Theatre of Shame:
The Impact of Paul’s Manual Labour on His Apostleship in Corinth

by

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Abstract

For many scholars Paul is viewed as having freely chosen to engage in manual labour. Using 1 Cor 9:1-18 as the interpretive key, Paul is seen as refusing the material support offered to him by the Corinthian Christ-community, financial support that was rightfully his given Paul’s accepted status as an apostle. Such an interpretation, however, fails to take into account what it meant to work as a manual labourer in the Greco-Roman world. On a first-century view, manual labour testified not to virtue but to lack of integrity; not to legitimate authority but to shameful servility. The life of a manual labourer was analogous to a theatre of shame, a picture that is confirmed by Paul himself.

This dissertation contends that the implications of reading Paul in his concrete socio-economic environment preclude the assertion, so pervasive within scholarship, that Paul had an option to choose with regard to manual labour. It will be argued that Paul was never offered food and drink, that is, material support by the Corinthians, and therefore Paul had no social power but to work (1 Cor 9:6). A new reading of 1 Cor 9:1-18, treating seriously what it meant to be a manual labourer in the Greco-Roman world, suggests that although Paul pronounced himself an apostle (1 Cor 9:1-2) and thereby deserving of material support (1 Cor 9:4-5, 7-12a, 13-14), this
claim of legitimacy was not echoed by the Corinthians (1 Cor 9:6) who equated Paul’s life as a labourer with a scenario of social shame. Paul, therefore, was forced to claim for his manual labour a freedom that was not conventionally accepted (1 Cor 9:12b, 15-18).
Acknowledgments

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BIBLIOGRAPHY
Note on Citations

This dissertation follows these standards for abbreviations, citations, and texts:


Classical texts are cited according to the text and translation of the Loeb Classical Library editions where available. All are listed in the bibliography.

The Greek New Testament is cited from the *Novum Testamentum Graece*, the Nestle-Aland 27th ed. All translations are my own, unless otherwise noted.
Chapter One:  
Introduction

The theological question of an apostle’s legitimacy is indissolubly linked with the material question of the apostle’s subsistence.¹

Or is it the case that only I and Barnabas do not have the social power not to work (ἠ μόνος ἐγὼ καὶ Βαρναβᾶς οὐκ ἔχομεν ἑργάζεσθαι;)²

The earliest movement of Christ-followers in Corinth, known primarily through the apostle Paul’s letters addressed to this community, has long elicited scholarly interest. Among significant developments in recent decades has been an increased appreciation of the social, economic, and cultural milieu of the first-century Greco-Roman world,³ yet Paul’s life as a manual labourer within this world has received only scant attention.⁴ Although scholars recognize that manual labourers in general faced a precarious economic existence, as well as derision from the standpoint of the elite, Paul’s work at a trade has remained entrenched in


² 1 Cor 9:6.


⁴ The one major exception to this claim is the work of Ronald Hock. Hock’s contributions will be discussed later in this chapter.
discussions of whether he was taught a trade in accordance with rabbinic maxim or in a familial context, as well as the nature of Paul’s trade itself, be it tentmaking, weaving, or leatherworking.⁵

This failure to treat Paul’s life as a handworker as a significant autobiographical datum has contributed in large part to the emergence of a scholarly consensus which takes as its point of departure Paul’s claims in 1 Cor 9:1-18. The dominant scholarly view of Paul’s manual labour, specifically in relation to his apostolic role in Corinth, can be summarized as follows: Paul refused to accept the material support offered to him by members of the Corinthian community, remuneration that was rightfully Paul’s given his acknowledged and accepted status as an apostle of Christ. Paul, therefore, chose freely to engage in manual labour as a means of support.

For example, Peter Marshall states that “freedom is not the ultimate value for him [Paul] as it is for his status-conscious critics. Paul has refused their offer and chosen to work for wages in Corinth.”⁶ Ronald Hock argues that “by not accepting pay for his preaching he [Paul] could even entertain hopes of gaining (κερδαίνειν) more - more converts, that is.”⁷ For Margaret Mitchell, “in 1 Cor 9 Paul shows himself to be a person of accommodation through self-

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⁵Scholars such as Günther Bornkamm and Bruce, referring to Acts 22:3, advance that Paul learned a trade while a student of Gamaliel, in line with the rabbinic ideal of combining study and teaching of Torah with work at a trade: “Excellent is the study of Torah together with worldly occupation” (M. Abot 2.2). Thus Bornkamm, “With Paul . . . theological training in Judaism was combined with the learning and practice of an occupation” (G. Bornkamm, Paul [New York: Harper & Row, 1971], 12) and Bruce, “Many rabbis practiced a trade . . . Paul scrupulously maintained this tradition as a Christian preacher” (F. F. Bruce, Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1977], 108); cf. W. H. Boulton, The Apostle Paul: His Life, Labours and Letters (London: Sampson Low, Marston, 1929), 5. Ronald Hock, citing examples such as Plato, Socrates, and Tryphon the weaver, postulates that Paul learned his trade from his father, a practice that was not uniquely Jewish but evidenced in Greco-Roman society. See Ronald F. Hock, The Social Context of Paul’s Ministry: Tentmaking and Apostleship (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1980), 24. Arthur Geoghegan combines both hypotheses, offering that Paul learned his trade from his father who was conforming to rabbinic ideal. See Arthur Geoghegan, The Attitude Towards Labor in Early Christianity and Ancient Culture, The Catholic University of America Studies in Christian Antiquity (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 1945), 108. For a discussion of the meaning of σκηνοποιός (Acts 18:3), see Helenann Hartley, “‘We worked night and day that we might not burden any of you’ (1 Thessalonians 2:9). Aspects of the Portrayal of Work in the Letters of Paul, Late Second Temple Judaism, the Graeco-Roman World and Early Christianity” (Ph.D. diss., Oxford University, 2004), 204-206.

⁶Peter Marshall, Enmity in Corinth: Social Conventions in Paul’s Relations with the Corinthians, WUNT 23 (Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1987), 304.

⁷Hock, Social Context, 62.
renunciation, one who does all that he can to avoid offending others and thus causing and perpetuating division in the church.”

Helenann Hartley combines the above interpretations surmising that “... Paul presents himself as an example of one who, out of consideration for the weak, waives his freedom for their sake. He has abstained from his apostolic ἔξουσία so as not to hinder his mission or burden those to whom he preaches... the main point in chapter 9... [is] to show how one can and ought to abstain from one’s freedom and privileges if the situation demands it.”

Paul’s references elsewhere to his (and others’) manual labour (1 Cor 4:9-13; 2 Cor 6:3-10; 11:7, 23-27; 1 Thess 2:9), and the accompanying hardships, are then read as endured precisely because of Paul’s choice to renounce material support in his promulgation of the gospel.

That the social and other implications of Paul’s daily life as a manual labourer have not been treated seriously are even more apparent when we look to studies which strive to illuminate Paul’s economic world. Karl Polanyi, Moses Finley, Justin J. Meggitt, and Steve Friesen have all highlighted the precarious existence of the vast majority of persons in the Greco-Roman world

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9 Hartley, “Portrayal of Work,” 185-86.

living at, near, or below subsistence level.\textsuperscript{11} Although these scholars have not conceptualized Paul’s life as a handworker within this realm or, specifically, as it relates to Paul’s claims of apostolic legitimacy in 1 Cor 9:1-18, economic considerations, and particularly socio-economic considerations, are now recognized as important, or should be, for our understanding of the first-century Greco-Roman world.

This leads to the topic of this particular investigation: placing Paul’s life as a manual labourer in Corinth in its surrounding socio-economic cultural context. What happens to our interpretation of Paul when we take his life as a manual labourer seriously; that is, both listen carefully to what Paul writes about his own life as a handworker and place the apostle’s means of self-support in its surrounding socio-economic environment?\textsuperscript{12} Could a man who worked with his hands in the first-century Greco-Roman world (and furthermore wanted to be recognized as a figure of authority and leadership in a city like Corinth where there seems to have been some \textit{parvenus} within the community with aspirations to higher status; cf. 1 Cor 1:26; 6:1-8)\textsuperscript{13} be considered anything other than a slave body? Scholars assume that abused manual labourers could attain positions of power in wider society, and this is how Paul’s claims in 1 Cor 9:1-18

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\textsuperscript{12} In 1 Cor 9:1-18, Paul does not offer any sort of description or framework for his manual labour, but only a series of arguments asserting his right to receive or renounce material support from the Corinthians. When the texts that do describe Paul’s handwork as a scenario of shame (1 Cor 4:9-13; 2 Cor 6:3-10; 11:7, 23-27; 1 Thess 2:9) are juxtaposed with the claims made in 1 Cor 9:1-18, Paul’s seemingly innocuous argument becomes less so.

\textsuperscript{13} The Corinthians would have brought with them into their new community many of the primary social values acquired by living within a particular cultural orientation. Whereas the conversion of an adult to a new religion is a secondary socialization, one’s initial values remain primary. See Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, \textit{The Social Construction of Reality} (New York: Doubleday, 1966). See John Harvey Kent, \textit{The Inscriptions, 1926-1950}, Corinth VIII.3 (Princeton: The American School of Classical Studies at Athens, 1966), nn. 128, 155, for just a couple of examples of self-promoting public inscriptions.
have been read; such interpretations, however, fail to take into account evidence to the contrary
in Greco-Roman society in general, Corinth in particular, and Paul’s own admissions. If we take
seriously Paul’s claim that he worked with his body, on the one hand, and recognize the palpable
scorn directed towards such persons within certain segments of the population, on the other, a
new understanding of the apostle and the hardships he encountered necessitates consideration.

Treating seriously Paul’s life as a manual labourer is a lacuna in scholarship that this
thesis will address, specifically the implications of this kind of a life for Paul’s claims to
apostolic legitimacy and support in 1 Cor 9:1-18, the text typically drawn upon as the foundation
for scholarly assessments of Paul’s life as a handworker. This chapter will place Paul’s
discussion in 1 Cor 9:1-18 in its surrounding literary context, and highlight that even though 1
these chapters together is “eating (and drinking).” This section will be followed by one
reviewing the state of scholarly literature when it comes to interpretations of 1 Cor 9:1-18,
highlighting both strengths and weaknesses of the various arguments. Here there will be a
concentration on significant developments and turning points pertaining to Paul’s manual labour
and his claims in 1 Cor 9:1-18, which will thereby situate the current study within the wider
scope of scholarship.
1.1 1 Cor 9:1-18: Contextual and Literary Considerations

This dissertation’s concentration on 1 Cor 9:1-18 as a discrete unit is justified for a number of reasons. First, whereas 1 Cor 9:1-18 deals with “rights,” 1 Cor 9:19 introduces new themes, and what follows is a carefully structured quartet of various behaviours. Second, 1 Cor 9:19-23 forms its own unit, for which 1 Cor 9:19 serves as the introduction and 1 Cor 9:22b as the conclusion.\(^{14}\) Third, Weiss suggests that 1 Cor 9:19-23 is an example of well-crafted rhetorical style arranged on the schema ABC CBA.\(^{15}\) Fourth, 1 Cor 9:24-27 consists entirely of athletic metaphors and prepares for a return to the argument in 1 Cor 10:1-22 concerning attendance at cultic meals. Taken together the above evidence supports treating 1 Cor 9:1-18 as a discrete unit, a position that this thesis will accept.\(^{16}\)

Paul’s claims in 1 Cor 9:1-18 fall within an extended discussion concerning the question of eating food offered to idols (1 Cor 8:1-11:1). There is, however, no explicit reference to eating idol meat anywhere in 1 Cor 9:1-18, nor does Paul raise issues of material support or

\(^{14}\)See Fee, *First Epistle*, 423 n. 9 for a diagram of the structure (perhaps chiastic) of 1 Cor 9:19-23.


recompense in his instructions regarding idol meat. After a relatively long period of scholarly disinterest, 1 Cor 8:1-11:1 has become the topic of renewed discussion and debate.\textsuperscript{17}

Current studies have tended to narrow in on four main issues surrounding these chapters: (1) compositional unity;\textsuperscript{18} (2) factions addressed (if any) over the issue of idol-food;\textsuperscript{19} (3) Paul’s instructions on when/if it were ever appropriate to eat food offered to idols;\textsuperscript{20} (4) the purpose of chapter 9 (#1 and #4 will overlap sometimes).\textsuperscript{21}

Although each one of these issues is interesting in its own right, deciding whether or not 1 Cor 8:1-11:1 is a case of original unity or secondary editorial conjecture is unnecessary to determine here. Clearly, each segment of 1 Cor 8:1-11:1 has its own peculiarities, but what is important to demonstrate for the task at hand is to observe the way in which these chapters relate to one another. In that vein, I will argue that the discussion of Paul’s authority to partake of


\textsuperscript{19}See below.

\textsuperscript{20}See below.

\textsuperscript{21}The review of scholarship concerning the purpose of 1 Cor 9:1-18 will be provided later in this chapter (section 1.2).
Corinthian food and drink (1 Cor 9:1-18) falls within two chapters that both deal with the topic of food (1 Cor 8:1-13; 10:1-11:1). Thus, in placing 1 Cor 9:1-18 in its literary context, I suggest, 1 Cor 8:1-11:1 has “eating (and drinking)” as its Leitmotiv, specifically when not to eat in 1 Cor 8:1-13; 10:1-11:1, and the “right” to eat in 1 Cor 9:1-18.

1.1.1 1 Cor 8:1-11:1 - The Constant Question is One of “Right to Food”

Although Paul’s discussion involving food offered to idols is multifaceted and complex, and differing interpretations and hypotheses will continue to be advanced and defended, Paul’s discussion of his own ἐξουσία in 1 Cor 9:1-18 occurs within a context not only of rights, but more specifically the right to partake of certain foods. The question of food and drink is precisely what ties these chapters together, namely the propriety of eating, or not eating, in 1 Cor 8:1-13; 10:1-11:1, and the “social power” to partake of food and drink, that is, material support in 1 Cor 9:1-18.

Contextually, 1 Cor 9:1-18 is the middle term in a section of the letter that deals with “food (and drink)”: food sacrificed to idols (1 Cor 8:1-13); food and drink in Israel’s wilderness experience (1 Cor 10:1-13); issues again pertaining to food sacrificed to idols (1 Cor 10:14-30); a concluding statement on eating and drinking (1 Cor 10:31-11:1). These three chapters all

22 The issue of food and drink, in one way or another, is a theme up to 1 Cor 11:34.

23 This is my translation of ἐξουσία as occurs in 1 Cor 9:1-18. The translation “social power” keeps the connotations of fluidity present. We see, for instance, that you can have ἐξουσία with one person but not another (cf. Luke 7:8). Ἐξουσία is a form of social power and authority (cf. Mark 1:27), and the NRSV translation of ἐξουσία as “rights” is anachronistic and misleading (the notion of “rights” began in an 18th century context for understanding political relationships. We need to remember that the Greco-Roman world was not a modern democratic republic). I thank Leif E. Vaage for his contribution on this point.
revolve around issues of “rights” and food and drink, and as expressed in 1 Cor 9:1-18, the ἐξουσία (1 Cor 9:4, 5, 6, 12, 18) to food and drink as synonymous with pay and sustenance.

In 1 Corinthians 8:1-13; 10:1-11:1, Paul refers to four venues in which food offered to idols would have been encountered by the Corinthians: (1) in the temple of an idol (τὸ εἰδώλειον; 1 Cor 8:1-13); (2) at the table of demons (τραπέζα δαιμονίων; 1 Cor 10:14-22); (3) at the macellum/market (τὸ μάκελλον; 1 Cor 10:25); and (4) at a meal attended by invitation, presumably at a private residence hosted by someone who is not a “believer” (εἴ τις καλεῖ ὑμᾶς τῶν ἀπίστων; 1 Cor 10:27-30).

Scholars have identified two issues related to Paul’s instructions on idol-meat: (1) did Paul address different factions which were in dispute over the issue of idol-food? And, (2) what were Paul’s instructions to the Corinthians about this matter? Although there have been various interpretations set forth, what remains central is the fact that the topic of “food and drink” holds these chapters together.

For instance, in response to the issue of whether or not Paul addresses divergent factions within the Corinthian community over the issue of eating food offered to idols, some scholars maintain that two groups were in dispute: the “strong” who, because of their knowledge about God and idols (γνῶσις; 1 Cor 8:1-4, 7, 10-11) buy and eat marketplace idol food and/or attend social meals at idol temples.24 Other Corinthians, being weak (τοῖς ἀσθενέσιν; 1 Cor 8:7, 9-12)

24 For the use of the terms “strong” and “weak” as labels for the two factions, see Theissen, Social Setting, 121-43. Fotopoulos, Food Offered to Idols, 189 n. 34, notes that “although many scholars refer to those who advocate idol-food as the Strong, this term is not used by Paul in 1 Cor 8:1-11 as a title given specifically to the groups advocating idol-food consumption. Paul refers to those who advocate eating idol-food as those who possess ‘knowledge’ (8:10). The term ‘Strong,’ however, is the logical opposite of ‘weak,’ a term Paul uses in reference to those opposed to idol-food consumption (8:9). Paul does, though, tell those in favor of eating idol-food that God will not let them be tested beyond their ‘strength’ (10:13), and he asks them if they are ‘stronger’ than the Lord (10:22) . . . The term ‘Strong’ may also seem appropriate to some scholars in reference to Corinthians advocating idol-food consumption since Paul uses this term in contrast to the ‘Weak’ in Romans 14 regarding disagreements about meat eating.”
continue to struggle with their former pagan worldview and connect the eating of idol meat with the worship of a pagan deity. That two factions were debating over the propriety of eating idol-food is a position taken by Weiss, Barrett, Theissen, Murphy-O’Connor, Mitchell, Witherington, Fotopoulos, and Horrell.  

Theissen identifies the weak with the poorer members of the Corinthian community, specifically the “socially weak” of 1 Cor 1:26-27:

Members of the lower classes seldom ate meat in their everyday lives. For that they were largely dependent on public distributions of meat which were always organized around a ceremonial occasion. The community meals of the collegia were also religious feasts. As a result, those from the lower classes knew meat almost exclusively as an ingredient in pagans’ religious celebrations, and the acts of eating meat and worshipping idols must have been much more closely connected for them than for members of the higher strata who were more accustomed to consuming meat routinely. For the poorer classes meat was truly something ‘special.’ It belonged to a sacred time segregated from the everyday world. It had a ‘numinous’ character.

Other attempts to define the composition of the “weak” include identifying them as “morbidly scrupulous people,” “Christians not yet fully emancipated from legalism,” or as “pagan neophytes who had difficulties with the power of idolatry.”

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26 Theissen, *Social Setting*, 128. Theissen’s division of the “strong” and the “weak” in 1 Cor 8:1-11:1 along social lines on the basis that the former ate meat while the latter did not, has come under some sustained critique. Gooch, *Dangerous Food*, 149, argues that the evidence does not support the view of “the stark difference in the social use of food (whether sacred or not) between social classes in Greco-Roman society. . . . is not borne out by the Greco-Roman literary and archaeological evidence.” This observation is supported by the work of Meggitt who suggests that meat “was more regularly eaten by the non-elite than [Theissen] allows,” particularly in the “cookshops” (popinae). See Justin J. Meggitt, “Meat Consumption and Social Conflict in Corinth,” *JTS* 45 (1994): 138. See Theissen’s refutation of these critiques, “Social Conflicts in the Corinthian Community: Further Remarks on J. J. Meggitt, *Paul, Poverty, and Survival*, JSNT 25 (2003): 381-89.


Another position taken by some scholars is that there were no actual divisions between two opposing groups at Corinth; rather, Paul’s references to the “strong” and “weak” were merely hypothetical. In this view, promulgated by scholars such as Conzelmann, Hurd, Fee, Gooch, Yeo, Cheung, and Smit, there was one generally unified position among the Corinthians, that of those who advocated the eating of idol meat. Paul, however, disagreed with this position and warned the community of its dangers.  

John Hurd, for instance, argues that there was no internal dispute among the Corinthians, but only conflict between Paul and the group as a whole, suggesting that the “weak brother appears to have been a hypothetical construction of Paul’s, created for the purpose of argument.” Although Gooch, like Hurd, maintains that there was no disagreement among the Corinthians over the issue of idol-food, he rejects Hurd’s proposal that the problem began after Paul’s change in policy brought about by the apostle’s acceptance of the Apostolic Decree (Acts 15:1-16:5; 21:25). Whereas Hurd argues that the apparent inconsistency in Paul’s instructions on idol-food resulted from Paul’s original concession to allow the Corinthians to eat idol-food, which he later retracted after the Jerusalem leaders pressured the apostle to implement the Apostolic Decree, Gooch suggests that Paul had always been consistent in avoiding idol-food.

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33 Gooch, *Dangerous Food*, 93-95, 140-43.
In particular, Gooch draws attention to the hypothetical objections of the weak in 1 Cor 8:13 to support his claim that “in 8:7-13 we hear not weak Christians but Paul.”

Although the above discussions are interesting indeed, I would suggest, however, that no matter whether Paul was responding to actual disputes or whether his instructions regarding idol-meat were hypothetical, what remains at the core is the issue of eating and drinking.

One other interpretive difficulty within these chapters is Paul’s seemingly inconsistent instructions regarding the eating of food offered to idols and the various contexts in which one potentially could come into contact with idol-food. Thus, Paul forbids the Corinthians from consuming sacrificial food in pagan temples (1 Cor 8:9-13), as well as from eating at the table of pagan gods (1 Cor 10:14-22). 1 Cor 10:21 is explicit on this point: οὐ δύνασθε ποτήριον κυρίου πίνειν καὶ ποτήριον δαίμονιων, οὐ δύνασθε τραπέζης κυρίου μετέχειν καὶ τραπέζης δαίμονιων. There seem to be contradictory instructions given, however, when Paul elsewhere allows the Corinthians to eat idol-food if they are invited to dinner at an unbeliever’s house, so long as it is not brought to their attention that what is being served is sacrificial food (1 Cor 10:27-30), a version of the maxim “ignorance is bliss.” Further contradictions seemingly arise when Paul permits the consumption of idol-food when it is purchased from the market, for “the earth and its fullness are the Lord’s” (τοῦ κυρίου γὰρ ἡ γῆ καὶ τὸ πλῆρωμα αὐτῆς; 1 Cor 10:25-26).

Numerous hypotheses have been advanced in answer to the question why Paul prohibits the eating of idol-food from pagan temples and the table of demons, but not from dinners with those who are not believers or from the market. No matter, however, how Paul’s instructions are

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34 Gooch, Dangerous Food, 66.

35 My own reading of Paul’s instructions on idol-meat leads me to conclude that he was addressing different factions within the community. It does not seem plausible, in my opinion, that within a letter in which there is so much attention paid to the unity of the community (e.g., 1 Cor 1-4; 6:1-18; 11:17-34), that one of its most extensive sections would deal with an issue over which no divisions existed.
interpreted, what remains central are his instructions that revolve around issues of eating (or not eating).

Fotopoulous, for instance, suggests that because of the frequent and explicitly idolatrous rites performed over food in pagan temples, such dinners, by their very nature, would have been known by the Corinthians to be idolatrous:

Paul’s consistent rejection of temple dining was due to the religious meaning attached to such meals that involved sacrificial food being placed before pagan deities represented by their idol statues . . . because of the participation of pagan gods at such meals, Paul believed that Corinthian Christian temple dining made those Christians who ate idol-food guilty of idolatry . . . Paul not only rejected the consumption of idol-food in temples because of the relationship that was actualized with pagan deities, but also because of the sexual encounters which oftentimes accompanied such meals and were considered by Paul to be immoral Christian behaviour.  

A logical question to be asked at this point, however, is that given Paul’s concern about the presence and harmful effects of idolatry, why did he permit the eating of food from the *macellum*, which was either bought by the individual or consumed at pagan private residences? One way to approach this question is to suggest that there was no definitive way to determine the origin of the food being sold in the *macellum*. Did all food that was sold at the *macellum* necessarily originate from pagan rites and rituals? As Isenberg has argued, there was an inherent ambiguity about where market meats were derived. Thus, the supposed contradiction in Paul’s advice can be answered by suggesting that because of this ambiguity as to the relationship of the food with idol sacrifice, if there was any relationship at all, questions of conscience need not be raised (1 Cor 10:25). For this reason, the believer could partake with thankfulness (1 Cor 10:30), because “the earth and its fullness is the Lord’s” (1 Cor 10:26).

Cheung arrives at the same conclusion and concludes that:

Paul urges abstention from idol food if it is known to be such, but one is not guilty if one eats idol food unknowingly . . . Paul affirms the general prohibition against eating idol food, but attaches

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36 Fotopoulos, *Food Offered to Idols*, 39.

an explanation that eating food of unknown origins does not constitute eating idol food. But once
the idolatrous status of the food is known, the status of such eating changes accordingly and is then
subject to the original general prohibition.\textsuperscript{38}

An underlying assumption of the above hypothesis, as Rudolph correctly notes, is that Paul
believed that idol food in-and-of-itself was not the source of contention.\textsuperscript{39} The food, as food,
was not in some way dangerous, as though in possession of numinous qualities, but rather it was
the disposition behind the consumption that was the cause of the problem and precipitated Paul’s
advice (1 Cor 10:19-20).

In this view, there is here a parallel between Paul’s view of unclean food elsewhere and
the food sacrificed to idols.\textsuperscript{40} The food itself was not the source of corruption, hence the
permission to eat food bought at the \textit{macellum} and at a pagan’s house, so long as the believer
was unaware. It was knowingly eating food that was offered to idols that was the problem, for
this knowledge constituted a relationship with idolatry.\textsuperscript{41}

Paul’s instructions regarding “idol food,” thus, continue to elicit scholarly discussions,
and although I have noted some of the debates, I have demonstrated that no matter one’s
interpretation, there remains in 1 Cor 8:1-13; 10:1-11:1 the recurring question of when to eat and
when not to eat. Paul argues that in some cases eating “idol food” is permitted, while in others
cautions and restraint must be taken. Therefore, the topic of “eating (and drinking)” is what holds
together these chapters.

\begin{flushright}\footnotesize
\textsuperscript{38}Cheung, \textit{Idol Food}, 301.

\textsuperscript{39}Rudolph, \textit{Jew to the Jews}, 94.

\textsuperscript{40}Cf. Rom 14:14, “nothing is unclean in itself; but it is unclean for anyone who thinks it unclean.”

\textsuperscript{41}David E. Garland, \textit{1 Corinthians}, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids,
MI: Baker Academic, 2003), 496, drawing on the work of Tomson (\textit{Paul and the Jewish Law}, 214), sees parallels
between Paul’s approach and that of the rabbis: “the rabbis absolutely prohibited direct or indirect contact with
pagan rites, but they ruled that Jews could intermingle with Gentiles unless it became clear that the latter were
engaged in some religious activity.”
\end{flushright}
Additionally, Paul’s discussion in 1 Cor 9:1-18 holds in common with its surrounding literary context the issue of “eating (and drinking).” Although these chapters hardly constitute a single argument or even discuss the same issue, 1 Cor 9:1-18 has food in common with the other texts. In 1 Cor 9:1-18, Paul expounds on the issue of food (and drink), namely, Paul’s social power to Corinthian material support. Although 1 Cor 9:1-18 will receive much greater emphasis in chapter five of this dissertation, as a cursory introduction, it can be noted that Paul claims he does have the social power to Corinthian “food and drink” (1 Cor 9:4; cf. 1 Cor 9:5, 6-12a; 13-14). Indeed, it is precisely the social power Paul claims to possess that constitutes his right, in his opinion at least, to Corinthian material support, that is, their food and drink (1 Cor 9:12b, 15).

That the topic of “eating (and drinking)” is what joins 1 Cor 8:1-11:1 together leads to a related recognition. Of all the topics dealt with in these chapters, the issue of hunger, even though it is never mentioned explicitly, runs like a red thread throughout. As Theissen has suggested, for instance, variations in class-based diet may be behind the discord in 1 Cor 8:1-13; 10:1-11:1, since the socially prominent members of the community, “the strong,” ate meat relatively routinely and had no compunction about eating meat offered to idols. The weak members of the community, on the other hand, whom Theissen equates with the “socially weak” of 1 Cor 1:26-27, only ate meat on the few occasions on which a particular festival or religious celebration occurred, and thus identified meat with “idol food.”

Additionally, 1 Cor 10:27 suggests that the Corinthian “strong” may expect invitations to dine. It is possible to postulate from these instructions that those who were invited to dine were of a higher social status than others within the community: it is difficult to imagine slaves being

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42 Theissen, Social Setting, 121-43.
invited to dinner. Such invitations may imply that the “strong” who “know” that idol-meat is really “nothing” may, in fact, be more interested in food as a sign of social status than as an answer to physical hunger.

Furthermore, in a section of the letter occupied with concerns about the right to eat, we cannot fail to remember Paul’s refrain of his own hunger and thirst as a manual labourer, a lack that would have been well-known to the Corinthians (1 Cor 4:11; 2 Cor 11:27). It is somewhat ironic that the concerns addressed in 1 Cor 8:1-13; 10:1-11:1 involve when and in what venue it is permissible to eat, whereas in 1 Cor 9:1-18, Paul’s own proximity to hunger and thirst as a manual labourer is one factor which has called his apostleship into question.

In this section, I have endeavoured to place 1 Cor 9:1-18 in its surrounding literary context, and I have determined that even though 1 Cor 8:1-11:1 otherwise hardly constitutes a single argument or always discusses the same issue, so also these chapters have “eating (and drinking)” as their Leitmotiv. Specifically, 1 Cor 8:1-13; 10:1-11:1 are both concerned with the propriety of eating, whereas the issue of food and drink, that is, material support, comes to the forefront in 1 Cor 9:1-18.

With regards to 1 Cor 9:1-18, the following section will provide some notable findings and arguments in the history of research into the specific purpose of this chapter. It will be demonstrated that Paul’s manual labour rarely is the focus of discussion, and when handwork does form a part of scholarly interpretation, the underlying assumption remains that Paul refused offers of support from the Corinthians. In other words, Paul refused his “right” to food and drink, thereby foregoing his apostolic privileges, opting instead to support himself as a manual labourer. I will demonstrate, however, that this is neither a defensible nor intelligible line of interpretation.
1.2 A History of Interpretation of 1 Cor 9:1-18

Given the complexity of the surrounding literary context, it should come as no surprise that there are differing, and sometimes contradictory interpretations and answers to the numerous questions posed by 1 Cor 9:1-18. Some see its purpose as Paul’s discourse on freedom in conversation with contemporaneous philosophers;\(^{43}\) others that Paul cedes his right to apostolic support as an example to be imitated in consideration of the weaker members of the community;\(^{44}\) still others, that 1 Cor 9:1-18 functions as an apostolic defence after questions have been raised about Paul’s behaviour regarding his instructions on idol food and/or his decision to refuse Corinthian material support.\(^{45}\) To muddy the waters further, Paul is sometimes thought to be addressing concerns of a theological nature;\(^{46}\) at other times, responding to conflicts arising from the social composition of the Corinthian community.\(^{47}\) The complexity of 1 Cor 9:1-18 is only matched by the myriad of its differing interpretations.

This section of the dissertation will establish that the common denominator among all of these interpretations of 1 Cor 9:1-18 remains the suggestion that Paul consciously refused offers of material support, choosing instead, to support himself as a manual labourer. This section will begin to sketch previous interpretations of 1 Cor 9:1-18 in order to lay the groundwork for a new


reading of this chapter, a reading that pays particular attention to the realities, perceptions, and implications of Paul’s life as one who worked with his hands.

