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# Paul's Collection: resources for a materialist theology

DAVID HORRELL

One of the most important gatherings in the life of the infant Church, perhaps the first ever Christian 'conference', was the meeting between Paul and some of the Jerusalem apostles which took place in Jerusalem, probably between 48 and 51 CE.<sup>1</sup> This so-called 'Apostolic Council' was a part of the process whereby the Church wrestled with the problems and issues raised by the incorporation of Gentiles into its membership. On what basis were the converted Gentiles to be accepted as members of this body, and what regulations were incumbent upon them?

Paul describes this meeting in Gal. 2:1-10, probably, in my view, the same meeting recounted in Acts 15:1-29, though portrayed somewhat differently there.<sup>2</sup> After his initial concern that he might have been found to have been 'running in vain' (Gal. 2:2), Paul was relieved to find his role as Apostle to the Gentiles accepted and affirmed, without any additions or subtractions being made to his gospel (Gal. 2:6-9). The only thing urged upon him by the so-called 'pillars' of the Jerusalem church, Peter, James and John, was that he should 'remember the poor', something which, Paul tells us, he was in any case eager to do (Gal. 2:10). So began the project known as the collection; a project which occupied a good deal of Paul's time and attention as he sought to organise the collection of funds from his Gentile churches to be delivered to Jerusalem.

The history of this collection project is hard to recover in detail.<sup>3</sup> Utilizing the evidence of Acts, in conjunction with that of the epistles, raises particular problems.<sup>4</sup> Acts 11:27-30 refers to relief sent from Antioch to Jerusalem during a time of famine, delivered by Barnabas and Saul. Knox regarded this as a chronologically misplaced reference to the delivery of the collection, the correct occasion for which was the visit of Paul to Jerusalem reported in Acts 21:15.<sup>5</sup> Georgi argues that Acts 11:27-30 refers to an Antiochene collection (not, he maintains, delivered by Barnabas and Saul); an 'effort undertaken in Antioch after and in accordance with the Jerusalem agreement'.<sup>6</sup> Nickle also takes Acts 11:27-30 to refer to an earlier Antiochene collection, but suggests that this Antioch famine relief was sent prior to Paul's agreement in Jerusalem to commence his larger collection project. Hence, he suggests, the present tense of the verb *mnēmoneuōmen* in Gal. 2:10 – the verb implies that a course of action already begun is to be continued.<sup>7</sup>

Whatever the earlier fundraising efforts of the Antioch community, Paul's major collection project spread much further; to the churches of Galatia, Achaia, and Macedonia. Paul's instructions to the Corinthians, he tells us, are a repeat of those he has already given to the churches of Galatia (1 Cor. 16:1-4). The same passage also suggests that the Corinthians have already heard of the collection project and have perhaps sought further information from Paul in the letter they wrote to him.<sup>8</sup> The collection may have broken down in Galatia, perhaps due to the conflicts in which Paul's letter to the Galatians is embroiled. It certainly broke down for a time in Corinth. The cause there too was almost certainly conflict with Paul and disaffection with him in the congregation, in particular the

painful visit which caused Paul such grief and led to his withdrawal from Corinth (2 Cor. 2:1-11). In 2 Cor. 8-9, however, we witness the rekindling of the collection project, and Paul's attempt to ensure that the collection is ready when he arrives from Macedonia (2 Cor. 9:2-5). From Rom. 15:25-26 we learn that both Macedonia and Achaia (the province in which Corinth was situated) did indeed make their contributions to the collection, and that as Paul wrote Romans he was preparing to travel to Jerusalem to deliver the gifts. The sum involved is hard to judge, as is the reception Paul, his travelling companions, and the money, received when they arrived in Jerusalem. The silence of Acts on the collection (see only Acts 24:17) has led many to suspect that it was not well received, and that Paul's hopes were disappointed (see Rom. 15:30-32).<sup>9</sup>

The various references Paul makes to the collection indicate its importance to him, and also offer important evidence for any reconstruction of the relative chronology of Paul's letters.<sup>10</sup> But what was the main motivation for Paul? Why was the collection so important? Three main reasons have been suggested, and they are reasons which may be complementary factors, rather than mutually exclusive alternatives.<sup>11</sup>

### **Reasons for the Collection**

One reason suggested for the collection is primarily eschatological and rooted in a particular view of salvation history. The collection may be linked with the themes expressed in Rom. 9-11. The mission to the Jews had not been a success; on the whole they had rejected the gospel. The Gentiles, on the other hand, had received and accepted the good news. The collection, accompanied by representatives from the Gentile churches, would fulfil the prophets' vision of the nations going up to Jerusalem 'in the last days' (Isa. 2:2-4; Micah 4:1-3).<sup>12</sup> It would provoke the Jews to jealousy (Rom. 10:19; 11:11-16) and thus lead to their salvation. The delivery of the collection, as a symbolic representation of the pilgrimage of the redeemed Gentiles to Zion, would play an instrumental role in God's plan of salvation, and in hastening the consummation of the end.

