all people (Rom. 2:6), there is found a description of two mutually exclusive categories of people (Rom. 2:7-10), not a delineation of two types of action". However, Romans 2:6 states explicitly that God will recompense κατὰ τὰ ἔργα — works which are described in verses 7-10. There seems to be no material difference between that description and the πρὸς ἃ ἔπραξεν of 2 Corinthians 5:10. Furthermore, the aorist ἔπραξεν of 2 Corinthians 5:10 (most probably a constative aorist), along with the singular adjectives ἀγαθὸν and φαῦλον, suggests that it is not individual works, but a person's life as a whole that will be under review at this judgement (Martin 1986:115). This would be fully in accord with Romans 2:6-10 which distinguishes people on the basis of the overall tenor of their lives.

It is reasonable to conclude that Paul, in 2 Corinthians 5:10-11, reminds the Corinthian Christians that he conducts his ministry with an eye on the final judgement and an awareness that only those

who are reconciled to God through Christ (cf. 2 Cor 5:18-21), and have lived lives that are pleasing to God, will receive the gift of eternal life.<sup>46</sup> This should be understood as the theological framework of Paul's exhortation to holiness in 2 Corinthians 7:1<sup>47</sup> and of his expressions of concern for his converts in 2 Corinthians 11:2,28-29. Similarly, the joy he expresses at the Corinthians' repentance (2 Cor 7:6-13) derives its significance from this framework. The vision of Christ's return and the reality of judgement gave Paul a clear focus and a powerful sense of urgency in his pastoral ministry: his converts needed to bring "holiness to completion in the fear of God" (2 Cor 7:1).

### 3.4 ENDS AND MEANS: THE LETTER TO THE ROMANS

Paul's presentation of his pastoral aims takes on a slightly different complexion in Romans when compared with the letters discussed above. In Romans, Paul's stated goal is the "obedience of faith" among the Gentiles. Section 3.4.1 below will show that this phrase does not refer to ethical transformation, which was a central concern in 1 Thessalonians, 1 & 2 Corinthians, and Galatians. Nevertheless, it will be seen that such ethical transformation continues to play a central role in the Letter to the Romans. In addition, Romans contains a detailed and extensive discussion of how ethical transformation is achieved in the lives of believers through the gospel and faith. Romans, therefore, moves the discussion of Paul's understanding of his own ministry forward by providing significant insight into the *means* by which Paul expected to achieve his pastoral aims.

#### 3.4.1 The goal: obedience of faith

Paul's pastoral goal is stated clearly in the Letter to the Romans: ". . . through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith (εἰς ὑπακοὴν πίστεως) for the sake of his name among all the nations" (Rom 1:5). Clearly Paul's aim as an apostle was to bring about the "obedience of faith" among the Gentiles for the sake of Christ's name.<sup>48</sup> This aim is echoed again at the end of Romans, firstly where Paul speaks about what Christ has done through him εἰς ὑπακοὴν ἐθνῶν (Rom 15:18) and secondly in the doxology (Rom 16:26).<sup>49</sup> It is simple enough to identify this stated aim, but there has been a great deal of debate around the meaning of the phrase.<sup>50</sup>

The various possible meanings of ὑπακοὴ πίστεως are listed by Cranfield (1980-1986:66) and Garlington (1994:14), of which the most plausible are:

1. the interpretation which understands πίστεως as an adjectival genitive, thus giving the sense "believing obedience";
2. "the obedience that comes from faith", taking πίστεως as a subjective genitive or a genitive of origin (this gives a sense close to 1 Thessalonians 1:3 — "work of faith");
3. "obedience which consists in faith", understanding πίστεως as a genitive of apposition.

It is tempting, in the light of the foregoing discussion (section 3.3) regarding Paul's emphasis on ethical blamelessness in preparation for the day of Christ, to choose either the first or the second of

<sup>46</sup> The relationship of judgement according to works with salvation by grace alone will be discussed below (section 3.4.2).

<sup>47</sup> It is significant that Paul makes the fear of God (ἐν φόβῳ θεοῦ) the motivation for holiness in 2 Corinthians 7:1. The same phrase is used in 2 Corinthians 5:11, and it is therefore reasonable to conclude that Paul has the judgement of 5:10 in mind when he makes the exhortation of 7:1.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. Garlington (1994:10), who states that the phrase ὑπακοὴ πίστεως expresses "the very design of the apostle's missionary labors".

<sup>49</sup> See section 3.2.1.3 above for comments on the genuineness of the doxology.

<sup>50</sup> Apart from the standard commentaries, see the monograph of Garlington (1991), which examines the concept of believing obedience in a number of Jewish texts; see also Garlington (1994:10-31).

these options. This would indicate that Paul's stated aim in Romans is to bring about an ethical obedience which flows out of gospel faith — fully in agreement with what is found in the earlier letters. However, most commentators read *πίστεως* in Romans 1:5 as a genitive of apposition (option 3 above), and this conclusion really is demanded by the way Paul uses *πίστις* and *ὑπακοή* interchangeably in Romans.<sup>51</sup> What this means is that, in this passage, Paul's stated aim is to lead people to obey the gospel by exercising faith. However, this is not all that needs to be said about the meaning of the passage.

Perhaps the most important question still to be answered is: Precisely what is the import of *πίστις* in this text? It is often held that *πίστις* refers to the initial act of faith, the initial response to the gospel (e.g. Cranfield 1980-1986:67; Murray 1959:13-14). Thus, many interpreters who choose option 3 above, and interpret faith as the initial response to the gospel, understand Paul to be saying here that his main focus is on bringing people to conversion.<sup>52</sup> Other scholars find this interpretation inadequate on the grounds that it underplays the importance of post-conversion obedience. Thus Moo (1996:52) complains that this interpretation “by evaporating ‘obedience’ into faith, gives insufficient emphasis to this part of Paul's ministry.” Garlington (1994:17) also wishes to find more in the phrase “obedience of faith” than just the initial response of the gospel, no matter how inevitably a true response must lead to a changed life. As a result, these scholars are unwilling to relinquish completely the first two options listed above.<sup>53</sup>

These objections can be met by observing in the first place that the obedience spoken of in Romans 1:5 is not the only obedience that concerns Paul: just because *this* obedience is the obedience that consists in believing the gospel, it cannot be concluded that Paul does not speak elsewhere about obedience that consists in specific acts. Secondly, even a brief consideration of the context of Romans 1:5, as well as the rest of the letter, shows that the faith referred to in Romans 1:5 cannot refer only to the initial act of faith. Note the following points:

1. Paul expresses a desire to minister to the Romans (Rom 1:11), to impart to them a spiritual gift for their strengthening (*εἰς τὸ στηριχθῆναι*). This would be the result of his preaching of the gospel in Rome (Rom 1:15). In effect, Paul is relating his commission — which was expressed in general terms in Romans 1:1,5 — to the specific situation of the Roman Christians.<sup>54</sup> Surely, therefore, the aim in view in 1:5 must include the aim

<sup>51</sup> Note the following pairs (Cranfield 1980-86:66; Garlington 1994:16):

- ἡ *πίστις* ὑμῶν καταγγέλλεται ἐν ὅλῳ τῷ κόσμῳ (Rom 1:8) & ἡ γὰρ ὑμῶν *ὑπακοή* εἰς πάντας ἀφίκετο (Rom 16:19);
- Ἀλλ' οὐ πάντες *ὑπήκουσαν* τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ (Rom 10:16a) & Ἡσαΐας γὰρ λέγει, Κύριε, τίς *ἐπίστευσεν* τῇ ἀκοῇ ἡμῶν (Rom 10:16b);
- κάκεινοι δέ, ἐὰν μὴ ἐπιμένωσιν τῇ *ἀπιστίᾳ* (Rom 11:23) & νῦν δὲ ἠλεήθητε τῇ τούτων *ἀπειθείᾳ*, οὕτως καὶ οὗτοι νῦν *ἠπειθήσαν* τῷ ὑμετέρῳ ἐλέει κτλ (Rom 11:30,31);
- οὐ γὰρ τολμήσω τι λαλεῖν ὧν οὐ κατειργάσατο Χριστὸς δι' ἐμοῦ εἰς *ὑπακοήν* ἔθνῶν (Rom 15:18) & δι' οὗ ἐλάβομεν χάριν καὶ ἀποστολὴν εἰς ὑπακοήν *πίστεως* ἐν πᾶσιν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν (Rom 1:5).

Note also 2 Thessalonians 1:8: . . . καὶ τοῖς μὴ ὑπακούουσιν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ.

<sup>52</sup> It would not be correct to infer that these scholars ignore the place of obedience subsequent to conversion, but that is seen as the natural or necessary *sequel* to faith (cf. Cranfield 1980-1986:67; Moo 1996:52).

<sup>53</sup> Moo (1996:52-53) does not state his position using grammatical terms, but his interpretation amounts to that of option 1 or 2. Garlington (1994:16-31, esp. 30) interprets *πίστεως* as deliberately *ambiguous*, being both a genitive of apposition and a genitive of origin. O'Brien (2004:269-270, n.78) justifiably has certain difficulties with the way Garlington separates faith and obedience in his treatment of the passage.

<sup>54</sup> Note the parallel between Romans 1:1 (*ἀφωρισμένος εἰς εὐαγγέλιον* θεοῦ) and 1:15 (τὸ κατ' ἐμὲ *πρόθυμον . . . εὐαγγελίσασθαι*).

expressed in 1:11. This is confirmed in verse 6 of Romans 1. Since the Roman Christians had made their initial response to the gospel before Paul wrote to them, the obedience of faith must embrace more than just that initial response.<sup>55</sup>

2. In 1 Thessalonians 3:2, the verb *στηρίζω* is used of Timothy's action in strengthening the believers' faith — a clear parallel to Romans 1:12. This confirms the conclusion of the previous point — that Paul has the faith of the Roman Christians in view when he speaks about the "obedience of faith".
3. It is significant that Paul uses the present participle *πιστεύοντι* in Romans 1:16,<sup>56</sup> indicating that he is concerned not with a once-off decision but with faith that is ongoing.<sup>57</sup>

Thus Paul's pastoral vision, as expressed in Romans 1:5 and related passages, is a vision of the Gentiles obeying the gospel by steadfastly continuing to trust in God through Christ for his salvation. This faith requires nourishment, not least through the work of ministry like Paul's.

This vision must now be related to the strong ethical and eschatological dimension of Paul's pastoral goal as it is expressed in the earlier letters. In order to do this there are two questions which must be answered:

1. How does Paul understand transformation in the life of a believer in the Letter to the Romans?
2. What is the role of faith in the believer's transformation?

### 3.4.2 Transformation in the life of a believer

Many commentators have felt that there is a conflict between the idea of judgement according to works (which relates to "blamelessness on the day of Christ") and the doctrine of justification through faith alone<sup>58</sup> (which relates to the obedience of faith).<sup>59</sup> Hence Snodgrass (1986:73), in dealing with Romans 2, comments that "one can understand readily why commentaries become brief or less than precise at this point for obviously what Paul says [regarding judgement according to works] does not seem 'to fit the system'." Similarly, Yinger (1999:1) notes that there is "no consensus or even large-scale agreement on how to relate" justification by faith alone and judgement according to deeds.<sup>60</sup> However, Romans, more than any other Pauline letter, shows the *absolute*

<sup>55</sup> Cf. Garlington (1994:26-27) and Bowers (1987:196).

<sup>56</sup> Thus the verse can be translated: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is God's power for salvation to everyone who *is believing* [present participle]."

<sup>57</sup> Compare also 1 Corinthians 15:2, where salvation is viewed as a continuing process dependent on ongoing adherence to the gospel, rather than a simple decision of the past. Second Thessalonians 1:8 also uses a present participle (*ὑπακούουσιν*), again focussing on the durative nature of the action.

<sup>58</sup> The doctrine of justification by faith has become hotly debated in recent years as a result of the "new perspective on Paul" (see, e.g. McGrath 1993; Garlington 2003; Piper 2003; Piper 2007). Nevertheless, commentators are still agreed that, in Romans 4:5 in particular, Paul teaches that those who believe receive a new status of acceptance before God that is not based on works, or on their own worthiness of any kind, but on God's grace (Cranfield 1980-1986:230-232; Moo 1996:264-265; Jewett 2007:314-315). Even Dunn (2006:366-367), who explains many of the passages that have traditionally been held to refer to meritorious good works as referring merely to Jewish identity markers, does not deny that Romans 4:5 teaches the classic (Reformation) doctrine of justification apart from works.

<sup>59</sup> This perceived conflict has been prominent in the traditional Protestant interpretation of the letter.

<sup>60</sup> Yinger (1999) has devoted a whole monograph to the question of judgement according to deeds in Paul and in Judaism.

*harmony* between justification by faith alone and final salvation following a life of good works. The key lies in understanding the process of transformation<sup>61</sup> which itself is a work of God's grace.

#### 3.4.2.1 *Romans 1:16-17: the gospel as God's power for salvation*

The theme of the letter (Romans 1:16-17) is a good place to begin in seeking to understand Paul's thinking on the relationship between the obedience of faith and blamelessness on the day of Christ. Romans 1:16 states:

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes (παντι τῷ πιστεύοντι), to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

In this verse Paul demonstrates the importance of faith: the gospel is God's power for salvation to those who have faith; conversely, those who do not believe cannot experience the gospel as God's power. But the verse also states the goal to which faith leads, namely salvation. A proper understanding of this salvation sheds much light on the relationship between faith and blamelessness on the day of Christ.

Salvation as used in Paul generally, and particularly in this verse, has a strong eschatological focus. It refers primarily to deliverance from God's wrath on the day of judgement and to the restoration of God's glory in creation — a glory that was lost through sin. However, there is also a sense in which believers experience the beginning of that salvation in the present world (Foerster & Fohrer 1964-1976:992-994; Cranfield 1980-1986:88-89; Moo 1996:66-67). Salvation is therefore not complete at the moment a person first believes the gospel; initial faith begins a process which culminates at the coming of Christ. That culmination is what Paul has in view in Romans 2, where he states that final salvation comes to those whose lives are characterized by appropriate deeds:

He [God] will render to each one according to his works: to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury. There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek, but glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek. For God shows no partiality (Rom 2:6-11).<sup>62</sup>

The same idea is echoed in Romans 6:

But what fruit were you getting at that time [i.e. before conversion] from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom 6:21-23).

These passages make it clear that final salvation follows a life of holiness. Thus it should be understood at the outset that righteous living is not an addendum to salvation; it is part of the process of salvation and it depends on the exercise of God's power, a power which is received through believing the gospel. Holy living is not somehow at odds with justification by faith apart

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<sup>61</sup> The recent work by Samra (2006) shows that transformation is an important concept in Paul's thinking, and that this concept, and the associated concept of growth in maturity have been neglected in favour of concepts like indicative/imperative (see esp. Samra 2006:5-8).

<sup>62</sup> Many interpreters understand these good works to be a description of the good works performed by believers (see, e.g. Cranfield 1980-1986:146-153; Moo 1996:136-143). This interpretation is accepted as correct.

from works; it is one of the goals of justification by faith apart from works. Returning to the theme of the letter, Romans 1:17 now explains why the gospel is God's power for salvation:

For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, "The righteous shall live by faith" (Rom 1:17).

δικαιοσύνη γὰρ θεοῦ ἐν αὐτῷ ἀποκαλύπτεται ἐκ πίστεως εἰς πίστιν, καθὼς γέγραπται· ὁ δὲ δίκαιος ἐκ πίστεως ζήσεται (Rom 1:17).

The gospel is God's power for salvation because "God's righteousness" (or, "a righteousness from God") is revealed in it. Furthermore, this righteousness is "from faith to faith". Thus the train of thought from verse 16 to verse 17 is:

1. Those who believe experience the working of God's power in such a way that they will be vindicated at the final judgement because their lives will be characterized by such works as are described in Romans 2:7. (This follows from the understanding of salvation outlined above.)
2. This power will be experienced through the revelation of δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ in the gospel and through the exercise of faith.

It is clear that Paul conceives of δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ as the key to experiencing God's salvation. Therefore it is no surprise that the reception of God's righteousness by faith becomes the main theme of Romans 1 to 5. It now becomes necessary to inquire into the meaning of δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ, and to understand how this leads to a transformed life, resulting in final salvation.

The phrase δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ can rightly be called a storm centre in the interpretation of Romans. The literature which focuses on the meaning of the phrase is massive, and the debate has received new impetus from the "new perspective" on Paul.<sup>63</sup> It is hardly possible to enter the debate here; conclusions with brief reasons will simply be stated.

It is recognized by all scholars, and can hardly be denied, that the phrase δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ has its background in the Old Testament (as do all of the words belonging to the δικ- group). In particular, Romans 1:17 (and also Rom 3:21) alludes to Psalm 98:2 and Isaiah 51:5-6,8, which speak of God making known his salvation and revealing his righteousness. This concept must have informed Paul's thinking, so that he wanted his readers to associate the phrase δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ with the revelation of God's salvation as described in Psalm 98 and Isaiah 51. However, Paul's use of the phrase in Romans makes it difficult simply to equate δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ with the saving power of God. Note:

1. Paul may have taken an Old Testament phrase and used it with freedom and originality (Cranfield 1980-1986:97).
2. The absence of the article from δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ in Romans 1:17; 3:21,22 — in contrast to its presence in the LXX of Psalm 97:2<sup>64</sup> and Isaiah 51:5-6,8 — may be an indication that Paul was deliberately making a distinction between his use of the phrase and its Old Testament use (though Käsemann 1986:25 calls this a "foolish debate"). It is interesting that in Romans 3:25, where Paul refers specifically to God's righteousness as a divine attribute, he uses the article.

<sup>63</sup> See, e.g. Cranfield (1980-1986:91-100); Jewett (2007:141-143); Käsemann (1986:25-30); Moo (1996:69-90); Onesti & Brauch (1993); Seifrid (2004).

<sup>64</sup> Psalm 98 in the English versions is numbered as Psalm 97 in the LXX.

3. The use of δικαιοσύνη with λογίζομαι in Romans 4:3,5,6,9,11,22 indicates that, in Romans 4 at least, δικαιοσύνη cannot refer to God's salvation and must refer to a status that is given to man. (It is meaningless to say that faith is regarded or credited as salvation understood as an act of God.)
4. Romans 4 is really an expansion of Paul's initial statement (Rom 3:21-26) that the believer is justified through faith, so it would seem reasonable to infer that δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ in Romans 3:21 refers to the righteous status given to believers through the gospel. Furthermore, the wording of Romans 3:21 (δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ πεφανέρωται) corresponds to that of Romans 1:17 (δικαιοσύνη . . . θεοῦ . . . ἀποκαλύπτεται) and it seems as though, in Romans 3:21, Paul is picking up his earlier expression in such a way as to indicate that he is now going to explain it. This suggests that δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ in Romans 1:17 means the same as it does in Romans 3:21-26 and Romans 4, namely, a status of righteousness which God freely gives to those who believe.<sup>65</sup>

Hence, it may be concluded that δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ in Romans 1:17 refers to the righteous status which God gives to believers, but also that Paul intended his readers to understand it as the fulfilment of the universal salvation referred to in Psalm 98:2 and Isaiah 51:5-6,8.<sup>66</sup>

#### 3.4.2.2 *The connection between righteousness, holiness and final salvation*

Returning to the logic of Romans 1:17, it can now be shown how Paul understands the "righteousness of God" to lead to holiness of life and thereby to final salvation.

After demonstrating in Romans 1:18-3:20 that all humankind is under sin (Rom 3:9), Paul expounds his doctrine of justification through faith in Romans 3:21-4:25. The *καὶ* of 3:21 signifies a "transition to a new phase" of Paul's exposition of the gospel (Moo 1996:221). This can be seen in the way the subject matter moves from the problem of sin to the revelation of God's righteousness, thus resuming the main theme of the epistle (cf. Rom 1:17). After explaining that a person can be righteous only through faith, on the basis of Christ's atoning work (Rom 3:21-25), Paul uses Abraham as an example to prove that the Old Testament itself ("the Law and the Prophets" — cf. Rom 3:21) bears testimony to this righteousness that is by faith. The whole argument is brought to a magnificent climax in Romans 5:1-11, where the finality and permanence of the believer's reconciliation is emphasized by the perfect tense of the verbs ἐσχήκαμεν and ἐστήκαμεν in 5:2 (Moo 1996:300; BDF §343[2]).<sup>67</sup> The section concludes with the powerful arguments in 5:9-11, which emphasize the certainty with which believers can expect final salvation:

<sup>65</sup> See also the discussion in Schreiner (2001:189-217) for an explanation of God's righteousness as a status conferred on the believer.

<sup>66</sup> Moo seeks to do justice to the Old Testament background as well as to Paul's use of δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ by interpreting the phrase to refer *both* to God's saving activity *and* to the righteous status given to believers: "Could we not take "righteousness of God" here to include *both* God's activity of "making right" — saving, vindicating — *and* the status of those who are so made right, in a relational sense that bridges the divine and the human?" (Moo 1996:74). It would seem a strange use of language to have one word or phrase denoting two things at the same time, but we may be approaching a grasp of Paul's mind if God's saving activity is understood as part of the *connotative* meaning of δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ.

<sup>67</sup> "Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God" (Rom 5:1-2).

Δικαιωθέντες οὖν ἐκ πίστεως εἰρήνην ἔχομεν πρὸς τὸν θεὸν διὰ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ δι' οὗ καὶ τὴν προσαγωγὴν ἐσχήκαμεν [τῇ πίστει] εἰς τὴν χάριν ταύτην ἐν ἣ ἐστήκαμεν καὶ καυχώμεθα ἐπ' ἐλπίδι τῆς δόξης τοῦ θεοῦ (Rom 5:1-2).

Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation (Rom 5:9-11).

There may seem to be a conflict between the triumphant certainty of Romans 5:1-11 and the apparent contingency of the idea of judgement according to works that has been assumed in the discussion so far. This may be partly responsible for the perceived conflict between the doctrine of justification by faith and that of judgement according to works that was noted above.<sup>68</sup> However, even in the midst of these verses there are indications that Paul has not abandoned the idea of judgement according to works.

1. In Romans 5:3, Paul states, "we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance (ὕπομονή)". It is noteworthy that ὑπομονή is the first quality of those whose deeds will lead to final vindication according to Romans 2:6-10. The import of the statement in Romans 5:3 is this: Paul is so confident of the power of the gospel, and of the fact that justification will lead to final salvation (as indicated in Romans 1:16-17), that even sufferings are seen to promote that salvation by producing the qualities required for the day of judgement.
2. In Romans 5:10 Paul states that those who were enemies, and have been reconciled by the death of his Son, will certainly also be saved by his life. It is clear that the salvation referred to is salvation from the wrath of God on the day of judgement. The means of that salvation is the life of Christ, which should probably be understood in the light of Romans 6:4 (and many other verses) as referring to the life of Christ in the believer (cf. Moo 1996:312; Jewett 2007:366-367). This life produces ethical transformation in the believer and thus prepares him for the day of judgement. Note in this verse that the certainty of final salvation is emphasized.

Moving on through Romans 5, it is seen that Paul concludes the passage comparing Adam to Christ with a statement of the powerful effects of the righteousness that believers have in Christ:

. . . so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord (Rom 5:21).

This verse echoes the main theme: God's salvation ("eternal life") comes to the believer by God's power ("grace") through righteousness. There is a clear temporal and logical progression in the verse: (a) God freely bestows on the believer his gift of righteousness; (b) this gift makes possible the reign of grace in the believer's life; and (c) this reign of grace leads to eternal life. The implications and outworking of the reign of grace are not described, but the discussion up to this point would lead us to expect that the reign of grace must be expressed (at least in part) in the transformation of the believer's life — since it is this transformation which prepares the believer to stand at the final judgement and thereafter to receive eternal life. This is the very theme which Romans 6 takes up.

#### 3.4.2.3 *Romans 6: the process of transformation*

Romans 6 is crucial to understanding the process of transformation that occurs in the life of a believer. It is not possible to give a detailed exegesis of the whole chapter — which contains many

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<sup>68</sup> See page 61 above.

exegetical difficulties of its own<sup>69</sup> — but it is important to grasp the logic and thrust of the passage, especially of verses 1-11. As in Romans 3:3,5,31 and 6:15, Paul poses a question which represents a possible misunderstanding of what he has just written: “Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?” (Rom 6:1). The answer, as in the other instances, is the emphatic *μη γένοιτο*. Following is an explanation of how the believer has been liberated from the power of sin so that he may live a life of holiness and ultimately receive eternal life. Before examining some of the details, it is helpful to note three of the controlling perspectives that guide Paul’s thinking in this chapter:

1. *Union with Christ*. Every verse in Romans 6:3-11, except verse 7,<sup>70</sup> refers explicitly either to Christ himself (vv.9-10) or to the believer’s union with Christ. It is evident that Paul’s whole argument in this section revolves around and depends on the reality of (a) Christ’s death and resurrection; and (b) the believer’s union with Christ. Victory over sin cannot be comprehended outside of this union.
2. *The reality of the new age for the believer*. The idea that those who have believed in Christ experience the new (eschatological) age underlies Paul’s reasoning in Romans 6. As Moo (1996:366) notes with reference to 6:4, union with Christ enables the believer to live “a life empowered by the realities of the new age” (which is a life characterized by ethical transformation; see also Cranfield 1980-1986:305; Jewett 2007:399-400).
3. *The reign of sin and death*. For one who desires to live in obedience to God, the problem to be overcome is the reign of sin and death (cf. Rom 5:21: “as sin reigned in death . . .”). Overcoming this problem is not as simple as receiving ethical instruction and obeying it, for those who have not received the gift of God’s righteousness are unable to obey God’s law (cf. Rom 5:20: “the law came in to increase the trespass”, and Rom 7:5: “For while we were living in the flesh, our sinful passions, aroused by the law, were at work in our members to bear fruit for death.”) Nothing short of new life is required.

The various uses of *θάνατος*, *νεκρός* and *ἀποθνήσκω* in Romans 6 are best understood in terms of an overall concept of death which is, in the first place, an expression of God’s judgement on sin (cf. Gen 2:16; Rom 1:31; Cranfield 1980-1986:294; Scott 1993:553).<sup>71</sup> This judgement results in physical death, but also in alienation from God, and as a result, total inability to please God or obey his commands. This is the argument of Romans 1:18-31 (cf. also Rom 7:9-11<sup>72</sup>). Thus, in Paul’s thought in Romans 6, a person who has not been declared righteous/justified through union with Christ lives under God’s judgement and therefore under the power of death and sin, with no human possibility of escaping that power. Solving the problem of death requires solving the problem of God’s judgement. When that is solved, death can no longer be a problem.

<sup>69</sup> Cf. Jewett’s (2007:405) comment on Romans 6:7: “. . . it appears that no fully satisfactory solution is currently available.”

<sup>70</sup> The exegesis given below understands Romans 6:7 to refer implicitly to the believer’s union with Christ.

<sup>71</sup> Cf. Bultmann’s (1964-1976:15) comment: “No attempt is made to interpret death as a natural process and thus to neutralise it. Even where it is seen to be defeated by the resurrection and death and resurrection are described in terms of an analogy from nature (1 C. 15:36; Jn. 12:24), *it is no more regarded as a natural process than is the resurrection*” (emphasis added).

<sup>72</sup> “I was once alive apart from the law, but when the commandment came, sin came alive and I died. The very commandment that promised life proved to be death to me. For sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me” (Rom 7:9-11).

The crux of Paul's argument in Romans 6:1-11 is found in verses 6-7. Verse 6 contains three clauses of which the second is a purpose clause and the third is a result clause:

1. Knowing this that our old man was crucified with [Christ],
  2. in order that the body of sin might be destroyed,
  3. so that we might no longer serve sin as slaves (literal translation).
1. τοῦτο γινώσκοντες ὅτι ὁ παλαιὸς ἡμῶν ἄνθρωπος συνεσταυρώθη,
  2. ἵνα καταργηθῇ τὸ σῶμα τῆς ἁμαρτίας,
  3. τοῦ μηκέτι δουλεύειν ἡμᾶς τῇ ἁμαρτίᾳ

In the first clause, ὁ παλαιὸς ἡμῶν ἄνθρωπος refers not to some part or nature of the person, but to the entire person as he is in Adam; i.e. the person that belongs to the old aeon with all its corruption. This παλαιὸς ἄνθρωπος that the believer has *in the sight of God* been crucified with Christ; this is a matter of God's decision in accordance with the truths of the gospel (Cranfield 1980-1986:308-309; Moo 1996:373-375; Jewett 2007:402-403). The purpose of that crucifixion with Christ is expressed in clause 2, where τὸ σῶμα τῆς ἁμαρτίας probably refers to the whole person as he is under the power of sin.<sup>73</sup> Moo (1996:375) translates ἵνα καταργηθῇ as "in order that [the body of sin] might be rendered powerless", but this interpretation makes clauses 2 and 3 mean essentially the same thing. Furthermore, the problem as Paul sees it is not that τὸ σῶμα τῆς ἁμαρτίας is an evil power from which a person must be freed; rather, τὸ σῶμα τῆς ἁμαρτίας is under the power of sin. Thus, it is better to follow Cranfield (1980-1986:309-310) and other interpreters who understand καταργηθῇ to mean "destroyed". Following the argument from clause 1 to clause 2, Paul is saying that the "old man" was crucified with Christ in order that the person in sin might be destroyed. Both clauses refer to the person's status in God's sight and the logic is that, by participating in the death of Christ (Rom 6:3-4), the person is viewed by God as having suffered death (and the associated judgement) himself. Clause 3 now states the end which is accomplished by the person's death in God's sight: "so that we might no longer serve sin as slaves" (my translation). This is the very problem which is at the heart of this chapter. Romans 6:6 could thus be paraphrased like this: "Our old person was crucified with Christ so that we, as we are in our sin, might suffer death in God's sight — with the result that we are no longer be enslaved to sin."

According to this explanation, the first two clauses in Romans 6:6 are closely connected, and the logical progression from clause 1 to clause 2 is easy to understand. However, there is a logical gap between the last two clauses. The progression from clause 2 to clause 3 seems to be based on an unstated assumption, so the question may be asked: why does death in God's sight free one from sin? Verse 7<sup>74</sup> now supplies the logical connection between clauses 2 and 3; this is the force of the γὰρ at the beginning of the verse.

Romans 6:7 has caused much difficulty to commentators, mainly because of the unusual use of the verb δικαιόω with ἀπὸ τῆς ἁμαρτίας: there is no other instance in the Pauline literature where the verb δικαιόω is used with ἀπὸ (Moo 1996:377, n.128). For this reason some commentators understand its meaning to be "set free from" (Moo 1996:377). However, the combination of δικαιόω with ἀπὸ (τῆς) ἁμαρτίας does occur in Acts 13:38 as well as in Sirach 26:29 (Jewett 2007:404). In both these texts δικαιόω may be interpreted in the normal Pauline sense of "declare righteous". It would

<sup>73</sup> σῶμα is often used by Paul to refer to the whole person, not just the physical body (Rom 6:12-13; 12:1; cf. Cranfield 1980-1986:309; Moo 1996:375). For σῶμα τῆς ἁμαρτίας, compare Romans 7:24, which speaks about τὸ σῶμα τῆς θανάτου, from which the Paul (as he represents himself under the law) must be delivered.

<sup>74</sup> ὁ γὰρ ἀποθανὼν δεδικαίωται ἀπὸ τῆς ἁμαρτίας.

also seem unlikely for Paul, in Romans 6:7, to use δικαιώω to mean something other than what he normally uses it to mean, especially when the word is so crucial to the whole argument of Romans, and when he could easily have used the word ἐλευθερώω, as he does in 6:18. Accepting, then, that δεδικαίωται ἀπὸ τῆς ἁμαρτίας in Romans 6:7 means “declare righteous/justify from sin”, what is the meaning of the verse as a whole?

As indicated above, Romans 6:7 supplies the unstated premise which connects clause 2 and clause 3 of verse 6. Why does dying in God’s sight lead to freedom from the power of sin? Because the one who has died (“in God’s sight” should be understood from the context) has been declared righteous from sin. And why does being declared righteous from sin free one from the power of sin? Because being declared righteous leads to peace with God and freedom from his judgement (Rom 5:1-2). And freedom from God’s judgement means freedom from death and its reign, which leave man utterly powerless to obey God (see p.64, point 3 above on the reign of sin and death). Thus, the logic of the argument in Romans 6:6-7 is this:

Our [referring to believers] “old man” was crucified with Christ (in God’s sight);  
 therefore that “body of sin” died (in God’s sight);  
 therefore we [believers] have been declared righteous from sin in God’s sight;  
 therefore we have been freed from the debilitating power of death;  
 therefore we are no longer enslaved to sin.

This interpretation derives added force if the verb δικαιώω in verse 7 is heard with overtones of the universal salvation promised in Psalm 98:2 and Isaiah 51:5-6,8 (see the discussion on the meaning of δικαιοσύνη τοῦ θεοῦ above, p.61). In this case, Paul intends his readers to associate God’s powerful, eschatological salvation with the statement that the one who has died has been declared righteous from sin. Haldane’s comment on this verse further explains the exegesis given above:

So long as the sinner is under the guilt of sin, God can have no friendly intercourse with him; for what communion hath light with darkness? But Christ having canceled His people’s guilt, having redeemed them from the curse of the law and invested them with the robe of His righteousness, there is no longer any obstacle to their communion with God, or any barrier to the free ingress of sanctifying grace. . . . The moment, therefore, that he is by faith brought into union with the second Adam — the grand truth on which the Apostle had been insisting in the preceding part of this chapter, by means of which believers are dead to sin — in that moment the source of sanctification is opened up, and streams of purifying grace flow into his soul. He is delivered from the law whereby sin had dominion over him. He is one with Him who is the fountain of holiness (Haldane 1996:256-257).

The flow of thought in Romans 6:8-11 now follows fairly easily. In verse 8, Paul summarizes the argument just outlined in verses 6-7: “Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him.” The statement “we will also live with him” probably refers to ethical holiness (cf. Rom 6:4) rather than to the final resurrection, since the latter sense is quite peripheral to the argument at this point (Cranfield 1980-1986:312-313; *pace* Moo 1996:377). The verb “we believe” (πιστεύομεν) indicates that the believer’s assurance of living a new life with Christ is based on faith (and therefore on the revelation of the gospel), rather than on mere natural understanding or knowledge.

In Romans 6:9-10,<sup>75</sup> Paul speaks about Christ’s death and resurrection, since it is in union with him that believers experience freedom from sin. The finality of Christ’s death and resurrection is the basis

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<sup>75</sup> <sup>9</sup> We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. <sup>10</sup> For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God (Rom 6:9-10).

of the believer's confidence that he has been freed decisively from the power of sin and death. The first clause of verse 9 states the simple fact that Christ "no longer dies" (literal translation) or "will never die again" (ESV), and the second provides a theological interpretation of this fact: "death no longer has dominion over him". In other words, Christ's resurrection means not merely that he will never die again, but that he is forever free from death as *the* expression of God's judgement on sin. The first clause of verse 10 provides the reason why Christ is forever free of death's curse: "the death he died he died to sin".<sup>76</sup> Some commentators interpret the phrase "died to sin" in verse 10 to mean something different from the way that believers die in Christ (cf. v.2: ἀπεθάνομεν τῇ ἁμαρτίᾳ), understanding it to mean that Christ affected sin by his death (Cranfield 1980-1986:314; Moo 1996:379). However, if it is understood that, in his death, Christ bore the penalty of God's judgement on sin,<sup>77</sup> the phrase "died to sin" in Romans 6:10 can mean much the same as it does in Romans 6:2.<sup>78</sup> It means that, by suffering God's judgement for sin in death, God's wrath was exhausted and death no longer had any claim on Christ. The result of this is that Christ lives eternally "to God". Although Moo (1996:379) translates τῷ θεῷ in Romans 6:10b more strictly as a dative of advantage, with the meaning "for (the glory of) God", it may be better to allow the looser sense of "person affected". In this case the meaning of τῷ θεῷ would be something like "before God" or "in the presence of God".<sup>79</sup> Paul here presents a glorious picture of Christ, eternally alive in the presence of God, permanently free from the claims and effects of sin and death.

Romans 6:11 now relates the realities of Christ's death and resurrection to the believer's victory over sin:

So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus (Rom 6:11).<sup>80</sup>

Note firstly the correlation between Christ and the believer expressed by the particle οὕτως ("so . . . also"). As Christ is dead to sin and therefore free from its power, so also the believer is free from the power of sin. Death — not mere physical death but death as God's judgement on sin — has no more claim on the believer than it has on Christ. This is so because the believer has, on the basis of his union with Christ, died in the sight of God. He is therefore seen as one who has suffered the punishment for sin and has therefore been declared righteous in God's sight. For him the new age has dawned and he is forever alive in the presence of God through his union with Christ. The powerlessness and slavery to sin that result from being under God's wrath (Rom 1:18-31) no longer apply to the believer. These are facts revealed in the gospel.

<sup>9</sup> εἰδότες ὅτι Χριστὸς ἐγερθεὶς ἐκ νεκρῶν οὐκέτι ἀποθνήσκει, θάνατος αὐτοῦ οὐκέτι κυριεύει. <sup>10</sup> ὁ γὰρ ἀπέθανεν, τῇ ἁμαρτίᾳ ἀπέθανεν ἐφάπαξ· ὁ δὲ ζῆ, ζῆ τῷ θεῷ (Rom 6:9-10).

<sup>76</sup> The ESV, along with most commentators, understands ὁ γὰρ ἀπέθανεν to stand for τὸν γὰρ θάνατον ὃν ἀπέθανεν and ὁ δὲ ζῆ as τὴν δὲ ζωὴν ἣν ζῆ (Cranfield 1980-1986:313; Moo 1996:378; see also BDF §154[2]).

<sup>77</sup> This is the meaning of Romans 3:25: "whom God put forward as a propitiation (ἱλαστήριον)". The word ἱλαστήριον has been the subject of considerable debate; the ESV translation "propitiation", with the implication of turning aside God's wrath, is accepted here (see Moo 1996:231-236 for discussion of the debate and reasons for accepting this sense).

<sup>78</sup> The dative ἁμαρτία can be classified technically as a "dative of disadvantage" or "dative of person affected", but it should be noted that "Paul uses several combinations especially loosely" (BDF §188[2]). The death to sin can therefore be understood as a death in relation to sin.

<sup>79</sup> See BDF §188[2] and note 78 above. Romans 14:4 may provide a helpful parallel: τῷ ἰδίῳ κυρίῳ στήκει ἢ πίπτει ("It is before his own master that he stands or falls" ESV).

<sup>80</sup> οὕτως καὶ ὑμεῖς λογίζεσθε ἑαυτοὺς [εἶναι] νεκροὺς μὲν τῇ ἁμαρτίᾳ ζῶντας δὲ τῷ θεῷ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ (Rom 6:11).

In light of these facts, the imperative λογίζεσθε (“you . . . must consider”) is significant. Paul is not commanding his readers to imagine something that is not true; he is commanding them to make a “deliberate and sober judgment on the basis of the gospel” (Cranfield 1980-1986:315). It is certainly not obvious (or even intelligible) to human reason that the believer is dead to sin and alive to God — that is why the imperative is necessary — and believers will constantly be tempted to look at their situation from the perspective of mere human reason — that is why the imperative is in the present tense — but the constant exercise of faith,<sup>81</sup> directed towards the revealed truth of the gospel, will allow believers to participate in the reality described in this verse (see also Moo 1996:380; Waldron 1995:178).