1.2.1 Traditional (Pre-Modern) Interpretations

From the Patristic period through to the mid-nineteenth century, an emphasis was placed on the “religious” identity of the apostle. Such a concentration apparently precluded investigation of the immediate literary context in which 1 Cor 9:1-18 fell, as well as issues arising from the wider Corinthian and Greco-Roman social context. Given the stress on theological pronouncements, 1 Cor 9:1-18 was explained under the aegis of voluntary self-renunciation on the part of the apostle as a model of paradigmatic behaviour for other Christian followers.

Thus, patristic authors drew upon Paul’s description of his self-denial as one example of a cardinal virtue towards which all Christians should strive irrespective of time and place. This was a timeless and self-evident truth applicable to all believers. In this vein, Tertullian regards Paul’s claim of self-denial as a prerequisite action and behaviour in order for the “old nature” to pass away and the “new nature” to come into existence. Tertillian, Jejun. 8; cf. John Cassian, The Institutes, 5.xi-xix.

Ps. Clement likewise reads Paul’s self-abnegation as a virtue which Christians should imitate, and connects such renunciation as an example of an illustrative example of Paul’s divinely inspired apostolic commission. Ps. Clement, Epistle Concerning Virginity, 9; cf. Jerome, Epist. 54.

Rather than Paul or the Corinthians being situated in their social milieu, or Paul’s assertions being read
in light of the contextual emphasis on the right to partake of food, Paul’s claims are read as ever-present and abiding truths, applicable for all Christians.

Medieval and Reformation authors, like their Patristic predecessors, similarly interpreted Paul’s claims in 1 Cor 9:1-18 as the apostle’s appeal to the Corinthians to act in imitation of his example. John Calvin, for instance, submits that the function of 1 Cor 9:1-18 is to remind the Corinthians that they, too, share in the gospel, and like Paul’s self-denial of his right to be supported by the community, the Corinthians are called “to forego many things for the sake of their brethren after his [Paul’s] example.”\(^50\) The gospel message, therefore, calls for self-sacrifice, and Paul is using his example as a model for correct Christian behaviour towards one’s fellow community members.

1.2.2 Modern Scholarly Interpretations

This traditional focus on the theological basis for Paul’s renunciation of his accepted apostolic rights to material support is echoed and expanded right into the mid-nineteenth century. What is noteworthy now, however, is that Paul’s manual labour begins to factor into scholarly discussions. In 1875, E. H. Plumptre published an article proposing that increased attention to Paul’s manual labour is beneficial in shedding “more light on the character and sagacity of the great Apostle.”\(^51\) Although Plumptre assigned Paul’s voluntary renunciation of support to paradigmatic purposes, much like his Patristic and Medieval predecessors, his argument included the realization that behind Paul’s refusal of support lay the fact that he worked as a labourer. For


\(^51\) Plumptre, “St. Paul,” 266.
Plumptre, the apostle’s life and means of support as a handworker introduced “a new sense of dignity of mechanic labour . . . and taught men to think of it, not as belonging to the bondage of the slave, but as part of the freedom of the free.”

Plumptre’s contribution to discussions involving Paul’s life as a manual labourer is significant in two respects. Firstly, there is present the recognition that Paul’s work at a trade should not be treated as an ancillary fact. Secondly, and more importantly, there is the realization, albeit only fleetingly, that manual labour was equated with slavery in the wider societal milieu. Although the implications of such an association are nowhere parsed, we witness with Plumptre an awareness that Paul’s claims in 1 Cor 9:1-18 need to be read not only in their surrounding literary context, but within the wider environment of the Greco-Roman world.

The contributions of F. C. Baur form a major landmark in scholarly studies pertaining to the Corinthian Christ-communities. The launching-point for Baur’s argument was Paul’s reference early in the Corinthian correspondence to “parties” within the community (1 Cor 1:12). The four parties mentioned (those of Paul, Apollos, Cephas, and Christ) were compressed by Baur into two: the followers of Paul and Apollos on the one hand, and Peter and Christ on the other, with the latter regarded as Judaizers.

Baur surmises that the slogan, ἔγώ δὲ Χριστοῦ, reflects the viewpoint of the Jewish members within the Corinthian-Christ movement, who interpreted their authority resting on a

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54 Baur, “Die Christuspartei,” 24-76.
direct link with Christ, represented in their apostle Peter. Paul responds to the charges of these critics (ἀνακρίνω; 1 Cor 9:3) that he was not truly a genuine apostle because he was not “of Christ.” The core cause of the conflict at Corinth can be reduced to disagreements between two opposing parties, and 1 Cor 9:1-18, for Baur, forms an apologia in defence of Paul’s apostleship.

Given this disagreement amongst different factions in Corinth, Baur argues that part of Paul’s apology by necessity addresses charges that he was not thought of as a genuine apostle because of his decision not to accept support from the community. Paul answers these charges by reminding the Corinthians of his “voluntary renunciation” of his apostolic rights, a choice made “because a higher consideration had bidden him [to] make no use of them.”55 Therefore, Paul did not accept the material support offered to him by the Corinthians “because such a practice did not seem to him to be consistent with the plan of the Gospel, and would place himself in a mercenary light.”56

Baur further suggests that Paul’s defence of his apostleship is included as part of the instructions regarding eating meat offered to idols, because the issue of foregoing one’s right for the sake of others (1 Cor 8:1-13) provides the opportunity to explain how his voluntary renunciation of rights is not a shortcoming in his apostolic ministry, but is rather a sign of his apostolic office. Whereas Paul’s opponents suggested Paul’s actions revealed how little he “dare[d] to place himself in a situation to assume the same rights as the other Apostles,” Paul maintained throughout this defence that “he subjugated his whole personality to the interests of others.”57 In the conflict with an opposing group, 1 Cor 9:1-18 functions as an evidentiary demonstration of Paul’s divine commission to apostleship.

55 Baur, Paul the Apostle, 1:279.
56 Baur, Paul the Apostle, 1:280.
57 Baur, Paul the Apostle, 1:280.
The work of Adolf Deissmann follows Baur’s lead in paying attention to Paul’s social milieu, but with Deissmann, Paul’s manual labour comes to the fore in a way not witnessed before within scholarship. Pointedly critiquing the lack of interest in the embodied world of Paul evinced in earlier studies, Deissmann characterizes the apostle as “the tent-maker from Tarsus,” a moniker placing Paul socially among the lower classes. Deissmann challenges previous suggestions that Paul was above-all, or solely, a theological and systematic thinker; rather, Paul was simply a travelling tentmaker who went unnoticed by the elite stratum of the Greco-Roman world. Paul was proud that he was the first artisan missionary, and the fact that Paul worked at a trade was readily apparent in his physical appearance: “the apostle’s ‘large letters’ (Gal 6:11) are best explained as the clumsy, awkward writing of a workman’s hand deformed by toil.” Deissmann continues, contrary to all previous appraisals of Paul, that “we must not think of Paul the tentmaker as a scholarly writer of books who by the way of recreation after his brainwork took his place for an hour or two at the loom as an amateur . . . He was much rather a plain and simple man whose trade was the economic foundation of his existence.”


59 Deissmann aptly states that “the earlier students of Paulinism, with their one-sided zeal for presenting the ‘doctrine’ of St. Paul in orderly paragraphs like so many anatomical preparations, lifeless and undated, had no concern with the problem of St. Paul’s social standing” (Deissmann, *St. Paul*, 49).


61 In Deissmann’s characterization “St. Paul is one of the great crowd of the weary and heavy-laden. To the aristocratic men of letters in that age he would have been, if they had noticed him at all, absolutely a homo novus” (Deissmann, *St. Paul*, 77; cf. 50, 53).


64 Deissmann, *St. Paul*, 50-51; cf. *Light*, 246. Compare this with W. H. Boulton’s conception of Paul’s handwork: “. . . it was a mechanical process, and would leave the mind free. In this we have indication of the divine providence which overruled the affairs of the Apostle, fitting him for his life’s work . . .” (*The Apostle Paul: His Life, Labours and Letters* [London: Sampson Low, Marston, 1929], 5).
Although Deissmann investigated Paul’s manual labour to a greater degree than any scholar prior to him, he still keeps Paul as homo religiosus at the forefront of his discussion. This is seen clearly in Deissmann’s short appraisal of 1 Cor 9:1-18: “. . . he [Paul] abstained of his own free will from exercising a right that was generally admitted . . . the right of a missionary to be supported by the churches.”65 In Deissmann’s conception, why did Paul abstain from collecting support from the Corinthians? No clear answer is given, apart from the suggestion that Paul refused to be supported by communities which were poor, lest he become a financial burden.66 Thus, Paul’s claims in 1 Cor 9:1-18 are read forgetting or neglecting Deissmann’s other evidence attesting to the insignificance of labourers within the wider social sphere. Paul’s life as a manual labourer and the hardships entailed are without a doubt afforded greater significance than demonstrated in earlier works by other scholars, yet the implications of such a life for Paul’s apostleship among the Corinthians are nowhere parsed to any significant degree.

Deissmann’s recognition that Paul’s manual labour formed an important part of his apostleship did not bear immediate fruit, and social considerations subsequently took a backseat to philosophical emphases. Ernst Käsemann, for instance, hypothesized that Paul’s intent in composing 1 Cor 9:1-18 was to demonstrate the ways in which “love sets bounds to Christian freedom.”67 However, given that the “necessity” (1 Cor 9:16) laid upon Paul to preach the gospel is directed solely towards the apostle, Paul cannot be claiming that such radical self-denial is appropriate for others; thus, 1 Cor 9:1-18 is not paradigmatic in nature.

65 Deissmann, St. Paul, 209.
66 Deissmann, St. Paul, 209.
For Käsemann, “Paul is not now conducting a controversy with enthusiasts, he is not defining the difference between himself and the rest of the apostles, he is not defending himself against reproaches from members of the community; he is giving account to himself to the truth of his apostolic existence.”

Thus, Paul is interpreted as arguing that his reception of support for his preaching would work against the necessity that had been laid upon him, and Käsemann concludes with the paradoxical assessment that Paul’s “reward” is not being rewarded for his missionary labourers. Paul, in this interpretation, chooses voluntarily to work because of the emphasis the apostle placed on his own apostolic commission. Paul’s conception of his apostolic stance is thought by Käsemann to be based on the Stoic conception of the *amor fati*, such as described by Epictetus: “I am free and the friend of God, so that I may freely obey him.”

Thus, once again, Paul’s labour as forming a part of 1 Cor 9:1-18 effectively goes unnoticed, and the apostle’s handwork is left at the margins of interpretation.

Along the same lines as Käsemann, Bengt Holmberg argues that Paul desired not to put any obstacle in the way of the gospel, lest he be “(mis)understood as a sophist, who peddles his teaching and miracles . . . and perhaps also that he did not want to deter poor people from becoming Christians.” Here Paul is understood as preaching the gospel free of charge, that is,

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70 Käsemann, “Amor Fati,” 234. There is one overarching problem in Käsemann’s scenario: how can Paul’s reward of not accepting support be such a source of pride when he freely accepts assistance from other communities?

he worked to support himself instead of accepting Corinthian material support, lest he deny the fundamental concept of “grace.”

Günther Bornkamm similarly argues that Paul’s motivations in 1 Cor 9:1-18 are overwhelmingly theological. In this interpretation, Paul exhorts the Corinthians to imitate his example because all are united under the “law of Christ” which is the Spirit. There is an element of defence present here, specifically that “his [Paul’s] adversaries often misunderstood and denounced his stance [regarding the propriety of eating meat offered to idols] as ambiguity, conformism, opportunism and unprincipled vacillation.” What is noteworthy, though, is that surrounding literary considerations now form part of the equation. Therefore, Paul’s purpose in 1 Cor 9:1-18 is to relativize the differing opinions as to the eating of idol food by showing the manner in which the gospel command to love sets limits on the appropriate exercise of freedom. Thus, 1 Cor 9:1-18 is both paradigmatic and apologetic in composition. In this reading, Paul’s status as an apostle is not in-and-of-itself under debate.

That 1 Cor 9:1-18 is best understood in light of the surrounding literary context is likewise reflected in an article published by C. K. Barrett, although Barrett’s interpretation includes within it an element of apostolic apologia. Barrett argues that in Paul’s founding visit to the Corinthians he held a liberal position on whether it was appropriate to eat idol meat. However, sometime after Paul’s initial sojourn in Corinth, Jewish-Christian missionaries under the authority of Peter, arrived in the community and introduced the Apostolic Decree which strictly prohibited any consumption of food sacrificed to idols (cf. Acts 15:29). When Paul then

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74 Bornkamm, “Missionary Stance,” 197.

tried to enforce in the community the prohibitions as set forth in the Apostolic Decree, the Corinthians began to question his apostolic authority. Paul, therefore, defended his apostleship throughout 1 Cor 9:1-18, an apostleship which had fallen under a shadow resulting from perceptions that the apostle was oscillating on his idol-food position.

Other commentators have approached Paul’s claim that he renounced material support from the standpoint of socio-rhetorical interpretation. Here lies the notion that Paul drew upon conventional topoi of Hellenistic moralists in addressing disputes caused in large part by the variegated social composition of the community. In this vein, Theissen argues that the disputes amongst the Corinthians were caused by the socially stratified nature of the adherents, rather than by religious or theological differences. Theissen interprets 1 Cor 9:1-18 through the lens of debate over the appropriate means of apostolic support between different types of missionary practices; thus “two types of missionaries meet in 1 and 2 Corinthians, types which can be distinguished by reference to their position on this issue of the right of support.”

On one side are the itinerant charismatics who forsake home, possessions, security and family to live a life devoid of basic social responsibilities, comparable, in this sense, to the life of itinerant Cynic philosophers. These recently arrived missionaries claimed to be in obedience to the commission of Jesus in accepting nothing but food and overnight lodging in return for their apostolic labours (cf. Luke 10:7; Matt 10:10b). Given that Jesus had assured his followers that God would tend to their everyday needs (cf. Matt 6:25-34; 8:20), their poverty was demonstrable proof that they were legitimate apostles of God.

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76 Theissen, *Social Setting*, 43.
77 Theissen, *Social Setting*, 31-32.
78 Theissen, *Social Setting*, 34-35: “lodging and sustenance would be guaranteed to them [the itinerant charismatics] εἰς δὸμα προφήτου, δικαιοῦ οὗ μαθητῶν (Mt. 10:40-42), not because they themselves belonged to the poor and needy, but because they stood in a special relationship to God” (p. 34).
The other group Theissen understands as underlying the conflict over the proper means of apostolic support is those he terms the “community organizers,” who are represented by Paul and Barnabas. Paul’s choice to work as a manual labourer had the potential to be understood by others within the community as a violation of the norm of poverty and freedom from worldly constraints, the result of which had the potential effect of calling Paul’s apostolic legitimacy into doubt. For Theissen, Paul’s choice to support himself rather than accept assistance from the Corinthians was not controversial in-and-of itself; rather, Paul’s self-support was interpreted by some as indicative of the fact that Paul did not enjoy “freedom” from worldly concerns. As Theissen claims:

Paul’s renunciation of the ‘privilege’ of support might be seen in a quite different way: the charge could be levelled at him that he has deliberately evaded the requirement of charismatic poverty, and that his work as a craftsman displays a lack of trust in the grace of God, who will also supply the material needs of his missionaries. Seen this way Paul is dependent on his work; he is not free and is no real apostle (9:1), for he has offended against the norm of primitive Christian ideal of itinerant charismatics set down by Jesus himself. In opposition to all of this Paul is at pains to show that the requirement of charismatic poverty is in reality the missionary’s privilege.79

Within this debate over the appropriate means of support, Theissen suggests that those who formed a united front against Paul, and brought his apostleship into doubt, belonged to the upper-class. Although the conflict in Corinth may have begun with the influence of the rival missionaries, this dispute is sustained by the prominent members of the community, i.e., the “strong,” who are competing for influence and prestige within the group. It is within this environment of competing households that Paul’s refusal to accept support is interpreted by Thiessen as enabling the apostle to maintain freedom from obligation or patronage.

Although Theissen interpreted 1 Cor 9:1-18 in light of the disputes he saw engendered by class-conflict, he paid minimal attention to the realities and implications of Paul’s life as a

79 Theissen, Social Setting, 43. Emphasis original.
manual labourer. It was Paul’s choice to renounce material assistance, supporting himself as a handworker, that caused the “strong” to question the genuineness of his apostleship.

Like Theissen, Ronald Hock takes the social and cultural considerations of the Greco-Roman world as instrumental in his understanding of Paul’s relationship among the Corinthians.\footnote{Hock has published three articles investigating Paul and his manual labour: “Simon the Shoemaker,” 41-53; “Paul’s Tentmaking,” 555-64; “The Workshop as a Social Setting for Paul’s Missionary Preaching,” CBQ 41 (1979): 438-50. Although a relatively slight book, all of 112 pages inclusive of notes and bibliography, Hock’s \textit{The Social Context of Paul’s Ministry} remains the only monograph devoted in its entirety to Paul’s manual labour.}

Unlike Theissen, however, or any other scholar up to this point, save perhaps Adolf Deissmann, Paul’s life as a manual labourer takes centre-stage in Hock’s analyses. For Hock, “Paul’s tentmaking, far from being at the periphery of the apostle’s life, was actually central to it.”\footnote{Hock, \textit{Social Context}, 16.}

Contrary to Deissmann, Hock does not purport that Paul was simply an artisan belonging to the \textit{plebs urbana}; rather, the apostle’s experiences as an artisan\footnote{Hock looks to Acts 18:3 for Paul’s precise occupation: \textit{σκηνοποιός}, and for Hock, Paul learned this trade apprenticing under his father (\textit{Social Context}, 24).} were similar to those of other labourers and can thus be illumined by them. Artisans in general, and Paul in particular, quite frequently travelled from one city to another in hopes of finding work,\footnote{Hock, \textit{Social Context}, 27-29. According to Hock, however, Paul used the hours and days taken up in travel to engage in varied intellectual pursuits with his fellow travel companions.} having to live in the rear of shops or on the streets,\footnote{Hock, \textit{Social Context}, 29-31. Such hardships did not affect Paul, so argues Hock, for the apostle was able to find lodging in the houses of fellow believers.} and toiling endlessly in workshops that were often noisy, dirty, and dangerous.\footnote{Hock, \textit{Social Context}, 31-35. Although, for Hock, the workshops in which Paul laboured were akin to the shops of shoemakers, which, Hock suggests, were comparatively quiet and safe.} For Hock, Paul’s experiences as an artisan-missionary were not as grim as those endured by others, but nevertheless, “making tents meant rising before dawn, toiling until sunset with leather, knives, and awls, and accepting the various social stigmas and humiliations that
were part of the artisans’ lot, not to mention the poverty - being cold, hungry, and poorly clothed.”

Hock’s working assumption is that Paul was cut from an aristocratic bolt of cloth, and surmises that these deprivations “must have been doubly difficult for Paul who, though he shared the life of artisans, was by birth a member of the socially elite, the very circles that maintained his social world.”

Hock places Paul’s manual labour squarely amidst the intellectual debate concerning the appropriate means of support befitting a philosopher. Four options were open to philosophers, each with its own unique advantages and disadvantages: charging fees, entering the households of the rich and powerful, begging, and working. Paul chose this last option, reflecting the mentality of the “true” philosopher in the Stoic-Cynic tradition, but it is precisely his appearance as one who toiled with his body that engendered such conflict in Corinth.

In 1 Cor 9:1-18 Paul was forced to defend his choice specifically by affirming that he was free. But why did Paul choose the option of work? Hock never specifically addresses this question, although he does earlier surmise that not being financially dependent on another was an ideal for the philosopher. As Hock states, “Paul’s affirmation of freedom is thus an unmistakable indication that he understood the issue of apostolic support in terms of the debate among

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86 Hock, Social Context, 37. Still, “Did Paul Loathe Manual Labor?” 781-95, privileging Paul’s Jewish background, argues against Hock’s claim that the apostle loathed manual labour in the same manner as a Greek or Roman aristocrat.

87 Hock, Social Context, 35.

88 Hock, Social Context, 52-59. “Paul’s tentmaking corresponds to one of the options, though the least popular one, and his right to be supported, a right exercised by his opponents, would seem to correspond to the option of entering a household” (p. 59).

89 In this context, Hock cites Musonius: “Is not the one who procures for himself the necessities of life more free (ἐλευθερώτερος) than the one who receives them from others?” (Social Context, 57, quoting Musonius, frag. 11).
intellectuals generally over the appropriate means of support. Freedom . . . was a central consideration in this debate.”

Thus, Hock interprets Paul’s work very much with reference to the ongoing debate among philosophers over means of support suitable for the philosopher and “more than any of us supposed, Paul was ‘Paul the Tentmaker.’” Certainly Hock makes a sizeable contribution to the study of Paul and his manual labour precisely through the admission that Paul’s bodily labours cannot be pushed to the periphery in understanding the life of the apostle. Nevertheless, problems remain. For instance, Hock simply assumes that Paul was a member of the socially elite, and from this unestablished premise seeks to observe elitist traces through what the apostle says and does not say about his manual labour. Further, Hock seemingly removes Paul from many of the continuous struggles faced by labourers: although workshops were often dirty, noisy, and dangerous, Paul worked and engaged in philosophical pursuits in a workshop more akin to a library. Notwithstanding the claim that craftsmen were often nomadic and faced great travails on the road, Paul was still able to use this opportunity to engage in stimulating intellectual discussion. Despite the fact that Hock places Paul among contemporaneous labourers, and those without any significant status in wider society, Paul stands apart and is never really one of them.

Hock may be fairly criticized for his selective reading of evidence in mounting his argument. Although drawing upon copious examples from Greco-Roman parallels to demonstrate the disdain directed towards labourers among the elite, Hock never convincingly establishes that Paul belonged to elite circles. Moreover, it seems to me that the issue of how

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90 Hock, Social Context, 61.

91 Hock, Social Context, 67.
Paul views his own manual labour cannot, and should not, be divorced from questions involving the perception of others towards such handwork. Paul’s shame, or lack thereof, towards his trade reveals little without an adequate understanding of the social dynamics at work within the Pauline communities and their surrounding society.

It is telling, for instance, that when Hock appeals to passages to support his contention that Paul possessed an elite attitude of contempt towards his own craft, Hock appeals singularly to the Corinthian correspondence to the exclusion of passages from Thessalonians. I would suggest that reading Paul’s descriptions of his manual labour in his letters to the Corinthians and the Thessalonians reveals that Paul is framing his presentation of his manual work depending upon the situation and membership of each community. The question is, therefore, not how Paul conceived of his own work, but rather, how the Pauline communities conceived of their apostle as a manual labourer. An answer to this question will allow a more robust picture to take shape of Paul’s life as a handworker.

Although Hock called for increased attention to be paid to Paul’s manual labour, his calls have largely gone unanswered in more recent scholarship. Scholars continue to look to contemporaneous philosophical discourse in their attempts to illumine the context of 1 Cor 9:1-18. With this focus, Paul’s aim is narrowed to a discussion of “theological freedom” and its proper exercise. The implications of Paul’s manual labour play no role in these interpretations of 1 Cor 9:1-18.

92 Paul, for instance, appeals positively to his manual labour in 1 Thessalonians. This point will be further explored in chapter two (section 2.1.3).

93 The one exception to this claim is Helenann Hartley’s 2004 doctoral thesis from Oxford University, “‘We worked night and day that we might not burden any of you’ (1 Thessalonians 2:9). Aspects of the Portrayal of Work in the Letters of Paul, Late Second Temple Judaism, the Graeco-Roman World and Early Christianity.”
Richard Horsley, for instance, infers a non-polemical situation in 1 Cor 8:1-11:1, suggesting that the issue of moral freedom is the overarching theme.94 For Horsley, Paul employs stock Stoic terminology in a manner that contrasts an understanding of philosophical notions of “freedom” (the catchword of the “strong” in Horsley’s estimation) with the understanding of the “strong.” Thus, Paul’s purpose in 1 Cor 9:1-18 is to demonstrate to the “strong” that true “freedom” is not self-serving, but is “liberation for purposive activity and more than just individualist liberation from burdensome constraints.”95 Thus, 1 Cor 9:1-18 is read as paradigmatic in nature, with a side-serving on the proper exercise of freedom within the community.

In like manner, Malherbe situates 1 Cor 9:1-18 in direct conversation with Stoic and Cynic ideas of personal freedom.96 Malherbe interprets Paul’s presentation of himself “as an exemplum of not insisting on his own exousia,”97 a presentation comparable to that of the Stoics where personal freedom is inextricable from personal exousia. Malherbe first imagines Paul as akin to the Cynics insofar as the apostle chose to reject the Corinthians’ offers of material support, thereby taking upon himself a lifestyle which included manual labour (1 Cor 9:15-18). Like the Stoics, though, Paul draws upon the notions of acting “willingly” and “unwillingly” in concert with the divine will. In this perspective, an appreciation of the philosophic dimensions of the issue makes sense of Paul’s arguments in 1 Cor 9:1-18 which otherwise appear disjointed. Therefore, in Malherbe’s view, Paul:

96 Malherbe, “Determinism and Free Will,” 231-55. Malherbe argues that 1 Cor 9:1-18 can be “made intelligible by examining it in light of the popular philosophic deliberations on the theme of the sage’s independence, particularly as it related to determinism and free will” (“Determinism and Free Will,” 232).
97 Malherbe, “Determinism and Free Will,” 238.
willingly does what necessity had laid upon him, thus examining his freedom, the topic that has engaged him throughout this long argument. His freedom of action predominates in his thinking and not compulsion (9:18-19). He provides the grounds for foregoing his exousia - his freedom did not compel him to insist on his exousia, but allowed him to forego it.98

Other scholars choose to focus their interpretations on the rhetorical and literary conventions underlying 1 Cor 9:1-18. Mitchell, for instance, pursues just such a trajectory, suggesting that 1 Corinthians throughout propounds ecclesial unity, and 1 Cor 1:10, which urges reunification amongst the Corinthian factions, is the proposito of the entire letter.99 Given Mitchell’s argument that 1 Corinthians as a whole is an example of deliberative rhetoric, 1 Cor 9:1-18 is presented as functioning as a digressio in the form of a mock-defence speech.

Mitchell’s hypothesis is that 1 Cor 9:1-18 is indeed connected to its immediate literary context, and its main function is to draw into sharper focus the questions under discussion, that is, debates over the propriety to eat meat offered to idols. For Mitchell, the core issue is self-sacrificing behaviour, behaviour which Paul anticipates will raise questions among the Corinthians. In response, Paul presents himself as an example of what it really means to be free, behaviour which the Corinthians are challenged and called upon to imitate. Thus, 1 Cor 9:1-18 is “an exemplary argument on the nature of true Christian freedom,” and in order for this freedom to take root in the community it must be redefined from an individualist to a corporate perspective.100 Paul’s redefinition of freedom takes into account the greater good and common advantage, and 1 Cor 9:1-18 works to amplify this perspective by demonstrating above all that Paul “has sacrificed himself totally for the gospel (9:23), and who is thus the paradigm of true

99 Mitchell, Rhetoric of Reconciliation, 1.
100 Mitchell, Rhetoric of Reconciliation, 243; cf, 133: “in 9:1-18 Paul presents himself as an example of a person who denies himself for the sake of the greater good (here defined as that of the gospel and the church) . . . Paul’s goal in 9:1-18 is not to convince the Corinthians likewise to work without pay. It is to show them in very concrete terms how Paul has been true to the counsel he offers - which is to renounce one’s ‘authority’ in some matters for the sake of peace in one’s relations with others for the sake of the social whole.”
Christian freedom in action." Paul, therefore, has chosen to take up manual labour, and in so doing, exemplifies self-sacrifice and the virtue of true freedom.

Using the work of Hock as the jumping-off point for her own investigation of Paul’s manual labour, Helenann Hartley contends that Paul followed a distinctly Jewish conception of labouring as a means of sharing in the creative work of God. Hartley critiques Hock’s failure to engage with Jewish perceptions and understandings of manual work, and indeed, it was precisely Paul’s Jewish background that provided the conceptual framework for the apostle’s understanding and portrayal of work.

Specifically in relation to 1 Cor 9:1-18, Hartley suggests that Paul’s reasoning to refuse offers of material support is analogous to that of Nehemiah, who waived his right to be supported by the community so as not to burden the poorer members. Consequently, “the main point in chapter 9, seen in its context, is not so much an apology for his apostolate; it is used rather to show how one can and ought to abstain from one’s freedom and privileges if the situation demands it.”

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101 Mitchell, Rhetoric of Reconciliation, 56.

102 Hartley, “Portrayal of Work.” Hartley’s corrective of Hock swings the proverbial pendulum too far in the opposite direction, removing Paul and the Corinthians almost entirely from their surrounding Greco-Roman context. Although Hartley devotes one chapter to Greco-Roman perceptions of work, her results are ambiguous at best. This is clear from her many and varied attempts to deduce Paul’s decision to cede his right to collect support: Paul presented himself as an example of one who waives his freedom out of consideration for the weak (p. 185); Paul chose to forego his apostolic ἐξουσία so as not to place an obstacle in his mission (p. 186); Paul desired to appeal to those who were themselves manual labourers (p. 188); Paul was engaged in a form of “backwards euergetism” whereby the apostle ceded his right to collect support in order that this money be added to the Collection (p. 193; cf. p. 62: Paul “is ultimately supporting himself in order to relieve the burden from his community [in the case of the Corinthians so that they can direct financial worth to the collection”]).

103 Hartley suggests that although in a Jewish context work is oftentimes portrayed as laborious and toilsome (e.g., Gen 29:15; 31:40; Deut 28:33; Job 7:1-3; Prov 16:26), work, nevertheless, “is an arena in which the worker (as an individual and communally with others), serves God and participates in God’s continuing creative work” (“Portrayal of Work,” 87).


The same line of critique levelled against Hock can be applied to Hartley’s overall argument: Paul’s view of his own work cannot, and should not, be isolated from the surrounding cultural ethos and the apostle’s interaction with the various Christ-communities. Asking whether or not Paul had a distinctly Jewish or Greco-Roman conception of his own manual labour is a question with only limited traction when we remember that Paul did not preach or found communities in a vacuum. The more fruitful line of enquiry is to probe the ways in which the cultural perceptions toward those who worked with their hands impacted upon Paul and his apostleship. At issue here is not only Paul’s view towards his work, but more importantly, his reception and authority within these early communities as a labourer. Only by placing Paul within his surrounding cultural context can we come to a full understanding of what it meant for this apostle to work with his hands.