A second reason has to do with the unity of the Church. It is clear that there were tensions between Paul and the Jerusalem church leaders, tensions which arose not least because of their different understandings of what the gospel was and of the basis on which the Gentiles could be full members of this new community in Christ – need they be circumcised? (See Gal. 2 etc.) The collection, then, may be seen as Paul's attempt to demonstrate 'the solidarity of all believers in the one Body of Christ';<sup>13</sup> to demonstrate to the Jerusalem church the fruit the gospel had borne among the Gentiles, and to encourage the Jerusalem church to recognise the Pauline churches as part of the whole Church of Christ. One may see the collection as part of the process whereby Paul sought to convince 'the Jerusalem church [leaders] of the legitimacy of the law-free congregations he had founded, so that they would stop trying to undermine them.'<sup>14</sup> Hence Paul's fears that the collection will not be accepted by those in Jerusalem (Rom. 15:30-31): to accept the collection would be to accept the validity of the Pauline congregations, to reject it would be to refuse to recognise them.

The third reason for the collection is simply to give financial assistance: it is a charitable redistribution of money to those who are in need. Its closest Jewish parallel may have been the practice of almsgiving, as Berger argues.<sup>15</sup> Such a focus on charity as a major reason for the collection is challenged by the theory

that the term 'the poor' (Hebrew: *ebionim*) was a self-designation of the Jerusalem Christians, and not a socio-economic description (cf. Gal. 2:10). However, Keck has shown this to be extremely unlikely, and, in any case, Paul specifically states that the collection is for 'the poor among the saints in Jerusalem' (Rom. 15:26).<sup>16</sup> Moreover, the evidence adduced by Jeremias suggests that many of the poor in Jerusalem were dependent upon charity or relief.<sup>17</sup> The infant Christian church in Jerusalem took responsibility for its own needy members (Acts 4:34-35; 6:1) and may soon have reached a point where it needed support from outside communities. Paul would presumably have known of this situation, having previously visited Jerusalem to meet Peter and James (Gal. 1:18-19).

Each of these reasons is basically theological. The eschatological, salvation-historical motivation is certainly rooted in a particular conception of what God is doing to work for the salvation of all creation (Rom. 11:25-32; 8:18-25), though it is probably the hardest for us to use as a contemporary theological resource, and the most alien to our way of thinking, not least because it implies that the consummation of all things was imminent around the time when Paul delivered the collection. Whether this was central to Paul's own understanding of the collection may be doubted, however, not least because he planned, once the collection had been delivered, to visit the Roman church on his way to begin a mission in Spain (Rom. 15:24, 28). Indeed, it is a reason which hardly emerges explicitly from Paul's own discussions of the collection project.

The ideal of church unity is, for Paul, an expression of the oneness of many members in Christ's body (1 Cor. 12:12-27; Rom. 12:4-5), and in particular he would wish to underscore his insistence that the Gentiles find their place in the body through faith in Christ alone, without additional requirements such as circumcision (Gal. 2:15-16; 5:1-12). Paul may have understood the collection in these terms, though again his own statements hardly formulate this explicitly. Nevertheless, the idea of the collection as a symbol of Christian unity and mutual concern may certainly be of contemporary relevance. Indeed, some years ago, Oscar Cullmann on this basis encouraged Catholics and Protestants to engage in a reciprocal collection project: Church unity was scarcely possible, but such a project would at least demonstrate their mutual regard and concern.<sup>18</sup>

The reason, however, which emerges most clearly as Paul's fundamental motivation for the collection is the desire to relieve the poverty of the poor among the saints in Jerusalem. But how does Paul regard such charitable redistribution as grounded and undergirded theologically? And what might we learn from his formulations in this regard? Here I turn to 2 Cor. 8-9, Paul's most extended discussion of the collection. These chapters are the main source for any insight into the reasons Paul gave to motivate giving; the rationale for generosity. I shall focus in particular on 2 Cor. 8:9-15. (Unspecified chapter and verse references hereafter refer to these two chapters of 2 Corinthians.)

