

**THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE PAULINE
THEOLOGY OF ΠΤΩΧΟΣ (PTOCHOS)
AND ΠΤΩΧΕΙΑ (PTOCHEIA) TO THE
CONTEMPORARY UNDERSTANDING OF
POOR AND POVERTY AMONG THE
DEACONS OF THE CONVENTION OF
PHILIPPINE BAPTIST CHURCHES IN THE
PROVINCE OF ILOILO¹**

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**Summary of the Theological Concepts about Πτωχός
and Πτωχεία in Pauline Literature**

The researcher recapitulates theological concepts gleaned from Paul's theology of πτωχός and πτωχεία based on the above exegesis of selected passages (Galatians 2:10, Romans 15:26-27, 2 Corinthians 8:1-2, 9).

First, Paul understands πτωχός in the literal sense, i.e. those who in some serious situation lacked the basic necessities to sustain life. Therefore, by "poor," he means the believers who were in economic need. This need was met by his collection from other churches. But at the

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same time he recognizes all Christians as being slaves to sin and to some form of legal requirements and thus as marginalized and weak in the society. The good news for the poor Christians is that Jesus became a curse for them and delivered them from the curse of the law. Similarly, πτωχεία is used of the destitute condition of the saints in Judea.

Second, Paul's concept of πτωχός and πτωχεία is to be understood in terms of his apostolic ministry. Relief, solidarity, and love for the poor are fundamental to his apostolic office. Paul tells his readers that in response to Jerusalem pillars' request to remember the poor, he is already fully engaged in this task, and that it is nothing additional to the exercise of his apostolic office.

Third, Paul's caring for the πτωχός has both a propositional and an incarnational dimension to the life and mission of the church. Paul affirmed that true Christian spirituality is demonstrated in loving and caring for other Christians and other people outside the Body of Christ. Each member of the Body of Christ (Church) has a clear duty to contribute to one's material needs needed for everyday life.

Fourth, Paul's doctrinal basis of all Christian giving for the poor. In 2 Cor. 8:9, through Christ's poverty, the church receives in exchange abundant and lavish riches of grace. This becomes the foundational resource for mutual sharing. Christ's becoming poor is the paradoxical ground of the true riches of the believer. It is also the basis and example for Christian giving. Their giving is modeled after Christ, who sacrificed himself to meet our needs (8:8-9). Because God ultimately is the one who supplies our needs, we can give generously, sure that he will care for us when we have need (cf. 9:8-11).

Fifth, Paul's practical response through a fund campaign project would help alleviate πτωχεία and widespread suffering of the πτωχός. In Paul's ministry, the πτωχων were not forgotten but remembered for an ongoing financial assistance. The relief project was

designed to meet the needs as well as alleviate the widespread suffering. He organized it to meet a permanent demand for continuous help. In consequence, it aided to the understanding of the Church's mission to other nations.

Sixth, Paul enjoined the rich members of the church to help the poor in generous giving. Paul alludes to the grace of God whereby the rich members should give generously. Paul stressed that running the risk of poverty through generosity brings spiritual blessing (see 2 Cor. 8-9). There is freedom and independence of their decision to give. Even though monetary collections was the result of freewill offerings, the Christians need to consider it as indebtedness to other churches.

Moreover, Paul challenged the rich churches to provide for their own poor members (Rom. 12:13). Paul must be addressing the rich Christians that the proper use of wealth was almsgiving and sharing, as exemplified by the Apostle Paul himself (cf. Antioch Church, the Philippian church).² Paul demands that those who had possessions share with others in "simplicity" and to distribute to the necessity of the saints (Rom. 12:8,13). Paul does not command the distribution of wealth to bring about a leveled society, but the rich are to see their wealth as a gift God has given them to alleviate the needs of brothers and sisters. In the end, Paul noted that a greedy person has no place in the life of a Christian (Col. 3:5; Eph. 4:19; Rom. 1:29; 2 Cor. 2:11). Paul, therefore, enjoins the sharing of wealth to the poor as a ministry of service.

² Tiano, Noel, "Luke's Teaching About the Poor and Its Implications for the Social Responsibilities of Luzon Southern Baptist Church Workers," Th. D. diss., Asia Baptist Graduate Theological Seminary (Baguio City, 1993), 33. Further, he argues that if indeed there is more weight to the argument that a greater percentage of Paul's congregation belonged to the middle class, then his warnings on greed and teachings on social responsibilities for the poor would constitute a major thematic emphasis. Ibid.

Further, Paul's theology of giving is demonstrated through economic sharing. The sharing community in Jerusalem is "κοινωνία" (cf. Acts 2:24, 42-47; 4:32-51; Rom. 12:13; Gal. 6:6; Phil. 4:15; Rom. 15:26; 2 Cor. 8:4; 9:13). In Paul's Christological model, within this new community of haves and have-nots called the church, socio-economic barriers are broken down (2 Cor. 8:4, 9:13; Gal. 6:6). The mutuality of the sharing (κοινωνία) of gifts and resources will move them toward "equality" (2 Cor. 8:13,14), though not a common community of goods. Economic sharing is to be characterized by spontaneity (2 Cor. 9:12), freedom (2 Cor. 9:7), and generosity (2 Cor. 8:14, 20, 9:5). Equality is closing the gap between rich and poor in the body of Christ so no one lacks. Gornik says that the reciprocity of resources, both spiritual and economic, during Paul's time, worked together to forge a new unity.³ The sharing of resources was to be with the poor (Gal. 6:2, 10) and other churches (2 Cor. 8:34; 9:15; Rom. 15:25-27).

Similarly, Paul encourages churches to help the poor saints in other churches in order to share the pains with each other as members of the same body of Christ. Thus, financial gifts become sharing, not "giving" (Rom. 15:26; 2 Cor. 8:4; 9:13).⁴ For this reason, financial sharing becomes a "communal service," a "generosity," a "bountiful gift" or "grace."

³ Mark R. Gornik, "The Rich and Poor in Paul's Theology," available from

<http://www.modernreformation.org/mr92/julaug/mr9204richpoor.html>; Internet; accessed 01 December 2002, 6.

⁴ Richards, 276. Mary Ann Getty notes that Paul capitalizes on the Greek notion that spiritual benefits have priority over the material, so that the Corinthians' own integrity would make them see how generous they should be in sharing their material goods (*The Collegeville Bible Commentary: 2 Corinthians*, eds., D. Bergant and R. Harris [Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1994], 1145).

Biblico-Theological Implications

The following are the biblico-theological implications: (1) all that humanity possesses belongs to God;⁵ (2) the rich are favored by God;⁶ (3) poor are not favored by God;⁷ (4) poverty is a punishment from God;⁸ (5) God has

⁵The deacons strongly agree (93.8%) on the teaching of the Bible that all humanity possesses belongs to God. They believe that possessions are a sign of God's blessings or favor. See Chapter Two (original dissertation), 133, referring to table 10 and their corresponding discussion in this dissertation. Dr. Henry P. Silbor says that man is only a steward of that which God allows him to possess (Gen. 1:27-28; Deut. 8:18-20; I Cor. 6:19-20) ("Developing a Program for Stewardship Methods," Thesis [Baguio City, 1982], 6). This means that all the earth belongs to all God's people. Its riches are meant for all to be used for human need. God has provided humanity with enough resources on this earth so that all God's people are able to enjoy a comfortable life. God intends the well-being of all creatures. See Barnette, 147. Possessions are to be acquired honestly. To regard material property as a possession to be made use of without taking other people's rights into account is to ignore the biblical conviction that man is simply a steward of the goods of the earth. Thus, poverty is injustice and a breach of God's covenant caused by the greed of the rich. The strong and the powerful use their considerable resources not to further relationships which men are placed by God but in support of their own ends. See Boerma, 42. In this way they tear apart what is meant to be a unity. Because God is the Creator and Owner of everything, man as steward of God-given wealth, therefore, must free himself from avarice and greed.

⁶The empirical study shows that the respondents agree that rich people are favored by God. As indicated in the result of the survey, 78.8% of deacons support this view. See Chapter Two (original dissertation), 133, referring to table 10 and their corresponding discussion in this dissertation. This implies that the respondents are aware of the teachings in the Bible that God makes people prosperous and abundant not only in spiritual things but also in material blessings. Paul gives no concrete evidence for this but hints the idea figuratively in 2 Cor. 8:9.

⁷A majority (90.1%) of deacons also believes that poor are not favored by God. See Chapter Two (original dissertation), 133, referring to table 10 and their corresponding discussion in this dissertation. They believe that the Bible talks about abundant life in John 10:10 and other passages. In this variable, Paul is silent about the issue.

chosen some people to be poor;⁹ (6) poverty is the result of laziness;¹⁰ and (7) poverty is a physical problem.

Poverty is a Physical Problem

The position of the respondents suggests that 55.1% of them agreed that poverty is a physical problem whereas 36.3% of them disagreed.¹¹ It can be observed

⁹A majority of the respondents (90.1%) supports the idea that poverty is a punishment from God. See Chapter Two (original dissertation), 133, referring to table 10 and their corresponding discussion in this dissertation. They regard poverty as a blight upon human life, either as divine curse or as a self-inflicted wound. People become poor because of their sins and the sins of others. The respondents believe that to live a life of poverty is a retribution of one's sin and disobedience. Paul is also silent on this issue.