That an understanding of social considerations can aid in interpretations of 1 Cor 9:1-18 has again been championed by Fee and Marshall, who both see in this chapter Paul’s attempts to defend his apostleship against attacks by some within the Corinthian Christ-community. Fee, for instance, reads 1 Cor 9:1-18 as a “vigorous defence of his [Paul’s] apostleship,” a defence precipitated by his actions and instructions within the community.106 In this reconstruction, some Corinthians have called into question Paul’s apostolic authority, both because of his failure to accept their offers of support, and his compromising stance on idol-food sold in the marketplace. Fee surmises that Paul’s:

106 Fee, First Epistle, 363.
107 Fee, First Epistle, 393.
Peter Marshall likewise reads 1 Cor 9:1-18 in relation to the implications of Paul’s instructions regarding idol-food, in particular seeing this section of the letter as necessary to affirm Paul’s position of leadership. This declaration is necessary because it is the position out of which Paul instructs the Corinthians on the matter of idol-food.\footnote{Marshall, \textit{Enmity in Corinth}, 177; cf. Butarbutar, \textit{Paul and Conflict Resolution}, 9.} It was necessary for Paul to defend his apostleship when it became known that he accepted a gift from Philippi while he was in Corinth. The Corinthians, questioning why the apostle would accept support from another community but not their own, surmised that “Paul, by his refusal [of their offer of support], had shamed and dishonoured them.”\footnote{Marshall, \textit{Enmity in Corinth}, 177.} What was at issue, thus, was not the fact that Paul worked as a labourer, but rather his spurning of their offers of patronage. Once again, the presupposition that Paul was offered recompense as an apostle by the Corinthian Christ-community forms the basis for scholarly interpretations of 1 Cor 9:1-18.

1.2.3 Critique

Scholars have read 1 Cor 9:1-18 in many different ways. Some scholars have emphasized Paul’s theological motivations at the expense of social reality. Other scholars interpret 1 Cor 9:1-18 as Paul’s treatise on the proper exercise of freedom. Still other scholars read 1 Cor 9:1-18 as a call to imitative behaviour, and others, a necessary apostolic defence. No matter the interpretation of 1 Cor 9:1-18, however, each assumes at its core that Paul renounced offers of material support from the Corinthians. As a result, Paul freely chose to work as a manual labourer. Each one of these readings presents many interpretive difficulties.
Firstly, scholars who only see Paul as addressing theological concerns, or view 1 Cor 9:1-18 primarily through the eyes of philosophical or rhetorical convention, fail to adequately address the surrounding social milieu. As will be made evident in the following chapters, there were members within the Corinthian Christ-community who had aspirations to higher status or were already of higher status, and reflected in their behaviour the ethos of the surrounding cultural milieu, an ethos that held manual labourers as equivalent to slaves and all things contemptible. Clearly, Paul’s labour had became a subject for criticism and defence by the time 2 Cor 10-13 was written. While the latter situation cannot simply be read back and used as an explanation for earlier debates, the fact that the issues raised in 1 Cor 9:1-18 later became a point of open conflict is supportive of the view that the reality of Paul’s labour and its implications need to be taken into consideration in interpretations of 1 Cor 9:1-18.

Secondly, against those who argue 1 Cor 9:1-18 is a defence of Paul’s refusal to accept support, there is negligible attention paid to the exegetical idiosyncrasy of Paul’s argumentation. Why does Paul first think that it is necessary to establish his right to receive support prior to explaining why he refused to accept it? Indeed, Paul is so zealous to affirm the legitimacy of his apostleship, that when he starts to explain in 1 Cor 9:12b the reasons he had “given up” these supposed rights, he breaks off to append two additional details of supporting evidence in favour of this right. More succinctly, these scholars fail to answer the question why Paul defends a right that he is thought already to possess. Such explanations likewise fail to address 1 Cor 9:6, in which Paul indicates that he had no right not to work.

Thirdly, such interpretations of 1 Cor 9:1-18 fail to treat seriously Paul’s own descriptions of his labour, which, as will be shown in chapter two, evince a scenario of social hardship and shame. Paul does not describe his manual labour in 1 Cor 9:1-18, but in the texts which do
mention his handwork, the abasement and ignominy Paul bore as a manual labourer come to the fore. Scholarship has hereto failed to read Paul’s depictions of his life as a manual labourer in combination with his claims in 1 Cor 9:1-18.

Fourthly, against those who posit 1 Cor 9:1-18 is an exemplary argument, there is no clear indication in the text that Paul is appealing to the Corinthians to follow his example. 1 Cor 9:1-14 certainly does not fit neatly within this paradigmatic argument, and to suggest that 1 Cor 9:1-14 merely sets the stage for 1 Cor 9:15-18 cannot account for the highly charged rhetoric within these last four verses (1 Cor 9:15-18) where Paul explains the reasons behind his “renouncement” of material support. As well, 1 Cor 9:15-18 is so highly personal in nature that arguments in favour of Paul calling for the Corinthians to follow his example are debatable.

That Paul refused to accept support, choosing instead to work in order to proclaim the gospel free of charge, remains unconvincing for a fifth reason. It must be remembered that Paul did accept material support from other churches. For instance, the apostle received support “more than once” (καὶ ἄπαξ θαλά τοῦ θεοῦ) from the Philippian church (Phil 4:15-16). 110 Paul also refers to assistance he received from other churches in Macedonia (presumably Philippi is also intended) while he was in Corinth (2 Cor 11:8-9). There is also the possibility that Epaphroditus, whom Paul describes as “your [the Philippians] messenger and minister to my need” (Phil 2:25) brought material assistance to the apostle provided by the Philippians (Phil 2:25-30). 111 Why would Paul accept support from other communities but not from the Corinthians? Scholars have

110 As Peter Marshall states, “from the moment his work began there and subsequent to his leaving, no other church entered into a relationship with him of giving and receiving (4:15).” See Marshall, Enmity in Corinth, 165-66. L. Morris, “Καὶ ἄπαξ θαλά τοῦ θεοῦ,” NovT 1 (1956): 205-208 argues convincingly on philological grounds that this phrase reveals that Paul received support not only while he was in Thessalonica, but also on several occasions when Paul was preaching in other locales.

111 Holmberg, Paul and Power, 91-92.
attempted to answer this vexing question in a number of ways, all of which remain unconvincing.

Theissen claims that it was Paul’s policy to reject material support during the initial stages of the community’s development, and thus, “the renunciation [of the Corinthians’ offer of material assistance] arose from concrete conditions in order to make the pioneering mission as effective as possible in this new territory.”\textsuperscript{112} Paul, however, insists that he will \textit{not} be a burden to the Corinthians (2 Cor 12:14; cf. 2 Cor 11:9-12). David L. Dungan, suggesting “that everything depended upon the financial strength of each particular congregation,” sees Paul’s apparent refusal of support motivated by his desire not to be burdensome to the poorer churches.\textsuperscript{113} One problem with this particular reading of Paul’s claims, however, is that Paul did accept support from the Macedonian community, even in their “depth of poverty” (2 Cor 8:2; cf. 2 Cor 11:9; Phil 4:14-20) whilst rejecting support from the Corinthians. Paul likewise desired to initiate the collection in as many communities as possible, irrespective of their levels of wealth (1 Cor 16:1-4; 2 Cor 8:9).\textsuperscript{114}

J. K. Chow suggests that the Corinthians’ previous acceptance of immoral behaviour indicated that “they submitted themselves, not to God and Christ, but to more powerful men” and that “Paul’s refusal to accept financial support from the church at Corinth would signify his unwillingness to be obligated to the powerful patrons in the church.”\textsuperscript{115} This argument also fails to stand-up to scrutiny. Paul did not reject all material support. For instance, Paul refers to

\textsuperscript{112} Theissen, \textit{Social Setting}, 40


\textsuperscript{114} On Paul’s collection efforts, see Dieter Georgi, \textit{Remembering the Poor: The History of Paul’s Collection for Jerusalem} (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1992).

Gaius as “my host” (ὁ ξένος μου; Rom 16:23), Phoebe as a “patroness” (προστάτις; Rom 16:2), and a request for personal assistance is implied in 1 Cor 16:6 (ἵνα ύμεῖς με προπέμψητε οὗ ἐὰν πορεύωμαι; cf. Rom 16:24) and Phlm 22 (αὕμα δὲ καὶ ἐτοίμαζε μοι ξενίαν). Paul likewise refers to his being “refreshed” in 1 Cor 16:17-18 by Stephanas, Fortunatus and Achaicus, and this may encompass both spiritual and material support. Therefore, suggestions that Paul worked in order to be free from patronal ties is negated by evidence to the contrary whereby Paul did accept material support when it was offered to him.

1.3 A Proposal for a Way Forward

The time has come to reconsider some of the presuppositions that have become so foundational to previous analyses of 1 Cor 9:1-18. Paul informs the Corinthians that he did not make use of his apostolic “right” to their material support, in effect, choosing to work, yet the life of a manual labourer in the ancient Mediterranean world essentially precluded notions of freedom and choice. A life of physical toil entailed a life equivalent or analogous to slavery, as Paul himself concedes. The pregnant descriptions of Paul’s dishonour as a manual labourer, combined with societal assumptions surrounding those who worked with their hands, present especially among the parvenus within the Corinthian Christ-community, call into question any reading of the apostle as a recognized or accepted apostle among the Corinthians.

Understanding Paul’s life as a manual labourer is a lacuna in scholarship that this thesis will address, specifically the implications of this life for Paul’s claims to apostolic legitimacy and support in 1 Cor 9:1-18. Exploring Paul’s manual labour through his own references to, and

116 See, for example, Phil 2:30 where material support may be in view; cf. Horrell, Social Ethos, 213.
descriptions of, his toil (1 Cor 4:9-13; 2 Cor 6:3-10; 11:7, 23-27; 1 Thess 2:9), as well as the Greco-Roman world of work, it will be demonstrated that Paul’s life as a manual labourer had a more significant and profound impact on his apostleship in Corinth than previously acknowledged.

Specifically, this thesis will propose that the implications of reading Paul in his concrete socio-economic environment preclude the assertion, so pervasive within scholarship, that Paul had an option to choose with regard to manual labour. I will argue that Paul was never offered food and drink, that is, material support by the Corinthians, and therefore Paul had no ἐξουσία but to work (1 Cor 9:6). A new reading of 1 Cor 9:1-18, treating seriously what it meant to be a manual labourer in the Greco-Roman world, suggests that although Paul pronounced himself an apostle (1 Cor 9:1-2) and thereby deserving of material support (1 Cor 9:4-5, 7-12a, 13-14), this claim of legitimacy was not echoed by the Corinthians (1 Cor 9:6) who equated Paul’s life as a labourer with a scenario of social shame. Paul, therefore, was forced to claim for his manual labour a freedom that was not conventionally accepted (1 Cor 9:12b, 15-18).

In order to support the above-stated reading of 1 Cor 9:1-18, this dissertation will proceed along the following lines. Chapter two will concentrate on Paul’s own representations of his life as a manual labourer. In the conventionally accepted authentic letters of Paul, mention of his manual labour is made in 1 and 2 Corinthians and in 1 Thessalonians, texts which accent the abasement and ignominy Paul bore as a common labourer. For example, Paul uses the hendiadys κόπος καὶ µόχθος (1 Thess 2:9; cf. 2 Cor 11:27)117 to describe his work, and later defines his life as a labourer as akin to περικάθαρμα and περίψημα (1 Cor 4:13). This second chapter will survey

117 The word µόχθος is always used by Paul in combination with κόπος to denote exhaustion resulting from strenuous labour (cf. 2 Thess 3:8).
and scrutinize Paul’s own descriptions of his life as one who worked with his hands, thereby illustrating that these depictions are not rooted in the language of dominance but, rather, of servility.

In order to understand how Paul’s descriptions of his manual labour would have been heard in Corinth, some background information on the city and its people will also be provided in chapter two. It will be demonstrated that there were those within the Corinthian Christ-community who had aspirations to higher status within the dominant Greco-Roman ethos, or who were already of a higher status, and reflected in their behaviour the ideology of the surrounding cultural milieu. I will also address the proverbial “elephant-in-the-room.” Specifically, if manual labour was what I will have described it to be in the Greco-Roman world, then why was it not initially a problem for the Corinthians, on the assumption that Paul actually was responsible for inaugurating the Christ-community in their city? I will suggest that 1 Thessalonians provides the lever into answering this question, and helps to explain the dynamics for the development of the Christ-community in Corinth within which Paul then came to experience the issues under discussion in 1 Cor 9:1-18.

Chapters three and four step back from Paul, the manual labourer, and describe his surrounding socio-economic world. Given the main trajectory of this thesis, namely, that Paul’s life as a manual labourer had a more adverse impact on his apostleship in Corinth than commonly recognized, chapter three will address some broad features of the Greco-Roman socio-economic world, and place the handworker within this environment. It will first be demonstrated that in the Greco-Roman world the world or work, viz. the economy, was embedded within the field of cultural values, and there were no factors at work to disembed the

118 Paul notes throughout the Corinthian correspondence his founding role in the community. See 1 Cor 3:6, 10; 4:15; 2 Cor 10:14.
economy from overriding status-concerns. Chapter three will then argue that these status concerns, articulated especially by the elite stratum of society, also were assumed by manual labourers, specifically that there existed a social hierarchy of labour within which some occupations were perceived to have more social status than others.

Whereas chapter three lays out the basic parameters of the Greco-Roman economy, chapter four will provide a “thick description” of the world of manual labour. This examination moves from the reality of Greco-Roman urban labour to the general perception of it, from the physical body to the rhetorical persona. Chapter four also explores the dominant cultural assumptions of those who worked with their hands. Since manual labourers occupied a low stratum in society in the eyes of the elite, low was understood to be synonymous with base; low in a social sense became low in a moral sense. It is shown that no matter how handworkers felt about their own work, the structures of signification taken over from the Greco-Roman socio-economic world tended towards an overriding denigration of labourers, at least among the elite and those with aspirations to higher social status.

Chapter five is the culmination of the entire thesis; namely, a rereading of 1 Cor 9:1-18 in light of the evidence thus far presented. In a world where the economy was embedded in cultural dynamics, where status was embodied, where there was a social hierarchy of occupations, the bottom rungs of which Paul presumably occupied based on his own descriptions of his manual labour, it can no longer be claimed without hesitation that Paul was perceived as a legitimate apostle among all of the Corinthians and therefore eligible for financial support. In fact, 1 Cor 9:6 seemingly indicates that Paul had no right not to work, yet this admission is passed over in scholarly analyses of this text.
Chapter five will argue that Paul was never offered material support by the Corinthian Christ-community (1 Cor 9:6; cf. 1 Cor 9:1-5, 7-12a, 13-14), and was forced to claim for his manual labour a freedom and virtue that was not traditionally recognized (1 Cor 9:12a, 15-18). I will strive to acknowledge the non-sense of Paul’s claims: as one who was subject to hunger and thirst as a handworker, the implications of which echoed profoundly amongst a powerful number within the Corinthian Christ-community, Paul argues that he is entitled to their food and drink. A new reading of 1 Cor 9:1-18 elucidates that this is the discourse of a man essentially without a choice, i.e., “not free,” trying to defend his claim to apostleship precisely by making a virtue out of a necessity.
Chapter Two:

Manual Labour in the Letters of Paul

Despite the fact that Paul reveals in 1 Cor 4:12 that he worked with his own hands (καὶ κοπιῶμεν ἐργαζόμενοι ταῖς ἰδίαις χερσίν) this autobiographical datum has received scant attention within scholarship. There has been only one book length monograph devoted to Paul’s manual labour, and even here the apostle’s actual descriptions of his handwork are subsumed under discussions of contemporaneous philosophical debates on the proper means of support.¹ Other works that pause to note Paul’s depictions of his life as a labourer sanitize the portraiture by drawing parallels with *peristasis* catalogues that exemplify the virtue of suffering, common rhetorical features present in characterizations of the life of the working philosopher, or labours performed in the service of the gospel.² But what will happen to our interpretation of Paul when we listen carefully to what he discloses about his life as a manual labourer? Does Paul paint this

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work as a source of strength and virtue, or as a scenario of shame and deprivation? This chapter will answer these questions, and the conclusions reached here will better enable us to untangle the web that is 1 Cor 9:1-18.

The important matter is to determine what Paul discloses about his life as a manual labourer, and place these revelations within the context of a community where seeking honour, prestige, and public recognition were paramount. Paul’s representations of his life as a labourer as reflected within his letters to the Corinthians will form the lion’s share of our discussion, with reference to the Thessalonian correspondence included where important parallels can be drawn. The reasons for this approach are twofold. Firstly, this dissertation concentrates on the repercussions of Paul’s life as a manual labourer within Corinth, thus supporting the limitation of the discussion to Paul’s letters to this community. Secondly, Paul’s portrayals of his life as a handworker in his letters to the Corinthians are much more robust than those in 1 Thessalonians, perhaps for the same reason as above.

Following the exegetical study of Paul’s characterization of his life as a labourer, additional background information on Corinth and the Corinthian Christ-community will be provided in order to sketch more fully the socio-historical context in which these descriptions must be placed. This section will first suggest a social process for the development of the Christ-community in Corinth, a community within which Paul came to experience questions concerning his apostolic legitimacy as a manual labourer. The social composition of the

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3 1 Cor 4:9-13; 2 Cor 6:3-10; 11:7, 23-27; 1 Thess 2:9. There is also a reference to Paul’s manual labour in 2 Thess 3:7-8, but the authenticity of this letter is contested, and as such, this chapter will not take into account the reference to labour in 2 Thessalonians.

Corinthian community will then be laid forth, a community that included within it some who had a higher social status relative to others within the community, as well as others with aspirations to higher social status in the wider ethos. The latter avenue of exploration is especially important in understanding the exegetical and contextual argument of 1 Cor 9:1-18.

The aim of this chapter will be to survey and scrutinize Paul’s portrayal of his life as one who worked with his hands in order to show that these depictions are not rooted in the language of dominance but, rather, of servility. This conclusion casts doubt on the usual scholarly assumptions of Paul’s recognized apostolic authority in Corinth.

2.1 Manual Labour in the Corinthian Correspondence

2.1.1 1 Cor 4:9-13

Of all of Paul’s depictions of his handwork, it is the one in 1 Cor 4:9-13 which most vividly encapsulates the shame, hardship, and humiliation that accompanied the life of this manual labourer. 1 Cor 4:9-13 is the description of an apostle. Paul does not make a distinction between his life as an apostle and his life as a manual labourer, as though the two could somehow be separated from one another; rather, manual labour was part of the life of this apostle. 1 Cor 4:9 and 1 Cor 4:13 begin and end with a statement of how the apostles are perceived and judged with regards to worldly criteria, with the statement in 1 Cor 4:9 - δοκῶ

5 Scholars have traditionally separated Paul’s manual labour from his apostleship (see Section 1.2: A History of Interpretation of 1 Cor 9:1-18), as if Paul could be an apostle at some times and a handworker at others. Paul makes it clear in 1 Cor 4:9-13 that there was no distinction: Paul’s apostolic work was inside his work as a manual labourer.

6 The phrase - τοῦ κόσμου ἐγενήθημεν (1 Cor 4:13) - corresponds to the phrase - ἐγενήθημεν τῷ κόσμῳ (1 Cor 4:9). As well - ὡς περικαθάρατα (1 Cor 4:13) - recalls the beginning of the portrayal of the apostles in 1 Cor 4:9 - ὡς ἐπιθανατίους - thus forming an inclusio of sorts.
γάρ, ὁ θεὸς ἡμᾶς τοὺς ἀποστόλους ἔσχατοις ἀπέδειξεν - functioning as the basic thesis statement for what follows. Thus, 1 Cor 4:9b-13 functions to support Paul’s opinion (δοκῶ) that the apostles are ἔσχατοι, utterly insignificant.⁷

Although some scholarship has approached Paul’s hardships through the lens of acute anxieties due to personal experience,⁸ there still remains an overriding emphasis on rhetorical and literary form. The dearth of investigation on the realities of Paul’s life as a manual labourer is especially acute.⁹ John Fitzgerald, for instance, sums up the purpose of his study as “an attempt to use Hellenistic material to address literary rather than historical or history-of-religion issues.”¹⁰ Thus, Fitzgerald offers numerous examples of hardship catalogues in Greek literature in connection with the endurance and indifference of the sage (especially those in the Stoic-Cynic tradition) to worldly suffering. Epictetus writes: “bring on hardships, bring on imprisonment, bring on disrepute, bring on condemnation. This is the proper exhibition.”¹¹ Here, boasting in one’s accomplishments is offensive, but self-praise for endurance amidst hardship is lauded.

It is in this context that Fitzgerald places 1 Cor 4:9-13, arguing that this catalogue arises from Paul’s admonition in 1 Cor 4:6, 11, as a father responding to the “arrogance” of his

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⁹ The last book-length exposition of Paul’s labour remains Ronald Hock’s *The Social Context of Paul’s Ministry*, published over thirty-years ago. Although Hartley does include a chapter detailing Paul’s manual labour, her emphasis remains on understanding the apostle’s conception of his work through his Jewish background, as opposed to the realities he faced as a handworker. See Hartley, “Portrayal of Work,” 167-206. See also chapter one (pp. 34-36) for my critique of Hartley’s methodology.


¹¹ Epictetus, *Diss.* 2.1.35.
Although the Corinthians imagine themselves wise (1 Cor 3:18; 4:10), in the eyes of the Stoic-Cynic philosopher it is improper to glory in one’s comfort or complacency. Therefore, Paul boasts in his own lists of trials which are witness to his wisdom, a boasting over-and-above the inappropriate claims of the Corinthians. In Fitzgerald’s view, Paul presents his hardships through the lens of the “suffering sage,” and Paul’s rhetoric in 1 Cor 4:9-13 reflects “the traditions about the sage.”

In a somewhat different approach to 1 Cor 4:9-13, Karl Theodore Kleinknecht argues that Paul’s frame of reference is connected with the suffering of the righteous in anticipation of the inauguration of the Kingdom of God in Jewish apocalyptic discourse. In the same way that Christ was rejected and dishonoured, so Paul presents himself in similar light. Alternatively, Schrage, while not entirely dismissing the influence of Stoic imagery, suggests a more plausible comparison is Paul’s identification with the crucified Christ, much as in Gal 6:17 and 2 Cor 4:10 where Paul bears the marks (στίγματα) of Christ on his person.

Whether or not Paul was influenced by Stoicism or apocalyptic Judaism is impossible and unnecessary to determine here. Of more immediate relevance is the fact that the literary form has been routinely spotlighted at the expense of personal realities, and the time has come to redress this imbalance. We now need to determine what Paul reveals about his life as a manual

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labourer, and place these admissions within the context of a community in which seeking social status, prestige, and public recognition were paramount.

Paul includes reference to his handwork in the sub-section which revolves entirely around the apostles, their life, and their behaviour (1 Cor 4:11-13). Again, Paul does not make the distinction between his life as an apostle and his life as a manual labourer; rather, the one existed inside the other. Contained within this subsection are six verbs (1 Cor 4:11-12a) all of which are present tense and indicative mood. The final verb (κοπιάω) is expanded by use of a participle (ἐργαζομαι).

Barrett reads the phrase - ἐργαζόμενοι ταῖς ἰδίαις χερσίν - as a separate, seventh item in Paul’s recitation of hardships. He thus interprets the verb κοπιάω as referring to the hardships in Paul’s mission of preaching and pastoral care. There is a twofold problem with Barrett’s construction. First, a repetitive, paratactic use of καὶ (six times in 1 Cor 4:11-12) binds together six different tribulations. If there were a seventh hardship included in Paul’s catalogue, arguably another finite verb would be employed, as opposed to the introduction of a participle. Second, as Fitzgerald recognizes, the final item is frequently amplified in catalogues of hardships, precisely by giving emphasis through use of a participle. Therefore, κοπιάω, rather than referring to the hardship of preaching, draws attention to the final phrase in this catalogue, which is the arduous nature of Paul’s life as a manual labourer.

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17 That these verses form a distinct sub-section within the larger unit is clear from the inclusio formed with ἄρτι in 1 Cor 4:11 and 1 Cor 4:13 (ἄρτι τῆς ἄρτι; 1 Cor 4:11; ἕως ἄρτι; 1 Cor 4:13).


We can pause to note that all the hardships listed prior to Paul’s explicit inclusion of his handwork are characteristic of the life of the common labourer. Indeed, I contend that this list of tribulations works to accentuate and prepare for Paul’s climatic point that as one who worked with his hands, he was “the refuse of the world” and “the offscouring of all things” (1 Cor 4:13). This is not a catalogue of the righteous, but a catalogue of shame, a catalogue which includes at its crescendo Paul’s admission that he worked with his hands.

Although the first five hardships are commonplace in other contemporaneous hardship catalogues, specific and explicit inclusions of manual labour are not standard elements. This point is revealing. Fitzgerald defines the function of peristasis catalogues as:

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\text{serv[ing] to legitimate the claims made about a person and show[ing] him to be virtuous because peristaseis have a revelatory and probative function in regard to character. Since it is axiomatic in the ancient world that adversity is the litmus test of character, a person’s virtuous attitude and action while under duress furnish the proof that he is a man of genuine worth and/or a true philosopher.}
\]

Yet, within contemporaneous hardship catalogues, manual labour was never considered a hardship that could be overcome. The perfect sage may abandon his body to hunger and thirst, and to “hatred, abuse, and reviling,” but never to manual labour.

Paul, though, includes his manual labour as a hardship endured. I suggest that he emphasizes the inherent dishonour and shame of this life, not only by including it in the emphatic final position, but also through his use of other descriptive terminology. Paul describes his handwork as \(\kappa\omicron\omicron\pi\omicron\varsigma\), which has connotations of being physically beaten, and extreme

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21 Fitzgerald, Earthen Vessel, 203.

22 Dio Chrysostom, Or. 32.19.

23 Euripides, Tro. 794; Aeschylus, Cho. 32.
exertion and fatigue. This term is also often paired with μόχθος or πόνος to denote extensive labours or hardships. In the LXX, κόπος and κοπιάω especially signify overwhelming exhaustion and tiredness resulting from work on the land (Joshua 24:13; Ps 126:1); in connection with working for wealth (Job 20:18; Sir 31:3); with oppressive labour and sorrow (Ps 89:10); with troubles allotted to humans generally (Ps 24:18; with ταπείνωσις; Ps 87:15; 106:12; Job 11:16); and with the general state of being burdened and weary (Gen 31:42; Deut 1:12; Isa 5:27; 16:12; 40:30-31; 46:1; 57:10; 1 Macc 10:81; Lam 5:5). Κοπιάω can denote making a toilsome effort (1 Sam 17:29) and wholesale physical hardship and labouring in vain. In Josephus, κοπιάω translates as “growing weary,” and κόπος retains connotations of endless tiredness, weakness, and exhaustion.

That κόπος, κοπιάω, and derivatives denote fatigue, hardship and weariness are likewise attested in papyri and inscriptive evidence. For instance, there are connections with severe and strenuous work, mental anguish, and torments. Evidence of κοπιάω in the gospel narratives similarly implies weariness and tiredness. Both Matthew and Luke contrast the idyllic serenity of the lilies of the field against toil (Matt 6:28/Luke 12:27), and Jesus calls upon εἰς κοπιῶντες καὶ

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25 Μόχθος: Euripides, *Phoen.* 784; Job 2:9; 1 Thess 2:9; 2 Thess 3:8; 2 Cor 11:17 (in the NT, μόχθος is always paired with κόπος). Πόνος: Ps 10:7, 14; 90:10; Hab 1:3; Jer 20:18; 45:3; Sir 11:1 (in the NT, πόνος only occurs four times: Col 4:13; Rev 16:10, 11; 21:4).


28 Exhaustion as a result in engaging in battle (*J. W.* 5.307; *Ant.* 7.299); a night march (*J. W.* 5.68); incessant wandering (*Ant.* 2.257); travels (*Ant.* 3.25); work (*Ant.* 7.48), and illness (*Ant.* 5.315).

29 *CIG* 9.552; *P.Mich.* 511, 15; 465.15; 477.28-29.

30 *P.Oslo* 160.1.

31 *P.Apoll.* 45.1; 45.13.
πεφορτισμένοι (Matt 11:28) to find respite under his yoke. Simon Peter declares to Jesus that “we toiled (κοπιάσαντες) all night and caught nothing” (Luke 5:5), underscoring the exhausting nature of the life of those who engage in κόπος. Indeed, Jesus himself was “exhausted” (κεκοπιακώς ἐκ τῆς ὁδοιπορίας; John 4:6) after making his way to the city of Samaria. In sum, integral to κόπος is exhausting, strenuous, overwhelming toil and weariness.

Thus, Paul’s description of his handwork as κόπος is not a virtuous hardship whereby the Corinthians would bear witness to his apostolic valour. Rather, Paul’s manual labour as κόπος points to the physical and bodily hardships endured by Paul, which leave him in a position of shame and dishonour. The hunger and thirst of the apostles (πεινῶ µεν καὶ διψῶ µεν; 1 Cor 4:11) stand in direct oppositional contrast to the satiety of the Corinthians (ἤδη κεκορεσµένοι ἐστέ, ἤδη ἐπλουτήσατε; 1 Cor 4:8).²²

Although a fuller description of the life of the manual labourer will be explained in chapter four, we can at this point include some examples demonstrating that the life of poverty Paul adumbrates is not uncommon. The economic hardships endured by labourers, for example, are expounded upon by Lucian, who relates an anecdote about Micyllus who faces a daily struggle to avoid starvation. The cock, upon waking the cobbler early one morning, laments:

I thought I could do you a favour by cheating the night as much as I could so that you might make use of the morning hours and finish the greater part of your work early; you see if you get a single sandal done before the sun rises you will be much ahead toward earning your daily bread. But if you had rather sleep, I’ll keep quiet for you and will be more mute than a fish. Take care, however, that you don’t dream you are rich and then starve when you wake up.³³

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²² Hunger and thirst are frequently paired to denote poverty; e.g., Dio Chrysostom, Or. 7.55; 8.16; Socr. 12; Deut 28:48; Ps 106:5; Isa 5:13; Matt 5:6; 25:35-37, 42-44; John 6:35; Rom 12:20; 2 Cor 11:27; Rev 7:16; Ignatius, Smyrn. 6.2.

³³ Lucian, Gall. 1.
We can also point to an example from Apuleius’ novel *The Golden Ass*. Apuleius records more than a fictional anecdote since his fiction is firmly rooted in a realistic portrayal of the socio-economic environment throughout the provinces of the Roman Empire.\(^{34}\) The central character has laboured piece-meal in another craftsman’s workshop, receiving his pay on a daily basis. The reality hidden beneath this account is if the protagonist does not work, he will be unable to buy food for that evening’s dinner.\(^{35}\) Clearly, the wages paid to this particular labourer were only able to provide for daily needs. There was no money left over to place in reserve lest the employment cease due to lack of demand, or if the labourer, for whatever reason, was unable to continue working.

The poverty of the apostles is further demonstrated by the next item in Paul’s hardship catalogue: the apostles were naked (γυμνιτεύω; 1 Cor 4:11). This verb is here often translated as “ill-clad” or “dressed in rags”\(^{36}\) Fee, for instance, concludes that γυμνιτεύω means to be “inadequately clothed,”\(^{37}\) Thiselton, “lightly clothed,”\(^{38}\) and Collins, “tattered and threadbare clothing.”\(^{39}\) Although γυμνιτεύω does not appear elsewhere in the New Testament, the adjective γυμνός is used in Mark’s Gospel to describe the anonymous young man who ran away γυμνός after being seized (Mark 14:52). In Matthew’s Gospel, Jesus clearly distinguishes between being naked and being clothed (Matt 25:36, 38, 43, 44). Furthermore, poverty and nakedness are


\(^{36}\) See, for instance, the translations in RSV and NRSV.


paired together in Job 31:19-20. Although we cannot entirely discount Paul’s admission as indicative of his being “ill-clad” or “poorly clothed,” ⁴⁰ we likewise cannot entirely ignore the possibility that the apostle is admitting to stark nakedness.