## **2 Corinthians 8-9**

It is important to note, first of all, that Paul portrays generous giving as essentially a sign of the grace of God at work (8:1).<sup>19</sup> Underlying the whole project is the 'inexpressible gift of God' (9:15). Moreover, the collection is no merely material undertaking. On the contrary, it is to result in thanksgiving and glory to God (9:11-13): 'both chapters show Paul's deep concern that the

Collection for the Saints should not only be an act of charity but an act overflowing in praise to God'.<sup>20</sup> Here then Paul's language reveals his conviction that an essentially material act – the giving of money – is of itself profoundly theological.

Paul's first way of inspiring the Corinthians to give is to tell them of the grace of God at work among the Macedonians (8:1-5). The Macedonians begged Paul to permit them to share in the grace and fellowship of serving the saints through the collection (8:4), and it is their enthusiasm that has led to Titus being urged to return to Corinth to complete the task of organising the collection which he previously began there (8:6). It may have been that, because of their deep poverty (8:2), Paul was initially reluctant to encourage the Macedonians to contribute.<sup>21</sup> However, the fact that he allowed them to do so highlights the fact that the collection cannot be viewed as arising solely from a concern to redistribute wealth from rich to poor. Paul organised no collections between other churches, but saw especial significance in a collection being made for Jerusalem.

Paul perhaps flatters the Corinthians a little in verse 7, writing of their abundance in everything (in 'faith and word and knowledge . . .' etc.), hoping that this will serve as the basis for an appeal to them to abound also in 'this grace' which is the collection. He does not, however, wish their giving to be a response to a command on his part, but rather to emanate from their own eagerness and love (8:8).

Paul's second major point of motivation, a model for the Corinthians of free and generous grace, is the example of 'our Lord Jesus Christ, who being rich, for your sakes became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich' (8:9). Scholars have argued over this verse: does Paul here refer to the incarnation,<sup>22</sup> or to the form of death which Christ accepted?<sup>23</sup> The former is in my view more likely, as it is in Phil. 2:5-11, a passage where a similar christological pattern is expounded. It is a pattern which may aptly be described as one of 'interchange': 'Christ became what we are, in order that, in him, we might become what he is.'<sup>24</sup> However, a further question arises: what does Paul mean here by 'rich' and 'poor'? It is certainly hard to interpret the verse as implying that Christ gave up material wealth, and still more unsatisfactory to suggest that the purpose of his becoming poor was to make Christians economically rich.<sup>25</sup> Nevertheless, we should also be wary of over-spiritualising the verse, and losing its connection with material realities. For one thing is certain from the passage: Paul considers that this christological statement is *relevant* as a motivation for the giving of money – that could hardly be more material. 'Paul dares to suggest a vital connection between the Christ event and his overdue collection. Material and spiritual are unapologetically lumped together.'<sup>26</sup>

The fundamental point of 2 Cor. 8:9, then, is that the self-giving of Christ can serve as a model for the self-giving of Christian people, and that this self-giving includes the giving of material things like money. Paul's appeal to the Corinthians to abound in 'this grace (*charis*)' (8:7) – the collection – is grounded in the example of 'the grace (*charis*) of the Lord Jesus Christ'. In its context in 2 Corinthians 8, verse 9 implies that imitating Christ may have material consequences, and not only 'spiritual' ones. Furthermore, Paul's use of the Christological pattern in this context implies that his demand may be more than a demand for almsgiving, for the giving of what one can spare. It is a demand for the giving of oneself, a self-emptying like the *kenōsis* of Christ (Phil. 2:7); a

giving in which one actually *becomes poor*.<sup>27</sup> Paul clearly believed that his own imitation of Christ called him to a pattern of life which was 'humble' in social as well as spiritual terms. His weaknesses, the only things about which he will ironically boast (2 Cor. 11:30), include, among other things, labouring with his own hands (1 Cor. 4:12), thus humbling himself rather than receive financial support from the Corinthian church (1 Cor. 9:1-23; 2 Cor. 11:7), in conscious imitation of the one who humbled himself even to death on a cross (Phil. 2:5-8; 1 Cor. 11:1, cf. 2 Thess. 3:7-9; Acts 20:34-35).<sup>28</sup> The 'lifestyle' to which Paul points Christians is, in Morna Hooker's words, 'that of one who emptied himself, became poor, and identified himself with sinful mankind'.<sup>29</sup>