#### 3.4.2.4 Ethical teaching in Romans 8-16

This exposition of Romans 6 (and some of the passages leading up to it) is sufficient to clarify Paul’s understanding of the relationship between justification, faith, transformation and the final judgement. Under this section it is now necessary only to comment on two further passages. Firstly, Romans 8:1-17 expresses the transformation of life, and the certainty of eternal life, experienced by those who walk according to the Spirit. There are certainly many important details in this section — and there is much debate about their precise meaning — but this main thrust is clear (Cranfield 1980-1986:377-378,394; Jewett 2007:485; Moo 1996:468,476-477,494). Note especially the connection between moral transformation and final salvation in Romans 8:12-13.

Secondly, Romans 12:1-2 serves to introduce the so-called ethical section of the letter (Rom 12:1-15:13). However, this section should not be seen as “the addendum to Romans but the climax of the argument for the believing community” (Thompson 2007:110). Hence οὖν at the beginning of verse 1 indicates a consequential connection with the entire argument up to this point. Also, the phrase διὰ τῶν οἰκτιρμῶν τοῦ θεοῦ (“by the mercies of God”) indicates that the ethical instruction is grounded in the grace and mercy of God as it has been expounded in Romans 1-11 (cf. Cranfield 1980-1986:595-596). As the community of Christians in Rome fulfils the ethical instructions of these last few chapters, it will demonstrate that the situation of Romans 1:18-31 has been reversed.<sup>82</sup> The important implication of this connection is that ethical transformation is impossible without an understanding of God’s grace and righteousness revealed in the gospel; this can only be appropriated by faith.

#### 3.4.3 Faith and transformation in Romans

The discussion of transformation in the previous section has indicated at various points that transformation in the life of the believer (a) is essential for final salvation; (b) can only be experienced by those who trust in God for the righteousness revealed in the gospel; (c) is guaranteed to those who trust God in this way. It may also be observed that no kind of moral transformation which is of any worth in God’s sight (at least as far as final salvation is concerned) is possible for a person who has not received the righteousness of God by faith. This section will use the exegetical insights of the previous section (3.4.2) to highlight the connection between faith and ethical transformation; some conclusions will also be drawn regarding the implications of Paul’s desire to bring about the “obedience of faith” among his converts.

The following are the key links between ethical transformation and faith that can be drawn from the discussion in the previous section:

<sup>81</sup> Cf. πιστεύομεν in Romans 6:8 and the discussion above (p.25) on that verse.

<sup>82</sup> Note the contrast between παρέδωκεν αὐτοὺς ὁ θεὸς εἰς ἀδόκιμον νοῦν in Romans 1:28 with τῆ ἀνακαινώσει τοῦ νοῦς εἰς τὸ δοκιμάζειν κ.τ.λ. in Romans 12:2.

1. In Romans 1 to 4, Paul demonstrates that all human beings, both Jew and Gentile, live under God's wrath and fail to keep his commands (Rom 1:18-3:20). They are in fact unable to keep his commands. Yet, in the face of human rebellion and failure, God has revealed his saving righteousness. This righteousness is in the first place a status given to those who believe; it creates a new relationship between believers and God so that there is peace between them (Rom 5:1-2). This righteousness comes only through faith, as Romans 4 is designed to prove.
2. The righteousness given to believers leads to the reign of grace in their lives (Rom 5:21). Since believers have been united to Christ in his death, God accepts and receives them as those whose sins have been judged (Rom 6:6-7). Death, as the judgement of God with the resulting inability to please God, no longer has any claim on believers' lives. Just as Christ has been permanently liberated from the claim and power of death, so believers have been liberated from that claim and power (Rom 6:6-10). All of these effects in the believer may be regarded as objective effects resulting from the gift of righteousness. They are true whether or not the believer understands them to be so.
3. Believers experience this liberation subjectively as they understand and believe what God has done for them in Christ. The reality of this liberating work is not accessible to human reason; it is revealed in the gospel and can only be appropriated by faith. Hence Paul states in Romans 6:8, "we believe that we will also live with him". For the same reason he commands his readers to "consider" themselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

It can be seen from the above that the objective power of God that works in a person, giving him the gift of righteousness, transforming him and leading him to final salvation, is received through faith and by no other means. Furthermore, the subjective experience of this power also depends completely on faith as the believer understands and appropriates the power available to him through grace and through the gospel. At every stage, the revelation of the gospel demands a certain obedience from the hearer; that obedience is the response of faith. This explains why Paul so often uses the present participle or infinitive form of the verb πιστεύω.<sup>83</sup> He wishes to emphasize the fact that true faith is not a once-for-all action, but a settled, ongoing trust in God "who gives life to the dead and calls into existence things that do not exist" (Rom 4:17).

From all of the above it can be seen why it is particularly appropriate for Paul to say that he has received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience *which is faith* from among all the nations. He is not minimizing ethical obedience (hence Romans 12:1-15:13), but he understands that such obedience is only possible as faith responds to the gospel and unites the believer to Christ.<sup>84</sup> The Book of Romans as a whole has the gospel at its centre (Rom 1:1,16-17); and Paul knows that if he can, as a pastor, lead people to understand the gospel and respond to it in faith, then they will experience the transforming power of God's righteousness which will produce in them the blamelessness that is required for the coming judgement. Paul's pastoral practice in 1 Thessalonians, where the emphasis is on "blamelessness on the day of Christ", is consistent with this emphasis in Romans: after being torn away from the believers, he sent to learn about their *faith*, and was overjoyed when he heard about their *faith* and love (1 Thess 3:5-6).

<sup>83</sup> See Romans 1:16; 3:22; 4:5,11,24; 9:33; 10:4,11 (present participle); 15:13 (present infinitive). The present tense indicates durative (ongoing) action in the infinitive and the participle (BDF §338-339).

<sup>84</sup> Hence there is no need to say that interpreting "obedience of faith" to mean "obedience which is faith" "gives insufficient emphasis to this part of Paul's ministry" (Moo 1996:52).

### 3.5 CONCLUSION

It is now necessary to draw together the various features of Paul's ministry as he understood it. In the first place it should be noted that Paul saw his ministry in the light of eternity, and particularly in the light of Christ's return. His goal was to present believers blameless before Christ at his coming (section 3.3). It has been argued throughout that this blamelessness is an ethical blamelessness characterized by "persistence in doing good" and by "seek[ing] glory, honor and immortality" (Rom 2:7). Final salvation would be received when believers stood blameless on the day of Christ. In the light of human sinfulness and inability, and of God's judgement (Rom 1:18-32), only a supernatural work of God is able to bring about such transformation. Hence Paul had a clear conception of his role as God's coworker (section 3.2.2). Though he applied himself strenuously to the work of ministry he knew that he was only creating the conditions for meaningful transformation in people's lives; the real power came from God.

The letters considered in this chapter also show that God's means of bringing people into a relationship with himself, and of transforming them, is the gospel — which is his power for the salvation of all who believe (Rom 1:16). The gospel reveals that God gives a status of righteousness to all believers; through this gift of righteousness they are restored to fellowship with God (Rom 5:1). Having been reconciled to God, Christians experience God's power at work in them, transforming and sanctifying them.

Because God's own power is the real cause of transformation, and because the gospel is the means God uses, Paul's identity was bound up with the gospel (cf. Rom 1:1). As an apostle, Paul had received the revelation of the gospel as well as a commission to preach it among the Gentiles. He was convinced that by bringing people to respond to the gospel in faith, whether for the first time or as an ongoing expression of the Christian life, he would enable them to experience God's transforming power preparing them for the day of Christ.

The work of community formation, or the building up of the body of Christ, was also a central part of Paul's ministry, as seen in 1 Corinthians. Although this can be seen as an end in itself, it also served the end of helping believers to grow into the image of Christ through their ministry to one another within the body of Christ. The ministry of Paul's coworkers (which is discussed in the next chapter) can be seen as an integral part of community formation, whereby the churches were built up and believers equipped to minister to one another.

## CHAPTER 4

### PAUL'S COWORKERS

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#### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

It has often been observed that there are few, if any, references to formal offices in Paul's Early Letters. Indeed, this fact lies behind the long-held view that there were no formal offices in the Pauline congregations during the founding period, and that church order during this period was purely "charismatic", based on the gifts given from time to time by the Holy Spirit. It is also one of the primary pieces of evidence needing to be explained by scholars who seek an alternative to that view.<sup>1</sup> One of the most significant recent treatments of this question is that of Campbell (2004), who explains that there are few references to formal leadership positions because the household heads — who already had a leadership role in the society — naturally took on leadership responsibilities in the newly-established churches. This view echoes and builds on the views of Meeks (2003:134; see also Wanamaker 1990:193). The earlier view has been criticized for assuming that the theological statements in the New Testament can be read as descriptions of social realities in the New Testament churches (Holmberg 1978:205-207; Campbell 2004:100-106). On the other hand, newer approaches which lean heavily on socio-historical and social scientific research tend to underplay the theological perspectives that are so prominent in the Pauline Letters.<sup>2</sup> It may be helpful, then, to look for a different approach to explaining the nature of leadership in the emerging Pauline churches.

The previous chapter investigated Paul's understanding of his own ministry. It was found that Paul's ambition was to present believers blameless on the day of Christ, and that he was convinced that the gospel was the means by which his ambition would be realized. All of Paul's efforts in and on behalf of the churches were directed towards the realization of this ambition through the ministry

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<sup>1</sup> See, e.g., the survey given by Campbell (2004:5-19). Burtchaell (1992:1-179) gives a detailed and comprehensive survey of the field from the time of the Reformation to the late twentieth century.

<sup>2</sup> Holmberg's (1978:206-207) intention in pointing out the danger of the "idealistic fallacy" was not to banish theology from consideration; he recognized that theology was also a historical reality needing to be considered, but he judged that New Testament scholarship at that time was not guilty of neglecting theological considerations in favour of social ones. Holmberg (1978:207) terms the latter error the "materialistic fallacy".

of the gospel. This is a historical reality which is abundantly evident from the primary sources, as was shown in chapter 3. It is therefore natural to expect that this ambition would play an important role in the development of the churches and their leadership. Indeed, one might expect that Paul's first priority in expanding his own ministry and establishing the churches was not to establish a leadership office as such, but to find other people who could share in ministering the gospel. This leads to a consideration of Paul's coworkers as the first historical step in the development of leadership in the Pauline churches.

Some of the recent treatments of leadership and leadership issues in the Pauline churches have recognized the important role of Paul's coworkers (Dickson 2003:86-152; Ehrensperger 2007:35-62; Clarke 2008:152-154).<sup>3</sup> Dickson emphasizes the role of the coworkers as preachers of the gospel, either alongside Paul or in a localized area in Paul's absence. Ehrensperger focuses on the relationship between Paul, the coworkers and the congregations, especially with reference to the exercise of "power" within these relationships. Clarke (2008:152-155, esp. p.155) does not treat the subject at length, but he does note the centrality of the teaching function exercised by those who were regarded as leaders in the Pauline churches. For the purposes of this study it is necessary to examine the role of the coworkers in relation to Paul's gospel and the work of ministering the gospel; hence, this chapter will investigate Paul's Early Letters to discover how other people became involved in the work of gospel ministry. It becomes clear that

1. from the time of the earliest records, Paul recognized and involved other people in the work of ministering the gospel to prepare believers for the day of Christ;
2. in Paul's understanding, the authority and effectiveness of the coworkers' ministry derived from the power of God at work through the gospel, not from any position of leadership or authority.

The first point is concerned primarily with historical description and is dealt with in section 4.2. The second point seeks to provide a theological understanding of why Paul was able to recognize and involve coworkers in the ministry of the gospel; it is considered in section 4.3.

#### 4.2 THE INVOLVEMENT OF COWORKERS IN MINISTRY WITH PAUL

Recent scholars have noted that the image of Paul working as a lone ranger to plant churches and spread the gospel is quite wrong (Drews 2006:1-2; Ehrensperger 2007:35-37; Ellis 1993:183-188). Paul worked with a large number of people, some of whom itinerated as he did, and some of whom were resident in the churches. The Early Pauline Letters shed much light on the role played by these people. In some cases the descriptions of their work are straightforward, but in other cases it is necessary to make inferences from the meanings of individual words in order to understand how the coworkers were involved in the work of the gospel. This section seeks to provide a historical understanding of the coworkers by examining:

1. Timothy's activities and role as Paul's coworker;
2. the role of the Thessalonian leaders (1 Thess 5:12-13);
3. the role of other coworkers.

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<sup>3</sup> Drews (2006:2-16) provides a useful survey of the literature on Paul's coworkers, most of which has been published in German; for a survey of English publications see Ellis (1993).

#### 4.2.1 Timothy as Paul's coworker

The primary passage relating to Timothy's work as Paul's coworker is 1 Thessalonians 3:1-10. This passage evidences in some detail the work that Timothy was called upon to fulfil when he was sent back to Thessalonica from Athens in order to encourage the new believers.

Some scholars have argued that passages like this, in which Paul sends one of his coworkers to perform a particular task, are to be understood in terms of the concept of the "envoy", whereby the envoy is the representative and substitute of the one who sent him. Two seminal articles in this connection are those of Funk (1967) and Mitchell (1992). For Funk (1967:249), the concept of "apostolic *parousia*", understood as "the presence of apostolic authority and power" is fundamental to understanding the activity of Paul's coworkers in passages like 1 Thessalonians 3:1-10: the role of the coworkers is to bear or mediate the apostolic *parousia* in situations where Paul was not able to be present himself. This view assumes that "Paul must have thought of his presence as the bearer of charismatic, one might even say, eschatological, power" (Funk 1967:265).<sup>4</sup> In similar vein, Mitchell (1992:644) states:

One of the most pervasive concepts in all of NT literature is that of the envoy, one who is sent by another to represent him or her in the carrying out of a certain function. . . . The general principle governing all social relations, formal and informal, in the first century is that *ὁ λαμβάνων ἄν τινα πέμψω ἐμὲ λαμβάνει* (John 13:20).

After explaining and illustrating this statement she proceeds to interpret Paul's sending of Timothy, Titus and others in terms of the "envoy" convention, though she does note that "Paul does not use such nominal terms as *ἀπόστολος*, *ἄγγελος*, *πρεσβευτής*, or *κῆρυξ* to describe the persons whom he sends" (Mitchell 1992:652).<sup>5</sup> Similarly, Wanamaker (1990:69), referring to Funk's article claims that "Timothy exercised Paul's apostolic *parousia*, that is, he embodied Paul's apostolic authority and power to the churches in Paul's absence". Again, Wanamaker (1990:127) states in commenting on 1 Thessalonians 3:2 that "Timothy was authorized to act in [Paul's] place in dealing with the community. . . . Timothy functioned as his 'apostle'".

It may well be that 1 Thessalonians 3:1-10 reflects some of the first-century conventions relating to envoys, but it is doubtful whether the envoy category is particularly helpful for understanding the transactions and relationships reflected in this passage. Some more recent commentators, in fact, highlight the similarity between Timothy's ministry and that of Paul (e.g. Dickson 2003:91-94;

<sup>4</sup> In support of this claim, Funk (1967:265) refers to 1 Corinthians 4:18-21; 5:3-5; 2 Corinthians 2:14-17; 10:11; 13:1-4,10. It should also be noted that Funk (1967:265, n.1) warns against exaggerating Paul's role; he states: "John Knox rightly warns against views that assign to Paul an exaggerated estimate of his own role in the eschatological plan of God . . . Paul does not hold the view that the eschaton depends on him. He may have thought of himself as the supreme apostle to the Gentiles, but he nowhere denies the right of others to labour among the Gentiles, and he appears to be willing to quit the scene himself (Phil. 1:19ff.). It follows that Paul does not regard his *parousia* as the *parousia* of Christ."

<sup>5</sup> Funk and Mitchell use a form-critical approach as the basis of their analyses.

<sup>6</sup> Mitchell (1992) seeks to modify Funk's analysis by showing that, in certain situations, Paul's envoys might be more effective than his personal presence. Her explanation for their effectiveness is in terms of providing a "diplomatic service which helps to affirm and maintain Paul's relationships with his churches from a distance. Hardly mere substitutes for the universally preferable Pauline presence, these envoys were consciously sent by Paul to play a complex and crucial intermediary role that he could not play, even if present himself" (Mitchell 1992:662). Nevertheless, her focus still falls on the relationship between Paul and his converts, and the envoys are intermediaries between these two parties.

Ehrensperger 2007:47-48).<sup>7</sup> The text itself uses the words ἀδελφός and συνεργός to describe Timothy's role in this situation, and the emphasis is not on Timothy's role as Paul's representative but on his own ministry to the Thessalonians. Though Paul's relationship with the Thessalonians is addressed (1 Thess 3:6), the primary focus throughout is on the Thessalonian believers' relationship with God and with his Son; hence the repeated emphasis on "faith" (1 Thess 3:2,5-7) and on the reference to the believers standing fast *in the Lord* (1 Thess 3:8).

The nature of Timothy's ministry and its similarity to that of Paul becomes much clearer when a detailed comparison is made between the significant words in 1 Thessalonians 3 and Paul's description of his own gospel ministry in Romans. This is done below, where the relevant passages from 1 Thessalonians and Romans are set out in such a way as to show the correspondence between the ministries of Timothy and Paul. In each group of passages the key words are underlined.

**Table 4.1.** The foundation of Timothy's ministry: the gospel of Christ.

<p><b>1 Thessalonians 3:2</b></p> <p>... we sent Timothy, our brother and God's coworker <u>in the gospel of Christ</u> ...</p> <p>... καὶ ἐπέμψαμεν Τιμόθεον, τὸν ἀδελφὸν ἡμῶν καὶ συνεργὸν τοῦ θεοῦ <u>ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ τοῦ Χριστοῦ</u> ...</p>	<p><b>Romans 1:1</b></p> <p>Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart <u>for the gospel of God</u> ...</p> <p>Παῦλος δοῦλος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ, κλητὸς ἀπόστολος ἀφορισμένος <u>εἰς εὐαγγέλιον θεοῦ</u> ...</p> <p><b>Romans 1:9</b></p> <p>For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit <u>in the gospel of his Son</u> ...</p> <p>μάρτυς γάρ μου ἐστὶν ὁ θεός, ᾧ λατρεύω ἐν τῷ πνεύματί μου ἐν τῷ <u>εὐαγγελίῳ τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ</u> ...</p>
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These passages show that the gospel of Christ was the foundation of Timothy's ministry, just as it was the foundation of Paul's ministry. Chapter 3 sought to demonstrate that Paul's ambition was to present believers blameless in Christ, and that his means of achieving this aim was the ministry of the gospel, beginning with the proclamation of justification by faith. It was seen that the gospel itself provided the dynamic power for believers to overcome sin, grow in holiness and ultimately to be saved (see especially the discussion on Romans in section 3.4 above). In this passage, where Timothy is called upon to encourage the believers of Thessalonica in the face of persecution and possible apostasy, Paul draws attention to the fact that Timothy is a coworker *in the gospel*.<sup>8</sup> One might infer from the context of this passage that the gospel was the basis of Timothy's encouragement of the believers in Thessalonica; this is confirmed by the following discussion.

<sup>7</sup> In other words, they emphasize that Paul and Timothy were partners, performing the same work. This is rather different to the idea that Timothy was a go-between for Paul and the Thessalonian believers.

<sup>8</sup> Dickson (2003:91) claims that "wherever the sense of εὐαγγελ- is clear in Paul it *always* connotes a 'primary' announcement. We are thus justified in insisting that, for Paul, the language of 'gospel' is the language of missionary proclamation [i.e. it is not applicable to those who are already believers]" (original emphasis). This conclusion cannot be justified in the light of Paul's whole argument in Romans (see chapter 3 above) and undermines the very means by which believers are to be strengthened and edified.

**Table 4.2.** The purpose of Timothy's ministry: to establish the believers.

<p><b>1 Thessalonians 3:2</b></p> <p>... we sent Timothy ... <u>to establish</u> [you] ...</p> <p>καὶ ἐπέμψαμεν Τιμόθεον . . . <u>εἰς τὸ στηρίξαι ὑμᾶς</u> . . .</p>	<p><b>Romans 1:11</b></p> <p>For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift <u>to strengthen you</u> . . .</p> <p>ἐπιποθῶ γὰρ ἰδεῖν ὑμᾶς, ἵνα τι μεταδῶ χάρισμα ὑμῖν πνευματικὸν <u>εἰς τὸ στηριχθῆναι ὑμᾶς</u></p>
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The word στηρίζω, used in these passages is clear enough; it means “to strengthen” (Louw & Nida 1996:1.677; Arndt *et al.* 2000:945). The import here is that the Thessalonians needed strength to withstand persecution and to continue in their commitment to follow and serve the living and true God. Timothy's responsibility towards the Thessalonian believers was to strengthen them, just as Paul desired to strengthen the Roman Christians when he wrote to them.

**Table 4.3.** The method of Timothy's ministry: to encourage the believers' faith.

<p><b>1 Thessalonians 3:2</b></p> <p>... we sent Timothy ... to establish and exhort you <u>in your faith</u> ...</p> <p>... ἐπέμψαμεν Τιμόθεον . . . εἰς τὸ στηρίξαι ὑμᾶς καὶ παρακαλέσαι <u>ὑπὲρ τῆς πίστεως ὑμῶν</u> . . .</p> <p><b>1 Thessalonians 3:5</b></p> <p>... I sent to learn <u>about your faith</u> ...</p> <p>... ἔπεμψα εἰς τὸ γνῶναι <u>τὴν πίστιν ὑμῶν</u> . . .</p> <p><b>1 Thessalonians 3:6</b></p> <p>But now that Timothy has come to us from you, and has brought us the good news <u>of your faith</u> and love ...</p> <p>Ἄρτι δὲ ἐλθόντος Τιμοθέου πρὸς ἡμᾶς ἀφ' ὑμῶν καὶ εὐαγγελισαμένου ἡμῖν <u>τὴν πίστιν</u> καὶ τὴν ἀγάπην ὑμῶν . . .</p>	<p><b>Romans 1:5</b></p> <p>... we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the <u>obedience of faith</u> for the sake of his name among all the nations ...</p> <p>... δι' οὗ ἐλάβομεν χάριν καὶ ἀποστολὴν εἰς <u>ὑπακοὴν πίστεως</u> ἐν πᾶσιν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν ὑπὲρ τοῦ ὀνόματος αὐτοῦ . . .</p> <p><b>Romans 1:11-12</b></p> <p>For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you — that is, that we may be mutually encouraged <u>by each other's faith</u>, both yours and mine.</p> <p>ἐπιποθῶ γὰρ ἰδεῖν ὑμᾶς, ἵνα τι μεταδῶ χάρισμα ὑμῖν πνευματικὸν εἰς τὸ στηριχθῆναι ὑμᾶς, τοῦτο δὲ ἐστὶν συμπαρακληθῆναι ἐν ὑμῖν <u>διὰ τῆς ἐν ἀλλήλοις πίστεως</u> ὑμῶν τε καὶ ἐμοῦ.</p> <p><b>Romans 1:16-17</b></p> <p>For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone <u>who believes</u>, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed <u>from faith for faith</u>, as it is written, “The righteous shall live <u>by faith</u>.”</p> <p>Οὐ γὰρ ἐπαισχύνομαι τὸ εὐαγγέλιον, δύναμις γὰρ θεοῦ ἐστὶν εἰς σωτηρίαν παντὶ τῷ πιστεύοντι, Ἰουδαίῳ τε πρῶτον καὶ</p>
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	Ἑλληνι. δικαιοσύνη γὰρ θεοῦ ἐν αὐτῶ ἀποκαλύπτεται ἐκ πίστεως εἰς πίστιν, καθὼς γέγραπται· ὁ δὲ δίκαιος ἐκ πίστεως ζήσεται.
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It was seen in the discussion on Romans in chapter 3 above (section 3.4) that faith held an absolutely central place for Paul. He conceived of his own calling as one of leading the Gentiles to the “obedience which is faith”,<sup>9</sup> (i.e. to respond appropriately to the gospel by trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ for the salvation revealed in the gospel). For Paul, faith is the means by which God’s salvation is appropriated and experienced by human beings; faith is the means by which God’s power works in people to prepare them for the day of Christ. This understanding of faith, derived from Romans, is mirrored in 1 Thessalonians 3: in verse 5 Paul reveals that his primary concern regarding the Thessalonian believers is their *faith*; in verse 6 he is encouraged because of their *faith*. This is noteworthy in a letter which emphasizes ethical blamelessness (see section 3.3.3 above) and which has sometimes been thought to stand at odds with Paul’s doctrine of justification through faith (cf. Schnelle 1986:218). With regard to Timothy, it is seen that his role was to strengthen and encourage the Christians with regard to their *faith*. Paul evidently expected him to apply the gospel to issues of Christian growth by reminding the believers to keep on trusting in God, despite their trials and sufferings, because of the assurance that Jesus would ultimately rescue them from God’s wrath and give them eternal life. This becomes clear from the following passages.

**Table 4.4.** Timothy’s ministry in the light of Christian perseverance.

<p><b>1 Thessalonians 3:2-3</b>          . . . we sent Timothy . . . that no one be moved <u>by these afflictions</u>.          ἐπέμψαμεν Τιμόθεον . . . τὸ μηδένα σαίνεσθαι ἐν ταῖς θλίψεσιν ταύταις.</p> <p><b>1 Thessalonians 1:3</b>          . . . remembering before our God and Father <u>your work of faith</u> and labor of love and <u>steadfastness of hope</u> in our Lord Jesus Christ.          . . . μνημονεύοντες ὑμῶν τοῦ ἔργου τῆς <u>πίστεως</u> καὶ τοῦ κόπου τῆς ἀγάπης καὶ τῆς <u>ὑπομονῆς</u> τῆς ἐλπίδος τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ἔμπροσθεν τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ πατρὸς ἡμῶν . . .</p> <p><b>1 Thessalonians 1:9-10</b>          . . . how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and <u>to wait</u> for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus <u>who delivers us from the wrath to come</u>.</p>	<p><b>Romans 2:7</b>          . . . to those who <u>by patience</u> in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, <u>he will give eternal life</u> . . .          . . . τοῖς μὲν καθ’ ὑπομονὴν ἔργου ἀγαθοῦ δόξαν καὶ τιμὴν καὶ ἀφθαρσίαν ζητοῦσιν [<u>ἀποδώσει</u>] ζωὴν αἰώνιον . . .</p> <p><b>Romans 5:3-5</b>          More than that, we rejoice <u>in our sufferings</u>, knowing that <u>suffering</u> produces <u>endurance</u>, and <u>endurance</u> produces character, and character produces <u>hope</u>, and <u>hope</u> does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.</p>
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<sup>9</sup> See section 3.4.1 above for an explanation of why “obedience of faith” (Rom 1:5) is taken in this sense.

<p>πῶς ἐπεστρέψατε πρὸς τὸν θεὸν ἀπὸ τῶν εἰδώλων δουλεύειν θεῷ ζῶντι καὶ ἀληθινῷ καὶ ἀναμένειν τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ ἐκ τῶν οὐρανῶν, ὃν ἤγειρεν ἐκ [τῶν] νεκρῶν, Ἰησοῦν <u>τὸν ὀνομαζόμενον ἡμᾶς ἐκ τῆς ὀργῆς τῆς ἐρχομένης.</u></p>	<p>οὐ μόνον δέ, ἀλλὰ καὶ καυχώμεθα ἐν ταῖς <u>θλίψεσιν</u>, εἰδότες ὅτι ἡ <u>θλίψις ὑπομονὴν</u> κατεργάζεται, ἡ δὲ <u>ὑπομονὴ</u> δοκιμήν, ἡ δὲ δοκιμή <u>ἐλπίδα</u>. ἡ δὲ <u>ἐλπίς</u> οὐ κατασχύνει, ὅτι ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ θεοῦ ἐκκέχυται ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις ἡμῶν διὰ πνεύματος ἁγίου τοῦ δοθέντος ἡμῖν.</p>
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It is probably best to understand the second genitive in each of the three pairs of 1 Thessalonians 1:3 (τοῦ ἔργου τῆς πίστεως καὶ τοῦ κόπου τῆς ἀγάπης καὶ τῆς ὑπομονῆς τῆς ἐλπίδος) as a subjective genitive, indicating that the work, labour and endurance sprang from the believers' faith, hope and love (Wanamaker 1990:75, cf. Fee 2009:24). The hope referred to in this phrase then correlates with 1:9-10, which speaks of the Thessalonians waiting for God's Son to come from heaven and deliver them from his wrath. Thus it can be seen that the gospel which Paul, Silvanus and Timothy preached to the Thessalonians had salvation (understood as deliverance from the eschatological wrath of God) as its end goal. Once again, there is a close relationship between the concepts expressed in these passages from 1 Thessalonians and the concepts found in the Romans passages quoted alongside:

1. In Romans 2:7 eternal life is received by those whose lives exhibit ὑπονομιή ἔργου ἀγαθοῦ ("endurance/perseverance in good works") and a seeking after glory, honour and immortality. In 1 Thessalonians Paul, Silvanus and Timothy thank God for the believers' ἔργον τῆς πίστεως and ὑπομονὴ τῆς ἐλπίδος.
2. In Romans 2:7 those who receive eternal life seek glory, honour and immortality; the Thessalonian believers are said to "wait for God's Son from heaven" (1 Thess 1:10).
3. In Romans 5:3-5 the Christian life is characterized by afflictions (θλίψεις) which promote the believer's salvation as he learns endurance through them. However, the response of endurance is not automatic, as is implied by Romans 2:7; each believer is required to make a deliberate choice. These are the very convictions which lie behind Timothy's assignment to go back to Thessalonica to encourage the believers (1 Thess 3:2-3).

Timothy's role is thus seen to be one of helping the Thessalonians to persevere in the faith of the gospel. It is clear that he ministered in accordance with the gospel pattern, expressed in Romans, that guided Paul's own ministry.

These comparisons, which have examined some of the details of Timothy's ministry to the Thessalonians, show that his role was very similar to that of Paul. The significance of his visit to Thessalonica did not lie in his representing Paul or in his mediating Paul's *parousia*; it lay in his ministry of the *gospel*, which was *God's* power for the salvation of the Thessalonians. The form critical arguments tend to assume rather than prove the power of Paul's *parousia* or the operation of the envoy concept. Even if the envoy concept is formally present, it is not necessarily the governing perspective by which a passage should be interpreted; rather, it is necessary to look at the actual content of the passage in question. In the case of 1 Thessalonians 3:1-10 the preceding analysis has

shown that the governing perspective is Timothy's role as Paul's coworker and as a minister of the gospel.<sup>10</sup>

This conclusion is strongly confirmed by the statement that Timothy is God's coworker in the gospel of Christ (συνεργὸν τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ τοῦ Χριστοῦ; 1 Thess 3:2). The statement is a bold one, and this is probably the cause of the textual variations.<sup>11</sup> However, the reading *συνεργὸν τοῦ θεοῦ* is the one most likely to have given rise to the others and hence should be accepted as genuine (Furnish 1961:367; Wanamaker 1990:128). This implies that Paul understood God to be at work through Timothy, and a comparison with 1 Corinthians 3:7<sup>12</sup> shows that for Paul the dynamic behind Timothy's ministry was the power of God himself. In this respect also Timothy's ministry was similar to Paul's.<sup>13</sup>

#### 4.2.2 The leaders in Thessalonica

Continuing in 1 Thessalonians, it is important to consider 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13. Whereas Timothy was one of Paul's travelling companions, and therefore an itinerant coworker, this passage gives some insight into coworkers who were resident in a congregation. The word "coworker" (συνεργός) is not used in this passage, and no extended description is given of their activity. Therefore much reliance must be placed on contextual and lexical arguments. The discussion begins, therefore, with a consideration of the context of the passage — both the immediate context and the context of the letter as whole.

First Thessalonians 5:12-13 begins a section of exhortation that is introduced by 1 Thessalonians 5:11<sup>14</sup> (Malherbe 1987:88). The latter verse also concludes a discussion on the Lord's return and the importance of being prepared for that event (1 Thess 4:13-5:11). In that section, the eschatological note is dominant and is intended to create an intense urgency on the part of the Thessalonian believers. At some point, while people calmly continue in their immoral behaviour, the Lord will return like a thief in the night and sudden destruction will come upon those who are unprepared (1 Thess 5:2-3). The assurance that God had not destined the Thessalonian Christians to suffer wrath in this way, far from creating complacency, was intended to galvanize them into sober, upright living so that they would be prepared for the great day (1 Thess 5:4-10). Moving on to the wider context, it is clear that the eschatological perspective is also prominent throughout the letter (1 Thess 1:10; 2:12,19; 3:13; 5:23-24). Hence Malherbe (1987:79-80) notes:

It is this pervasive eschatological dimension in the letter that gives the Thessalonian community its special character. Paul's readers are not a ragtag group of manual labourers

<sup>10</sup> It is noteworthy also to consider Romans 15:14-33, which Funk (1967:251-253) uses as the reference point for his formal analysis. Although Paul's visit to the Roman Christians (and hence his "presence" or *parousia*) is central to the passage, he does not attribute any power to his presence *per se*; rather, he emphasizes the fact God in Christ, by the Holy Spirit, has brought the Gentiles to the obedience of faith through the ministry of the gospel: "For I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me to bring the Gentiles to obedience — by word and deed, by the power of signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God — so that from Jerusalem and all the way around to Illyricum I have fulfilled the ministry of the gospel of Christ" (Rom 15:18-29).

<sup>11</sup> The text as it stands in UBS<sup>4</sup> has relatively weaker attestation, being found in D\* 33 and some other witnesses; B 1962 have καὶ συνεργὸν ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ τοῦ Χριστοῦ; *κ* A P and others read καὶ διάκονον τοῦ θεοῦ κτλ, which is therefore most strongly attested.

<sup>12</sup> "So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth" (1 Cor 3:7).

<sup>13</sup> See section 3.2.2.1.

<sup>14</sup> "Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing" (1 Thess 5:11).

formed by an itinerant tentmaker. Rather, they are a community created and loved by God and occupy a special place in his redemptive scheme.

This eschatological perspective must be given due weight in the interpretation of 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13, which is now examined in detail. The passage reads:

We ask you, brothers, to respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Be at peace among yourselves.

Ἐρωτῶμεν δὲ ὑμᾶς, ἀδελφοί, εἰδέναι τοὺς κοπιῶντας ἐν ὑμῖν καὶ προϊσταμένους ὑμῶν ἐν κυρίῳ καὶ νουθετοῦντας ὑμᾶς καὶ ἡγεῖσθαι αὐτοὺς ὑπερεκπερισσοῦ ἐν ἀγάπῃ διὰ τὸ ἔργον αὐτῶν. εἰρηνεύετε ἐν ἑαυτοῖς.

The passage begins with an instruction to the believers to “acknowledge” (εἰδέναι)<sup>15</sup> a certain group of people within the church; for convenience they will be called “leaders”.<sup>16</sup> These leaders are then identified by means of three participles, all in the present tense: τοὺς κοπιῶντας . . . προϊσταμένους . . . νουθετοῦντας. The present tense participles draw attention to the activities performed by the leaders rather than to any formal position, and taken together they help to provide a picture of the function that the leaders performed within the community.

The first participle, κοπιῶντας, is sometimes taken to be a semi-technical term for Paul’s ministry of preaching and teaching (Campbell 2004:12-121), and it is true that the verb κοπιᾶω and its cognate noun κόπος are often used in connection with the work of preaching the gospel (e.g. 1 Cor 3:8; 15:10; Gal 4:11; 1 Thess 3:5). However, construing κόπος/κοπιᾶω specifically to signify gospel labour appears to confuse the contextual and lexical senses of the words: just because the words are used in contexts where they refer to gospel ministry doesn’t mean that the words themselves *denote* gospel ministry.<sup>17</sup> This is seen by the way that κόπος/κοπιᾶω are used to refer to other forms of work such as Paul’s manual labour (1 Cor 4:12; 1 Thess 2:9) and Christian labour in general (1 Cor 15:58; 1 Thess 1:3). Rather, the lexical sense of κόπος/κοπιᾶω is “hard, tiresome labour”,<sup>18</sup> and that is the force of the words, whether used in a particular context to refer to gospel ministry, or to manual labour, or to Christian labour in general.<sup>19</sup> This is clearly seen in 1 Corinthians 15:10, for example: “On the contrary, I worked [ἐκοπίασα] harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me.” It follows that the meaning of τοὺς κοπιῶντας in 1 Thessalonians 5:12 is “those who work hard” (cf. Best 1979:224; Green 2002:249; Fee 2009:205). The participle κοπιῶντας thus correlates with διὰ τὸ ἔργον αὐτῶν in 1 Thessalonians 5:13 and indicates that the leaders could be recognized by their strenuous efforts on behalf of the Thessalonian Christians (hence the qualification of κοπιῶντας with ἐν ὑμῖν). The exact nature of the leaders’ hard work cannot be

<sup>15</sup> Fee (2009:204) explains the suitability of “acknowledge” as a translation equivalent of εἰδέναι.

<sup>16</sup> Malherbe (1987:88-89) asserts that Paul had no clearly defined group in mind in this passage; his motivation, apparently, is to distance himself from the attempt to discern a formal office in the passage. Most scholars, however, recognize that a particular group of people — who may loosely be called “leaders” — is in mind (Wanamaker 1990:191-193; Witherington 2006:160; Fee 2009:203-204). This is required (a) by the grammar — a single article governing the three participles; and (b) by the logic of the passage: Paul is “not merely talking about functions, he is talking about persons who can be singled out because they regularly perform certain functions for other church members” (Witherington 2006:160).

<sup>17</sup> See Cotterell & Turner (1989:164-167) on the distinction and relationships between lexical sense, contextual or discourse sense, and technical sense of a word.

<sup>18</sup> See Louw & Nida (1996:1.514); Arndt *et al.* (2000:558-559).

<sup>19</sup> Instances where κόπος/κοπιᾶω are used in the sense of “trouble, hardship” are naturally excluded from this statement.

inferred from *κοπιῶντας*, but when this participle is read with the other two they shed light on one another: the leaders work hard in the activities designated by *προϊσταμένους* and *νουθετοῦντας*, and those activities are performed with strenuous effort.

The second participle, *προϊσταμένους*, has given rise to a considerable amount of discussion. The traditional interpretation of this word, which is reflected in most English translations, is “who are over you” (cf. ESV translation quoted above). The word is thus understood to refer to those in a position of leadership or authority within the congregation. However, there is a large measure of consensus amongst recent commentators that this interpretation is unlikely (Best 1979:225; Wanamaker 1990:192-193; Witherington 2006:160; Fee 2009:205-206). It is observed that it would be much more natural for *προϊσταμένους* to be placed first in the list of participles if it referred to a leadership position, and that the verb *προϊστημι* in Romans 12:8 (the closest parallel in the Pauline Letters) is far more likely to have the sense “care for”. It may be added that the perfect participle, rather than the present, would be much more natural if a formal office was being referred to; this can be seen in the following passages from the Septuagint:

καὶ ἐκάλεσεν τὸ παιδάριον αὐτοῦ τὸν προεστηκότα τοῦ οἴκου αὐτοῦ (2 Sam 13:17, LXX). (“And he called his servant who was in charge of his house . . .”)

καὶ ὑποστρέφει εἰς τὸν οἶκον τοῦ προεστηκότος αὐτοῦ (Prov 23:5, LXX). (“ . . . and it [i.e. wealth] returns to the house of its master.”)

καὶ ἐρεῖ τοῖς προεστηκόσι τῆς οἰκίας (Amos 6:10, LXX). (“ . . . and he will say to those in charge of the house . . .”)

καὶ θυμωθεὶς ὁ βασιλεὺς ἐκάλεσε τοὺς προεστηκότας τοῦ ἱεροῦ (Bel 1:8, LXX). (“And the king became angry and called those in charge of the temple . . .”)