Lack of clothing as a reality faced by manual labourers is a concern echoed in Lucian’s *Cataplus*, where the aforementioned cobbler Micyllus relates how he was only too ready to put aside his tools when his time of death came. ⁴¹ He acerbically reflects on what he lost in death:

> Alas my scraps of leather! Alas my old shoes! Alackaday, my rotten sandals! Unlikely man that I am, never again will I go hungry from morning to night or wander about in winter barefooted and half-naked, with my teeth clattering from the cold. ⁴²

Paul’s description of the apostles as *γυμνοί* not only points to the physical inadequateness of their clothing, but also is the obvious opposite of the Corinthians who are “already rich” (1 Cor 4:8). ⁴³ Although Paul is certainly drawing a rhetorical contrast between the apostles in their poverty, and the Corinthians in their fullness, the fact remains that Paul depicts his manual labour in the language of inadequacy, shame, and want. Contra Fitzgerald, ⁴⁴ this is not a hardship catalogue that signifies virtue and heroism, but deprivation and abject poverty.

The listing of adversity continues with Paul’s inclusion of the physical abuse he and the other apostles have suffered (*κολαφίζω*), which is one more adversity that defined the life of the manual labourer. In 2 Cor 12:7, Paul likewise employs this verb to describe the humiliation of his painful treatment, although in this case, it is a satanic angel that beats him. As Shantz notes,

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⁴⁰ As seen, for example, in Seneca, *Ben.* 5.13.3.

⁴¹ Lucian, *Cat.* 15.

⁴² Lucian, *Cat.* 20.

⁴³ Cf. Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 7.55, who contrasts those who have money with those who are *γυμνοί*. The combination of poverty and nakedness is also evident in Job 31:19-20; Rev 3:17; Epictetus, *Diss.* 3.22.45.

apparent in this latter case is a “pattern of exaltation and debasement,” specifically that the
elation of Paul’s ascent (ὑπεραίρω) is counterbalanced with his debasement.\(^{45}\)

We can note the same sort of framework at play in 1 Cor 4:9-13. Although Paul is the
father of the Corinthian community (1 Cor 3:6, 10), he is being exhibited “as last of all.” The
satiated Corinthians stand in vivid contrast to the hungry and abused apostles. Paul’s emphasis
falls on the bodily hardships suffered by the apostles, and afflictions endured by those who work
with their hands. The contrast in rank and social status between Paul and some members of the
Corinthian Christ-community could not be more extreme.

Returning to Paul’s inclusion of his beatings in 1 Cor 4:11, this was a hardship faced by
labourers. Apprentices were often vulnerable to abuse at the hands of their instructors. Lucian,
for instance, describes a dream in which he was subjected to corporeal punishment after striking
a piece of marble with too much force.\(^{46}\) Corporeal punishment was a routine element of craft
training, and that it did sometimes result in serious injury to the apprentice is witnessed in the
legal sources. The jurist Julian, for instance, discusses a case where a father apprentices his son
to a shoemaker who blinded the freeborn boy in one eye after striking out at him with a
shoemaker’s form.\(^{47}\)

Paul’s mention of physical abuse in connection with his manual labour is significant in
our understanding of how the Corinthians, among others in the Greco-Roman world, would have
understood the apostle. Being physically vulnerable to abuse at the hands of others was


\(^{46}\) Lucian, *Somn*. 3-4.

\(^{47}\) *Dig*. 9.2.5.
refers to as “the map of his [Paul’s] missionary journeys that has been cut into his back,” are not cicatrices received in the valour of combat, but evidence of corporeal vulnerability. By including references to his physical vulnerability, a vulnerability elsewhere evident in the lives of some of those who laboured with their hands, Paul is testifying not to virtue but to humiliation and submission. Ancient audiences would have no doubt that Paul’s susceptibility to abuse as a labourer was the dermal sign of servility. Along these same lines, Matthew Roller contends that “physical and legal degradation corresponded in Roman society to moral degradation.” Paul’s admission to his somatic vulnerability marked him not only as dishonourable, but utterly contemptible.

With Paul’s revelation that he was unable to uphold the physical boundaries of his body against breaches of any sort, he was admitting to a loss of masculinity and thus authority. Scar tissue on a man’s back relates a story of cowardice. Jonathan Walters recognizes that bodily inviolability was integral to Roman masculinity: “sexual penetration and beating, those two forms of corporeal assault, are in Roman terms structurally equivalent.” Men of lower status, and especially slaves of both genders, were not able to guard their bodies against assault by others, and this vulnerability would colour the reaction of the Corinthians to Paul. Not every

51 For example, Livy’s Servilius proclaims proudly, “I possess a body adorned with honourable scars, every one of them received in front” (45.39.16).
53 Cf. the enslaved freeborn woman Leukippe who tried to resist the advances of her master Thersandros. Thersandros responds by highlighting Leukippe’s sexual vulnerability as a slave: “But since you are unwilling to feel my passion as your lover, you shall feel my power as your lord” (Achilles Tatius, Leuc. Clit. 6.20).
scarred body tells the story of honour and valour, and Paul’s abused body as a labourer is one sign of humiliation and submission.

Paul’s final hardship acccents his sense of shame among the Corinthians (ἀστατέω), a hardship which refers to the apostle’s incessant movement. Fee understands ἀστατέω as referring solely to the itinerant nature of Paul’s missionary activity, but this is not the description of a recognized apostle who freely travelled from one community to the next preaching the gospel. Fee’s argument falters on the fact that all of the descriptions thus far listed by Paul do not culminate in the apostle’s proclamation of his preaching, but rather in his life as a manual labourer. Itinerancy, together with poverty, abuse, and hunger were the lot of the labouring non-elites, and Paul’s characterizations do not place him far removed from these trials, but squarely amidst them.

All of these hardships suggest that Paul was at the bottom of the social ladder. Paul’s accounts are not those of the Cynic sage who overcomes hardships. Certainly, this is not how the Corinthians would have perceived this poor and abused manual labourer. In 1 Cor 4:9-13, Paul compares himself to the Corinthians and immerses himself in a catalogue of shame. This is the vivid description of dishonour that attends Paul’s apostleship in contradistinction to the Corinthians who consider themselves to be sated, rich, ruling, wise, powerful, and honoured.

This catalogue, when viewed by the Corinthians, places their apostle amongst those in the social world who are objects of scorn, shame, and contempt. Paul is ἐσχάτος, the least important (1 Cor 4:9). In contrast to Fitzgerald who argues that, “the scars that the good man sometimes bears on his body are visible tokens of his virtue . . . the evidence of hardship is thus the proof of

54 Incessant movement and homelessness appear in other hardship catalogues; e.g., Seneca, Prov. 4.14-15; Epictetus, Diss. 3.22.45, 47; 4.8.30-31.
55 Fee, First Epistle, 179.
virtue, the seal of integrity.” Paul’s admissions testify not to integrity but to vulnerability. Fitzgerald fails to distinguish between different types and functions of hardship lists, and he leaves the impression that any scar of any endurance of hardship is worthy of recognition and honour. Paul’s description of what he has suffered as a handworker, though, would be read by the Corinthians as markedly dishonourable, as Paul himself recognizes (1 Cor 4:10).

Additionally, Paul characterizes himself as a spectacle before the world. In the Greco-Roman ethos, a “spectacle” could be “a person or a thing seen as an object of curiosity, contempt, marvel, or admiration.” Paul’s metaphor involves a spectacle of death, suggesting the context of public ritualized killings. Paul conveys this spectacle of death to the Corinthians, a spectacle with which they would be familiar. Throughout the Roman world, Roman spectacles of death were staged in theatres, amphitheatres, and circuses, but the most prominent venue for these events was the amphitheatre. Although Corinth’s amphitheatre has not been excavated, it was most likely constructed during the colonization of Corinth, and had a reputation for glorying in these spectacles of torture. Both Dio Chrysostom and Lucian


58 Various explanations for Paul’s metaphor of a spectacle have been postulated, including a Roman triumphal procession, a gladiatorial show, and a mime performance. See V. Henry T. Nguyen, “The Identification of Paul’s Spectacle of Death Metaphor in 1 Corinthians 4:9,” *NTS* 53 (2007): 489-501, for a critique of these positions and his counter argument that this metaphor should be understood as referring to the Roman spectacle of executing condemned criminals (noxii) within the arena.

59 The word ἐπιθανάτιος is used only here in the New Testament, but drawn upon in the Apocrypha (Bel 31) in reference to those condemned (τῶν ἐπιθανατίων) to be fed to the lions in the arena; cf. Dionysius of Halicarnassus (*Ant. rom.* 7.35) who employed this term for those “condemned” (ἐπιθανατίος) to be tossed off the highest rock in the Forum to their death.


comment on the wild popularity and extravagance of these Corinthian spectacles. Therefore, Paul employs a familiar metaphor to the Corinthians.

V. Henry T. Nguyen makes a compelling case that this Pauline metaphor should be understood as referring to the Roman spectacle of executing condemned criminals (noxii) within the arena. The noxii were distinct from gladiators and “although both gladiators and noxii could be observed in the same spectacle shows, there is a clear difference in their displays of death: the former fought and struggled for possible survival, while the latter dishonourably suffered certain and aggravated death.” Given that there is no evidence in 1 Cor 4:9-13 to gladiatorial combat, it is most likely that Paul is comparing himself to those condemned to such shameful deaths. Indeed, Paul’s spectacles of struggle, failure, and disgrace take place in the eyes of the world, of angels, and of humanity (1 Cor 4:9).

After prefacing the hardships endured in his life as a handworker with his utterly shameful fate as one sentenced to death in the arena, Paul concludes with the strong expression in 1 Cor 4:13 that the apostles are ὡς περικαθάρματα τοῦ κόσμου ἐγενήθη ἐν τοῖς ἄρτι. Thiselton states that by drawing upon these descriptors, “Paul is searching for the lowest, strongest, most earthy language he can find.”

These two virtually synonymous expressions are used to refer to that which is scraped off bodies or objects, thus, any kind of uncleanliness or filth. The term περικαθάρμα refers to

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62 Dio Chrysostom, Or. 31.121; Lucian, Demon. 57.
64 Nguyen, “Spectacle,” 497.
66 Thiselton, First Epistle, 365.
67 As seen, for example, in Aristophanes, Eq. 909.
sweepings from the floor, in other words, dirt, mud, or waste. Περίψημα denotes dirt that had been removed from the body, and both words are used for that which is detestable and devoid of value.

Paul’s point in 1 Cor 4:9-13 is singular. In contrast to the Corinthians, he was despised and rejected. These antitheses are stated most succinctly in 1 Cor 4:10 where the “foolish,” “weak,” and “dishonourable” apostles are set in contrast with the “wise,” “strong,” and “honourable” Corinthians. With three staccato comparisons, the apostle goes straight to the heart of the matter: from a worldly point of view Paul is not one about whom one can boast. In contrast to the pride of the Corinthians in their status and success, Paul expresses his disrepute and dishonour in such a manner as to destroy any thought of him as a figure of social importance or prestige. Cosmic disgrace, brutal treatment and homelessness hardly describe the situation of an apostle whose authority would be recognized within the Corinthian community.\(^6\) The implications of manual labour negate any interpretation of Paul as anything other than servile and slavish. Paul’s presentation of his life as a handworker is the exact opposite of what the Corinthians would want to hear, for their apostle is at the very bottom of the social scale.

\(^6\) A theme carried on in 2 Corinthians (e.g., 2 Cor 2:14-6:13; 10:1-13:10).
2.1.2  2 Cor 6:3-10

Paul’s descriptions of his manual labour as a scenario of humiliation and deprivation continue in 2 Corinthians. In 2 Cor 10-13, the criticisms and claims made against Paul become more explicit. It is no longer simply Paul’s character that has come under attack, but his entire position as an apostle of Christ (2 Cor 10:10; 13:3). The Corinthians are reluctant to accept his position (2 Cor 11:1), instead opting to follow Paul’s rivals. Whoever these opponents were, doubts were raised against Paul’s apostolic authority. Paul attempts to counter these misgivings, and he does so by drawing upon his manual labour as a scenario of shame, hardship, and suffering.

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70 The identity of these opponents is the subject of much debate. Major discussions of this issue can be found in C. K. Barrett, “Paul’s Opponents in 2 Corinthians,” NTS 17 (1971): 233-54; Dieter Georgi, The Opponents of Paul in Second Corinthians (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1987); Jerry L. Sumney, Identifying Paul’s Opponents: The Question of Method in 2 Corinthians, JSNTSup 40 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990); Timothy B. Savage, Power Through Weakness: An Historical and Exegetical Examination of Paul’s Understanding of the Ministry in 2 Corinthians (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 3-13. A definitive connection with the factions of 1 Cor 1:10-12 (cf. 2 Cor 10:7) cannot conclusively be proven, but the divisiveness is of a like nature suggesting that similar foundations may have underlain both instances of opposition to Paul.

71 In a letter and in a section where Paul is concerned to demonstrate his apostolic credentials, why does he include reference to his manual labour? Paul’s life as a manual labourer had clearly become a matter of conflict among the Corinthians (2 Cor 11:7, 23, 30), and I suggest that Paul has no choice but to confront his “dishonour” head on. Paul, therefore, takes what has called his apostleship into question, and attempts to frame it in a new light.
Paul’s hardship list in 2 Cor 6:4b-10 occurs within an extended discussion concerning the essence and exercise of the apostolic ministry.\textsuperscript{72} In 2 Corinthians 1:1-9:15, Paul engages in self-commendation and provides a series of reasons why the Corinthians should boast in him. Paul’s boast in himself is not undertaken as a means to self-glorification; rather, the goal is to provide reasons to the Corinthians for them to have confidence in him. Only then would they be open to hearing his apostolic message. Paul’s integrity is central in 2 Cor 1:1-9:15, written to secure his standing among the Corinthian Christ-community, and 2 Cor 6:4b-10 has a definite role within this context. Indeed, Paul’s appeal is a tangible indication that there are troubles in his relationship with the Corinthians (2 Cor 6:11-7:4).

Within 2 Cor 6:4b-10, three subunits can be identified on the basis of content.\textsuperscript{73} Paul first appeals to the Corinthians not to accept the grace of God in vain (2 Cor 6:1-2), which is followed by a claim that he gives no offence lest the ministry of reconciliation be disputed (2 Cor 6:3-4a), and concludes with a catalogue of hardships that both supports Paul’s appeal to this community and gives the Corinthians reasons to boast in their apostle (2 Cor 6:4b-10). This need for reconciliation between the apostle and the Corinthians is urgent, for if the founder of the community is estranged from his children (2 Cor 6:13), the result is ridicule of the ministry (2 Cor 6:3).

\textsuperscript{72}Although 2 Cor 6:4b-10 is called a “hardship list,” not all items in this list are strictly “hardships.” In 2 Cor 6:6-7, for instance, Paul lists attributes such as “knowledge,” “kindness,” and “the power of God,” all of which enable him to bear his hardships. Given the overall unity of this section, however, all of these verses can be understood as an extended hardship list that also includes items of how Paul endures these trials. See Fitzgerald, \textit{Earthen Vessel}, 184-201, for further discussion.

\textsuperscript{73}As to structure, 2 Cor 6:3-10 consists not of finite verbs but of a series of participles. Aside from 2 Cor 6:2, the entire section is a single sentence, though not typically translated as such. For a more thorough discussion of the structure see, Jan Lambrecht, “The Favorable Time: A Study of 2 Corinthians 6:2a in its Context,” in \textit{Studies on 2 Corinthians}, ed. R. Bieringer and J. Lambrecht, BETL 112 (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1994), 515-29.
Paul’s hardship list in 2 Cor 6:4b-10 is a rhetorically powerful sequence with a well-defined structure.\textsuperscript{74} This catalogue begins with eighteen items, each of which is introduced by the preposition \textit{ἐν}. The first of these items - \textit{ἐν ὑποµονῇ πολλῇ} - functions as a general introduction and heading to the subsequent list, and is followed by three triads of three trials (2 Cor 6:4b-5).\textsuperscript{75} This is followed by two groups of four, detailing the manner in which Paul endured these hardships (2 Cor 6:6-7a), followed by three contrasts introduced by \textit{διὰ} (2 Cor 6:7b-8a). The catalogue ends with seven antitheses, all introduced by \textit{ὡς}, contrasting how Paul appeared in the worldly eyes of the Corinthians as opposed to how he perceived the paradoxical nature of his apostolic ministry (2 Cor 6:8b-10). There is a contrast between the wisdom of this age which is embodied and accepted by the Corinthians, and the wisdom of God as preached by Paul. Suffering, both physical and emotional, is intrinsic to this catalogue.

In 2 Cor 6:3-4a, Paul presents an apostolic ideal, but in 2 Cor 6:4b-5, apostolic realities are outlined, all of which require “great endurance.” The term \textit{ὑποµονή} is the capacity to tolerate what is agonizing. The book of 4 Maccabees employs this term to describe the bearing of horrific tortures,\textsuperscript{76} and Philo, for enduring great difficulties.\textsuperscript{77} Inscriptional evidence denotes an

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textsuperscript{74} R. P. Martin, 2 Corinthians, WBC 40 (Waco: Word, 1986), 161-62, drawing attention to the careful structure of the text and parallel with 2 Enoch 66:6, suggests usage of a pre-existing text.; cf. H. Windisch, Der zweite korintherbrief; Meyerk 6 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1924), 206. It can be countered, however, that 2 Enoch 66:6 is “no longer seen as a pre-Christian, Jewish parallel to Paul’s catalogues, but as an echo of the latter, esp. 2 Cor 6:4ff” (Fitzgerald, Earthen Vessel, 17 n. 56). While tribulation lists were a widespread literary convention in the first-century (cf. Fitzgerald, Earthen Vessel; R. Hodgson, “Paul the Apostle and First Century Tribulation Lists,” ZNW 74 [1983]: 59-80), Paul clearly adapted this convention to his own use. This is evidenced by the strongly autobiographical section (2 Cor 6:4b-5), and the highly personal polemical responses (2 Cor 6:7-10), which together constitute the majority of this section.
\item \textsuperscript{75} That the phrase, \textit{ἐν ὑποµονῇ πολλῇ}, functions as a general titular heading for 2 Cor 6:4b-5 is clear from the fact that within 2 Cor 6:4b-5 \textit{ὑποµονή} is the only qualified noun (and the only noun in singular form). See 2 Cor 12:12 for a similar use of noun and umbrella function.
\item \textsuperscript{76} 4 Macc 6:9; 7:22; 9:6, 22; 15:32; 16:1, 17, 19, 21; 17:7, 10; cf. Porphyry, Abst. 1.2.3: “they endure the removal of genitals.”
\item \textsuperscript{77} Philo, Joseph 36; Dreams 1.47; Moses 1.224; Spec. Laws 2.88; Virtues 122.
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endurance against harm, or against familial troubles. Josephus describes general tolerance of all hardships. This term also occurs periodically in Paul’s epistles to denote sustaining any nature of trials. Paul’s self-praise is focussed above all on his sufferance of adversity, and we see that manual labour falls under that which must be suffered.

Having commended himself “in great endurance,” Paul begins with the first group of three hardships: ἐν θλίψει, ἐν ἀνάγκαις, ἐν στενοχωρίαις (2 Cor 6:4b). The first of these hardships, θλῖψις, occurs frequently in 2 Corinthians (2 Cor 1:4, 8; 2:4; 4:17; 7:4; 8:2, 13), and its placement at the head of this triad of hardships speaks to the sense of constant oppression and even has connotations to economic poverty. The term ἀνάγκη indicates a state of distress or trouble and στενοχωρία refers to a set of stressful circumstances from which there is no escape. Both of these terms are echoed in the hardship list of 2 Cor 12:10.

The term ἀνάγκη indicates a state of distress or trouble and στενοχωρία refers to a set of stressful circumstances from which there is no escape. Both of these terms are echoed in the hardship list of 2 Cor 12:10. Paul’s inclusion of στενοχωρία as the final term in the first triad creates a rhetorical crescendo as the longest word in the line. This is the most severe of the

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78 P. Oxy. 904.5.
79 P. Oxy. 1186.4.
80 Josephus, Ant. 2.7; 3.53; 12.122.
81 Rom 5:3-4; 8:25; 15:4, 5; 2 Cor 12:12; 1 Thess 1:3; cf. 2 Thess 3:5.
83 For στενοχωρία with θλῖψις see Rom 2:9; 8:35 (cf. 2 Cor 4:8; LXX: Deut 28:53, 55, 57; Judg 16:16; Esth 1:1; Isa 8:22; 30:6).
84 Fitzgerald, Earthen Vessel, 192.
three hardships listed, confirmed again by the final placement of στενοχωρία in Paul’s catalogue of hardships in 2 Cor 12:10.

The plurals of these three items do not necessarily refer to multiple instances of each trial, but can emphasize serious distress (cf. 2 Cor 11:23). The first triad contains a vivid portrayal of the constant duress and pressures faced by Paul, an apostle hemmed in on every side by repeated difficulties. Although Paul’s manual labour is not yet mentioned, these hardships lay the groundwork for that which is to come, building a sort of crescendo of shame.

Paul’s second triad of afflictions is more specific (2 Cor 6:5a): ἐν πληγαῖς, ἐν φυλακαῖς, ἐν ἀκαταστασίαις. The first of these difficulties, πληγή, can signify a physical blow to one’s body, as witnessed, for instance, in Diodorus Siculus’ description of suffering under the cracks of a whip. In Acts, Luke paints Paul as one who endures mob violence, beatings, and imprisonment, and in 2 Cor 11:23-32, Paul admits to being beaten numerous times (2 Cor 11:23), specifically five times a synagogue flogging (“the forty strokes minus one”) and beatings with a rod at the hands of the Romans (2 Cor 11:24-5).

In 2 Cor 11:23, where the items πληγή and φυλακή occur again (although in reversed order), the beatings are described as “far worse” (ὑπερβαȳλλω) and the imprisonments “far more” (περισσῶς) than those suffered by others.

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85 Contra Fitzgerald, Earthen Vessel, 192.

86 Diodorus Siculus, Sic. 4.43.3. Interestingly, Diodorus frames his description of those suffering the pains of the whip as “enduring” (ἐν ταῖς ἀναγκαῖς) such torture (cf. the immediately preceding triad wherein Paul “endured [ἐν ταῖς ἀναγκαῖς]” many hardships [ἐν ύπομονῇ πολλῇ]).

Although the word ἀκατάστατος can refer to “disorder” (2 Cor 12:20) or “general unruliness” (1 Cor 14:33), Paul’s use of the term here implies serious tumults of some kind.\textsuperscript{88} All three items in this second triad point to concrete instances and circumstances in which Paul was persecuted and subject to the abuse and control of others.

It is within this context of routine suffering that Paul includes yet another hardship, specifically his manual labour.\textsuperscript{89} The same triad of κόπος, ἀγρυπνία and νηστεία is also found in 2 Cor 11:27, although in the latter with intervening hardships. There is no indication that Paul has endured his manual labour voluntarily,\textsuperscript{90} but rather we see Paul including his handwork, and the deprivation contained therein, as the final triad of sufferings faced by an apostle who is afflicted by outward circumstances. That Paul links his κόπος with sleeplessness (ἀγρυπνία) and hunger (νηστεία) should come as no surprise given the arduous nature of handwork in the first-century. Indeed, Lucian characterizes the life of the manual labourer as “laborious and barely able to supply them with just enough.”\textsuperscript{91}

As will be exemplified in much greater detail in chapter four, the irregularity of work opportunities for the vast majority of labourers entailed a life of poverty. Such impoverishment is mentioned explicitly by Paul at the conclusion of this section (2 Cor 6:10), but is already anticipated in the first triad by use of ἀνάγκη and στενοχωρία. This fear of not earning enough is

\textsuperscript{88} Rioters were often punished with scourging and imprisonment (cf. Acts 16:19-23; 21:30-22:29). Fitzgerald, \textit{Earthen Vessel}, 193 suggests that ἀκατάστατος is in the last position, not only because it is the longest word in this triad (as with the previous trial of hardships), but because it more succinctly encompasses the possibility of death (cf. Acts 14:19).

\textsuperscript{89} Although κόπος is here in the plural form, context suggests it refers to the wearisome toil endured by Paul the manual labourer, as the singular form clearly does in 2 Cor 11:27 and where the verb does in 1 Cor 4:9-13. Cf. Hock, \textit{Social Context}, 64; Furnish, \textit{II Corinthians}, 344; Matera, \textit{II Corinthians}, 152; Paul Barnett, \textit{The Second Epistle to the Corinthians}, NICNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997), 152; Fitzgerald, \textit{Earthen Vessel}, 193.

\textsuperscript{90} Voluntary or involuntary cannot be deduced from the context. Contra Harris, \textit{Second Epistle}, 473; Matera, \textit{II Corinthians}, 152; Fitzgerald, \textit{Earthen Vessel}, 193.

\textsuperscript{91} Lucian, \textit{Fug.} 12-13.
clear from the opening sequence of Lucian’s *Gallus*, in which the shoemaker Micyllus is advised to start working before the sun rises so as to earn enough to feed himself. What is important to recognize is that in Paul’s descriptions of afflictions, of beatings, of imprisonments, and of hardships, also included is reference to Paul’s own manual labour.

As mentioned before, inclusion of manual labour is not characteristic of contemporaneous *peristasis* catalogues, and the hardships already listed crescendo to this ultimate humiliation. In a community which sought worldly wisdom and honour, the Corinthians would not have heard in Paul’s admission heroic exploits. Rather, here was one who could not protect the boundaries of his body, was homeless and hungry, and most disgraceful of all, worked with his hands.

In brief, in the tetrads that follow, Paul no longer details his physical sufferings, but moves towards the moral quality of his behaviour and the manner in which he has endured the aforementioned afflictions. Although Paul claims he was able to tolerate these various tribulations, what remains constant is that along with beatings, abuse, and imprisonment, all aspects of profound social shame, Paul includes his manual labour. In each of these hardships, and in the eyes of his contemporaries, Paul had lost honour, had displayed weakness, and was one of no account. As S. Scott Bartchy astutely asks, “how could he [Paul] who had already suffered so much dishonour and humiliation even become regarded as a leader of men who instinctively respected those who had achieved great honour and had not been shamed in the eyes of anyone?”

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93 To be demonstrated later in this chapter.

Paul completes his list of hardships with a series of seven antithetical phrases, pointing towards the paradoxical nature of his apostolic sufferings. Paul has endured these aforementioned sufferings through the power of God (2 Cor 6:6-7a) and always conducts himself in righteousness (2 Cor 6:7b-8a). There is thus a paradoxical dimension to Paul’s apostleship that only those who comprehend the workings of the Spirit can understand (2 Cor 6:8b-10).

It seems to me, however, that Paul had no choice but to present his message in this way. It is clear that the Corinthian community was embroiled in a conflict arising from two very different viewpoints. On the one hand, there is the Corinthians’ perspective which valued honour, commendation, and public recognition. On the other hand, there is Paul “the manual labourer,” who, as a poor worker, would not likely be granted authority on his own physical or other merits. Although Paul may be putting pressure on cultural assumptions by claiming power through weakness, glory through shame, and life through death, this is the language of desperation. On the surface, each one of these claims is impossible. For all the alleged brightness of the glory of God manifest through Paul, it was not visible to the naked Corinthian eye.

Paul’s life as a handworker had clearly become a matter of contention among the Corinthians (e.g., 2 Cor 11:7, 23, 30). Although the apostle presents his labour in a certain light, the Corinthians were still judging him based on more conventional criteria (e.g., 2 Cor 10:10; 11:6; 12:11-18; cf. 1 Cor 2:1-5), and Paul was found wanting indeed.
2.1.3 2 Cor 11:7; 11:23-27; 1 Thess 2:9

Paul’s descriptions of his manual labour in 2 Cor 11:7, 23-27 fall within Paul’s defence of his apostolic authority (2 Cor 10:1-13:14), with the latter catalogue echoing many of the hardships listed in 2 Cor 6:4b-10. The primary concern of this section concerns questions of Paul’s apostolic authority raised by some among the Corinthians. Others have been recognized as legitimate apostles, a point Paul finds especially troublesome (2 Cor 11:12-15), with the Corinthians now showing deference to the apostle’s more impressive rivals (2 Cor 11:4, 18-20).  

Paul is clearly being criticized because he does not embody a conventional figure of authority and power. For instance, Paul’s physical presence (2 Cor 10:10), his speech (2 Cor 10:10), which Paul acknowledges is untrained (2 Cor 11:6), and issues of financial support (2 Cor 11:5-12; 12:13-18) are all brought into disrepute. Paul’s life as a manual labourer is also a point of criticism.

In 2 Cor 11:7 Paul asks if he abased (ταπεινός) himself by preaching the gospel for nothing (δωρεάν). Paul speaks bitterly: his work was tantamount to humiliation. Ταπεινός refers to a person who is of low birth, ignoble, and despised, and held in low esteem. As Hock astutely notes, “in the social world of a city like Corinth, Paul would have been a weak figure, without power, prestige, and privilege . . . To those of wealth and power, the appearance (σχῆμα) .

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95 J. J. Gunther surveys the multitude of scholarly opinions concerning the identity of these so-called “false apostles.” See Gunther, St. Paul’s Opponents and Their Background: A Study of Apocalyptic and Jewish Sectarian Teachings, NovTSup 35 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1973). Savage, Power Through Weakness, 4-9, groups scholarly opinion of the “false-apostles” into three categories: Palestinian Jewish Christians; Gnostic Jewish Christians; Hellenistic Jewish missionaries.

96 Note that Paul does not state that he willingly chose to abase himself, merely that he preached without cost to the Corinthians.

97 For example, Plato, Leg. 6.744c; Plutarch, Cic. 10.5; Cat. Min. 12.5; Dem. 1.1; 1.3; Lucian, Cal. 24; Luke 1:48, 52; Rom 12:16; Eph 4:2; P. Oxy. 79.2.
of the artisan was that befitting a slave (δουλοπρεπές)." Paul’s use of ταπεινός, thus, is an appropriate description of his manual labour.

In particular, this humiliation leads to poverty, which Paul concedes in 2 Cor 11:9. Thus, ὑστέρημα μου, further defines the phrase ἐμαυτῶν ταπεινῶν, indicating that this apostle suffered want on account of his life as a labourer. Although his argument is filled with irony and sarcasm, Paul portrays his handwork accurately as demeaning and ignoble. Paul casts his manual labour in terms of abasement and exaltation: he “abased” himself by preaching the gospel without cost so that he could exalt the Corinthians. The contrast is clear: manual labour as indicative of someone who was ταπεινός is an arena of no commendation or virtue.

When we turn to Paul’s extensive catalogue of weakness in 2 Cor 11:23-29, we are once again confronted with the hardships and abuse faced by those who worked with their hands. As a general introduction to this hardship catalogue, Paul draws particular attention to his abundant toil (ἐν κόποις περισσοτέρως; 2 Cor 11:23) and his wearisome labour (κόπος καὶ μόχθος; 2 Cor 11:27; cf. 1 Thess 2:9; 2 Thess 3:8). Paul’s brushes with death are adumbrated by listing five items, each specified by the number of times the hardships were suffered (2 Cor 11:24-25). These are followed by eight dangers Paul has faced on his journeys (2 Cor 11:26), culminating in a list of four items associated with his sufferings as a manual labourer (2 Cor 11:27). This section then concludes with Paul’s reference to his anxiety for the churches (2 Cor 11:28) and two rhetorical questions encapsulating Paul’s weaknesses.