Does this then mean that Christianity is, at least for Paul, essentially about self-abasement, self-impoverishment, about a 'worm-like' humility; the very ethos Nietzsche so despised? The answer, at least from this passage in 2 Corinthians, must be in the negative. For Paul in the following verses explicitly confronts the idea that he has called the Corinthians to bring distress and affliction upon themselves, while others enjoy relief and plenty. His intention is 'not that there should be relief for others and affliction for you, but it is a matter of equality' (8:13). The purpose of exhorting the rich – those who at present have 'abundance' (8:14) – to 'become poor', in order that others might be enriched, is not that the two groups might exchange places; the purpose, rather, is that inequalities might be removed. Those who have plenty in the present should supply those who lack, aware that at some point, or in some different way, the reverse may occur (8:14; cf. Rom. 15:27).

The concept of equality (*isotēs*) was strongly developed in Greek thought, especially in the legal context.<sup>30</sup> Equality is linked with justice/righteousness (*dikaïosunē*), particularly in the writing of Philo, for whom 'the mother of justice is equality'.<sup>31</sup> For Philo, however, 'equality' is essentially to be seen as the ordering work of God the Creator.<sup>32</sup> Such a view of 'equality' can easily become deterministic, affirming the order of the world as it is, rather than challenging it: God apportions to each their lot.<sup>33</sup> Paul however, does not present such a view, even though he sees 'equality' as the motivating source of the collection project (8:13 – *ex isotētos*).<sup>34</sup> His aim, rather, is that the human action which he seeks to inspire and encourage will lead to the equality which is God's purpose (8:14).

Paul, like Philo, quotes Exodus 16:18 as a scriptural illustration of the equitable distribution which is the divine will: 'the one who had much did not have too much, and the one who had little did not have too little' (8:15).<sup>35</sup> Philo sees this Exodus passage as an example of the perfect distribution accomplished by the divine *logos*. In this, he is perhaps closer to the meaning of the original than Paul: in Exodus 16 it is a divinely wrought providential miracle which ensures that 'each had collected as much as they needed to eat'. Paul quotes the verse, however, as a vision of what human action, in the form of the collection, should achieve. For Paul, the divine objective of equality is to be realised through the generous actions of Christian people, inspired as they are by the grace of God.

After outlining to the Corinthians the practical arrangements regarding those whom he is sending to organise the final preparation of the collection at Corinth (8:16-9:5), Paul gives the Corinthians one more reason for generosity: 'the one who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the one who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully' (9:6). But their giving must be freely and lovingly

undertaken, as was Christ's giving of himself (Gal. 1:4; 2:20; Mark 10:45; 1 Tim. 2:6 etc), for, in an oft-quoted phrase; 'God loves a cheerful giver' (9:7).<sup>36</sup> The comfortable rich who wish to remain so may interpret this to mean that if they can only give a little cheerfully, and would resent giving more, then God would rather they only gave a little. Paul, it is clear, puts things rather differently: where the grace of God abounds, there people of their own free-will will abound in good deeds (9:8), like the righteous one whom the scripture describes as scattering gifts freely to the poor (9:9).<sup>37</sup>

Paul concludes his discussion by describing the collection in deeply theological terms:<sup>38</sup> it is the harvest of righteousness (9:10), causing an abundance of thanksgiving to God (9:11,12), and bringing glory to God (9:13). Participation in the collection is described as 'the obedience of your confession of the gospel of Christ' (9:13). It is evidence, above all, of the surpassing grace of God (9:14).

### **Conclusion: resources for contemporary theology**

The rich theological language which Paul uses to describe the collection should not lead us to over-spiritualize his concerns in these chapters, as some of the commentaries tend to do. His main concern is essentially and unavoidably material: the collection of money. The fact that Paul can use such theological language to describe and inspire such a project is of profound significance. It does not imply that Paul's concerns are spiritual as opposed to material, but rather demonstrates that he views such material action as itself an expression of gospel theology. The collection for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem is a sign of the working of the grace of God, a harvest of righteousness, and a cause for great thanksgiving. Paul therefore reminds us that the outworkings of the grace and righteousness of God do not merely encompass the 'spiritual' dimensions of life, but are expressed also in social action; in the redistribution of money, and in the realisation of the divinely willed equality. It might be more true to Paul were we to say that the 'spiritual' and 'material' dichotomy is a false and ultimately unsustainable distinction; in the collection project we see that the preventient grace of God, the grace which is at work to give birth to acts of justice/righteousness, gives rise to financial generosity, which is in turn a source of prayers, thanksgiving and glory to God. The spiritual and material, the social and theological, are here inextricably intertwined.