⁹A majority of the respondents (61.3%) believes that God has chosen some people to be poor. See Chapter Two (original dissertation), 133, referring to table 10 and their corresponding discussion in this dissertation. God did not choose that some people will be poor or rich but God chose the poor people of this world to be rich in faith and to possess the kingdom, which he has promised to those who love him (James 2:5). In this variable, Paul is also silent.

¹⁰A good percentage (77.5%) of the respondents disagreed with the question that poverty is a result of laziness. See Chapter Two (original dissertation), 134, referring to table 10 and their corresponding discussion in this dissertation. Paul and CPBC deacons do not hold similar view on this statement. It is a fact that there are poor because they refused to work. In a sense, they are lazy. They become habituated to gaining their living by begging, or other easy means. Beals says that a living condition of absolute poverty and an environment of hopelessness is not a productive seedbed to nurture a strong sense of self-reliance and personal initiative. See Art Beals, *Beyond Hunger: A Biblical Mandate for Social Responsibility* (Portland, Oregon: Multnomah Press, 1985), 204. It is very easy for such people to be discontented if their remuneration is not meeting their basic needs. Such people will always be susceptible to the lure of making "easy money." Hence, there is a need to re-educate the poor people of Iloilo regarding the value of work. There should also be a strong emphasis on training church leaders about this issue to help prevent poverty.

¹¹See Chapter Two (original dissertation), 133-4, referring to table 10 and their corresponding discussion in this dissertation.

that the economically *poor* are very much affected physically. Many are malnourished resulting to all kinds of diseases including their mental capacity to think and decide to improve their economic condition to the extent that they cannot provide themselves with the basic necessities of life, such as food, shelter and clothing. Because of the above life situation, there has been less economic development and a constant deterioration of the living standard from an abundant life of eating various kinds of food from farm products to a poverty stricken life, in which, rice becomes the staple food but rarely with side dishes. *Similarly, Paul used πτωχός to refer to the condition of economically poor believers in Jerusalem (Gal. 2:9-10; 6:10; 2 Cor. 8:14; cf. Acts 6:2.). They are the “physically poor.”*¹² They are those who in some serious situation lacked the basic necessities to sustain life (cf. 1 Tim. 6:8).¹³

Ethical-Economic Implications

The following implications are: (1) collection of funds for the poor relieves poverty; (2) participation in lottery can help ease poverty;¹⁴ (3) distribution of relief goods is

¹²See previous discussion in Chapter One (original dissertation), 66, under the subsection on “Exegesis of Galatians 2:10.”

¹³For further discussion, see Chapter One (original dissertation), 69, under the subsection on “Exegesis of Galatians 2:10.”

¹⁴Paul is silent on this issue. It is to be noted that 87.8% of the deacons indicate that joining in games and lotteries can help ease poverty. See Chapter Two (original dissertation), 135, referring to table 10 and their corresponding discussion below. In the “Statement of Concern of CPBC” on gambling, it says, “In the face of worsening economic crisis, the Filipino people are offered venues for coping with the attendant problems of poverty. One of these is gambling: horse race, *jueting*, daily double, lotto – to mention but a few. The proliferation of lotto terminals and gambling casinos, the endless queues of people at lotto ticket counters, the incapacity of law enforcement agencies to crack down gambling syndicates all point to the fact that this vice is supported, if not perpetuated, by those who are in the higher echelons of power. We are appalled that

an expression of Christian love; (4) collection of funds on behalf of the poor is a noble act; (5) wealth is to be shared for use by the needy; (6) poverty is an economic reality; (7) the poor needs help from the rich; (8) extended family is a source of material support;¹⁵ (9) and extended family is a liability.¹⁶

instead of providing the people with the dignified means of livelihood, their hopes to survive are falsely raised; instead of encouraging the people to earn honest wages through the sweat of their brow, they are promised instant wealth, which benefits only a few individuals and not the society as a whole. See "Gambling: A Vicious Form of Exploitation," in *A Statement of Concern of the Convention of Philippine Baptist Churches, Inc.*, 1. Majority of the respondents do not adhere to the statement of concern of CPBC Board of Trustees on this matter. For them, lottery gives them hope though it is a false hope. In addition, the Faith and Order Committee of CPBC posed the same concern, "The experience of poverty of the majority of our people and the sense of hopelessness and powerlessness that go with it make them gullible to emotional and supernatural influences. When times are hard and difficult, people tend to look for quick fix scheme in solving their problems. This is why miracle crusades are attractive and are always attended. Often what is presented is the so-called "prosperity gospel" ("And They Will Deceive Many," *A Statement about Cultic Groups and Teachings*), 2.

¹⁵Of the eighty total respondents, 76.3% claimed that extended family is a source of material support. See Chapter Two (original dissertation), 135, referring to table 10 and their corresponding discussion in this dissertation. Paul does not reflect this view.

¹⁶Of the eighty total respondents, 42.5% reflected that they "agree," but on the opposite side, 42.6% of the respondents said that they "disagree" that extended family is a liability. See Chapter Two (original dissertation), 135, referring to table 10. More than half of them disagreed that extended family is a liability. However, in essence it is a liability. In many instances, one person in the family, especially if employed, becomes an asset for the rest and the rest becomes a liability or dependent. Paul again is silent on this matter.

Collection of Funds for the Poor Relieves Poverty

The study shows that 52.5% of deacons believed that collection of money for the poor relieves poverty while 37.5% of the respondents disagreed with the view.¹⁷ The question posed is, 'Is it ethical to collect funds for the poor people?' As such the deacons think that this activity might lead into dependency resulting to laziness from lack of personal initiative. However, accountability on this issue is enjoined with the recipients. As noted in chapter one, the early church established communities of sharing (Acts 4:32). So they had enough resources and there was no poverty. The famine-stricken communities were financially supported by the collection made by believers elsewhere. *Διακονία* ("service") is foundational to Christian life and community. In a similar fashion, the deacons adhere to the idea of Paul that collection should be directed to the poor (see 2 Cor. 8:4; Rom. 15:26; Gal. 2:10).¹⁸ Indication of a more universal reference is found in other texts, which apply to non-believers.¹⁹ In a world of inequality, enmity, injustice and greed, the church is called to live out the biblical model for the Christian community.

¹⁷See Chapter Two (original dissertation), 134, referring to table 10 and their corresponding discussion in this dissertation.

¹⁸Refer to the discussion of the section "Summary of the Theological Concepts about *Πρωτός* and *Πρωτεία* in Pauline Literature", 114, of Chapter One (original dissertation).

¹⁹Paul enjoins hospitality in its literal sense of love for or care of strangers, here meaning non-believers since it contrasts the immediately preceding injunction of sharing with fellow Christians ("saints") and the following stipulation of love to one's enemies (cf. 1 Thess. 3:12; 5:15; 2 Cor. 9:13; Phil. 4:5; 2 Tim. 2:24; Tit. 3:2, 8). See *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, s.v. "Ethics," by S. C. Mott.

Distribution of Relief Goods is an Expression of Christian Love

The survey reveals that 91.3% of the deacons support the view that distribution of relief goods is an expression of Christian love.²⁰ They believe that faith without works or actions is dead. They affirm the passage in James, "What good is there in your saying to them 'God bless you!', 'keep warm,' if you don't give them the necessities of life" (James 2:15). In addition, Paul urges the rich Corinthian members to complete their collection for the relief of the needy Christians in Jerusalem (2 Cor. 8-9).²¹ Moreover, Paul solicits generous participation in the collection by referring to the exemplary behavior of the Macedonian churches (in view of their own profound "poverty" (2 Cor. 8:2)).²² Poor relief of various kinds was thus established, though sharing of goods was not attempted.²³

²⁰See Chapter Two (original dissertation), 134, referring to table 10 and their corresponding discussion in this dissertation.

²¹See Chapter One (original dissertation), 90, under the subsection "Exegesis of 2 Corinthians 8:1-2,9," and under the section "Summary of the Chapter" (original dissertation), 109. If Paul were among us today, he would encourage us to serve within the local context by using local resources to meet the local needs of churches, because that is exactly what he did. See Christopher R. Little, "Whatever Happened to the Apostle Paul? An Exposition of Paul's Teaching and Practice of Giving," *Mission Frontiers* 23:3 (September 2001): 25.

²²See the discussion of the subsection on "Exegesis of 2 Corinthians 8:1-2,9", 99, of Chapter One (original dissertation).

²³Ibid. At their first appearance (Acts 6:1) the Hellenists complain in the rapidly growing Christian community in Jerusalem that their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of money or food. Acts 6:1-6; 15:1-35 and Gal. 2:1-14 suggest that there was debate within as well as between the churches in Jerusalem and Antioch. See Craig A. Evans and Stanley E. Porter, eds., *Dictionary of New Testament Background* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 2000), s.v. "Hellenism," by G. R. Stanton.

Collection of Funds on behalf of the Poor is a Noble Act

The result of the survey reveals that more than half of the respondents (51.3%) shared the view that collection of funds on behalf of the poor is a noble act.²⁴ Culturally, we, Filipinos, have imbibed from the Spaniards the belief that helping the *poor* can help lessen one's sins. Also, the appeal to generous and ungrudging care is linked with the promise of the Lord's blessing to those who give freely.

