

Essay

Shedding Some Light on Economics in Philippians: Phil 4:10–20 and the Socio-Economic Situation of the Community

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Abstract: This essay considers what conclusions may be drawn concerning the socio-economic situation of the Philippian community from Paul's response to the Philippians' gift in Phil 4:10–20. It contributes to the recent discussions of the socio-economic situation of the Pauline communities, as well as to the current understanding of the possibilities, challenges, and limitations of a social-scientific interpretation of this letter. Phil 4:10–20 includes several potential hints about the Philippians' socio-economic situation. These could indicate that their situation is quite precarious under shifting economic circumstances. Immediately after Paul founded the community, the Philippians supported him twice (4:15f). Afterward, however, they did not have the opportunity to do so, although they kept it in mind (4:10: ἐφ' ᾧ καὶ ἐφρονεῖτε, ἡκαίρεῖσθε δέ). Eventually, they were able to send another, apparently large, gift to the imprisoned apostle (4:18). As a part of his response to this gift, Paul explicates his self-sufficient lifestyle (4:11–13), possibly as an example for the Philippians. He also promises them that God will satisfy all their needs (4:19), which may be understood as a consolation in view of socio-economic distress. This study reconsiders the potential socio-scientific interpretations of these hints. It explores to what extent they (even collectively) may shed light on the socio-economic situation of the Philippian community. In doing so, it also points out the uncertainties and challenges such an interpretation must address. It thus shows how the scope of social-scientific interpretation, at least in this case, is limited.

Keywords: Philippians; social-scientific interpretation; poverty and wealth; Early Christianity



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1. Introduction

The last few decades have seen a growing interest in the milieus from which the early Christian communities drew their members and what can be known of their socio-economic status. In this regard, a social-scientific reading of the Pauline letters has gained increasing significance, as it asks what hints concerning the social and socio-economic status¹ of early Christians can be found in these letters. Two current trends may be observed: first, the use of socio-economic models to classify the community members into socio-economic status groups (Longenecker 2010, pp. 237–49; Öhler 2018), and second, a tendency to see the communities as not merely consisting of poor people but of people who are living above subsistence level and even possessing a surplus (Öhler 2018, pp. 266–86; Weiß 2015). Both trends seem to be linked insofar as socio-economic models break with the idea of a dichotomous Roman society that consists only of a small elite and the poor masses.²

Concerning the question of the socio-economic status of early Christians, Phil 4:10–20 may be of special interest. In this section, Paul responds to a material matter, namely, the gift that the community sent him. In doing so, the apostle reflects on his current and former material support from the community. This essay considers to what extent it is possible to gain information regarding the socio-economic situation of the community and its members from the remarks on the Philippians' gifts in this section. What conclusions may be drawn? What uncertainties remain? Thus, it contributes to the recent discussions of the socio-economic situation of the Pauline communities, as well as to the understanding of

the possibilities, challenges, and limitations that a social-scientific interpretation of Paul's letter to the Philippians and the Pauline letters as a whole, must address.

Initially, it should be considered what sorts of socio-economic situations could fit the information found in Phil 4:10–20. To do so, a look at some passages from 2 Cor will also be necessary. Thereafter, the potential of a social-scientific interpretation (in this case, a specifically socio-economic reading) can be demonstrated based on these reconstructed scenarios. This will also allow for a methodological requirement inherent to the social-scientific approach to be illustrated.

2. Phil 4:10–20—Hints on a Precarious Socio-Economic Situation

A study that tries to shed some light on the socio-economic situation of the Philippian community should start with the observation that there is evidence of repeated, though inconsistent, financial support for the apostle Paul. Regarding Phil 4:15–16, the community supported Paul at least two times shortly after its founding.³ Following this, the support obviously stopped. A few years later, after hearing of Paul's imprisonment, the Philippians again sent him a financial gift. Herein lies the central issue: What could the repeated support and its interruption imply regarding the wealth or poverty of the community members? Does the initially frequent support point to some wealth, and is the interruption caused by the diminishment of said wealth? Above and beyond Philippians, this question must be considered in light of a statement from 2 Cor 8:1–5. Probably shortly after supporting Paul again, the Macedonian communities were, as Paul writes, much engaged in the collection for Jerusalem, although they were in "deep poverty" (βαθὺς πτωχεία [2 Cor 8:2]).

