

ECONOMIC MOTIF IN PAULINE EPISTLES AND ITS IMPLICATION TO THE NIGERIAN CHRISTIANS AND THE SOCIETY

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ABSTRACT

The work showed Paul's holistic approach to the gospel, which includes socio-economic ideas in his Epistles. However, the history and theology of Paul's ministry inadvertently underrated his concern on the economic matters. The study used historical and theological methods and showed that the reason for this situation is partly disguised interpretation or misconception of what Paul meant especially in regards to I Corinthians 16:1-4; 2 Corinthians 8:1-9; and Romans 9:15, 15:25-32. These are just examples of Pauline Scriptures showing his intent on financial matters in his apostolic calling to the Gentiles. Some findings from the study clarified facts that readings of Scriptures from Paul's Epistles show his concern and care for the poor in the Jerusalem church and how the love of Christ has grown in him. It also discovered that the collections he organized for the churches created opportunities for his soul winning concerns and also the unity of all believers, both Jews and Gentiles. The work also discovered textual rhetoric linkage of historical and theological languages in the Pauline Epistles on economic terms with clear dimension on the gospel message of love for humanity and Christ. Nowhere in the epistles have Paul indicated exploitation of the poor, weak or marginalized as the practice was in the imperial economic policy at that time. An interesting phenomenon in the study showed that Paul got influenced by eschatological proclamations of

Old Testament writings, that organized his economic orientation.

Keywords: Apostle Paul, Economic motif, Collections, Nigerian Christians and Greco - Romans

INTRODUCTION

Any time Apostle Paul is mentioned what comes to mind is his role in the propagation of the gospel of Christ, the establishment of the Church and its growth in the first century. In all the twenty-seven books of the New Testament, thirteen (if not fourteenth with Hebrews) are associated to his influence/authorship. There is one area of his teachings and life that has hardly been discussed till of recent that some theologians took interest in studying, that is, the issue of economy. It was summarized beautifully by D. Georgi as, "Biblical studies, theology, and the church at large are unaware that the authentic writings of Paul contain some of the most elaborate literary reflections on the flow of money surviving from the ancient" (141).

The aim of this paper is to fill this gap of idea that Paul, even after his commission as an apostle to the Gentiles, maintained a care-ethic of the poor/ needy within his spiritual concerns. In order to understand Paul's message holistically, it is necessary to bring on board his economic perspective in the realms of scholarly discourse, which would clearly give direction to the church and society on how to handle socio-economic issues. This holistic proclamation is believed to have contributed in influencing Paul in his gospel work. The goodnews, which Jesus brought to the world, according to Walter Bruggemann, was care for the poor, the captives, the blind, the oppressed – that is, all those left behind by the dominant economy (186). It was probably imbedded in the apostles' mind that the negative attitude in the Roman culture affected the lives of the slaves, the non-Jews and the poor. Bruggemann observes that the experience of Paul's conversion from Judaism to Christianity (through a free gift of grace) radically changed his thinking from both merit - based religion and economics of the Roman Empire to one by 'economics generosity' (219). Paul's understanding of the gospel was such that it became a better alternative to the exploitation of the Roman Empire which included taxation of its subjects (220).

It is in this perspective that this work will explore economic motif

as a process in which the gospel that Paul preached got free access of the goodness of God to humanity through Christ Jesus. To achieve this objective, the authors will discuss what economic motif was in relation to Paul's ministry, Pauline Scriptural narrations and their interpretations and how such understanding helped the early church to transform lives/communities. Finally, a number of implications would be drawn between the individualistic nature of Western theology and the African community life in view of the church and the society.

ECONOMIC MOTIFS IN PAULINE THEOLOGY

It is widely accepted that the Pauline epistles lack systematic arrangement or flow of thoughts, but the issues were discussed in the Pauline letters as such issues kept springing up from the various churches (Dodd 13). In the same manner, to search for a well-articulated economic theory in ancient texts is anachronistic, since it is improbable in the extreme that contemporary thought included a category that "the economy as distinct from the political (macro) sphere, and the domestic household, where the economic, social and religious were considered inseparable parts of the whole" (Malina 17).