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98 Hock, Social Context, 60.

99 Cf. Lucian of Samosota’s description of his handwork as ταπεινὸς τὴν γρώμην (Somn. 9).

100 C. K. Barrett comments that “Paul’s irony here is at its most bitter” (Second Epistle to the Corinthians, BNBC [London: A. & C. Black, 1973], 281).
I suggest that Paul frames his catalogue of hardships in 2 Cor 11:23-29 with mention of his manual labour. Paul begins his hardship list articulating that he has a greater claim to be a "minister of Christ" because of his more numerous labours (ἐν κόποις περισσοτέρως), imprisonments (ἐν φυλακαίς περισσοτέρως), and beatings (ἐν πληγαῖς ὑπερβαλλόντως) that brought him near death (ἐν θανάτοις πολλάκις). This triad is reminiscent of 2 Cor 6:5. Paul’s κόπος in 2 Cor 11:23b does not explicitly refer to his manual labour, but given that some of the hardships here are likewise reflected in 2 Cor 6:5 where manual labour is clearly in mind, it seems likely that Paul is once again referring to his handwork in this latter catalogue. Paul’s inclusion of his κόπος, his manual labour, in 2 Cor 11:23b occurs in the same sequence as corporeal defencelessness and circumstances of dishonour. As discussed previously, such weakness and the inability to protect the physical boundaries around one's body encompassed connotations of servility and low social status. That Paul included his manual labour alongside such corporeal vulnerability equates his life as a handworker with humiliation and weakness.

At the corresponding bookend to this catalogue of hardship, Paul again references his manual labour (1 Cor 11:27): Paul describes his labour as κόπος καὶ µόχθος. These two terms are likely a traditional pairing. Job’s wife, for instance, laments, “In vain I have toiled in misery” (εἰς κενὸν ἐκοπιάσα µετὰ µόχθων; T. Job 24.2). The term µόχθος is employed quite regularly in the Septuagint, especially Ecclesiastes (22x), where it is used to describe the miserable and fruitless toil of humans. There is the lament, for instance, of labouring miserably with no advantage (Eccl 2:11; cf. Eccl 1:3; 5:14), the seeming endlessness of toil (Eccl 4:8), and the necessity of labour (Eccl 8:15; cf. Eccl 9:9). Leviticus speaks of the oppressiveness of labour

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101 Cf. Euripides, Ion. 103; Jer 20:18; T. Jud. 18.4; Philo, Moses, 1.284; Hesychius, Scr. Eccl. 9.28.7; Eusebius, Theol et Scr. Eccl. 7.1.31.
(Lev 25:43; cf. Lev 25:53), and Job, the exhausting nature of toil (Job 2:9). The labour that Paul engages in, then, is not one he describes in laudatory or praiseworthy terms; rather, it is misery, toil, and fatigue (cf. 2 Cor 11:7).

It may be helpful to consider briefly Paul’s other usage of κόπος καὶ μόχθος in reference to his handwork. Amongst a community of fellow manual labourers in Thessalonica, Paul describes his own work with the hendiadys κόπος καὶ μόχθος (1 Thess 2:9; cf. 2 Cor 11:27; 2 Thess 3:8).\(^{102}\) In 1 Thessalonians, Paul does not downplay, but rather highlights, his manual labour in the midst of establishing his ethos (1 Thess 1:5) within the community.\(^{103}\) Thus, Paul exhorts the Thessalonians to “work with your hands” (ἐργάζεσθαι ταῖς [ἰδίαις] χερσὶν ὑμῶν; 1 Thess 4:11), “just as you have learned from us” (1 Thess 4:1). Paul appeals to his manual labour positively, and does not disparage but commends work. Both of these aspects provide a clear indication where to place the Thessalonians on the Greco-Roman social map.

Nevertheless, although Paul appeals to his manual labour among the Thessalonians positively, Paul similarly depicts his own labour in 1 Thessalonians and 1 and 2 Corinthians in the context of hardship and social shame, as κόπος καὶ μόχθος. In Thessalonica, among a


\(^{103}\) Richard S. Ascough, “Voluntary Associations and Community Formation: Paul’s Macedonian Christian Communities in Context” (Ph.D. diss., University of St. Michael’s College, 1997), 78-81, argues that Paul was able to appeal positively to his handwork in 1 Thessalonians though use of work-related language.
community of fellow-workers, workers who shared in Paul’s poverty, Paul describes his work in language that connotes degradation. Paul not only refers to his work as a positive experience in 1 Thessalonians, but likewise draws attention to the exhausting nature of his life as a handworker: νυκτὸς καὶ ἡμέρας ἐργαζόμενοι (1 Thess 2:9; cf. 2 Cor 11:27).¹⁰⁴

What is interesting is that within a community of fellow manual labourers in Thessalonica, in a community in which Paul does not have to defend himself or his handwork, Paul still speaks of his manual labour as a hardship, as κόπος καὶ μόχθος. Why, then, amongst fellow labourers in 1 Thessalonians would Paul characterize his work in the language of dishonour? I suggest that this question can be answered by noting the social stigma attached to those who worked with their hands, a stigma that would have been known to those within the Thessalonian community. As chapters three and four will demonstrate, there existed a social hierarchical order in Greco-Roman society, a hierarchy reflected and perpetuated by labourers themselves. As labourers who were poor, and who described their work as κόπος καὶ μόχθος, they would have felt the social stigma from their surrounding society. Paul can appeal to his work positively among the Thessalonians because they, too, were manual labourers. At the same time, Paul can describe his labour as a scenario of shame among fellow-labourers precisely because this was how he, and they, were perceived within Greco-Roman society. Even among other handworkers, and this point is revealing, Paul places himself, and his work, at the bottom of the social scale.

Just as Paul describes his manual labour as κόπος καὶ μόχθος in 1 Thess 2:9, so he does also in 2 Cor 11:27. Returning now to this latter reference, Paul not only bookends his catalogue

¹⁰⁴ As will be demonstrated in chapter four, employment opportunities generally for labourers were sporadic in the ancient world, and thus, handworkers toiled long hours when they did find employment.
of hardships in 2 Cor 11:23-27 with mention of his manual labour, he also specifies the nature of
the trials faced as one who worked with his hands. Some manuscripts read ἐν before κόπος καὶ
µόχθος, no doubt because ἐν precedes each of the four subsequent items. The best manuscript
tradition (P₄⁶, 8, B, D), however, does not attest ἐν. I suggest, therefore, that just as ἐν θανάτοις
πολλάκις (2 Cor 11:23b) forms a heading for Paul’s elaboration of the circumstances when he
found himself often near death (2 Cor 11:24-25), and just as ὀδοιπορίαις πολλάκις (2 Cor 11:26)
forms a heading for an amplification of what Paul experienced on his frequent journeys, so κόπος
καὶ µόχθος (2 Cor 11:27) functions as a rubric for the rest of 2 Cor 11:27 in which Paul elaborates
on his arduous life as a manual labourer.

Paul’s expansion of his hardships as a manual labourer falls into four groups, each of
these groups introduced by the particle ἐν. In the first and third pairing (ἐν ἀγρυπνίαις; ἐν
νηστείαις), Paul lists a single hardship, each modified by πολλάκις. In the second and fourth
pairing (ἐν λιμῷ καὶ δίψει; ἐν ψύχει καὶ γυμνότητι), each hardship is joined by the conjunction
καὶ. Consequently, as a result of Paul’s poverty as a handworker, he was hungry, often went
without food, and was poorly clothed. These descriptions of Paul’s life as a manual labourer
echo those found in 1 Cor 4:9-13; thus, there is no need again to delve into these descriptions at
length. It is worth stressing, however, that in the somatic language of first-century Corinth,
Paul’s descriptions of his weakness, of his κόπος καὶ µόχθος, would have been heard as shameful
and servile.

Paul’s catalogue of hardships in 2 Cor 11:23-27, I suggest, is introduced by mention of
κόπος and concludes on the same note. Contained within these bookends of shame are numerous
other instances of suffering, abuse, and tribulations undergone by Paul. To the Corinthians, Paul
would have been perceived as weak and of no account (2 Cor 10:10). In a self-derisory way, and out of desperation, Paul glories in his humiliation and shame, boasting in his weakness (2 Cor 12:5), but this weakness was precisely what was causing the problem between Paul and the Corinthian community.

We have thus far paid attention to Paul’s own descriptions of his manual labour. At various times in this discussion, it was noted that Paul’s language of servility and shame would have been met with contempt on the part of the Corinthians. The following section will turn its attention to the socio-economic composition of the Corinthian Christ-community in order to demonstrate conclusively that Paul’s life as an abused, hungry, and poor manual labourer would have called his apostolic legitimacy into doubt among some within this group.

2.2 The Socio-Economic Composition of the Corinthian Community

Paul’s descriptions of his manual labour must be placed within a discussion of the socio-economic composition of the Corinthian Christ-community. As Donald Engels states, “the problems Paul encountered at Corinth were a reflection of the nature of the city’s people.”105 Thus, in order to grasp properly Paul’s descriptions of his manual labour, it is important to examine the surrounding social context of Roman Corinth. Fortunately, there have been multiple

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studies that have investigated the social context of Roman Corinth. Given these studies, it is not my intention to offer an extensive study of the social composition of the Corinthians, but only to establish the diversity of persons within it.

I will begin first by addressing what I have termed the “elephant-in-the-room.” If Paul was the founder of the Christ-community in Corinth (1 Cor 3:6, 10; 4:15; 2 Cor 10:14), as a manual labourer, how and/or why was Paul ever taken seriously as an apostle? I will provide a plausible social process in answer to this question. Secondly, it will be demonstrated that there were those within the Corinthian Christ-community who had aspirations to higher status within the dominant Greco-Roman ethos, or were already of a higher social-status relative to others within the community, and reflected in their behaviour the ideology of the surrounding cultural milieu. These discussions will all provide important background and contextual information when we later reread 1 Cor 9:1-18 in light of the implications of Paul’s life as manual labourer.

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2.2.1 Paul’s Paternity vs. Paul’s Contested Apostleship: What Happened?

If Paul’s life as a manual labourer encompassed hardship, abuse, and physical want, as his descriptions of his labour clearly imply, how and/or why was Paul ever taken seriously as an apostle? There is Paul’s evident paternity of the Corinthian Christ-community on the one hand (1 Cor 3:6, 10; 4:15), and Paul’s clearly contested apostleship on the other hand (e.g., 2 Cor 11:7, 23, 30; cf. 1 Cor 9:1-18).\numberref{107} I suggest that the answer to the above-posed question can be found in the development of the Christ-community in Corinth, specifically the development of the community in Corinth when compared to the development of the community in Thessalonica.

In Thessalonica, as in Corinth, Paul was the founder of the community (1 Thess 2:11, 13; 4:1; 1 Cor 3:6, 10; 4:15). In Thessalonica, as in Corinth, Paul was a handworker (1 Thess 2:9; 1 Cor 4:12). Hock has paid some attention to Paul’s missionary activity and lifestyle, suggesting that the workshop was a plausible setting for initial missionary activity.\numberref{108} Perhaps, then, among Paul’s initial converts in both communities were manual labourers and others of lower social status. Although Paul was the founder of both communities and worked as a manual labourer in both communities, in Corinth the question arose as to whether he should carry on as an apostle, a development not reflected in Thessalonica. So what happened?

Although we do not have a history of the development of these communities, the following seems to me to be a reasonable assumption. The difference between both communities, a difference that I think can explain why Paul’s apostleship was brought into doubt in Corinth but not in Thessalonica, concerns that of the social composition of Corinth and

\numberref{107} Indeed, both extant Corinthian letters witness Paul having to continually defend his apostleship, except for 2 Cor 6:14-7:1; 1:1-2:13; 7:5-16.

\numberref{108} Hock, “Workshop as a Setting.”
Thessalonica. In Thessalonica, the community remained one of like-minded labourers (1 Thess 4:11), whereas in Corinth other people became involved (1 Cor 1:12; 3:4-15). After Paul’s initial founding of the community, other preachers visited Corinth, including Apollos, and quite possibly Cephas, or at least those who aligned themselves with the latter and the Jerusalem church. Paul was now facing comparisons between himself and other missionaries, most notably Cephas (1 Cor 9:5), and was being judged by the Corinthians who were acting in a “fleshly” way (e.g., 1 Cor 3:3-4; 4:3-5). Although this sentiment was “initiated by a few,” it was infecting the whole.

As the next section will explore, there were also present in the Corinthian Christ-community those who were of a relatively higher social status relative to others in the community, as well as those who had aspirations to higher social status. I suggest that after Paul’s initial founding of the community, the Corinthian Christ-community became attractive to more socially diverse persons, and was no longer as socially homogenous as it was in its initial incarnation. The inclusion of more “statussed” persons will help to explain the issues under discussion in 1 Cor 9:1-18.

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109 If the Thessalonians were similar to a professional voluntary association, as argued by Richard S. Ascough, there would be a certain homogeneity within the membership. See Richard S. Ascough, “The Thessalonian Christian Community as a Professional Voluntary Association,” *JBL* 119 (2000): 311-28.

110 For Apollos, see 1 Cor 1:12; 3:4-9. For Cephas, see 1 Cor 1:12; 3:22; 9:5; 15:5. For a reconstruction of the timeline of Paul’s initial visit to the community and the sequence of letters, see Fee, *First Epistle*, 4-15.

111 1 Cor 1:12; 4:3, 6, 18-20; 9:3; 10:29-30; 14:37; 15:12.

112 Wayne A. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians. The Social World of the Apostle Paul* (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 1983), asserts that the early Christ-communities would have been especially attractive to those with “high status inconsistency,” who “share many of the attitudes, values, and sentiments of unambiguously higher social levels yet still lack status crystallization,” and whose “achieved status is higher than their attributed status” (pp. 70, 73).
2.2.2 Socio-Economic Makeup of the Corinthian Christ-Community

The pagan author Celsus claimed that Christianity attracted only “the foolish, dishonourable and stupid, and only slaves, women and little children.”\(^{113}\) Origen’s response to this characterization includes an early interpretation of 1 Cor 1:26, stressing that “Paul’s words are not ‘no wise man after the flesh,’ but ‘not many’ wise men after the flesh.”\(^{114}\) Despite Origen’s protestations, the social makeup of the early Christ-communities still echoed the view of Celsus, that is, a community of persons of low social status. This viewpoint received particular emphasis with Adolf Deissmann, whose work with the papyri led him to conclude that the Greek evidenced in the New Testament was that of ordinary people, not of philosophers or elite literature.\(^{115}\) Although Deissmann did not claim that these earliest Christian communities were exclusively composed of lower-class members, he did assume that these were the majority.

This so-called “old consensus” has been challenged to such an extent that now a “new consensus” has emerged, wherein “the social status of early Christians may be higher than Deissmann has supposed.”\(^{116}\) E. A. Judge and Gerd Theissen have in particular focussed their attention on the minority within the Corinthian Christ-community who were of relatively high social status, with Judge suggesting that “the Christians were dominated by a socially pretentious

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\(^{113}\) As quoted by Origen, Cels. 3.44.

\(^{114}\) Origen, Cels. 3.48; emphasis mine.


section of the population.” 117 It would be a mistake to suggest that scholarship en masse initially fell behind the arguments of Deissmann, and from the 1960’s onwards, behind the arguments of Judge, as if both possibilities were inherently mutually exclusive. As Theissen cautions with regards to the scholarship of Deissmann and Judge, “both opinions are probably correct, because . . . the Corinthian congregation is marked by internal stratification. The majority of the members, who come from the lower classes, stand in contrast to a few influential members who come from the upper classes. This internal stratification is not accidental but the result of structural causes.” 118

Although Meeks and Theissen have been criticized for too-readily taking certain indices to determine wealth and social status, 119 their work effectively underlines the diversity of membership within these early Christ-communities. We will now establish that there was not only a considerable degree of social diversity within the Corinthian community, but the related point that there were some with a higher social status relative to others in the community, as well as parvenus with aspirations to higher status. The socio-economic composition of the Corinthian Christ-community will be of utmost significance in properly understanding the impact of Paul’s manual labour in Corinth.

We can begin with 1 Cor 1:26, which reveals both social diversity amongst membership as well as the existence of a relatively elite group (οὐ πολλοὶ σοφοί κατὰ σάρκα, οὐ πολλοὶ δύνατοί,  81 


118 Theissen, Social Setting, 69. By structural causes, Theissen is referring to the Greco-Roman world as preindustrial and underdeveloped (at least by modern standards) where wealth and power was concentrated into the hands of a few elite families who re-invented themselves as a distinct status group. The socio-economic structure of the Greco-Roman world will receive further attention in the following chapter.

οὐ πολλοὶ εὐγενεῖς). The triadic formula of σοφὸς, δυνατός, and εὐγενής has been examined to demonstrate that these three terms are social descriptions drawn upon to depict the elite of society. Prosopographic evidence has likewise been analyzed to conclude that some in the community were of a socially higher class. Paul mentions that he baptized the household of Stephanus (1 Cor 1:16), a household which may have included slaves or dependent workers, such as Fortunatus and Achaicus (1 Cor 16:17). Although the ownership of slaves does not by itself imply wealth and social status, Stephanus would be comparatively wealthy in order to support slaves. At any rate, his social position would have been higher than that of his slaves.

Gaius was also likely a person of some wealth, since he acted as host not only to Paul but to ὁλης τῆς ἐκκλησίας (Rom 16:23; cf. 1 Cor 1:14). Phoebe, as well, may have been comparatively wealthy, since she is described as being a patron of many, including Paul (Rom 16:2). Paul commends Phoebe to the believers in Rome (Rom 16:1), requesting that they “help her in whatever she may require from you” (Rom 16:2). This assistance may be

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121 So Theissen, Social Setting, 71-73; Clarke, Leadership, 41-45; Malherbe, Social Aspects, 30; Horrell, Social Ethos, 95.


understood as “worldly,” that is, financial or material support, as Theissen suggests, which would reciprocate Phoebe’s help to Paul and others.124

Finally, if οἱ Χλόης (1 Cor 1:11) are interpreted as slaves or members of Chloe’s household, then she, too, can be considered a person of some wealth and perhaps social standing. Indeed, 1 Cor 3:18 reveals that Paul was cognizant of the fact that there were some within the community who perceived themselves to be amongst the leaders in society. The apostle beseeches those who think that they are wise in the eyes of society (εἴ τις δοξεῖ σοφὸς εἶναι ἐν ὑμῖν ἐν τῷ αἰῶνι τούτῳ) to become rather fools.

Already having outlined the social diversity within the Corinthian Christ-community, there is likewise evidence within 1 Corinthians itself that this diversity, and the dominant ethos of the surrounding Greco-Roman milieu, played a significant part in the conflicts to which Paul responds.125 The first four chapters of 1 Corinthians have been interpreted as laying the groundwork for the remainder of the letter.126 Within these introductory chapters, Paul reports that he has heard of σχίσματα and ἔριδες within the community, the result of which was the development of factions centred around various apostolic figures and “Christ” (1 Cor 1:10-12; cf. 1 Cor 3:3-4). Given that Paul repeatedly singles out Apollos throughout this section (1 Cor

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124 Theissen, Social Setting, 88: “The term πρᾶγμα frequently means ‘business’ in the economic sense of the word, and the generalizing relative clause all the more hints that something more than just congregational matters are involved.”

125 Although in some cases, these may have been problems for Paul, but not necessarily for the Corinthians.

126 Troels Engberg-Pedersen, “The Gospel and Social Practice According to 1 Corinthians,” NTS 33 (1987): 562, argues that the first four chapters of 1 Corinthians are “an introduction to the principles that lie behind Paul’s solutions to the specific problems of social practice that he discusses from chapter 5 onwards.” Cf. Margaret M. Mitchell, Paul and the Rhetoric of Reconciliation: An Exegetical Investigation of the Language and Composition of 1 Corinthians (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991), 1, who suggests that in a letter whose intent is ecclesial unity, 1:10 serves as the thesis statement. Karl Theodor Kleinknecht suggests that 1 Cor 4:8-13 is the “summierende[r] Höhepunkt” of the first four chapters; it is Paul’s climatic critique of the Corinthians’ internal discord and disagreement with his view of the λόγος ὁ τοῦ σταυροῦ. See Kleinknecht, Der leidende Gerechtigete: Die alttestamentliche-jüdische Tradition vom ‘leidenden Gerechten’ und ihre Rezeption bei Paulus, WUNT 2/13 (Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1984), 222.
3:4-6; 4:6), it is arguable that discord had developed between the apostle and Apollos, or those who presented themselves in his name.\textsuperscript{127}

The wisdom of some Corinthians, demonstrated in their conduct according to worldly standards (1 Cor 3:3-4), and in their boasting and application of social distinctions (\textit{καυχάσθω ἐν ἀνθρώποις}; 1 Cor 3:21; \textit{φυσιοῦσθε κατὰ τοῦ ἑτέρου}; 1 Cor 4:6) clashes with \textit{ὁ λόγος ὁ τοῦ σταυροῦ} (1 Cor 1:18-25).\textsuperscript{128} What is remarkable about Paul is that he uses another scenario of shame, that is, the crucifixion, to frame his message. Scholars who glibly argue that Paul sovereignly inverts language fail to recognize that this language is coming from a slavish body.\textsuperscript{129} I suggest that embodied subjectivity conditions the meaning of language. As with Paul’s presentation of his manual labour, and as with his understanding of the crucifixion, Paul may be attempting to put pressure on cultural assumptions, but he does so out of desperation.

The Corinthians likely exploited their “wisdom” as an indication of status, leading to the evaluation of the community leaders according to their perceived social standing. Paul reacts against this inappropriate wisdom, criticizing the Corinthians as arrogant (\textit{φῦσίωσις}; 1 Cor 4:19), who behave according to “worldly” standards (1 Cor 3:3-4), boasting in individuals (1 Cor 3:21; 4:6). It is within this context that Paul contrasts the elite status of the Corinthians with the lowly

\textsuperscript{127} Although tangential insofar as the focus of this chapter is on the letters of Paul, an interesting piece of information is found in Acts, which describes Apollos as \textit{ἀνὴρ λόγιος and δυνατὸς ὃν ἐν ταῖς γραφαῖς} (Acts 18:24). This description, of course, is in direct opposition to Paul, who came to the Corinthians in much weakness, fear, and trembling (1 Cor 2:1-5). Given what has already been demonstrated about the Greco-Roman social world in which the Corinthians lived, it is not hard to see why this community would be more attracted to Apollos.

\textsuperscript{128} Apart from 1 Corinthians and Galatians, Paul uses the language of “cross” and “crucifixion” only in Rom 6:6 and Phil 2:8; 3:18. In the deuto-Pauline letters, there are three references (Col 1:20; 2:14; Eph 2:16). Outside of the Pauline epistles, apart from the Passion narratives, there are only a few references to the crucifixion of Jesus (Matt 20:19; Luke 24:7, 20; Acts 2:36; 4:10; Heb 6:6; 12:2; Rev 11:8), and only scant references to the cross within the context of discipleship (Mark 8:34/Matt 16:24/Luke 9:23; Matt 10:38; Luke 14:27).

status of the apostles (1 Cor 4:8-10). It is also worth noting some problems observed throughout
the remainder of the epistle that reflect the Corinthian preoccupation with social status and
perception, for it is precisely this worldview, I will argue, that engendered their negative
reception of Paul, the manual labourer.

In 1 Cor 6:1-8, Paul confronts the problem of believers who engaged in civil litigation
against one another over “trivial cases” (1 Cor 6:2).\textsuperscript{130} For Paul, these actions were a violation of
the sanctity of the community (1 Cor 6:6). Although the precise nature of the lawsuit is lost to
the annals of history,\textsuperscript{131} it is likely that those involved were people of some wealth and social
position, who were using the legal system to augment their status. Wealth and social status held
great sway in the courts, and bringing a case to court was “elaborate and expensive.”\textsuperscript{132} The
unequal distribution of wealth and influence prevented the lower strata from making full use of
the courts, a point illustrated by the elder Seneca in his account of the taunts of the rich man
against his poor foe, due to the latter’s inability to prosecute him for his father’s murder in
court.\textsuperscript{133} As Andrew Clarke writes, “at the heart of the issue of legal privilege was the
widespread Graeco-Roman preoccupation with personal standing and reputation . . . [and] all
parties would do everything in their power to extend their own reputation, something which

\textsuperscript{130} On this issue in Corinth, see Bruce W. Winter, “Civil Litigation in Secular Corinth and the Church: The
Colloquium Honoring Burton L. Mack}, ed. Elisabeth A. Castelli and Hal Taussig (Philadelphia: Trinity Press

suggests the case involves sexual matters, while Fee, \textit{First Épître}, 229, argues that property or business dealings lay
behind the lawsuit.

Press, 1963), 1.

\textsuperscript{133} Seneca, \textit{Controversiae}, 10.1.2, 7; cf. Peter Garnsey, \textit{Social Status and Legal Privilege in the Roman
could normally only be achieved at the cost of another’s.” Thus, it seems that some elite Corinthians were enhancing their own social status by taking others to court.

That the Corinthian Christ-community contained persons of a relatively higher social status, and these persons held their social status as a primary concern, can again be demonstrated through consideration of one final example. Once again, it is evident that “worldly” concerns were playing a part within the community. One of the reports that Paul had received from the Corinthians concerned their behaviour at the Lord’s Supper (1 Cor 11:18). It was made known to Paul that there were splits (σχίσματα) when the community gathered to share a meal (1 Cor 11:17-34). There are two groups involved in the conflict, those who have their own meals (τὸ ἵδιον δείπνον; 1 Cor 11:21) and the have-nots (τοὺς μὴ ἔχοντας; 1 Cor 11:22). This suggests that the problem involves a difference in socio-economic status. Although the phrase τοὺς μὴ ἔχοντας is somewhat ambiguous, it is usually interpreted in an absolute sense, that is, those who have nothing, the “have-nots.”

Gerd Theissen suggests that the problem Paul confronts deals with the fact that some Corinthians began eating “before the commencement of the congregational meal.” It is equally plausible that while the “Lordly Supper” was being consumed (ἐν τῷ φαγεῖν; 1 Cor 11:21) some were eating their own separate food, not available to others at the meal (τὸ ἵδιον δείπνον; 1 Cor 11:21), “so it may be that with the words of institution, not all of the food on hand

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134 Clarke, Leadership, 62-63,

135 See, for example, Hans Conzelmann, A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians, Hermeneia, trans. James W. Leitch, ed. George W. MacRae (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), 192; Meeks, First Urban Christians, 68; Theissen, Social Setting, 96; Fee, First Epistle, 544. Although Meggitt suggests that this phrase has an unstated object, specifically “the bread and the wine of the eucharist,” this conjecture is unlikely given the immediate context. Paul is referring to eating and drinking in general, and not the bread and the wine specifically (Justin J. Meggitt, Paul, Poverty and Survival, Studies of the New Testament and Its World [Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1998], 120).

136 Theissen, Social Setting, 153.
was shared with the congregation, but a certain portion of it was claimed as ‘private.’”

Such a practice would not have been unusual in the Greco-Roman world, where the quality and quantity of a person’s food was dependant upon his/her social status. Pliny, for instance, describes a dinner where all the guests are “graded,” and “the best dishes were set in front of himself [the host] and a select few, and cheap scraps of food before the rest of the company.”

In his important survey of Roman social relations, Ramsey MacMullen stresses that distinctions of rank and status were continuously displayed and reinforced in Roman society. In particular, dinners and banquets were precisely occasions where such distinctions were in full public view, and Theissen suggests that the Corinthians’ celebration of the “Lordly Supper” was no exception. As Theissen concludes, “in all likelihood wealthy Christians probably did not suffer from a guilty conscience in this entire matter. It is more likely that they thought of themselves as having supported the poorer Christians in generous fashion by providing a meal.”

An alternate reconstruction is offered by Peter Lampe who argues that this community meal was an *eranos*, that is, a meal in which people each bring some food with them rather than a meal hosted by the inhabitants of the household in which the meeting was held. The problem Paul is facing is thus one of a temporal nature, in which certain community members arrive prior to others and eat their food (*προλαμβάνω*; 1 Cor 11:21), while those who arrive later

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140 MacMullen, *Roman Social Relations*, 111.

141 Theissen, *Social Setting*, 162.

only eat what has been left over.\textsuperscript{143} Moreover, those who arrived earlier would eat in the \textit{triclinium}, whereas those who arrived later would be left to find room in the \textit{atrium} and \textit{peristylum}, thereby forming a physical division within the community.\textsuperscript{144}

Although Theissen emphasizes the ways in which the wealthier community members enjoy a meal of better quality and quantity during the Lord’s Supper, and Lampe stresses both the ability of the wealthier members to bring better quality food with them, and their arrival before the lower-class members of the community, both scholars are in agreement that this division is between the wealthier higher-status members and the poorer lower-status members. Both reconstructions also agree that the conduct of the wealthier Corinthian believers was not exceptional in the surrounding socio-historical climate.

We have thus presented a picture of the Corinthian Christ-community in which there were divisions present, divisions that were not unique to this community, but were characteristic of Greco-Roman society as a whole.\textsuperscript{145} Therefore, the cultural milieu played a role in the ways in which the believers received and interacted with one another, with those of a higher social status afforded privileges not attainable by the lower status members in the community. It is also clear that there was a high degree of integration which the members of the Corinthian community experienced with the surrounding society. We have seen that some of the members took others to court (1 Cor 6:1-6) which signals their confidence in the legal system. As chapter one of this dissertation already noted, some Corinthian believers are found as participants in the feasts celebrated at pagan temples (1 Cor 8:10), and some are invited to partake of meals in the houses of non-believers (1 Cor 10:27). Indeed, the high degree of social integration is evidenced by the

\begin{footnotes}
\item[143] Lampe, “Das korinthische Herrenmahl,” 194-201.
\item[144] Lampe, “Das korinthische Herrenmahl,” 197-201.
\item[145] A point to be more fully developed in the following chapter.
\end{footnotes}
fact that non-believing neighbours may very well drop-in to the houses of believers while meetings were in progress (1 Cor 14:24-25). We have also seen that within the Corinthian Christ-community there were individuals of higher social status and wealth whose boundaries with the non-believing world were somewhat fluid. Clearly, then, the behaviour of some of the members of the Corinthian community echoed the primary and dominant values of the Greco-Roman world. This fact will be of utmost importance when we pause to consider the impact of Paul’s manual labour on his apostleship in Corinth.

2.3 Conclusions

In Paul’s letters to the Corinthians and the Thessalonians, he refers to his work as a scenario of shame. He numbers it among his sufferings (1 Cor 4:12; 2 Cor 11:23b), and draws particular attention to his surpassing toil (2 Cor 11:23), his intense labour (2 Cor 11:27; 1 Thess 2:9), and the long hours spent at his trade (1 Thess 2:9). These are not characterizations that signify strength, dignity, and honour, but are synonymous with social stigma, abuse, and humiliation. These depictions are not rooted in the language of dominance but, rather, of servility. There are not the exhortations of a moral philosopher, but the admissions of an abused manual labourer.