In Phil 4:10, Paul initially expresses his joy at the fact that the Philippians "had blossomed anew" (ἤδη ποτὲ ἀνεθάλετε) in their concern for him. However, he immediately rejects the idea that this implies a rebuke of the addressees' previous behavior. They were always concerned, but they lacked the opportunity (ἐφ' ᾧ καὶ ἐφρονεῖτε, ἠκαιρεῖσθε δέ). Both the speaking of a new blossoming and of a previous lack of opportunity clearly indicate that an interruption of the former support must be assumed.⁴ The imperfect ἐφρονεῖτε and ἠκαιρεῖσθε might point to an extended period during which the support was interrupted (Fee 1995, p. 430; Bockmuehl 1997, p. 260). This would fit with Paul in 4:15f only referencing examples of former support which took place shortly after the community's founding.⁵ Crucial for our question is the meaning of ἠκαιρεῖσθε δέ. What kind of opportunity was lacking (presumably, even for some years)? It is often assumed that it (at least partly) might have resulted from insufficient material means (Standhartinger 2021, p. 285; Bockmuehl 1997, p. 260; Walton 2011, p. 229). Given that 4:15–16 (even in connection with 2 Cor 11:9, the support by "brothers coming from Macedonia") points to a once relatively high material capacity⁶, it seems that, on this understanding, a severe drop in this capacity must be assumed. Likewise, it must be assumed that, at least to some degree, the material capacity had increased again. The new gift to Paul was apparently large (Phil 4:18), just as the Macedonian contribution to the collection (2 Cor 8:2) would be.

Whether the interruption of the support was caused by economic problems, two factors must be present when considering the former and the current socio-economic situation of the Philippians: (1) The former support, the actual gift, and the collection were bound up with travel costs. These costs imply travel and, in places without Christian communities or other persons to contact, accommodation expenses. This factor is left out of most accounts (cf. Crook 2017, pp. 200–201; Concannon 2017, pp. 354–355 as exceptions), although the financial means that are required for it might be anything up to, but less than, those required for the gift itself.⁷ (2) The traveling community members might have lacked income. Therefore, in addition to Paul, they also had to be supported (Öhler 2018, pp. 272–273). At least, this must be assumed for the member (or even members) of the collection's delegation⁸, but likely for the community's legate Epaphroditus and the "brothers" who supported Paul in Corinth (2 Cor 11:9) as well. Regarding these factors, the financial needs go considerably farther, or even far, beyond that which is needed for the gift per se. So, the community's

activities in support of Paul and his mission only seem conceivable if a (perhaps more than rudimentary) surplus is presumed.⁹