In view of these considerations, most commentators accept the sense “care for” for the participle *προϊσταμένους* in 1 Thessalonians 5:12. This sense is well attested for the verb *προϊστημι* outside the New Testament (see Reicke 1964-1976:700-701; cf. Arndt *et al.* 2000:870). In this sense, the word apparently has a broad semantic range, and can perhaps be well represented by the Concise Oxford English Dictionary’s definition of “care”: “the provision of what is necessary for the health, welfare, maintenance, and protection of someone or something” (Soanes & Stevenson 2004:“care”).

This understanding of *προϊσταμένους* in 1 Thessalonians 5:12 has been further refined through the use of social-scientific arguments, and many scholars accept that the word refers specifically to the care and protection provided by patrons to the Christian community in Thessalonica. On this understanding, the community included persons of greater wealth and social status, and these persons, in addition to providing protection and other forms of patronage to the community, also became responsible for leadership and spiritual guidance. Hence Meeks (2003:134) states that “a position of authority grows out of the benefits that persons of relatively higher wealth and status could confer on the community”. Wanamaker (1990:193-195) has adopted this view and developed it using the research of Theissen (1999:69-119). Witherington (2006:160) adds the comment that

Patrons frequently gave their clients advice and even admonitions, and we may envision this being the case with Christians as well. The owner of the house was the leader of the house church, and since his fellow Christians were seen as brothers and sisters, it would be natural for such a person to give them familial advice and even to exhort them once in a while.

In the same vein, Campbell (2004:121) states that “[i]t is natural to suppose that those who thus acted as patrons on behalf of the church in the wider community would also have been looked to for leadership within the life of the church”. From the perspective of all these scholars, *προϊσταμένους*

in 1 Thessalonians 5:12 refers to the caring and protection offered by wealthier, more powerful Christians to those who were poorer and more vulnerable.

The question of the relationship between leadership and social status in the Pauline churches is examined in greater detail in chapter 2, where I argue that the two are not connected. The focus for the present is to understand how other people participated in Paul's work of gospel ministry. Whether or not *προϊσταμένους* can be taken as a reference to the protection of patronage is more than can be inferred from the word itself, but the context of 1 Thessalonians 5:12 suggests that something else is in mind. It has already been noted above that the whole letter is pervaded by an eschatological perspective. It has also been noted that the specific context for Paul's instructions relating to the leaders of the congregation is 1 Thessalonians 5:11 and the discussion on the Lord's return in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:10. In the light of this, it would be natural to interpret the "caring" implied in *προϊσταμένους* with reference to the mutual encouragement of the Thessalonian Christians as they edify one another in preparation for the Lord's return. Hence Reicke (1964-1976:701-702) and Malherbe (1987:80-81,88-89) interpret *προϊσταμένους* as a reference to pastoral care within the community (cf. Best (1979:225)).<sup>20</sup>

This interpretation of *προϊσταμένους* accords also with the third function that the leaders are said to perform in 1 Thessalonians 5:12, namely that of admonishing (*νουθετοῦντας*). There is little disagreement about the meaning of this word, which speaks of teaching that is directed to the will and hence to a change of behaviour (cf. Louw & Nida 1996:1.414,435-436; Arndt *et al.* 2000:679). It is an appropriate activity for the leaders as they help the believers to prepare themselves for the coming of the Lord, and Best (1979:225) notes that "caring" and "admonishing" form a natural pair where the first activity is positive and the second is negative.

A comparison of 1 Thessalonians 5:11-12 with 1 Thessalonians 2:11-12 shows that the local Thessalonian leaders performed a role very similar to that of Paul, Silas and Timothy when they were in Thessalonica.

**Table 4.5.** The ministry of the Thessalonian leaders compared with that of Paul, Silas and Timothy.

<p><b>1 Thessalonians 5:11-12</b></p> <p>Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing. We ask you, brothers, to respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you . . .</p> <p>Διὸ παρακαλεῖτε ἀλλήλους καὶ οἰκοδομεῖτε εἰς τὸν ἕνα, καθὼς καὶ ποιεῖτε. Ἐρωτῶμεν δὲ ὑμᾶς, ἀδελφοί, εἰδέναι τοὺς κοπιῶντας ἐν ὑμῖν καὶ προϊσταμένους ὑμῶν ἐν κυρίῳ καὶ νουθετοῦντας ὑμᾶς . . .</p>	<p><b>1 Thessalonians 2:11-12</b></p> <p>For you know how, like a father with his children, we exhorted each one of you and encouraged you and charged you to walk in a manner worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory.</p> <p>καθάπερ οἶδατε, ὡς ἕνα ἕκαστον ὑμῶν ὡς πατὴρ τέκνα ἑαυτοῦ παρακαλοῦντες ὑμᾶς καὶ παραμυθούμενοι καὶ μαρτυρόμενοι εἰς τὸ περιπατεῖν ὑμᾶς ἀξίως τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ καλοῦντος ὑμᾶς εἰς τὴν ἑαυτοῦ βασιλείαν καὶ δόξαν.</p>
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<sup>20</sup> Malherbe (1987:80-81) shows how the eschatological perspective informs our understanding of Paul's exhortations in 1 Thessalonian 5: "Members of the community of the last days do not live solitary lives. As Paul moves toward the end of the letter, he increasingly brings into view his readers' responsibility for their community's pastoral care. . . . It is as the community of the last days . . . that they are to engage in pastoral care of one another. Paul's specifications of that care have become intensified."

Although there is not a large overlap in vocabulary between the two passages, the conceptual similarities are noteworthy:

1. Both passages have a strong eschatological perspective. This is explicit in 1 Thessalonians 2:12 and is clear from the context of 1 Thessalonians 5:11, as has been pointed out above. Whether he himself was present, or he was relying on local leaders to exercise pastoral care, Paul was concerned that the Thessalonian Christians should be prepared for the return of Christ.
2. The leaders referred to in 1 Thessalonians 5:12 are said to labour in caring for the believers (see discussion above). This finds a parallel in the statement that Paul, Silas and Timothy were “like a father with his children” towards the Thessalonians as they exhorted and encouraged them.<sup>21</sup>
3. The function of admonishing is clearly present in 1 Thessalonians 2:12 “[we] charged you to walk in a manner worthy of God . . .”

In conclusion, although only the briefest statement is made about the Thessalonian leaders, a combination of lexical and contextual arguments gives some insight into their function within the community of believers. Their role was to help prepare the believers for the coming of Christ by caring for them and encouraging them, and also by admonishing and instructing them in the kind of lifestyle demanded by their newfound relationship with God. The parallels with the ministry of Paul, Silas and Timothy described in 1 Thessalonians 2:11-12 show that these leaders can be thought of as Paul’s coworkers, although that term is not explicitly used to describe them.

#### 4.2.3 Other coworkers

Paul uses a number of terms to designate his coworkers, including *συνεργός*, *ἀδελφός* and others.<sup>22</sup> Much insight can be gained into the Pauline mission by considering Paul’s use of the terms as well as the people referred to by them. For the present purpose it will be sufficient to focus attention on the term *συνεργός*, which is the most common term and is used to denote both itinerant coworkers and those who were resident in the congregations.

The meaning of the word *συνεργός* is straightforward. It denotes one who shares in a task with another, whether as an equal or as a subordinate. The cognate *συνεργέω* likewise denotes the act of cooperating with another person in some task (cf. Louw & Nida 1996:1.511,514; Arndt *et al.* 2000:969). One might expect, then, that when Paul calls someone his *συνεργός*, he is thinking of someone who shares in the work that is so distinctive of his own life. It is clear from Romans 1:1,5 that Paul understood his own life and work to be devoted to the gospel: as an apostle he received the revelation of the gospel and his life’s calling was to lead the Gentiles to the obedience of faith through his ministry of the gospel.<sup>23</sup> It was also shown in section 3.2.2 above that Paul understood himself to be God’s coworker. It is natural therefore to understand Paul’s *συνεργοί* as those who shared in his work of ministering the gospel and leading people to salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.<sup>24</sup> This

<sup>21</sup> It is interesting to note that Epictetus (1978:184-185), when using the verb *προϊστημι* to describe God’s care for human beings, qualifies it with the adverb *πατρικῶς* (“fatherly”).

<sup>22</sup> See Ellis (1971:3-22 & 1993) for important discussions of the phenomenon of Paul’s coworkers and the various terms that he uses to designate and describe them.

<sup>23</sup> See chapter 3 for a full discussion on Paul’s understanding of his own ministry as a ministry of the gospel.

<sup>24</sup> The actual reception of divine revelation was peculiar to the apostolic office and therefore not shared by all of Paul’s coworkers (cf. Bertram 1964-1976:874).

is the view taken by Jewett (2007:957) who, commenting on the use of *συνεργός* in Romans 16:3, states (with reference to Ollrog 1979:72):

The use of this term does not imply that Prisca and Aquila are “helpers of the apostle”; the clear implication is that each functions as “a missionary who becomes a colleague and co-worker with Paul, who is called to the same task and in the same service of proclamation: to awaken faith in the . . . congregation.”

It may further be expected that Paul's coworkers are to be considered as God's coworkers, just like Paul himself. This understanding of *συνεργός/συνεργέω* is borne out by Paul's use of the words, a consideration of which helps to provide a concrete picture of the way Paul involved other people in the proclamation and ministry of the gospel.

Timothy is the quintessential coworker of Paul. In Romans 16:21, Paul calls him *ὁ συνεργός μου*, and in Philemon 1, he is called *ὁ ἀδελφός*, a term which, as Ellis (1971:13-17) has shown, refers in certain instances to Paul's colleagues in the Christian mission. It was seen in section 4.2.1 above that 1 Thessalonians 3:1-10 gives evidence of a close parallel between Timothy's ministry and that of Paul, and it is noteworthy that Paul refers to Timothy as God's coworker in 1 Thessalonians 3:2 (see p.78 above). Later in Paul's ministry he wrote to the Philippians: “For I have no one like [Timothy], who will be genuinely concerned for your welfare. For they all seek their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. But you know Timothy's proven worth, how as a son with a father he has served with me in the gospel” (Phil 2:20-22). These observations confirm Jewett's statement (quoted above) that a coworker is called to the same service of gospel proclamation as Paul, with the aim of awakening faith in the congregation. Further confirmation of this perspective is found in 1 Corinthians 16:10, where Paul urges the Corinthians to receive Timothy well because “he is doing the work of the Lord, as I am”.<sup>25</sup>

Titus was another important coworker of Paul, called “my partner and fellow worker for your benefit” (*κοινωνός ἐμὸς καὶ εἰς ὑμᾶς συνεργός*) in 2 Corinthians 8:23. In Paul's Early Letters he appears briefly in Galatians 2, and more prominently in 2 Corinthians, where his closeness to Paul and his role as a coworker is very much in evidence. Without entering into the complex scholarly issues regarding 2 Corinthians, it is clear that Titus was sent to Corinth by Paul to deal with a very difficult pastoral situation. This situation was apparently resolved at the time of — or just before — Titus' visit to Corinth:

But God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus, and not only by his coming but also by the comfort with which he was comforted by you, as he told us of your longing, your mourning, your zeal for me, so that I rejoiced still more. . . . And besides our own comfort, we rejoiced still more at the joy of Titus, because his spirit has been refreshed by you all. For whatever boasts I made to him about you, I was not put to shame. But just as everything we said to you was true, so also our boasting before Titus has proved true (2 Cor 7:6-7,13-14).

For Paul, the gospel was central to the issues that were troubling the church, as can be seen by his explicit mention of it in 2 Corinthians 4:3-4 and 11:4, and by the extended description of his apostolic ministry in chapters 2:12-7:1. Thus it can be inferred that, as Paul's coworker, Titus was not only

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<sup>25</sup> Timothy's sharing in the work of gospel ministry is not in conflict with the fact that Paul had a special relationship with those whom he had led to Christ. Hence 1 Corinthians 4:15-17: “For though you have countless guides in Christ, you do not have many fathers. For I became your father in Christ Jesus through the gospel. I urge you, then, be imitators of me. That is why I sent you Timothy, my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, to remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach them everywhere in every church.”

involved in gospel ministry but was regarded by Paul as a man of “proven pastoral skill” who could be entrusted with the difficult task of helping the Corinthians to apply the gospel to their complex pastoral issues (Gillman 1996:582).

Other itinerant coworkers who are designated by the term *συνεργός* in the Pauline Letters include Aristarchus, Mark, and Jesus called Justus (Col 4:10-11), as well as Demas and Luke (Phlm 24).

Coworkers who were resident in the congregations are also an important group, and have special significance for the development of leadership within the churches. Prisca and Aquila are probably the best known of these, and are designated *συνεργοί* in Romans 16:3. Their involvement in theological teaching and gospel ministry is clear from Acts 18:26 (cf. Jewett 2007:957); in the light of this, it is likely that their role as hosts of house churches (Rom 16: 5; 1 Cor 16:19) included the ministry of the gospel. When one considers Prisca and Aquila’s close association with Paul, starting from his initial ministry in Corinth, through his time in Ephesus (Acts 18:18-20:1; 1 Cor 16:19), right up to the end of his life (2 Tim 4:19), it is clear that coworkers resident in the churches had a key role to play in the development of the Pauline churches.

Philippians 4:2-3, although not from one of Paul’s Early Letters, sheds further light on the resident coworkers. The passage reads:

I entreat Euodia and I entreat Syntyche to agree in the Lord. Yes, I ask you also, true companion, help these women, who have labored side by side with me in the gospel together with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.

Εὐδοκίαν παρακαλῶ καὶ Συντύχην παρακαλῶ τὸ αὐτὸ φρονεῖν ἐν κυρίῳ. ναὶ ἐρωτῶ καὶ σέ, γνήσιε σύζυγε, συλλαμβάνου αὐταῖς, αἴτινες ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ συνήθλησαν μοι μετὰ καὶ Κλήμεντος καὶ τῶν λοιπῶν συνεργῶν μου, ὧν τὰ ὀνόματα ἐν βίβλῳ ζωῆς.

The phrase ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ συνήθλησαν indicates that Euodia, Syntyche, Clement and others had participated in the proclamation of the gospel and had shared in the suffering and opposition that Paul himself had experienced (O’Brien 1991:481-482). In the light of what has already been observed about the term *συνεργοί* and those to whom it is applied, it is most appropriate that these Philippians also be designated as coworkers.

Finally, 1 Corinthians 16:15-16 is a crucial text for understanding the resident coworkers and their place in the development of leadership in the Pauline churches. In these verses Paul urges the congregation to recognize those who “share in the work”:

Now I urge you, brothers — you know that the household of Stephanas were the first converts in Achaia, and that they have devoted themselves to the service of the saints — be subject to such as these, and to every fellow worker and laborer.

Παρακαλῶ δὲ ὑμᾶς, ἀδελφοί· οἶδατε τὴν οἰκίαν Στεφανᾶ, ὅτι ἐστὶν ἀπαρχὴ τῆς Ἀχαΐας καὶ εἰς διακονίαν τοῖς ἁγίοις ἔταξαν ἑαυτούς· ἵνα καὶ ὑμεῖς ὑποτάσησθε τοῖς τοιούτοις καὶ παντὶ τῷ συνεργοῦντι καὶ κοπιῶντι.

Although the household of Stephanas are called the “first converts in Achaia” in the ESV translation quoted above, the Greek word so translated is actually ἀπαρχή, “firstfruits”, and their significance lay not merely in their temporal priority;<sup>26</sup> rather, it should be understood that they were “the core base of mature, long-standing believers . . . whose loyal work and witness holds promise of more believers to come” (Thiselton 2000:1338). This promise was realized as they devoted themselves to

<sup>26</sup> Acts 17:33 indicates that Dionysius, Damaris and others became believers in Athens (also in Achaia) before Paul reached Corinth.

the service of the saints (εἰς διακονίαν τοῖς ἁγίοις ἔταξαν ἑαυτούς), and through their hard work (κοπιῶντι) as they shared in Paul's labour (συνεργοῦντι). Though the verb (συνεργέω) rather than the noun (συνεργός) is used here, the connection between the two is unmistakable, and in the light of Paul's use of συνεργός elsewhere it can be concluded that the work in which they were involved was the ministry of the gospel. This passage also shows that the household of Stephanas served the believers in Corinth voluntarily ("they devoted themselves to the service of the saints" — εἰς διακονίαν τοῖς ἁγίοις ἔταξαν ἑαυτούς), not because they had been appointed to any formal leadership position. In a similar way, Paul recognizes that there are others who share in the ministry of the gospel out of their own free choice (hence παντὶ τῷ συνεργοῦντι καὶ κοπιῶντι). It is to all of these that the Corinthian believers must accord recognition and submission. The parallel between 1 Corinthians 16:15-16 and 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13 is striking, and the two passages provide the most direct indication of how leadership began to develop during the period of Paul's Early Letters.<sup>27</sup>

In conclusion, it can be seen from Paul's Early Letters that there were a number of people whom Paul recognized as coworkers and sharers in the task of gospel ministry to which he himself had been set apart. Some of these were part of his itinerant mission and some of them were resident in the churches. Those who were part of his mission shared with him in the work of evangelizing new areas and were sometimes called upon (like Timothy and Titus) to help the churches to deal with difficult situations. The resident coworkers played a crucial role by helping to consolidate the work that Paul had begun through their own pastoral ministry within the congregations. In all of this, the work of the gospel is central.

### 4.3 THE THEOLOGICAL BASIS OF THE COWORKERS' MINISTRY

Having observed the historical situation with regard to Paul's coworkers, it is worth asking the question why Paul felt free to involve others in his work of gospel ministry. Though he was an apostle and never relinquished his apostolic prerogatives, he nevertheless encouraged others to participate in his work and in fact relied on them continually. What was it about the nature of gospel ministry that allowed for this sharing? The answer to this question reveals some important theological truths about the gospel and its ministry that will guide later investigations regarding leadership in the churches. The question will be answered by reviewing the discussion in section 3.2.2 on Paul's understanding of his role as God's coworker, then by considering the nature of the gospel as Paul understood it, and finally by noting how Paul answers the problem of factionalism in 1 Corinthians 1-3.

It was found in section 3.2.2 that one of the essential aspects of Paul's understanding of his own ministry was his view of himself as God's coworker. As a result of this perspective Paul had a tremendous sense of privilege and responsibility; his ministry was glorious because God was present in it, and it was necessary because God had chosen to make it his instrument. In 2 Corinthians 4:1 he states, "having this ministry by the mercy of God, we do not lose heart (οὐκ ἐγκακοῦμεν)", implying that he does not grow slack in well-doing (see section 3.2.2.5). In 2 Corinthians 5:20 he extols the glory of his ministry by stating, "Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God" (see section 3.2.2.7). Nevertheless, Paul was acutely aware that he was never more than an instrument of God who alone produced fruit in the lives of his people (see section 3.2.2 *passim*).

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<sup>27</sup> For this reason the two passages are frequently discussed together in treatments of leadership in the Pauline churches (e.g. Campbell 2004:120-123; Gehring 2004:197-205).

This understanding of ministry is fully in line with Paul's view of the gospel. In Romans 1:1, Paul states that he is "set apart for the gospel of God," and in Romans 1:16 he calls the gospel the "power of God for salvation". When the gospel is faithfully proclaimed it is owned by and used of God, but if it is changed it ceases to be God's instrument for salvation. This explains Paul's alarm at hearing about the teaching which had infiltrated the Galatian churches:

I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel — not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed (Gal 1:6-9).

Paul is alarmed because that distorted "gospel" cannot save, and those who embrace it cut themselves off from God's saving power and from the transforming power of the Spirit: "Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?" (Gal 3:3). Neither the divinely-given authority of an apostle nor the heavenly power of an angel can give any value to a false gospel. God is sovereign in salvation and his chosen instrument is his own gospel concerning his Son. Two complementary truths are therefore evident regarding the gospel and its ministry:

- A false gospel cannot lead to salvation and must be rejected out of hand. No earthly or heavenly authority can remediate it.
- The true gospel is God's power for the salvation of those who believe. This is so because God has ordained it and chooses to use it, not because of any power inherent in the minister of the gospel.

These are the truths which underlie Paul's treatment of the divisions in Corinth (1 Cor 1:18-4:25). The divisions centred around personalities and the all-too-human desire to find security and a sense of superiority in human leaders. The solution to this problem lay in recognizing that true Christian ministry has nothing to do with human superiority but with God's power, realized through the preaching of the gospel:

For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified [i.e. the true gospel message]. And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling, and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God (1 Cor 2:2-5).

Hence, when the discussion moves on to Paul and Apollos (1 Cor 3:4-9), Paul's argument is that they were only servants through whom the Lord enabled the Corinthians to believe.<sup>28</sup> They could accomplish nothing on their own and all the growth came from God. The climax of the argument comes in 3:9 where Paul states, θεοῦ γὰρ ἐσμὲν συνεργοί. This phrase has given rise to much discussion and many recent commentators follow Furnish (1961) in interpreting it to mean something like, "we are coworkers in God's service," with the emphasis being on the equality of the coworkers rather on their sharing in God's work (see, e.g. Fee 1987:134; Thiselton 2000:305-306). It seems best, however to understand the phrase to mean "we are coworkers with God". Reasons for this choice are:

1. Proponents of Furnish's view supply the context as a reason for their interpretation, including 3:8a which speaks about the equality between Paul and Apollos (Furnish

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<sup>28</sup> This fact is stated three times in different ways, in verses 5, 6 and 7 of 1 Cor 3. (See below.)

1961:369) and “the argument of the whole paragraph [which] emphasizes their unity in fellow labor *under* God, an argument that would be undercut considerably if he were now emphasizing that they worked with God in Corinth” (Fee 1987:134). However, the context is a strong argument for the alternative view. Paul has stated three times that the power behind his and Apollos’ ministries is nothing other and nothing less than God: “What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you believed (v.5) . . . God gave the growth (v.6) . . . neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth” (v.7) (1 Cor 3:5-7). By concluding his argument with the statement, “God’s coworkers we are” (θεοῦ is in the emphatic position), Paul is not elevating them but relativizing their role: they appear as small as they really are when placed alongside God. In any case, he has already stated three times that they are working with God, or rather that God is working through them.

2. Whenever the noun συνεργός is used in Paul’s letters with a genitive referring to a person, that person is the one who is the coworker of the συνεργός (Furnish 1961:366-367).
3. However much it may be denied, the more natural interpretation of the phrase is “God’s coworkers” in the sense of “coworkers with God” (Weiss 1970:78). This follows from point 2 just stated, and also from the word order of the sentence. If Paul had been wanting to use the word συνεργός to emphasize his equality with Apollos, it would have been far more natural to write συνεργοὶ γὰρ ἐσμὲν θεοῦ (*coworkers* we are of God), or perhaps θεοῦ γὰρ συνεργοὶ ἐσμὲν (which gives more emphasis to συνεργοί), rather than θεοῦ γὰρ ἐσμὲν συνεργοί (which emphasizes θεοῦ and places συνεργοί last in the phrase).

The tenor of this argument is applied in the injunction of 1 Corinthians 4:1: “This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.” The idea of God and his gospel being the true power behind the Corinthians’ faith has been dominant since 1 Corinthians 1:18 — “For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved *it is the power of God*” (emphasis added) — and this principle is applied to the Corinthians’ view of Paul and Apollos (and other human teachers). They were nothing more than “stewards”, conveying the “mysteries of God”, while God himself imparted eternal salvation.

All of these observations can now be used to answer the question posed at the beginning of this section: Why did Paul feel free to involve other people in his work of ministry? The answer is that he understood the role of the minister to be that of a steward. Power for salvation came from God through his gospel, not through any personal qualities of the minister (even if he was an apostle). Hence, if other people could be brought to understand the gospel and to minister it faithfully, Paul was confident that God’s power would be at work through them leading people to salvation just as was the case in his own ministry. That is why he can call Timothy God’s coworker (1 Thess 3:2) and say that “he is doing the work of the Lord, as I am” (1 Cor 16:10). The apostle would surely have been willing to say the same about his other coworkers.

#### 4.4 CONCLUSION

This chapter begins by recognizing the scarcity of references to any formal office in Paul’s Early Letters. It is also noted that New Testament scholarship, in seeking to explain this phenomenon, has moved away from the older view which emphasized “charismatic order” to a view which emphasizes socio-historic considerations. In seeking a new approach to this question, it was decided to build on the observation made in chapter 3 that Paul was directed by a passion to see believers

built up and established in the gospel. The suggestion that it would be natural to him first to expand his own ministry by finding others who could share in the work of gospel proclamation is investigated.

A detailed examination of the work of Timothy in Thessalonica (1 Thess 3:1-10), shows that he had a role very similar to that of Paul. He was involved in ministering the gospel as God's coworker, in building up the believers' faith, and in helping them to persevere in the face of persecution. A detailed study of the Thessalonian leaders (1 Thess 5:12-13) shows that their role was probably one of caring pastorally for the church, thus helping the believers to be prepared for the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. A number of other people, both itinerant and resident in the churches, were also involved in gospel ministry and regarded as Paul's coworkers. The call for the congregations in Thessalonica and in Corinth to recognize such people seems to point to the inception of a more formalized leadership function, but at this stage the emphasis is on the ministry of the gospel rather than any formal leadership position. Most importantly, it can be observed that God's presence and power were the determining factor in ministry, and that ministry was effective because God had appointed the gospel as his power for salvation, not because there was power inherent in any person or office. True ministry, therefore, was a ministry of the true gospel, empowered by God himself.

Although these observations have a strong theological content, they are nevertheless historical observations as well: they deal with conversations people had with one another, letters that were written, journeys that were undertaken, words that were spoken, and thought-patterns that governed decision-making. It is important to recognize that Paul's coworkers and the gospel they preached were an important step in the historical process of developing leadership in the Pauline churches. In addition to rejecting the "idealistic fallacy" care must be taken to avoid the "materialistic fallacy" (Holmberg 1978:205-207)!

## CHAPTER 5

### DIVINE EQUIPPING AND APPOINTMENT

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#### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

The examination of Paul's understanding of his own leadership role in chapter 3 shows that he was profoundly conscious of his role as God's coworker (section 3.2.2). For him, this meant that the decisive influence behind his work as a minister of the gospel was in fact the power of God himself. His own work was essential but could only create the conditions for growth, not the growth itself. Furthermore, in chapter 4 it was found that Paul viewed Timothy and other ministers of the gospel as God's coworkers, in many ways like himself (1 Cor 3:4-9; 1 Thess 3:2; see sections 4.2.1 and 4.3 above). If Paul's theological language is a reflection of underlying realities, then the idea of God's power at work in the leaders of the church provides profound insight into the "waves of energy"<sup>1</sup> that were at work in the New Testament churches. Hence, this chapter will seek to investigate more thoroughly the idea of the divine equipping and appointment of leaders in the Pauline churches. The investigation is necessarily theological, rather than social, as it deals primarily with the relationship between God and his servants.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> On this metaphor, see the quote from MacMullen(1974:121-122) in section 1.3.

<sup>2</sup> This is not deny the importance of understanding the social and organizational aspects of leadership, which will be studied in more detail in chapter 6.

The issue of divine equipping was, to some extent, addressed by the scholarship of the twentieth century up to about the 1970's, where the dominant paradigm was that of "charismatic order" in the churches. Nevertheless, the main emphasis was not on understanding God's equipping of leaders *per se*, but rather on showing that the form of order in the (early) Pauline churches was non-institutional, based only on the events in which the Spirit inspired believers to exercise their *χαρίσματα*.<sup>3</sup> The socio-historical paradigm, on the other hand, has deliberately sought to explain the leadership of the Pauline churches in socio-historical terms, and has therefore given little attention to the theological dimensions of leadership.<sup>4</sup> Regarding the issue of power in leadership, other recent studies (e.g. Ehrensperger 2007; Clarke 2008) have tended to consider the matter in terms of its social dimensions, often in dialogue with postmodern and feminist scholars like Castelli (1991) and Polaski (1999). As valuable as the social and philosophical perspectives are, it is impossible to understand Paul or the social life of his communities apart from his theological thinking, and hence it is important to investigate this dimension of early Christian leadership.<sup>5</sup>

The pattern of chapters 3 and 4 will be followed here in that the topic of divine equipping will be investigated first with regard to Paul's ministry and then with regard to the ministry of other leaders. One of the key terms that Paul used to describe the ministry that he had received is the word *χάρις*. This same word, along with the morphologically related word *χάρισμα*, is also used to describe the ministry of other Christians. It will therefore be valuable to discuss the meaning of *χάρις* before considering the subject of divine equipping itself.

## 5.2 THE MEANING OF ΧΑΡΙΣ

### 5.2.1 Lexicography of *χάρις*

In seeking to understand the meaning of *χάρις*, it is important to avoid confusing *words*, or *terms*, with *concepts*. As important as it is to investigate and understand concepts, terms must not be treated as though they carry in themselves the full breadth of a developed idea.<sup>6</sup> This has, at times been the case with the term *χάρις*. Conzelmann (1964-1976:393), for example, states, "In Paul *χάρις* is a central

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<sup>3</sup> This paradigm has its roots in the work of Sohm (see Campbell 2004:5-10). Major representatives of the paradigm (with significant variations) include Schweizer (1963), Käsemann (1964), Von Campenhausen (1969), and Dunn (1997[1975]).

<sup>4</sup> See chapter 2 for a detailed review and evaluation of this paradigm.

<sup>5</sup> Holmberg's dictum regarding the danger of the "idealistic fallacy" has been a significant influence in the quest for social and non-theological explanations of leadership in the Pauline churches (see, e.g. Chapple's (1984: 37-55) criticism of Von Campenhausen and Dunn, as well as Campbell's (2004:100-106) discussion on the "fallacy of idealism". I consider, however, that scholars have been insufficiently critical in adopting the "idealistic fallacy" as a hermeneutical principle. Holmberg (1978:205-207) explained this "fallacy" as the view that social realities are completely determined by ideas (with particular reference to theological ideas). In response, many scholars have sought to eliminate theological ideas from their explanation of the social realities of the Pauline churches. However, social psychology shows that norms (which in themselves are ideas) have a powerful influence on the life of a group (Forsyth 2006:170-176; Johnson & Johnson 2006:17-18). Much of Paul's work with his churches — including his letters — involved developing group norms. Although his ethical and other instructions may not be read as a simple historical description of the churches, their influence on the norms and hence the historical behaviour of the churches cannot be ignored. Theology, however, is more than just another field of ideas: it claims to deal with realities, unseen though they may be. If these realities do in fact exist, no historical description is complete without taking them into account.

<sup>6</sup> See Cotterell & Turner (1980:115-125,152-154) for a discussion of this issue, especially in relation to theological dictionaries. Berding (2000) discusses this issue with particular reference to *χάρις* and *χάρισμα*.

concept that most clearly expresses his understanding of the salvation event," clearly equating the word *χάρις* with Paul's whole understanding of salvation. Similarly, Dunn (1997:202-205) discusses Paul's theological understanding of grace, with the apparent implication that the word *χάρις* itself conveys all these ideas.<sup>7</sup> Of course, the aim is not to eliminate theological concepts from one's understanding of the word *χάρις*, but it is important, especially where the aim is to elucidate particular passages, to be clear about what is and isn't conveyed by the word itself in the various contexts in which it is used. With regard to the word *χάρις*, Boers (1997) has provided a discussion which shows sensitivity to these important lexical issues.

As a starting point, it is helpful to discuss the four senses for *χάρις* given by Louw & Nida:

1. "[T]o show kindness to someone, with the implication of graciousness on the part of the one showing such kindness — 'to show kindness, to manifest graciousness toward, kindness, graciousness, grace.'" The idea here is of "an event involving a particular quality"; the semantic domain is "moral and ethical qualities and related behavior", and the subdomain is "kindness, harshness" (Louw & Nida 1996:1.748-749). What is envisaged here is an action whereby one person is motivated by a disposition of kindness towards another; the meanings of the English words "graciousness" and "grace" used in the definition by Louw & Nida imply that this action is undeserved by the recipient.<sup>8</sup>
2. "[T]hat which is given freely and generously — 'gift, gracious gift.'" In this case the semantic domain is "possess, transfer, exchange" and the subdomain is "give" (Louw & Nida 1996:1.568-569). When used with this sense *χάρις* refers to the entity which is given, whether a concrete object, a privilege, or an act of kindness. Once again, the implication is that gift is unearned and undeserved by the recipient.
3. "[A]n expression of thankfulness — 'thanks.'" The semantic domain in this case is "communication" and the subdomain is "thanks" (Louw & Nida 1996:1.428). This sense is straightforward and generally easy to distinguish from the other senses of *χάρις*.
4. "[A] favorable attitude toward someone or something — 'favor, good will.'" The semantic domain is "attitudes and emotions" and the subdomain is "acceptable, to be pleased with" (Louw & Nida 1996:1.298-299). This sense of *χάρις* draws attention to the attitude that one person has towards another.

Of these four meanings, sense 3 is clearly distinct from the others, and it is easy to recognize this use of *χάρις* in any particular context. The remaining three senses, however, all include three components: (a) the disposition or attitude of the one showing *χάρις* (emphasized in sense 4); (b) the benefit that is conferred, which could be an actual object or the activity of treating a person graciously (emphasized in sense 2); and (c) the moral quality of the person who shows *χάρις* (emphasized in sense 1). As a result, it is frequently difficult or impossible to distinguish which sense of *χάρις* is being used in a particular context. Louw & Nida (1996:1.569, n.26) make the following comment:

In the classification of *χαριζομαι*<sup>a</sup> there is obviously a problem of what might be called 'fuzzy sets,' since these meanings may involve not only the transfer of actual objects but may often

<sup>7</sup> This is not to suggest that the discussions of Conzelmann and Dunn are not valuable and important.

<sup>8</sup> A clear example of *χάρις* in this sense is found in Romans 3:24: "and are justified as a gift by his graciousness [δικαιούμενοι δωρεάν τῆ αὐτοῦ χάριτι], through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (own translation).

<sup>9</sup> Notes on *χαριζομαι*<sup>a</sup>: (a) The superscript <sup>a</sup> indicates that this is the first sense of *χαριζομαι* distinguished in Louw & Nida [1996]. (b) The word *χαριζομαι*<sup>a</sup> is related to the second sense of *χάρις* listed above: *χάρις*

refer equally well to more generalized activities in which one person treats another graciously and generously (see 88.66 [i.e. sense 1 listed above]). As such, these meanings could very well be classified under certain aspects of Domain 25 *Attitudes and Emotions* [cf. sense 4 above], though there seems to be no clear-cut distinction. Rather, there seems to be a gradient from one aspect of meaning to another.

Boers (1997:697) essentially agrees with Louw & Nida by stating that “words derived from the stem  $\chi\alpha\sigma\text{-}$  . . . [are] are strongly multivalent”.<sup>10</sup> As a result, it is probably not useful to specify distinct translation equivalents for the different meanings of  $\chi\acute{\alpha}\sigma\iota\varsigma$  (as defined by Louw & Nida). Rather, it should be remembered that the three elements (disposition, giving of a benefit, and moral quality of the giver) are all present to a greater or lesser degree. What is characteristic of  $\chi\acute{\alpha}\sigma\iota\varsigma$ , especially when God is the giver, is the undeserved and generous nature of the kindness/giving which takes place. Since the distinguishing component of the English word “grace” is understood to be “undeserved kindness/giving”, I generally use the English word “grace” to translate  $\chi\acute{\alpha}\sigma\iota\varsigma$  in this chapter. Depending on the particular emphasis in a given context, modifiers or other words may be used. (It goes without saying that sense 3, “thanks”, will be translated as such.) It is true that this approach may at times leave some ambiguity in the translation, but it is an ambiguity which exists in the source language.

Although the one who shows/gives  $\chi\acute{\alpha}\sigma\iota\varsigma$  (in senses 1, 2 and 4 above) can be God or a human being, this does not mean that there is nothing distinctive about God’s  $\chi\acute{\alpha}\sigma\iota\varsigma$ . While Paul’s full understanding of salvation by grace must not be imported into every occurrence of the word  $\chi\acute{\alpha}\sigma\iota\varsigma$  in his writings, it is important to recognize that his understanding of the word would have been enriched by the concepts of grace that are prominent in the Old Testament. In particular, Hebrew words like  $\eta$  and  $\text{חסד}$  provide an important linguistic context for Paul’s use of  $\chi\acute{\alpha}\sigma\iota\varsigma$  (Ehrensperger 2007:71-78). Ehrensperger (2007:75) explains their meaning as follows:

All of these [Hebrew] terms in some way or other denote aspects of a *relationship* be it between humans, or between God and humans. When applied to God, the terms indicate the priority of God’s unmerited initiative in establishing a bond between himself and humans, particularly with his people Israel. This relationship is founded exclusively on deep divine love, a love that anticipates any favourable act of God towards his people. This love leads to a self-commitment of God in his  $\text{ברית}$  (covenant) with Israel.

A further aspect of this Old Testament view of God’s grace, which seems to be important for some instances of Paul’s use of  $\chi\acute{\alpha}\sigma\iota\varsigma$ , is that God’s gracious initiative provokes a response from those who receive it. This response is “an overflowing gracious activity on the part of the receivers”, which is frequently expressed in acts of favour ( $\text{חסד}$ ) towards other people (Ehrensperger 2007:75-76). These perspectives on  $\chi\acute{\alpha}\sigma\iota\varsigma$  can be regarded as contributing to the connotative meaning of the word in the first two senses (“graciousness” and “grace-gift”) outlined above.

Boers (1997:705-712) also shows that, in Romans and Galatians,  $\chi\acute{\alpha}\sigma\iota\varsigma$  develops into a technical term which carries with it the complex of ideas involved in the gospel of justification through faith, as

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in this sense is regarded as a derivative of  $\chi\alpha\sigma\acute{\iota}\zeta\omicron\mu\alpha\iota$ .<sup>a</sup> Hence the quoted comments regarding  $\chi\alpha\sigma\acute{\iota}\zeta\omicron\mu\alpha\iota$  also apply to  $\chi\acute{\alpha}\sigma\iota\varsigma$ .

<sup>10</sup> Boers (1997:703) points out that Aristotle defined the word as “that according to which the one who has it is said to render favor to the one who needs it, not for something [in return], nor for the sake of the one who renders it, but for the sake of the other”. This definition also includes the components of (a) disposition; (b) giving (in object or in act); (c) the thing given; and (d) the undeserved nature of the giving. There is a clear correlation between this definition and the definition of Louw & Nida.

opposed to works (e.g. Rom 4:16; Gal 2:21). It is important to note, however, that this sense is not present in every use of χάρις.

### 5.2.2 Χάρις in 2 Corinthians 8-9

The word χάρις appears ten times in 2 Corinthians 8-9 in a variety of senses,<sup>11</sup> and the interplay between God's χάρις and its fruit in the χάρις of those who have received grace from God is instructive for our understanding of divine equipping. Of the ten occurrences of χάρις in 2 Corinthians 8-9, two have the meaning "thanks" (2 Cor 8:16; 9:15) and are of peripheral interest here. Of the remaining eight occurrences, three refer to God's χάρις, one to the χάρις of Christ, and four to the χάρις of the believers of Macedonia and Achaia.

This passage, which deals with the collection for the poor in Jerusalem, aims to encourage the Corinthian believers to contribute generously. The first argument that Paul uses to motivate them is the example of the Macedonian Christians, who had already contributed very generously to the project — despite their own poverty. Yet it is noteworthy that Paul does not begin his appeal by referring to the Macedonians' generosity: he first draws attention to the grace of God which was given to them (τὴν χάριν τοῦ θεοῦ τὴν δεδομένην ἐν ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις τῆς Μακεδονίας; 2 Cor 8:1). In this instance, χάρις refers to the gracious working of God in the hearts of the Macedonian Christians whereby they were made willing to contribute to the relief of the poor in Jerusalem. As noted above, χάρις deals with an act of kindness that is based on the gracious disposition of the giver, rather than anything about the recipient which makes him worthy of that kindness; it also indicates a need on the part of the recipient. In the case of God's dealings with his people it is based on his covenant love and mercy. All of this indicates that the Macedonians, in and of themselves, would not have been disposed to give in the way they did; but God in his love and kindness gave them what they lacked, enabling and equipping them by his supernatural love and power to give generously.