On the other hand, Paul was actively engaged in organizing a collection among the churches of Asia and Greece for "the poor among the saints at Jerusalem" (Rom. 15:26; 2 Cor. 8-9). In this way, the churches expressed their special concern for the poor, even if they did not follow the example of the Jerusalem community of meeting all needs out of a common purse. Further, Paul tells us that on his first visit to the community in Jerusalem, he had explained his mission to James, Cephas and John, who recognized that he had been commissioned to preach to the pagans, and agreed that he should continue to do so, laying down the sole condition that he and his followers should remember to help the *poor* (Gal.2:9-10).²⁵ Moreover, Paul, in his use of the sowing-reaping metaphor, sums up all the reasons why the Corinthians should give generously to the collection and does not hesitate to appeal to selfish motives as well as noble ones. For him, generous giving is an act of worship, which gives thanks to God for his gifts.²⁶

²⁴See Chapter Two (original dissertation), 134, referring to table 10 and their corresponding discussion in this dissertation.

²⁵Refer to the section, "The Exegesis of Galatians 2:10," under "Exegesis of Related Passages in Pauline Literature", 70-71, of Chapter One (original dissertation).

²⁶See Chapter Two (original dissertation), 134, referring to table 10. In Gal. 2:1-10, the other concession made by the Gentile Christians was the financial collection for the poor in Jerusalem. Generosity will not

Wealth is to Be Shared for Use by the Needy

Of the eighty total respondents, 86.3% indicated that wealth is to be shared for use by the needy.²⁷ The survey reveals that Iloilo's *poor* sees poverty as material deprivation. It also reveals the marginalization and the oppression of the poor. The marginalized are the unemployed, the beggars, the abandoned children, the prostitutes, and others. The exploited are the "working poor" as well as the rural and urban workers. Therefore, they are not to be generally blamed for their poverty. For them, poverty means lack of opportunity, etc. It has been observed that the reciprocity of resources, both spiritual and economic, during Paul's time, worked together to forge a new unity. The sharing of resources was to be with the poor (Gal. 6:2, 10) and other churches (2 Cor. 8:34; 9:15; Rom. 15:25-27).²⁸ Paul demands that those who had possessions share with others in "simplicity" and to distribute to the necessity of the saints who were needy (Rom. 12:8,13). Paul does not command the distribution of wealth to bring about a leveled society, but the rich are to see their wealth as a gift God has given

leave one impoverished, but will allow God to give even more to the giver. The no-so-subtle threat here is that God will not bless those who refuse to give generously. So giving generously is truly in the Corinthians' best interests. They can glorify God and ensure further blessings for themselves at the same time. See *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, s.v. "Financial Support," by J. M. Everts.

²⁷See Chapter Two (original dissertation), 134, referring to table 10 and their corresponding discussion in this dissertation.

²⁸Refer to Chapter One (original dissertation), 113-14, under the section on "Summary of Theological Concepts about *Πτωχός* and *Πτωχεία* in Pauline Literature," of Chapter One (original dissertation). Economic sharing with other churches, even though many of the Corinthian believers were of little financial means, was to be a regular part of their communal life (1 Cor. 16:1-2). The sharing of resources was to be with the poor (Gal. 2:10, other churches (2 Cor. 8:34, 9:15; Rom. 15:25-27). This community of sharing was part of what it meant to be the servant people of God (Phil. 1:5; 2 Cor. 8:15).

them to help alleviate the needs of fellow human beings.²⁹

Possessions and property must be looked after, assessed and distributed in such a way that every member of the community has his fair share. One man's prosperity is closely connected with that of others. You cannot be rich by yourself.³⁰ In this way, the wealth of the rich is purged and transformed into mutual help and support. The poverty of the poor is transformed in the same way.

Poverty is an Economic Reality

In this variable, of the eighty total respondents, 81.3% reflected that poverty is an economic reality.³¹ The poor in Iloilo are those who depend their livelihood mainly on agriculture. They are bond-labourers and suppressed by the rich. Others, because of their landlessness and joblessness, have to accept whatever wages they can get to stay alive. Also, the "small landowners" are finding their livelihood threatened by the advance of "agribusiness." In other words, the ordinary farmers cannot cope with the need to improve their farm equipments, buy grains, pesticides, fertilizers, and etc., for greater production output. The tenant-farmers till the land for the landowners and get only a small share of the harvest. On the other hand, small landowners are not able to pay back capital they have invested because of the small return they get from their farm products due to the presence of middle persons. Economically, poverty

²⁹Consult Chapter One (original dissertation), 112-3, under the section, "Summary of Theological Concepts about Πτωχός and Πτωχεία in Pauline Literature."

³⁰Conrad Boerma, *The Rich, the Poor and the Bible* (Philadelphia: PA: The Westminster Press, 1980), 69.

³¹See Chapter Two (original dissertation), 134, referring to table 10 and their corresponding discussion in this dissertation.

results from the denial of their labour, which deprives them of their dignity and opportunity.

However, in Paul's Christological model, within this new community of haves and have-nots, called the church, socio-economic barriers are broken down (2 Cor. 8:4, 9:13; Gal. 6:6). The mutuality of the sharing ("κοινωνία") of gifts and resources will move them toward "equality" (2 Cor. 8:13,14), though not a common community of goods.³² As stated previously, Paul used the term πτωχός to refer to the condition of economically poor, that is, those who in some serious situation lacked the basic necessities to sustain life. They are those who were in economic need.

The Poor Needs Help from the Rich

Of the eighty total respondents, 75% claimed that the poor person needs help from the rich.³³ Money and possessions are necessary because poor people need them to live a decent life. The rich becomes an instrument capable of acting justly and rediscovering the joy of corporate living. The poor people's chance to have a better life lies on the generosity of the rich to share their material blessings. However, dole-outs are discouraged and corresponding accountability from the poor is expected. Aptly, the saying states, "Give a man a fish and he will have a meal, teach him how to fish and he will have food for life."

In 2 Cor. 8-9, Paul urges the rich Corinthian members to complete their collection for the relief of the needy Christians in Jerusalem.³⁴ Paul alludes to the

³²Read Chapter One (original dissertation), 113, under the section, "Summary of Theological Concepts about Πτωχός and Πτωχεία in Pauline Literature."

³³See Chapter Two (original dissertation), 134, referring to table 10 and their corresponding discussion in this dissertation.

³⁴See findings in Chapter One (original dissertation), 90, under the subsection on "Exegesis of 2 Corinthians 8:1-2,9."

grace of God whereby the rich members should give generously to the welfare of the poor. Just as Christ freely gave up His riches in heaven so too should believers give up riches for others. Paul stressed that running the risk of poverty through generosity brings spiritual blessing (see 2 Cor. 8-9).³⁵ There is freedom and independence of their decision to give.³⁶ Paul was saying that the wealthy are to be rich in good deeds and economic sharing toward the poor (1 Tim. 6:18; cf. 2 Cor. 8:21).³⁷

Socio-Political Implications

The following implications are: (1) good governance can improve one's economic condition;³⁸ (2) rich people oppress the poor; (3) poverty is caused by graft and corruption; (4) misuse of wealth is a source of inequality; (5) unemployment results in poverty; (6) poverty is

³⁵Consult the discussions in Chapter One (original dissertation), 103, under the subheading on "Exegesis of 2 Corinthians 8:1-2,9" and the section on "Summary of Theological Concepts about *Πτωχός* and *Πτωχεία* in Pauline Literature," 111-2.

³⁶*Ibid.*, 104-5, 111.

³⁷See Chapter One (original dissertation), 114, under the section on "Summary of Theological Concepts about *Πτωχός* and *Πτωχεία* in Pauline Literature."

³⁸Of the eighty total respondents, 61.3% reflected that they "agree", and 33.8% claimed that they "strongly agree." See Chapter Two (original dissertation), 136-7, referring to table 10 and their corresponding discussion in this dissertation. In the present context, the poor people's condition reflects an administration that is pro-rich and consequently tolerates graft and corruption. Similarly, there is no or lack of transparency of the different aspects of administration such as, budget for different government projects, no proper implementation of public funds and honest execution of law and ordinances, etc. On the other hand, in Hellenistic Judaism, the ideal government would distribute for "the necessary needs" of life so that there would be no "excess for luxury" nor lack (Philo *Jos.* 243). That the recipients are the poor and that this standard of justice is applied reveal elements of a social ethic. See *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, s.v. "Ethics," by S.C. Mott.

caused by economic oppression;³⁹ and (7) the poor are financially disadvantaged.⁴⁰

Rich People Oppress the Poor

Of the eighty total respondents, 62.5% claimed that rich people oppress the poor. On the opposite side, 22.6% of the respondents disagree.⁴¹ This is observed and experienced especially from those *hacenderos*, (“big landowners”) where the tenants and workers are victims of exploitation and oppression. The “poor” people in Iloilo include small landowners whose income depend mainly from their harvest, the tenant farmers who had to pay the due to their landlords before providing for their own families, the hired laborers, fishermen, carpenters, vendors, beggars, etc. The practice of usury, which charges 20% interest or more of the principal amount borrowed (money used to buy seedlings, pesticides,

³⁹Moreover, in the survey, of the eighty total respondents, 73.8% percent claimed that they “strongly agree” that poverty is caused by economic oppression. See Chapter Two (original dissertation), 137, referring to table 10 and their corresponding discussion in this dissertation. At present, the people are heavily taxed in more ways than one. Moreover, the uncontrolled pricing of basic commodities such as gas and other petroleum products affect other basic needs such as food and transportation. Likewise, during Paul’s time, people as a whole were heavily taxed. The head tax, which the Romans required, usually in connection with a census, was collected by the Jewish administration. It was the goods and services tax which burdened the people most heavily and which, in fact, caused the greatest economic hardship. Obviously, the people hurt most by the excessive taxation responded with anger and resentment. See Chapter One (original dissertation), 78-9, under the subsection on “Exegesis of Romans 15:26-27.” See also Pilgrim, 52.