Paul's missionary self-conception builds on such socio-economic and religious frameworks with a universal motif different from that of Judaism. To Paul, the gospel was not only meant for the Jews alone but was meant to be extended through them which they refused thereby opening door to the non-Jews or Gentiles alike (Romans). Nonetheless, when one considers the epistles contextually, which is necessary as Gotsis and Dodd argue, one need to focus on an understanding of some of the key themes of Paul theology such as eschatology, justification by faith and the relationship of his work with Judaism (14). Paul's working strategy of seeking help for the members of the wider family could also be linked to Old Testament models like the "Table of Nations" (Genesis 10; 1 Chronicles 1). Table of the Nations is an inclusiveness of people in the lineage of a person's irrespective of where they were found, for example, the children of Noah after dispersion in Genesis.

In reading Paul's life and ministry, some scholars emphasize his use of imperial conciliatory delegation and evaluate them by drawing on the aspect of equating his call to that of Old Testament prophets

including the expected messiah. Jesus in an early declaration of the core of his redemptive mission said, "The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners" (Isaiah 61:1).

Like Jesus, Paul received the same vision for the Corinthian believers. For example, Paul saw himself as part of the prophetic community and most of his teachings were based on the engrafting into a new family of believers whosoever wills to believe in Jesus Christ (Ephesians 1:5). In economic terms, Dodd describes Paul's strategy of patron-client relationship as brokering of "God's patronage over the community of believers" (14). The idea of a broker in economics is someone who buys and sells goods or assets for others. This was the context these scholars comment on Paul being a broker for a heavenly patron (14). He brokered for people through the gospel, which has been paid by Jesus Christ on the cross.

Paul's universal appeal (for salvation theology and national identity) has become the opposite of what Judaism claims that salvation was exclusive for the Jews only. Dodd argues rightly that the coming of the new community i.e. the new creation brought with it the fulfilment of the new covenant through faith and the abolishing of rituals. The separation of Israel from other nations was reconstructed into a new community where both Jews and Gentiles have equal identity (15).

Looking at the interplay of these themes in Paul's writings, Dodd rightly argues in regard to universalism, justification by faith and that the new covenant was the product of Christ's victory on the cross that brought great influence in building Paul's economic motifs in his epistles (15). Hawthorne et al categorize Paul's concept of the body of Christ into three compartments of the physical body of Christ, the body of Christ in the Eucharistic content and the body of Christ as a designation of the church (76). This categorization comes from about twenty-one phrases in Pauline writings, which are metaphors regarding the church, crucified or resurrected body of Christ.

The physical body of Christ in Romans 7:4, Hawthorne et al explain, is

to be the representative of the “instrument through which believers were rendered dead to and hence free from the law” (76). It refers to the literal body of Christ that suffered and died on the cross. The same body was what Paul alludes in Colossians 1:20 as “his body of flesh against the heresy of the Colossians on the true humanity of the incarnate Zeus” (76). Here again one sees Paul differentiating Christ’s action as different from the Greek idols signified by Zeus.

The second perspective of the body of the Christ, Hawthorne et al present, is the one mentioned by Paul in 1 Corinthians in relation to the Lord’s Supper. In this, Paul showed a close affinity between the physical body of Christ that was hung on the cross and the church, which is evidence of the risen Christ (76). By implication through the Holy Communion, taking both the wine and the bread is indicative of the participation in the real act of Christ with the benefit of the new created life (1 Cor. 10:16). From these two renderings, it is evident that Paul’s interpretation shows the centrality of Jesus’ purpose in ministry of building the broken image of God in man that sin distorted.

PAUL’S PERSPECTIVE ON ECONOMIC PRACTICES IN THE EARLY CHURCH

Within the confine of religion and economics, Welch and Mueller identify four options for understanding the relationship between economics and religion. These are as follows; economics is separate from religion, economics in service of religion, religion in service of economics, and religion in union with economics (185-202). Of interest in this work as proposed by Welch and Mueller is economics in service of religion because it “pertains to situations where specific economic conditions or activities are seen as necessary or desirable for the attainment of faith-based objectives” (191). What this means, according to Gotsis, is that economic conditions provide support for the gospel work to thrive (41). Furthermore, Oslyton argues that it is subject to theology in regards to its being positioned and relativized by theology (32-44).