The extraordinary nature of the Macedonians' response to God's grace is shown by the way in which they pleaded with Paul for the favour (2 Cor 8:4 — a mundane use of χάρις in sense 2 above) of participating in the collection. It would appear that Paul had been reticent to ask them for a contribution due to their own affliction and extreme poverty (2 Cor 8:2). Yet, despite their own hardships, they "overflowed in a wealth of generosity", giving according to and even beyond their ability (2 Cor 8:2-3). As Paul applies the lesson to the Corinthians, he refers to the collection with the word χάρις (τὴν χάριν ταύτην . . . ταύτη τῇ χάριτι — 2 Cor 8:6-7). Most likely the meaning here is "act of grace" (so ESV),<sup>12</sup> referring to the collection project as an expression of kindness on the part of the Gentile Christians towards the poor in Jerusalem. In line with Aristotle's definition, they were giving freely to those in need, not out of compulsion or the expectation of a return. It would seem that Paul was deliberate in his use of χάρις to describe God's action in the Macedonians as well as the Gentile Christians' collection for Jerusalem. There is a definite link here with the Old Testament

<sup>11</sup> Interestingly, Ehrensperger (2007:67), in her discussion of χάρις in 2 Corinthians 8-9, states that "it seems impossible to determine its meaning in a precise lexicographical way". Nevertheless, some careful analysis can bring clarity to the situation. (Cf. Harris (2005:559-560) for some comments on the various senses of χάρις in this passage.)

<sup>12</sup> Although some translations and commentators translate the second of these two instances of χάρις with "grace of giving" (cf. NIV, Harris 2005:560), the same Greek is used; hence the simpler translation which uses the same English equivalent for both phrases is to be preferred. It goes without saying that the referent of "act of grace" is the collection, which involves giving.

concept of God's  $\tau\omicron\pi\eta$ , which stirs up its beneficiaries to respond in their turn with gracious acts towards other people (see above, section 5.2.1).<sup>13</sup>

Paul's second argument for motivating the Corinthians to give generously is also rooted in God's grace; this time it is the grace expressed in the work of the Lord Jesus Christ:

For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ [ $\tau\eta\nu\ \chi\acute{\alpha}\rho\iota\nu\ \tau\omicron\upsilon\ \kappa\upsilon\rho\acute{\iota}\omicron\upsilon\ \eta\mu\acute{\omega}\nu\ \text{I}\eta\sigma\omicron\upsilon\ \chi\rho\iota\sigma\tau\omicron\upsilon$ ], that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor [ $\acute{\epsilon}\pi\tau\acute{\omega}\chi\epsilon\upsilon\sigma\epsilon\nu$ ], so that you through his poverty might become rich (2 Cor 8:9).

Here,  $\chi\acute{\alpha}\rho\iota\varsigma$  refers both Christ's gracious disposition and to a gracious act, which in this instance is centrally related to God's work of salvation. However, the emphasis is not on grace as opposed to works (like in Galatians and Romans), but to the personal favour shown by the Lord Jesus Christ in his giving of himself. There is some discussion as to the exact meaning of  $\acute{\epsilon}\pi\tau\acute{\omega}\chi\epsilon\upsilon\sigma\epsilon\nu$  ("he became poor"): whether it refers to Christ's actual incarnation, or his life and ministry, or specifically his death on the cross, especially in his experience of God forsaking him (cf. Matt 27:46; Mark 15:34). Probably the best solution to this question is to understand Christ's poverty as embracing all these elements of his experience, each of which can be described as poverty compared to the supreme glory and honour which he experienced in the immediate presence of God before his incarnation.<sup>14</sup> It was this poverty, which Christ voluntarily endured, that resulted in great riches for the Corinthian believers. Christ's act of grace thus conforms to the general definition of  $\chi\acute{\alpha}\rho\iota\varsigma$ , but goes far beyond its normal expression: he did not merely give something which he had and others did not have; he suffered extreme personal loss in order to grant the favour which believers gain as a result of his act of grace. This also implies that his love and kindness towards the beneficiaries of his grace far exceed what is involved in mere human acts of  $\chi\acute{\alpha}\rho\iota\varsigma$ .

Paul's rhetorical point in mentioning the grace of Christ is to motivate the Corinthian Christians to perform their own acts of grace, in this case by giving generously to the poor of Jerusalem. The motivation includes the example of Christ, but it is all the more forceful because they themselves are the beneficiaries of Christ's grace. By pointing to Christ, Paul aims, firstly, to show the Corinthians how dependent they themselves are on grace, and secondly to arouse their compassion towards other believers by helping them to see the depth of Christ's compassion. Once again, grace begets grace.

A third motivation to generosity, also derived from the grace of God, is found in 2 Corinthians 9:8:

And God is able to make all grace ( $\pi\acute{\alpha}\sigma\alpha\nu\ \chi\acute{\alpha}\rho\iota\nu$ ) abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.

With this statement, Paul starts extending his horizon beyond the collection for Jerusalem, which is still very much in view. In 2 Corinthians 9:6-7 he has reminded the Corinthians that God loves a cheerful giver, and that whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Those statements refer primarily to the Corinthians' participation in the collection, while 9:8 indicates God's ongoing response to their generosity: he will continue to supply all their needs so that they will be able to live a lifestyle of generosity. That Paul has a wider view than just the present collection for Jerusalem is indicated by 2 Corinthians 9:13, which refers to the Corinthians' generosity "for them [i.e. the poor of Jerusalem] and for all others".<sup>15</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Harris (2005:575): "Paul's point is that the receipt of  $\chi\acute{\alpha}\rho\iota\varsigma$  should lead to the giving of  $\chi\acute{\alpha}\rho\iota\varsigma$ ; grace received should prompt grace given."

<sup>14</sup> See Harris 2005:579-580 for discussion and references.

<sup>15</sup> See Harris (2005:637-639) for further discussion of this verse.

Once again, God's grace is seen to be something which empowers and equips believers for service. The word χάρις in this verse refers primarily to gifts given (rather than to a gracious act), which in this case are comprehensive in their scope. The fact that God's grace enabled the Macedonians to give so generously (2 Cor 8:1-2) shows that the gift referred to in 2 Corinthians 9:8 must include inward aspects of motivation and willingness. In the light of 2 Corinthians 8:9 and 1 Corinthians 2:6-16 one would expect that this gift also refers to the Spirit's illumination by which the believer is enabled to understand the grace of God revealed in Jesus Christ (cf. Eph 1:17-23). Finally, the gift must include material provision, since Paul expects the Corinthians to give according to what they have, not what they do not have (2 Cor 8:12-14). No matter what the nature of the gift may be, it is God's gift, and it is this gift which enables believers to exercise χάρις towards their fellow-believers.

In view of the emphasis throughout this passage on God's grace equipping believers for service, it is entirely appropriate that Paul concludes his discussion of the collection by drawing attention to the way in which God will be glorified for the generosity shown by the Corinthian Christians:

By their approval of this service, they will glorify God because of your submission flowing from your confession of the gospel of Christ, and the generosity of your contribution for them and for all others, while they long for you and pray for you, because of the surpassing grace of God upon you [διὰ τὴν ὑπερβάλλουσάν χάριν τοῦ θεοῦ ἐφ' ὑμῖν]. Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift! (2 Cor 9:13-15).

The Corinthians' generosity flows from the χάρις of God upon them and because of this the believers in Jerusalem will give praise to God. From a literary point of view, the use of χάρις at the beginning and end of the whole passage (2 Cor 8:1 and 2 Cor 9:14) form a powerful *inclusio*. These two instances of χάρις not only bind the whole discussion together, but also highlight its main theme: the χάρις of God which begets χάρις in his people. It will be shown in the course of this chapter how these concepts provide insight into Paul's understanding of the divine equipping of leaders, but it should be clear at this point that he conceived of God's χάρις as an empowering gift.

### 5.3 DIVINE EQUIPPING IN PAUL'S APOSTOLIC CALL AND MINISTRY

One aspect of the approach that I am using in this study is to investigate Paul's own leadership role, both for its own sake and also because the work of other leaders was closely related to his own work. Some of the parallels between the leadership roles of Paul and his coworkers were discussed in chapter 4, and it is striking to observe how these parallels extend into the realm of divine equipping. One of the important passages (discussed below in section 5.4.2) for understanding Paul's view of the divine equipping of leaders is Romans 12:3-8. This passage shows a remarkable correspondence between Paul's own role as an apostle and the roles of other believers in the body of Christ:

For by the grace given to me [διὰ τῆς χάριτος τῆς δοθείσης μοι] I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned (Rom 12:3).

Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us [ἔχοντες δὲ χαρίσματα κατὰ τὴν χάριν τὴν δοθεῖσαν ἡμῖν], let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith (Rom 12:6).

In these two verses the phrase χάρις δοθεῖσα is applied both to Paul (12:3) and to the Roman Christians (12:6). It is reasonable to think that, at least in some respects, Paul's own experience of God's grace was echoed in the experience of the Roman Christians, and especially in that of the leaders. This phrase proves to be central to Paul's own call and provides a good starting point for understanding his own sense of being empowered by God for his apostolic work.

The idea of receiving, or being given grace, is prominent in the passages which deal with Paul's own call to ministry. In fact, Paul hardly speaks of his call without also referring to God's grace given to him in that call. Note the following passages:

Romans 1:1,5: Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God . . . through whom [i.e. through Jesus Christ] we have received grace and apostleship [δι' οὗ ἐλάβομεν χάριν καὶ ἀποστολήν] to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations.

Romans 15:15-16: But on some points I have written to you very boldly by way of reminder, because of the grace given me by God [διὰ τὴν χάριν τὴν δοθεῖσάν μοι ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ] to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles in the priestly service of the gospel of God, so that the offering of the Gentiles may be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

1 Corinthians 3:10: According to the grace of God given to me [Κατὰ τὴν χάριν τοῦ θεοῦ τὴν δοθεῖσάν μοι] me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building upon it.

1 Corinthians 15:10: But by the grace of God [χάριτι δὲ θεοῦ] I am what I am, and his grace toward me [ἡ χάρις αὐτοῦ ἢ εἰς ἐμὲ] was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me [ἡ χάρις τοῦ θεοῦ [ἡ] σὺν ἐμοί].

2 Corinthians 4:1: Therefore, having this ministry by the mercy of God [ἔχοντες τὴν διακονίαν ταύτην καθὼς ἠλεήθημεν<sup>16</sup>], we do not lose heart.

Galatians 1:15-16: But when he who had set me apart before I was born, and who called me by his grace [καλέσας διὰ τῆς χάριτος αὐτοῦ], was pleased to reveal his Son to me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles.

Galatians 2:9: . . . when James and Cephas and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given to me [τὴν χάριν τὴν δοθεῖσάν μοι], they gave the right hand of fellowship to Barnabas and me, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised.

The prominent use of χάρις δοθεῖσα (or some equivalent expression) in these passages, combined with perspectives from Paul's use of χάρις in 2 Corinthians 8-9,<sup>17</sup> suggests that God's grace equipped Paul in a supernatural way to carry out the calling he had received, and that this was also for the benefit of others. This can be confirmed more explicitly by studying Paul's perception of the way God equipped him for the ministry he had received. Four lines of evidence will be considered:

1. the meaning and use of the phrase χάρις δοθεῖσα and similar expressions;
2. Paul's understanding of his call as a prophetic call in the tradition of the Old Testament prophets;
3. the revelation from God which enabled Paul to carry out his task;
4. the way Paul's work was empowered by the Holy Spirit.

<sup>16</sup> In this instance the passive of the verb ἐλεέω is virtually equivalent to χάρις ἐλάβομεν, as in Romans 1:5. Note Ehrensperger's (2007:74) comment: "there was an increasing tendency among first-century Jewish writers, writing in Greek, to exchange ἔλεος (mercy) and χάρις (grace), using them interchangeable, in their description of God's favour towards humans — that is, of his ἰσχυρὸς or ἰσχυρῶς".

<sup>17</sup> Note the parallel expression, τὴν χάριν τοῦ θεοῦ τὴν δεδομένην ἐν ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις τῆς Μακεδονίας, in 2 Corinthians 8:1.

### 5.3.1 Paul's use of χάρις δοθεῖσα in relation to his call

The close connection between God's χάρις and Paul's apostolic call, as expressed in the above passages, raises the question of how and why Paul understood that call to be an expression of God's χάρις. Sandnes (1991:64) claims this χάρις is a reference to God's forgiveness of Paul for his "prior life of persecuting the church". Without this grace Paul was completely unqualified to preach the gospel. But it is better to take χάρις as a reference to God's favour shown in the particular act of calling Paul to his service.<sup>18</sup> This interpretation is confirmed by Romans 15:15-16 — where the grace given to Paul is the grace "to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles [εἰς τὸ εἶναί με λειτουργὸν Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ εἰς τὰ ἔθνη]" — and by Galatians 2:9 — where the grace that was acknowledged by James, Cephas, and John was Paul's special call to preach the gospel to the Gentiles.

The question now is: What are the implications of Paul referring to his call with the term χάρις (or ἐλεέω, as in 2 Cor 4:1)? Considering that χάρις deals with the granting of favour, whereby one person gives to another something that the latter does not have,<sup>19</sup> the implication is that Paul would not and could not have had the calling to be an apostle and minister of the gospel if God had not granted him this privilege out of sheer mercy. Paul's apostleship "does not depend on any human power, nor his own accomplishment, but only on God" (Ehrensperger 2007:90). God, and he alone, had called and appointed Paul to the task of apostleship.<sup>20</sup>

Of the passages cited above, 1 Corinthians 3:10 and 1 Corinthians 15:10 show explicitly that the grace which God gave to Paul in calling him to be an apostle also involved equipping him to do the work. In 1 Corinthians 3:10, Paul states that he laid the foundation of the church in Corinth "according to the grace of God" given to him. First Corinthians 15:10 provides a rich understanding of how God's grace was at work in Paul's ministry. The first use of χάρις in that verse refers both to God's gracious act and to the favour which he granted. This grace resulted in Paul's conversion and also in his calling to be an apostle. God's grace "was not in vain" because Paul carried out his apostolic work with consummate zeal — but here again Paul finds it necessary to deny that the work which he did was actually his own, attributing it rather to the working of God's grace in him. From this verse it is clear that Paul understood his work as an apostle to be the effect of God's undeserved kindness from start to finish: God's grace had called him in the first place, and all of his zealous labours in responding to God's call were further expressions of God's grace. He certainly understood himself to be divinely equipped for his task!

### 5.3.2 Paul's prophetic call

It was noted in section 3.2.1.2 that Paul understood his apostolic call to be in continuity with that of the Old Testament prophets.<sup>21</sup> In particular, the phrase ἐκ κοιλίας μητρός ("from my mother's womb") (Gal 1:15) seems to be an allusion to Isaiah 49:1 and to Jeremiah 1:5. Isaiah 49:1 comes from one of Isaiah's Servant Songs, placing Paul in parallel with the *Ebed Yahweh* of Isaiah, as well as with the Old Testament prophets. Recognizing these parallels provides further insight into Paul's perception of his own divine equipping.

<sup>18</sup> This is the view taken by Jewett (2007:109) and Ehrensperger (2007:87-88).

<sup>19</sup> See section 5.2.1 above.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Harris (2005:323), in commenting on 2 Corinthians 4:1: "Paul was profoundly aware that neither his appointment as an agent of the new covenant nor his adequacy to serve in this role arose from human initiative or resources. They were, from first to last, ἐκ θεοῦ . . . and διὰ Χριστοῦ . . . never ἐξ ἑαυτῶν."

<sup>21</sup> Ehrensperger (2007:81-86) also finds the parallel between Paul and the Old Testament prophets to be significant.

The Servant Song of Isaiah 49:1-7 speaks powerfully of the way God will equip his Servant to be a light to the Gentiles. Note especially the following:

The LORD called me from the womb, from the body of my mother he named my name. He made my mouth like a sharp sword; in the shadow of his hand he hid me; he made me a polished arrow; in his quiver he hid me away. . . . he says: "It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to bring back the preserved of Israel; I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth" (Is 49:1-2,6).

Although Paul is not *the* Servant of Isaiah, it does seem as though his perception of his own ministry is influenced by Isaiah's Servant Songs. The statement quoted above — that the Servant would be a light to the nations — is strongly echoed in Paul's ministry, which was explicitly focussed on bringing the Gentiles (nations) to faith in Christ (Rom 1:5; 15:15-16). It would therefore seem reasonable that other aspects of the Servant Song also influenced Paul's understanding of his call and ministry, including the sense of God's equipping. The words quoted above demonstrate how decisive this equipping was: "*He [God] made my mouth like a sharp sword . . . he made me a polished arrow . . . 'I will make you a light for the nations . . .'*"<sup>22</sup>

This consciousness of divine equipping is also found in the account of Jeremiah's call. After Jeremiah has complained of his inability ("Ah, Lord GOD! Behold, I do not know how to speak, for I am only a youth" — Jer 1:6), God responds by empowering him:

Then the LORD put out his hand and touched my mouth. And the LORD said to me, "Behold, I have put my words in your mouth. See, I have set you this day over nations and over kingdoms, to pluck up and to break down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant (Jer 1:9-10).

The primary passage in which Paul draws a parallel between his own call and that of the Old Testament prophets is Galatians 1:15-16 (see section 3.2.1.2 above). In the broader context of these verses, Paul is seeking to show that his gospel was not received from any human agent, but directly by revelation from Jesus Christ. This is clearly a claim to divine equipping such as is found in the prophetic passages quoted above. This observation provides a deeper perspective on Paul's perception that his ministry was empowered only by God himself.

### 5.3.3 The revelation given to Paul

A further way in which Paul was equipped for the task to which God had called him was through the revelation of the gospel that he received when he was called (see section 3.2.1.3 above). Since the gospel could only be known by revelation, it was essential that this gospel should be revealed to him if he as an apostle was to make it known to the Gentiles. This is in fact what happened, as Paul states in Galatians 1:12,15-16:

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<sup>22</sup> The Servant Song of Isaiah 42:1-9 also speaks of how God will equip his Servant, again with parallels to Paul's commission as apostle to the Gentiles (nations): "Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my Spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations. . . . Thus says God, the LORD, who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread out the earth and what comes from it, who gives breath to the people on it and spirit to those who walk in it: 'I am the LORD; I have called you in righteousness; I will take you by the hand and keep you; I will give you as a covenant for the people, a light for the nations, to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness. I am the LORD; that is my name; my glory I give to no other, nor my praise to carved idols'" (Is 42:1,5-8).

For I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ. . . . But when he who had set me apart before I was born, and who called me by his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son to me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles . . .

Galatians 1:16, in particular, shows that Paul's ability to preach Christ among the Gentiles was dependent on his receiving the gospel by revelation from God. Further confirmation that this was the work of God is found in Galatians 2:7-8:

On the contrary, when they saw that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been entrusted with the gospel to the circumcised (for he who worked through Peter [ὁ γὰρ ἐνεργήσας Πέτρῳ] for his apostolic ministry to the circumcised worked also through me [ἐνήργησεν καὶ ἐμοὶ] for mine to the Gentiles).

It was this revelation which enabled Paul to equate his message to the Thessalonians with the very word of God:

And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers (1 Thess 2:13).

This revelation also formed the foundation of Paul's proclamation of Christ crucified to the Corinthians. As he argues in 1 Corinthians 1:18-2:16, the gospel seemed like a foolish message, and could only be understood by those to whom God had revealed its truth. It would therefore have been impossible for him to preach it (or for the Corinthians to receive it) without the supernatural work of God's Spirit.

God's revelation of the gospel to Paul was therefore part of the way in which he equipped the apostle for his calling.

#### 5.3.4 The power of the Spirit in Paul's ministry

The theme of the Holy Spirit empowering Paul's ministry brings the topic of his divine equipping to a powerful climax. Not only does this theme reinforce the above three lines of evidence for divine equipping, but it also shows that, due to the Spirit's presence and power, Paul's ministry belongs to the new covenant and therefore partakes of the eschatological fulfilment brought about through the coming of Christ and his outpouring of the Spirit. The ministry of the gospel belongs to a whole new dispensation in the economy of God's salvation.

Two similar passages which express the importance of the Spirit's power in Paul's ministry are 1 Thessalonians 1:4-6 and 1 Corinthians 2:1-5. I deal first with 1 Thessalonians:

For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you, because our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction. You know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake. And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you received the word in much affliction, with the joy of the Holy Spirit (1 Thess 1:4-6).

ὅτι τὸ εὐαγγέλιον ἡμῶν οὐκ ἐγενήθη εἰς ὑμᾶς ἐν λόγῳ μόνον ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐν δυνάμει καὶ ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ καὶ [ἐν] πληροφορίᾳ πολλῇ, καθὼς οἴδατε οἷοι ἐγενήθημεν [ἐν] ὑμῖν δι' ὑμᾶς (1 Thess 1:5).

In this passage Paul refers to his pioneering ministry in Thessalonica.<sup>23</sup> By saying that his gospel came "not only in word", he foreshadows the argument of 1 Thessalonians 2:1-12, where he will

<sup>23</sup> In this ministry Paul was accompanied by his coworkers Silvanus and Timothy.

contrast his (and his coworkers') ministry with that of the philosophers who use words to lure people into following them (cf. Fee 2011:43). Within the structure of 1:5, the phrases ἐν δυνάμει, ἐν πνεύματι ἀγίῳ, and ἐν πληροφορίᾳ are adverbial, qualifying the main verb ἐγενήθη (Fee 2011:44). Hence they refer to the manner in which the gospel *came to* the Thessalonians, and so to the fact that their experience of Paul's preaching was not one of merely hearing words, but that they experienced a profound power, leading to a deep, inner conviction as they listened to that preaching.<sup>24</sup> This power came from the work of the Holy Spirit and produced in the Thessalonians all the supernatural effects that Paul thanks God for in 1 Thessalonians 1.

In 1 Corinthians 2:1-5, Paul states:

And I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom<sup>25</sup>. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling, and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.

Here Paul brings to a head his argument against the Corinthian misperceptions regarding wisdom and the Spirit. Whereas they had adopted a high view of "wisdom" and rhetoric, attributing them to a superior experience of the Spirit (Fee 2011:90), Paul has argued in 1 Corinthians 1:18-31 that this is not God's wisdom at all: God's wisdom is demonstrated in the foolishness of the cross. To seal his argument, Paul reminds the Corinthians that the message he preached when he first came to them was a message of the cross (1 Cor 2:1-2), and that the manner in which he preached this message was characterized by weakness (1 Cor 2:3-5). It was this kind of ministry which had produced the Corinthians' conversion (note the similarity to 1 Thess 1:5), showing that it was not human power which made Paul's ministry effective. Rather, it was the "demonstration of the Spirit and of power" which caused Paul's ministry to be fruitful. This phrase is a hendiadys — virtually equivalent to "demonstration of the Spirit's power" — indicating that the power of Paul's proclamation came from the Holy Spirit (Thiselton 2000:222; Fee 2011:92). As Fee (2011:93) notes, for the Corinthians, "Spirit" meant entering into a new existence above the level of mere earthly existence, but for Paul "the emphasis lay on the Spirit's *power*, power to transform lives (as here), to reveal God's secret wisdom (2:6-16), to minister in weakness (4:9-13), and to effect holiness in the believing community (5:3-5)." These two passages show how central the Holy Spirit was in Paul's understanding of his own ministry. He understood clearly that supernatural power was required to minister the gospel effectively, and he was persuaded that this power came from the Spirit.

<sup>24</sup> Some scholars interpret ἐν δυνάμει to refer to the missionaries' inner sense of conviction in the act of preaching (e.g. Wanamaker (1990:78-80), but the adverbial sense of ἐν δυνάμει seems to exclude this interpretation. Furthermore, the gist of the whole chapter concerns the fruit of the gospel in the lives of the Thessalonians, and the point of verse 5 is to give reasons why Paul knows that they have been chosen by God (ὅτι is causal) — as Wanamaker himself recognizes — thus drawing attention to the subjective effect of the gospel in the lives of its hearers (see also Bruce 1982:14). The main difficulty with the view adopted here is the phrase καθὼς οἶδατε οἱοὶ ἐγενήθημεν [ἐν] ὑμῖν δι' ὑμᾶς. If this phrase is closely related to the rest of the verse preceding it, then the statements regarding power, the Holy Spirit and conviction would apply to Paul and his coworkers (Wanamaker 1990:79-80). However, the best solution seems to be to take the καθὼς clause as parenthetical (Fee 2011:45-50; cf. Bruce 1982:15).

<sup>25</sup> Thiselton's (2000:208) translation "high-sounding rhetoric or a display of cleverness" captures the sense well by using words that draw attention to the pretentiousness of the "wisdom" that was prized in Corinth (see further Thiselton 2000:204-205).

I turn now to the most extended passage regarding the Spirit's role in equipping the apostle for gospel ministry: 2 Corinthians 3.

Second Corinthians 3 is part of a lengthy passage (2 Cor 2:14-7:4) which is often referred to as a "digression", since 2 Corinthians 7:5 resumes the account of Paul's journey from Ephesus to Macedonia which he had been discussing in 2 Corinthians 2:12-13.<sup>26</sup> Nevertheless, the subject matter of this "digression" is at the heart of the letter, dealing as it does with the innermost aspects of Paul's ministry as an apostle. In particular, 2 Corinthians 3 shows the centrality of the Holy Spirit in Paul's apostolic ministry. Furthermore, it should be noted that, throughout these chapters, Paul is defending his ministry against the accusations of his rivals in Corinth. The Corinthians had been taken in by these opponents, with the result that they had begun to question Paul's standing as an apostle and minister of the gospel.<sup>27</sup>

The flow of thought leading into 2 Corinthians 3 is as follows:

- Paul's ministry has a profound effect on its hearers, leading either to death or to life according to their response to the gospel (2 Cor 2:16).
- This places an awesome responsibility on those who claim to be Christ's ministers, and leads Paul to ask the question: "Who is sufficient for these things?" (2 Cor 2:16).
- There is some debate over whether Paul's response to this question is positive or negative (Thrall 1994-2004:208-210), but the logic of 2:17, and indeed of 2 Corinthians 3 as a whole, implies that Paul considers himself sufficient for such a ministry (cf. Fee 2011:298 and n.53). However, Paul is emphatically not sufficient in himself; his only qualification is that God has equipped him for this service.
- Having implied that he is sufficient for the ministry (in contrast to those who are "peddlers" of God's word — 2 Cor 2:17), Paul hears the objections of his detractors and moves into an extended defence of his ministry (2 Cor 3:1-7:4), starting with the question, "Are we beginning to commend ourselves again?" (2 Cor 3:1). The present concern is not with this defence as a whole, but to understand Paul's perception of how he was equipped by the Holy Spirit. The relevant passage for this purpose is 2 Corinthians 3, especially 3:1-6 and 3:16-18.

I now examine these passages in greater detail, starting with 2 Corinthians 3:1-6:

<sup>1</sup> Are we beginning to commend ourselves again? Or do we need, as some do, letters of recommendation to you, or from you? <sup>2</sup> You yourselves are our letter of recommendation, written on our hearts, to be known and read by all. <sup>3</sup> And you show that you are a letter from Christ delivered by us [διακονηθεισα υφ' ημων], written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.

<sup>4</sup> Such is the confidence that we have [Πεποίθησιν δε τοιαύτην εχομεν] through Christ toward God. <sup>5</sup> Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, but

<sup>26</sup> See, e.g. Harris (2005:240-241) and Fee (2011:297-298 and n.50) for further comments on this "digression".

<sup>27</sup> This point is disputed, e.g. by Thrall (1994-2004:219, n.222). The degree to which one judges that Paul's opponents (who appear so prominently in 2 Cor 10-13) are in view in this earlier part of the canonical letter is somewhat related to one's view of the unity of the canonical 2 Corinthians (see further p.142 below). The position adopted here is that 2 Corinthians 10-13 is sufficiently closely related to 2 Corinthians 1-9 for Paul to have the opponents of chapters 10-13 in view also in the earlier part of the epistle. For extensive discussion from an advocate of the letter's integrity, see Harris (2005:8-51); Thrall (1994-2004:3-49) favours the view that the letter was not a single composition; see also Fee (2011:283, n.5).

our sufficiency is from God,<sup>6</sup> who has made us competent to be ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit. For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life (2 Cor 3:1-6).

In addition to the apologetic overtones in 2 Corinthians 3:1, there is also the hint that Paul's opponents were using letters of recommendation, and that they as well as the Corinthians felt that such letters enhanced the credibility of a minister who came to them from outside.<sup>28</sup> Paul rejects the need for such letters in his own case and offers much more convincing evidence that his ministry is genuine: the Corinthian believers themselves are a living letter, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God.<sup>29</sup> Since Paul was the founder of the church in Corinth, the Corinthians' lives are a God-given testimony to the genuineness of his ministry.<sup>30</sup> This is a particularly powerful argument, for if the Corinthians reject it they call their own faith into question. The role of the Spirit is central in Paul's argument, and mention of him sparks off in Paul's mind further ideas about his role in the new covenant.<sup>31</sup> This is the main focus for the rest of the chapter.

The first indication that Paul's thinking is moving in the direction of the new covenant comes in 3:3, with the statement "not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts".<sup>32</sup> This is an allusion to Ezekiel 11:19 and 36:26 (which speak of God giving his people a heart of flesh instead of a heart of stone), probably in contrast to Exodus 34:1 where it is recorded that the Ten Commandments were written on tablets of stone. The context in Ezekiel is that of the new covenant, characterized by the coming of the Spirit who will "cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules" (Ezek 36:27). Paul thus shows his understanding of gospel ministry as the eschatological fulfilment of Old Testament promises.

The argument is developed in 3:4-6. In 3:4-5 Paul makes the dual assertion that he has great confidence (based on the work of the Spirit in his ministry),<sup>33</sup> and that this confidence does not come from himself but from God. It is evident throughout that Paul considers himself to be completely unqualified for ministry apart from God's enabling power. In view of this, it would be most appropriate to view the sufficiency which God supplies as a gift of grace (according to the meaning of *χάρις* discussed above; cf. Martin 1986:52). The nature of the sufficiency which God provides is described further in 3:6: "[God] has made us competent to be ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit". In the present context, this imagery has its immediate source in the idea of the Corinthians being letters written by the Spirit (2 Cor 3:3), but Paul has moved on from that image to make a profound statement about the nature of gospel ministry. Picking up on the allusion to Ezekiel 36:26 from 3:3, combined with Jeremiah's prophecy of the new covenant (Jer 31:31-34), Paul now states explicitly that his ministry is a ministry of the new covenant and contrasts it with that of

<sup>28</sup> Note the way Apollos brought a letter of recommendation when he came to Corinth from Ephesus (Acts 18:27). Letters of recommendation had become accepted amongst Christians in the New Testament churches (Harris 2005:259-260).

<sup>29</sup> Note the echo of 1 Thessalonians 1:5 and 1 Corinthians 2:5.

<sup>30</sup> Note the statement *διακονηθεῖσα ὑφ' ἡμῶν*, translated by ESV as "delivered by us". Whatever the precise meaning of this phrase, the use of *διακονέω* draws attention to the ministry of Paul and his coworkers as an essential factor in the Corinthians' conversion.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Fee (2011:298-299): "The mention of 'letters of commendation' in turn spins off a whole series of images, all of which are designed to defend his own apostleship, especially as evidenced by the Corinthians' reception of the Spirit."

<sup>32</sup> The image has shifted from one in which the Corinthians are a letter written on the hearts of Paul and his coworkers to one where the Holy Spirit writes on their hearts. Throughout the chapter Paul's imagery is fluid, with one image leading to another (Fee 2011:303).

<sup>33</sup> As Harris (2005:267) points out, *τοιούτην* refers back to verse 3.

the old covenant. The new covenant is superior because it is characterized by the Spirit rather than the letter, and “the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life”. Herein lies the glory of Paul’s ministry.

The meaning of this last statement (“the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life”) is not easy to discern from the context. As Fee (2011:36) suggests, Paul may have spoken to the Corinthians about this matter in person, so that he could leave them to supply the details of what he treats fairly allusively. For us as modern-day readers of Paul it is necessary to refer to Paul’s other writings, especially Galatians 3 and Romans 7. By saying that “the letter kills”, Paul is probably indicating that the Old Testament law — even though it was a revelation of God’s will — could bring only death, since nobody had the power to obey it. This is the implication of the promise of the Spirit in Ezekiel 36:36-37 and of Paul’s argument in Romans 7:11: “For sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, deceived me and killed me”. Ministry of the law without the Spirit can produce only death. By contrast, the promised Holy Spirit causes God’s people to walk in his statutes and obey his laws (Ezek 36:27), as Paul also affirms in Romans 8:2,4: “For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. . . . in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.”<sup>34</sup> It is important to recognize the link between Paul’s ministry as it is described there and the gospel as the power of God for salvation (cf. chapters 3 and 4).

It is likely that part of Paul’s reason for emphasizing the new covenant was that his opponents had a strong emphasis on the law; perhaps they were introducing the old covenant as a means to righteousness (Fee 2011:305).<sup>35</sup> By emphasizing the fact that his ministry is a ministry of the Spirit, and of the new covenant, and that it is characterized by life, Paul shows the superiority of his ministry over that of his opponents. Not only has God equipped Paul, but he has equipped him for a most glorious ministry.

The following two paragraphs (2 Cor 3:7-11 and 3:12-15) reinforce the superiority of new covenant ministry in preparation for the climax in 3:16-18. In the first of these paragraphs (2 Cor 3:7-11), Paul argues from the lesser to the greater to prove that the ministry of the new covenant is glorious. He accepts that the old covenant had glory (as seen by the shining face of Moses, 3:8), but reasons: if the ministry of the old covenant, which brought condemnation, came with glory, how much more will the ministry of the new covenant, which brings righteousness, come with glory. In the second paragraph (2 Cor 3:12-15), Paul once again becomes quite flexible in his imagery. He notes that Moses had to put a veil over his face to prevent the Israelites from seeing its brightness (3:13), and then uses that image to make a statement about those who continue to cling onto the old covenant, refusing to come to Christ. He states that such people’s hearts are hardened, so that they, like the Israelites in Moses’ day, are prevented from seeing God’s glory because of the presence of a veil. This time the veil lies over the heart. Until it is taken away, God’s glory is hidden. The implications for those who, like Paul’s opponents, wish to conduct their ministries along old covenant lines are obvious. Paul’s argument is now ready for the keystone to be slotted into place (2 Cor 3:16-19).

The final three verses of 2 Corinthians 3 form a powerful climax to the chapter.

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<sup>34</sup> I largely follow Fee (2011:306) in this line of reasoning. See also Harris (2005:271-274). Harris (2005:274 notes: “the new covenant is marked preeminently by inward divine enablement to carry out God’s will.”

<sup>35</sup> The Jewish emphasis of the opponents appears from 2 Corinthians 11:4, which speaks of “another Jesus” and “a different gospel”: the latter phrase is used in Galatians 1:6 with reference to the teaching of the Judaizers. Further, it is evident from 2 Corinthians 11:2 that the opponents boasted of the Hebrew and Israelite pedigree.

<sup>16</sup> But when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed. <sup>17</sup> Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. <sup>18</sup> And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit (2 Cor 3:16-18).

<sup>16</sup> ἡνίκα δὲ ἐὰν ἐπιστρέψῃ πρὸς κύριον, περιαιρεῖται τὸ κάλυμμα. <sup>17</sup> ὁ δὲ κύριος τὸ πνεῦμά ἐστιν· οὗ δὲ τὸ πνεῦμα κυρίου, ἐλευθερία. <sup>18</sup> ἡμεῖς δὲ πάντες ἀνακεκαλυμμένῳ προσώπῳ τὴν δόξαν κυρίου κατοπτριζόμενοι τὴν αὐτὴν εἰκόνα μεταμορφούμεθα ἀπὸ δόξης εἰς δόξαν καθάπερ ἀπὸ κυρίου πνεύματος (2 Cor 3:16-18).

Although there are a number of exegetical challenges in these verses,<sup>36</sup> a good measure of clarity has emerged in recent scholarship. Verse 16 is an adaptation of Exodus 34:34a (LXX);<sup>37</sup> it is helpful to show the two passages together:

ἡνίκα δ' ἂν εἰσεπορεύετο Μωυσῆς ἔναντι κυρίου λαλεῖν αὐτῷ, περιηρεῖτο τὸ κάλυμμα ἕως τοῦ ἐκπορεύεσθαι (Exod 34:34a LXX).

ἡνίκα δὲ ἐὰν ἐπιστρέψῃ πρὸς κύριον, περιαιρεῖται τὸ κάλυμμα (2 Cor 3:16).

The first question that must be asked about Paul's adaptation of the Septuagint passage concerns the subject of ἐπιστρέψῃ. The best answer to that question is that Paul has in mind a "generalized subject" in order to indicate that he was thinking of anyone (Jew or Gentile) who might turn to the Lord (Martin 1986:70; Harris 2005:308). The flow of thought from 3:15 to 3:16 indicates that Paul is discussing the metaphorical veil which prevents people from seeing the glory of God and how that veil is removed. The purpose of using an Old Testament passage which deals with Moses is to provide the imagery of removing the veil, but Paul's main aim is to make a statement about people in his own day, and this is why he adapts the passage so freely. Hence it is unlikely that Moses is still the subject of ἐπιστρέψῃ in 2 Corinthians 3:16 (*pace* Thrall 1994-2004:271). Ἐπιστρέψῃ indicates Christian conversion, but the emphasis is on the removal of the veil, expressed in the second part of the verse (Martin 1986:70). Thus Paul has moved, in 3:15, from the problem of those who will not turn to the Lord, to the glory (signified by the removing of the veil) experienced by those who do (3:16). The anarthrous κύριος in 2 Corinthians 3:16 is probably a reference to Yahweh, as in Exodus 34:34, rather than to Christ (Harris 2005:308).

There is now a fairly general acceptance that 3:17 should be understood as Paul's interpretation of his adapted quotation in 3:16. Thus the phrase ὁ δὲ κύριος takes up the mention of κύριος in 3:16, so that the first part of 3:17 could be rendered: "Now 'Lord' [in the citation] means 'the Spirit'" (Martin 1986:70-71; Thrall 1994-2004:274; Harris 2005:311; Fee 2011:311). This does not mean that Paul is identifying the "Lord" of Exodus 34:34 with the Spirit; he is saying that this is the correct way to understand the experience of those who now turn to the Lord: "the Spirit is the key to the eschatological experience of God's presence" (Fee 2011:312). Through the Spirit the new covenant people of God come face to face with his glory.

The last part of 3:17 ("where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom") indicates the blessing which is experienced by those who have turned to the Lord. In the context of the chapter, the freedom of

<sup>36</sup> Second Corinthians 3:17 has been considered one of the most difficult verses in Paul (Thrall 1994-2004:274; Fee 2011:311, n.88).

<sup>37</sup> In the light of the many differences between 2 Corinthians 3:16 and Exodus 34:34a (LXX) it may be doubted whether Paul is in fact using the Exodus passage. However, as Harris (2005:306) has pointed out, ἡνίκα occurs in the New Testament only here and in the preceding verse; the verb περιαιρέω occurs only here in Paul; and the combination of τὸ κάλυμμα with περιαιρέω occurs only in these two verses in the whole Greek Bible.

the Spirit is freedom from the veil which hides God's glory (3:14-15), freedom from the ministry of condemnation (3:9), freedom that comes from God's righteousness (3:9), and the freedom to behold God's glory (3:18) (Harris 2005:312-313; Fee 2011:313).