Paul's collection project, and in particular his treatment of the subject in 2 Cor 8:9-15, seem to me to offer profoundly valuable scriptural resources for a materialist theology; by which I mean a theology which engages with social, economic and political realities, a theology which insists that the gospel has to do with the whole of life, including the material conditions and socio-economic relationships in which people are enmeshed.<sup>39</sup> Paul's use of the example of Christ's self-giving in this context is of immense significance. It demonstrates that this voluntary self-giving, the fundamental pattern for all Christian discipleship, has socio-economic, as well as spiritual, implications. It demonstrates that imitating Christ is a way of life which encompasses the whole of life, in all its spiritual, physical, social and material conditions.

Paul's Christology, combined with his insistence that Christian living is about imitating Christ and about being conformed to the pattern of his self-giving death (2 Cor. 4:7-12; 5:14-15; Gal. 2:20 etc), presents a profound challenge to those of us who live in the richest parts of a world where millions

live in desperate poverty; a world, moreover, in which many of the poorest countries are economically crippled by an enormous burden of debt.<sup>40</sup> The model of the collection, in such a global context, would surely inspire a massive act of redistributive charity. Or would it? Is what Paul offers here a 'theology of charity', or is it more radical even than that? One of the problems, of course, with 'charity' is that it fails to change fundamentally the social and economic positions of either rich or poor. The rich give a little of what they can spare, and the poverty of the poor is a little relieved; but structural inequalities remain.

Paul's christological statement in 2 Cor. 8:9, it must be said, formulates a pattern with a structural depth which goes far beyond a call for charity. The model, the inspiration, rather, is that the Lord Jesus Christ *became poor*, for the sake of others, that they might *become rich*. The pattern of Christ's self-giving expresses a challenge more profound than an appeal for charity, and implies that the rich may actually experience a fundamental change in their position as a result of their Christ-like, costly self-giving. They may find themselves, at least to some extent and in some ways, impoverished, emptied, as they follow Christ. Paul recognizes that this is the implication of his statement of the christological *exemplum*,<sup>41</sup> for he proceeds immediately to clarify his request: he is not asking the Corinthians to bring affliction upon themselves, in order to relieve others; his desire is that there should be equality. The aim of structural change is not reversal, but equality.

Paul's introduction of the concept and goal of equality into his discussion adds a vital complement and qualification to the christological pattern of self-giving. In the context of the challenge to financial self-giving it introduces invaluable elaboration of the aims and intentions of such giving. The aim, for Paul, of economic redistribution is not that Christians with something to give might impoverish themselves, but that a state of equality might be attained. The self-lowering of the relatively wealthy is a means of achieving equality. This equality is rooted in the will of God, but is to be realised through responsible human action.

Paul thus offers, I believe, theological resources which are of considerable value to a Christian community placed among the richest nations of the world. The resources Paul offers of course require elaboration and development to speak adequately to our own context; but scriptural resources, written in a particular historical setting, always need such work in order to speak to a different and equally specific setting. For one thing, Paul's collection aims only to relieve the needs of 'the poor *among the saints*'; it is an intra-ecclesial project. However, it is not hard to justify broadening the scope of Christian self-giving, even from Paul's own theological formulations. Christ's self-giving, the pattern by which Christian discipleship is shaped, was certainly, for Paul, a giving for all (2 Cor. 5:14-21). Indeed, it was a self-giving that had redemptive significance not only for humanity, but for the whole of creation (Rom. 8:18-25). In a world threatened by major ecological and environmental disasters, by the collapse of third world economies under an ever-increasing debt burden, and by an ever-widening gap between rich and poor, Paul has much to say. To interpret the calling of the Christian as a calling to imitate the self-giving of Christ, and to see this at least in part as a challenge to step down in the world economically, may be deeply discomfiting to those who are rather attached to a lifestyle dependent upon high levels of consumption and material wealth. But is not a reduction in levels of acquisition and consumption among the relatively rich the only way in



which a sustainable equality could be attained in the current global context? As we contemplate such a challenge, we might remind ourselves of Paul's insistence that the extent to which we are willing to give, in order that others might share equally in the world's resources, is a measure of the extent to which the grace of God is truly at work among us.<sup>42</sup>