Haddorff is of the opinion that religious beliefs that support economic interests encourage polarization and support the interests of certain groups in the society at the detriment of others (490 -93). This is contrary to Paul’s thinking and teaching. Any attempt he makes in relation to collections of finances is purely in support of

the poor, needy and weak in the society.

Economic practices in the early church developed on Jesus' model that he preached on the establishment of an alternative economic order centred on cooperation, altruism and sacrificial giving from the onset. The biblical economic tradition, according to some scholars, offers an understanding of the later development of the Christian ethics. Christian ethics was based on both distributive justice in economic transactions and distributive justice underlying social responsibilities. This was directed at the weaker members of society as moral concern for economic justice became a permanent feature of Christian tradition. This in turn offers an understanding of the later development of the Christian tradition based on both distributive justice in economic transactions and distributive justice underlying social responsibilities to the weaker members of society as moral concern for them. The discussion on economic justice, therefore, became a permanent feature of Christian traditions unlike the exploitation that is now manifested in certain church communities universally (Nitsch 148 -162; Gotsis 41-56; Ceccarell 283-84).

1. Origin of Paul's Collections

Paul's collections for the poor saints in Jerusalem were partially motivated by the generosity of the ancients as gift to the needy. This could be seen from the call by the brethren in Antioch that "the poor be remembered" which Paul found it similar to his heart felt desire to help the poor and needy (Galatians 2:10). To Paul, the collections were sacrifice of love in line with the gospel that Jesus preached and lived in his earthly life and instructed in the beatitudes (Matthew 5:1-9). Also, an indirect parallel of request for help by brethren in Antioch to "the brothers and sisters living in Judea" could be seen in Acts 11:27-31.

Other reasons include the outcome of agreement Paul and Barnabas reached with leaders of the Jerusalem church. They agreed that Paul will only preach to the Gentiles outside Jerusalem while they will look after the population in Jerusalem (Acts 2:9). They also placed the obligation of the poor on Paul and he also intended to use the gifts from the gentile Christians as a uniting factor within the body of Christ that includes non-Jews, which the leaders of the Jerusalem church objected. They, however, accepted Paul and his

message among Gentiles.

Jeremy Punt, in his contribution, argued that the origin of Paul's collection is similar to the purposes which included financial gift to the poor, unity of the saints irrespective of their racial background. Others are substitution for Jewish initiation rites of the gentiles into Judaism and eschatological inspiration (475-78). Some of these are similar to what was discussed earlier from some verses of the scripture that Christopher W. Stanshke, argued as purported instruments of overcoming any obstacle on the side of the Gentile Christian Donor's. In the mind of the Christians in Antioch, their intent in sending Barnabas and Paul to Jerusalem with their donations was to relieve the ravages of famine (Acts 11:27-30) (237).

The Corinthians, however, opposed Paul's gesture of helping strangers while there was need at home. Ascough comments that for some Christian groups, their first priority seemed to have remained on meeting the needs of the local congregations. Paul's troubles with raising the money that was promised and his rhetorical strategies in the letters to the Corinthians seem to suggest that they remained unconvinced of the social and religious obligation they had to an otherwise unknown group. What confuses the Corinthians, according to Ascough, was not necessarily the fact that they had to donate, but that the monies were going to Jerusalem rather than the common fund of the local congregations (237).

2. Purposes of the Collection in the Pauline Contents

It is important to understand methodically that Pauline metaphors on sowing/reaping are theologically important functions (Evert 299). They are also interconnected to Paul's thought and practice as Georgi writes "...a close relationship between the collection, its establishment, and its organization structure, on the one hand, with Paul's missionary thinking and strategy on the other" (19). Some issues could be noticed in this statement. One was that the collections justifies Paul's mission to the Gentiles, which Georgi clearly indicated, and it explains that Galatians 2:10 refers to the collection brought about unity of purpose as it linked the saints that were given the proceeds in Jerusalem with those who contributed from churches outside Jerusalem (19).

It should be noted that the issue of financial collections to help those that were poor did not start with Paul. Evert addresses some antecedents in the form of temple tax and votive offering (297). To Paul, the collections were not tax debt relief but sacrifice of love in line with the Gospel message of Jesus in the beatitudes. The other purposes that the collections were meant to address, according to Punt, include helping the poor, uniting the church, substitute for Jewish initiation rites and eschatological inspiration (475-478). Could these purposes be what were in Paul's mind when he asked the Gentile churches to collect resources for the saints in the Jerusalem church?