Verse 18 reaches the pinnacle of Paul's exposition and defence of his new covenant ministry. It is not necessary to deal with all the exegetical questions relating to the verse; I will seek, rather to give a clear explanation, showing how the verse draws together the themes of the chapter to make a climactic statement about the ministry of the new covenant.<sup>38</sup>

The "we all" probably refers in the first place to Paul and the Corinthians, but, by extension, applies to all Christians. The statement that we all behold the glory of the Lord "with unveiled face" expresses the privilege enjoyed by the new covenant people of God over against those of the old covenant (and those who do not wish to enter into the new covenant): there is nothing to obstruct the new covenant believers' sight of God's glory. The verb κατοπτριζόμενοι introduces the image of a mirror. Although the middle voice, as used here, could have either a passive sense ("reflect as in a mirror") or an active sense ("behold as in a mirror"), the argument for the active sense is much stronger, and this sense fits much better in the context.<sup>39</sup> The "glory of the Lord" which believers see is, in all probability, Christ, who is the image of God; this becomes clear from the later context (see 2 Cor 4:4,6). This later context also shows that "Lord" here almost certainly refers to God, i.e. to Yahweh. The image of the mirror introduces the idea of seeing something indirectly, by means of its image, and so the thought of the verse is that God is seen in Christ, who is his glory and his image. The word "image" is not used in the first part of the verse, but is implied by the mirror metaphor; the idea is then taken up by the phrase "same image" later in the verse. Thus, by contemplating the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ (cf. 2 Cor 4:6), believers are transformed into that same image (i.e. the image of Christ). As they contemplate that glory, and are transformed into that image, believers themselves experience an increasing glory, expressed in the phrase ἀπὸ δόξης εἰς δόξαν, which could be translated idiomatically as "with ever-increasing glory" (NIV; REB), or "from one degree of glory to another" (ESV; RSV; NRSV).

The final phrase καθάπερ ἀπὸ κυρίου πνεύματος ("For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit") is best understood as a reference back to 3:17a, which explains the reference to the Lord in the modified citation of Exodus 34:34 as a reference to the Spirit. In the words of Harris (2005:318), "the Lord (=Yahweh), who is (now experienced as) the Spirit". The phrase thus recapitulates what has been central throughout the chapter: it is the ministry of the Spirit which makes the new covenant a reality, and which allows believers to experience the full riches — the glory — that God imparts to them through the gospel.

With this final paragraph Paul goes beyond a mere logical defence of his ministry. He stirs up the affections of his readers to see and feel that the ministry which he is engaged in is so far beyond that of his detractors that the difference between the two is nothing short of the difference between life and death. The new covenant ministry brings people into the very presence of God. It eliminates the barriers to fellowship with God which the old covenant presented, thus allowing people to gaze upon the glory of God in a way that exceeded even Moses' experience. That aspect of the old covenant ministry which brought condemnation, and which was characterized as a "ministry of death" (3:7), has been completely superseded, and the powerlessness of the law (without the Spirit) to produce obedience has been replaced by a process of transformation into the image of Christ and

<sup>38</sup> The following explanation rests largely on the work of Harris (2005:313-319) and Fee (2011:314-320).

<sup>39</sup> It is much easier to understand transformation as the result of *seeing* God's glory than of *reflecting* God's glory.

of God “from one degree of glory to another”. Who could wish to return to the ministry of the covenant that was carved in letters of stone?

The ministry of the new covenant is so transcendently glorious that it can only be produced by the power of God himself, and herein lies the burden of 2 Corinthians 3. Paul affirmed early on in his discussion that the confidence of the new covenant minister came not from his own abilities or competence, but from the Holy Spirit (3:3,6). Throughout the chapter the Spirit has been prominent, and the concluding affirmation, which brings together the whole argument, is that all this — all the blessing of the new covenant — is “from the Lord, the Spirit”. The effect of the whole is to outline a ministry of such profound power and glory that there is no question of any human being having the competence to perform it. Yet God himself grants that competence through his own presence in the person of the Holy Spirit, the third Person of the Trinity, whom Fee (2011:5-9) rightly calls “God’s empowering presence”. There can be no doubt that Paul understood his entire ministry to rest on the enabling of the Holy Spirit.

There is an important correlation between this work of the Spirit in Paul’s ministry and Paul’s goal in ministry, as discussed in chapter 3 (section 3.3) above. In chapter 3 I argued that Paul’s goal for ministry was the transformation of his converts so that they would be blameless on the day of Christ. Second Corinthians 3, discussed here, concludes with the statement that those who behold the glory of God in Christ are transformed from one degree of glory to another — and this is made possible by the power of the Spirit. Thus it can be seen that the Spirit equipped Paul to accomplish precisely that goal which was at the centre of his life and ministry.

### 5.3.5 Conclusion: divine equipping in Paul’s ministry

For Paul, apostleship and ministry were not something that he could take upon himself; nor did he possess the competence in himself to carry out the work. From start to finish, the ministry that he had received was a gift, as seen by his frequent use of the phrase *χάρις δοθεῖσα* in relation to his call. The four lines of evidence considered here show that divine equipping and appointment were fundamental to his call. Paul’s profound sense of dependence on God are seen (a) in the meaning of *χάρις δοθεῖσα* and the way he uses the phrase to speak of his own call; (b) in the call of the Servant of God in Isaiah and of the prophet Jeremiah; (c) in the way God revealed the gospel to Paul; and (d) most of all, in his understanding of the Holy Spirit as the One who makes the new covenant a glorious and supernatural reality for God’s people: only if the Spirit took possession of his ministry could it have any worthwhile effect.

It has been important to investigate Paul’s understanding of his own divine equipping for two reasons: (a) Paul’s leadership role in the churches was still very prominent during the time period under consideration (i.e. that of his Early Letters); and (b) as was seen in chapters 3 and 4, Paul’s own ministry was in many respects a model for that of his coworkers. It is, of course, true that certain aspects of Paul’s ministry pertained to his apostleship and were not shared by his coworkers, but there were certainly many aspects in common.

As I now turn to consider how divine equipping was understood in relation to other leaders — both in Paul’s missionary team and in the churches that he founded — it can be expected that Paul’s own experience will provide important insight into the way God worked in and through the lives of others.

## 5.4 DIVINE EQUIPPING IN THE MINISTRY OF OTHER LEADERS

Having considered how Paul understood himself to be divinely equipped for the work of ministry, it is now important to investigate how he understood this equipping in and for the ministry of other leaders. In order to answer this question I will pursue 2 lines of investigation:

1. What insight can be gained into divine equipping from 1 Corinthians 12 and Romans 12:3-8 (i.e. the so-called “gifts” passages)?
2. What can be deduced from the similarities and dissimilarities between Paul’s ministry and that of other leaders in his mission and in the churches?

### 5.4.1 The “gifts” passages: 1 Corinthians 12

First Corinthians 12 and Romans 12:3-8, with their discussion of gifts (χαρίσματα) and the working of the Spirit in the church, have been important for those scholars who consider that the Pauline churches were characterized by “charismatic order”.<sup>40</sup> These scholars lean heavily on the idea of spiritual gifts in their efforts to show that any believer who performed a function in the context of the church did so purely because he was gifted by the Spirit to perform that function, and not because he had been appointed to a formal position. In general this view relies too much on theological constructs while neglecting to examine the actual socio-historical situation which existed in the churches. Discussions by these scholars also tend to quote verses from here and there to support their view instead of engaging in thorough contextual exegesis.<sup>41</sup> Nevertheless, Paul’s discussions of gifts in 1 Corinthians 12 and Romans 12:3-8 are important for an understanding of leadership in his churches and they need to be considered. It is, however, important to approach the passages exegetically, with an understanding of their context and central message.

First Corinthians 12-14 forms part of a larger block of teaching running from 1 Corinthians 8:1-14:40 in which Paul’s concern is with believers’ mutual respect for one another. His discussion reveals that there were a number of issues which some Corinthian believers were using as an occasion for displaying superior attitudes towards those within the church whom they considered inferior to themselves (Thiselton 2000:900). These included the question of meat offered to idols (1 Cor 8:1-13) and the treatment of the poorer members at the common meal (1 Cor 11:17-34). In chapters 12 to 14 the issue is the way some members of the church were using issues of spirituality to claim superiority over those considered less spiritual. One of the key points of contention was the practice of “tongues-speaking” (glossolalia), although this was probably not the only issue (Thiselton 2000:900; Carson (1995:15-19)).<sup>42</sup> Although chapters 12-14 form a unit, only chapter 12 is directly relevant to the present study.

Paul’s argument in 1 Corinthians 12 can be outlined as follows:<sup>43</sup>

**Verses 1-3:** Contrary to the view of certain members of the church in Corinth, all believers are controlled by the Holy Spirit. This is the force of Paul’s reminder that the believers, before their conversion, were “led astray to mute idols” (1 Cor 12:2), and of the contrast between those who say

<sup>40</sup> E.g. Schweizer (1963); Käsemann (1964); Von Campenhausen (1969); Dunn (1997).

<sup>41</sup> This method is clearly seen, e.g. in Von Campenhausen’s (1969:55-75) chapter entitled “Spirit and authority in the Pauline congregation”. Cf. Chapple’s (1984:55-69) critique of Von Campenhausen and Dunn.

<sup>42</sup> Fee (2011:146-197) tends to overemphasize the abuse of glossolalia as almost the only issue that Paul was addressing in the chapter. It was, nevertheless, one of the main problems.

<sup>43</sup> This is probably one of the most contested passages in all of the Pauline literature. I will not discuss all the exegetical problems of the chapter. Thiselton (2000:900-1026) provides comprehensive bibliographies and discusses the various positions for most of the exegetical debates.

“Jesus is accursed!” and “Jesus is Lord” (1 Cor 12:3). All who had become followers of Jesus had rejected their former way of life characterized by rejection of, or even blasphemy against, Christ, and had embraced him as Lord. Paul’s point in these three verses is that they couldn’t have done so except by the power of the Spirit. Thus there is no ground for judging certain members of the church as more spiritual on the basis of phenomena like glossolalia: all who have submitted to the lordship of Christ are “spiritual” (Carson 1995:24-31).

**Verses 4-11:** Although some commentators read these verses as placing an emphasis on diversity (Fee 2011:159; Carson 1995:32),<sup>44</sup> the grammatical structure and flow of thought seem rather to emphasize unity.<sup>45</sup> In each of the first three statements the emphasis falls on the adversative clause in the second half of the statement:

Now there are varieties of gifts (χαρισμάτων), but the same Spirit;  
and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord;  
and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone (1 Cor 12:4-6).

The summary statement in 12:11 also emphasizes unity:

All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills (1 Cor 12:11).

Paul’s point in these verses is that, although there is a variety of spiritual manifestations within the church, all of these are the work of one and the same Spirit, one and the same Lord, one and the same God. No one manifestation is superior to another or more “spiritual” than another. Furthermore, the first general term that is used to describe these manifestations is the word *χαρίσματα*, drawing attention to their nature as a gift of God’s grace.<sup>46</sup> Therefore any sense of superiority is illogical. The particular list of “gifts” that are mentioned in 12:8-10 (utterance of wisdom, utterance of knowledge, faith, gifts of healing, working of miracles, prophecy, ability to distinguish between spirits, various kinds of tongues, interpretation of tongues) would reflect the kinds of Spirit-manifestations experienced by the church in Corinth, and it may well be that “tongues” is placed at the end of the list because it was receiving undue emphasis in that church (Fee 2011:172).

**Verses 12-13:** These two verses introduce the well-known metaphor of the body with its different parts. The metaphor itself is introduced in 12:12,<sup>47</sup> and 12:13 makes the assertion that the Corinthian believers are members of that one body. The point, clearly, is to stress the equality and unity of all believers, but the language of the Spirit is noteworthy. The statement “in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body” (1 Cor 12:13) should not be taken as a reference to the sacrament of water baptism since *ἐν ἐνὶ πνεύματι* (“in one Spirit”) refers to the medium into which one being baptized is immersed (Carson 1995:47; see also Fee 2011:179). Paul thus speaks of all believers as being “immersed” in the Spirit, reminding the Corinthian church not only of their unity in Christ, but also

<sup>44</sup> This emphasis could fit well into the overall argument. Paul would be saying, in effect, “You think that there are only a few evidences of the Spirit’s working in your midst (like tongues), but in actual fact God gives a great variety of gifts, all of which are evidence of his working.”

<sup>45</sup> Thiselton (2000:928-929) also argues for a reading which emphasizes unity. This unity could embrace unity of source (God), goal (the building up of the body), and community.

<sup>46</sup> See p.23 below for further discussion on the meaning of *χαρίσματα* in this passage.

<sup>47</sup> Although, at the end of verse 12, Paul states *οὕτως καὶ ὁ Χριστός* (“so also is Christ”), Thiselton (2000:991-992) is right to reject that interpretation which equates the church with Christ in an ontological way. Paul’s language is metaphorical.

of the fact that it is the Spirit's activity in a person's life which makes that person a believer. As Fee (2011:178) explains:

The Spirit is what essentially distinguishes believer from nonbeliever (2:10-14); the Spirit is what especially marks the beginning of Christian life (Gal 3:2-3); the Spirit above all is what makes a person a child of God (Rom 8:14-17). Thus it is natural for him to refer to their unity in the body in terms of the Spirit.

The connection between this understanding of conversion and Paul's discussion in 2 Corinthians 3 (see section 5.3.4 above) should be noted.

**Verses 14-26:** These verses develop the metaphor of the body. Whereas the first part of the chapter has stressed the unity of the body and the unified source of all spiritual gifts in the one God, Paul now develops the metaphor in such a way as to show the need for diversity: "unless the many perform their assigned functions, however diverse, the one body would not exist as a single entity but as a chaotic array of conflicting forces without focus or coherence" (Thiselton 2000:1002). The metaphor is developed in such a way as to address two incorrect attitudes. In 12:14-20 Paul addresses those whose sense of inferiority would make them withdraw from the body, while in 12:21-26 he addresses those whose sense of superiority leads them to dishonour and disrespect those whom they consider inferior (Carson 1995:48-49).

**Verses 27-31:** The body metaphor is now applied directly to the church in Corinth. The particular application which Paul makes identifies a variety of functions within the church,<sup>48</sup> and asserts that these functions are performed by *different* people: "Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles?", etc. In other words, the different members (μέλη) of the body are likened to the people who perform these various functions, which by implication are called *χαρίσματα* in 12:31. No member of the church can take pride over against another member because all are members of the one body, all are necessary, and each one has received his function as a gift from God.

Paul's use of "first . . . second . . . third . . ." with respect to apostles, prophets and teachers raises an important question: If Paul is arguing for the essential equality of all members of the body of Christ, why should these three (apparently) be ranked as first, second and third? Likewise, how can certain gifts be distinguished as the higher/greater ones (τὰ μείζονα) (1 Cor 12:31)?

At first sight, the ranking of first, second, third, seems to contradict the argument of the whole chapter. Hence, some scholars explain Paul's use of the ordinal numbers as something other than an indication of importance. Carson (1995:90-91) explains it in terms of chronological appointment; Fee (2011:190) explains it in terms of "precedence . . . in the founding and building up of the local assembly", rather than that one is "more important than the other".<sup>49</sup> However, the weight of opinion is that Paul regards these first three gifts (apostles, prophets, teachers) as the most important because they are most significant for the edification of the church. It should be noted, however, that Paul ends the ranking after teachers,<sup>50</sup> thus setting the first three gifts apart in terms of their importance (Thiselton 2000:1014-1015).

<sup>48</sup> Some are described by naming the person who performs the function (apostles, prophets, teachers); others are described in terms of the action/function that is performed (miracles, gifts of healing, helping, etc.).

<sup>49</sup> See also Thiselton (2000:1015).

<sup>50</sup> Although the word "then" (ἔπειτα) is used for the next two gifts after teachers, the remaining three have no indication of order at all. The first three items stand out by their qualification as "first . . . second . . . third . . .", and it appears that Paul only intended to rank these three (see Fee 2011:190 for further arguments).

The final exhortation to desire the greater gifts does not contradict the argument of the chapter. It is in reality a use of irony to subvert the Corinthians' evaluation of which gifts were the greatest. For them, the greatest gifts were those that ministered to self, giving them the highest status (tongues, apparently, were particularly valuable in this regard; apostles, by contrast, were "last of all").<sup>51</sup> For Paul, the greatest gifts were those which "serve the good of others and build the community" (Thiselton 2000:1024, original emphasis). Fee (2011:196) takes "greatest gifts" to refer to "all the intelligible gifts" (original emphasis), as expounded in 1 Corinthians 14:1-25. These would surely be included, but Paul would probably not have restricted "greater gifts" in this way.

Having considered the message of 1 Corinthians 12 in its own context, it is now appropriate to ask what the passage teaches about the divine equipping of leaders. In the first place it may be noted that some of the "gifts" mentioned in the passage have particular bearing on the work of leaders as discussed in chapters 3 and 4 of this study. Of particular note are the following:

- *Apostles (1 Cor 12:28)*. Throughout this study Paul's role as an apostle has been prominent. It is not surprising that he should mention apostles as one of the groups of people who are important for building up the church, or that he should label them as "first".
- *Prophets (1 Cor 12:10,28)*. There is a vast literature on the subject of prophets and prophecy in the New Testament.<sup>52</sup> It is not possible to enter into the debate here, and I accept the conclusion of Thiselton (2000:964) on the nature of prophecy in the New Testament:

prophecy, as a gift of the Holy Spirit, combines pastoral insight into the needs of persons, communities, and situations, with the ability to address these with a God-given utterance or longer discourse (whether unprompted or prepared with judgment, decision and rational reflection) leading to challenge or comfort, judgment, or consolation, but ultimately building up the addressees.

There is a clear correspondence between this understanding of prophecy and the labour of Paul and his coworkers among the Thessalonians whereby they "exhorted each one of you and encouraged you and charged you to walk in a manner worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory" (1 Thess 2:12).

- *Teachers (1 Cor 12:28)*. Though Fee (2011:192) states that "[a]ll attempts to define [teaching] from the Pauline perspective are less than convincing, since the evidence is so meager", it is indeed possible to formulate a fairly good idea of the role of teachers in the Pauline churches. Dunn (2006:582) proposes that teachers "were responsible for retaining, passing on, and interpreting the congregation's foundation traditions, including interpretation of the prophetic scriptures and the Jesus tradition."<sup>53</sup> Thiselton (2000:1017), in a more technical fashion, distinguishes between prophecy and teaching on the basis that

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<sup>51</sup> Cf. Thiselton (2000:1023): "we must bear in mind that in 4:1-13 it emerges clearly that for the Corinthians 'high status' gifts were the triumphalist ones of exultation and visible, demonstrative 'success'; the apostles were 'dirt,' struggling in the arena while the Corinthians sat in seats of honor and watched their bloodied humiliation."

<sup>52</sup> See, e.g. Thiselton (2000:957-965,1087-1094) for a bibliography, discussion and evaluation of a number of positions on New Testament prophecy.

<sup>53</sup> For justification of this understanding of teachers, see Dunn (1997:282-283; 2006:185-195). The close connection between the teaching role and the traditions of the church can be seen, e.g. in Romans 16:17; 1 Corinthians 4:17; 11:2,23; 15:3; Galatians 2:2,7-9; Colossians 1:28; 2:7; 2 Thessalonians 2:15; 3:6. Note 1 Corinthians 4:17: "That is why I sent you Timothy, my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, to remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach them everywhere in every church," (where the teaching of Paul and

prophets perform speech-acts of announcement, judgment, challenge, comfort, support, or encouragement, whereas teachers perform speech-acts of transmission, communicative explanation, interpretation of texts, establishment of creeds, exposition of meaning and implication, and, more cognitive, less temporally applied communicative acts.

Once again there is a link between the work of teachers, understood in this way, and that of Paul and his coworkers as described in chapters 3 and 4: the pastoral care of Paul and his coworkers was founded on the gospel, which formed the core of the New Testament church's traditions (cf. 1 Cor 15:3-8).

These three "gifts" stand out in two ways: firstly, these are the only three in the whole chapter which are named in terms of the person who carries out the function; and secondly, these are the only three that are distinctly ranked (see discussion above). The naming of the person indicates that such people were recognized as performing the function on a regular basis (cf. Fee 2011:192), so that particular people were associated with these roles. The ranking indicates the importance of the function for building up the community. Furthermore, these three functions correlate with the role and function of Paul and his coworkers as discussed in chapters 3 and 4 of this study.

This chapter and its wider context highlight an important dynamic in the Pauline churches. In the first place, there were certain individuals who were associated with particular functions (prophecy, teaching), but it was also possible for other members of the church to exercise these functions on a more *ad hoc* basis.<sup>54</sup> For example, 1 Corinthians 12:10 mentions prophecy as a way in which God may work in the church without tying it to a particular person; furthermore, 1 Corinthians 11:4-5 and 14:1-5 suggest that prophecy could in principle be practiced by any member of the church. Evidence of this dynamic is also found in 1 Thessalonians 5:12-14, where there are those who *labour* in the work of admonishing their fellow-believers, while those fellow-believers are also instructed to admonish one another. As Chapple (1984:232-233) observes, the ministry of "those who labor" (1 Thess 4:12) was directed towards the church as a whole, and was a regular feature of the church's life; hence their ministry differs in both *scope* and *scale* from the ministry of the other members of the church, which was more individual and occasional.

Both the regular ministries of recognized prophets and teachers, and the more occasional acts of service by other members of the church, are understood by Paul to be "gifts" (χάρισματά; 1 Cor 12:4) of God to the church. This is an important term, and is of particular significance in the present context of seeking to understand divine equipping in the ministry of church leaders. The word χάρισμα occurs 17 times in the New Testament, of which 16 instances are in the Pauline literature.<sup>55</sup> Although popular usage has associated the word with the gifts of the Holy Spirit in particular, its use in passages such as Romans 5:15-16 and 6:23 show that it is closely associated with χάρις and means, essentially, "a gift graciously given".<sup>56</sup> The conclusions regarding the meaning of χάρις

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his coworker, Timothy, coalesce around the basic Christian tradition), and 2 Thessalonians 2:15: "So then, brothers, stand firm and hold to the *traditions* that you were *taught* by us, either by our spoken word or by our letter" (emphasis added).

<sup>54</sup> It goes without saying that apostleship is not included in these functions.

<sup>55</sup> Six instances in Romans; seven in 1 Corinthians; one in 2 Corinthians; one in 1 Timothy; one in 2 Timothy and one in 1 Peter (word counts obtained using the Libronix Digital Library System).

<sup>56</sup> Cf. Louw & Nida (1996:1.568-569) where χάρισμα is listed as a synonym of χάρις. See Berding (2000:37-46) for an argument against a technical sense for χάρισματά (i.e. a meaning that denotes spiritual gifts in some sense) and in favour of a meaning which takes its sense from that of χάρις.

(section 5.2) can, to a large extent, be used to inform our understanding of *χαρίσματα* in 1 Corinthians 12. The theological perspectives gained from 2 Corinthians 8-9 are also applicable.

The implication of Paul characterizing these functions as *χαρίσματα* is that no believer would be able to exercise them apart from God's gracious enabling power.<sup>57</sup> Such enablement would have had many dimensions — depending on the function — including material provision, spiritual insight, supernatural abilities (as in the case of, e.g. healing), love for fellow believers, etc.<sup>58</sup> Furthermore, the *χαρίσματα* of 1 Corinthians 12 partake of the nature of *χάρις* insofar as they are given “for the common good” (1 Cor 12). Just as in the case of God's *ἔλεος* in the Old Testament (section 5.2.1 above), and the *χάρις* which enabled the churches to give generously (section 5.2.2 above), the *χαρίσματα* which God gives to the body of Christ are intended to be used to benefit, edify, and express love towards other members of the body.<sup>59</sup> That no function in the church can operate apart from God's enabling power is unequivocally expressed in 1 Corinthians 12:4-6:

Now there are varieties of gifts (*χαρισμάτων*), but the same Spirit;  
and there are varieties of service (*διακονιών*), but the same Lord;  
and there are varieties of activities (*ἐνεργημάτων*), but it is the same God who empowers  
them all in everyone (*ὁ δὲ αὐτὸς θεὸς ὁ ἐνεργῶν τὰ πάντα ἐν πᾶσιν*).

The words *ὁ . . . θεὸς ὁ ἐνεργῶν τὰ πάντα* draw particular attention to the working of God in his people.

The relevance of this chapter for the divine equipping of leaders is now clear. I have argued that the way in which Paul mentions apostles, prophets and teachers indicates something of a leading role which correlates with that of Paul and his coworkers (as discussed in chapters 3 and 4). Paul, in 1 Corinthians 12, does not describe any differences between their equipping and that of other believers. What is emphasized is that *all* have received God's gracious enabling power, and it is only by that divine power that they are able to make their unique contributions to the body. However, it is also implicit, by the nature of the case, that those who exercised various functions in the church would be equipped in ways that were necessary and appropriate to each particular function: teachers with insight into the tradition and its meaning, prophets with pastoral insight and divine revelation, and so on. It follows then that those who exercised a pastoral and leadership function would have been equipped with whatever knowledge, understanding, love and other spiritual qualities they needed to fulfil those functions. The fact that their function was ongoing more than *ad hoc* would also have had implications for the kinds of abilities they would have required.

<sup>57</sup> Berding (2000:46-50) makes too much of a distinction between *χαρίσματα* as ministries and as abilities. He defines them as “Spirit-given ministries” in contrast to “special abilities/enablements”. While acknowledging that some of these ministries would have required an “extraordinary enablement” (e.g. prophecy, healing), some would have required “no more work than any other daily Christian activity” (e.g. administration, serving). He seems to place teaching in the latter category, a judgement which is impossible in the light of 2 Corinthians 3, as discussed in section 5.3.4 above (Berding 2000:48, n.69). The issue, after all, is this: the Spirit-given ministries are brought into being by the special working of the Spirit (actually: of the triune God), through which the various members are enabled to perform their functions. They are not mere administrative arrangements (though that need not be excluded). This is precisely what 1 Corinthians 12:4-6 (esp. v.6) states.

<sup>58</sup> Cf. page 97 above, where the *χάρις* that enabled the Corinthians to give generously would have included spiritual illumination, willingness, motivation and material provision. All of these were God's gracious gift to them, enabling them to show *χάρις* towards the poor of Jerusalem.

<sup>59</sup> It is therefore highly appropriate that Paul should speak of a “still more excellent way” (1 Cor 12:31), which is the way of love as described in 1 Corinthians 13.

Paul's rhetorical purpose in 1 Corinthians 12 was not to describe or explain the functioning of leadership in the Corinthian church. Even less was it his purpose to explain the theoretical ideal for church leadership in general. Although the chapter has sometimes been misused in this regard, it nevertheless makes an important contribution to our understanding of leadership and the divine equipping of leaders. Further insight will be gained from Romans 12:3-8, and from a comparison of Paul's ministry with that of the other leaders.

#### 5.4.2 The "gifts" passages: Romans 12:3-8

Alongside 1 Corinthians 12, Romans 12:3-8 is one of the two passages in Paul's Early Letters which discuss the gifts that God gives to the body of Christ. The content and thrust of the two passages is similar, although Romans 12:3-8 is much shorter. Paul's rhetorical purpose in Romans 12:3-8, as in 1 Corinthians 12, is to discourage any sense of superiority that some believers may have towards others. This point is brought out forcefully by the way Paul expresses himself in 12:3:

- Paul emphasizes his own apostolic authority with the phrase *διὰ τῆς χάριτος τῆς δοθεῖσθαι μοι* (Jewett 2007:738).
- The way Paul addresses his readers in Rome: "*παντὶ τῷ ὄντι ἐν ὑμῖν* is a good deal stronger than *πᾶσιν ὑμῖν*" (Cranfield 1980-1986:612).
- Paul uses an elaborate wordplay on *φρονεῖν*, which is repeated four times in different forms. This particular wordplay was frequent in Greek literature, and Paul uses it to urge his readers not to think of themselves too highly.<sup>60</sup>

Paul proceeds in 12:4-8 to use the metaphor of the body as a discouragement to pride and an exhortation to unity. The three main points of the metaphor are (a) that the body is one; (b) that it has many members; and (c) that each of the members has a different function (12:4; cf. Berding 2006:436). In 12:5-8 the metaphor is applied specifically to the Roman Christians. To understand the meaning of these verses, it is necessary to address the particular exegetical problem of whether 12:6 begins a new sentence or not. The key section of the passage runs as follows:

<sup>4</sup> For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, <sup>5</sup> so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. <sup>6</sup> Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith, etc. (Rom 12:4-6).

<sup>4</sup> καθάπερ γὰρ ἐν ἐνὶ σώματι πολλὰ μέλη ἔχομεν, τὰ δὲ μέλη πάντα οὐ τὴν αὐτὴν ἔχει προᾶξιν, <sup>5</sup> οὕτως οἱ πολλοὶ ἐν σώματι ἕσμεν ἐν Χριστῷ, τὸ δὲ καθ' εἰς ἀλλήλων μέλη. <sup>6</sup> ἔχοντες δὲ χαρίσματα κατὰ τὴν χάριν τὴν δοθεῖσαν ἡμῖν διάφορα, εἴτε προφητείαν κατὰ τὴν ἀναλογίαν τῆς πίστεως, κτλ (Rom 12:4-6).

Here it can be seen that the ESV translation, like most English translations, follows the UBS<sup>4</sup> Greek text in placing a full stop at the end of 12:5. The lack of a main verb in 12:6 then requires the addition of "let us use them" (or something equivalent) as a main verb in 12:6. This is the interpretation followed by many commentators (e.g. Cranfield 1980-1986:618; Moo 1996:763).<sup>61</sup> Some commentators (e.g. Dunn 1988:725-726; Jewett 2007:744) construe the participle *ἔχοντες* as

<sup>60</sup> Cf. Cranfield (1980-1986:612) and the discussion in Jewett (2007:736-741), who translates Romans 12:3 as: "do not be superminded above what one ought to be minded, but set your mind on being sober-minded".

<sup>61</sup> Cranfield (1980-1986:618) reasons that "*ἔχοντες δὲ* certainly looks like the beginning of a fresh sentence". This is rather subjective: surely that absence of a main verb provides as much reason for thinking that a clause is dependent as the presence of the particle *δὲ* provides reason for thinking that a new sentence has begun.

dependent on ἐσμεν in 12:5 and end the sentence only after 12:8. Yet in neither case is the sense provided very satisfying. Berding (2006) has, however, provided a strong argument for the one sentence interpretation and has at the same time given an excellent interpretation of Paul's meaning in these verses.

Berding notes the following:

1. The type of ellipses suggested by the two-sentence interpretation — an ellipses which requires the insertion of a whole clause — would be unparalleled in Paul (Berding 2006:434).
2. If the sentence is ended after 12:5, there is nothing in the application of the body metaphor to correspond to the third aspect of the metaphor itself, i.e. the aspect of different functions expressed by the phrase τὰ δὲ μέλη πάντα οὐ τὴν αὐτὴν ἔχει προᾶξιν at the end of 12:4 (Berding 2006:436).
3. Most commentators and English translations construe διάφορα very closely with χαρίσματα, which occurs earlier in 12:5 — as in the ESV translation above where the order of κατὰ τὴν χάριν τὴν δοθεῖσαν ἡμῖν and διάφορα is reversed. However, as Berding (2006:435) notes, the third element of the metaphor (difference) is clearly present if the word διάφορα is left at the end of its clause and 12:6a is translated as “having charismata according to the grace given to us that differ . . .”.
4. Having interpreted διάφορα in this way, the list of “gifts” now become examples of the different functions (corresponding to οὐ τὴν αὐτὴν . . . προᾶξιν at the end of 12:4). The prepositional phrases, instead of indicating the manner in which believers should exercise their gifts (as is the case when the imperative “let us use them” is added), indicate that respect wherein the various gifts differ from one another (Berding 2006:437-439).

The whole passage can then be translated:

<sup>4</sup> For just as (we) have many members in one body,  
and all the members do not have the same function,

<sup>5</sup> so the many (we) are one body in Christ, and  
[we are] members individually of one another, and

<sup>6</sup> [we are] having *charismata* according to the grace of God that was given to us  
differing [from other members]

whether [we are having] prophecy [differing from other members] according to the  
proportion of our faith

<sup>7</sup> whether [we are having] service [differing from other members] in our serving  
whether the one who teaches [differing from other members] in [one's ministry of]  
teaching

<sup>8</sup> whether the one who encourages [differing from other members] in [one's ministry of]  
encouragement

whether the one who gives [differing from other members] in [the attitude of one's]  
generosity

whether the one who rules [differing from other members] in [the attitude of one's]  
diligence

whether the one who shows mercy [differing from other members] in [the attitude of one's]  
cheerfulness (Berding 2006:438-439).

I consider this interpretation to be superior to the alternatives, firstly because it calls for much less adjustment of or addition to the Greek text as it stands, and secondly because it makes better sense of the passage. Two conclusions follow directly:

1. The rhetorical purpose of the passage is greatly strengthened on this reading. Rather than 12:6-8 introducing an exhortation to believers to use their gifts (which would be something of a digression from the main purpose), these verses emphasize (a) the differences between the believers, and (b) the fact that these differences are God-given. The body needs all the members to function properly, and any function which any member performs is a gift of grace. This leaves no room for pride and provides firm grounds for the exhortation in 12:3 not to think too highly of oneself.
2. On this reading of Romans 12:6-8, the prepositional phrases (κατὰ τὴν ἀναλογίαν τῆς πίστεως, ἐν τῇ διακονίᾳ, ἐν τῇ διδασκαλίᾳ, κτλ) indicate the different ways in which God's χάρις is made manifest in the different members of the body. This reinforces the conclusion that each member of the church has received grace and equipping appropriate to the function of that member (see p.112 above on 1 Cor 12). What was merely inferred from 1 Corinthians 12 is stated directly in Romans 12:6-8.

It is now necessary to consider what insight this passage gives into the divine equipping of leaders in the New Testament churches. In the first place, some of the functions mentioned in Romans 12:6-8 correspond to leadership functions (as conceived of in chapters 3 and 4). Prophecy and teaching are the obvious candidates (as in the case of 1 Cor 12:28), but “the one who exhorts” (ὁ παρακαλῶν — Rom 12:8) also seems to have something in common with the function of pastoral care found in 1 Thessalonians 2:10-12; 5:12-13 (cf. Dunn 1988:730; Jewett 2007:750-751). Other named functions may or may not relate to pastoral care and leadership, but the details would not change the inferences to be drawn from the passage for the present study. The passage teaches that each member of the body has received the grace necessary for his particular function; leaders are both explicitly and implicitly included. Paul is therefore asserting that leaders are divinely equipped for their task.

Secondly — and contrary to 1 Corinthians 12:28 — there is no ranking of the functions, nor is there a clear distinction between *ad hoc* ministries and those which are more ongoing. Although some are named in terms of the function (prophecy, service), and some in terms of the person who performs the function (the one who teaches, the one who exhorts, etc.), the emphasis throughout the passage is more on the people performing the ministries than on the ministry itself, so that the idea seems to be more of ongoing rather than *ad hoc* ministries.

Thirdly, it is important to return to the point made on page 95 above regarding the correspondence between the grace Paul had received and that given to other believers. The relevant verses are quoted again:

For by the grace given to me [διὰ τῆς χάριτος τῆς δοθείσης μοι] I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned (Rom 12:3).

Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us [ἔχοντες δὲ χαρίσματα κατὰ τὴν χάριν τὴν δοθείσαν ἡμῖν], let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith (Rom 12:6).

Two points can be made in this regard:

1. Paul can understand the grace received by every member of the body in the same light as the grace which he received for his apostolic ministry. (This point is confirmed by 1 Cor 12:28 where apostles are listed alongside prophets, teachers, and others. Even if the apostles are listed first, the point Paul makes in 1 Cor 12:28 is that all receive their

empowerment from God and all are members of the body, placed in it by God for the benefit of the whole.) The same principle is at work in Paul and in other believers: God equips them for their respective functions, even if the nature of that equipping differs from function to function. This empowerment is a divine favour which may embrace natural abilities, spiritual understanding, willingness to do the work, material provision, and other factors, all appropriate to the task at hand (see on the working of grace in 2 Cor 8-9, p.95 above).

2. Where other believers had functions that overlapped with Paul's own work (as was the case with his coworkers), at least certain aspects of the grace which Paul received must have been given to them as well. This will be considered further in section 5.4.3 below.

To sum up, the gifts passages have sometimes been misapplied in studies of leadership in the Pauline and other New Testament churches, and it is necessary to engage in proper contextual exegesis if one is to derive valid insights from them. However, when that it done these passages do provide a number of important insights into the leadership of the New Testament churches. They show that the leadership function, like any other in the church, was a gift sovereignly given by God through his gracious equipping of the leaders to carry out their tasks for the benefit of the whole church.

The final section of this chapter will seek a deeper understanding of the particular grace given to the leaders by relating their ministry to that of Paul.

#### 5.4.3 Comparison between the ministries of Paul and other leaders

I argued in chapter 4 that there were many similarities between the ministries of Paul and of others who exercised leadership, whether itinerant (like Timothy and Titus) or local (like Stephanas — 1 Cor 16:15-16). It also follows from the discussion on apostleship in section 3.2.1 that Paul's ministry differed in certain important ways from the ministries of those who were not apostles. By considering these similarities and differences, it is possible to gain insight into which aspects of divine equipping were present in the lives and ministries of Paul's coworkers. The key differences are presented in Table 5.1, and the key similarities in Table 5.2.

**Table 5.1.** Differences between the ministries of Paul and his coworkers.

<b>Paul</b>	<b>Coworkers</b>
Apostle. <sup>62</sup>	Not apostles.
Gospel revealed directly.	Gospel not revealed directly: had to be learned through teaching, passing on of tradition, etc.
Directly commissioned by Christ.	Not commissioned directly; engaged in ministry by Paul's invitation (e.g. Timothy) or by personal choice (1 Cor 16:15).

<sup>62</sup> See section 3.2.1 for discussion of apostleship as embracing a direct commission from Christ as well as a direct revelation of the gospel.

**Table 5.2.** Similarities between the ministries of Paul and his coworkers.<sup>63</sup>

<b>Paul and his coworkers</b>
Regarded as God's coworkers (e.g. 1 Cor 3:9; 1 Thess 3:2).
The gospel is the essential message which they proclaimed (e.g. Rom 1:1; 1 Thess 3:2).
Need to understand the gospel and how to apply it to the practical situations faced by the churches.
Work hard (κοπιᾶω, e.g. 1 Cor 15:10; 1 Thess 5:12).
Personal integrity is very important (e.g. 1 Thess 2:1-12).
Admonish believers; seek their spiritual growth and preparation for the coming of the Lord Jesus (e.g. 1 Thess 2:10-12; 5:12-13).
The effectiveness of their ministry lies in God's use of the gospel (e.g. Rom 1:16-17; 2 Cor 3:1-6).

These comparisons show the following:

1. Paul's aim, as that of his coworkers, was the transformation of God's people in preparation for the coming of the Lord.
2. The means of accomplishing this transformation was the ministry of the gospel (see extensive discussion in chapters 3 and 4).
3. The gospel was powerful because it was God's means of salvation (Rom 1:16-17; see also the discussion in section 4.3).
4. The key difference between Paul and his coworkers lay in the fact that Paul had received the gospel by direct revelation from Jesus Christ. Although he and his coworkers stood equally under the authority of the gospel,<sup>64</sup> the coworkers were dependent on Paul, the other apostles, and Christian tradition for their knowledge of the gospel. Paul, however, received this knowledge directly from Christ.