⁴⁰Of the eighty total respondents, 57.5% reflected that they “agree,” and 17.5% claimed that the poor are financially disadvantaged. See Chapter Two (original dissertation), 137, referring to table 10 and their corresponding discussion in this dissertation.

⁴¹See Chapter Two (original dissertation), 137, referring to table 10 and their corresponding discussion in this dissertation.

fertilizers, etc.) is rampant.⁴² Consequently, most of the poor borrowers can only pay the interest of the borrowed amount. Most of the people lived in economic poverty and low social status resulting to low morale and unproductiveness of both body and mind. Moreover, the government is imposing taxes (withholding, transportation, property, inheritance, value added taxes [VAT], custom, and others) that poor people are burdened to pay. Some of the government officials through their different so-called projects are able to enrich themselves financially. During Paul's time, numerous complaints show that the taxes were generally felt to be oppressive. There were religious taxes in addition to the state ones. Overburdened by taxes and forced labor, people in towns avoided public service, and the majority of Roman citizens became indifferent to the fate of Rome.⁴³

Today, with a measure of wealth it is possible for the rich to use the power of wealth to gain more. This power can be used to restrict or deprive those without power in situations of injustice. Some gain a monopoly on wealth and resources, and social relations become imbalanced. It cannot be denied that our economy is set up for the benefit of the few and the exploitation of the many. The elite who have the power resources as well as the political clout around them, suppress the poor and take away their rights to natural resources and properties. It is believed that all human beings have a right to those basic things that are needed to sustain human life with some semblance of dignity. If human beings have a right to those things that are necessary for sustaining human life, then someone somewhere is under obligation to provide

⁴²P. H. Davids puts it, the "poor lived on the edge of existence even in the best of times, for to be in an agricultural economy without owning sufficient productive land to provide security is to be economically marginal." See Davids, 703.

⁴³See Chapter One (original dissertation), 79, under the subsection on "Exegesis of Romans 15:26-27."

those rights. The rich must be on board if the rights of the poor are to be met. Just as the teaching function of the apostle Paul was crucial in bringing the churches that were established in the New Testament era to maturity, pastors and church spiritual leaders entrusted with the apostle's instructions have the same function today.

Poverty is Caused by Graft and Corruption

Of the eighty total respondents, 72.6% agree that poverty is caused by graft and corruption.⁴⁴ Red tape is rampant. Hence, poverty is the result of corruption for many years. Sadly, government officials and employees are taking bribes, charging interest, making unfulfilled promises, and plundering. Some officials have even become callous to the sufferings inflicted by injustices to the *poor*. Thus, the poor people are overlooked by government officials. However, in Paul's ministry, the *πτωχων* were not forgotten but remembered for an ongoing financial assistance. His relief project was designed to meet the needs as well as alleviate the widespread suffering of the poor. He organized the said project not for his needs but to meet a permanent demand for continuous help of the poor.⁴⁵

Misuse of Wealth is a Source of Inequality

Of the eighty total respondents, 78% reflected that misuse of wealth is a source of inequality.⁴⁶ The plundering of financial resources, inappropriate project priorities, republic acts and laws of our government are

⁴⁴See Chapter Two (original dissertation), 137, referring to table 10 and their corresponding discussion in this dissertation.

⁴⁵See Chapter One (original dissertation), 111, under the section on "Summary of Theological Concepts about *Πτωχός* and *Πτωχεία* in Pauline Literature."

⁴⁶See Chapter Two (original dissertation), 137, referring to table 10 and their corresponding discussion in this dissertation.

issues to consider. One clear example is RA 7941 that places Philippine resources and patrimony under foreign control and exploitation under the so-called Financial and Technical Assistance Agreement (FTAA). A further statement of concern by the Convention Baptist Ministers' Association (CBMA) says,

“RA 7942 otherwise known as the Mining Act of 1995 also gives auxiliary rights such as timber rights, water rights, easement rights, right to enter into private land and concessions, freedom from expropriation, right to arbitration and confidentiality. Giving foreign mining companies all these rights is nothing but a whole sale of our national patrimony to foreign capitalists and relegates our country into mere suppliers of raw materials and cheap labor. Such wholesale of our natural resources is unthinkable for a sovereign country like the Philippines. This Act mainly satisfies the greed for monetary gains of both foreign and local capitalists who would now, after raping and denuding our forest reserves, now commit the final act of plundering the very bowels of the earth to extract what ought to be our birthright. It is destructive to the environment because it will result to the denudation and destruction of our mountains and the very small forest reserves left. This law is indirectly and ultimately anti-people because when our forest reserves are gone and our mountains denuded, we shall continually suffer from flash floods, water shortage, and unprecedented drought. This law will have a tremendous adverse effect to food production, climate, ecological balance and human survival in general.”⁴⁷

⁴⁷This Statement of Concern was endorsed by the Convention Baptist Ministers' Association during its National Assembly on January 21-24, 1997 in Iloilo City. RA 7942 poses the biggest threat to the Philippine environment and ecological balance. Ibid.

We are stewards, not destroyers of God's creation (Ps. 24:1-2; Gen. 1:28-30). The church has the duty to teach and witness to certain basic truths about the human person and certain fundamental values that ought to be respected in society. The Church should not exist for its pious club-members but rather for the needs of the society and it should act as the salt and light of the society.

The world, during Paul's time, was marked with differences between the large group of poor people and a small, rich upper class. Many agree that closely related to wealth and poverty in Paul's time is the issue of social status. Moreover, the great figures in the land owned the most fertile areas. The Roman economic system brought class divisions among the people. The effect of these so-called social classes resulted to poor people living in wooden houses crowded closely together.⁴⁸ In his ethical admonitions Paul did not require complete abolition of differences in means, but looked for active and effective brotherly love (2 Cor. 8:13ff.). This means that the 'abundance' of some is to supply the 'want' of the brethren (in Jerusalem) 'that there may be equality.'

⁴⁸Consult the discussions in Chapter One (original dissertation), 78, under the subsection on "Exegesis of Romans 15:26-27" and the section on "Summary of Theological Concepts about *Πτωχός* and *Πτωχεία* in Pauline Literature," 113-4. The class distinctions among the Romans were based mainly on wealth. The upper-class was composed of landowners, merchants, and professionals (e.g. doctors, lawyers, and government officials). The lower-class were laborers, farmers, and trade workers. See Chapter One (original dissertation), 62-3, under the discussion on the section "Exegetical Studies of Related Passages for *Πτωχός* and *Πτωχεία* in Selected Pauline Literature." The norm, Paul suggests, is something like economic equality among the people of God (2 Cor. 8:13-15). Just as God had insisted on equal proportions of manna for all his people in the wilderness, so now the Corinthians should give "that there may be equality" in the body of Christ. See further Sider, 97.

Unemployment Results in Poverty

Of the eighty total respondents, 52.5% reflected that they “agree,” and 30.0% claimed that they “strongly agree.”⁴⁹ In 1992 unemployment, as defined by the Philippine government stood at 9.8%. Per capita GNP growth at that time registered at .06%. By 1993, with the dramatic rise to 2.77% in per capita GNP growth, unemployment went down slightly to 9.3%. At the end of 1994, with even higher growth at 5.1%, unemployment paradoxically rose up to 5.5%, unemployment increased to 11.9%.

Moreover, the picture in terms of unemployed human beings is telling: 1992, 2.594 million; 1993, 2.497 million; and in 1994 2.622 million. In Region VI, labor and employment rates based on the monthly update (September 2002) of NSO's most requested statistics, unemployment rate is 9.9% and underemployment rate is 24.8% in relation to the population. Region VI has the income gap of 31.0% lower than the estimate at the national level.⁵⁰ This shows that the income gaps had worsened from 1992 to 2002. Truly, a scenario of jobless growth!⁵¹ In Paul's time, there was a large number of poor people living in Jerusalem. Christians suffered due to religious ill-will and social persecution by the Jewish religious groups. As a result, many Christians were unable to find work to support themselves and their families due to religious ill-will, social persecution, and over-population.⁵²

⁴⁹See Chapter Two (original dissertation), 137, referring to table 10 and their corresponding discussion in this dissertation.

⁵⁰This information is based on NSO Quickstat on Region VI – Western Visayas (September 2002).

⁵¹<http://www.socwatch.org.uy/1996/philippi.html>. It comes as no surprise that the nation's poorest are also the nation's unemployed. See Perkins, 97.

⁵²See Chapter One (original dissertation), 67, under the subsection on “Exegesis of Galatians 2:10.”