Indeed, if Phil 4:19 (the promise that God will supply all the needs [χρεῖα] of the addressees) is understood as a consolation in view of the community's socio-economic distress (Standhartinger 2021, p. 299; Bird and Gupta 2020, p. 192; Wojtkowiak 2012, p. 281), then its current material capability might have been in some way limited. Furthermore, 4:11–13 (Paul's remarks on his autarky) could function as a reference to the apostle's exemplary role in dealing with socio-economic suffering (Wojtkowiak 2012, p. 281) and may also serve as a reassurance to poorer community members who could not contribute to the actual gift (Walton 2011, p. 229). The assumption that these passages address a tricky socio-economic situation fits with Paul's speaking of the Macedonians' "deep poverty" in 2 Cor 8:2. This phrase should be taken seriously and must also be understood as related to the Philippians because of two considerations: (1) Although the socio-economic situation in Thessalonica and Berea might be worse than in Philippi (Witherington 2011, p. 4), the Philippian community is likely to be included here. It would be very confusing for the addressees if Paul did not intend this community to be included, especially considering the use of "Macedonia" in 2 Cor 11:9, apparently for Philippi only.¹⁰ (2) The socio-economic situation of the Macedonian communities must have been noticeably worse than that of the Corinthians. Otherwise, it would be inappropriate for Paul to encourage the Corinthians to participate in the collection in 2 Cor 8:1–5 by holding up the example of the poorer communities. The reference to the habit of poorer communities as an ethical motivation only seems to be expedient if it reflects reality and if the addressees are aware of their superior socio-economic status (Wojtkowiak 2023, p. 317; Oakes 2015, p. 77).¹¹

All in all, the hints about the socio-economic situation of the Philippians seem to be ambiguous. There was, and now is again, a situation of material surplus. However, at least the actual surplus might be to some degree limited and is most likely smaller than the surplus of the Corinthians. This ambiguity fits with the assumption that the support was interrupted because of economic problems. It might be best explained by the precarious socio-economic situation of the community members. 'Precarious', in this case, should be understood in the narrower sense of material and financial insecurity.¹² In what follows, the task will be to examine how far it is possible to strengthen this assumption and to obtain a clearer picture of the community's economic situation. Which circumstances might have led to the case that repeated support for Paul stopped, and then only a few years later, support for him and the church in Jerusalem resumed (perhaps under aggravated material conditions)? This question should be treated on three different levels: (1) What argues for the assumption that the support was interrupted because of socio-economic distress? (2) What kind of situation may be assumed that could have effected these changes in material capacity? (3) What sorts of socio-economic backgrounds may have made up the Philippian community?

First, the hapax legomenon ἀκαιρέομαι, which Paul uses in Phil 4:10 to describe the circumstances that lead to the interruption of the support, can be understood in two ways: (a) Paul's situation gave the Philippians no occasion to support him, or (b) they themselves lacked the possibility to support the apostle. The first way of understanding this verb (specifically the phrase ἡκαιρέισθε δέ) fits with the current support that is in response to Paul's imprisonment. Otherwise, it does not seem to fit with the previous support, either. Even though Paul mentions his need when he was in Corinth (2. Cor 11:9), the frequency of the former support (probably two times in Thessalonica¹³) suggests regular giving to Paul rather than giving dependent on specific circumstances. As such, some form of financial commitment between Paul and the Philippians (Ogereau 2014, pp. 280–89; Briones 2013, p. 130) seems to be conceivable and would fit the close relationship which Paul still stresses in Phil 1:5 (Briones 2013, p. 108). Therefore, the cause of the interruption might rather originate in the community itself. Since there are no hints of a long-lasting crisis between Paul and the Philippian community, other reasons must be found to explain why the community did not support Paul for about three years.¹⁴

Second, not the least of the experiences of suffering faced by the early Christians could have been economic (Oakes 2001, pp. 89–96; Oakes 2015, pp. 78–79). This specifically applies to the experiences of the Philippian community. That they must face sufferings because of their religious orientation is obvious from Phil 1:30, where Paul qualifies these sufferings as “the same fight, that you once saw in me and now hear from me” (τὸν αὐτὸν ἀγῶνα ἔχοντες, οὗον εἶδετε ἐν ἐμοὶ καὶ νῦν ἀκούετε ἐν ἐμοί). Indeed, oppression most likely only originated from pagan fellow citizens or officials (Oakes 2001, pp. 87–89). There is no evidence of a Jewish community or even a Jewish portion of the population in Philippi (Wojtkowiak 2012, pp. 61–62; Pilhofer 1995, pp. 231–33).¹⁵ Although official Roman persecution of the community members as Christians in the 50s is historically highly unlikely, conflicts with local officials because of real or only alleged offenses against the Roman *ius maiorum* (cf. Acts 16:20–24) and non-attendance at official pagan cult ceremonies are plausible. Both might result in the social and socio-economic isolation of Christians by their fellow citizens, too. Peter Oakes highlights that in the Graeco-Roman world, “economic activity depended more on relationships and power than on the market” (Oakes 2015, p. 79).¹⁶ Hence, the socio-economic relevance of conflicts with the majority population is not to be underestimated. Socio-economic consequences could well explain why the frequent support that started subsequent to the community’s foundation stopped after one or two years. Even the specific circumstances would correspond well to the likelihood that it would take some time for a social conflict to develop and for the community members’ reserves to be exhausted. Finally, it would fit with the observation that the socio-economic situation at the time of Paul’s letter to the Philippians is worse than it was about half a decade earlier, although it would not explain why there may be new financial means to support the apostle and the Jerusalem community.