Hence, in terms of day to day ministry, which consisted of the proclamation of the gospel and its application to the lives of believers, Paul and his coworkers were performing much the same work. This is why Paul could say of people like Timothy, "he is doing the work of the Lord, as I am" (1 Cor 16:10; cf. section 4.2.3).

These observations can be related to the discussion in section 5.3 above, regarding Paul's understanding of his own divine equipping. It may be observed:

1. The grace given to Paul was the grace of apostleship (section 5.3.1). This grace, viewed in its totality, was unique to Paul. It was seen (sections 5.4.1 and 5.4.2 above) that Paul's coworkers — as every other member of the body of Christ — also received grace for the exercise of their respective callings. The actual outworking of God's grace would have been different in each case, but the principle is the same: God works by his supernatural power in the different members of the body of Christ, enabling them to serve one another for the common good.
2. Paul's understanding of his call as a prophetic call is expressed most clearly in Galatians 1 (section 5.3.2; see also section 3.2.1.2). In this chapter Paul distinguishes clearly between

<sup>63</sup> See the discussion in chapter 3 for the basis of this listing.

<sup>64</sup> See section 4.3. Dunn's (1997:279) comment is insightful: "it follows that *as apostolic authority stems directly from certain decisive events and words of the past, so the exercise of that authority is limited by these same events and words*" (original emphasis; see also Von Campenhausen 1969:37).

his own call and that of his coworkers, and it is his own call which is described in prophetic terms.<sup>65</sup> The uniqueness of Paul's prophetic call is readily understandable in light of his apostleship: direct revelation from God was crucial both to apostleship and to the Old Testament prophetic office.

3. Closely related to the issue of Paul's prophetic call is the way God equipped him by giving him a revelation of the gospel (section 5.3.3). Naturally, Paul's non-apostolic coworkers did not share this aspect of the enabling which God gave to him.
4. The most extensive discussion on Paul's divine equipping concerned the power of the Spirit in his ministry (section 5.3.4). It was found that Paul's ministry was a glorious, new covenant ministry in which the eschatological promises of the Holy Spirit became real to God's people. This ministry was powerful because the Spirit enabled believers to see Jesus Christ, the image and glory of God, which resulted in their transformation into the same image. In this way, the Spirit empowered Paul for ministry by making his proclamation of the gospel effective, resulting in the conversion of unbelievers and the transformation of believers. It is precisely these aspects of ministry — proclamation of the gospel and the guidance of believers — that Paul shared with his coworkers, and so it may be expected that they would have been empowered and equipped by the Holy Spirit in a way that was similar to Paul's own equipping.

The conclusion just arrived at in point 4 can be confirmed by the way Paul includes his coworkers in passages such as 1 Thessalonians 1 and 2 Corinthians 3.<sup>66</sup> Although Paul does at times use the epistolary plural, the first person plural in these two passages seems deliberately to include Paul's coworkers.<sup>67</sup> These are the very passages which speak so powerfully of the way God equips Paul, and for him to include his coworkers in the discussion is significant. It was not important for Paul to maintain his status over against his coworkers; his concern was with the work of the Spirit in building up the body of Christ, and his coworkers had an important part in that work.

## 5.5 CONCLUSION

When the various strands of New Testament data regarding God's grace and equipping power are drawn together, a picture emerges of churches in which the Holy Spirit was powerfully at work. People were enabled to see the glory of Christ and to submit to his lordship (1 Cor 12:1-3) as the veil was removed from their hearts (2 Cor 3:16). Each one experienced the working of the Spirit who enabled the believers to serve one another for the common good. Although the thought patterns of the wider society sometimes dominated the believers' thinking (as evidenced so clearly in 1 Corinthians), it was always Paul's goal to help them to understand the spiritual realities which

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<sup>65</sup> Note Galatians 1:1-2: "Paul, an apostle — not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead — and all the brothers who are with me" and Galatians 1:15-16: "But when he who had set me apart before I was born, and who called me by his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son to me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles." In these verses Paul speaks about his call as something unique to himself.

<sup>66</sup> 1 Thessalonians 1:2,5: "We give thanks . . . because *our* gospel came to you . . ." (emphasis added). 2 Corinthians 3:1: "Are *we* beginning to commend *ourselves* . . ." (emphasis added).

<sup>67</sup> On 1 Thessalonians 1, see Bruce (1982:11), who points out how in 1 Corinthians 1:4 Paul uses the first person singular "I give thanks", even though Sosthenes has been named as a co-author (1 Cor 1:1). This suggests that the plural in 1 Thessalonians 1:2 is not merely epistolary. On the plural in 2 Corinthians 3, note the abrupt shift from singular to plural in 2 Corinthians 2:13-14, suggesting that Paul intends to include his coworkers in the plural which he uses in the following passage (cf. Harris 2005:244).

defined their existence and their identity as followers of Christ, and to help them to live by these realities. As was the case with their initial conversion, Paul knew that it was only the Spirit's power that would transform their thinking and conform them to the image of Christ (2 Cor 3:18). He was convinced that the Spirit was indeed at work in his ministry so that the Corinthians, for example, could be described as "a letter from Christ ministered (διακονηθεῖσα) by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts" (2 Cor 3:3, own translation). Paul was deeply conscious that his ministry was a gracious favour that God had bestowed on him — it was not something that he had the right or ability to do himself — with the result that he often spoke about his work and calling as grace (χάρις) which had been given to him.

The role of Paul's coworkers was in many respects similar to that of Paul himself. His itinerant coworkers like Timothy and Titus would minister alongside him or would actually go to places like Thessalonica or Corinth to expand the reach of Paul's team when he himself was unable to go and minister to particular needs in these churches (e.g. 1 Thess 3:2-5; 1 Cor 16:10; 2 Cor 7:6-7). Coworkers in the churches would instruct, admonish and exhort their fellow-believers on the basis of the gospel, continuing the work which Paul began. It is not difficult to recognize such coworkers in passages like 1 Corinthians 12 and Romans 12:3-8. From those passages, and from an understanding of the nature of their ministry as Paul's coworkers, it becomes clear that they too were empowered by the Spirit for the work of proclaiming the gospel and providing pastoral care to Christians who were discovering what it meant to be followers of Christ in the Graeco-Roman world of the first century.

While certain aspects of Paul's ministry were directly related to his apostleship, many aspects were shared by his coworkers. I have argued from a variety of passages in Paul's Early Letters that, as far as Paul was concerned, his coworkers must have experienced God's equipping for ministry that was in many ways similar to his own equipping. Their work could also be described in terms of grace which God had given. Furthermore, the coworkers must have been given special insight into the Christian traditions, an understanding of the gospel and its application to the lives of believers, pastoral insight and sensitivity, and the power of the Holy Spirit accompanying their ministry just as it accompanied Paul's ministry (cf. 1 Cor 2:4-5; 2 Cor 3; 1 Thess 1:5). The fact of their divine equipping would have become evident in the effects of their ministry, just as the effects of Paul's ministry gave evidence that he had received grace from God for that ministry (2 Cor 3:2-3).

Paul's discussion of the collection for the poor in 2 Corinthians 8-9 is deliberately built around the theme of grace. In this passage Paul shows how God, out of his undeserved kindness, works in his people, motivating and enabling them to demonstrate undeserved kindness to their fellow-believers. These perspectives on the operation of grace in the body of Christ inform our understanding of divine equipping in the life and ministry of the leaders (and other members) of the Pauline churches. Just as God enabled the Macedonians and the Corinthians to serve their fellow-believers mercifully and sacrificially, so he enables each member of the body of Christ (including its leaders) to serve the others through their respective ministries.

To speak about divine equipping is, by the nature of the case, to speak about the inward working of God by his Spirit. It is also important, however, to consider how this inward work of the Spirit came to concrete expression in the life of the churches. This question will be investigated in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER 6

### THE EXPERIENCE OF LEADERSHIP IN THE EARLY PAULINE CHURCHES

#### Chapter Outline

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#### 6.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this chapter is to draw together the results of the previous chapters and to provide an understanding of how leadership was expressed and experienced in the context of the social and historical realities of the early Pauline communities. Before focussing on this investigation it is helpful to review the foregoing chapters:

- In chapter 2 I evaluate the sociohistoric model of leadership, and particularly the view that leadership in the Pauline communities was based on wealth, social status, and patronage. I seek to show that the arguments used to support this view are inadequate, and that the historical evidence available to us points in another direction.
- Chapter 3 analyses Paul's understanding of his own leadership role. It can be seen from Paul's Early Letters that he had a profound consciousness of his apostolic calling, and that he was motivated by a desire for believers to appear blameless on the day of Christ. This blamelessness involved a profound ethical transformation; it was brought about through the gospel, which Paul understood to be God's power for the salvation of all who believe. Hence, Paul devoted himself to the ministry of the gospel, not for its own sake but for the purpose of strengthening believers in their faith. Ongoing trust in God for his salvation

was the means for believers to experience his transforming power; this is why Paul was so concerned about the ministry of the gospel and why he was so passionate about the faith of the believers.

- Paul's coworkers form the focus of attention in chapter 4. A number of passages reveal remarkable parallels between Paul's ministry and that of his coworkers, both in the churches and in Paul's itinerant mission team. Hence I argue that Paul sought to expand his own ministry by encouraging others to minister the gospel to their fellow believers just as he had done. I further conclude that the key to their effectiveness lay in the fact that the gospel was God's, and that it was his power for the salvation of all who believe. Power for ministry was not inherent in any person or position.
- This last conclusion is reinforced in chapter 5, which deals with divine equipping. There I argue that one of the key concepts for understanding divine equipping is the concept of God's grace, i.e. his unmerited favour demonstrated through acts of kindness towards his people. Paul frequently referred to his own call by speaking about the grace which he had received. Because of this grace he had a ministry which was full of glory; yet it was only the working of the Spirit which made his ministry at all effective. In a similar way Paul's coworkers were divinely equipped to build up the body of Christ through their ministry.

Throughout the study up to this point I have used the word leadership rather freely. There would probably be little argument that the various issues and phenomena discussed above can be understood as falling within the topic of leadership, broadly conceived. However, it is important now to bring conceptual unity to the exegetical perspectives that have been gathered, and it is difficult to do that without defining more precisely what leadership really is. Thus I begin the chapter by seeking insight into the nature and operation of leadership from the social sciences (and in particular from the fields of leadership studies and social psychology<sup>1</sup>). This insight will be structured around a definition of leadership.

The quest for conceptual unity is not the only reason for using inter-disciplinary theoretical insight in this way. As Esler (1998:256-157; 2011:xii) has pointed out, researchers' perspectives, and the questions which they ask, cannot but be limited by their own cultural and environmental conditioning. Inter-disciplinary models and theoretical perspectives — as heuristic devices — help researchers to ask new questions and think in new ways. This kind of fresh thinking is crucial in studies on New Testament leadership, where ecclesiastical commitments and interests have often predetermined the debate so that issues related to structure, polity, office and authority dominate everything else (Elliott 2003:77; Barentsen 2011:1,17-20). By using such inter-disciplinary perspectives, the potential is opened up for thinking differently about the data and using new categories to analyse it. Hence these theoretical perspectives and models should not be seen — and

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<sup>1</sup> Social psychology is the study of how people behave in groups. It includes such fields as group dynamics, power, influence, etc. Chapple (1984) made effective use of social psychology in his study on local leadership in the Pauline churches. Barentsen's (2011) study is based on the social identity model from social psychology.

should not be used — as an imposition on the text; their purpose is to help the interpreter to avoid imposing his own preconceived ideas on the text.<sup>2,3</sup>

Having outlined some theoretical perspectives on the nature of leadership, I will use these perspectives as a heuristic device to gain insight into the leadership roles of Paul and his coworkers. The concepts and categories suggested by the theory will be applied to the New Testament data — especially that which has been gathered in the foregoing chapters — with a view to ordering and structuring the data within a coherent conceptual framework. The aim of such a framework is not merely to provide insight into leadership as an abstract concept, but also to give insight into the historical and social experience of leadership in the Pauline communities.

## 6.2 PERSPECTIVES FROM LEADERSHIP THEORY AND SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

### 6.2.1 Defining leadership

Up to this point I have referred to leadership rather loosely. Although such usage has been useful in guiding the empirically orientated investigation of the previous three chapters, it is now important to define the concept more precisely. This I will do by accessing insights from leadership theory and social psychology, while keeping the New Testament data in mind so as to ensure that the resulting definition suits its intended purpose.

As an academic discipline the field of leadership studies is about a century old.<sup>4</sup> The primary motivation for studying leadership has been the desire to make commercial organizations more effective, but other contexts have also been recognized. As far as definitions of leadership are concerned, Bass & Bass (2008:15) note that the field sometimes seems highly fragmented, with hundreds of definitions having been formulated. Nevertheless, there is a measure of convergence, as can be seen from a comparison of definitions.

Bass & Bass (2008:23) note this definition, formulated by 84 social scientists from 56 countries:

leadership . . . [is] the ability to influence, motivate, and enable others to contribute to the effectiveness and success of the organizations of which they are members.

Northouse (2013:5) identifies four components as central to the phenomenon of leadership: (a) a process; (b) influence; (c) groups; and (d) common goals. He defines leadership as follows:

Leadership is a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal.

Yukl's (2010:26) definition is:

Leadership is the process of influencing others to understand and agree about what needs to be done and how to do it, and the process of facilitating individual and collective efforts to accomplish shared objectives.

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<sup>2</sup> From an epistemological point of view it could be said that these inter-disciplinary perspectives help to generate hypotheses which must then be tested against the actual data (see, e.g. Hempel 1966:3-18 and Popper 1980:27-34 for helpful insights from the philosophy of science on the generation and testing of hypotheses). This testing process has at times been insufficiently rigorous in studies of leadership in the New Testament (cf. chapter 2 above).

<sup>3</sup> Examples of studies on Pauline church leadership that have used such theoretical perspectives in a fruitful way include those of Holmberg (1978), Chapple (1984), MacDonald (1988), Ehrensperger (2007) and Barentsen (2011).

<sup>4</sup> Useful introductions to the field include Bass & Bass (2008), Bolden *et al.* (2011), Northouse (2013), and Yukl (2010).

Bolden *et al.* (2011:39) describe leadership as

1. a process
2. of social influence,
3. to guide, structure and/or facilitate
4. behaviours, activities, and/or relationships
5. towards the achievement of shared aims.

It is helpful to make a few comments on these definitions before formulating a definition appropriate to the present study. Firstly, the last three definitions all state that *leadership is a process*. This component is important because of the way it addresses perceived inaccuracies and dangers in the so-called “heroic paradigm” of leadership, a paradigm which emphasizes the power of leaders to influence followers to accomplish what the leaders desire (Bolden *et al.* 2011:38). Even leadership theories which place more value on the followers as persons (such as transformational leadership theories) have not liberated themselves from the idea that the leader is the one who holds the power and who, ultimately, determines the results. The emphasis on process, however, draws attention to the reality that there are many social processes at work in a group, and that the leader is not in control of all these processes. Hence Uhl-Bien (2006:667) draws attention to “relational processes” and mutual influence in a group. She defines “relational leadership as a social influence process through which emergent coordination (i.e., evolving social order) and change (i.e., new values, attitudes, approaches, behaviors, ideologies, etc.) are constructed and produced” (Uhl-Bien 2006:668). As a preliminary observation, there seems to be a correlation between this idea of leadership as a process of mutual influence and the idea of the church as a body in which each part contributes to the welfare of the whole (1 Cor 12; Rom 12:3-8; see sections 5.4.1 and 5.4.2 above). Furthermore, the apparent absence of formal offices in Paul’s Early Letters, combined with the emergence of particular roles, seems to fit the idea of “emergent coordination” in the definition of Uhl-Bien quoted above.

In the second place, it is noteworthy that the first three definitions all refer explicitly or implicitly to a *leader or leaders* while Bolden *et al.* deliberately avoid mentioning leaders. The reason for this omission is to accommodate leadership models such as shared and distributed leadership in which leadership may come from any member of the group, not only from a recognized leader (Bolden *et al.* 2011:34-36). With regard to the early Pauline churches, the previous chapters show that Paul and his coworkers did exercise some sort of leadership role distinct from that of the other members of the churches (although those roles are in need of proper definition). It would therefore seem wise, for the present purpose, to retain mention of a leader or leaders in a definition of leadership. Nevertheless, the idea of shared leadership finds an echo in the dynamic whereby any member of the church is free to contribute to the edification of the body, even by performing those functions that are regularly performed by the “leaders” (see, esp. p.111 above, section 5.4.1). The idea of shared leadership may therefore provide perspectives that are helpful for understanding the early Pauline churches.

Thirdly, it is implicit or explicit in all the definitions above that leadership results in the *members of the group contributing their efforts* to the group endeavour. Leadership is not simply action or activity by a leader. This essential dimension of leadership has not received much attention in this study up to now, but it is evident in the way Paul emphasized the role that each member has in the functioning of the body of Christ (1 Cor 12; Rom 12:3-8). It will be important to consider this aspect when analysing leadership in the early Pauline churches.

Fourthly, all the definitions above explicitly mention *influence*. The word “influence” is used as a general term which allows for a variety of methods by which leaders may influence group members.

Bolden *et al.*, in their definition, spell out some of the practical dimensions of the influence by specifying the content of the influence as “to guide, structure and/or facilitate behaviours, activities, and/or relationships”. Yukl’s definition details similar practical aspects of influence (understanding and agreeing about what needs to be done; facilitating individual and collective efforts). These descriptions are useful inasmuch as they provide a more concrete understanding of how leadership may influence group members. In the analysis below, I will refer to these aspects of leadership practice as *focal points of influence*. There are also, however, more abstract aspects of influence such as the role of authority and the means by which leaders actually affect the behaviours, activities and relationships of group members. This issue is so important that it is discussed in more detail in section 6.2.2 below.

A fifth component (explicit or implied) of all the definitions is that *leadership occurs in groups*. As collections of individuals, it is important to distinguish groups from aggregates and categories. An aggregate is a collection of people who happen to be in the same place at the same time but do not form a unit, such as a bus full of people commuting to work (Johnson & Johnson 2006:8). A category is a collection of individuals who share a common quality, such as being introverts or lawyers (Forsyth 2006:5). As for groups, social psychologists vary widely in their definitions, partly because some wish to focus on small groups or other particular kinds of groups (Forsyth 2006:2-5; Johnson & Johnson 2006:5-11). Some of the potential defining qualities over which there is a difference of opinion include person-to-person relationships, the presence of communication, interdependence, shared identity, the existence of common goals, and group structure. As far as the study of leadership is concerned, it is obvious that the concept of leadership is meaningless outside the context of a group (as distinct from an aggregate or a collection). For the present study the essential characteristics of a group will be taken to be interdependence among the members and the existence of shared goals. It is clear that these characteristics were present in the early Pauline churches.

Lastly, and closely related to the last component, leadership is concerned with the *accomplishment of shared objectives*. This is explicit in the definitions of Northouse, Yukl, and Bolden *et al.*, and is implicit in the definition quoted by Bass & Bass. It became clear in chapter 3 (section 3.3) that Paul had definite goals for his own ministry, and that he understood these to determine the goals which the churches were to pursue: (a) they were to pursue the goal of appearing blameless on the day of Christ by the power of God at work through the gospel (1 Cor 1:7-8; 1 Thess 5:23); (b) they were to seek the edification (building up) of the body of Christ. Building up the body of Christ (see section 3.3.3 above) is both a goal and a means of achieving the goal, since it harnesses the contributions of all the members towards the edification of the body, both individually and corporately.

Bearing the above discussion in mind, I now define leadership for the purpose of the present study:

**Leadership in the context of the early Pauline churches is a social process whereby a leader, empowered by the grace of God, influences members of the group to accomplish their common goals.**

### 6.2.2 Power and influence

Power in relation to leadership is often thought of negatively, in terms of a leader imposing his will on others, frequently against their own will and desires<sup>5</sup> — and it is true that earlier treatments of leadership and power tended to conceive of power in this way (Bass & Bass 2008:19-20; cf. Raven

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<sup>5</sup> Ehrensperger (2007:16-34) provides a helpful survey of some contemporary views of power.

2008:12).<sup>6</sup> This view stands in sharp contrast to the ethic of the New Testament, and it may therefore seem inappropriate to speak about the power of leaders in the early Christian communities. However, social power may be understood in a neutral sense as *the potential to bring about a change in the belief, attitude, or behaviour of a person* (Raven 2008:1). As such, social power may be completely agreeable and beneficial to the one on whom it acts. Power is, by definition (see previous section), essential to the exercise of leadership since a leader can only influence others if he has power according to this definition.

There have been many characterizations and analyses of power, but the most influential in recent decades has been that originally published by French & Raven (1959), and updated by Raven (1992; 2008). It is commonly referenced in treatments of leadership.<sup>7</sup> French & Raven's analysis has been noticed in studies on New Testament leadership (e.g. Chapple 1984:97; Barentsen 2011:54-55), but has not, to my knowledge, been used for in-depth analysis of the New Testament data.<sup>8</sup> In view of the general acceptability and wide applicability of this characterization, I will make use of it to analyse Pauline leadership in this chapter.

In their original article French & Raven (1959:155-164) identified five "bases of social power":

1. reward power
2. coercive power
3. legitimate power
4. referent power
5. expert power (with informational power recognized as a particular type of expert power)

In later publications Raven (1992; 2008) distinguished informational power from expert power, thus defining six different types of social power. These six forms of power differ "in the manner that the social change is implemented, the permanence of such change, and the ways in which each basis of power is established and maintained" (Raven 2008:2). Thus, the six bases of social power are classified into three groups:

1. power that leads to socially independent change: *informational power*;
2. power that results in socially dependent change, with surveillance necessary: *reward power* and *coercive power*;
3. power that leads to socially dependent change, with surveillance unnecessary: *legitimate power*, *expert power*, *referent power* (Raven 2008:2-3).

It will become clear that the characterization of power as socially dependent or independent and the necessity of surveillance are important when applying the classification to situations where beliefs and ethics are prominent, as in the case of the early Pauline churches. In his update of the original 1959 article, Raven (1992:222-223) noted that "there are several other approaches [to influencing other people] which are less direct". In particular he mentioned *environmental manipulation* and *invoking the power of third parties* as additional means beyond the six bases of power. However, he did not discuss these in any detail.

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<sup>6</sup> Cf. Weber's (1947:139) definition of power as "the probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance, regardless of the basis on which this probability rests."

<sup>7</sup> E.g. Bolden *et al.* (2011:73-74); Northouse (2013:9-11); Bass & Bass (2008:21); Yukl (2010:201-210).

<sup>8</sup> Barentsen (2011:55) does comment that his own social identity approach can be "fruitfully connected" with French & Raven's analysis.

Before describing the bases of power in French & Raven's model, it is important to note that the influencing agent<sup>9</sup> may need to "prepare the stage" before an influence attempt can be effective. For example, coercion will not be effective if the target of influence does not believe that the agent has the ability or willingness to implement his threats (Raven 1992:223-225). This "stage-setting" can be related to the understanding of leadership as a social process (see definition above). If the appropriate perceptions, beliefs, and social relationships are not in place, a leader's attempts to influence other people will not be effective.

I now describe the various bases of power, following the order used in French & Raven's (1959:156-164) original article:

*Reward power* is "power whose basis is the ability to reward" (French & Raven 1959:156). In a commercial organization a supervisor might seek to motivate employees to work longer hours by promising a reward such as increased salary, the possibility of promotion, etc. The effectiveness of this form of power is obviously dependent on the supervisor's actual ability to provide the promised reward, and on employees' perception of that ability and likelihood. Hence, the supervisor may need to do some stage-setting by providing evidence that he is in fact able to make good on his promises. Over a longer period of time, a social process will be at work in the organization whereby the supervisor gains a reputation either for fulfilling or not fulfilling the promises; that reputation will have a significant effect on the supervisor's attempts to influence employees using reward power. In this way leadership, using this form of influence, involves a social process.

*Coercive power* is based on the expectation that the one who seeks to use it is able to create some punitive consequence for the target of influence (French & Raven 1959:157). In a commercial situation the punitive consequences could include dismissal, lowering of salary, and being excluded from promotion opportunities and other benefits. It is clear that similar stage-setting devices and social process are applicable to coercive and reward power.

Both reward and coercive power are socially dependent forms of power, meaning that the change which is produced is dependent on ongoing influence from the influencing agent. When the promise of a reward, or the threat of a punishment, is no longer present, the target of influence is no longer influenced by reward or coercive power. Furthermore, these forms of power are dependent on the influencing agent's knowledge of the target's behaviour; in other words, surveillance is necessary. However, in the case of reward power, the target benefits by allowing the influencing agent to know that compliance has occurred. In contrast, surveillance becomes more difficult in the case of coercive power because the target will be inclined to hide non-compliance (Raven 2008:2).

A further contrast between reward and coercive power is that the former is likely to make the target positively disposed towards the agent, leading to the operation of referent power (see below) in the relationship. This may eventually result in the target making changes which are socially independent. On the other hand, coercive power tends to make the target negatively disposed towards the agent, with the resultant desire to escape from the agent's influence. In this case the agent may need to introduce further constraints to continue influencing the target (French & Raven 1959:157-158). There are, however, examples of socially independent changes being produced as a secondary effect of the moderate use of coercive power. For example, it was found that workers who were reluctant to change their work procedure, and were compelled to do so through a moderate use of coercive power, found that the new procedure enabled them to work more easily (Raven

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<sup>9</sup> For the sake of clarity, I use the technical (though rather impersonal) terms "(influencing) agent", "target (of influence)" and "influence attempt" throughout this discussion. These are the terms used by French and Raven in their presentations of the model.

2008:15). In this case the secondary change could be considered the effect of informational power (see below).

Raven's update of the original model introduced a further nuance into the concepts of reward and coercive power. In addition to providing external rewards or punishments, Raven noted that personal approval, as well as personal rejection or disapproval, are powerful forms of influence. Whereas these had previously been classified as examples of referent power, they are more properly viewed as instances of reward/coercive power (termed *personal reward/coercive power*) since they also require surveillance: a person cannot express approval or rejection without knowing how the other person has acted (Raven 1992:219-220; 2008:3-4). With regard to the social process, relationships between people — including how much one values another's opinion — and a person's known readiness to express approval or disapproval will play a part in the way personal reward and coercive power operate in a group.

*Legitimate power* is a complex phenomenon, described as power which "stems from social norms requiring that the target of influence comply with the request or order of the influencing agent" (Raven 2008:4), or power "which stems from internalized values in [the target] which dictate that [the agent] has a legitimate right to influence [the target] and that [the target] has an obligation to accept this influence" (French & Raven 1959:159). French & Raven (Raven 2008:12) derived the term "legitimate" from the writings of Weber (1947:300), who identified three "pure types of legitimate authority"<sup>10</sup> (although Weber's three types would not all fall under French & Raven's "legitimate power"). One of the most obvious forms of legitimate power would be that which occurs when a person in a socially recognized position of authority issues an instruction to subordinates. The subordinates obey because they accept the right of the person in authority to issue commands. Legitimate power may be deeply rooted in cultural values and customs (e.g. the case of a tribal chief; cf. Weber's 1947:301 traditional authority), or it may but it may be based in organizational structures (cf. Weber's 1947:300 rational-legal authority). Both of these could be termed *legitimate position power*. However, it is also possible to identify the *legitimate power of reciprocity* (the obligation to return a favour); the *legitimate power of equity*, also known as the "compensatory norm" (I have suffered, so I have the right to ask you to make up for it); and the *legitimate power of responsibility or dependence* (the obligation to help those who cannot help themselves) (Raven 1992:220-221; 2008:4). Interestingly, some of these forms of legitimate power can be exercised by someone in a subordinate position towards a superior, or between two people where there is no authority relation between them.

With regard to social process, it is important to note that legitimate power depends on internalized values in the target of influence. Where these values are cultural, sanctioned by years of tradition, legitimate power can be very strong, and very little "stage-setting" is required by the influencing agent before using this form of social power. On the other hand, if an agent wishes to rely on a value that is not yet internalized in the target of influence it will be necessary first to transmit that value and have it internalized before any influence attempt will be accepted.

Regarding the matter of social dependence, legitimate power is socially dependent, but does not require surveillance (Raven 2008:12). This means that an attempt at influence which is based on legitimate power will be accepted by the target of influence because the target accepts that the agent

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<sup>10</sup> Weber's doctrine of the three ideal types is widely recognized (e.g. Bolden *et al.* 2011:75), and has been applied to studies of leadership in the New Testament (notably Holmberg 1978; MacDonald 1988). Elliott (2003:81) expresses the opinion that the "classical theory of basic, differing types of domination/authority put forward by Max Weber, while long fundamental to sociological analysis, has yet to be adequately utilized by exegetes and ancient church historians".

has the right to exercise such influence; there is no need for the agent to determine whether the influence has been accepted or the command obeyed. However, the change produced is still socially dependent because it only occurs when the agent exerts an influence or is perceived to require certain behaviours and actions from the target.

*Referent power* is based on the target's identification with the agent. This identification can include a "feeling of oneness" with the agent, an attraction towards the agent, a desire to become closely associated with the agent, or seeing the agent as a model to be emulated (French & Raven 1959:161; Raven 2008:3). The power is effective because the target perceives that an identification with the agent can be established or maintained by behaving, believing and perceiving as the agent does (French & Raven 1958:162). In his update of the model, Raven (1992:221) noted a negative form of referent power: if the target has an antipathy towards the agent, the tendency will be to choose the opposite of what is seen in the agent. Referent power is a socially dependent form of power, but French & Raven (1959:163) suggest that there is "probably a tendency for some of these dependent changes to become independent of [the agent] quite rapidly". Since referent power is based on the target's perception of the agent it does not depend on the agent being able to observe the target's responses (French & Raven 1959:163; Raven 2008:3). Certain aspects of the power of example would be instances of referent power.

As far as social processes are concerned, referent power obviously depends on the target's perception of and attitude towards the agent. If the two are relatively unknown to each other referent power will be weak. The more they know each other, the greater is the potential for referent power to be operative, either in its positive or negative form. One who would seek to exercise referent power positively would therefore need to build up a relationship with the target whereby the target has significant respect for and attraction towards the agent.

*Expert power* is found where the target of influence believes that the influencing agent has knowledge or understanding not shared by the target. The strength of the power increases as the target attributes greater knowledge or understanding to the agent. Thus the agent may say, "I believe what he says because he is an expert on the subject, although I don't understand the reasoning" (French & Raven 1959:163; Raven 2008:3). This kind of power is often found in doctor-patient interactions (Raven 2008:12,15). It should be noted that, when an agent communicates some sort of information to a target, the target may initially accept the communication because of the agent's perceived superior knowledge; however, in time the target begins to understand the content of the communication and to accept it because he understands it to be true, irrespective of the opinion of the original agent. In such a situation it is only the initial acceptance which can be classified as expert power (French & Raven 1959:163; Raven 2008:15). The secondary influence of the communication's content is the result of informational power (discussed below).

The change associated with expert power is socially dependent, but does not require surveillance. It depends only on the target's perception of the agent, not on the agent's awareness of what the target is doing. Expert power can lead to socially independent change — if it leads to a genuine change of knowledge or understanding on the part of the target — but some thought about various life situations shows that there are many instances where people remain dependent on the opinions of those perceived to be "experts", whether those "experts" are university professors, bureaucratic officials, or traditional healers.

The social process leading to the effective operation of expert power must persuade the target that the influencing agent does in fact have superior knowledge and that the agent can be trusted to tell the truth (French & Raven 1959:164). There are various ways in which such persuasion may be

achieved, including the agent's track record, formal qualifications, and recommendations from others who are trusted.

The last of the six main bases of power is *informational power*. Informational power influences the target by providing reasons why a particular belief should be adopted or a course of action followed. The target can evaluate the reasons and decide to accept or reject the influence attempt on the basis of those reasons alone, irrespective of how the agent is perceived. "Understanding the reason' . . . is what distinguishes *Informational Power* from *Expert Power*" (Raven 2008:3, original italics). It should be noted that the idea of "information" in "informational power" must be understood in a broad sense; it can include a changed understanding that comes through experience — e.g. the experience of a changed work procedure or the experience of effective medication (cf. Raven 2008:15).

Since the target's willingness to be influenced by informational power is dependent on the intrinsic value of the information (rather than on the target's perception of the influencing agent), the change produced by informational power is socially independent. For this reason also, the process leading to effective use of informational power does not pertain to the target's perception of the agent. That process would need to address the target's own prior knowledge (without which certain communications cannot be understood), and his willingness to consider logical reasons for accepting a particular conclusion (since vested interests and emotional factors may prejudice him against a course of action or belief, and thereby against accepting the sound logic which leads to that course of action or belief).

This completes the explanation of the six bases of power as they appear in French and Raven's Power/Interaction Model of Interpersonal Influence. Two further comments are required before applying the model to leadership in the early Pauline churches.

Firstly, it should be noted that "in our everyday interactions, more often than not there are several bases of power operating in varying degrees in any specific situation" (Raven 2008:14). This reality does make practical analyses more difficult, but such analyses will become confused if it is not borne in mind.

Secondly, a person may exercise power indirectly by *invoking the power of a third party* (cf. p.125 above). The third party in question may possess any of the six power bases discussed above, and any of these six may be invoked (Raven 1992:222-223; 2008:15-16). The power of a third party becomes particularly important in a religious context where a person speaks or claims to speak on behalf of a deity.<sup>11</sup>

### 6.2.3 Preliminary observations regarding power and influence in New Testament leadership

Before making a detailed examination of the phenomenon of leadership in the early Pauline churches, it is useful to relate the French/Raven model of social influence to the investigations of the

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<sup>11</sup> Raven does in fact refer to Biblical teachings in his articles from time to time, pointing out that appeals to God's actions or requirements are frequently examples of invoking the power of God as a third party (e.g. Raven 2008:18-19). Raven (1999) has also published a complete article in which he analyses religion by means of his Power/Interaction Model. He speaks as one who comes from a Jewish background, but is not religiously observant (Raven 2008:18); he acknowledges that he is not an expert on religion and that his analysis may appear "oversimplified and naive" (Raven 1999:164,169). He (1999:162-164) judges that religion's positive contribution has been to exercise social control and protection even though it often emphasizes "extreme coercion, reward, ultimate legitimate and expert power". I do not share his perspective on Biblical religion, but it would distract from the purpose of the present study to interact in detail with Raven's analyses of religion here.

previous chapters. This will help to provide a general idea of how the model may elucidate the operation of power and influence in the early Pauline churches.

The French/Raven model operates on the basis of the target's perceptions — either of the influencing agent (the first five bases of power) or of the actual information transmitted. All forms of power, with the partial exception of informational power, assume that the target actually has the ability to carry out the instruction or otherwise respond to the influence attempt. In the case of informational power, the influence attempt may include guidance on how to carry out a command or perform a task (hence the concept of empowerment).

I argued in chapter 3 (section 3.3 above) that one of Paul's central aims in ministry was to help his converts to grow towards blamelessness on the day of Christ. Much of his interaction with them involved attempts to influence them towards holy living. Yet it would be a mistake to start analysing his interactions in terms of the six bases of power without first understanding some of the underlying dynamics. In contrast to the assumption (see previous paragraph) of the target's ability to respond to an agent's influence, I sought to show in chapter 3 that Paul strongly believed in human beings' inherent *inability* to do what God requires.<sup>12</sup> Hence, seeking to influence them simply on the basis of their perception of himself or even of God (invoking a third party) was inadequate to produce the required changes. For Paul, the direct working of God in the life of the believer is necessary. In part this is a sovereign work of God, but it also involves the faith of the believer. Humanly speaking, faith is the means by which God's power is received and experienced, which is why Paul was so concerned with the believers' faith (Rom 1:5,17; 1 Thess 3:2,5-7,10; cf. sections 3.4.1 and 3.4.3 above). Faith in this sense is trusting God to act according to his promises and to do what is humanly impossible but divinely possible (cf. Rom 4:16-22). It involves a proper understanding of the gospel.

All of this implies that Paul's particular dealings with the churches must be understood within the framework of the gospel and the dynamic by which it operates in the lives of God's people. The last thing in his mind would have been the idea that he or his coworkers, by means of their own ability to influence people, could have induced them to live the life that God required. This is strongly confirmed by the discussion on divine equipping in chapter 5 (and especially section 5.3.4) above. In particular, 2 Corinthians 3 shows that, in Paul's mind, effective gospel ministry is characterized by the action of the Holy Spirit writing on tablets of human hearts (2 Cor 3:3-6). With these words Paul dissociates the influence associated with effective gospel ministry from the "law"; in terms of the first five bases of power in the French/Raven model, he dissociates it from coercive and reward power, whether exercised directly or on behalf of God as a third party. Effective gospel ministry is an expression of the grace of God, who demonstrates his undeserved kindness by (a) enabling his servants to conduct a ministry which will communicate the gospel accurately; and (b) making that ministry effective in the lives of those who receive the ministry. It is closely associated with the Holy Spirit's revelation of God as he removes the veil over the heart and enables believers to see the glory of God through Christ in the gospel (2 Cor 3:18).

Thus, effective gospel ministry is conceived of as a supernatural work of God. It is not simply the action of the hearers responding to an influence attempt, and therefore it cannot be comprehended within the six bases of power discussed in the French/Raven model. This conclusion is not surprising when it is considered that the presence and working of God are a central component in Paul's

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<sup>12</sup> See esp. section 3.4 above. Note, e.g. this statement on page 65: "Overcoming this problem [i.e. the problem of sin's reign in a person's life] is not as simple as receiving ethical instruction and obeying it, for those who have not received the gift of God's righteousness are unable to obey God's law."

discourse, whereas French and Raven devised their model to deal with common human interactions without reference to God. Since French and Raven themselves acknowledged that the six bases of power usually discussed in their model are not the only means by which people influence one another, it is entirely appropriate to adapt the model by introducing an additional basis of power as observed in the Early Pauline Letters (French & Raven 1959:155; Raven 1992:222). I will call this *spiritual power*, and define it as follows:

*Spiritual power* is found where God graciously equips a person to minister the gospel effectively so that the recipients of the ministry put their faith and trust in God through Christ as he is revealed in the gospel. Both the ministry and the response are the effects of God's gracious working.

It was observed in section 5.4 (above; see p.111) that this ministry was frequently associated with particular people, but could also be performed on an *ad hoc* basis by any member of a congregation.

The necessary preparation for exercising spiritual power would include the agent/minister living in relationship with God according to the gospel, relating to the recipients of the ministry with Christlike love and integrity, living out the values of the gospel before those who receive the ministry, and communicating the gospel accurately in accordance with God's revelation of it.

Recognizing that spiritual power as I have just defined it is the primary means of influence for accomplishing the aim of spiritual transformation, one may also consider some of the concrete ways in which power and influence operated on an interpersonal level. How did Paul and his coworkers seek to encourage faith in their fellow Christians, and to lead them to greater conformity to Christ? Some general principles may be noted in advance of the more detailed discussion in sections 6.3-6.4 below:

1. Paul and his coworkers set forth the content of the gospel and of Christian tradition (e.g. 1 Cor 15:3-8; cf. sections 3.4.2.1 and 4.2.1 above).
2. They explained how God relates to his people, enabling them to experience his transforming power (e.g. Rom 6; cf. section 3.4.2.3 above).
3. They looked to God to do the actual work of transformation in the lives of his people (e.g. 2 Cor 3:3-6; cf. section 5.3.4 above). Therefore prayer was an important aspect of their ministry (e.g. 1 Thess 3:10-13).
4. They were not averse to urging, admonishing, exhorting and even commanding at times. However, this mode of relating must be understood within the broader framework of faith and the gospel. It was possible to urge particular actions, but Paul was well aware that such commands would be worthless without the power of God at work through the gospel.