Although it is true that Paul’s status as a handworker defined his relationship among those whom he preached, it is equally true that no matter the social status of the audience, Paul used the language of social shame to define his life as a labourer. Surely, the implications of this life must have had a noticeable effect on or within Paul’s communities, especially a community such as Corinth where, as we have seen, there were members who aspired to social standing,
reputation, and honour in the wider Greco-Roman ethos. It is this last point that the following chapter will investigate, primarily to demonstrate that in a social world of distinctive values and practices articulated especially by the elite stratum of society, the values and practices were also assumed by non-elite members of the same society. The place of manual labour within the social hierarchy will likewise be investigated.
Chapter Three:

Manual Labour and the Greco-Roman Socio-Economic World

There is no status so low that it cannot be touched by the sweetness of prestige.¹

Glory drags in chains behind her shining chariot the obscure no less than the nobly born.²

Most historical accounts of the Greco-Roman world have been written from the point of view of the elite and, as a result, modern historians have no popular literature on which to rely to reconstruct any sort of self-image for those not part of this rarefied social stratum. Some effort, nevertheless, must be made to recover something of the experiences of the craftsmen who lived and worked in the towns and cities around the ancient Mediterranean.³ Given the main trajectory of this thesis, namely, that Paul’s life as a manual labourer had a more adverse impact on his

¹ Valerius Maximus, 8.14.5.
² Horace, Sat. 1.6.23-24.
³ It must be admitted that there is difficulty in discovering evidence about the lowest level of Roman provincial society: the really poor, the widows, and the destitute. Many craftsmen, however, were members of collegia which were an important foci for non-elite sociability and were a central source of civic identity for those groups beneath the elite. These associations left varying traces of their activities, from charters, to membership lists, to benefactions, to epitaphs. As a result, many of the conclusions from this chapter will be based on my reading of these inscriptions.
apostleship in Corinth than commonly recognized, this chapter will address some broad features of the Greco-Roman socio-economic world, and place the handworker within this environment.

The Greco-Roman world, in all of its incredible vastness and variety, was characterized by a pronounced predilection for establishing social hierarchies. The importance of the categories with which the Greco-Romans viewed and characterized one another cannot possibly be overstated. This is a point-of-fact so obvious among historians who study the ancient world that it has effectively become a truism. Whether you belonged to the category of slave, freed, or free, a citizen or *peregrinus*, had a profound impact on how you were treated in society, and conversely, were able to treat others. A hierarchical social ranking was evident throughout the Roman Empire, illustrated by means of a steep pyramid, with an extremely minute portion of the populace at the top and the rest increasingly at the bottom.

The vast majority of the population fell below the elite stratum, yet were also ranked “intrinsically” on a hierarchical scale. The non-elite segment of the population was divided among the free, freed, and slave, with legal divisions separating each. A freeborn person held a higher position in the hierarchical social ranking in the Roman Empire, even though it was plausible a freedperson may have more wealth. There was also a distinction between citizen

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6 “The primary distinction in the law of persons is this, that all men are either free or slaves. Next, free men are either *ingeni* (freeborn) or *liberti* (freedmen). *Ingenii* are those born free, *liberti* those manumitted from lawful slavery” (Gaius, *Inst.*, 1.9-11).

7 For instance, former slaves had an increased opportunity to gain employment when compared with their freeborn colleagues. Although perceived as poor by the elite, a freedperson who could expect more continuous employment would be financially better-off than a freeborn person. The reasons precipitating such a state of affairs will receive further discussion in the subsequent chapter.
and non-citizen, although during the Principate this distinction lost much of its significance as the citizen body gradually incorporated peoples from the provinces. This culminated in AD 212 when Caracalla granted citizenship to virtually all free inhabitants of the Empire.

As the citizen/non-citizen classification began to lose its significance, a new distinction was formally enacted in the reign of Hadrian, specifically between the minute number of elite and the great mass of the non-elite (*honestiores* and *humiliores*). The former category included those in the aristocratic orders along with veterans who were rewarded for their service protecting the social order, while the rest of the free population comprised the *humiliores*. Such differentiation was evident in society even before its formal enactment as is clear in Pliny the Younger’s advice to a provincial governor in Spain. Pliny recommended that it was incumbent upon the governor to preserve “the distinction of orders and dignity” in various legal hearings, because “if these distinctions are confused, nothing is more unequal than equality itself.” At the opposite extreme of the *honestiores* lay the non-free inhabitants in the Greco-Roman world.

The categorization of the citizen body through *ordo* or citizen/non-citizen criteria fails us, however, insofar as the vast mass of citizens which included the (relatively) prosperous and completely indignant, is left largely undifferentiated. Working to nuance our understanding of

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9 Pliny the Younger, *Ep.* 9.5.

10 The first-century BC freedman Pubilius Syrus characterized slavery by stating that “it is better to die instead of being degraded as a slave *(occidi est pulchrum, ignominiose ubi servias)*.” See Pubilius Syrus, *Sententiae*, 489. Orlando Patterson argues that slavery as an institution was not governed by the legal ideology of chattel property. Rather, the Romans conceived of slavery through the concept of absolute power, and more specifically, personal relationships engendered between the dominator and the dominated. Patterson emphasizes that slavery was not only the loss of freedom but a life devoid of honour. See Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982); cf. Jennifer Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity* (Minneapolis, Fortress Press, 2002); idem, “Obstacles to Slaves’ Participation in the Corinthian Church,” *JBL* 117 (1998): 481-501.

11 Pliny, for instance, includes all who were not senators or knights as one order (Pliny the Elder, *Nat.* 33.29; cf. Sallust, *Bell. Jug.* 31-37).
ancient peoples, Walter Scheidel and Steven Friesen have identified various strata among the non-elite through income-equivalent data.\textsuperscript{12} Although poverty-scale models are valuable tools insofar as they ground scholarly discourse in a workable taxonomy, differentiating the non-elite into strata dependent solely upon proportionate levels of income and resources, they nonetheless employ a one-dimensional and rigid variable, as opposed to multi-dimensional and multi-faceted variables. In discriminating among those not in the elite we also need to include sociological measures, which admittedly can be messy and multivalent, yet allow us to take into account the tangibility of status in society that stark statistic-based economic models tend to downplay.

The very concept of status reflects, and is dependent upon subjective values, and as such, distinctions are less precise than those found in a strict legal ordering of society or statistical economic data.\textsuperscript{13} Such subjectivity is evident in Wayne Meeks’ definition of status as a phenomenon composed of several different variables, including ethnic origins, \textit{ordo}, citizenship, personal liberty, wealth, age, gender, and public offices or honours.\textsuperscript{14} To this list, although emphasizing “poverty was probably the most important variable in social status, no matter how status is defined,” Friesen adds additional criteria including patron-client relationships, marital status, family lineage (noble or common) and socialization into elite etiquette.”\textsuperscript{15} I would like to

\textsuperscript{12}Walter Scheidel and Steven J. Friesen, “The Size of the Economy and the Distribution of Income in the Roman Empire,” \textit{JRS} 99 (2009): 61-91. One of the major strengths of this model is that it is based on a “zero-sum” principle, that is, raising the figures or percentages in one area requires a lowering of these figures in another. Such controlled conjecture has the advantage of establishing a quasi-objective standard which enables cross-cultural comparison.

\textsuperscript{13}This point is echoed by Peter Garnsey who avows that “the Romans saw men subordinated to or raised above one another by their involvement in conventional social relationships; by their involvement in the political relationships; and by their respective positions in society” (emphasis mine). See Peter Garnsey, \textit{Social Status and Legal Privilege in the Roman Empire} (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), 1-2.


add to these status criteria one’s employment. There existed a rigid hierarchy of honourable and dishonourable occupations, and one’s livelihood dictated, or reflected, one’s place in society.

These hierarchies were not simply structural in nature, but social. Honour (and dishonour) lay at the core of Greco-Roman efforts to relate to one another and it was through this type of intercourse and exchange that the Greco-Romans set about constructing the hierarchic grids to which they were so devoted.16

How did these social hierarchies play themselves out among craftsmen? Before we enter into this discussion, the appropriateness of using the moniker “the ancient economy” will first be addressed.17 This first section will then be followed by a second, outlining the debates among historians regarding the role, if any, of ideology and cultural mores in the ancient economy. Discussions of social status, honour, and the ancient economy have been intertwined since Max Weber first took up the topic,18 but it has been Moses Finley’s approach to these questions that has set the benchmark for scholarship.19 Finley insisted that all economic endeavours were embedded in a larger web of social relationships, one where dominant cultural values were

16 The anthropologist Julian Pitt-Rivers distinguished between what he called honour-as-virtue, “honour which derives from virtuous conduct,” and honour-as-precedence, “honour which situates an individual socially and determines his right to precedence.” This second type of honour was especially pronounced in Greco-Roman society. See Pitt-Rivers, “Honour and Social Status,” in Honour and Shame: The Values of a Mediterranean Society, ed. J. G. Peristiany (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966), 36. J. E. Lendon has found in the concept of honour a symbolic currency of sorts that worked to maintain the fabric of the Roman Empire. For Lendon, “honour was a filter through which the whole world was viewed, a deep structure of the Greco-Roman mind, perhaps the ruling metaphor of ancient society” (Lendon, Empire of Honour: The Art of Government in the Roman World [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997], 73).

17 “Economics” is a modern abstraction that did not exist in antiquity as an emic term.

18 Max Weber had very early on made the connection between honour and social status when he advanced: “We wish to designate ‘status situations’ every typical component of the life fate of men that is determined by a specific, positive or negative, social estimation of honor . . . in content, status honor is normally expressed by the fact that above all else a specific style of life can be expected from all those who wish to belong to the circle.” See Weber, Economy and Society, vol. 1, ed. G. Roth and C. Wittich (New York: Bedminster Press, 1968), 186-87.

powerful determining factors in the behaviour of individual actors. This section will explore these sometimes contentious debates, thereby setting the stage for the discussion of the role of the manual labourer within the ancient socio-economic world.

We will then explore whether Finley’s holistic model of the Greco-Roman economy and society is reflected among manual labourers. Was the world of ancient labour structured by an ideology of status hierarchies? We will probe whether, and in what ways, the gradations of status evident in Greco-Roman society at large impacted upon, and/or were reflected within, the world of ancient labourers. It will be established that handworkers lived, worked, and perpetuated a “moral economy.”

There was a strict hierarchy among labours undertaken, insofar as some associations and crafts were perceived to have more status than others. No matter the placement of the labourers within this occupational hierarchy, however, all sought a claim to status by mimicking the ideology and practices of the surrounding polis. Indeed, the principles underlying the mechanisms by which economic assets were transformed into social and symbolic capital were built into the foundations of Greco-Roman social life, and these cemented not the social homogeneity of labourers, but hierarchy. If we are able to convincingly demonstrate that among the non-elite there existed the recognition that there were more honourable and less honourable trades, we will then be able to plot Paul’s life as a manual labourer upon this hierarchical grid, which will in turn provide some explanatory force regarding the apostle’s argument in 1 Cor 9:1-18.

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3.1 The Ancient “Economy”

In analyses of ancient socio-economic configurations, it is essential to clarify that ancient Mediterranean peoples did not discuss or understand the economy in the same way as in contemporary parlance. Although the term “economy” is derived from οἰκονομία, its usage in Greek referred to household order, that is, to the operation of a household as opposed to need-satisfying production, distribution, and exchange of goods. In this sense, M. M. Austin and P. Vidal-Naquet are correct in suggesting that “the very concept of ‘the economy’ in the modern sense is untranslatable in Greek, because it simply did not exist.”21 Thus, Xenophon’s Oeconomicus deals not only with agriculture, deemed the only honourable economic activity, but likewise treats the rights and power the οἰκονόμος held over his property, including his wife, children, and slaves, as well as the moral virtues the head of the household should possess. For these reasons and despite its potentially misleading title, Moses Finley categorizes Oeconomicus as “fundamentally . . . a work on ethics,”22 as opposed to economics.

The relationship between economics and the household intimates that what in modern usage would be considered “economic behaviour,” was not evident in the Greco-Roman world. What we see in the latter is behaviour connected with a multitude of cultural values, the sole purpose of which did not revolve exclusively around financial gain. The fact that both the ancient and modern systems of operation and production are, by common usage, termed “economics” need not in itself be a cause of confusion. In studying these aspects of antiquity, we may at times need to draw on the terms “economics” and “economy,” admittedly anachronistic


22 Finley, Ancient Economy, 18.
or etic language, simply because “economics” is the discipline explicating such activities. In doing so, however, we need to be ever mindful that these elements did not exist in antiquity as a separate reality.

3.2 Honour and Status in Greco-Roman Socio-Economic Configurations: Background Issues

To begin this section we can note that questions pertaining to the Greco-Roman economy, including, but not limited to its level of embeddedness, integration, rates of technological development, and extent of growth, continue to occupy scholarship and elicit sharp debate. Continuing numismatic, epigraphic and papyrological investigations, as well as numerical analyses, expand the evidentiary field, which, in turn, lead to further discussions and hypotheses concerning the nature of the ancient economy. As interesting and necessary as these fields of research are for understanding the underlying institutions and organizations of the Greco-Roman economic system, attention must also be paid to the ideology that lay behind ancient economic behaviour.

The objective of this section is to outline some of the history of scholarship when it comes to questions about the embedded nature of the ancient economy, accepting with Finley

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and others that the ancient economy was embedded in a social world of distinctive values and practices articulated especially by the elite stratum of society. This discussion will lay the groundwork for the following section which will show how those values and practices were also assumed by manual labourers of the same society.

3.2.1 Bücher and Meyer

Many approaches to the Greco-Roman economy have adopted an explicitly comparative perspective, measuring the economic achievements and advancements of the Mediterranean world against those of Europe since the Middle Ages. The economist Karl Bücher, at the end of the nineteenth century, applied a general theory of economic evolution to European history and advanced that the ancient Greek and Roman economic order exhibited marked differences from modern market economies, specifically that the former was characterized by simple, small-scale, closed household economies aimed at self-sufficiency. This, in turn, restricted the development of market-oriented commerce, manufacturing output, and independent labour. Bücher categorized the ancient Mediterranean economy as an Oikenwirtschaft, a closed household economy, in contrast to the Stadtwirtschaft, the economy of the Middle Ages, to be differentiated again from the more modern period with its integrated national economies (Volkswirtschaft). Although Bücher did appreciate that closed household economies did not entirely preclude the development of limited trade and manufacture for export, he maintained that such activities were more the exception than the rule.

Bücher’s argument was a reaction against English classical economists’ attempt to explain all economic phenomena using one overarching and all-encompassing framework. To this end, Bücher attempted to nuance the entire discussion by identifying the organizing principles and economic structures particular to each historical society. Far from the oikos economy being the first primitive stage along the continuum of economic development, it was the salient feature that set the Mediterranean economy apart from other societies.

Bücher’s theory did not gain immediate acceptance; quite the opposite in fact, receiving scathing criticism most notably from Eduard Meyer who refused to accept the notion of a progressive model of economic history and felt the need to rebut what he perceived to be a simplistic and amateur view of historical progression. Meyer, rather, insisted on identifying cyclical stages of economic development throughout the ages. In this way, Meyer was able to advance his thesis that ancient economies were similar in structure to modern national economies, the main difference between the two revolving around the extent of scale.26 Meyer concluded with the infamous dictum that the ancient economy “in jeder Hinsicht nicht modern genug gedacht werden kann. Nur darf man nicht das neunzehnte Jahrhundert zum Vergleich heranziehen, sondern das siebzehnte und achtzehnte.”27

Here was essentially born the debate pertaining to the form and structure of the ancient economy which came to be known as the “primitivist-modernist debate.” Although the arguments advanced with regards to the scale and functioning of the economy are beneficial, this debate effectively narrowed scholarship down to the issue in which the Greco-Roman economy fell along a continuum from closed self-sufficient households to modern industrial economic

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structures, ignoring a wide range of intermediary complexities and phenomena. Indeed, so divisive was this debate that when Max Weber suggested it would be more profitable to understand the structure of the economy, especially the interrelationship between social status, on the one hand, and production, circulation, and consumption of goods, on the other, as opposed to measuring performance along a primitive-to-modern scale, his sociological observations were all but ignored.28

Meyer’s conception of the ancient economy gained traction for a while, receiving its fullest exposition by Mikhail Rostovtzeff in his monumental *The Social and Economic History of the Roman Empire*. In this study, Rostovtzeff set out to supply the empirical underpinnings of Meyer’s framework for Roman economic history, bringing to the debate the ever-increasing archaeological record. Rostovtzeff proposed that the differences between the ancient Roman economy and the modern, capitalist economy, were not so much qualitative as they were quantitative. In terms of the importance of commerce and trade in the Roman world, it was here that elite members of society were able to make money: “As far as I can judge from the evidence I have got together, the main source of large fortunes was commerce. Money acquired by commerce was increased by lending it out mostly on mortgage, and it was invested in land.”29 It was precisely this entrepreneurial spirit engendered by these “shrewd and successful . . . merchant[s]”30 that played such a significant developmental role in the cities throughout the Roman Empire. According to Rostovtzeff:

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28 For Weber’s contribution to issues of structure, see especially, Max Weber, *Die römische Agrargeschichte in ihrer Bedeutung für des Staats- und Privatrecht* (Stuttgart: F. Enke, 1891). Weber had correctly recognized that Bücher’s main point was not to assign the Mediterranean world to a primitive stage of economic evolution or deny the existence of historical development. Meyer missed this dimension of Bücher’s thought.

29 Mikhail Rostovtzeff, *The Social and Economic History of the Roman Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1957), 153. The very fact that Rostovtzeff notes that money was invested in land points to the importance of social values within the economy, although this point is not pursued by Rostovtzeff.

30 Rostovtzeff, *Roman Empire*, 613 n. 31.
the representatives of this form of capitalism [i.e., a capitalism founded upon commerce, trading, industry, and advanced agricultural practices] were the city bourgeoisie, which steadily increased in numbers... The result was an unprecedentedly rapid and striking development of commerce, industry, and agriculture, and the constant growth of the capital accumulated in the cities gave a fresh impetus to the brilliant efflorescence of the city throughout the Empire.  

The importance attributed to this so-called entrepreneurial urban bourgeoisie, as envisioned by Rostovtzeff, can be critiqued on two main grounds. Firstly, at a theoretical level, Rostovtzeff’s analysis of ancient Greco-Roman economic behaviour was anachronistic, simply assigning modern economic concerns to the ancients, never seriously considering that the ancient economy may exhibit its own unique signs of complexity. This leads to a second critique, which is Rostovtzeff’s failure to sufficiently recognize that throughout antiquity, agriculture was the basis of “economic life,” not commerce. Any sort of commercial manufacturing was at most ancillary to the mainstay of agriculture, owing to the decentralization and limited capacity of production, the costs and difficulties of distant transport, and the scant progress of technological innovation.

3.2.2 Polanyi and Finley

One sharp reaction to Rostovtzeff’s reconstruction of the ancient economy came from Moses Finley who recognized the limitations of this strict focus on levels of performance. In order to properly conceptualize Finley’s immense contribution to our understanding of the

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31 Rostovtzeff, *Roman Empire*, xiv. Rostovtzeff’s use of terms such as “capitalism,” “bourgeoisie,” “proletariat,” and “mass production” arose from his defining experiences living in pre-Soviet Russian society. The shaping of Rostovtzeff’s ideology has been documented by Arnaldo D. Momigliano. In particular, see Momigliano, *Studies in Historiography* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1966), 91-104.

32 Hence Rostovtzeff’s liberal use of terminology drawn from modern capitalistic economies, as well as the overarching emphases on commercial and entrepreneurial activities as the principle source of wealth.

Greco-Roman economy, we must first recognize Finley’s indebtedness to Karl Polanyi. For Polanyi, reciprocity, redistribution, and markets were the three mechanisms through which goods could circulate. It was only in modern capitalist market economies, though, where individuals acted as disembedded social actors interested primarily in the pursuit of monetary gain. Polanyi registered the difference between the modern and ancient economies by distinguishing between an “embedded” economy, an economy which is enmeshed within the whole social order and does not stand above or outside this order, and a “disembedded” economy, an economy totally removed from the social fabric thereby becoming an independent actor that may eventually dominate social decision-making.\(^{34}\)

Market economies have a nature of their own, according to Finley, a nature whereby decisions are made primarily at the level of exchange value, overriding potential constraints derived from customs and ethos. In economies centred around reciprocity and redistribution, on the other hand, social institutions and societal values are embedded in every aspect of life, including what we would term “economic” activities.\(^{35}\) Although Polanyi never denied that the pursuit of profit existed in earlier societies, he did insist, nonetheless, that profit was perceived as a means to an end rather than an end in itself.

It is hardly an understatement to claim that Finley transformed scholarly conceptualizations of ancient economic structures. His discussions of social status, honour, and the ancient economy have both informed and set the boundaries for debate about these issues. The analytical heart of Finley’s model of the ancient economy is social status, and in his holistic

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model of the Greco-Roman economy he sought to incorporate the dominant cultural values of social status and civic ideology in his economic models. According to Finley, economic analyses quite simply did not exist in antiquity because these concepts with their “common cultural-psychological framework”\(^{36}\) did not have a separate existence. For this reason, Finley insisted that all economic pursuits were embedded in larger webs of social relationships, relationships that were determined and structured by an elite ideology that privileged agricultural endeavours as the source of honour at the expense of commercial pursuits:

> the citizen-elite were not prepared, *in sufficient numbers*, to carry on those branches of the economy without which neither they nor their communities could live at the level to which they were accustomed . . . They lacked the will; that is to say, they were inhibited, as a group (whatever the responses of the minority), by overriding values.\(^{37}\)

In focusing on what he perceived to be the characteristic modes of behaviour evident throughout the Greco-Roman Mediterranean as a whole during the first millennium BC and first half of the first millennium of the Christian era, Finley envisioned a distinctive type of economic system, one where such activities were embedded in a network of social relationships that structured values, attitudes, and social behaviour. The implications of such a preoccupation with status inhibited the growth of markets, encouraged the social marginalization of commercial activities, and reinforced the primacy of the political over-and-above that of the economic.\(^{38}\)

Key to Finley’s analyses and conclusions was his reading of the relationship between status and economic activity as presented in Cicero’s schema of honourable and dishonourable pursuits and the social catalogues attributed to each means of employment.\(^{39}\) For Finley, it was

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\(^{36}\) Finley, *Ancient Economy*, 34.

\(^{37}\) Finley, *Ancient Economy*, 60 (emphasis original).

\(^{38}\) Despite these implications of an embedded economy, Finley never specified or quantified what economic embeddedness meant for performance.

these ancient writers who best conceptualized and accurately recorded ancient economic behaviour. Here was presented a world where Greco-Roman citizens relegated lending and trade to those outside of legitimate society, and where foreigners, women, freedmen, and slaves not only engaged in, but dominated, such marginalized pursuits. Finley concludes that “the decisive point remains that, against the relatively few known instances of select partnerships and similar devices, not a single prominent equestrian can be identified ‘who was primarily a merchant’ or any equites ‘who were themselves active in the grain trade or engaged personally in sea-borne commerce’ - even equites let alone senators.”

The bonds of egalitarian male citizenship and concern for citizen status thereby acted as a brake on the development of markets in land, labour, and commerce, resulting in stagnation of technology and trade.

Finley’s enduring contribution remains focusing attention on the role of economic sociology in conceptions of the ancient economy, specifically by locating issues of production, distribution, and consumption within larger networks of status concerns and hierarchical structures of power. Finley strove to provide a holistic view of the ancient economy, one united “in the fact that in its final centuries the ancient world was a single political unit.”

3.2.3 Post-Finleyan Scholarship

Since the publication of The Ancient Economy in 1973, Finley’s model has been both refined and critiqued. Keith Hopkins has contributed to the debate surrounding the growth of

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40 Finley, Ancient Economy, 58.

41 The ways in which people navigated these ancient “rules of the game” are the focus of New Institutional Economics. See, in particular, Pedar F. Bang, “The Ancient Economy and New Institutional Economics,” JRS 99 (2009): 194-206.

42 Finley, Ancient Economy, 34.
trade and integration of markets under Roman hegemony. For Hopkins, the expenditure of taxes and of monies paid for rents to absentee landlords at some distance from where they were raised, were the catalysts for large volumes of long-distance trade. Essentially, tax-payers were securing money with which to pay taxes in successive years through the sale of produce. Richard Saller has developed Hopkins’ calculations by suggesting that per capita economic growth averaged approximately 0.1% per year in the western Roman empire between 200 BC and AD 100. Although such a percentage is minuscule by modern standards, it was of significant benefit to those who experienced such growth.

There has likewise been debate concerning the existence of independent markets in a world characterized by agrarian pursuits. Related to issues regarding the viability of independent markets is that concerning monetary exchange. Expanding Finley’s model, which downplayed the scale of monetization in ancient economies, Scott Meikle suggests that however much the ancient economy was influenced by monetary exchange, there was simply no market for credit used for productive investment. The ancient economy lacked capital markets precisely because this was a system dominated by “use value” rather than “exchange value.”

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Despite these refinements, all of which are seemingly focussed on microeconomic issues including domestic production, integration of markets, or credit and exchange,\textsuperscript{47} it still seems obvious that, with Finley, we are studying relations and institutions that were far from being central and defining aspects of Greco-Roman society. Modern concepts such as independent, rational, economic development, and relations of exchange value, for instance, were peripheral at best within the ancient economy. When we turn to issues of structure, Finley’s overall characterization of the Greco-Roman economy is still relevant:

His [Finley’s] overall framework has remained intact: gross disparities in wealth, the importance of political power and social status, and the limitations of financial systems, are not in dispute. However, most commentators are more positive about the level and nature of economic activity that took place within this framework.\textsuperscript{48}

We have explored some of the major questions and debates surrounding the socio-economic world of the Greco-Roman empire. Although Finley’s model has been refined, especially in terms of economic indicators, his overall argument concerning the embedded nature of the ancient economy continues to find scholarly support.

Finley, however, concentrated on the structure of the ancient economy as a whole,\textsuperscript{49} and did not examine among other things the impact of surrounding societal constraints within the

\textsuperscript{47} Some key performance issues continue to be debated. For instance, to what extent did the political unification of the Mediterranean under Roman role trigger market exchange, both regional and interregional, increase the division of urban labour, and contribute to the amount of per capital growth in output and consumption?


arena of manual labour. Does Finley’s emphasis on the dominant cultural values of honour and status within economic activities hold up for handworkers? In a social world of distinctive values and practices, in what ways were these values and practices assumed by manual labourers? These are important avenues of investigation because the answers will influence how we situate Paul within his surrounding socio-economic world. It is to these questions that we shall now turn.

3.3 Honour and Social Hierarchy among Manual Labourers

Philip F. Venticinque claims that the farther down on the social scale one goes, the less applicable hierarchical social structures and status concerns become. Labourers, therefore, operated semi-autonomously and were divorced from overriding value systems. This section will argue that the opposite is in fact true. Among the elite, no doubt, all labourers were looked down upon with contempt, but among the vast field of the non-elite, some trades were looked upon as having more status than others. In the arena of social hierarchy, trades such as those in precious metals or medicine were of a higher social status in the wider ethos than those of butchers, litter-bearers, and leather-workers. This section will establish that symbolic capital structured the world of handworkers insofar as some forms of labour were considered to be of a higher status than others, yet at the same time, all labourers, no matter their trade, connected in varying ways with the wider networks of the polis and sought honour there.

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50 Philip F. Venticinque, “Common Causes: Guilds, Craftsmen and Merchants in the Economy and Society of Roman and Late Roman Egypt” (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 2009), 81.
3.3.1 Literary Evidence

We can enter into the discussion regarding the hierarchy of labour with a quote from Cicero’s *De Officiis* which offers a schema, albeit from an elite point of view, of honourable and dishonourable pursuits and the social status associated with each occupation:

Now in regard to trades and employments, which are to be considered liberal and which mean, this is the more or less accepted view. First, those employments are condemned which incur ill-will, as those of collectors of harbour taxes and money lenders. Illiberal, too, and mean are the employments of all who work for wages, whom we pay for their labour and not for their art; for in their case their very wages are the warrant of their slavery. We must consider mean those who buy from merchants in order to re-sell immediately, for they would make no profit without much outright lying . . . And all craftsmen are engaged in mean trades, for no workshop can have any quality appropriate to a free man. Least worthy of all are those trades which cater to the sensual pleasures: “fishmongers, butchers, cooks, poulterers and fishermen” as Terence says; to whom you may add if you please, perfumers, dancers, and all performers in low grade music halls. But the occupations in which either a higher degree of intelligence is required or from which society derives no small benefit - such as medicine or architecture or teaching - they are respectable for those whose status they befit. Commerce, if it is on a small scale, is to be considered mean; but if it is large scale and extensive, importing much from all over and distributing to many without misrepresentation, is not to be greatly censured. Indeed, it even seems to deserve the highest respect if those who are engaged in it, satiated, or rather, I should say, content with their profits, make their way from the harbour to a landed estate, as they have often made it from the sea to a harbour. But of all things from which one may acquire, none is better than agriculture, none more fruitful, none more sweet, none more fitting for a free man.\(^{51}\)

Cicero’s statement, although prizing agricultural pursuits as the only occupation appropriate for a free man, does not unilaterally disparage all trades. Rather, Cicero reveals a hierarchy of labour regarding those occupations which demanded a greater degree of intelligence than those of a more banausic nature.

Whereas Cicero differentiates the trades based on intellectual skill, the third-century jurist Callistratus draws attention to the role of money in the social hierarchy of occupations:

It is not proper to ignore as base persons those who deal in and sell objects of daily use (*qui utensilia negotiantur et vendunt*), even though they are people who may be flogged by the aediles. Indeed, men of this kind are not debarred from seeking the decurionate or some other office in their own *patria*; for they do not suffer from *infamia*. Nor indeed are those who have actually been flogged by the aediles excluded from office, even if the aediles were within their right in performing that act. Nonetheless, I think it is dishonourable for people of this kind who have been subjected to flogging to be admitted to the *ordo*, and especially in those *civitates* which have plenty of men of standing. For if there is a shortage of those who are bound to perform

\(^{51}\) Cicero, *Off.* 1.150-51.
public *munera*, if follows that even these may hold local office, if they possess sufficient substance.\(^{52}\) Although Callistratus does not differentiate as explicitly as Cicero among the trades, referring only to those “who deal in and sell objects of daily use,” the jurist does offer the qualification that it is only those with “sufficient substance” who can be considered worthy to provide civic services. Despite the fact that these labourers may not match up to the prevailing ideology of who is honourable from the perspective of the elite, Callistratus does imagine cases where labourers may be called upon to perform civic functions, but not all craftsmen were deemed eligible. Only those who worked in trades where there was the opportunity to accrue moderate financial resources could provide such services.

In Dio’s *Euboean Discourse* it is suggested that a virtuous life was possible for the urban poor,\(^ {53}\) but only if they lived in a manner consistent with what he believed was a way to remain open to the attainment of virtue. Dio posits that “investigation of kinds of labour and crafts in general of a life that is fitting or unfitting to decent people has proved to be intrinsically worthy of much exact theory,” and that such a discussion is “relevant to matters essential and suitable to philosophy.”\(^ {54}\) Dio summarizes what he considered to be occupations inimical to a virtuous life, but unfortunately, his account is broken off before relating acceptable occupations for the urban poor. Included among those that are utterly incompatible with virtue are those that are sedentary, the result of which is weakness and softness in the body;\(^ {55}\) those that are solely concerned with superfluous and luxury concerns, such as, perfumers, decorators, actors, and flute-players;\(^ {56}\) and

\(^{52}\) Dig. 50.2.12.