Third, to obtain a more concrete picture of the community members’ socio-economic status, the stratification models of Steven Friesen and Bruce Longenecker seem to be well-suited (Friesen 2004, p. 341; Longenecker 2010, p. 45). Since Longenecker adopts Friesen’s model, both are identical, except that Longenecker speaks of “economy scale” (“ES”; Longenecker 2010, pp. 44–45) instead of “poverty scale” (“PS”; Friesen 2004, pp. 340–341).¹⁷ In the following, the less tendentious designation “economy scale” will be preferred:

ES1	Imperial elites	imperial dynasty, Roman senatorial families, a few retainers, local royalty, a few freedpersons
ES2	Regional or provincial elites	equestrian families, provincial officials, some retainers, some decurial families, some freedpersons, some retired military officers
ES3	Municipal elites	most decurial families, wealthy men and women who do not hold office, some freedpersons, some retainers, some veterans, some merchants
ES4	Moderate surplus resources	some merchants, some traders, some freedpersons, some artisans (especially those who employ others), and military veterans
ES5	Stable near subsistence level (with reasonable hope of remaining above the minimum level to sustain life)	many merchants and traders, regular wage earners, artisans, large shop owners, freedpersons, some farm families
ES6	At subsistence level (and often below minimum level to sustain life)	small farm families, laborers (skilled and unskilled), artisans (esp. those employed by others), wage earners, most merchants and traders, small shop/tavern owners
ES7	Below subsistence level	some farm families, unattached widows, orphans, beggars, disabled, unskilled day laborers, prisoners

(Friesen 2004, p. 341; Longenecker 2010, p. 45)

Regarding the financial means necessary to support the apostle and Jerusalem (the gift, the travel costs, and the costs for the sustenance of the community’s delegates), there must be some community members who are above ES6. In view of this, Justin J. Meggitt’s

thesis that the Pauline communities “shared fully the bleak material existence that was the lot of the non-élite inhabitants of the empire” (Meggit 1998, p. 153) falls short. It does not explain where such quite extensive means might stem from.¹⁸ However, against Markus Öhler, living above the poverty level does not have to be assumed for the community as a whole (Öhler 2018, p. 273). Three scenarios are imaginable, all of which might fit the ambiguous hints about the socio-economic situation:

- (i) At the outset of the community, there was a large number of people from ES5 and even ES4. People from these socio-economic status groups have a small surplus that soon fades when they are in socio-economic distress. They tend to descend to ES6 and ES5, respectively, so they cannot offer gifts as extensively as before. For those who are scaled down to ES6, this would be all but impossible.
- (ii) Initially, the community consisted primarily of poor people (ES 6 or even ES7), while there was a small number of people from ES4 or above who were responsible for nearly the entirety of each gift. If these few wealthy people had left the community, e.g., in the face of oppression, its financial capability would have collapsed. This scenario fits Paul’s insistence on abandoning status (Phil 2:3–8; 3:4–11; cf. Wojtkowiak 2012, pp. 145–49, 179–82). Furthermore, the turning away of some community members because of oppression seems to be the background of Paul’s words about the “enemies of the cross of Christ” (3:18).¹⁹ This scenario can be combined with Oakes’ assumption that women comprise a large part of the community. If the community is supported by elite women who are financially dependent on their husbands, the non-Christian husband could stop this support (Oakes 2015, pp. 74–75). However, this might not apply to Lydia (Acts 16:14f), who seems to be unmarried and possibly a wealthy widow, which, according to Roman law, would give her proprietary rights broadly equal with those of men.²⁰ As the widow of a seller of purple who continues her husband’s business, she might be classified as ES4. Eva Ebel points to the possibility that the use of an ethnicon (e.g., a woman from Lydia) refers to a former slave. If this is the case, Lydia might not belong to the social elites, even though some financial means (not at least for practicing her business) must be assumed (Ebel 2012, pp. 25–26, 32). Therefore, if Ebel’s assumption about Lydia as a freedperson is correct, then this woman would be an example of the disparity between social and socio-economic status.²¹
- (iii) There might be a combination of both scenarios, i.e., the social decline of many community members with a small or moderate surplus, and the turning away of a few wealthy members.

3. Possibilities, Challenges, and Limitations

The fact that there are three imaginable scenarios points to the uncertainties as well as limitations that every attempt to shed some light on the socio-economic situation of an early Christian community must face. Usually, the literary evidence is too small to furnish one with a clear scenario. However, socio-scientific models can help to illustrate which of the socio-economic conditions might be the *sine qua non* for making plausible sense of Paul’s statements. Therefore, the models serve to clarify a reasonable spectrum of poverty and wealth as a background for reading the apostle’s letters. For example, if Paul’s argument in 2 Cor 8f is only plausible if the Corinthian community is almost entirely made up of people above ES6 (Wojtkowiak 2023, pp. 325–29), for the Philippian community as a whole, a lower socio-economic status is likely. Nonetheless, its support of Paul and his mission requires either many members with a small or moderate surplus (ES5 and probably ES4) or a few members with a moderate-to-high material surplus (ES4 and above). Thereby, it becomes clear that a general socio-economic classification of early Pauline Christians is insufficient. Rather, every single community must be evaluated based on the information that may be gleaned from the Pauline epistles and Acts.²²

Furthermore, it must be appreciated that socio-economic circumstances are influenced by divergent factors. Beyond religious conflicts, socio-economic distress can be caused

by earthquakes, economic crises (e.g., bad harvests), riots, or wars. In these cases, not only the Christian community but all the people in the city and landscape are faced with a loss of material capability. Likewise, the situation of social and religious outsiders may be sharpened as well as the situation of the already previously poor members of the society. So, for reconstructing the socio-economic situation of Christian communities, the relevance of these factors must be considered as a kind of double-check on one's methodology. Otherwise, they constitute a blind spot that leaves the results questionable.

This can be illustrated with Philippians as an example. As expounded in this essay, the interruption of the support for Paul is best explained by straightened socio-economic circumstances caused by oppression. As this thesis can appeal to literary and historical evidence, other factors that could cause socio-economic distress might not falsify but even help to strengthen or specify it. During the first century, wars and riots may be negligible in the senatorial province of Macedonia. However, if Oakes' assumption about the centrality of agriculture for Philippi's economy is correct (Oakes 2001, p. 70), bad harvests are a factor not to be underestimated. Provided that Peter Garnsey's calculation for Larisa, Athens, and Odessa can be transferred to Philippi, there may be a bad harvest of wheat about every fourth year (Garnsey 1988, p. 17). Therefore, during the roughly four years between the first support of Paul and the gift mentioned in Phil 4:10–20, one bad harvest is very probable. The effect of this factor should not be overstated, however. Two succeeding years of a bad wheat harvest might only happen every decade. The same counts for only one bad harvest of barley (Garnsey 1988, p. 17). A challenge and limitation regarding bad harvests and earthquakes is the lack of a comprehensive transmission of such incidents, which can be further connected with the problem of dating them (cf. Deeg 2016, pp. 163–164 concerning the earthquake on Crete). Nonetheless, as Macedonia is a seismic area, earthquakes must be considered as a relevant factor. Sen., Nat. quaest. 6,1,13 mentions an earthquake that happened "last year" (anno priore) in Achaia and Macedonia. This earthquake is dated to 61 (Deeg 2016, pp. 155, 162–163) and so would only be a factor in case of a (highly problematic) late dating of Paul's letter to the Philippians to the time of his Roman imprisonment.²³ In conclusion, for the socio-economic decline of the Philippian community, non-religious factors seem to be of only limited relevance. This strengthens the thesis that this decline results from oppression.