In terms of the six bases of power in the French/Raven model it can be seen that there is a strong emphasis on informational power. It is noteworthy that this is the mode of influence which leads to socially independent change, and which provides the opportunity for empowering people to overcome their own inabilities. The involvement of a third party, namely God, in these "influence attempts" is also strong, since Paul was concerned about believers' relationship to God and the operation of his power in their lives.

Understanding the dynamics of the gospel in relation to interpersonal power and influence is essential for an adequate analysis of leadership in the early Pauline churches. Without this understanding, the interpreter is tempted to look only at surface issues like the structure of authority and the issuing of commands, not perceiving that the grace of God and the gospel provided the

controlling dynamic for Paul's (and his coworkers') entire ministry — and also for the response of the recipients of this ministry.

### 6.3 AN ANALYSIS OF PAUL'S LEADERSHIP

Although chapters 3 to 5 above have discussed aspects of New Testament leadership broadly understood, the question does arise, now that a theoretical understanding of leadership has been provided, whether the New Testament phenomena can be understood as leadership according to this definition. A further — and perhaps more important — question is whether this theoretical understanding of leadership can shed light on the New Testament data. Can it bring conceptual unity? Can it further our understanding of the Pauline Christians' experience of leadership?

In order to answer these questions I will seek to analyse first Paul's leadership (this section), and then that of his coworkers (section 6.4 below), in terms of the theoretical perspectives set out in section 6.2 above. The analysis will be representative rather than exhaustive. The approach that I take regarding Paul's leadership is to consider the evidence in 1 Thessalonians, Galatians, 1 & 2 Corinthians, and Romans so as to gain insight into how he related to particular communities and to what extent this relationship can be called "leadership".

#### 6.3.1 1 Thessalonians

1 Thessalonians is a letter that provides rich insight into Paul's<sup>13</sup> relationship with one of the earliest churches to be established west of the Aegean Sea.<sup>14</sup> The letter was written shortly after the gathering of the church in Thessalonica and provides an understanding of Paul's involvement with the church at this early stage of its development.

*Group context.* As far as leadership is concerned, it may be noted at the outset that those who belonged to the "church of the Thessalonians" (1 Thess 1:1) constituted a group in the sense defined on page 124 above: they had very definite shared aims (discussed below), and they were interdependent. Their interdependency is especially clear from the exhortation that they show brotherly love towards one another (1 Thess 4:9), comfort and encourage one another (1 Thess 4:18), and exercise pastoral care towards one another (1 Thess 5:14). In addition, they had a clear sense of identity which distinguished them sharply from those of their community who were not believers in the Lord Jesus Christ (e.g. 1 Thess 1:9-10; 2:14-16).<sup>15</sup>

*Aim.* Paul's aims, as expressed in 1 Thessalonians, are discussed in section 3.3.1 above. Although they are discussed as Paul's aims for his own ministry, it is clear that Paul considers these to be the aims which ought to guide the actions and ambitions of the Thessalonian Christians. These aims are centred on the moral and ethical transformation of the believers so that they will appear "blameless in holiness" at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Thess 3:13; cf. 5:23). Such moral and ethical transformation is not something which the Thessalonians themselves can accomplish: it is the work

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<sup>13</sup> It should be noted that the letter was sent from Paul, Silvanus and Timothy (1 Thess 1:1), and reflects the relationship of all three of these persons with the Thessalonian Christians. However, since the focus in this section is on Paul's leadership I will frequently refer to Paul alone even where the other two senders are included.

<sup>14</sup> See, e.g. Hemer (2001:251-256) and Van Bruggen (2005:284-286) for the chronology of this period of Paul's ministry. Van Bruggen's dates imply that Paul reached Thessalonica in AD 49. Hemer's dates would imply AD 50 (2001:254-256).

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Donfried's (2002:19-162) article on the assembly (ἐκκλησία) of the Thessalonians. Donfried draws attention to the ἐκκλησία of the Thessalonians as an assembly which God the Father had called into being.

of God (1 Thess 3:12-13; 5:23-24), and will be accomplished in the Thessalonians through the exercise of faith (1 Thess 1:3; 3:1-10).

*Social process.* There is evidence of a social process at work in Paul's relationship with the Thessalonians; this process made it possible for Paul to exercise a leadership role among them. When Paul first arrived in Thessalonica, after being beaten and imprisoned in Philippi (1 Thess 2:2; cf. Acts 16:19-24), he would have faced the challenge of communicating the message about Jesus to people for whom it would have been completely unintelligible (cf. 1 Cor 1:18-31). Though he was an apostle, with authority and competence from Christ to proclaim the truth of the gospel, the inhabitants of Thessalonica did not possess the values or the categories of thought that would have given Paul either legitimate position power or expert power among them. In this context it is interesting to observe what kind of social process Paul used to provide a platform for his influence. This process is reflected in 1 Thessalonians 2:1-12, where Paul describes his entrance (τὴν εἴσοδον ἡμῶν) into Thessalonica and his ministry among those who accepted his message.

In 1 Thessalonians 2:3-5 Paul emphasizes the integrity with which he and his coworkers approached their task. They did not seek to deceive their hearers, nor did they flatter them in an attempt to benefit from them materially. In contrast, they sacrificed their own right to support, while engaging in tiresome labour, so as to avoid placing any financial burden on the new believers (1 Thess 2:6-9). Using imagery from the family,<sup>16</sup> Paul emphasizes his tender care for the Thessalonian believers in their material need (1 Thess 2:7-9), as well as his pastoral care and moral instruction. The latter included exhorting, encouraging and charging them "to live lives worthy of God" (παρακαλοῦντες ὑμᾶς καὶ παραμυθούμενοι καὶ μαρτυρούμενοι εἰς τὸ περιπατεῖν ὑμᾶς ἀξίως τοῦ θεοῦ; 1 Thess 2:10-12). In terms of the social process involved, it can be observed that Paul focussed on creating trust and setting an example. Paul acknowledges apostolic prerogatives (1 Thess 2:6-7), but makes no mention of an attempt to inculcate values that are associated with legitimate position power (i.e. he does not emphasize his apostolic authority).<sup>17</sup> One should be careful not to extrapolate this last observation too far, but it does seem as though Paul was seeking to create the kind of relationship in which referent and informational power, rather than legitimate (position) power, would be most effective.

*Influence.* The exercise of influence can be considered in a little more detail. Firstly, it can be observed that Paul and his coworkers certainly did seek to exercise influence in the Thessalonian church, both during their sojourn in the city and afterwards through visits and letters. Before leaving the city they exhorted, encouraged and charged the believers to walk in a manner worthy of God (1 Thess 2:12). After leaving, Paul testifies of a strong desire to return to Thessalonica to see the believers face to face (1 Thess 2:17-18). When this was not possible, Timothy was sent back to find out about their faith and to strengthen them (1 Thess 3:1-6). Even after receiving Timothy's positive report, Paul still prayed earnestly that God would allow him to see the Thessalonians to supply what was lacking in their faith (1 Thess 3:10-11). Finally, the letter itself was a means of exercising influence among the believers in Thessalonica.

<sup>16</sup> On the family imagery in 1 Thessalonians 2:1-12, see Van Rensburg (1986) and Weima (2002).

<sup>17</sup> The metaphor of the father may seem to point to legitimate position power. However, the details at this point — including personal example (1 Thess 2:10) and directing the converts to "God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory" (2:12) — point more to referent power and spiritual power. Ehrensperger (2007:117-136) also argues that, for Paul, parental images have their origin in Jewish customs and are associated with a teaching role (such as is found in the Jewish wisdom literature). This contrasts with Graeco-Roman customs where the authority of the *paterfamilias* is stronger.

Secondly, there were *a number of focal points* for Paul's influence in the church. The first and most important focal point was their faith. This is to be expected in the light of Paul's understanding of his own ministry (see sections 3.4.1 and 3.4.2, and also section 6.2.3 above), and is confirmed by the actual content of 1 Thessalonians.<sup>18</sup> Within the context of faith, Paul also sought to influence the believers' behaviour, especially regarding ethical matters: 4:1-12 constitute an appeal for holy living. Another focal point of influence was their mutual relationships. This is inherent in the exhortation to brotherly love (1 Thess 4:9-10), but is dealt with at greater length in 5:12-15. What is noteworthy here is that the work of pastoral care is not restricted to Paul and his coworkers, nor even to a select group within the church. This means that every member had a part to play in helping the group (i.e. the church) to accomplish its shared aims.<sup>19</sup> Leadership was therefore not a matter of doing the work on behalf of the group, but of helping all members to contribute to the combined effort. Another important focal point of influence was the development of a leadership role within the church. This is discussed more fully below (section 6.4), but it should be observed at this point that Paul expected the church to acknowledge, "to esteem . . . highly in love" those who provided pastoral care to their fellow believers (1 Thess 5:12-13). To speak of a formal leadership office at this stage of the church's life would be anachronistic as there is no evidence of a formal process of appointment, but it cannot be doubted that Paul was nurturing a leadership role based on the work that certain members were already engaged in (cf. section 4.2.2 above).

Thirdly, it is important to consider what evidence this letter gives for the *forms of influence, or bases of power*, that Paul used in his dealings with the Thessalonian church. The following observations may be made:

- Spiritual power has first place. This form of power is reflected in 1 Thessalonians 1:5-6 (cf. discussion in section 5.3.4 above), and Paul's emphasis on his and his coworkers' integrity before God in 2:4-5 reinforces its importance.
- I noted above, in the discussion of the social process, that Paul and his coworkers laboured to demonstrate their love and concern for the Thessalonian believers, and that this would create trust, thus enhancing their referent power — i.e. the Thessalonians would have a sense of shared identity with the missionaries and would desire to enhance their closeness to them. That this did in fact happen is seen in Timothy's report, when he brought news that the Thessalonians remembered the missionaries kindly and longed to see them (1 Thess 3:6).
- The many ethical instructions and commands in the letter (e.g. 1 Thess 2:12; 4:1-12,18; 5:6,11-23) pose an interesting question in relation to the bases of power. Commands and instructions would naturally be associated with legitimate position power, since a person in a position of authority has the right to issue commands to those who are under his authority. Yet there is no evidence in the letter that Paul tried to establish his own authority as the basis for issuing these commands. More in evidence are explanations as to why these commands conform to Christian tradition,<sup>20</sup> to God's will, and to the lifestyle which befits those whom God has destined for salvation (e.g. 1 Thess 2:12; 4:7,8; 5:4-9). Where the

<sup>18</sup> In addition to 1 Thessalonians 3, which largely concerns the believers' faith, the letter opens with a statement implying that faith is the source of their "labour" (1 Thess 1:3), and towards the end they are exhorted to put on the breastplate of faith and love (1 Thess 5:8).

<sup>19</sup> Cf. the comments on mutual ministry on page 114 above.

<sup>20</sup> Note 1 Thessalonians 4:1: "as you received (παρελάβετε) from us how you ought to walk", where παρελάβετε refers to the reception of tradition (Bruce 1982:78-79).

appeal is to legitimate power, it is to God's legitimate power rather than to Paul's.<sup>21</sup> From Paul's perspective the appeal is more to informational power and, to some extent, to expert power (since, as an apostle, he had access to knowledge and information that had been revealed to him by the Lord<sup>22</sup>).

### 6.3.2 Galatians

There are a number of ways in which the Letter to the Galatians differs from Paul's correspondence with the Thessalonians and the Corinthians. Galatians was written not to one church in a city, but to a number of churches in a region (Gal 1:2). It contains no personal greetings and seems less involved in the daily affairs of the addressees than the Letters to the Thessalonians and the Corinthians. It is occupied almost entirely with one particular issue that distressed Paul deeply and, as far as he was concerned, threatened the very salvation of the Galatian converts.<sup>23</sup> Thus, from a leadership point of view, the letter largely gives insight into Paul's involvement in a group of churches in a situation where their most fundamental beliefs were being undermined through the influence of rival teachers; more general issues are only touched on very briefly.

Up to the late 1900's there was general agreement regarding the key issue addressed by Paul in Galatians. It was widely accepted that the churches had been confronted by teaching which added observance of the Old Testament law to the necessity of faith in Christ, thus compromising the doctrine of justification through faith alone (cf. Bruce 1990:19-23). However, with the rise of the "new perspective on Paul" in the late 1900's, a number of scholars have argued that the doctrine of justification through faith was read into the letter by post-Reformation exegesis, and that the real problem with the "works of the law" opposed by Paul in Galatians was that Jewish Christians were trying to impose Jewish "identity markers" on Gentile Christians.<sup>24</sup> Silva (2004) has demonstrated that this view represents a false dichotomy: although the traditional interpretation did not pay sufficient attention to the issue of ethnic identity, it is quite wrong to imagine that Paul was unconcerned about justification through faith as opposed to works (see esp. Gal 2:16; 3:2,5-6,10-12).<sup>25</sup> This point is significant in the context of the present study in which I have argued throughout that one of Paul's central concerns was the faith of those to whom he ministered.

*Group context.* In analysing Paul's leadership in Galatians, it is evident that the group context is different from that of 1 Thessalonians. Paul was not dealing with one church, which would have been a group in the sense defined, but with a number of churches (Gal 1:2). Considering Paul's understanding of the local church it may be accepted that each church would have been a group, since the members were interdependent and shared common goals within the local church context. These goals would have been shared by the churches together (since Paul's own goals remained constant across the different churches that he worked with — cf. sections 3.3 and 3.4 above). The fact that Paul can address all the churches together, and that they were subject to similar influences from the rival teachers, suggests a measure of interdependence between them, although this was certainly much weaker than the influence within each church.

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<sup>21</sup> Cf. 1 Thessalonians 4:2,8: "For you know what instructions we gave you through the Lord Jesus. . . . Therefore whoever disregards this, disregards not man but God, who gives his Holy Spirit to you."

<sup>22</sup> Cf. section 3.2.1 above on apostleship.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Galatians 5:2-4: "if you accept circumcision, Christ will be of no advantage to you. . . . you who would be justified by the law; you have fallen away from grace."

<sup>24</sup> See Silva (2004) for references to the literature and a discussion of the various viewpoints.

<sup>25</sup> Longenecker (1998:179-183) also cautions against this false dichotomy.

*Social process.* The question of the social process between Paul and the Galatian churches is noteworthy. According to Galatians 4:13-15, Paul first preached to them because of a bodily ailment and was well-received by them. Although it is virtually impossible to know exactly what the circumstances were and what the bodily ailment was,<sup>26</sup> there is an indication that a warm and mutually trusting relationship developed between Paul and the Galatians.<sup>27</sup> This would have provided a solid basis for many kinds of influence on Paul's part. However, the relationship was severely disrupted after the activity of the rival teachers, so much so that Paul asks, "Have I then become your enemy by telling you the truth?" (Gal 4:16). Although it would seem likely that the legitimacy of Paul's apostleship had been called into question (Bruce 1990:72; Longenecker 1990:xcvi), it is significant that Paul doesn't mount any detailed argument in defence of his apostleship. Rather than approaching the matter from the perspective of his own authority, he approaches it on the basis of a reasoned argument.<sup>28</sup>

*Aims.* Paul's aim for the Galatians was their transformation into the image of Christ (Gal 4:19; 6:15). This aim is closely related to the eschatological emphasis of Galatians, both as it looks forward to the final end of the age (Gal 6:7-9), and even more as it celebrates the fact that the new age has already begun due to the coming of Christ (see, further, section 3.3.2 above). Paul's passionate concern for the Galatians' faith was closely related to this aim: he knew that it was only by the Spirit's power that they would experience this transformation, and that they would be cut off from that power if they pursued a course characterized by "the works of the law" (Gal 3:2-3; 5:16-25). His influence attempt in the letter was therefore sharply focussed on the aims he wanted to achieve — and which constituted the shared goals of the groups that he was addressing.

*Influence.* As in the case of the church in Thessalonica, Paul made strenuous efforts to influence the churches in Galatia in a situation which he believed was a threat to the most fundamental aspects of their Christian existence. The letter reveals how strongly he felt about the issues and how earnestly he endeavoured to recall them to the teaching which he had entrusted to them. Note the following rhetorical features:

- the expression of shock and horror where a prayer of thanksgiving is expected (1:6-7; DeSilva 2004:505);
- the strong condemnation of anyone who preaches another gospel ("let him be accursed" 1:8-9);
- the emphatic statement of how illogical it was to follow the new teaching ("O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you?" 3:1);
- Paul's metaphorical portrayal of himself as a mother in labour to express his compassion and concern: "my little children, for whom I am again in the anguish of childbirth until Christ is formed in you!" (4:19);
- the statement of how extreme would be the consequences of following the false teachers ("You are severed from Christ" 5:4);

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Bruce (1990:208-211); Longenecker (1990:190-193).

<sup>27</sup> Galatians 4:14-15: "and though my condition was a trial to you, you did not scorn or despise me, but received me as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus. . . . For I testify to you that, if possible, you would have gouged out your eyes and given them to me."

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Dunn (2006:572-574). See further below on the bases of power.

- the excoriating indictment of the false teachers in 5:12: "I wish those who unsettle you would emasculate themselves!"<sup>29</sup>

There can be no doubt that Paul sought to exercise influence!

The Galatians' belief system — namely their reliance on faith in Christ alone without any reliance on the "works of the law" — is the overwhelmingly *dominant focal point* of Paul's influence attempt. Virtually the whole letter is occupied with this matter. However, *other focal points* are not absent. Paul is concerned with the Galatians' behaviour (e.g. Gal 5:16-24), although that is addressed more as a corollary of the main issue than as an issue in itself. He is also concerned to promote mutual edification amongst the believers (Gal 6:1-5). In Galatians 6:5, Paul exhorts those who receive instruction to "share all good things with the one who teaches". This statement indicates that there was a teaching/leadership role in the churches, and that Paul wanted to encourage that role.

Galatians is also revealing for what it shows about the *bases of power* that Paul used. Considering the seriousness of the letter's central issue, the apparent attack on Paul's apostolic status by the false teachers, and his opening assertion that he was an apostle "not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father" (Gal 1:1), one might expect that Paul's approach would be to prove his apostolic status and to use that status to recall the Galatians to the faith they were now doubting. This kind of approach would have emphasized legitimate position power (i.e. authority). Yet the approach that we find in Galatians 1-2 is rather different. Paul was not so much concerned with defending his apostleship as he was with defending the divine origin of the gospel. The biographical details of Galatians 1:11-24, which recall his conversion and call through God's supernatural intervention on the Road to Damascus, are constructed in such a way as to prove the assertion of 1:11: "For I would have you know, brothers, that the gospel that was preached by me is not man's gospel." The authority of angels and apostles was subject to the authority of the gospel (Gal 1:8; cf. Dunn 2006:572-574). Thus the whole letter up to 4:11 is a carefully reasoned argument which aims to explain the historical and theological facts relating to Paul's ministry of the gospel, the meaning of the gospel, and why the gospel of faith apart from the works of the law is the only position consistent with the (Old Testament) Scriptures. All of this is far more an exercise of informational power than it is of legitimate power. Where Paul does appeal to legitimate power (authority) it is to the authority of the Scripture (3:7-4:7). Inasmuch as Paul's arguments sought to establish the faith of the Galatians, they were the necessary precursor to the exercise of spiritual power; and to the extent that Paul relied on the Spirit to make his arguments effective he was actually exercising spiritual power.<sup>30</sup>

There is an interesting example of what might be called the exercise of coercive and reward power on behalf of a third party (namely God) in Galatians 6:7-9.<sup>31</sup> Although Paul seeks to motivate his hearers by reminding them of the final judgement, it is not as though he tries to change their behaviour simply through coercion. Rather, he uses this as a reminder that they must sow to the Spirit (another way of saying that they must embrace and live by the gospel) so that the Spirit may produce in them the fruit that leads to eternal life. Thus Paul does not use coercive power in an attempt to frighten people into obedience, but to make them aware of the absolute necessity of

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Dunn's (2006:574, n.41) comment on this verse: "the crudity of 5.12 is unsurpassed elsewhere [in Paul]."

<sup>30</sup> Although Paul does not actually state in Galatians that he is relying on the Spirit to grant understanding to his hearers, it can be inferred from his other letters that this is the case (e.g. 1 Cor 2; 2 Cor 3).

<sup>31</sup> "7 Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. <sup>8</sup> For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. <sup>9</sup> And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up" (Gal 6:7-9).

embracing the gospel — which provides both the power for obedience and the assurance of eternal life.

### 6.3.3 1 & 2 Corinthians

The history of Paul's relationship and correspondence with the church in Corinth involves many complex issues over which there is little scholarly agreement.<sup>32</sup> Fortunately it is not necessary to resolve these issues in order to make some meaningful deductions from the letters regarding Paul's exercise of leadership. I will, however, use the following construction of the circumstances related to the two canonical letters to the Corinthians:<sup>33</sup>

1. Paul spent about 18 months in Corinth during which time the church was gathered (Acts 18:1-17).
2. After leaving Corinth, Paul returned to Palestine and then settled in Ephesus for an extended period of two to three years (Acts 19:10; 20:31).
3. During this time problems developed in the Corinthian church — including divisions, immorality, and other issues dealt with in 1 Corinthians. Paul was informed of the situation and wrote 1 Corinthians to address it. This was his second letter to the church, the first being the one referred to in 1 Corinthians 5:9.
4. After the sending (and probably also the receipt) of 1 Corinthians, the situation in the church deteriorated drastically, necessitating an immediate visit from Paul (contrary to the plans outlined in 1 Cor 16:5-8). This visit is termed a "painful visit" in 2 Corinthians 2:1. Harris's (2005:59) suggestion that the visit was painful because of the need to rebuke certain people guilty of immorality (cf. 2 Cor 12:20-13:2) seems the most plausible.
5. After Paul had returned to Ephesus, new trouble broke out in Corinth, this time occasioned by direct opposition to Paul from a member of the Corinthian church (2 Cor 2:5-10; Harris 2005:59,227). It is possible that, by this time, the church had been infiltrated by the Jewish-Christian intruders whom Paul has in view in parts of 2 Corinthians, and that they had instigated the opposition (cf. Barentsen 2011:114-115).
6. In an attempt to address these problems, Paul wrote the "severe letter" (2 Cor 2:3-4; 7:8-9) and sent Titus to Corinth to deliver it (2 Cor 7:7).
7. Paul left Ephesus and met up with Titus in Macedonia. He was overjoyed to discover that his severe letter had led to repentance and that the Corinthians were apparently united in their love for him and their commitment to follow his leadership (2 Cor 2:6-8; 7:7).
8. If the intruders were not already active in Corinth by the time Paul wrote the severe letter, they were a significant influence by the time 2 Corinthians was written.
9. Paul wrote 2 Corinthians from Macedonia, either as a unit or as a two-part letter (2 Cor 1-9 and 2 Cor 10-13) which was, nevertheless, sent with Titus as a single letter. Scholars who follow the two-part hypothesis note that Paul's tone in chapters 10-13 is very different from that in chapters 1-9, and that, in the later chapters, he seems to be writing into a situation in which his apostleship was once again under attack. This could be explained by the acquisition of new information to the effect that the situation in Corinth

<sup>32</sup> See, e.g. Barnett (1997:15-40) and Harris (2005:1-105) for discussions and bibliographies.

<sup>33</sup> See Hemer (2001:251-261), Harris (2005:54-105), and Van Bruggen (2005:284-286,298-30) for more detailed discussion and dating.

had once more deteriorated. The weaknesses of this view are (a) that there is no explicit indication in the letter that Paul had received such information; and (b) that, if the situation really had deteriorated so badly, the first nine chapters would be of questionable relevance since they assumed a different situation for the readers. Scholars who see the letter as a unit explain the change in tone in terms of rhetorical strategy (Barnett 1997:17-23; Barentsen 2011:133, esp. n.54). Neither solution is without its difficulties, but Paul's approach in chapters 10-13 does seem to indicate that the situation he is grappling with is different from what he envisages in chapters 1-9.<sup>34</sup> Why then were those chapters not discarded? A possible answer is that they contained much material that was still relevant to the church, such as the description of gospel ministry (2 Cor 2:14-7:1) and the instructions for the collection (2 Cor 7-8); indeed, it is difficult to imagine Paul discarding these passages which form the bulk of 2 Corinthians 1-9 (Carson 1996:14-15). I will therefore accept the two-part view for the present purposes.

Although there is a measure of uncertainty regarding some elements in this construction, it does show that Paul's relationship with the Corinthian church was complicated, challenging and conflict-ridden. Barentsen (2011:116) comments on the situation reflected in 2 Corinthians: "The stakes were high since Paul had almost lost his position as apostolic leader in Corinth so that the entire Corinthian congregation might have been lost as hub in Paul's Aegean network." Paul's leadership was thus tested to the limit in his interaction with this church. It is not possible to provide a complete analysis of Paul's leadership in 1 & 2 Corinthians here; I will simply highlight some of the most prominent features.

*Group context.* As in the case of Thessalonica, the church in Corinth was a group in the sense defined above. It was an identifiable unit (as shown by the greetings in 1 Cor 1:2 and 2 Cor 1:1) and the members were certainly interdependent with common goals (see next paragraph). The body metaphor of 1 Corinthians 12 indicates not just a casual, but a deep organic interdependence amongst the members, as do Paul's continual reminders that believers should consider the effects of their actions on their brothers and sisters (e.g. 1 Cor 8:10-13). The passages dealing with church discipline (1 Cor 5; 2 Cor 2:1-11), the unhappiness surrounding the Lord's Supper (1 Cor 11:17-34), the divisions (1 Cor 1:10-4:21), and the contests surrounding "spiritual gifts" (1 Cor 12-14) all provide examples of how profoundly the believers in Corinth influenced one another, for good or for ill.

*Aims.* Paul's aims for the church in Corinth are discussed in some detail in sections 3.3.3 and 3.3.4 above. It is shown there that the way Paul dealt with a range of pastoral issues reflected his concern that the Corinthian believers should appear "guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor 1:8). Further, it was found that the building up of the church in mutual edification (see esp. 1 Cor 3; 12) was also one of Paul's central aims. These two aims are in absolute harmony, since believers will grow in holiness as they edify one another. From a leadership perspective the mutual edification of the church also becomes one of the focal points of influence through which Paul helps the group (i.e. the church) to achieve its common goals.

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<sup>34</sup> Contrast "[Titus] told us of your longing, your mourning, your zeal for me. . . . I have complete confidence in you" (2 Cor 6:7,16) with "For if someone comes and proclaims another Jesus than the one we proclaimed, or if you receive a different spirit from the one you received, or a different gospel from the one you accepted, you submit to it readily enough" (2 Cor 11:4) and "I have been a fool! You forced me to it. Indeed you should have been the ones commending me, for I am not at all inferior to these super-apostles, even though I am nothing" (2 Cor 12:11).

*Social process.* Given the complex ebbs and flows in Paul's relationship with the church in Corinth, it may be expected that the social processes involved in his exercise of leadership were similarly complex, especially after the writing of 1 Corinthians.<sup>35</sup> Some of the processes that can be identified are:

- When Paul first arrived in Corinth he would have been confronted with a similar situation to what he encountered in Thessalonica (see section 6.3.1 above): his hearers simply lacked the categories of thought by which they could make sense of his message (1 Cor 1:18-31). His response was not to adapt his message to the thought patterns and value system of their culture, but to resolve on a "demonstration of the Spirit and of power" (1 Cor 2:4).
- The situation which prevailed at the writing of 1 Corinthians reveals a measure of stability in the relationship. The fact that the church as a whole was able to send a delegation to Paul (1 Cor 16:17) and to ask Paul's advice on a number of issues<sup>36</sup> indicates that the Corinthians were disposed to accept his influence. However, the existence of factions, only one of which identified itself with Paul (1 Cor 1:12), does suggest that Paul's position was not completely secure, and he did offer something of an apology for his primary leadership role in the church in 4:15.<sup>37</sup> Nevertheless, for the most part Paul is able to assume that the Corinthians will give him a receptive hearing — 1 Corinthians doesn't contain any extensive defence of Paul's leadership position in relation to the church.<sup>38</sup>
- The social process surrounding the painful visit, severe letter and 2 Corinthians is highly complex and in many respects uncertain. Some details can however be identified. It appears from 2 Corinthians 2:5-11; 7:8-13 that Paul made strenuous efforts to regain the respect and trust of the church when he was openly challenged. Though he was nervous about potential negative responses, he wrote the severe letter calling the church to repentance (2 Cor 7:8,11). When (according to the construction given above) opposition broke out again during the writing of 2 Corinthians, he marshalled a whole range of arguments to recapture the Corinthians' acceptance of his apostolic leadership role (see esp. 2 Cor 11:16-12:13).<sup>39</sup> All of this indicates that, although Paul was an apostle and had been commissioned by the Lord Jesus himself, he could not in practice simply command people to obey him. Where his authority and leadership were questioned he sometimes had to use difficult and emotionally painful processes to regain trust, even in a church which he himself had gathered and nurtured. His willingness to suffer weakness and insult is astounding, yet that willingness reveals one of the most profound aspects of his ministry: its true power is the power of Christ, which is supremely revealed in the weakness of his servants (2 Cor 12:9-10).

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<sup>35</sup> Using the Social Identity Model of Leadership, Barentsen (2011:75-140) has provided an extensive analysis of Paul's relationship with the Corinthian church. His analysis sheds much light on these social processes.

<sup>36</sup> As shown by the announcement, "Now concerning the matters about which you wrote ..." in 1 Corinthians 7:1; see also 8:1; 12:1.

<sup>37</sup> "For though you have countless guides in Christ, you do not have many fathers. For I became your father in Christ Jesus through the gospel" (1 Cor 4:15).

<sup>38</sup> Barentsen (2011:102,106-107) probably overemphasizes the extent to which Paul's influence was marginalized as a result of the divisions mentioned in 1 Corinthians 1:12.

<sup>39</sup> Although Barentsen (2011:117,128,132) argues that the Corinthians had already accepted Paul's leadership by the time he wrote 2 Corinthians, the arguments in 2 Corinthians 11:16-12:13 seem genuinely to be directed at a recovery of the Corinthians' trust in Paul as their apostle.

*Influence.* Paul's desire to influence the Christians in Corinth is prominent in all his correspondence with them. Throughout 1 Corinthians Paul addresses issues which he believed were important for them, whether he was asked for advice (e.g. 1 Cor 7:1; 8:1) or not (e.g. 1 Cor 1:11; 5:1). Especially significant is his refusal to be sidelined when false teachers had infiltrated the church. From a personal point of view it might have been much less painful for him simply to relinquish the church to those who so fiercely opposed him, yet his conscience would not allow him to do that. He had betrothed the church to Christ and could not look on idly while its members were drawn aside after a different gospel and a different Jesus (2 Cor 11:2-4).

There are many aspects of belief and life that could be considered *focal points of Paul's influence* in the Corinthian church. These would include relationships amongst believers (e.g. believers taking one another to court – 1 Cor 6); ethical behaviour (e.g. sexual purity – 1 Cor 5); theological convictions (e.g. the resurrection – 1 Cor 15); and the church's corporate action to discipline and restore offenders (e.g. 1 Cor 5; 2 Cor 2:5-11). Certainly, these were focal points of influence for Paul, but it is perhaps possible to identify a more fundamental issue that explains many of the others. That issue is the believers' understanding of their identity in Christ over against their identity as residents of a Graeco-Roman city. As Ehrensperger (2007:150) remarks:

The new members of the Christ-movement did need teaching and guidance concerning life in Christ. What it meant to be part of a movement which attributed its origins to one who had been crucified by the imperial power was not self-evident. It was not obvious that values which were the opposite of the Graeco-Roman imperial standard, such as being weak, foolish, poor, working with one's own hands, etc. should be significant.

Barentsen's (2011:78-86,91-95,119-120) analysis also shows how many of the Corinthian church's problems, including their readiness to follow the interlopers of 2 Corinthians, can be traced to their inability to understand how their Christian identity and value system should be expressed in a society which prized wealth, status, honour-competition and human acclaim. Without Paul's intervention they would not have been able to resolve the problems that stemmed from the value system into which they were acculturated, yet which was so hostile to Christian discipleship. The local leaders had not yet grasped the Christian way of thinking sufficiently to guide the community through these challenges.

Another important focal point for Paul was to guide and structure the community's corporate life. In contrast to their societal values of status and competition, Paul wanted them to love one another (1 Cor 13) and to recognize that each member had an important contribution to make to the life of the group (1 Cor 12; see section 5.4.1 above). This did not mean that distinct roles were obliterated; the body metaphor itself shows that different members have different contributions to make (see esp. 1 Cor 12:28). As was the case in Thessalonica (1 Thess 5:12-13), Paul encouraged the emergence of a leadership role in Corinth (1 Cor 12:28; 16:15-16).

In terms of the *bases of power*, perhaps the most striking observation regarding 1 Corinthians is the dominance of informational power. On every issue that Paul touches he is careful to explain why he recommends a particular belief or course of action. Divisions are to be avoided because the church belongs to God, not to human teachers, and God is the one who builds up the church (1 Cor 1:10-17; 3:10-16); the man guilty of immorality must be disciplined "so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord" (1 Cor 5:5); idolatry must be avoided because "you cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons" (1 Cor 10:21). As Dunn (2006:575) observes with reference to 1 Corinthians 15, one of Paul's most remarkable responses to the Corinthians' problems is the way "he *argues* against what he regards as a false view on something as crucial as the resurrection from the dead rather than simply condemning it out of hand" (original emphasis). Paul was prepared to make

authoritative pronouncements (e.g. 1 Cor 5:3-5), but he always backed them up with careful reasoning and a sensitivity to the pastoral context (Barentsen 2011:99).

There were good reasons for this emphasis on informational power. Paul knew very well that the Corinthians were bombarded with temptations to conduct their lives both individually and corporately according to the value system of their culture rather than the value system of the gospel. It would not help for them to be dependent on him — either through expert power or legitimate position power (i.e. authority), or for that matter coercive or reward power — to direct their responses to each and every temptation. In the first place, there was a limited number of issues that Paul could address directly, and in the second place his contact with the church was very restricted. Thus it was essential that they become less dependent on Paul's guidance by internalizing the value system of Christ and his gospel. Out of the six main forms of social power identified by French and Raven, it is informational power which leads to socially independent change (see section 6.2.2 above). Paul recognized the need, while the Corinthian believers were still coming to grips with the implications of their newfound faith, to remain involved in the church (hence his desire to exercise ongoing influence there — see above in this section), but the way he dealt with the issues shows that he wanted to lead them towards self-sufficiency in Christ.

Spiritual power is also prominent in the Corinthian Letters, and it is closely linked to informational power as Paul exercised it. The arguments which Paul used with the Corinthians were characterized by wisdom, though not the "wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age" (1 Cor 2:6). Paul's appeals were all carefully reasoned, but they depended on assumptions that defied human logic and even human decency, being rooted in the idea that a crucified criminal was actually Lord and Christ. He categorically refused to relinquish those assumptions, or to develop a line of reasoning that would be more congenial to Graeco-Roman values (1 Cor 2:1-5).<sup>40</sup> But this refusal meant that Paul had to cast himself upon the supernatural work of the Spirit in the lives of those who heard the gospel (1 Cor 2:6-16). In terms of the definition on page 131 above, Paul was committed to the use of spiritual power.

This dependence on spiritual power is evident throughout 1 & 2 Corinthians. It is seen by the frequent references to Christ's death: the church must discipline the immoral brother because "Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed" (1 Cor 5:7); those with no qualms about eating food offered to idols must be prepared to refrain for the sake of "the brother for whom Christ died" (1 Cor 8:11). In 2 Corinthians, the ministry which Paul defends is one that proclaims the lordship of Christ and a stance on the part of his servants which imitates Jesus' own humility and sacrifice: "For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake" (2 Cor 4:5). Thus, Paul was prepared to be "always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies" (2 Cor 4:10). The false teachers, by contrast, elevated themselves as "super-apostles" who boasted in their power and authority (2 Cor 11:5,20). It is no wonder that Paul accused them of preaching "another Jesus" (2 Cor 11:4). In the light of this clash of value systems, and of the gospel's "illogical" assumptions, it is no wonder that Paul says of the Corinthians who had put their faith in the crucified Christ that they were his "letter of recommendation . . . written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God" (2 Cor 3:3). The outworking of that faith remained an ongoing challenge, but it was a challenge which continually sent the Corinthians back to the cross — and Paul to the need for spiritual power.

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<sup>40</sup> This is one of the reasons why the false teachers of 2 Corinthians were able to get such a hold on the church (Barentsen 2011:119).

### 6.3.4 Romans

I restrict myself to some general comments regarding Paul's leadership as seen in the Book of Romans. One of the most noticeable features of the way Paul interacts with the believers in Rome is his cautiousness when speaking about possible ministry there. Although he considers himself obligated to "Greeks and to barbarians" — which must have included the people of Rome — and although he is eager to preach the gospel there and to impart some spiritual gift, he is careful to emphasize the mutuality of the encounter: "that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine" (Rom 1:11-15). Though driven by his apostolic commission, which did not exclude Rome, Paul seemed to be aware that appropriate relationships had to be cultivated as a foundation to effective ministry in the city.<sup>41</sup> This again highlights the importance of social processes in the exercise of effective leadership.

The Letter to the Romans itself can be regarded as an exercise of leadership (bearing in mind the caution just noted), inasmuch as Paul seeks through the letter to influence the church towards the accomplishment of its shared objectives. Considering the carefully constructed arguments and the centrality of the gospel, spiritual power and informational power are once again prominent.

## 6.4 AN ANALYSIS OF LOCAL LEADERSHIP IN THE EARLY PAULINE CHURCHES

In this section I aim to develop an understanding of how local leaders contributed to the experience of leadership in their churches. My approach will be to interact with some of the relevant scholarly ideas and then to formulate conclusions regarding this local leadership. I deal firstly with the issues relating to social status and divine equipping, and then with the question of order and authority in the early Pauline churches.

### 6.4.1 Leadership, social status and divine equipping

I begin this section by repeating part of a quotation from Wanamaker (1990:194-195; cf. p.24 above) which is representative of the socio-historical construction of leadership that I critiqued in chapter 2:

In commenting on this verse Marshall . . . claims, "In the NT church honor is not given to people because of any qualities that they may possess due to birth or social status or natural gifts but only on the basis of the spiritual task to which they are called." This is a theological statement articulating an important principle, *but it bears little correlation with the actual situation prevailing in the Pauline churches based on the evidence available in the apostle's writings. . . .* It was the relatively better off and those with relatively higher social status who could afford to toil and care for the community at their own expense, serving as its patrons and protectors (emphasis added).

The italicized sentence is important in that it draws attention to the evidence of Paul's own letters. Wanamaker claims that a view of leadership which is based on spiritual equipping finds no support from the evidence, and that the socio-historical model of leadership does find such support. The results of this study make Wanamaker's claims difficult to support. The evidence presented in chapter 2 indicates that the socio-historical model of leadership employs historical constructions that depend on a number of insufficiently-tested hypotheses, and the connection between these historical constructions and the actual practice of leadership in the early Pauline churches is rather tenuous. The whole model depends essentially on the idea that household structures and patronage (which

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<sup>41</sup> Cf. Dunn (2006:579); Ehrensperger (2007:148-149) who comments that Paul's position in Rome was similar to that of Apollos in Corinth in that he wasn't a founding apostle of the church.

is seldom defined properly) determined the leadership structures of the churches; there is very little interaction with the communities' self-understanding of leadership. In this regard, chapters 3 to 5 above present a large body of data, much of which is ignored by the socio-historical model.<sup>42</sup>

Perhaps one of the reasons for paying relatively little attention to this evidence is that much of it is theological. This avoidance of theology seems to be a reaction against the earlier view that Pauline church order was determined by charismatic ministry and a lack of formal offices. Scholars who supported the idea of "charismatic order" often pitted theological concepts against sociological ones and insisted that the theological should take priority. Von Campenhausen (1969:58) provided a classic expression of this view with his statement that the church is not a sociological entity.<sup>43</sup> The "charismatic ministry" view has been rejected on the ground that it commits the "fallacy of idealism" — the fallacy of believing that social realities were completely determined by ideas — and scholars who support the socio-historical paradigm have been eager to avoid this fallacy (e.g. Campbell 2004:100-103).<sup>44</sup> However, the problem is not solved by eliminating theology from consideration. I pointed out on page 71, note 2 above that Holmberg (1978:206-207), who first cautioned against the idealistic fallacy in theories of church order, recognized that theological realities also needed to be considered; rejecting the idealistic fallacy should not lead one to commit the "materialistic fallacy" (to use Holmberg's terminology).