Contextual-Situational Implications

The following are the contextual-situational implications: (1) poverty is not caused by natural calamities such as floods and droughts; (2) people born into poor families can become rich;⁵³ (3) poverty can lead to an increase in criminality;⁵⁴ (4) poverty results in poor

⁵³Of the eighty respondents, 88.8% disagree and only 3.8% agree that people born into poor families can become rich. See Chapter Two (original dissertation), 140, referring to table 10. In Iloilo, because of the lack of education, they have no choice for better means of employment, hence, they cannot improve their condition. They are the victims of the oppressive and unjust social system. There is a deep “sense of hopelessness” due to the unfulfilled promises of politicians and government officials. They have lost confidence in the values of the society. Overburdened by taxes and the presence of graft and corruption, people no longer felt the drive or motivation to sustain the momentum and to strive for more. They become discouraged and indifferent to the fate of the nation. On the other hand, Paul is silent on this matter. However, in his time, there was a serious economic crisis. Stephen Neill notes that the widespread use of slave labor discouraged economic growth (*A History of Christian Missions* [London, England: Penguin Press, 1964], 24). Even the Romans seldom looked for new ways of producing goods and the wealthy had no interest in starting new businesses. See *Ibid*.

⁵⁴Of the eighty total respondents, 52.5% reflected that they “agree,” and 35.0% claimed that they “strongly agree.” See Chapter Two (original dissertation), 139, referring to table 10 and their corresponding discussion in this dissertation. There are those who are poor due to bad choices (drunkards, gamblers, drug addicts and others) and there are those who were forced to make wrong choices because they do not have any choice at all. As the saying goes, “*Kahit sa patalim kumakapit*.” For many, these uncontrolled vices keep them poor and destitute. They are forced by the hard and difficult circumstances to take shelter on such vices to alleviate for a moment their deep-seated condition. In most cases, they are trapped into such bad habits by their circumstance, which they don’t realize adds to their poverty. It is observed that one of the effects of poverty in Iloilo is the increase in criminality, which is a result of unemployment. Some people who are unemployed are forced to steal, rob, sell prohibited drugs, and the like for them to provide food on the table. There is a need of conscientization of society, radical change in the attitude and structures of society, and, of course, looking beyond for divine

health condition;⁵⁵ (5) poverty leads to prostitution; (6) squatting by homeless people is a result of poverty; (7) gambling leads to poverty;⁵⁶ (8) illiteracy causes

intervention. In the same way, the natural catastrophes of the first century A.D. may have had more serious consequences than those of the previous century.

We hear nothing of comparable state aid from the period of direct Roman administration (after A.D. 6), but only of private initiatives (Acts 11:28; Antt. 20.2.5). This had momentous consequences, as is shown by the increase in robbery and rebellion in subsequent years. See Chapter One (original dissertation), 96, under the subsection on "Exegesis of 2 Corinthians 8:1-2,9." On this issue, pastors and church leaders should strongly advocate that the good news to the poor consists of bold confrontations and change in the existing order of the societal practices to protect the poor from the institutionalized crimes.

⁵⁵Of the eighty total respondents, 88.8% reflected that poverty results in poor health condition. See Chapter Two (original dissertation), 139, referring to table 10. Iloilo City alone is characterized by surviving and poor slum barangays with a very low family income. It is also observed that there is a high incidence of communicable diseases in these kinds of communities. Furthermore, children at school age in these communities are malnourished and there are still children classified as second degree under-nourished.

⁵⁶Of the eighty total respondents, 86.3% claimed that gambling leads to poverty. See Chapter Two (original dissertation), 139, referring to table 10 and the following discussion. In Iloilo, there is the presence of rampant gambling such as *jueteng*, daily double, lotto - to mention but a few. The CPBC Board of Trustees condemned the flourishing presence of these games, to wit: "We are appalled that instead of providing the people with the dignified means of livelihood, their hopes to survive are falsely raised; instead of encouraging the people to earn honest wages through the sweat of their brow, they are promised instant wealth which benefits only a few individuals and not the society as a whole; instead of empowering the poor to release themselves from the debilitating clutches of poverty, gambling lords take advantage of the situation of the poor by perpetuating a vicious cycle of dependence which destroy the moral fiber of the citizens, and therefore the entire nation (see *CPBC Statement of Concern*, 3). In reality, gambling is a multifaceted problem with tentacles, which reach deep into society to touch not only society through rising crime rate, economics and politics but also the individual and the family unit. See Martin, 125. Paul did mention in general about immoral acts when he admonished church members in Romans about stealing, desiring what

poverty;⁵⁷ (9) poverty is a hindrance to good education;⁵⁸ and (10) hard work results in survival despite poverty.⁵⁹

Poverty is not Caused by Natural Calamities such as Floods and Droughts

Of the eighty deacons, 51.3% agree and 45% disagree that poverty is not caused by natural calamities such as floods and droughts.⁶⁰ There are those who have become poor due to natural calamities such as floods, and droughts. Natural calamities affect the lives of thousands of people every year. The poor are the first ones to be affected by them. When such calamities occur, they lose everything in such calamities or have

belongs to someone else – all these and any others besides (Rom. 13:9).

⁵⁷Of the eighty total respondents, 70% claimed that illiteracy causes poverty. See Chapter Two (original dissertation), 139, referring to table 10 and the following discussion. There are places in Iloilo where the literacy level is very low which may have been brought by jobless people or by unemployment. In some cases, mothers are forced to find a job outside the home, thereby leaving the younger children behind under the care of older children in the family. As a result, the older children are deprived of further education. See Huelar, 3. Again, Paul is also silent on this matter.

⁵⁸Of the eighty total respondents, 60% agree whereas on the opposite side, 40% of the respondents disagree. See Chapter Two (original dissertation), 139, referring to table 10. Many children do not have access to pre-school education. Parents cannot normally afford to send their children to private education because it is expensive. Paul further is silent on this issue.

⁵⁹Of the eighty total respondents, 86.3% claimed that hard work results in survival despite poverty. See Chapter Two (original dissertation), 139-40, referring to table 10. Filipinos are compared to a bamboo tree, which is pliant and resilient and able to adjust to any circumstances in life. Even in the worst poverty situation they can find something to work with their hands. They show their creativity and ingenuity in utilizing scrapped materials and other means to earn in order to survive. As it is mentioned before, they work for a very low daily wage rate in order to eat and survive.

⁶⁰See Chapter Two (original dissertation), 139, referring to table 10.

nothing to cling on to. Often times, without any money or skills to survive, they continue to remain poor.

Furthermore, aids or assistance from the government or private sectors for the victims are usually not received in full. Iloilo as an agricultural province suffers from floods and droughts affecting the lives and properties of the farmers and that of their families. Similarly, during Paul's time, while many Gentile converts were financially comfortable, the Jerusalem church had suffered from the effects of a severe famine (see Acts 11:28-30) [A.D. 25], a drought [A.D. 65], a hurricane [A.D. 64], an earthquake [A.D. 31], and epidemics [A.D. 29], and was struggling.⁶¹

Poverty Leads to Prostitution

Of the eighty total respondents, 63.8% claimed that Poverty leads to prostitution.⁶² There are women who are forced by economic pressures to sell their bodies. There are those who believe that it is their only means of survival. Others used this as stepping stone to have a better life such as using their income for education and support for younger siblings and/or family (isolated cases reveal that daughters of poor parents sold or rented them for money).

Though Paul is silent on this, according to Brian Rosner, the immoral lifestyle of the Corinthians,

⁶¹See Chapter One (original dissertation), 96, under the subsection on "Exegesis of 2 Corinthians 8:1-2,9."

⁶²See Chapter Two (original dissertation), 139, referring to table 10 and the following corresponding discussion. Of 1,200,000 street children in the Philippines, 100,000 are estimated to be involved in prostitution. The average annual increase of prostitution of children is 3,266. The Philippines' rank is fourth as the country with the highest number of prostituted children. For example, there are about 50,000 to 70,000 street children in Manila alone. See Michael Scott Knight, "Literary Research about Street Children: Around the World and Specifically in the Philippines," Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, (September, 2001), 22.

prostitution in particular, was a part of their social, economic and religious existence.⁶³

Squatting by Homeless People is a Result of Poverty

Of the eighty total respondents, 76.3% claimed that squatting by homeless people is a result of poverty.⁶⁴ The Philippines has 32,894,317 children who are below the age of eighteen. They make up almost forty-five percent (44.98%) of the total Philippine population of 73,130,985 in 1995. The total population of the Philippines as of May 1, 2000 is 76.5 million.⁶⁵ In the Philippines, the Department of Social Welfare and Development estimated that there are about 1,200,000 homeless street children. And this number rises annually by 6,365 children.⁶⁶ It cannot be denied that Iloilo City alone has a number of homeless, especially homeless children, who roam and beg in the streets. This problem has threatened the divine justice and human dignity. In Paul's time, the Roman economic system brought class divisions among the people. The class distinctions among the Romans were based mainly on wealth. There was a great contrast between rich and poor in the Roman world. Though Paul does not mention of the same situation, the effect of these so-called social classes resulted to poor people living in wooden houses crowded closely together in the

⁶³See Chapter One (original dissertation), 88, under the subsection on "Exegesis of Romans 15:26-27."

⁶⁴See Chapter Two (original dissertation), 139, referring to table 10 and their corresponding discussion in this dissertation.

⁶⁵2000 Census of Population and Housing Highlights, *National Statistics Office, 2000 FIES Final Results*, March 2002, xviii.