## Notes

1. Among the works which deal with the chronological questions, see D. Georgi, *Remembering the Poor: The History of Paul's Collection for Jerusalem*, Abingdon Press, 1992, pp.128-137 (48 CE); J. Knox, *Chapters in a Life of Paul*, SCM Press, revised edition 1989, p.68 (51 CE); R. Jewett, *Dating Paul's Life*, SCM Press, 1979, p.100 (51 CE); G. Lüdemann, *Paul: Apostle to the Gentiles. Studies in Chronology*, SCM Press, 1984, p.262 (47 or 50 CE).
2. See Knox, *Chapters in a Life of Paul*, pp.47-49; G. Lüdemann, *Early Christianity according to the Traditions in Acts: A Commentary*, SCM Press, 1989, pp.171-172.
3. The two most detailed works in this regard are Georgi, *Remembering the Poor*; and K. Nickle, *The Collection: A Study in Paul's Strategy*, SCM Press, 1966.
4. As it does for Pauline chronology generally; see further Knox, *Chapters in a Life of Paul*; Lüdemann, *Paul: Apostle to the Gentiles*.
5. Knox, *Chapters in a Life of Paul*, pp.49-52.
6. Georgi, *Remembering the Poor*, p.44, see pp.43-48.
7. See Nickle, *The Collection*, pp.23-32, 59-60; E. Burton, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians*, T. & T. Clark, 1921, p.99.
8. See 1 Cor. 7:1, and J. C. Hurd, *The Origin of 1 Corinthians*, SPCK, 1965, pp.65-74, who drew particular attention to the sections in 1 Corinthians which begin with the words *peri de* ('and concerning . . .'), as do 7:1 and 16:1.
9. Georgi argues that 'the total sum gathered for the collection must have been considerable', *Remembering the Poor*, p.123; on the reception the collection may have received, see pp.122-127. Nickle, however, believes that 'the amount given was not great', *The Collection*, p.129; and on the partial success of the collection, see pp.155-156.
10. See Lüdemann, *Paul: Apostle to the Gentiles*, esp. pp.77-100. On the collection's importance to a more general chronology of Paul's life, see also C. H. Buck, 'The Collection for the Saints', *Harvard Theological Review* 43 (1950), pp.1-29; N. Hyldahl, *Die paulinische Chronologie*, E. J. Brill, 1986, pp.112-127.
11. See further Nickle, *The Collection*, pp.100-143.
12. Cf. J. Munck, *Paul and the Salvation of Mankind*, SCM Press, 1959, pp.301-308; F. F. Bruce, 'Paul and Jerusalem', *Tyndale Bulletin* 19, 1968, pp.23-25.
13. Nickle, *The Collection*, p.154; cf. K. Berger, 'Almosen für Israel: Zum Historischen Kontext der Paulinischen Kollekte', *New Testament Studies* 23, 1977, p.199; and many others.
14. F. Watson, *Paul, Judaism and the Gentiles*, Cambridge University Press, 1986, p.175.
15. Berger, 'Almosen für Israel'; cf. Hyldahl, *Die paulinische Chronologie*, pp.124-125. Contrast Nickle, *The Collection*, pp.74-99, who argues that the Temple tax is the closest analogy to Paul's collection in the Judaism of his time.
16. L. E. Keck, 'The Poor among the Saints in the New Testament', *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 56 (1965), pp.100-129; idem, 'The Poor among