What is needed then is an account of local leadership in the early Pauline churches which reckons with all the evidence: the socio-historical context as well as the theological expositions of the Early Pauline Letters.<sup>45</sup> A proper understanding of the letters shows that they represent an intense engagement between the thought world of the gospel and that of Graeco-Roman society as the two collided in the historical existence of the Christian communities. This engagement is what needs to be understood, and that requires an understanding of the gospel, of Graeco-Romans society, and of the historical reality of the Christian communities. Where Von Campenhausen and others gave insufficient attention to the socio-historical realities, the newer paradigm has often ignored the role of the gospel. I would contend that both approaches have erred in their interpretations of both theology and social history. One cannot get the one right while ignoring the other since they are woven together (cf. Barentsen 2011:95); the one should be understood in terms of the other.

Bearing this perspective in mind, I now attempt to provide an account of local leadership in the early Pauline churches. To do this, I highlight relevant results from the previous chapters and then use

<sup>42</sup> I recognize that Paul's views should not be equated simplistically with the communities' self-understanding. The discussion in section 6.3 above shows that Paul's views were at times fiercely contested within the communities, often due to the influence of the surrounding culture and of other itinerant teachers. Nevertheless, Paul regarded his views as normative for the communities and sought to persuade them that this was the case. Such persuasion is of the essence of leadership. However, Paul's persuasion did not rest on dominance and manipulation but on rational argument, on the authority of Scripture and Christian traditions, and above all on the working of the Holy Spirit in his hearers. The fact that a number of leading individuals in the various churches can be regarded as Paul's coworkers shows that his views gained acceptance within the communities.

<sup>43</sup> "On this basis Paul develops the idea of the Spirit as the organising principle of the Christian congregation. There is no need for any fixed system with its rules and regulations and prohibitions. Paul's writings do as little to provide such things for the individual congregation as for the Church at large. The community is not viewed or understood as a sociological entity, and the Spirit which governs it does not act within the framework of a particular church order or constitution" (Von Campenhausen 1969:58).

<sup>44</sup> Chapple (1984:58) is correct to characterize Von Campenhausen's view as ecclesiological docetism.

<sup>45</sup> Barentsen (2011:30-31,75) also recognizes this need and makes it one of his main aims to integrate social and ideological factors. He seeks to do this using the social identity model of leadership.

some of the theoretical perspectives on leadership from section 6.2 above to give order and coherence to the New Testament data.

First, a comment on the socio-historical context. I argued in chapter 2 that the prevalent socio-historical leadership paradigm is based on a stark binary classification of the Pauline believers' social status, and that this classification is untenable in the light of more recent research (see esp. section 2.3.1). The research of Friesen and Longenecker indicates that the Pauline Christians probably ranged from ES4 to ES7, with the centre of gravity being at ES5. Although gatherings could include a wide range of socio-economic statuses (cf. 1 Cor 11:17-34), there would also have been a number of people of similar status in many, if not most of the gatherings. This makes the idea of one dominant patron unlikely.

Second, the direct evidence for local leadership in Paul's Early Letters is found chiefly in five passages:

1. 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13: "<sup>12</sup> We ask you, brothers, to respect those who labor among you and are over you [or care for you] in the Lord and admonish you, <sup>13</sup> and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work." This passage is discussed in some detail in section 4.2.2 above where the similarity between their work and Paul's is noted.
2. 1 Corinthians 16:15-18: "<sup>15</sup> Now I urge you, brothers — you know that the household of Stephanas were the first converts in Achaia, and that they have devoted themselves to the service of the saints — <sup>16</sup> be subject to such as these, and to every fellow worker and laborer. <sup>17</sup> I rejoice at the coming of Stephanas and Fortunatus and Achaicus, because they have made up for your absence, <sup>18</sup> for they refreshed my spirit as well as yours. Give recognition to such men." This passage and its connection to 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13 are noted in section 4.2.24.2.3 above where attention is drawn to the fact that those who must be recognized are people who share in the work — they are coworkers.
3. 1 Corinthians 12: In this passage Paul discusses the body of Christ at some length (see section 5.4.1 above). Two main truths are emphasized, namely (a) all members of the body are "spiritual", since they have been baptized by one Spirit into the one body (1 Cor 12:13); each one is able to contribute to the common good due to his experience of the working of God; (b) the working of God differs from one member to the other, so that the various members make different contributions. The purpose of the passage is not to provide teaching on leadership as such, but it does give evidence of local leadership in the Corinthian church since some of the functions mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12 can be correlated with a leadership role (e.g. prophets and teachers).
4. Romans 12:3-6: This passage has a similar thrust to 1 Corinthians 12 (see section 5.4.2 above). Once again, certain of the functions that are mentioned can be correlated with a leadership role. What is taught very clearly in Romans 12:3-6 is that members are able to exercise their functions because of the "grace (*χάρις*) given to them". This grace is analogous to the grace given to Paul for his apostolic ministry (see chapter 5 above).
5. Galatians 6:6: "One who is taught the word must share all good things with the one who teaches." This passage has been referred to at various places in the study up to this point. It demonstrates that there were people in the Galatian churches who devoted themselves to teaching their fellow believers, and that these teachers were not wealthy enough to support themselves.

To gain further insight into the functioning of local leadership, the role and function of the local leaders must be considered in relation to the rest of the members, to Paul, and to the issues that the

churches had to deal with. Since these leaders are not always mentioned explicitly, it is sometimes necessary to make inferences from less direct evidence. This calls for caution, but does not mean that it is impossible to reach valid conclusions. As in the analysis of Paul's leadership (section 6.3 above), I will use the definition of leadership from section 6.2.1 as a framework for analysing local leadership. My method here is not to *assume* that those whom I have called leaders exhibited all the elements of leadership as defined (since that would be an illegitimate use of a definition — tantamount to assuming what must be proved); rather, I use the categories provided by the definition as a means of ordering the evidence to gain insight into the nature of the local leadership in the churches.

*Group context.* The group context was the same for the local leaders as for Paul. Even though Paul was not permanently resident in the churches, he considered himself part of the group and acted as such.<sup>46</sup> The local leaders acted as permanent, resident members of their respective churches.

*Aims.* The aims of the churches were discussed in the analysis of Paul's leadership above. These aims, or shared goals, were essentially the same in all the churches and comprised (a) helping each believer to be experience the transforming power of the gospel so as to be prepared for the day of Christ; and (b) building up the churches into mature communities of believers who edify one another.<sup>47</sup> According to my working definition of leadership, a leader is one who influences group members towards the accomplishment of their common goals. The discussion on coworkers (chapter 4 above) argued that their role was very similar to that of Paul, especially in terms of providing pastoral care to help their fellow believers prepare for the Lord's return. The following paragraphs also show that the local leaders helped to order the life of the community (see on κυβερνήσεις below). Thus it is evident that the local leaders furthered both of their communities' shared objectives.

*Influence: (a) The fact of influence.* The passages referred to above (i.e. 1 Thess 5:12-13; 1 Cor 12; 16:15-18; Rom 12) show that local leaders did exercise influence within their communities. There is, however, much less direct evidence of their influence than there is of Paul's influence. The most likely reason for this is that they were not sufficiently grounded in their newfound faith to be able to guide the churches on their own. Paul wanted them to be properly established before he left the churches in their care (cf. Barentsen 2011:90-92; cf. p.141 above).

*b) The focal points of influence.* As coworkers of Paul, the local leaders would have shared most of his focal points of influence, which can be described in different ways. Perhaps it is most helpful, however, to work from the direct evidence regarding the local leaders. In 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13 the "leaders" are said to admonish their fellow believers, and this probably included both individual and corporate ministry (Chapple 1984:232-233). The focal point of this ministry was the believers' spiritual growth and transformation. Teaching is another aspect of the local leaders' ministry (cf. 1 Cor 12:28; Rom 12:7). As pointed out on page 110 above, this would have included "retaining, passing on, and interpreting the congregation's foundation traditions, including interpretation of the prophetic scriptures and the Jesus tradition" (Dunn 2006:582). The focal point in this case is knowledge and beliefs. These two focal points are individually oriented even when the ministry takes place in a corporate setting, but there is an indication that local leaders also influenced the corporate life of the churches. The word κυβερνήσεις in 1 Corinthians 12:28 probably refers to the function of providing guidance to the church community; it is a nautical term that refers to steering or piloting a ship and is used metaphorically in this verse (Thiselton 2000:1021-1022).

<sup>46</sup> Cf. Paul's statement that apostles were part of the church in Corinth (1 Cor 12:28).

<sup>47</sup> Although this second aspect was only discussed for the church in Corinth, it is true of the other churches as well.

Although the three focal points mentioned in the previous paragraph could be considered separately, there is a significant overlap between them. It is therefore helpful to think about some of the concrete situations in which the local leaders would have been called upon to exercise their ministry. First Thessalonians shows that they would have had to comfort believers in the loss of their loved ones while trying to explain whether Christians dying before Christ's return would still be raised from the dead (1 Thess 4:13-18). The local teachers in Galatia as well as Paul's coworkers in Corinth would have had to formulate a response to itinerant teachers who claimed a higher authority than Paul and presented a different view of Christ and the gospel. At Corinth the question of food offered to idols (1 Cor 8), the Christian approach to marriage and divorce (1 Cor 7), and the correct use of spiritual gifts (1 Cor 12-14) were all issues that must have exercised their thinking. Even after Paul had issued instructions to discipline the immoral man in 1 Corinthians 5, the church would have needed to decide on practical measures for implementing the instructions. Many of these concrete issues reflect the continual clash between the values of Christ and the values of Graeco-Roman society. The fact that Paul had to address all these issues himself shows that the local leaders were not always equipped to steer the churches through the rough and stormy waters they sometimes encountered (cf. Barentsen 2011:90-92). By the nature of the case, the issues addressed most prominently by Paul would have tended to be the ones that were beyond the competence of the local leaders. Nevertheless, the Early Letters provide insight into the challenges that would have confronted these leaders. Furthermore, the local leaders must have been active in the community in many ways that were not noted explicitly by Paul in his letters.

*c) The bases of power.* Paul and his coworkers shared the same aims, and their ministries were equally rooted in the gospel. It is therefore reasonable to infer that the bases of power which characterized Paul's ministry were also operative for his coworkers, including the local leaders. The analysis of the previous section (i.e. section 6.3) showed that the dominant forms of power used by Paul were informational power and spiritual power. The fact that local leaders were often cast in a teaching or admonishing role (e.g. Rom 12:7; 1 Cor 12:28; Gal 6:6; 1 Thess 5:12) tends to confirm the prominence of informational power for the local leaders as well. The centrality of the gospel in their ministry and the way they would have had to deal with the clash of values between their culture and the gospel also confirm the importance of spiritual power for them (cf. chapter 4 and section 6.3.3 above). This reality highlights the need for divine equipping, as discussed in chapter 5 above.

The centrality of spiritual power and divine equipping, and Paul's refusal to allow Graeco-Roman values to control the church, provide another reason to move away from the defined socio-historical model of leadership, whereby the wealthy church members are understood to be the ones who provided local leadership. To be sure, natural endowments including wealth do not need to be excluded from the *χάρις* that enables believers to serve one another — those who give generously (Rom 12:8) are a case in point. Yet it is hard to believe that gospel ministry — which sets forth a crucified Jesus, calls his disciples to reject the *φιλοτιμία* of their culture, and depends on the supernatural working of the Holy Spirit for its effectiveness — could have been tied to socio-economic status as either a necessary or a sufficient condition. There is no need to imagine that all the wealthier members who provided hospitality to the churches were excluded from leadership, but to insist that they alone provided it would conflict with the most fundamental beliefs and values of the Pauline communities.

*Social process.* The analysis of Paul's leadership (section 6.3 above) showed that Paul was very sensitive to the social processes involved in the exercise of leadership. One could therefore expect that he would also be sensitive to these processes in the exercise of local leadership. This is indeed the case. When Paul calls for recognition of the Thessalonian leaders it is on the basis that they have

been active in their congregation, “working hard, caring for and admonishing” their fellow believers. They are to be acknowledged and held in regard because of their work (1 Thess 5:12-13). Here is no arbitrary imposition of authority but rather the recognition of an organic, relational process that has been going on in the church for some time. Similarly, in 1 Corinthians 16:16 Paul calls for the believers to submit themselves (ὑποτάσσησθε) to every labouring coworker (παντὶ τῷ συνεργοῦντι καὶ κοπιῶντι). This reality of social process leads into the question of office and the appointment of leaders, to which I now turn.

#### 6.4.2 Charismatic order, office and the appointment of leaders

A final question needs to be considered in regard to the local leadership of the early Pauline churches, namely the appointment and recognition of the local leaders in the churches. It is convenient to introduce the issue by referring to the debate over the relationship between *charisma* and office in the New Testament churches.

As has already noted in this study (pp.2,90), a number of scholars up to about 1980 set charismatic order over against office and institutional ministry. Käsemann (1964:83) represents one of the most radical expressions of this position with his statement that “The Apostle’s theory of order is not a static one, resting on offices, institutions, ranks and dignities; in his view, authority resides only within the concrete act of ministry as it occurs, because it is only within this concrete act that the *Kyrios* announces his lordship and his presence.” Von Campenhausen (1969:58,64), too, has a radical view, stating that the church is not a sociological entity, but is utopian in terms of its social order. Schweizer (1963:102-103) does allow for formal acknowledgement of gifts by the church — even on a long-term basis — but insists that such acknowledgement does not turn the ministry into anything new; this type of order only “conforms itself afterwards to the ‘event’ of the Spirit”. Dunn (1997[1975]:286,291) believes that Stephanas and his household (1 Cor 16:16,18) exercised “the authority of a regular ministry, not just an isolated act”, but denies that there was any formal recognition of their ministry by the church; he echoes Käsemann’s view of authority: “In short, *authority was essentially charismatic authority: only he who ministered could have authority and that only in the actual exercise of his ministry*” (original emphasis).<sup>48</sup> Scholars who have adopted this view of the Pauline churches generally reject the authenticity of the Pastoral Epistles. The offices (overseer and deacon) found in the Pastorals are said to represent a declension from the pure form of church order introduced by Paul (e.g. Käsemann 1964:85-87).

Over against this view is the view of scholars who have sought to demonstrate that office and *charisma* are not incompatible; these would include Fung (1980); Ridderbos (1997:443-446) and Du Plooy (2005). Generally speaking, these scholars accept the authenticity of the Pastoral Epistles and approach the matter synchronically — seeking to present a synoptic view of church leadership over time. There is nevertheless a recognition that the leadership patterns of the Pauline churches developed over time (Fung 1980:211; Du Plooy 2005:563).

My own concern in this study is to understand the practice of leadership in the early Pauline churches. Although I concur generally with the second group of scholars regarding the authenticity of the Pastoral Epistles and the relationship between *charisma* and office, the developments which occurred after the writing of Romans are not my present concern. The questions which I seek to answer are: whether local leadership in the early Pauline churches should be understood in terms of formal office; how leaders came to exercise their functions; and how they were recognized by the churches. To answer these questions it is necessary to define the concept of office. The following five

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<sup>48</sup> Note that Dunn has substituted “actual exercise of ministry” for Käsemann’s “act of ministry as it occurs”. This is significant because it allows for an ongoing, “regular” ministry.

elements are identified by Brockhaus (1975:24, n.106) and command general agreement (Du Plooy 2005:562-563; Dunn 2006:566, n.3; Barentsen 2011:175):

1. the element of duration;<sup>49</sup>
2. the element of recognition by the community (a fixed description of the office is a clue to duration and recognition);
3. the incumbent is distinguished from the congregation in authority and status;
4. the orderly appointment of the incumbent;
5. the position is legally secured;

A sixth element is added by Dunn (2006:566, n.3) and Barentsen (2011:175), namely the possibility of transferring the office to another person (i.e. provision for succession). This description indicates that an office is an official position in an organization to which a person may be appointed. Such an appointment imparts authority and status to the incumbent. In Weber's terms this kind of appointment would be associated with legal-rational authority; in French & Raven's terms, with legitimate position power (see section 6.2.2 above).

The local leadership of the early Pauline churches can now be evaluated in terms of this description:

1. There is no indication that organizational positions exist independently of specific people. When ongoing functions are noted, it is in terms of the people performing those functions, not in terms of abstracted positions. E.g. "apostles, prophets, teachers" (1 Cor 12:28). The functions are considered as belonging to particular individuals: "Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us" (Rom 12:6).
2. Since Paul's Early Letters do not provide a description of organizational positions (offices) in the abstract, the element of recognition is also absent. 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13 and 1 Corinthians 16:16 do call for recognition of individuals, but it is not for the purpose of appointing them to a position. It is a recognition of the work that they are already doing.
3. Both 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13 and 1 Corinthians 16:15-16 (especially the latter) call for some sort of elevated status to be attributed to those who serve the churches through their teaching and admonishing. The reference to submission in 1 Corinthians 16:16 suggests a measure of authority. However, the investigations of this chapter indicate that legitimate position power was not a prominent part of Pauline leadership.
4. There is no evidence of formal appointment in Paul's Early Letters; such appointment is impossible until an actual office has been established. Scholars seem to be agreed on this point (e.g. Clarke 2008:85; Barentsen 2011:111). Rather than formal appointment, Paul's view at this stage of the churches' development is that anyone could take the initiative in ministering within the church. When it became evident that certain people were divinely equipped for the task, the churches were expected to acknowledge them and give them space to minister (see further below).<sup>50</sup>
5. There is no evidence of legal arrangements.
6. The idea of succession is not relevant in the absence of formal office.

<sup>49</sup> This means that the office exists independently of the incumbent (Barentsen 2011:175).

<sup>50</sup> Note especially 1 Corinthians 16:15-16 "they devoted themselves to the service of the saints . . . be subject to such as these and to every fellow worker and laborer" (emphasis added).

This analysis indicates that office (as generally understood) is not a suitable category for describing local leadership in the early Pauline churches.

What, then, can be said positively about the churches' recognition of local leaders? This discussion highlights the value of the theoretical perspectives which I have employed in this chapter. When the issue is approached primarily using the categories of *charisma*, office and authority it is difficult to go much beyond the conclusions of Schweizer and Dunn which acknowledge the reality of regular ministry but deny its official character.

However, the theoretical perspectives which I developed in section 6.2 above provide for a broader and richer understanding of leadership than the concepts of office and authority. Instead of focussing on position, the emphasis falls on relationships, social processes and different ways in which people influence one another. The previous section (6.4.1 above) explored some dimensions of the influence exerted by Paul's coworkers in the churches. I concluded that these local leaders exercised primarily informational and spiritual power; their goal was to help their fellow believers to follow Christ ever more faithfully in the context of a society whose value system was in many respects at odds with the gospel. Acknowledging and submitting to such leaders would have meant recognizing that God by his supernatural grace had equipped them to guide the community; it would have meant giving them space to exercise influence. In practical terms the churches needed to provide opportunities for people who were evidently gifted by God for leadership to teach and guide them in their Christian walk (as individuals and as communities); they needed to take that teaching seriously, but also to test it (1 Thess 5:21), and together as the body of Christ to seek the mind and will of their Lord and Saviour. This whole process bears some resemblance to the "emergent coordination" referred to on page 123 above.

## 6.5 CONCLUSION

In the foregoing discussion I have used theoretical insights on leadership and social power to analyse the phenomenon of leadership in the early Pauline churches. The theoretical perspectives which I chose proved to be broad enough to accommodate the New Testament data on leadership. In its published form the French/Raven theory of social power was not adequate to accommodate all the data, particularly the data pertaining to spiritual influence. However, the theory does provide conceptual categories that help to understand the processes of influence within the early Pauline churches and it is open-ended enough to allow for the addition of "spiritual power" as an additional basis of influence.

When Paul's own leadership is analysed it can be seen that he definitely did exercise leadership in his communities — according to the definition of leadership which has been adopted for this study. The categories provided by the definition of leadership and the French/Raven theory of social power (with the addition of spiritual power), give much insight into Paul's exercise of leadership.

Instead of focussing on position and authority, as traditional analyses have tended to do, it has been possible to gain greater insight into the leadership processes at work between Paul and his communities. The analysis shows that Paul was continually dealing with complex social processes, and that he had to handle his relationships with great care in order to ensure the success of his leadership. Though it may have been tempting to appeal to his apostolic authority (legitimate position power) to influence his converts towards a particular course of action, he continually relied on spiritual power and informational power, mentioning his apostolic authority in passing but not using it as a motivation (1 Thess 2:7).

He taught with great patience, carefully explaining the reasons for his appeals, and relied on the Holy Spirit to reveal Christ and persuade his hearers of the important truths that would make his

arguments cogent and compelling. In this he was committed to the gospel as the power of God for the salvation of all who believe. His whole approach exemplifies the meekness and gentleness of Christ as he sought to nurture and encourage the churches rather than dominating them. He was willing to carry "in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested" (2 Cor 4:10). Paul knew how important it was to exemplify this value system which was both foreign to the world of his day and essential for believers to internalize and live by.

Paul's Early Letters also provide evidence of local leadership. At this stage of the churches' development there is no evidence for formal offices but Paul did encourage the emergence of a leadership/ministry role. Local leaders demonstrated the fact of their divine equipping by working hard in the task of teaching and admonishing the congregation. The congregation was expected to respond by giving them opportunities to teach and guide. The church needed to take their teaching seriously without accepting it uncritically. As Paul's coworkers the local leaders shared his aims and methods. Although they were, no doubt, growing in their understanding of the gospel and its application, many of the issues which confronted the churches were beyond their ability to handle. This necessitated decisive intervention from Paul, either through a personal visit, a delegate like Timothy or Titus, or a letter.

The theological data from Paul's Early Letters support the conclusion of chapter 2 that local leadership was not tied to social status.

## CHAPTER 7

### CONCLUSION

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#### 7.1 OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

The aim of this study has been to develop an understanding of the leadership processes and dynamics operating in the early Pauline churches. The approach has been to study relevant passages from the Early Pauline Letters using a combination of grammatico-historical exegesis and socio-historical methods.

Chapter 2 reviews a body of literature which has led to a particular view of leadership in the Pauline churches. I have called this view the socio-historical model/paradigm of church leadership. This model developed out of the work of Judge, Theissen, and others, who emphasized that the early Pauline churches included people of relatively higher social status. High status individuals within the churches are assumed to have exercised leadership on account of their elevated status and exercise of patronage. This view is closely connected to the house church model (expounded in detail by Gehring and others), according to which the early Pauline city churches were composed of “house churches”. These “house churches” are said to have been organized on the model of the ancient household, with the host acting as the leader of the “house church”.

Although it has been acknowledged in the scholarship that the churches embraced people with a range of social statuses, the socio-historical model here considered works with a classification of the early Pauline Christians that effectively recognizes only two categories: higher and lower social status. The model has also lacked precision regarding the definition of socio-economic status. However, recent scholarship has allowed for a more precise characterization of economic status in the Graeco-Roman world of the first century, and when this characterization is applied to the early Pauline churches it becomes difficult to divide the believers into two groups — those of “high status” versus the rest. Even if “high status” is qualified as “relatively high status”, the difficulty remains.

I therefore argue in chapter 2 that the case for linking church leadership to patronage is inadequately founded. Patronage has not been clearly defined in the discussions and the role of the patron is often confused with the role of the householder. Furthermore, later scholarship tends to quote earlier authors in support of conclusions that were not rigorously established in the original publications. The house church model also seems to embody many assumptions that have not been adequately established.

These conclusions suggest that the dynamics of social status and patronage were not the dominating factors in the leadership of the early Pauline churches.

In chapters 3 to 5 I engage in a more empirical study of the early Pauline churches, with the aim of gathering the most direct evidence we have concerning their leadership. Chapter 3 deals with Paul’s

understanding of his own leadership role, since he was the most prominent leader during this early stage. Aspects considered include his self-identity as an apostle and his role as God's coworker. Attention is also given to his aims in ministry and the means by which he sought to achieve those aims.

The evidence indicates that Paul's most prominent ministry goal was to help his converts to experience the transforming power of God so that they would appear blameless on the day of Christ. This process of transformation is an integral part of God's saving work through the gospel. It rests on the work of justification and is experienced as people put their faith in God through Christ as he is revealed in the gospel. Because faith is so central to this experience of transformation, Paul described his ministry by saying that he had "received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith . . . among all the nations" (Rom 1:5). Paul was deeply concerned about the faith of his converts — not only their initial act of faith, but also their ongoing trust in God. Another goal that was prominent in his ministry was the building up of the church so that it would function as a unit with each part doing its work.

These results are important for the aim of the study since they show that Paul understood the dynamics of the gospel and faith to be central in his ministry.

Chapter 4 deals with Paul's coworkers. By studying Timothy's ministry in detail and comparing it with Paul's, I sought to demonstrate that Timothy was not simply a delegate of Paul whose only function was to mediate Paul's *parousia*; Timothy himself was a minister of the gospel, a coworker of the apostle. Timothy, like Paul, is called God's coworker (1 Thess 3:2, cf. 1 Cor 3:9), and like Paul his task was to minister to the faith of the believers (1 Thess 3:1-5).

Paul's Early Letters give evidence that Paul regarded many others besides Timothy as his coworkers. The term "coworkers" indicates that they shared in his gospel ministry both in terms of its aims and its methods. This sharing was possible because the power for ministry was not vested in a person — Paul — but in God, whose saving power was experienced through the gospel (Rom 1:16-17).

Chapter 5 examines the theme of divine equipping and appointment. The term χάρις is prominent in Paul's statements about his own apostolic call, and Romans 12:3-6 shows that he also understands the ministry of other believers in terms of God's χάρις. A lexicographical study of this Greek word shows that it can refer to a person's act of kindness (which act may be conceived of as a gift), to an actual gift, or to the gracious attitude of the person showing kindness. More than one of these three senses of χάρις may be present in a particular instance of its usage. What the word does indicate in all three cases is the bestowal of unmerited favour, so that "grace" is an appropriate translation equivalent for χάρις. Paul's discussion of the collection in 2 Corinthians 8-9 powerfully illustrates how the grace of God enables believers to act in grace towards one another.

Paul's application of the word χάρις to his own ministry indicates that his apostleship was a gift of God; in no way could he do anything to earn or deserve the privilege of being an apostle. This understanding of ministry as a gift of God's grace is seen most powerfully in the way Paul describes the role of the Holy Spirit in his work. In particular, 2 Corinthians 3 shows that the only ministry which is genuine is one in which the Spirit has brought about a response from the recipients of the ministry. Through such a ministry, the Spirit removes the veil from people's hearts and enables them to see the glory of God through Jesus Christ; as a result they are transformed into his image.

The function of the "gifts" passages (Rom 12; 1 Cor 12) is to exhort the Christians in Rome and Corinth to respect both the unity and the diversity of the body of Christ. Since believers have different "gifts" (χαρίσματα) through the working of the triune God, no Christian should consider himself superior to another Christian. Some of the gifts mentioned in these passages (esp. teaching

and prophecy) can be correlated with the work of ministry that characterized Paul's coworkers. Other believers could also exercise such gifts on an *ad hoc* basis, but those who exercised the gifts on a regular basis would become associated with those particular forms of ministry and be called teachers or prophets. In all cases it was God's grace which enabled a person to exercise ministry of any kind.

The discussion of divine equipping advances the aim of the study by extending and deepening the results of chapters 3 and 4. By characterizing ministry as *χάρις*, and by emphasizing the Spirit's role in making true ministry effective, Paul shows how God, by the power of the Spirit, is dynamically and actively present in the exercise of any authentic ministry.

The aim of chapter 6 is to bring conceptual unity to the results of the previous chapters and to seek insight into the way the members of the early Pauline churches experienced leadership — both Paul's leadership and that of the local leaders. As a heuristic aid, I access theoretical insights from leadership theory and social psychology. Using leadership theory I formulate the following definition of leadership for use in analysing both Paul's leadership and the leadership of his coworkers:

Leadership in the context of the early Pauline churches is a social process whereby a leader, empowered by the grace of God, influences members of the group to accomplish their common goals.

The definition includes the idea that leadership involves influence, an idea which relates closely to the aim of the study. French and Raven's power/interaction model of personal influence provides some useful concepts for developing an understanding of leadership influence in the Pauline churches. However, relating the model to the results of chapters 3 to 5 leads to the conclusion that, for the purposes of this study, the model needs to be adapted by adding an additional basis of power, namely spiritual power.

These theoretical perspectives serve the aim of the study by providing additional analytical tools for understanding the leadership processes and dynamics in the early Pauline churches. Instead of focussing attention on church structure, position, and authority (as has traditionally been the case), the emphasis falls on the leadership processes at work within the early Pauline churches.

When applied to Paul's practice of leadership in the churches it is found that Paul was profoundly sensitive to the social processes at work in his relationships with the churches. Consequently, he dealt very carefully with his churches, always seeking to demonstrate the humility and gentleness of Christ. It is not necessary to deny that he appealed to his apostolic authority, yet it is remarkable how little he did so. Almost always, he guided his converts through his own example and by informing and instructing them in the way of Christ. His emphasis was on spiritual power, informational power, and referent power.

Paul's Early Letters do give evidence of a local leadership function, which can be linked with the coworkers discussed in chapter 4 of this study. However, there is no evidence of a leadership office (as generally understood) at this stage of the churches' development. The local coworkers shared Paul's aims and methods, but it appears from the letters that there were a number of issues which were still beyond their capacity. For this reason Paul and his itinerant coworkers continued to maintain a significant level of involvement in the churches.

The question must now be answered as clearly and concisely as possible: What has this study shown regarding the leadership processes and dynamics in the early Pauline churches? The evidence indicates that, as far as Paul was concerned, genuine Christian leadership originated in the grace of God who called and equipped particular people to minister to their fellow believers on the basis of

the gospel. That ministry became effective by the power of the Holy Spirit at work in both the ministers and the recipients of ministry. Ministry was directed towards the building up of the church and the preparation of God's people for the day of Christ. Believers were built up and transformed by the saving power of God as they lived a life of trust in him. Although Paul did encourage the emergence of a leadership role, true ministry was not characterized by positional or structural authority but by the imitation of Christ in his gentleness and humility. Divinely gifted ministers influenced their fellow believers primarily through spiritual and informational power. Although the mindset of the surrounding culture often challenged and subverted the values of the gospel within the early Pauline churches, Paul worked patiently with them, helping believers to live as increasingly faithful followers of Christ.

**I conclude that the gospel of Jesus Christ, as God's power for the salvation of all who believe, was the central dynamic of leadership in the early Pauline churches.**

Any construction of leadership in these churches must take account of this reality.

## 7.2 INDICATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

1. I am aware that my critique in chapter 2 of what I have called "the socio-historical model of leadership" challenges a paradigm that is well entrenched in New Testament scholarship. By the nature of the case, scholarly communities are not quick to abandon paradigms that have guided their thinking on a particular subject for an extended period of time — and for good reasons. I do not therefore expect that my arguments will persuade New Testament scholarship immediately to abandon the accepted view that wealth, status and patronage determined who would exercise leadership in the early Pauline churches. However, I have shown that there is a body of recent research which challenges the simple binary of high/low status, and this in turn challenges the idea that leadership was necessarily exercised by believers of (relatively) high status.

I would suggest that it is important not simply to accept that articles written in the 1960's and 1970's have proved the "socio-historical model of leadership", and that the assumptions and arguments need to be revisited. Further research also needs to be done on issues surrounding the Economy Scale developed by Friesen and Longenecker so that our understanding of the early Christians' social location can be rounded out. This more developed picture needs to be related to the picture we have of leadership in the Pauline churches. There is also further evidence that I have not considered, such as the Pastoral Epistles' emphasis on the families of overseers and deacons (1 Tim 3:4-5,12). This needs to be examined and the results related to the investigations of this study either to support or disconfirm my conclusions.

2. This study has been limited to the early Pauline churches. However, the practice of leadership in the Pauline churches shows a developmental trajectory from the Early Letters through the Prison Epistles to the Pastoral Epistles. Of course, much work has been done on the later letters, but it would be worthwhile to apply the particular perspectives of this study to an investigation of the later letters — i.e. to consider how the gospel dynamic was carried through into the leadership practice of the Pauline churches as they developed. Such an investigation may indicate the need to modify some of the conclusions reached in this study, but it is essential for a comprehensive understanding of leadership/ministry in the Pauline Letters and in the New Testament as a whole.

3. It has only been possible to apply the (adapted) French/Raven model of influence to the Early Pauline Letters in a synoptic way and there are many details in the letters which have not been considered. There would be benefit in analysing shorter passages (e.g. 1 Thessalonians) in greater detail using this model so as to produce a more detailed understanding of how leadership was

exercised in the early Pauline churches. Such a study could modify, expand, substantiate, or call into question some of the results obtained here.

4. There is an ongoing need to provide a more integrated understanding of the theological and socio-historical aspects of leadership in the New Testament churches. As advances are made in our understanding of the social history of the New Testament communities, this should not lead scholarship to abandon the theological perspective which has traditionally been at the heart of New Testament studies. That perspective may need to be modified, but the fact remains that the chief concern of the Pauline Letters — as of the entire New Testament — is theological; theological ideas constitute a large part of the raw material from which our understanding of the New Testament communities must be constructed. Although social dimensions received insufficient attention for too long (partly due to the lack of available data), what is needed now is to integrate the theological and the socio-historical.

As far as the present study is concerned, chapter 2 argues for a modified understanding of the social stratification in the early Pauline churches, and for a review of the “socio-historical model of leadership”. That model, however, presents a concrete picture of how leadership operated in the churches — perhaps its concreteness has something to do with its appeal — and this is one area where the present study is incomplete. Although I used socio-historical perspectives in chapter 6, those perspectives were more social and sociological than historical. This leaves something of a vacuum in terms of a concrete historical picture of how leadership operated, and until that vacuum is filled the picture I have constructed may seem less plausible. There is therefore a need to provide a more concrete, historically rooted account of leadership in the early Pauline churches which integrates the theological emphases of this study with a lively yet well-founded picture of the historical realities of the early Pauline churches.

### 7.3 SUGGESTIONS FOR PRACTICAL APPLICATION

Although practical application is not the real concern of this study, the church through history has accepted the Early Pauline Letters — and indeed the whole Bible — not only as a collection of historical documents but as God’s living and present word. It is therefore appropriate to reflect on some possible implications of the study for contemporary church life.

1. I have argued in this study that the power of God and the gospel of Jesus Christ, received in faith, were the central dynamics of leadership in the early Pauline churches. Leadership structures did develop later on, and these were foreshadowed by the leadership roles that began to appear in the Early Letters. However, it is difficult to imagine that Paul would have wanted authority structures to overpower the dynamic that was so closely connected to his most fundamental views on salvation, apostleship, ministry, and the gospel. This has implications for the practice of church leadership, irrespective of the formal structure in which it may be embedded. Church leadership which is faithful to the vision of the Apostle Paul should seek the presence and power of God by his Spirit; it should seek to encourage first and foremost the faith of those being led (more than their behaviour); it should seek to instruct and inform them in the ways of Christ; it should seek change that is based on understanding and on a perception of God’s glory in Christ; it should be careful not to make people unduly dependent on the leader/minister. Leadership which reflects Paul’s practice also needs to be sensitive to the social processes at work within the church and to build trust as a foundation for effective leadership.

2. According to Paul’s understanding, leadership functions in their various forms are a gift of God’s grace. This very fact calls for a recognition that the body of Christ includes others who have also received *χαρίσματα* — gifts of grace — which are equally necessary for the building up of the body.

Responsible church leadership must therefore include efforts to encourage and facilitate the appropriate participation of each member. The church cannot experience the fullness of God's gracious power in its midst unless all the *χαρίσματα* which he has placed in the body are active for the common good.

3. The study has implications for the exercise of leadership among different local churches. Variations in church polity have resulted in a range of associational and denominational structures, from independence and autonomy to presbyterianism to episcopalianism. At the one extreme, local churches reject any "interference" from outside and insist on their right to make their own decisions. At the other extreme a bishop may exercise authority over a congregation. I would suggest that Paul's practice leads us to place the emphasis somewhere other than on the structure of authority.

Paul's practice, especially in the case of the church in Corinth, shows that (a) he was sensitive to the social processes involved; and (b) he did not leave the church alone when he saw that they lacked the internal resources to deal with difficult issues; when the members and local leaders in a church were unable to apply the gospel effectively to their various challenges, Paul got involved, either through a letter, or through a coworker, or through a personal visit. This approach reflects his overriding concern to equip churches and believers to live out the gospel in their particular situation. His reason for getting involved was not merely his apostolic authority; it was also his concern for the churches and his recognition that they needed guidance.

Any experience of the contemporary situation will show that there are times when local churches lack the knowledge, understanding and maturity required to deal with difficult issues. In such cases an appeal to autonomy in order to reject outside influence will leave the church floundering and unable to fulfil its gospel mandate. On the other hand, intervention which simply relies on legitimate position power may bring temporary respite, but will leave the church unable to deal with its next challenge. What is needed is intervention that genuinely equips the church to follow Christ faithfully in the particular social context in which it finds itself.

4. Since authentic church leadership is characterized by the power of God, it can never be understood as a mere technical (or even relational) exercise. It is essential for the minister/leader to maintain a practical dependence on God through prayer and personal devotion.

Perhaps the most important practical perspectives arising out of this study are (a) that God's power is central in the exercise of church leadership; and (b) that the essence of leadership according to the Early Pauline Letters is genuinely to *equip* believers for the exercise of their calling as God's people. These are not new insights, but will, I hope, receive new impetus from this study.



## ABBREVIATIONS

### BOOKS OF THE BIBLE

**Old Testament:** Gen, Exod, Lev, Num, Deut, Josh, Judg, 1 Sam, 2 Sam, 1 Kgs, 2 Kgs, 1 Chr, 2 Chr, Ezra, Neh, Esth, Job, Ps/Pss, Prov, Eccl, Song, Isa, Jer, Lam, Ezek, Dan, Hos, Joel, Amos, Obad, Jonah, Mic, Nah, Hab, Zeph, Hag, Zech, Mal.

**New Testament:** Matt, Mark, Luke, John, Acts, Rom, 1 Cor, 2 Cor, Gal, Eph, Phil, Col, 1 Thess, 2 Thess, 1 Tim, 2 Tim, Titus, Phlm, Heb, Jas, 1 Pet, 2 Pet, 1 John, 2 John, 3 John, Jude, Rev.

### BIBLE TEXTS AND TRANSLATIONS

ESV, see Bible 2001.

LXX, see Rahlfs 1979.

NASB, see Bible 1995.

NIV, see Bible 1996.

NRSV, see Bible 1989.

REB, see Bible 1991.

RSV, see Bible 1971.

UBS<sup>4</sup>, see Aland *et al.* 1993.

### OTHER

BDF, see Blass *et al.* 1961.

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