The saints in Jerusalem, Dodd argues, were stricken by poverty partly due to persecution but more importantly the church had many poor and few rich members (230). There was the self-denial ethic of the gospel that the Gentile Christians in Antioch imbibed which they were willing to share in the unity of the oneness of New Israel even in dispersion (Dodd 230). They continued to offer this voluntary service. It was also important to note that Paul supported such gestures because they were in line with his calling. He made it abundantly clear that members of the Christian church must take responsibility of one another in the "sphere of economics as well as spiritual matters" (231).

This exercise of helping the poor Christians in Jerusalem is further echoed in Galatians 2:10 and 2 Cor. 8:8-9; 19:12-15. It was probably done as a show of the love of God that the Gentiles freely found in Christ. Underneath this was also Paul's admonition for the need of equality amongst members of the church so that no one will unnecessarily be too wealthy and oppressive of the poor or creating division between the have and have not.

Another important aspect of Paul's economic motivation as propounded by Hawthorne was eschatological. To him, Paul's call on the Gentile Christians to assist financially and assign delegates who escorted the collections and delivered to the recipient's location was a fulfilment of scriptures that the Gentiles would bring gifts to Zion (Isa. 2:2-4; 60:6-7; Mic. 4:13) (146). It is evident from these scriptures that this could be one of the interpretations in the mind of the first century Jews. However, whether that was what Paul meant will be explored as we yet look into his teachings and life.

Paul was one person that never wanted to be a burden to anyone. He was a tent maker and work was part of his resumes. Wojciechowski in his study of some literature of the first century interprets a moral obligation that produces material goods of value in the content of economic activity (399). This could be traced or fixed within what the scripture admonishes people to do "whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might..." (Eccl. 9:10).

In authenticating the position of possessions, Wojciechowski observes that everything could be traced from the commandments 'you shall not steal' (Exo. 20:15; Deuteronomy 5:19). Also, he points out that the last of the commandments given to Moses says one should not covet or desire what belongs to his or her neighbour (400). It therefore connotes activity that produces economic value even if it is subsistent. Deeply rooted in these commandments is the idea of property gained through one's personal effort or work. This will take us to the creation story where everything is created by God and given to man to rule over it (Gen. 1:26-29). It is the utility value that made God delegated all authority over his creation to man. In the contents of the Old Testament, most work and possessions of property were subsistence as Wojciechowski quotes what Aristotle theorized that "Humans need a moderate income, not too small in relation to needs, but not too great either, because it leads to moral dangers, exploiting others, greed and concentration on the possessions" (402). This is directed primarily against the greed of the rich, who exploit the poor and vulnerable sector in society. Riches in themselves are not bad as long as the needs of the poor are taken care of. This explains what Paul rightly says that one can only give from what he has (1 Cor. 16).

Looking at the passion with which Paul had in writing to the Gentile churches outside Jerusalem and calling for collections to be given to the saints of the church in Jerusalem, his focus was the alleviation of their poverty and creating opportunities for furtherance of the gospel. This group of the needy/vulnerable, according to Punt, included widows, orphans, the poor, the sick and elderly to mention a few (471). It was also to be noted that the content of economic dimension in Paul for the Jerusalem church was a form of care giving, establishing equality of distribution of what the privileged had with the less-privileged together with show of generosity (2 Cor. 8:12; 9:5-11) (McKnight 143). Important issues coming out from

the scriptures again are: emphasis on the goal of equality and good administration of resources (Punt 472). These are important lessons one finds in 2 Corinthians 8:13-15 and 18-21.

In another contribution, Georgi commenting on the Jerusalem collections summarizes it as indicating "the principles of representation, vicarious action, reciprocity, and shared destiny that are tightly connected to the concept of collections for Jerusalem including its conveyance" (82). This position is also held by Schmidt, who argues that Paul generally spiritualizes the vine of wealth and riches and other synonymous terms to describe Christian moral mind-set or events related to it (82). Schmidt further said that because there were very few poor people in Jerusalem in the first century who had no means of livelihood. In another opinion by Punt, the poor in Jerusalem were the economic deprived and deference of identity among the Jews "longing for the spiritual riches of salvation" (473).