⁶⁶Michael Scott Knight, "An analysis of the Need for Social Ministry Classes at Philippine Baptist Theological Seminary, Baguio City, Philippines," M. Div. Thesis, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, (December 2001),22.

countryside, whereas the upper-class Romans lived in luxurious town houses.⁶⁷

Practical-Incarnational Implications

The following implications are as follows: (1) almsgiving is an expression of Christian generosity;⁶⁸ (2) relief efforts for the poor are an important testimony for Christian ministry; (3) rich churches should financially share with poor churches; (4) a life of poverty is modeled by Jesus in the Bible; (5) poverty can be eased through functional education;⁶⁹ (6) the rich can make use of their God-given wealth to help the poor; and (7) poverty can be minimized by the pooling of resources for the needy.

⁶⁷See Chapter One (original dissertation), 78, under the subsection on "Exegesis of Romans 15:26-27." See also Theissen, 41.

⁶⁸Of the eighty total respondents, 73.8% claimed that almsgiving is an expression of Christian generosity. See Chapter Two (original dissertation), 142, referring to table 10. As the saying goes, "You can give without loving but you cannot love without giving." In the same way, the deacons believe in benevolent offerings collected by the church for those who are in need. Almsgiving is still applicable today. Though, in Paul's time, the Holy City (Jerusalem) was the favorite location for the rabbis and their students who were dependent on charity. Since almsgiving in Yahweh's city was thought to be an especially meritorious act, the poor in general naturally drifted to Jerusalem. See Chapter One (original dissertation), 68-9, under the subsection on "Exegesis of Romans 15:26-27."

⁶⁹Of the eighty total respondents, 78.8% reflected that they "agree," and 11.3% claimed that they "strongly agree." See Chapter Two (original dissertation), 142, referring to table 10. Poor education has many obvious consequences: underemployment or unemployment, poor nutrition, bad housing conditions, ill health, bad retirement, and powerlessness to use the system for one's benefit. Education and quality of life are directly related. Lacking a good education means lacking among other things, access to the very doorway that leads to a wholesome life-style. Paul is also silent about this.

Relief Efforts for the Poor are an Important Testimony for Christian Ministry

In the above variable, of the eighty respondents, 61.3% reflected that they “agree,” and 15.0% claimed that they “strongly agree.”⁷⁰ Paul uses the term *κοινωνία* (here “contribution”) to emphasize the sense of sharing in a common cause (in this case, the relief of the needy Christians in Jerusalem) at some cost.⁷¹ For Paul, the intimate fellowship in the body of Christ has concrete economic implications, for he uses precisely the word *κοινωνία*, to designate financial sharing among believers (Gal. 2:10). Indeed, this financial sharing was just one part of a total fellowship. Economic sharing was an obvious and crucial part of Christian fellowship and ministry for Paul.⁷²

Rich churches Should Financially Share with Poor Churches

As indicated in the survey, of the eighty total respondents, 91.3% claimed that rich churches should financially share with poor churches.⁷³ The deacons believe that helping the poor churches especially in their finances will help them focus on the ministry or task given to them rather than in concentrating their effort in reaching their financial obligation. Paul assumed the task of demonstrating his commitment to the community in Jerusalem by calling upon other congregations to support the new congregation financially. He made the

⁷⁰See Chapter Two (original dissertation), 142, referring to table 10.

⁷¹See Chapter One (original dissertation), 113, under the section on “Summary of the Theological Concepts of *Πρωτός* and *Πρωχρία* in Pauline Literature.”

⁷²See Chapter One (original dissertation), 75, under the subsection on “Exegesis of Romans 15:26-27.” See also Sider, 95.

⁷³See Chapter Two (original dissertation), 142, referring to table 10 and their corresponding discussion in this dissertation.

Macedonian churches as a clear example for the rich Gentile Christians.⁷⁴ Accordingly, in 2 Cor. 8:1-2, Gal. 2:10, and Rom. 15:26-27 (see also 1 Cor. 16:1-4), the Apostle Paul had this desire to collect an offering from the Gentile churches, which were somewhat wealthy, in order to give it to the poor saints in Jerusalem who were in dire need.

A Life of Poverty is Modeled by Jesus in the Bible

Majority of the respondents (67.6%) of the respondents indicate that a life of poverty is modeled by Jesus in the Bible.⁷⁵ The deacons view this present life as a life of abundance and prosperity rather than a life of poverty. For the respondents poverty is a personal and godly choice.

On the other hand, for Paul, through Christ's poverty, the church receives in exchange abundant and lavish riches of grace (2 Cor. 2:4; 5:18, 9:15), which become the foundational resource for mutual sharing. Christ's becoming poor is the paradoxical ground of the true riches of the believer. It is also the basis and example for Christian giving.⁷⁶ Paul is showing the implications of divine solidarity for solidarity among believers. Here Paul is drawing out the implications of divine solidarity and applying them to behavior among human beings. Paul saw in Jesus Christ God's solidarity with poor humanity. Paul's model, in imitation of Christ, of downward mobility and relinquishment of an esteemed status for the sake of the Gospel remains a strong challenge for the wealthy to identify with the poor and lowly in the society. John Perkins, Viv Grigg, and others have underscored this in

⁷⁴Refer to Chapter One (original dissertation), 98, under the subsection on "Exegesis of 2 Cor. 8:1-2,9."

⁷⁵See Chapter Two (original dissertation), 143, referring to table 10 and their corresponding discussion in this dissertation.

⁷⁶Refer to Chapter One (original dissertation), 102-5, under the subsection on "Exegesis of 2 Cor. 8:1-2,9."

terms of the “concept of relocation.”⁷⁷ Relocation is making a community of need our home.⁷⁸ This practice is viable and possible for big local churches.

The Rich Can Make Use of their God-given Wealth to Help the Poor

Of the eighty total respondents, 85% claim that the rich can make use of their God-given wealth to help the poor.⁷⁹ Out of their generosity, voluntarily individual rich Christians or local churches have the chance and opportunity to extend monetary help or other means for the poor members. The deacons hope that conversion will take place in the hearts of the rich and they should live by God’s grace. Their possessions will no longer be the basis for their life nor a destructive power. The deacons believe that the rich were allowed a chance of salvation if they lived modestly and distributed their possessions generously to the poor. Riches, on the other hand, are given by God to be used in the service of the poor. That the rich Christians (first century) among them gave with overflowing generosity to meet a desperate need in the body of Christ indicates not naïve idealism but unconditional discipleship. The costly sharing of the first church stands as a constant challenge to Christians

⁷⁷Christians work together in terms of mobilizing spiritual and physical resources in and for communities of need through the Church. See John M. Perkins, *Beyond Charity: The Call to Christian Community Development* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1993), 184. If a church were to be planted in the city, it would have to address the economic issues in the process of its maturing and discipling of the poor. See further Viv Grigg, *Cry of the Urban Poor* (Monrovia, CA: MARC Publications, 1992), 56, 73.

⁷⁸If urban evangelism is to be truly to the whole world, this call cannot be neglected.

⁷⁹See Chapter Two (original dissertation), 142, referring to table 10. See also discussions on “The Rich Churches Should Financially Share with Poor Churches” and “The Poor Needs Help from the Rich” of this Chapter.

of all ages. They dared to give concrete, visible expression to the oneness of believers. The result was far-reaching economic liability for and financial availability to the other brothers and sisters in Christ.⁸⁰ This implies good stewardship as indicated in 1 Cor. 4:1, and 2 Cor. 8:8.

Poverty Can Be Minimized by the Pooling of Resources for the Needy

Of the eighty total respondents, 88.8% claimed that poverty can be minimized by the pooling of resources for the needy.⁸¹ The church at Jerusalem is a classical illustration of a larger sharing of life.⁸² “All who became Christians were together and held all they had for the common use. They sold their property and goods, and shared the proceeds according to their individual needs” (Acts 2:43-47, cf. 4:32-5:11). Paul alludes to this activity. Wherever people meet closely on a footing of equality, sharing is inevitable.⁸³ The pooling of resources issues a call to the recovery of an economically heterogeneous church, which is fully committed to justice for the poor. For instance, a local city church as a gathering of a cross section of society can play an important role in providing role models and “connections” for inner city neighborhoods that are economically and culturally

⁸⁰Refer to Chapter One (original dissertation), 77, under the subsection on “Romans 15:26-27.” See further Sider, 92.

⁸¹See Chapter Two (original dissertation), 142, referring to table 10 and their corresponding discussion in this dissertation. See also discussions on “Collection of Funds on behalf of the Poor is a Noble Act,” “Distribution of Relief Goods is an Expression of Christian Love,” and “Wealth is to Be Shared for Use by the Needy” of this Chapter.

⁸²Refer to Chapter One (original dissertation), 76-7, under the subsection on “Exegesis of Romans 15:26-27.”

⁸³See Chapter One (original dissertation), 113, on the section “Summary of the Theological Concepts of Πτωχός and Πτωχεία in Pauline Literature.” See also Walter Rauschenbusch, *Christianity and the Social Crisis* (London: The Macmillan Co., 1911), 120, 122.

isolated. Partnership relationships between rich and poor churches would be formed with the idea of pooling resources for God's mission in the city. One practical step for churches of economic means is to, at minimum, tithe building programs and mission budgets to congregations in poor urban neighborhoods that have programs or projects in need of funding assistance.