\(^{53}\) Dio, *Or*. 7.108.

\(^{54}\) Dio, *Or*. 7.128.

\(^{55}\) Dio, *Or*. 7.112.

auctioneers and lawyers who are willing to take on any work for a fee. Unfit occupations “are injurious to the body by impairing its health and by preventing the maintenance of its adequate strength through their inactive or sedentary character . . . which engender in the soul either turpitude or illiberality.” Acceptable forms of work include those that do not cause physical weakness or injury whilst allowing the practitioner to earn a decent wage. From this text, it is clear that although Dio finds most forms of paid employment opposed to the good life, there do exist some occupations more acceptable than others, confirming our position that there existed a moral hierarchy of labour.

3.3.2 Inscriptional Evidence

There exists further evidence which validates the literary and legal tracts that there existed a social hierarchy of labour in the Greco-Roman world. Some craftsmen, for instance, were able to secure for themselves positions in lower public offices. Rather than being an amorphous and undifferentiated mass, some trades had sufficient financial resources to differentiate themselves from fellow craftsmen, and seek honour and social status in civic positions. Thus, a baker in Korykos held a local councillor position, and another baker in

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57 Dio, Or. 7.123.
58 Dio, Or. 7.110.
59 P. A. Brunt suggests that Dio likely had in mind those occupations that took place in the open-air, much like the work with which Dio was engaged while he was in exile. See Brunt, “Aspects of the Social Thought of Dio Chrysostom and the Stoics,” Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society 19 (1973): 15.
60 SEG 37, 1309. Bakers were able to amass relative wealth due to the constant demand for their products. For consistent levels of demand for baked goods, see Cameron Hawkins, “Work in the City: Roman Artisans and the Urban Economy” (Ph.D diss., University of Chicago, 2006), 69.
Ephesus was a member of the *gerousia*. There is also evidence of a goldsmith in Sardis, a purple-dyer in Hierapolis, and shipowners at both Ephesus and Nikomedeia in Bithynia, all of whom advanced into the lower ranks of the *boulē* (civic council). In Ephesus, one silversmith was on the Artemis sanctuary’s board of management, a well-respected civic position. There is also the elaborate tomb of the baker Eurysaces, who was no doubt able to achieve financial stability, if not success, precisely because bakers faced an even level of demand for their products. We should note, however, that Eurysaces emphasized his official status as a *redemptor* and *apparitor*, reminding those who passed by that he was no mere baker, but had successfully converted his relative wealth into symbolic capital.

Whereas some trades afforded their practitioners the necessary financial resources to acquire symbolic capital, specifically positions in the civic sphere, other occupations did not accommodate such a path. For example, I have been unable to find evidence of donkey-drivers, sewer-workers, or tanners holding such civic positions. Auctioneers (*praecones*), for instance, were reportedly banned from taking up positions on the local council. Further, a gymnasiarchal law from the city of Beroia in Macedonia denies entry into the Macedonian

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61 *IK* 16, 2225. *Gerousiai* were organizations of older citizens (normally over the age of 50), and although their backgrounds were socially diverse, the one common denominator remained their relative wealth.

62 *DFSJ* 22-23.

63 *HierapJ* 156.

64 *IEph* 1487-88; *SEG* 27, 828.

65 *IEph* 2212.

66 For Eurysaces’ tomb, see O. Brandt, “Recent Research on the Tomb of Eurysaces,” *ORom* 19 (1993): 12-17. The inscription can be found in *CIL* 12, 1203-1205.

67 That donkey-drivers were perceived to have little honour by the elite in the Greco-Roman world is clear from the nickname given to Vespasian on account of his being of humble-birth: *mulio* or “mule-driver” (Suetonius, *Vesp.* 4.3).

68 Cicero, *Verr*, 2.11-12.
This last inscription is particularly revelatory when we see the other categories of persons likewise denied entrance to the gymnasium: slaves, freedmen, drunks, and the mentally disturbed. In this case, the ones who practice a craft in the marketplace, presumably those who sell items on a small scale, are functionally equivalent to those of low social status. When it comes to holding positions in the civic sphere, clearly some occupations ranked higher on the social hierarchy of acceptable trades. Although some craftsmen used their resources to acquire public positions, other handworkers used their higher position in the social hierarchy of trades to withdraw from certain duties. For instance, a report of judicial proceedings from Oxyrhynchus records the hearing of Isidorus Eudaemon’s petition to be granted immunity from the liturgy on the basis of his trade. This particular text differentiates the trades, noting that Isidorus was a perfumer and a relatively wealthy one at that. Although the precise reasoning behind Isidorus’ seeking of an exemption is not provided, it is clear that for certain handworkers their trades were not considered a hinderance in service to the state.

That some occupations were afforded more honour and social status than others, thereby situating the individual higher in the social hierarchy is also witnessed in our evidence from professional voluntary associations. Previously, it has been noted that a goldsmith was able to rise to a position of some civic prominence. There is further evidence that other workers in precious metals were able to transfer their resources into symbolic capital. An inscription from Smyrna records how ἡ συνεργασία τῶν ἄργυροκόπων καὶ χρυσοχόων had repaired a statue of

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69 SEG 27, 261.

70 P.Oxy. 22,2340. Ἰππίας ῥήτωρ εἶπεν ὡς Επίμαχος φησιν μὴ εἶναι εὐτῶν λιαυφόν ἀλλὰ μυροπάλην εὐσχήμονα ἀνθρώπον. It is interesting that Dio categorized perfumers as those only interested in the superficial, and this was therefore not a trade open to the attainment of virtue (Dio, Or. 7.117-19). From the point of view of this elite author, perfumers were practicing a base profession, but at “ground level” this was a profession where enough money could be made to be of service to the state.
Athena, presumably at their own expense.\textsuperscript{71} The rededication of this statue likely involved some public ceremonial, thereby increasing the public profile and honour of this particular association of handworkers.

Even among labourers engaged in the same profession, there could be distinct ranges of wealth and social status. Here, we can point to a guild of fishermen and fish dealers in Ephesus. This particular association had a membership of approximately one hundred persons (of which eighty-nine names are legible in the inscription) who donated monies towards the construction of a fishery toll office in the mid-first century. Those who contributed are listed in order of the amount of the donations, from the four columns donated by Publius Hordeonius Lollianus and his family to those who contributed five denarii or less.\textsuperscript{72}

As the aforementioned quote from Cicero confirms, teachers and physicians were also perceived to have more honour than those tradesmen who simply worked with their hands and were thought not to use intellectual skill. Although workers in more “intellectual” professions were paid for their services, putting them on par with labourers generally who worked for others, teachers and physicians practiced the so-called \textit{artes liberales} and possessed intellectual capabilities prized by the elite. Although Cicero does not claim that teaching and medicine are respectable occupations to be taken up by members of the elite, he does affirm that some professions are deemed more honourable than others. A variety of evidence confirms Cicero’s differentiation. An inscription testifies that some παίδευται in Aizanoi were members of the \textit{boulē},\textsuperscript{73} as was a certain ἀρχιάτρος in Pisidian Antiocheia.\textsuperscript{74} There is also the inscription for the

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{71} IK 24.1, 721.
\bibitem{72} \textit{IEph} 20.
\bibitem{73} SEG 38, 1296.
\bibitem{74} SEG 32, 1302.
\end{thebibliography}
wealthy benefactress Aba which clearly names physicians and teachers as worthy of receiving preferential treatment in comparison with other occupations such as butchers and singers of hymns.\textsuperscript{75}

Tasks that contributed to the imperial food supply were likewise considered more honourable than others, a claim supported by the fact that such occupations were provided with public positions of prominence in theatres. Seating arrangements were far from random, and seating was predicated upon social position. The inscriptions attesting reserved seating for these occupations were visible for all to see and they represented the claim of an individual or a professional voluntary association to membership and participation in the wider community. That some trades were considered more useful to the polis and were therefore afforded more honour than others is witnessed in Xenophon’s suggestion that foreign traders be provided with elevated seats of honour:

\begin{quote}
It would likewise be an excellent plan to reserve front seats in the theatre for merchants and ship-owners, and to offer them hospitality occasionally, when the high quality of their ships and merchandise entitles them to be benefactors of the state. With the prospect of these honours before them they would look on us as friends and hasten to visit us to win the honour as well as the profit.\textsuperscript{76}
\end{quote}

This particular example not only demonstrates that occupations such as merchants and ship-owners were thought respectable enough to be afforded special seats, but this was a widely coveted honour upon which the city could profitably capitalize. The tangible benefits of honour, and being considered more honourable was potent symbolic capital that reinforced the social hierarchy among the occupations.

Even latrines could be reserved for members of various associations, including those at the Vedius bath-gymnasium facility in Ephesus, which were allocated only for use by the groups

\textsuperscript{75}I.Histria 57.

\textsuperscript{76}Xenophon, \textit{Ways and Means}, 3.4.
of bankers, hemp workers, wool craftsmen, and linen workers. By inscribing their names within and on such public places, associations were attempting to fix their place in their community, thereby allowing their membership to partake of honours as a group that were certainly denied to them individually and/or as a group within the wider polis.

We have additional evidence of seating in theatres that emphasized and expressed a fundamentally hierarchical conception of ancient labour. There are only a few theatres and stadia where seating arrangements can be reconstructed in defensible detail, but this evidence does seem to support our contention regarding the differences in perceived honour and social status in varying occupations. Place inscriptions have been unearthed in the theatre of Termessos in Pisidia which indicate that stone-cutters connected with the imperial grain storehouses (ὄρειοι λατύποι) were seated in the front row, a visible location which carried with it considerable prestige. Goldsmiths, some of whom we have seen previously were able to rise to moderate public positions in the civic community, also had special seats reserved for them. In the theatre of Miletos, the goldsmiths’ association was seated in the first, second, and fourth section on the first level, fairly prominent and visible positions. Goldsmiths were also seated in relatively noticeable seats in the theatre at Bostra, where they were situated five rows ahead of the butchers, indicating that in the hierarchy of occupations, goldsmiths were regarded more

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77 IEph 454.

78 Although we do have inscriptions of reserved seating in the archaeological record, it is difficult to assign these seats to a map of ancient theatres and stadiums. Epigraphical publications simply record that an inscription has been found, but provide no additional details as to where in the stadium or theatre the evidence was unearthed.

79 TAM 3.1, 872.

favourably than butchers. Referring back to Cicero’s hierarchy of occupations, butchers were perceived to be a less honourable occupation, made manifest visibly in the public sphere at Bostra through seating arrangements.

The public theatre served as a teaching medium, and seating arrangements reflected the image of a well-ordered society where every person had a fixed place. Even the architectural designs of these structures were aimed at the internalization of social division. The general effect, therefore, was to force upon all those in attendance an awareness that a strict hierarchy was the foundation-stone of the Greco-Roman social system, a system where also labourers had their assigned place.

Labourers such as silversmiths, goldsmiths, and bakers were able to leave a permanent record of their social status in large part because they successfully transformed money accrued from their trades into symbolic capital and civic prominence. Placing other occupations and associations within this social pyramid of labour is more difficult, due in large part to the relative paucity of evidence.

What about those trades for which erratic employment and poverty were the norm? Evidence for such occupations is not as robust as those occupations listed above, restricted almost entirely to funerary inscriptions. Although there is always the risk of partiality with epitaphs, specifically that in death the person or commemorator may have taken liberties with the truth, meaning essentially that the dead person became in death what s/he never was in life,

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82 Paul Zanker, *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus*, trans. Alan Shapiro (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1988), 147-55, notes how the corridors and stairs were engineered in such a way as to prevent different social groups from interacting when entering and leaving the building.
epitaphs remain a deliberate memorialization which expressed a certain idea of society. The most common issues addressed in mortuary displays were social status, wealth, and identity, all of which were couched in honorific style.

We note, for instance, in many epitaphs for craftsmen, the common use of the formula ἐτέιµησαν, which not only identified the deceased as a member of a social group, but also implied a strategy for integration, signalling to outsiders that the craftsman, and by extension, the association were bound by a morality similar to that of the civic community. In this way, handworkers were able to place themselves as honourable within the social hierarchy. Thus, Primus son of Mousaios was honoured by the synodos of leather-workers (ἡ σύνοδος τῆς σκυτικῆς).\(^{83}\) Further use of such honorific language was also employed by other leather-workers (ἡ πλατεία τῶν σκυτέων) in memorializing others of like occupation.\(^{84}\) Likewise, an association of donkey-drivers (ἡ συνήθεια τῶν ὀνων) memorialized a certain Aelius Orestes.\(^{85}\) We also have examples of funerary inscriptions for axle-makers\(^{86}\) and litter bearers.\(^{87}\) We have the funerary inscription of Iucundus, slave of Taurus, litter bearer (Iucundus Tauri lecticarius). His epitaph records: “as long as he lived, he was a man and he acted on his own behalf and on the behalf of others.”\(^{88}\) Although Iucundus was a slave and spent his days lugging around his master, at death he claimed or had claimed on his behalf, a place of honour for himself. Despite, or even in the face of, denigration of his work, he was thus a man who was able to defend himself and others.

\(^{83}\) SEG 29,1183  
\(^{84}\) TAM 5.1, 78, 79, 80, 81.  
\(^{85}\) Iberoia 372.  
\(^{86}\) CIL 6.9215.  
\(^{87}\) CIL 6.6308.  
\(^{88}\) CIL 6.6308.
He was claiming the masculinity denied to him as a slave and claimed honour for himself at
death. This form of funerary epigraphy was not a forum of protest against social hierarchy, but
demonstrates an adherence to the elite principles of classification.

Additional examples include the epitaph of a gardener from Lycian Boubon, who
announces proudly that he was “the best of the gardeners” (κηπουρῶν ἄριστος).⁸⁹ In similar
fashion, the epitaph of the second- or third-century AD cobbler Apollonides from Lydian
Thyaterra remembers him for all posterity as “the best of the cobblers” (Σκυτοτόμων ὅχ” ἄρι[ς]
tος Ἀπολλωνίδης).⁹⁰ A vegetable seller (λαχανοπώλης) likewise claims to be the “best in his
trade” (ἄρξας τῆς τέχνης). With such claims, these labourers were claiming moral excellence and
honour for themselves. These epitaphs can be read as a claim to status staked out by these
labourers within the hierarchy of occupations, who were attempting to establish their
respectability through emulation of the symbolic language of the elite.

Not only did they place themselves, or were placed within the social hierarchy, but they
did so precisely by equating themselves with virtuous conduct. Indeed, among the elite, ἄριστεία
can be employed to indicate valour and excellence worthy of honour.⁹¹ In effect, the hierarchic
principles and social order evidenced within the elite’s own standards of honour likewise created
social distinctions at the level of the humiliores, specifically at the level of the manual labourer.
That our evidentiary field is not as robust when compared to craftsmen such as workers in
precious metals or traders with the imperial grain supply can be explained by remembering that

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⁸⁹ BE (1973), 463.
⁹⁰ SEG 41, 1033.
⁹¹ For example, Plato, Leg. 942d; Plutarch, Thea. 26. There is also the ἄριστείον τῷ θεῷ; IG 2.652.
status was expressed by monetary means, and some trades, by their very nature, were unable to attract wealthy patrons.

This state of affairs may be due in large part to the fact that certain crafts were afflicted with disadvantages that cemented their low regard. For example, tanners, dyers, leather-workers, and fullers were excluded from the city, and tanneries especially were noted for their noxious smell. Not surprisingly, tanners and leather-workers were regarded as one of the most banausic crafts. Some workshops were placed outside of the city confines due to popular demand. Tanneries, especially, were noted for their smell: “The tannery is bothersome to all. Since the tanner has to handle animal corpses, he has to reside far out of town, and the dreadful smell points him out even when hiding . . . The vultures are companions to the potters and the tanners since they reside far from towns and the latter handle dead bodies.”92 The Mishnah also recommends that tanneries should be set up only on the east side of an inhabited area, lest the winds blow the noxious smell into town.93 Aristophanes capitalized on Kleon’s connection with these trades, commending Kleon’s “Herculean valour in braving the stench of his trade.”94 Indeed, so dishonourable were tanners thought to be that for anyone to dream of tanning hides was interpreted as an omen of ill-fortune.95

On the hierarchical pyramid of occupations, trades such as those in precious metals, those connected with the imperial grain trade, and those involving intellectual skill, ranked higher than occupations such as tanners and dyers. The former trades were able to convert their financial resources into symbolic capital, an avenue not available to all craftsmen. The latter labourers,

92 Artemidorus, Onir. 1.51; see further, 2.20.
93 M. B. Bat. 2:9.
94 Aristophanes, Eq. 892; cf. Vesp. 38.
95 Artemidorus, Onir. 1.51.
however, by drawing upon the language of honour in their epitaphs, signalled to all those who
looked upon their memorials, that they, too, were bound by a similar morality and that the world
of honour likewise structured their lives and occupations.

3.4 Conclusions

The first half of this chapter accepted that in the Greco-Roman world, economic spheres
of activity were not divorced or somehow disembodied from the structuring currency of honour
and symbolic capital; indeed, entrepreneurship and financial success were not the paramount
concerns, but social status, honour, and the perception thereof. This was an economy embedded
in its cultural values, a “moral economy.”

The second half of this chapter has demonstrated that there were some occupations which
were thought to have more status than others. Often these trades were those in which some
measure of relative wealth could be accrued, enabling the worker to transform that money into
symbolic capital, either through the holding of civic positions or through various public
benefactions. We have also seen, though, that labourers sought through other means to place
themselves within the surrounding social hierarchy. This is an important conclusion to keep in
mind as we move towards an understanding of the impact of Paul’s manual labour within the
Christ-community in Corinth.

Given the social hierarchy in the ancient world of work, and remembering the ways in
which Paul describes his own life as a worker, can we continue to claim that Paul’s manual
labour did not have significant repercussions on his reception as an apostle amongst the
Corinthians? Before we can answer this question, the lived realities of first-century manual
labourers will be elucidated. Given that the vast majority of the non-elite lived at or near subsistence level, what sort of daily realities did the handworker face? What sort of cultural assumptions surrounded such a general labourer? These questions will be discussed in the following chapter.
Chapter Four:
Manual Labourers in the Greco-Roman World

Lucian of Samosata, writing in the silver age of the Roman Empire, described the life of the handworker in the following manner:

. . . you will be nothing but a labourer (ἐργάτης), toiling (πόνος) with your body and placing in it your entire hope of a livelihood, going unnoticed, receiving scanty and sordid returns, humble-witted (ταπεινὸς τὴν γνώµην), an insignificant figure in public, neither sought by your friends nor feared by your enemies nor envied by your fellow citizens - nothing but just a labourer (ἐργάτης), and one from among the countless people, cowering beneath the superior man and serving the man who can speak, leading a hare’s life, and counting as a godsend anyone stronger.¹

Lucian’s characterization serves as a point of departure into the world of the manual labourer in the Greco-Roman world, and with good reason. Scholars who have momentarily paused to mention that Paul worked with his hands invariably draw upon Lucian’s characterization of handwork, observing that although manual labour was widely scorned in the larger cultural ethos, Paul nevertheless chose precisely this option as a means of support.²

¹ Lucian, Somn. 9.

However, such limited discussions are no longer satisfactory. Chapter two has demonstrated that amongst the Corinthians, a community that included some parvenus with aspirations to higher social status, Paul describes his labour as a scenario of social shame. Further, chapter three has revealed that a social hierarchy of labour existed in the Greco-Roman world, where some occupations were considered as having more status than others. Before we move to 1 Cor 9:1-18, in which Paul attempts to nullify the negative repercussions of his life as a handworker, we first need to document the recurring equation between labourers and lack of honour.

Given the conclusions from the preceding chapter, the claim here is not that all labourers were denigrated by all persons within the Greco-Roman world. The prior discussion has clearly shown that some trades were thought to have more status, wealth, and honour than others, and in addition, workers were able to connect with the wider network of the polis and find honour there. As post-Finleyan scholarship has demonstrated, some urban labourers will have managed to carve out a more secure economic existence. Nevertheless, given the nature of the Roman Empire as an advanced agrarian economy coupled with Scheidel and Friesen’s zero-sum principle poverty-scale model, most of the non-elite population lived at or close to subsistence level. Although there would have been instances in which the relationship between the elite and the non-elite was more symbiotic and less exploitative, it still remains a fact that agrarian societies were structured to benefit the elite to the detriment of the non-elite. As Bruce Longenecker summarizes, “those with power did everything to acquire more power, often in

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4 See the essays in Helen M. Parkins, Roman Urbanism Beyond the Consumer City (London/New York: Routledge, 1997).
blatantly calculating and oppressive measures that compounded life’s difficulties for those less secure than themselves.”

With these facts in hand, this chapter will make some general statements about the lived realities of the urban manual labourer. This discussion is all the more pertinent when we remember from chapter two that Paul’s mention of his own manual labour often occurs in tandem with issues of poverty, sleeplessness, hunger, and numerous other physical hardships. Given that the axis of this thesis revolves primarily around Paul’s discourse in 1 Cor 9:1-18, no attempt is made here to trace all manner of evidence pertaining to manual labour in the Greco-Roman world. Instead, it is enough to point to several features which provide the backdrop against which the present study operates.

Moving to the rhetorical persona of the handworker, the elite and those with aspirations to higher status no doubt considered manual labour to be déclassé, and the cultural assumptions surrounding work will likewise be explored. In the latter part of this chapter, a more in-depth examination of how manual work in general was understood within the Greco-Roman ethos will be conducted, assumptions, I will later suggest, that contributed to Paul’s apostolic legitimacy being called into question by some within the Corinthian Christ-community.

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6 This chapter follows in the same vein as Jennifer Glancy’s *Slavery in Early Christianity*, where she endeavours to uncloak both the realities and perceptions of ancient slaves.

4.1 Setting the Stage

Data pertaining to the Greco-Roman urban manual labourer are fragmentary, scattered, and resistant to exacting interpretation. Unfortunately, the sources on which we can draw are not as robust as those to which scholars of later historical periods have access, such as the manifold inquisition records depicting the lives of the non-elite in the Middle Ages, employment registers in eighteenth-century France, autobiographical sketches of North American slaves and nineteenth-century London labourers, or even labourers’ own record-keeping.

The life of the Greco-Roman manual labourer can be elucidated by different types of evidence, but the fragmentary nature of our information must always be borne in mind. Source materials on which we can draw include decrees and statutes from professional voluntary associations, but as Onno Van Nijf points out, these inform us only about craftsmen of certain economic and social levels. There are also numerous epitaphs, but epitaphs speak more to the ways in which the deceased wished to be remembered as opposed to the reality of their conditions. Similarly, archaeological remnants can offer a guide to the physical contexts of production including, for example, the size and locations of workshops and distribution of wares;

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12 Such as those of a nineteenth-century tailor’s monthly business accounts. For further, see David R. Green, From Artisans to Paupers: Economic Change and Poverty in London, 1790-1870 (Aldershot: Scholar’s Press, 1995), 34-36.

however, such remains are only a sample of that which existed, and not necessarily a representative one. With due caution, I will draw upon such evidentiary material amongst others in order to illumine some general characteristics of the life of the urban handworker.

To begin, it is necessary to draw some boundaries with regards to terminology. Who, specifically, is a “manual labourer,” “handworker,” or “artisan”? In recent scholarship, these terms denote a separate social status that, although being constantly renegotiated, distinguishes these individuals, in their own eyes as well as in the eyes of others, from other workers, as much as or more than the work in which they engaged.

This definition is helpful in that it embraces a diverse range of workers who differed in occupation, but less so pertaining to the urban labourer’s place in the ancient world. In Greco-Roman society, the reputation for any particular type of work was not dependent on those engaged in it, but rather was determined precisely by the nature of the labour itself. Labour was viewed through the filter of relationships of dependency engendered by the work, rather than through the legal status of those who toiled. This conception of work is made clear in Cicero’s famous ranking of occupations which reveals a hierarchy of occupations arranged according to social as opposed to functional criteria. Such a manner of conceptualizing work also helps to explain why there is scant evidence of slave and free labour being distinguished from one another when both worked side-by-side, not only in urban-based workshops, but also in large-

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scale agricultural enterprises. This is an important distinction to make, because unlike modern visualizations of the “manual labourer,” such a person did not exist as an independent entity in Greco-Roman conceptions, but rather, was equated with the work undertaken. Thus, as seen in the previous chapter, a goldsmith who worked in precious metals had a higher social status on the pyramid of occupations than the tanner who dealt with dead animals and noxious odours.

What kinds of trades were labourers engaged in? The world of urban production throughout the Greco-Roman world was one of overwhelming variety as seen in Diocletian’s Price Edict of AD 301 which included provisions for setting minimum wages for various occupations. Although concentrating on the legalities of ancient life, the Digest likewise includes mention of a plethora of ancient trades. As Gideon Sjoberg comments regarding pre-industrial urban life in general: “Numerous tasks that in the highly industrialized environment are accomplished by machines are here fulfilled by humans: the city teems with servants, burden bearers, messengers, animal drivers and others.” The working stratum of the urban population included those who managed small workshops; those who worked them as slave or wage-workers; those who plied their trade out of a room in their own or another’s residence; or found employment on a bespoke basis in a variety of industries, including building and manufacturing. Within this innumerable sea of labourers there toiled free, freed, and slave.

It can likewise be propounded that the modern distinction between the arts and the crafts, between the unskilled day-labourer and the craftsman was unknown in the Greco-Roman world.


Although to the unskilled labourers the harsh life of a struggling artisan might have seemed like comfort, in elite perceptions at least, those who worked with their hands were thought to draw on the same source for their work, and that was their physicality. In the view of the Greco-Romans, it was the practical application of acquired skills or training that united a wide variety of occupations into a single category.  

Restricting our evidentiary field to the Greco-Roman Empire in the first-century AD may be regarded as most advantageous in discerning the realities and perceptions of urban manual labour. Nevertheless, some of the evidence evinced will be of an earlier and later date than the time period strictly contemporaneous with Paul. That it was written down, copied, and discussed in the time up to, during, and after the first-century AD, suggests that such material reflects, and by extension, has been influential in shaping dominant attitudes towards labour. There was an overriding system of moral values behind and beyond economic ones throughout this time period, thereby serving as a red-thread tying together a wide swath of time. Throughout these centuries, one’s livelihood dictated or reflected one’s place in society. Therefore, one of the implicit arguments is that local economies of different regions likely shared important structural and ideological characteristics.

The evidence drawn upon to form our understanding of manual labourers will concentrate mainly on the Eastern part of the Roman Empire although, where appropriate, evidence from the Western half will be taken into consideration. The reasoning for this is two-fold. First, this is not intended to be an exhaustive study of manual labour, but rather, a synopsis of the realities faced by the majority of urban manual labourers, hardships echoed in Paul’s own missives. Secondly, when it comes to the lived circumstances and perceptions of handworkers, our

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20 See, for instance, Julian (Dig. 38.1.25.2) who includes doctors with “other craftsmen.” Also, Xenophon, Oec. 4.2.1-4.3.6; Aristotle, Pol. 1337b7-14.
evidence from the east, even if not as robust, shows marked similarities with the evidence from Rome.

One type of literary evidence that provides some information regarding manual labour are ancient literary tracts. Such texts bespeak only a passing concern for the craftsman's way of life, and any information supplied is incidental to the main theme. Within these texts, labourers are routinely referred to as βάναυσος, a term of reproach with strong connotations to vulgarity, and θητεία, with its correlation to servility. Indeed, χειροτεχνία and βάναυσος can be seen as synonymous and oftentimes βάναυσος modifies χειροτεχνία or τέχνη. For example, Plato queries, βαναυσία δὲ καὶ χειροτεχνία διὰ τί οἴει ὄνειδος φέρει; Aristotle affirms that labourers were defined by their bodies. In discussing the proper ways to attain wealth, Aristotle claims that work for money is the basest of endeavours pursued only by vulgar labourers (τῶν βαναυσών τεχνιτῶν) and others who are only useful for bodily work (τῶ σώματι μόνω χρησιμων).

These terms of disrepute are connected with a social attitude which identifies certain occupations as ignoble. Such tasks were performed to satisfy physical requirements, as opposed to the so-called liberal arts which were practiced with the end-goal of liberating the spirit. Of course, such characterizations have their origin in the class consciousness of an elite segment of the population who do not engage in productive work. Although such opinions do not tell the

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21 For example, Herodotus, Hist. 2.165.5; Plato, Leg. 74134; 743d4; Resp. 495e2, 522b4; Aristotle, Maj. mor. 1205a33; Xenophon, Oec. 4.2.2; 4.3.2.

22 See, for instance, Epicurus, Sent. Vat. 67; Aristotle, Rh. 1367a31; Lucian, Fug. 12.

23 Plato, Resp. 590c2; cf. Alc. maj. 131b7; Resp. 522b4; Symp. 203a6; Aristotle, Rh. 1367a26-27; Pol. 1258b26; 1260a41; Xenophon, Oec. 4.3.6; 6.5.3.

whole story, it would nonetheless be a mistake to dismiss this evidence as only myopically reflecting the concerns of the elite.\textsuperscript{25}

To what extent, though, can we take these literary sources as a mirror of the labourer’s lived circumstances and overall cultural presuppositions? Ancient literary tracts are profitable in providing data not only pertaining to the reality of the urban manual labourer, but also cultural perceptions. Given that literary evidence will constitute a large portion of the upcoming discussion, justification for including such sources as advantageous witnesses should be supplied. This discussion will proceed along three fronts: 1) the applicability of such literature to reality; 2) the applicability of such literature to assumptions; and 3) the reasons why the sentiments reflected in these witnesses were not confined solely to the elite.

As far as attesting to the daily lives of handworkers, we can cite a couple of pertinent examples. Literary witnesses depict workers of the same trade locating their shops in close proximity to one another. The shoemaker Micyllus had a neighbour of the same trade,\textsuperscript{26} and presumably the silver-smiths in Ephesus, depicted in Acts 19:25, were in close proximity given that Demetrius was able to gather them together without too much trouble when problems arose. Further, Artemidorus states that “the tanner handles dead bodies and lives outside the city” and “potters and tanners . . . live away from the city . . . because they handle corpses.”\textsuperscript{27} That workshops existed outside of the city is confirmed by archaeological evidence,\textsuperscript{28} reinforcing the claim that literary evidence may contain reliable attestations in the exploration of the world of ancient manual labour.


\textsuperscript{27} Artemidorus, \textit{Onir.} 1.51; 2.20.

\textsuperscript{28} Willem Jongman, \textit{The Economy and Society of Pompeii}, Dutch Monographs on Ancient History and Archaeology (Amsterdam: J. C. Gieben, 1988), 155-86.
Furthermore, literary sources furnish layer upon layer of information pertaining to cultural preoccupations and assumptions in the ancient world, suppositions which did not merely remain an intellectual quirk, but had tangible effects on the labourer’s status and reception within larger society. Even though it is clear that we are dealing with an upper-class or elite sentiment, it must surely be granted that throughout antiquity the elite to a very large extent set the tone of public opinion. Moses Finley, for instance, advances that “the pejorative judgments of ancient writers about labour, and specifically about the labour of artisans, and of anyone who works for another, are too continuous, numerous and unanimous, too wrapped up in discussions of every aspect of ancient life, to be dismissed as empty rhetoric.” Indeed, we have already seen that there existed a social hierarchy of ancient labour where some occupations had more status than others, reflecting to a great extent the preponderance for social hierarchies in the Greco-Roman world at large.