Other noteworthy perspectives similar to Schmidt's argument include that of Haan, Numberger and Georgi. To Haan, the inflow of economic contribution did not happen just like that but for spiritual experience that the people had through the messages of the apostles that had transforming impact (70). Numberger, sees the collections meant for lessening the material needs of others as an opportunity to participate in the "investment of love in terms of money" and directly as gratitude to God for the gift of riches (166). Gerogi in his contribution sees the Jerusalem contribution as God initiated that springs in his honor and some kind of inducement of his continuous grace (105). He further argues that the collections were an indication of God's new creation i.e. "the eschatological people of God" who are now "covenanted with Jews alike" (141). As one interprets and understands the Pauline collections in their original context, it is important to find out if the objectives set up initially have been achieved. This will be articulated in the next section of the study.

3. Meaning and Effects of Pauline Collections

In his own contribution, David J. Downs uses four modes to interpret the collections for the Jerusalem saints (34). These collections include eschatological event, obligation, ecumenical offering, and

material relief. Different commentators ascribe Paul's project to any of these factors or to all. The interest in this work is to consider various interpretations of the collections. In consideration of the mode as an eschatological event, one must take bearing from the scriptures especially in Isaiah 2:2-4, 60:5 and Micah 4:1-2. Munck argues that Paul's collection has prophetic basis; he connects this with the prophecies regarding Gentiles and the happenings of the end of days. This position was however opposed by Downs who argues that Munck failed to explain clearly how the traditions are presented in Paul's perspective of the collection.

There is the obligatory collection that is socio-culturally accepted and geared towards helping the poor as indicated by the Jerusalem church to Paul and Barnabas to "remember the poor" which was traditionally understood as a responsibility given to Paul by the Jerusalem church. Downs utilizes the perspectives of Karl Holl and Klaus Berger to show what scholars believe makes this collection an obligation. Holl, using Romans 15:26-27, suggests that Gentile contributors were indebted to the Jerusalem church. This was because Jerusalem was believed to be the centre of the early Christian movement, therefore, Paul and his Gentile congregations were legally obligated to return financial support to the mother church. Berger, on the other hand, notes the cultural standards of Jerusalem and makes an outstanding linkage to the collection by referring to Acts 24:17. Within this understanding, the collection was shown to be like an almsgiving.

Laing observes that N. T. Wright and P. Walker strongly disagree with the assertion that the Jerusalem collection was an eschatological event. Their argument was that Jerusalem had an important meaning in Paul's eschatology, but there was no proof in the Pauline literature in that direction (89). Although unnecessary to support the argument in this work, one would believe Wright and Walker are correct in their views.

Interpreting Paul's collections as ecumenical offering within the context of the *koinonia* is important. Downs suggests that the collection serves as a bridge-building tool between the Jewish believers and the Gentile brethren which was not out of compulsion or a taxation but done voluntarily. It was also done as a show of affinity between people who were once culturally, religiously and

racially divergent (15). This new relationship was the sign that the message of reconciliation in Christ is making in-roads in the life of people.

Notice must be made of Paul's background of the Greco-Roman world and their traditions of benefaction. In line with this, Paul was probably motivated to meet the needs of the poor since he has been told by the Jerusalem church leaders to do so. For the sustenance of his apostolic work, he was concerned that a true *koinonia* must be established between the Jewish and Gentile believers.

It is true that the term *koinonia* has varying meanings, argues Ogereau (366). He further says that the terms meet the meaning that Paul's actions referred to. The narrations in 2 Corinthians 8:4 and 9:13 are relevant which refers to what financial contribution holds though there are various meanings to the term *κοινωνία* (*koinonia*) that may accurately define the type of collection Paul conducted. As Hereda makes reference to Demosthenes, another meaning to *κοινωνία* is denoted "*κοινωνίαν βοηθείας καὶ φιλίας ποιήσασθαι*" (*koinonian boetheias kai philias poiesasthai*) meaning the establishment (*ποιήσασθαι, poiesasthai*) of a common agreement or partnership (*κοινωνία, koinonia*) among the Greeks to help each other (*βοηθεία, boetheia*) and unite politically and militarily (*φιλία, philia*) against the threat of Philip of Macedon (370).