Implications of the Findings

This section enumerates the theological and practical implications of Paul's theology of *πτωχός* and *πτωχεία* to the contemporary understanding of *poor* and *poverty* among the deacons of CPBC in the province of Iloilo. These implications are important and significant to the mission and ministry of the CPBC churches. They could be mentioned in the following:

1. *There is a need for CPBC to be a model and catalyst for transformed relationships.*

As the Christian community is the salt and light of the world, Christians must set an example to the people around them. They must begin with themselves and become a model for society. But the Church is more than a model, it is an agent of transformation, a catalyst for change. The leaven of the Christian Church will leaven the whole lump of human society. The Christian message is revolutionary! It changes the lives of all who accept it in true faith. The church is the "responsible community."⁸⁴ The church is necessarily interested in the sufferings of humanity and it will show its concern by its actions.⁸⁵

⁸⁴Truman Douglas, *Why Go to Church* (New York, NY: Harper & Brothers, 1957), 47.

⁸⁵Franklin M. Segler, *A Theology of Church and Ministry* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1960), 32.

Likewise, by their Christian ideals and convictions, the recognition of the CPBC churches as models and catalysts for transformed relationships has far-reaching practical implications for all the Christian churches in the province of Iloilo.

2. There is a need for a mutual interdependence of the CPBC member-churches.

Rick Warren asserts that a culture of individualism and independence must be replaced with the biblical concepts of interdependence and mutuality.⁸⁶ Mutual interdependence means there will be no one-sided approach. We share what we have with each other: financial resources, personnel, experiences, etc. As Rene Padilla puts it, "interdependence comes with a deeper understanding of the nature of unity in Christ and of the situation in which other members of the body of Christ live."⁸⁷ In God's community, there must be a mutual sharing. Padilla further points out, "Life in community cannot be conceived in terms of a situation in which one section of the church is always on the giving end while another is always on the receiving end."⁸⁸ We need to learn to discover other churches' gifts and resources and to share with ours and others. Similarly, CPBC churches should have an attitude of learning and accepting help

⁸⁶Rick Warren, *The Purpose-Driven Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995; reprint, Manila Philippines: OMF Literature Inc., 1998), 369. A healthy world order would be marked by interdependence among nations and institutions, all blended with self-reliant independence. Peoples and nations, even in a just world, will necessarily depend upon one another, for not even the largest nation-states are completely self-sufficient. See William R. Burrows, *New Ministries: The Global Context* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1981), 22.

⁸⁷C. Rene Padilla, *Mission Between the Times: Essays on the Kingdom* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing House, 1985), 134.

⁸⁸*Ibid.*, 137.

from one another. They must acknowledge that, in Christ, God has given gifts without partiality to all local expressions of the Body of Christ and so they need each other in order to experience the full manifestation of the Body of which Christ is the Head. Then, they all have a responsibility to exercise those gifts and to create an environment in which others can exercise theirs. They need also to respect each other in their limitations and difficulties and try to build each other up, to be sensitive to the need of the other and willing to respond to them. Finally, the “local autonomy of the congregation” as one of the Baptist distinctives should not limit or deprive the church to exercise its role or function to its four corners but go beyond them when it is deemed necessary.

In his mission, Paul set a model for mutual interdependence of the Christian Church – particularly in his raising of a collection for the Jerusalem churches. From Paul’s perspective, the Church as the Body of Christ finds its real life in togetherness and interdependence. He emphasized that all members of Christ’s body are one and interdependent with each other. By comparing the church to the human anatomy, the apostle taught that much could be done if the members share the burdens of and cooperate with each other in ministry. Paul taught that the interdependent parts within the body, the Church, needed each other. Each member had a responsibility towards the body. In essence, God wills fundamentally transformed economic relationships among his people.⁸⁹ These biblical precedents challenge the CPBC churches in the twenty-first century, when global inequalities become visibly larger than ever, to move toward mutual interdependence, setting a new model, as a particular denomination, for the contemporary world.

⁸⁹Ronald J. Sider, *Cry Justice! The Bible on Hunger and Poverty* (Broadway, New York, NY: Paulist Press, 1980), 99.

Independence in the CPBC churches and other denominations can lead to provincialism and decay unless they remember the purpose of their independence. In the words of David Bosch, “we need new relationships, mutual responsibility, accountability, and interdependence (not independence!).”⁹⁰

3. *There is a need for the denomination's theological institutions to incorporate social ministry in their respective programs.*⁹¹

One important implication derived from this study is the need for social ministry courses to be offered under CPBC institutions. The whole existence of these institutions is to teach and train people to do ministry in a way that brings people to the salvation of Jesus Christ, educates the converts, and equips the called men and women of God for ministry. Michael Scott Knight says that the offering of courses that relate to social ministry at institutions, social ministry will become more prominent within the context of the Christian community.⁹²

⁹⁰David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991), 466.

⁹¹There is a need for social ministry to be done in the Philippines. The poverty in the Philippines is on the rise. On a national level in the Philippines from 1993-1998, 40.6 percent of the people lived in a state of poverty. In the urban areas of the Philippines from 1993-1998, 22.2 percent of the people lived in a state of poverty, and the rural areas of the Philippines had 51.2 percent of its people lived in a state of poverty. See Michael Scott Knight, “An analysis of the Need for Social Ministry Classes at Philippine Baptist Theological Seminary, Baguio City, Philippines,” M. Div. Thesis, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, (December 2001), 2-3.

⁹²This would also give prominence to the theological aspects that relate to social ministry within the Biblical context. This blend of theological knowledge and understanding and the implications of this information through the application of doing social ministry would build more capable and well-rounded ministers and lay workers in the church. Ibid., 87.

Christian institutions have the theological obligations not only to teach, but also to train students to do social ministry so as to give them a holistic approach in doing ministry.⁹³ One of the hindrances that prevents the churches in doing social ministry is the lack of education and training in the seminary and Bible schools.⁹⁴

In addition, CPBC institutions' focus is both on the teaching and doing. Their whole existence is to teach and train students to do ministry. Knight notes, "If Christian institutions avoid or ignore the idea of teaching and training future ministers in doing social ministry effectively, then they are ignoring an avenue of ministry that is needed in these current times."⁹⁵

4. There is a need for the denomination to recognize social ministry as a viable tool for mission and evangelism, and discipleship.

The church as the body of Christ is imbued by his Spirit and is continuing his ministry. The ministry of Jesus is the norm for the church's ministry.⁹⁶ Every function of the members of Christ's Body is a *διακονία* ("service"), and Christ himself is the primary holder of every *διακονία*.⁹⁷ Bloesch affirms that "social action is in reality the fruit and evidence of the Gospel."⁹⁸ The functional ministry of the church is a sort of translation of its ideal ministry into the language of on-going social activity.⁹⁹

⁹³Ibid., 88.

⁹⁴Ibid., 5.

⁹⁵Ibid., 83-4.

⁹⁶Franklin M. Segler, *A Theology of Church and Ministry* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1960), 23.

⁹⁷H. Richard Niehbur, *The Purpose of the Church and Its Ministry*, (New York, NY: Harper & Brothers, 1956), 31.

⁹⁸Donald G. Bloesch, *Essentials for Evangelical Theology: Life, Ministry, and Hope*, Vol. 2 (San Francisco, CA: Harper and Row Publishers, 1978), 56.

⁹⁹See Visser't Hooft and Oldham, *The Church and Its Function in Society* (Chicago: Willet, Clark and Co., 1937), 144-163.

People are all made in the image of God. Since we are created in His image, Christians should act like Him and do the things He has done. The Christian community need not only be emphatic to the plight of the poor and needy but they also need help that only the Christian community can offer them, which is the response of God through individual Christians and organizations.¹⁰⁰ They not only has the obligation to do social ministry as Christians, they also have a privilege to show the love and compassion image of God through doing acts of love and mercy in the name of Jesus Christ.¹⁰¹

Further, Dr. E. Samson notes that both ministry to the soul and ministry to the body are integral to the church's work.¹⁰² Likewise, CPBC pastors and workers are expected to model the biblical teachings and ideals not only on the spiritual dimensions but concerning social ministry as well. As Christian ministers and workers, they are also responsible to teach, to guide, and to mold their members in understanding the so-called social ministry. There is a strong mandate from God's Word regarding ministry to the total needs of persons.

Social ministry finds its basic model for integrating ministry and evangelism in how the early church interpreted the lordship of Christ.¹⁰³ Watkins says that

¹⁰⁰Knight, 81.

¹⁰¹Ibid.

¹⁰²See discussion on the "Significance of the Study", 12, under the "Introduction" of this dissertation. A truly holistic ministry defines evangelism and social action as functionally separate, relationally inseparable and essential to the total ministry of the church. See Tetsunao Yamamori, et al, eds., *Serving with the Poor in Asia* (Monrovia, CA: MARC Publications, 1995), 133-93.

¹⁰³Social ministers are always looking for opportunities to reach out and serve. When we are aware of another's need, it is our Christian responsibility to make our helping presence available in such a way that the person can receive it and use it. Our love for our neighbors should cause us to seek them out in their time of need and to make our resources available to them. See Darrel R. Watkins, *Christian Social Ministry: An Introduction* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1993), 100.

many programs have earned the distrust of the community because they are used as bait for adding members to the church (e.g. "rice Christian").¹⁰⁴ Our helping with physical, emotional, mental, and relational needs should be something we do as a matter, of course, because we are Christians.¹⁰⁵ Social ministry should not be separated from our identity and real purpose of the church, which is God's mandate of helping people and leading people to Christ. Therefore, social ministry should be a means of CPBC churches for witnessing Jesus Christ and making disciples (not Christians) of Christ but should avoid being conditional bait of making "rice Christian"¹⁰⁶ or increasing numbers of the church.