However, it may be that not every development can be explained. It requires a great deal of speculation to explain why the community resumed their support of Paul and, beyond that, gave to the church in Jerusalem. Did the Philippian community gain some new wealthy members?²⁴ However, this explanation raises the question of how it could be brought in line with Paul's speaking of "deep poverty" in 2 Cor 8:2. Did instead the already non-wealthy members collect some surplus? Then, it could be supposed that this surplus was not sufficient for regular support, as in the initial period of the community. Instead, the money must now be collected over a long period of time and treasured for special circumstances, like Paul's imprisonment. In this case, ἡκαίρεῖσθε δέ (Phil 4:10) would acquire particular significance (including both understandings mentioned above), to the effect that the Philippians surely now found the moment (καιρός) to use the rare reserves according to their appropriation. This assumption would fit Julien Ogereau's understanding of the heavily discussed phrase κοινωνεῖν εἰς λόγον δόσεως καὶ λήψεως (4:15 ["having partnership in the matter of giving and receiving"]) as referring to a financial fund that the Philippians installed to serve the apostle's missionary needs (Ogereau 2014, pp. 280–89), a fund that once took in enough money for frequent support, but now only allows for support in response to specific circumstances.²⁵ Indeed, this second explanation also raises another question, namely, why the community supposedly shortly afterward is able to give a considerable financial contribution to the collection for Jerusalem (exclusive of the costs for the member or members of the collection's delegation). According to that, it might be worth considering that the phrase "deep poverty" applies to the majority of the Macedonian (including the Philippian) Christ-Believers, notwithstanding that there are some wealthy community members who raise the bulk of the financial requirements.

Finally, there seems to be no evidence in Phil 4:10-20 or in other Pauline epistles that would enable going beyond such speculations about the economic reasons why the Philippians were able to send gifts again.

4. Conclusions

Despite the challenges and limitations that a socio-scientific interpretation of New Testament texts must face, it can be shown how it is quite possible to shed some light on the socio-economic situation of the Philippian community. At least, one can determine what spectrum of the community members' material capacity must be assumed in order to enable a reasonable understanding of the texts. According to the two current trends mentioned at the beginning of this essay, first, it can be shown how socio-economic models serve the clarification of this spectrum. Second, even if the Philippian community as a whole had a lower material capacity than the Corinthian, a significant portion of the community with material surplus must be assumed, at any rate, at the time of its founding. Based on this second result, the issue of the socio-economic status of early Christ-Believers should be critically evaluated in further research.