As to the outcome of the delivery of the collections and resources to the brethren in Jerusalem scholars like Hawthorne et al argue that not much was said about it by either Luke or Paul himself (146). It was in Acts 21:17-26 that one finds the record that Paul and his group were received warmly. Presumably then, the delivery of the collections at this point has been obeyed. There was also acknowledgement of what God was doing in the life of the Gentiles as Paul revealed in Acts 21:19-20. However, the Jerusalem saints insisted that Paul should demonstrate his commitment to the law and the Jewish people by undertaking some rituals of cleansing on the Gentile converts. Paul obliged and did as recorded in Acts 21:21-26.

Hawthorne et al have it that some scholars objected to the fact that the collections did achieve their purposes as people in Jerusalem still remained poor. They confirm this by the fact that there was tension between the Jewish Christians and the Gentile Christians, which

further degenerated and that the anticipated conversion of Israel never became real (146). It is important to remind ourselves here of the reasons Paul advanced for his support of financial contributions to those in need. Besides limiting the expansion of the body of Christ, which are recorded in Acts 21-28, the conflicts/divisions persisted and the issue of *koinonia* (fellowship) was threatened and not uniform.

Roman philosophers and politicians speaking on giving or receiving of benefits like Lucius Annaeus Seneca called the practice, “the chief bond of human society” (85). Historians like Richard Saller presented two models of understanding the gift giving practices in the first century society as that of patronage and benefaction as follows:

Firstly, it involves the reciprocal exchange of goods and services. Secondly, to distinguish it from commercial transaction in the market place, the relationship must be a personal one of some duration. Thirdly, it must be asymmetrical, in the sense that the two parties are of equal status and offer different kinds of goods and services in the exchange; a quality which sets patronage off from friendship between equals (1).

It can now be stated that the collections were voluntary and had no intent of amassing profit of any kind. Could one assume or say confidently that in this campaign of care/assistance Paul had not found any resistance? This would be on the negative because there were lots of obstacles he encountered as it is briefly stated in the next section.

4. Objection by the Corinthians to participate in the collections

Paul’s campaign for raising money and his rhetorical strategies as revealed in his epistles to the Corinthians suggest that they remained unconvinced of any intent aside that they had a social and religious obligation to an otherwise unknown group. What confuses the Corinthians was not necessarily the fact that they have to donate, but that the monies were going to Jerusalem rather than the common fund of their local congregations (Ascough 237).

Tradition, therefore, offers an understanding of the latter

development of the Christian ethics that was based on both distributive justice in economic transactions and distributive justice in social responsibilities to the weaker members of the society. It was also a moral concern for economic justice that became a permanent feature of Christian tradition (Nitch 148-162; Gotsis 41-56; Ceccareth 283-284). This tradition was moderated by leaders of the churches as seen in the discourse between Paul and the leadership of the Jerusalem church on the one hand and those of the Gentile churches outside Jerusalem.

Another example was Zisimov-Tsyfonidi reporting the incidence of Canon 251 of the council in Antioch Syrian. He said that the Bishop had a supervisory power over the property of the church as distributed to those in need. However, the Bishop was not allowed to convert church revenue to his personal use or to manage income of church without the consent of deacons and priests (54-55). These were all instruments of check and balances that Paul used in his time through getting representatives of each church accompany their collections to the recipient church in Jerusalem.

In imperial Rome, however, Walter Scheidel and Sitta von Reden reveal “expressions of economic activities (especially trade)” that led to the accumulation of both material and human capital. This system of getting wealth was witnessed by the shrewd process of acquisition that saw a concentration in the hands of a small minority and unequal distribution amongst social groups going contrary to the principles of equity and care for the needy that Jesus preached (32).

It should be noted that Biblical economics was viewed as a subsistence activity, which was mainly concerned with satisfying basic collective needs of the family, tribe and society in general (Gotsis 44). Gotsis further emphasizes like the Aristotelian conception that this thinking refers mainly to “household economics” of issues like property, wealth, retention and use, poverty and distribution of inequalities, money-lending, trade, profit and usury” (44).

In the context of the early Christian economics, particularly the formative years, the powerful and autocratic elites determined the ends in most social relationships. Not only that but also they controlled individual and collective economic activities that were found in limited forms (Oakma 127; Safrai 92; Horsley 88).

ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS TO THE CHURCH AND SOCIETY

The implications of Pauline economics to the church and the society in the 21st century could be explained as follows:

1. **Christ-centered community:** This refers to communality of life that embodied public policy among the people. In essence it is the new community that Paul says Christ established through the church with its transforming values of the promised Kingdom. Sider agrees with Paul that the transformation is holistic, that is, it cuts through all segments of societal life including economic relations. Remember that the emphasis of the Pauline financial gathering was to show love, alleviate the suffering of those who don't have, both physical and mentally, and removing the class distinction prevalent in the Roman society his time.
2. Jesus taught his disciples the act of community living in the new kingdom which was expressed by his practical life. Judas was there administering the common purse with provisions under the directive of the Master (John 12:6; 19:29). This principle was what Paul adopted in his economic model of reaching out to the needs of the needy particularly the poor Jews in Jerusalem. It is true that when the poor are cared for the propensity to be angry and react negatively against societal ills is reduced. Sustained help, therefore eliminates lack among the people and could eliminate insecurity. It was in this light that Taylor says that economic relationship of openness and love in the new community ensures personal security (21). This is against the individual property holdings in Western democracies of today.
3. Another impact of Paul's economic model for our society is the concept of the Jerusalem koinonia. This Greek term means fellowship; and Paul used the collections from the churches in bridging relationship between the receiving Jewish Christians in Jerusalem and the Gentile churches in the country. This also brought economic equality, socio-cultural unity, and love "that no one said that any of the things which he possessed was his own" (Acts 4:32). Here we can see the redeeming power of God healing relationships amongst nations, races, the rich and the poor.

4. The holistic and all-inclusiveness of Paul's principle of collection and delivery according to Sider was broader in scope among the people of God irrespective of background. Here we see that ethnic, cultural and sexual divisions were no more important in the table fellowship of the one body of Christ. It is not surprising that Schoemen argues that economics and politics in real life are inseparable (227). By implication, Paul's economic model results in macro-economic policy that brings an interplay of social issues with economic matters. This is what the modern convention calls political economy which affects aspects of employment creation, social welfare provision and budgetary expenditures (227). In this regard the conventional church and society need to be properly involved in addressing socio-economic issues.

5. The Pauline economy also introduced a policy objective that involves using the Old Testament jubilee. The biblical requirement is that the Jubilee year was to be treated like a Sabbatical year, with the land lying fallow, but also required the compulsory return of all property to their original owners or their heirs (Leviticus 25). The intent of this command was to share riches with the poor and vulnerable in society in establishing a sense of equality. This is a worthy policy instrument that the church in Africa could emulate in manifesting Christ's love in His Kingdom. Rich congregations should endeavor to slow down on expensive constructions of properties and rather build lives of people sacrificially as Christ did. This is the gospel that Jesus has delegated the church to preach:

CONCLUSION

This work showed that Paul's holistic approach to the gospel included socio-economic ideas just as the spiritual dimension was important. However, the history of Paul's ministry inadvertently underrated his concern on the economic well-being of the poor. The study has shown that the reason for this situation is partly disguised interpretation or misconception of what he meant especially in regards to I Corinthians 16:1-4; 2 Corinthians 8:1-9 and Romans 9:15; 15:25-32. These are just examples of Pauline scriptures showing his intent on financial matters in his apostolic calling to the Gentiles

Re-reading of these scriptures, in this work, shows that Paul's concern and care for the poor in the Jerusalem church emanated from socio-economical experiences and the love of Christ that has grown in him since his conversion on the road to Damascus. The work also discovered that the collections he organized was to open more doors or opportunities for his soul winning concerns and also to unite the Jewish and Gentile believers as one in Christ. It also discovered the textual rhetoric linkage of historical and theological languages in the Pauline epistles in economic terms, centring on the gospel message of love for humanity and Christ. Nowhere in the epistles did Paul indicate exploitation of the poor, weak or marginalized as the practice was in the imperial economic policy that was in practice at that time. An interesting phenomenon in the work was Paul's influence from eschatological pronouncement that he viewed the collections as evidence of their fulfilment. Such influential commitment would make the church and society in the 21st century to embrace viable economic managements of the public funds and ensure the proper utilization of designated funds without any attempt of diversion for private use.

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