5. There is a need to re-educate the CPBC churches towards the validity and appropriateness of social ministry.

Poverty is one of the biggest problems in the Philippines. In spite of the initiatives of the government to eradicate poverty since the time of President Ramos, it remains one of the biggest problems the country is facing. During the time of President Estrada, poverty incidence raised from 32 to 35 percent. The government is losing its battle against it. For example, even with its continuous efforts to eradicate street children, its number

¹⁰⁴Ibid., 110.

¹⁰⁵Ibid., 111-112.

¹⁰⁶Jun Vencer concurs that when the Gospel is preached during relief, many would probably respond to the invitation to receive Christ as Savior and Lord. The risk of making "rice Christians" is there. One way to minimize the making of "rice Christians" would be not to emphasize pre-relief but post-relief evangelism. The people then would be free to attend or not to attend a Bible Study. An appropriate follow-up program yields genuine results. See Jun Vencer, *The Church and Relief* (Quezon City, Philippines: Philippine Relief and Development Services, Inc., 1990), 12.

has increased sevenfold from 223,000 in 1991 to 1.5 million in 1999.¹⁰⁷

The church, as a community institution, needs to fill the gap left by the government in relation to social ministry. The church needs to continue doing social ministry even when the government is unable because of lack of budget. The problem is that the majority of the churches are not doing social ministry. This could be because the people are not aware of their responsibility to do social ministry as well as the lack of knowledge and skills required in doing social ministry. There needs to be more training and education in the area of social ministry to help the churches begin working with the Philippine government to help eradicate poverty. Pastors and church workers need to have a clear theology of social ministry in the light of this concern.

Knight further notes that the Church has many resources, including the social minister, gifted staff, and facilities, financial resources, and community resources.¹⁰⁸ Many of our buildings are unused during the week, and they could be used to help persons. Some churches designate the “plate offerings” to benevolence on the fifth Sunday of each quarter. Others include benevolence in the regular budget. Church can utilize educational system and hospitals and public buildings of the community for adult basic education, vocational training, and literacy training.¹⁰⁹

6. There is a need to offer financial assistance for the poor CPBC churches.

The quality of life of the *poor* in Iloilo was found to be far from desirable. Their condition was characterized by

¹⁰⁷Knight, 80.

¹⁰⁸Knight, 136.

¹⁰⁹*Ibid.*

low monthly per capita income and poor housing condition. The government welfare services in the community which would have ameliorated their living condition were inadequate if not absent. Thus, they suffered more under poverty. Factors affecting the poor quality of poor people include, low educational attainment, irregular or seasonal work, big household size with average of seven members of household, unemployment and underemployment of its members of labor force age, and daily maintenance from farming and fishing. In like manner, poor members of CPBC churches have the same situation.

At this juncture, the rich could help emancipate the oppressed, augment opportunities for the less privileged, and enhance benefits for the marginalized people of the community. They could utilize their resources to render praiseworthy service to God through various avenues conducive to members especially to the less fortunate ones. However, Little says, "Experience has taught us that all assistance must be temporary and empowering in order to avoid unhealthy dependency."¹¹⁰ Thus, there is a need for the *poor* to view monetary collection and benevolence as a provisional means of support. Therefore, CPBC rich Christians, if possible, must witness to the importance of a caring society.¹¹¹

This scenario entails the sharing of basic resources like food, water, the means of healing, and knowledge to

¹¹⁰Christopher R. Little, "Whatever Happened to the Apostle Paul? An Exposition of Paul's Teaching and Practice of Giving," *Mission Frontiers* 23:3 (September 2001), 26.

¹¹¹Men and women are intended to grow to maturity as members of the community, in which they learn to understand one another, to relate to one another by co-operation and shared experience, and to bear one another's burdens. See John F. Sleeman, *Economic Crisis: A Christian Perspective* (Bloomsbury Street, London: SCM Press, 1976), 76.

the *poor*. Paul enjoins everyone that to belong to one Body of Christ involves sharing of all God's gifts to us, so that there might be equality among all members (2 Cor. 8:14-15). To the extent that this standard is obeyed, dire poverty will be eliminated (Acts 2:42-47). Accordingly, the Antiochene Church took up an offering for the Jerusalem Church during a famine (Acts 11:27-30). This was clearly an act of Christian compassion, which needs to be followed today. When Christian communities suffer an overwhelming disaster that depletes their local resources, then their brethren around should be ready to offer help.

7. There is a need to biblically practice stewardship in the CPBC churches.

Stewardship is the commitment of life and possessions to the service of Christ. It is not primarily a method of raising money for the church but a means of developing mature Christians. To be sure, a true sense of Christian stewardship will also serve as a financial safeguard against economic problems. Its motivation is gratitude expressed in sacrificial giving to the church, regardless of the circumstances of life.¹¹² Tom Sine puts the challenge of stewardship well:

“We need to understand, if we are to be the people of God and follow Christ who identifies with the poor, it means more than giving out our leftovers. We need to move back to jubilarly stewardship models. Jubilarly stewardship is based on the assumption that ‘the earth is the Lord’s.’ If the earth is indeed the Lord’s do I get to keep in a world in which 800 million people are not able to survive. We need a whole new theology in all of our churches that understands

¹¹²Segler, 32.

that we are part of the international body of Jesus Christ. We are called to lives of greater responsibility and greater celebration under the reign of God."¹¹³

Shubin notes that when the Church gives less than 4 percent of its income to all charitable causes, we need to ask ourselves why we invest so little in His Kingdom from those resources He has entrusted to us.¹¹⁴ In the same fashion, given a call to be economists in God's house, CPBC churches should look to see where God's resources are not being properly distributed in the church and society, beginning with "ourselves."

8. There is a need to create different training programs and seminars for jobless Church members.

The CPBC should continually provide a program for members to learn a trade or special skill. Moreover, there is a need for continuing education and further training in the area of entrepreneurship and economic strategy among CPBC churches. This continuing and further enhancement of the leaders and members' skills would eventually lead to the effective administration of social services. Therefore, the creation of more regular jobs for adult members of CPBC is essential. More of these jobs should be in production rather than in services, because only the latter will eventually result in a self-sufficient family. Of course, the said proposal entails a proportionate monetary budget and other means.

¹¹³Tom Sine, "Shifting Christian Mission into the Future Tense," *Missiology: An International Review*, Vol. XV, No.1 (January, 1987): 152.

¹¹⁴Russell G. Shubin, "Where Your Treasure Is ...," *Mission Frontier* 23:3 (September 2001): 12 (10-14).

9. There is a need to put up Preschool Program for the benefit of the poor members' children and the community.

The province of Iloilo is characterized by many surviving and poor barangays. Since these are poor and slum areas, the literacy level is very low. These areas are characterized by a very low family income. It is striking to note that in order to augment this deficiency, mothers are forced to find job outside the home, thereby leaving the younger children behind under the care of older children in the family. As a result, the older children are deprived of further education. They are left without parental guidance and finally fall into the trap of gambling and drug addiction.¹¹⁵

The purpose of Preschool Program is to inculcate Christian virtues to children's minds and hearts and evidently promoting righteousness for our nation seeking favor before God and man. Second, to develop Christian leaders for our community and for our nation as a whole. Third, to reach and teach children positive Christian values. Fourth, to teach children the Christian way of life while they are young and molding is easy (Prov. 22:6). Fifth, to extend quality Christian education to poor families who cannot afford to send their children to private schools. As a result, this will lower the possibilities of mothers seeking jobs outside the home. The presence of mothers in the home will afford the necessary parental guidance that children badly need.¹¹⁶

Recommendations for Further Study

Given this situation, it is obvious that the solution to the problem of poverty requires a holistic integrative approach. It is evident that the conditions within which we

¹¹⁵May K. Huelar, *Feasibility Study: Jesus Christ is Lord Learning Center*, (Iloilo City, 1982), 2-4.

¹¹⁶*Ibid.*

find poor people in especially difficult circumstances are varied and complex. Having known the specific factors and manifestations of poverty, which affect the poor, the researcher suggests the following recommendations for further study and actions that may aid in the proper and effective exercise of Church ministry to the *poor*. These recommendations are as follows.

1. The churches should be educated and equipped concerning the issues of poverty and struggles of the *poor* through regular seminars, workshop and literature.
2. There is a need to manifest visible and transparent Christian witness in the proper exercise of church funds particularly for the *poor*.
3. There is a need to improve the procedure and the practice of Christian giving and stewardship among the churches.
4. There should be a united effort, with a sense of accountability, to be made at the denominational level to address the issues and the problems of the *poor* and *poverty*.
5. The Church should adopt the apostolic model of *διακονία* ("service"), which reflects sacrificial attitudes and a caring community.
6. The church should discover and exercise the neglected incarnational gifts – sharing, caring and giving (cf. Rom. 12:8-9).
7. The adoption of a deprived community by a rich local church to serve as a catalyst.
8. The churches should practice the stewardship of the earth's resources.
9. A simple life-style of the members of the Body of Christ.
10. The churches should show solidarity with the *poor* in every way and participate in their struggles against injustice.
11. An additional study needs to be conducted in relation to how churches participate in the social ministry aspects.
12. There should be solidarity among Christian congregations in the issue of poverty and injustice.