- the Saints in Jewish Christianity and Qumran', *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 57, 1966, pp.54-78; similarly, Lüdemann, *Paul: Apostle to the Gentiles*, pp.78-79.
17. J. Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*, SCM Press, 1969, pp.111-112; cf. J. Murphy O'Connor, *The Theology of the Second Letter to the Corinthians*, Cambridge University Press, 1991, pp.75-76.
  18. O. Cullmann, *A Message to Catholics and Protestants*, Eerdmans, 1959; idem, *Peter: Disciple, Apostle, Martyr. A Historical and Theological Study*, SCM Press, second edn, 1962, pp.46-47, n.39.
  19. On the centrality of *charis*, 'grace', in these chapters, see C. T. Rhyne, 'II Corinthians 8:8-15', *Interpretation* 41 (1987), p.409.
  20. I. H. Jones, *The Contemporary Cross*, Epworth Press, 1973, p.43.
  21. Cf. Nickle, *The Collection*, p.62.
  22. So, for example, V. P. Furnish, *II Corinthians*, Doubleday, 1984, p.417; R. P. Martin, *2 Corinthians*, Word Books, 1986, p.263; F. B. Craddock, 'The Poverty of Christ: An Investigation of II Corinthians 8:9', *Interpretation* 22, 1968, p.165.
  23. So J. D. G. Dunn, *Christology in the Making*, SCM Press, 1980, pp.121-123; Murphy O'Connor, *The Theology of the Second Letter to the Corinthians*, p.83.
  24. See M. D. Hooker, *From Adam to Christ: Essays on Paul*, Cambridge University Press, 1990, pp.1-69.
  25. Cf. Craddock, 'The Poverty of Christ', p.164.
  26. Rhyne, 'II Corinthians 8:8-15', p.409.
  27. Cf. Hooker, *From Adam to Christ*, pp.47, 69.
  28. This is an argument I develop in chapter 5 of my PhD thesis, *The Social Ethos of Pauline Christianity*, Cambridge University, 1994.
  29. Hooker, *From Adam to Christ*, p.69.
  30. See G. Stählin, *isos, isotēs, isotimos*, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol.3, p.346; Georgi, *Remembering the Poor*, p.85.
  31. Philo, *De Specialibus Legibus* 4.231, Loeb Classical Library, vol. 8; cf. idem, *Quis Rerum Divinarum Heres* 161, 163, Loeb Classical Library, vol.4.
  32. See *Quis Rerum Divinarum Heres* 141-206; Georgi, *Remembering the Poor*, pp.138-140.
  33. Cf. Jones, *The Contemporary Cross*, p.43.
  34. Georgi, *Remembering the Poor*, pp.88-89 argues that *ex isotētos* in 8:13 is virtually equivalent to *ek theou* ('from God').
  35. Cf. *Quis Rerum Divinarum Heres* 191.
  36. An approximate citation of Prov. 22:8a (LXX); a Greek addition to the Hebrew text.
  37. A quotation of Psalms 112:9 (111:9 LXX), where the righteous person is the subject. 2 Cor 9:10 may suggest that it is God's righteousness which is referred to in v.9; see discussion in Furnish, *II Corinthians*, pp.448-449.
  38. See the list of terms Paul uses to describe the collection in N. A. Dahl, *Studies in Paul*, Augsburg, 1977, pp.37-38.
  39. Cf. the article on 'Materialist Interpretation', by C. C. Rowland, pp.430-432 in *The Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation*, R. J. Coggins and J. L. Houlden (eds), SCM Press, 1990.
  40. Examples from the recent literature on the debt problem include S. Corbridge, *Debt and Development*, Blackwell, 1993; P. Vallety, *Bad Samaritans: First World Ethics and Third World Debt*, Hodder and Stoughton, 1990, <sup>2</sup>1993; S. George, *The*

*Debt Boomerang*, Pluto Press, 1992; idem, *A Fate Worse than Debt*, Penguin Books, 1988.

41. Cf. H. D. Betz, *2 Corinthians 8 and 9*, Fortress Press, 1985, p.61.
42. I am very grateful to Jane Leach and Morna Hooker for their comments on earlier drafts of this essay. Errors and indiscretions remain, of course, my own responsibility.

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### A GLIMPSE OF WADING BIRDS . . .

. . . was stitching ripples on the silvered water  
as he crossed to Hobthrush, Cuthbert's island,  
stepping rock to rock among uncovered mussels.  
The cuddy ducks had vanished with the tide.  
Five days past Easter, daffodils  
were wilting at the cross's foot.  
Then sun came up like sudden trumpets.  
A train ran south to cities, parishes,  
a distant dragon-snake  
embellishing a carpet-page of fields.  
Its wheelsound reached him twenty seconds after  
it had gone. As had the godwits. Wavelets  
whispered their reconquest of the bladderwrack.  
The early-service bell rang out on rising air.

The Scripture was '*The valley of dry bones*'

Lindisfame, April 1994

Vince Gilbert