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Notes

- ¹ Although social status and socio-economic status were connected in Roman society, they cannot be equated. E.g., material means were required for belonging to the *ordo decurionum* as the municipal elite. However, even extensive wealth cannot compensate for an unfree birth, which excludes one from such offices and their associated status. The same applies to the elite status groups of senators, equestrians, and decurions (Scheidel and Friesen 2009, p. 77–78).
- ² For a fundamental critique of the dichotomic model of Roman society, see (Scheidel 2006).
- ³ In 2 Cor 11:9, Paul mentions material support from “brothers coming from Macedonia” (οἱ ἀδελφοὶ ἐλθόντες ἀπὸ Μακεδονίας). Relying on Paul’s assertion in Phil 4:15 that, when he left Macedonia, no other community besides the Philippians had partnership with him “in the matter of giving and receiving” (εἰς λόγον δόσεως καὶ λήψεως), this can only mean support from the Philippians—even though in this case Paul’s speaking of other “churches” in 2 Cor 11:8 is exaggerated or it denotes to the households in Philippi (Bockmuehl 1997, p. 264). That prompts the question of whether this support is included in Phil 4:16 (ὅτι καὶ ἐν Θεσσαλονίκη καὶ ἄπαξ καὶ δις εἰς τὴν χρεῖαν μοι ἐπέμψατε), or 2 Cor 11:9 relates to a third gift that Paul does not explicitly mention in Phil 4:15f (for a discussion of the possible interpretations, see Reumann 2008, pp. 664–65, 708). The second solution may be preferred precisely because it enables a literal reading: in 4:15, Paul refers to the support in Corinth when he “left Macedonia” (ἐξῆλθον ἀπὸ Μακεδονίας), while in v. 16 (connected with ὅτι καὶ) he complements the reference to two-time support in Thessalonica (Fee 1995, p. 439–40). A parallel to such a (apparently spontaneous) reference to a similar event can be found in 1 Cor 1:16 (the baptism of the house of Stephanus).
- ⁴ Hence, there is no scholarly discussion about whether the support stopped, but only how it came to be interrupted.
- ⁵ Ephesus is by far the most plausible place of origin for Paul’s letter to the Philippians. So, it is highly likely that the letter was written in 54 or 55, about four or five years after the founding of the community and their first material support for Paul when he was in Thessalonica. Between the support received in Corinth and the support for the imprisoned apostle lies the at least two-year stay in Ephesus (cf. Acts 19:10) and the (albeit historically uncertain) events Luke describes in Acts 18:18–19:1. For the problems regarding Caesarea (57–59) or Rome (60–62) as a place of origin (the long travel distance and the implausible reasons for such a long journey) and for the plausibility of an imprisonment at the end of Paul’s stay in Ephesus, see (Wojtkowiak 2012, pp. 66–70).
- ⁶ A minimum of two, probably even three, gifts must be reckoned with (one or two times in Thessalonica and one time in Corinth (cf. n. 3). Even supposing that the support was not sufficient and that Paul still had to work for his livelihood (Oakes 2015, p. 76; cf. 1 Thess 2:9; Acts 18:3), the frequency of the support is worth noting.
- ⁷ Regarding the estimated prices for a journey from Philippi to Corinth, see (Concannon 2017, p. 355). Concerning Philippi and Ephesus, Concannon states: “We should also pay careful attention to the fact that Paul must have developed a tremendous amount of resources and effort to sustain a connection between Ephesus and Philippi 692 km apart” (Concannon 2017, p. 354). It may be added that the Philippians also needed some resources in order to send Epaphroditus to Ephesus.
- ⁸ The Philippians’ participation in the collection for Jerusalem not only arises in 2 Cor 8:1–5, but also in the meeting of the delegation in Philippi (Acts 20:6). The fact that no member of the Philippian community is named as part of the delegation might result from

the fact that they are the authors of a collection report which Luke adopts in Acts 20:5–21:17. In this case, they would be included in the 1st person plural “we” (Koch 2014, p. 339).

- 9 These factors are left out of the account by (Oakes 2015, p. 76). Therefore, his conclusion, as well as his cross-cultural reference, may not fit the circumstances of the Philippian community: “It [=supporting Paul] might well involve some financial sacrifice, but it does not require a significant average of wealth among the group. To say it cross-culturally: there are many churches of the very poor that manage to provide for at least the part-time financial support of a pastor”.
- 10 2 Cor 11:9 might stem from a letter that was written earlier than 2 Cor 8. Here, the use of the “synonym” Macedonia for only one community is possible because the addressees in Corinth know where the “brothers” came from.
- 11 However, this does not preclude some rhetorical exaggeration.
- 12 For such an understanding of ‘precarious’ with special regard to freedpersons and women, see (Oakes 2015, pp. 73–75).
- 13 Cf. n. 3.
- 14 Cf. n. 5.
- 15 It is significant that, according to Luke, the missionaries meet the god-fearer Lydia, a woman sympathetic to Judaism, at a *προσευχή* (an unspecified place for praying, cf. Acts 16:13).
- 16 For a more detailed exposition of this circumstance, see (von Reden 2015, p. 168–69).
- 17 Correspondingly, Longenecker assumes a larger percentage of people in the Roman Empire who belong to intermediate groups (Longenecker 2010, p. 46).
- 18 It is a deficiency of Meggits work that he does not sufficiently consider the Pauline passages that point to certain financial means. So, Phil 4:10 is not considered at all, and 4:15f only regarding Paul’s situation as the receiver of the gift (Meggit 1998, p. 77). For more on this problem regarding Meggit’s socio-economic classification of the Corinthian community members, see (Wojtkowiak 2023, p. 316).
- 19 Not only the phrase *ἐχθροὶ τοῦ σταυροῦ* but also their description as people who are living (*περιπατεῖν*) orientated towards earthly things (*οἱ τὰ ἐπίγεια φρονοῦντες*) point to people with, in Paul’s view, an improper relationship to suffering. That Paul speaks of their destiny as destruction (*ὄν τὸ τέλος ἀπώλεια*) implicates that they are not members of the (according to the Pauline theology) effective holy church. His assertion that he ‘now’ talks about them crying (*νῦν δὲ καὶ κλαίων λέγω*), as well as some further hints on an actual conflict over experiences of suffering in Phil suggests that these people have left the community quite recently (Wojtkowiak 2012, pp. 193–99).
- 20 On the proprietary status of women, especially regarding the Roman inheritance law, see (Koch 2014, p. 63).
- 21 Cf. n. 1. For the discrepancy of Lydia’s social (non-elite) and socio-economic status (anything but poor), see (Sterck-Degueldre 2001, pp. 235–38). Sterck-Degueldre categorizes Lydia as one of the better-off *humiliores*, which matches ES 4.
- 22 For another example of the comparison of Thessalonica and Corinth, see UnChan Jung. While Jung suggests a very low socio-economic level for nearly all community members in Thessalonica (Jung 2021, pp. 75, 137–38), he expounds a more diverse socio-economic structure of the Corinthian community with “semi-elite, upwardly mobile people, and the poor” (Jung 2021, pp. 184–86, 239; cf. n. 24).
- 23 Cf. n. 5. A late dating, even on 61 or 62 (Witherington 2011, p. 11), must recognize that, in this case, the renewed support for Paul would probably happen at the same time as a regional crisis.
- 24 This would be analogous to the scenario Jung considers for the Corinthian community. Based on 1 Cor 4:6–13, Jung assumes that there was a certain amount of “upwardly mobile people or nouveaux riches” (Jung 2021, p. 169) who possibly became community members just after Paul left Corinth (Jung 2021, p. 168–69).
- 25 For a review of the scholarly discussion about the type of partnership which Paul might describe (patronage, ‘societas’ [e.g., Ogereau 2014, p. 349 as a general description of the partnership], friendship, etc.), see (Standhartinger 2021, pp. 290–96; Ogereau 2014, pp. 271–80). Ogereau’s understanding of the specific phrase in Phil 4:15 has the advantage of fitting the context (Paul’s reference to repeated financial gifts), while using a literary understanding of the phrase *λόγος δόσεως καὶ λήψεως*.

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