Although it would be naïve to suggest that the viewpoints of moralists and philosophers were the only true view of the situation, it would be equally naïve to dismiss them as the idiosyncratic ramblings of unusual thinkers. Brent D. Shaw expounds on precisely this point when he reminds his readers that “we must, of course, reject outright simplistic conceptions of idea systems, ideological or otherwise, as functioning solely as instruments of conscious or deliberate misinformation, or indeed as the manipulated distortion of thought aimed at subject classes.” The applicability of using literary tracts to read public opinion and the potency of


ideology are likewise attested in the recognition that stereotypes, by their very nature, contain within them cores of untransformed truth. Stereotypes and cultural assumptions, consequently, can be viewed as meanings themselves, that is, as a way of thinking about the world and society from circumscribed points of view.

Finally, the stereotypes and cultural assumptions expounded in the literary sources are echoed throughout other segments of society. As such, there was an embodied perpetuation of what might be called aristocratic ideology throughout the lower stratums. As one example, Pliny the Elder laments the fact that even plebeian women wore pearls and silver bracelets. Although Pliny’s grumblings appear in the context of a highly-potent invective against luxury and excess, there is no reason to suggest that he is not drawing on actual behaviour.

The disdain for labourers is likewise well-illustrated from non-elite literary sources. The inculcation of elite values and biases to the non-elite are found in a comparison of the evangelists treatment of Jesus’ occupation. The Gospel of Mark relates that Jesus was a τέκτων (Mark 6:3), but this biographical datum is not included in the other synoptic gospels, nor the Gospel of John. Working from the conclusions of the Two-Document Hypothesis whereby Mark’s Gospel was employed independently by Matthew and Luke, Matthew alters Mark’s text to read not that Jesus was a τέκτων, but that he was ὁ τοῦ τέκτονος υἱός (Matt 13:55), thereby removing Jesus

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32 Keith R. Bradley, *Slaves and Masters in the Roman Empire: A Study in Social Control* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 29; cf. Hazel Carby, *Reconstructing Womanhood* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 22, who stresses the fact that the social realities represented in discussions of black female sexuality in antebellum America should not and cannot be separated from the beliefs and perceptions that condition them: “literary stereotypes [are] a directly related expression of social processes in terms of resemblance, homology, or analogy.”

33 For pearls, see Pliny, *Nat.* 9.114; 33.40; on bracelets, Pliny, *Nat.* 33.152.

34 On Pliny and luxuries, see Andrew Wallace-Hadrill, “Pliny the Elder and Man’s Unnatural History,” *GR* 37 (1990): 80-96.


This reluctance on the part of the later evangelists to identify, or otherwise to name Jesus in relation to manual labour, coupled with the fact that there are no stories in the Gospels recounting Jesus’ occupation as a τέκτων, suggest that the figure of Jesus, in the eyes of the evangelists and their communities, needed to be more than a mere labourer.\textsuperscript{36}

Archaeological evidence corroborates the contention that the biases of the elite did not remain benign intellectual quirks. Returning to Pliny’s complaint that plebeian women were adorning themselves with jewels normally reserved for wealthy women, sizeable stocks of silver and semi-precious gems have been unearthed from a second-century Roman jeweller’s workshop in Snettisham, England. Given the amount of gems on hand, an argument can be made that this particular labourer experienced enough orders and demand to have such items on-site.\textsuperscript{37} As well, excavations from Pompeii have revealed numerous wall decorations in non-elite residences crafted during the first-century AD. As Wallace-Hadrill states, “At a remove, it may import something of the lifestyle of the prosperous and successful into a humble home. But, more than that, I would suggest, it brought a sense of belonging: of membership of a society in which ideology and culture were defined by the elite.”\textsuperscript{38}

\textsuperscript{36}That Jesus’ role in salvation history could not be reconciled with manual labour is a sentiment not restricted solely to the evangelists. Geza Vermes attempts to explain away the equation of Jesus as a mere “carpenter” by arguing that the term τέκτων is used metaphorically to mean “scholar” or “learned man.” See Geza Vermes, \textit{Jesus the Jew} (London: Collins, 1973), 21-22.


\textsuperscript{38}Wallace-Hadrill, “Pliny the Elder,” 92.
Other catalogues of literary evidence contain data pertaining to manual labour. Pomeroy insists that dream interpretation is closely linked to the social status and expectations of the customer, and the dream interpreter’s elucidation would invariably need to parallel the customer’s aspirations and prejudices. Contained within the handbooks of Greco-Roman dream interpreters are wealths of findings detailing the preoccupations of the non-elite stratum in general, and the labourer’s obsession with the precarious existence of his employment, specifically.

The dream manuals of Artemidorus of Daldis are highly valuable. His tractates evince the careful cataloging of the ways in which dream interpretation varies depending on the livelihood of the dreamer. Artemidorus’ dream manuals preserve numerous explications that are case-specific to labourers, thereby allowing for a level of insight into their lives and concerns that cannot be extracted from other literary evidence. Moreover, Artemidorus includes in his manuals information collected from other dream interpreters with whom he had conversed throughout his travels to cities in Asia Minor, Greece, and Italy.

Papyri and legal texts are also types of literary witnesses containing information regarding manual labour. Of the papyri that have been collected, most are concerned with fiscal and commercial interactions important in everyday legal and social interactions. Papyri can sometimes be difficult to decipher in that they contain a considerable amount of information known only to the sender and recipient. Nevertheless, such documentary evidence can be

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40 Artemidorus, *Onir.* 1.9.

41 Artemidorus’ careful fieldwork includes an examination of a plethora of popular oral traditions from across the Mediterranean world. Artemidorus’ work has been quite fittingly compared to that of a modern anthropologist. See John Winkler, *The Constraints of Desire: The Anthropology of Sex and Gender in Ancient Greece* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 26.
profitably employed in relation to a number of important issues associated with manual labour. As Edwin Judge has suggested, the “papyri offer us the most direct access we have to the experience of ordinary people in antiquity, including even the illiterate, provided their affairs were of enough consequence to be worth registering in writing at all.”  

Legal texts have less information to provide on the daily realities of the urban labourer, in large part because the law functioned to reaffirm elite self-identity. Nevertheless, what the legal texts imagine, in order to explore the putative circumstances leading to this or that judicial rendering, is conditioned by the historical society in which jurists lived. In practical terms, this means that legal texts illumine mentalities, but there are instances where the daily realities encountered by the handworker can also be deduced. For instance, legal texts regulate the \textit{operae} due to a patron by his freedman, and reveal that some masters had invested sizeable sums in the training of their slaves to practice certain types of skilled labour. Although couched in terms of the appropriate honour and deference due a former master, we learn something of the training servile labourers had, making them a valuable investment, and likewise providing skills not always available to the freeborn labourer. Therefore, legal codes can help define the conditions of what was given precisely by outlining the boundaries within which such activities and relationships took place. 

The world of handwork can also be unveiled through use of various archaeological evidence. We have already had reason to mention both inscriptive and epigraphical material as important venues for the non-elite to express something about themselves, so a detailed

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43 \textit{Dig.} 38.1.34.

44 \textit{Dig.} 38.1.9; 38.1.38.1; 38.1.16. pr.

Having examined our evidentiary material, the aim of this chapter is to demonstrate that there existed an ideology that insisted manual labour in the ancient Mediterranean world was slavish and ignoble. On a first-century view, for the bulk of those who toiled with their hands, manual labour testified not to virtue but to lack of integrity; not to legitimate authority but to shameful servility.

### 4.2 Manual Labour in a First-Century Greco-Roman Urban Environment

The cultural suppositions surrounding labourers were, in large part, based on a modicum of reality. For example, labourers were thought unable to achieve virtue;\footnote{This is a constant refrain throughout literature. See, for example, Plato, *Leg.* 741e1-6; 743d; *Symp.* 203a6 *Resp.* 495c-496a; 590c1-6; Aristotle, *Rh.* 1367a26-27; *Pol.* 1258b26, 1258b33-38; 1260a34-43; Lucian, *Somn.* 6.1-13.16; *Gall.* 2; Xenophon, *Oec.* 4.2.1-4.3.8; 6.5.1-6.10.7; Epictetus, *Diss.* 1.19.16-23; Cic. *Off.* 150-51.} handworkers certainly did not have the time to engage in such pursuits, as will shortly be demonstrated. The outline of this section will be as follows: It will be argued that many urban manual labourers in
the Greco-Roman world faced irregular employment prospects and continual threats of poverty. Interestingly, it was those labourers with ties to servility who were in a relatively stabler economic position than freeborn workers. Manual labourers, whether free, freed, or slave often engaged in work that was dangerous. Given their socio-economic position within wider society, handworkers often sought economic benefits that were denied to them through membership in professional voluntary associations.

The data laid forth will provide “grist for the mill” for the second part of this chapter pertaining to the cultural assumptions surrounding manual labour within Greco-Roman society. That agricultural pursuits were idealized at the expense of manual labour will be noted, along with the fact that divine beings who engaged in labour in the Greco-Roman world were scorned. We will also pay attention to texts that suggest handworkers lacked independence and virtue, key qualities in the ancient world, and finally probe the connection between the ideology of slavery and its impact on conceptions of manual labour.

4.2.1 Irregular Employment Prospects

Instability of demand for many labourers’ products meant they were unable to rely on continuous and stable business throughout the year. We can begin this discussion by looking to Artemidorus.

Artemidorus’ dream manuals suggest that an overriding concern among labourers was the instability of their employment.48 He interprets dreams that portend both periods of idleness and loss of work, as well as auspicious dreams that predict employment. For example:

48 Examples include, Artemidorus, Onir. 1.13, 24, 47, 51, 54, 76, 78; 2.3, 8, 11, 22; 3.52, 62.
White clothes are auspicious only for those accustomed to them and for Greek slaves, but for other men they foretell troubles because the ones who cause upset in the crowd wear white clothes. But for labourers (χειροτέχνης), dormancy and idleness. And the more expensive the clothes, the greater the idleness. For workingmen (ἐργῳ ὄντες οἱ ἄνθρωποι), and especially the ones who work at vulgar trades (οἱ τὰς βαναύσους τέχνας ἐργαζόµενοι) do not wear white clothes.⁴⁹

What is most interesting with this example is Artemidorus’ use of βαναυσία in his description of those engaged in labour. As already witnessed, this is a term of particular disdain with connotations of vulgarity, crassness, and brutishness. Given that dream interpretation is closely linked to the social expectations of the dreamer, it is telling that Artemidorus names labour in such fashion. Even in their attempts to portend the future, workers were not free from the scorn and hostility their labour faced. The point at hand, though, is that Artemidorus’ material clearly indicates handworkers worried about their ability to sustain themselves in an economic environment marked by unstable employment.

Why was the economic environment marked by chronic work irregularity? Studies in Greco-Roman population and per capita growth illustrate purchasing power was concentrated in the hands of the elite. Scheidel and Friesen have calculated that within the Roman Empire, 1.5 per cent of households controlled between 15 to 25 per cent of total income, with another 10 per cent of households controlling another 15 to 25 per cent. This translates to not much more than half of all income left for the remainder of households.⁵⁰ Although Scheidel and Friesen are quick to state that, in demographic terms, “middling” income groups were small, this does not a priori equate to economic insignificance. However, when disposable income above so-called “respectable” consumption levels (set at 2.4 times minimum gross subsistence) was calculated,

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⁴⁹Artemidorus, Onir. 2.3; cf. 1.13, 54. Artemidorus clearly recognizes that there existed a social hierarchy of labour.

elite income exceeded “middling” income by a substantial margin.\textsuperscript{51} These figures suggest that the majority of purchasing power was concentrated in the hands of elite households whose consumption habits were irregular.

Compounding the situation, the percentage of households within the “middling” category likely declined from the end of the first-century BC onwards. The decline of real income was the consequence of two interrelated processes. Firstly, during the Republic, sizeable amounts of wealth was redistributed from the provinces to Roman Italy. Secondly, one consequence of Roman imperialism was military mortality and provincial colonization depressed natural population growth, thereby keeping per capita wealth high. Both of these activities, however, became less pronounced in the Augustan era, resulting in wealth becoming increasingly stratified throughout the first and second centuries AD.\textsuperscript{52} Thus, the purchasing power of the elite grew along with the impact of their unstable consumption habits. The result was unstable demand and economic uncertainty for the vast majority of ancient urban labourers.

Labourers in the ancient world, specifically those who toiled in workshops, produced their goods on the basis of commissions from individual clients. Such a claim can be applied to a variety of industries,\textsuperscript{53} but is especially pronounced in jewellery and clothing workshops that catered to a more elite clientele. In the second-century BC, Plautus notes that both jewellers and embroiders were hired on a bespoke basis to add decorative refinement to clothing.\textsuperscript{54} Various

\textsuperscript{51} Scheidel and Friesen, “Size of the Economy,” 88-89.


\textsuperscript{54} Plautus, \textit{Aul.} 426-27, 541-45. On clothing as a means to draw attention to status distinctions throughout the Roman Empire, see Kelly Olson, “Fashioning the Female in Roman Antiquity” (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1999).
jurists likewise assume that goldsmiths worked on commission-based orders, each tailored to individual specifications.\textsuperscript{55} The vagaries of elite demand created an environment where the labourer was unable to rely on a steady number of orders.

The unpredictable nature of employment is also witnessed in the increase in orders placed during times of festivals and pilgrimages.\textsuperscript{56} Marc Kleijwegt draws attention to seasonal surges in textile production precipitated by consumers placing orders for celebratory or ritual clothing required for religious festivals.\textsuperscript{57} Such religious requirements combined with the omnipresent social pressures to engage in status definition almost certainly stimulated demand for artisanal products at certain times of the year. How much business was brought to artisans during these festivals is difficult to gauge, but given that such religious festivals were seasonal, artisans were left without contracts to fill presumably for long periods.

Further evidence confirming the precariousness of a labourer’s employment can be found within the pages of the New Testament. In Acts 19:23-28, Luke details a riot that erupted in the city of Ephesus in response to Paul’s proselytizing efforts. The ancient city of Ephesus was a major centre of communication and transport links in Asia Minor and was the centre for a widespread cult devoted to the worship of Artemis of Ephesus.\textsuperscript{58} According to Acts 19:24, the silversmith Demetrius crafted silver shrines to Artemis, devotional objects undoubtedly purchased by pilgrims who would leave them in the goddess’ temple as votive offerings. If Paul

\textsuperscript{55} Dig. 19.2.1; 19.2.13.5; 19.2.31; cf. BGU 4, 1065.
\textsuperscript{56} Cf. Hawkins, “Work in the City,” 47-51.
succeeded in converting any devotees to the Christian deity, demand for Demetrius’ shrines, as well as those of other workingmen of like occupation (Acts 19:25), would not only be reduced but potentially be made obsolete. The riot that ensued can be interpreted as craftsmen, already labouring in an occupation where demand for products was based on the seasonal travel of pilgrims, attempting to protect demand for their goods.

Labourers reacted to the unstable demand for their products in one of two ways, both of which demonstrate that handworkers were unable to amass enough money during periods of peak demand to see them through periods of low to non-existent demand. Some labourers wandered from one location to the next in hopes of finding temporary work wherever and whenever it became available. In the “Ostia Episcopo Relief,” a figure stands at an impromptu trestle counter selling produce. Given that the equipment detailed in this relief consists only of a trestle counter, some shelves, and a basket, Kampen speculates that the seller moved from place to place. It is only conjecture, but perhaps this seller followed various pilgrimage or festival routes in order to follow demand.

Travelling from one place to another to find work or potential commission-based contracts seem to be fairly regular occurrences in the ancient world. Two potters named Bakchios and Kittos found employment in Ephesus when the pottery industry in Athens was in decline. Likewise, workers from across the Mediterranean came to work in the Delian

59 An interesting avenue of exploration is to ask whether the apostle Paul’s journeys from one city to another had at their root considerations of work opportunities. See further pp. 231-32 of this thesis.

60 See Kampen, Image and Status, 59-64, for a detailed examination of this particular relief.

61 Kampen, Image and Status, 61.

62 See, for example, Seneca, Helv. 6.2; Dig. 12.2-3; Dio Chrysostom, Orat. 36.25; P. Oxy. 2.252 (AD 19) about a weaver; 17.2153 (third-century AD) about both a carpenter and a builder; 33.2669 (AD 41-54) about a bronze-smith.

63 Burford, Craftsmen, 67.
sanctuary, and upon completion of their specific tasks they moved elsewhere as other work became available.  

This pattern of artisans on the move is evidenced in Egypt as well. One letter indicates that a certain Boethus travelled from Oxyrhynchus to Panga “in order that, if god wills, there may be perhaps something to sell.” In a similar letter, Appamon informs his patron Dorotheos that he has travelled to Alexandria in hopes of selling some sacks. That the movement of artisans from one city to another as a means of alleviating their unstable employment prospects was not always a successful endeavour is made known through a certain Ptolemaeus, who informs Thonis that the scheduled trip to sell linen yarn is no longer necessary on account of the potential buyer losing interest. Slaves who were trained to work as artisans were also sent from one city-based workshop to a workshop set up in a different city, no doubt to alleviate production pressures in periods of higher demand.

The second way in which labourers, specifically those who ran workshops, were able to deal with uncertain employment was through the disintegration of their production. Such decentralization was no doubt typical of Greco-Roman manufacturing as a whole which offered few economies of scale. Instead, we have what Ramsey MacMullen describes as a distinctive

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65 *P. Oxy.* 12.1494.2-4. This papyri is dated to the late-third or early-fourth century revealing that the precariousness of employment was a continuing factor throughout the early centuries.

66 *P. Oxy.* 55.3864.5-11, 20-25; early fifth-century.

67 *P. Oxy.* 61.4127.

68 For example, *P. Mich.* 1.52 (251 BC) recounts a potter with workshops in both Herakleopolis and Philadelphia shifting ten workers from one shop to the other.

69 See Hawkins, “Work in the City,” 51-77 for a detailed discussion on disintegrated production in the Roman craft economy. The following discussion on disintegrated and decentralized production relies heavily on Hawkins’ findings.
“atomized” pattern where both production and trade were “minutely subdivided into little shops and little agencies.”

That disintegrated risk protected labourers from an uncertain economic environment is made clear from the existence of small workshops, the dominant unit of production in the Greco-Roman urban environment. A workshop could be situated in a number of different locales depending on their size. Clearly, a labourer who worked alone, or with only a couple of assistants required a minimal amount of space. The smallest of workshops could be located in a room within an artisan’s residence. Workshops could also be situated on a ground floor within a block of units, with the labourer residing in an upstairs room, a back room, or even in the rear of the workshop. Workshops were also set up in separate buildings, often in well-defined geographical locales in the city. The geographical proximity of these workshops to one another suggests collaboration amongst the labourers. The situation envisioned here is one where they would come together to facilitate integrated production of their wares.

Therefore, unstable demand within the Greco-Roman economy as a whole ensured that investing in vertical integration remained risky. The precarious state of demand that labourers


[73] Simon the Shoemaker’s workshop was apparently in his house. See Thompson, “House,” 234-40. Further examples can be found in Demosthenes, Orat. 27.24-25; 48.12; P. Tebt 1.38 (113 BC); PGM 12.104.

experienced, thus, evidences itself in their decentralization of production. A point to be later
picked up is that although urbanization brought with it division of labour, from the psychological
point of view this division only reinforced the dependence of labourers on others in order to
execute their craft.

If labourers who managed workshops decentralized and disintegrated their production as
means to alleviate risk, what about those labourers who did not run workshops but, rather, toiled
within them? They faced even more uncertain employment prospects as unstable demand for
products precluded steady and continuous employment. As de Ste. Croix states, “there is no
evidence at all for regular hired labour of any kind at Rome . . . We are obliged, therefore, to
assume the existence of a great deal of short-term hiring.”

As a way to enter into the discussion pertaining to short-term hiring prospects throughout
the Roman Empire, we can again refer to an example from Apuleius’ novel *Metamorphoses*. The
protagonist worked piece-meal in the workshop of another cobbler and was paid on a daily basis.
If he did not work, he would be unable to buy food for that evening’s dinner. This anecdote
provides us with two pertinent details. First, much like those who ran workshops and only
received pay when customers placed their orders, general or unskilled labourers in the employ of
others likewise faced uncertain employment prospects. Second, wages paid to this particular
labourer were only able to provide for daily needs. There was no money left over to place in
reserve lest the employment ceased due to lack of demand, or the labourer, for whatever reason,
was unable to continue working.

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Workshop based labourers also occasionally hired on assistants for limited-term work. In an employment contract from Roman Egypt, a father placed his son in a weaver’s workshop for a period of seven months.\textsuperscript{77} Another employment contract details a freedman who agreed to work in a shop of unknown production for five months.\textsuperscript{78} A parable in the Gospel of Matthew similarly implies the practice of using day-labourers, although the contract noted here is of an oral nature.\textsuperscript{79}

Further direct data of labourers facing only short-term work prospects are scarce, no doubt because our literary and legal sources had little interest in this phenomenon. Nevertheless, due to the unstable demand characteristic of the Greco-Roman economy, it is a defensible argument that labourers, including those who ran workshops and those who toiled within them, faced uncertain and precarious employment prospects. With erratic employment, of course, came poverty.

4.2.2 Poverty

Precise statistics regarding the income of labourers are difficult to obtain, and are resistant to diachronic analysis when available. Knowledge of the handworkers’ standard of living can only come through access to the wages and prices of a wide range of occupations and commodities over a statistically significant period of time. The evidence available to us, however, does not permit precise statistical examination. For one thing, some sectors are

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{77} PSI 287.
  \item \textsuperscript{78} P.Mich. 9.574.
  \item \textsuperscript{79} Matt 20:1-16. For verbal contracts in Roman Egypt, see Rafal Taubenschlag, \textit{The Law of Greco-Roman Egypt in the Light of the Papyri, 322BC-640AD}, 2d ed. (Warszawa: Panstwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1955).
\end{itemize}
substantially better documented than others, this being particularly true with regards to building projects and sculptures. In terms of written records, inscribed accounts of public works in some cities or employment contracts recorded on papyri, contain details of organizational specifics, conditions under which craftsmen were employed, as well as the prices and occasionally wages with which labourers were remunerated. Although such data do provide information on some aspects of the labourer’s lot, they are often too subject-matter specific to relate usefully to labourers in general. Even though specific statistical conclusions elude us, there are enough traces to paint a realistic picture of the economic conditions faced by handworkers.

To begin with, wage rates for manual labourers were low, and the handworker could not count on a daily wage. Harkening back to Apuleius’ protagonist in *Metamorphoses*, if he did not work, he did not eat. Those who worked as apprentices received even lower wages. Various apprentice contracts stipulate not only that the apprentice must remain in the master’s service for a specified period of time, but that the apprentice would only be paid at a minimal wage rate. Further, the instructor demanded that he be compensated by the apprentice for any missed days of work, either by extending the contractual period or paying a fine of one drachma for each day missed, a sum no doubt intended to compensate the master for the value of lost labour.\(^80\) This should not be taken to mean, however, that apprentices could be expected to be paid one drachma for each day of work. The stipends paid out by the instructors to their apprentices appear to be five drachmai per month, especially during the early stages of apprenticeship.\(^81\)

Friesen’s “poverty-scale” model may further help us to deduce where labourers could be situated on a non-elite income scale. Artisans fall into income-level categories where they could

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\(^80\) For example, *P. Oxy*. 3.22; 275; *P. Wisc*. 4.

\(^81\) See, for instance, *P. Mich*. II 121 recto II, 8; *P. Oxy*. 275, 2875, 2971; *P. Oxy. Hels*. 29; *P. Tebt*. 385.
be expected to achieve subsistence, either at or close to, yet below the minimum level calculated to sustain life. Friesen defines “subsistence” as “the resources needed to procure enough calories in food to maintain the human body.” Unlike their rural counterparts who could have grown much of their food, urban labourers would be forced to purchase most of their food or trade for it on top of payment for rents and taxes.

Literary sources also reflect the poverty of manual labourers. Artemidorus’ dream manual touches on the broad concerns among many labourers as to whether they can sustain themselves with their trade. Indeed, a dream as seemingly benign as singing off-key symbolizes unemployment and poverty. Further evidence can be deduced from Oxyrhynchus where papyri record how an individual without a trade was driven out of town by his wretched poverty.

Elsewhere, Lucian describes the widow Crobyle as one who was reduced to starvation after failing to make enough money weaving, labour she was forced to take up after the death of her husband. Not only did urban manual labourers live with chronic poverty, but “their income hardly suffices for the subsistence of families, especially when they could suffer a social catastrophe if they lose their provider through the death of the husband and father.” We find such hardships echoed in the situation of Philinus, the smith. Although he was able to support himself, his wife, and his daughter with his craft while he was alive, it is clear that he existed

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84 Artemidorus, Onir. 1.76; cf. 1. 70.

85 P. Oxy. 2.251.

86 Lucian, Dial. meretr. 6.293.

only at or near subsistence level: Philinus was unable to leave behind any money after his death, and very shortly afterwards his widow was forced to turn their daughter over into prostitution in order to avoid starvation. Therefore, Lucian’s summation of manual labour as “laborious and barely able to supply them with just enough” is an accurate representation.

4.2.3 Manual Labour, Slavery, and Work Undertaken

The subject of slavery in the Roman Empire is a complex one, and it is important to allow for possible regional variations in slavery practices. For our purposes, however, it will be shown that slaves did work in the urban marketplace in positions unavailable to freeborn labourers. Slaves were ubiquitous in an urban context, being found in mining, factories, and undertaking public works such as road construction and the maintenance of aqueducts. Weaving is often cited as a trade that employed a high number of slaves, although apprentice contracts make it clear that female slaves were more often trained in this occupation. Slaves who laboured in the building, manufacture, and skilled service categories are especially prominent in the sources.

Some slaves ran workshops on the basis of a peculium, which in Roman law was an account consisting of funds and/or productive capital that a paterfamilias could assign to his dependents. Slaves in this position were generally expected to return a portion of the profits to

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88 Lucian, Dial. meretr. 6.293. For similar occurrences, see BGU 1024.7; Dig. 23.2.43.5; Plautus, Cist. 38-45; Terence, Eun. 934-940.


90 I do not intend to suggest that there existed competition for jobs between free and slave labour. Such competition is inconceivable in an economy with no free labour market. The point, rather, is that when positions could be filled by slaves in workplaces, there was no advantage in hiring freeborn labourers.


92 Joshel, Work, 95.
their masters.93 Slaves not only worked for their owners, but could be leased out to another.94 For instance, slave plasterers and stonemasons were loaned out when the master had no pressing demand for their labour.95 Slaves, therefore, had a very close affiliation with the urban world of work, and this connection continued even after their manumission.

The reasons behind the existence of servile labour in the urban context can be logically explained. When owners manumitted their slaves, juridical ties between both parties remained. Some freedmen, in exchange for being manumitted, swore a legally binding oath attesting that they would provide their former owners with a specified quantity of labour.96 As Paul Veyne astutely points out, “Roman nobles preferred their freedmen to their impoverished fellow citizens because . . . freedmen remained loyal to their former masters, who knew them personally.”97 Further to this point, from the time of the late Republic and continuing onwards, Roman law maintained a distinction between labour of a more personal nature (operae officiales) and labour of a skilled nature (operae fabriles). When freedmen swore the oath to provide their patrons with labour, it was always operae fabriles.98 In concrete terms, owners who had either paid a premium purchase price to acquire a skilled slave, or had expended monies themselves training the slaves did not forfeit their investment upon manumission. Given that freedmen in


94 See, for example, Dig. 9.4.19.1; 12.6.55; 19.2.42-43; 19.2.45.1; 33.2.2

95 Dig. 13.6.5.7.


98 Dig. 38.1.9; 38.1.38.1; 38.1.16.pr. See Gardner, Roman Citizen, 29.
discharging these obligations to their former masters did so at their own expense, it was advantageous for the patrons to use such labour as opposed to hiring freeborn workers.

The picture that emerges from the evidence is that labourers with ties to servility were able to capitalize on skills and opportunities that were not open to the freeborn worker. Freed labourers existed in such high proportion not despite their servile background but precisely because of these origins. In practice, “it was the combination of trust and familial integration, education and skills, capital investment and general support from their patrons that gave the freedmen their particular advantages and prominence in the urban economy.”

The role of the freedman in labour, thus, grew logically out of his servile past.

Whether slave, freed, or freeborn, labourers worked at jobs that were often dangerous and replete with fatigue. Some workers were more prone than others to physical deformity, disability, or death from the effects of their labour. Metalworkers certainly fall into this category as they worked in environments where any exposed extremity was all-too-vulnerable as molten metal was poured from one container to another. Lucian offers a portrait of the physical appearance of a workman having “. . . unkempt hair, hands full of callous places, clothing tucked up, and a heavy layer of marble-dust . . .”

Even the Olympian god associated with labour, Hephaestus, was pictured as lame with a muscular physique, itself considered a deformity. For such an image to have popular resonance, the deformities resulting from dangerous work must have been quite prevalent.

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100 Lucian, *Somn. 6*. For the conditions endured in some bakeries, Apuleius, *Metam. 9.12*.

It was not only the nature of the work that was dangerous. Apprentices were often vulnerable to abuse at the hands of their instructors. Lucian details the corporal punishment to which he was subjected, being beaten mercilessly after striking a piece of marble with too much force.\textsuperscript{102} That corporeal punishment was a routine element of craft training and did sometimes result in serious injury to the apprentice is echoed in the legal sources. Julian discusses a case where a father apprentices his son to a shoemaker who blinded the freeborn boy in one eye after striking him with a shoemaker’s form.\textsuperscript{103}

The work of the slave and day-labourer is thought to be so saturated with toil and hardships that it supplied the metaphor for the misery from which Job suffered (7:1-3). For Job, to exist is to be enslaved and forced to work, but even he prays that humans may enjoy the gladness a day-labourer derives from his day (Job 14:1-16). This can be interpreted as Job’s plea that humans be permitted to rest from their sufferings in the same way that the day-labourer is relieved for the short period of the day when his work burdens are behind him and he is free from work. The \textit{Testament of Job} draws upon this idea to illustrate Job’s willingness to bear his manifold sufferings with patience: “I for my part am a wretch immersed in labour by day and in pain by night, just so I might provide a loaf of bread and bring it to you” (\textit{T. Job} 12).\textsuperscript{104}

In Sirach, rest after work is regarded as a laudable goal (Sir 11:17-19; 31:3-4; cf. 28:16; 51:27-28). Sirach recognized that work and repose were divided between the different classes, and it was necessary for the slave to work in order that his master may find rest (Sir 33:25). Whereas the rich man was able to find contentment in rest after gathering his possessions, the

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{Lucian, \textit{Somn.} 3-4.}
\footnote{Dig. 9.2.5.}
\footnote{A common theme throughout the Hebrew Bible is engaging in heavy and burdensome work with no prospect of success. See, for example, Isa 19:5ff.; 49:4; 57:10; Jer 18:1-12; 51:58; Ezek 29:18ff.; Mic 6:16; Job 3:13-14; 9:29.}
\end{footnotes}
poor man had no such luxury. If the poor man did not work, he did not eat (Sir 31:3-4).

Matthew’s Gospel likewise reflects that work is a heavy strain and rest is the ideal. Jesus calls out, “Come to me, all who labour (οἱ κοπιῶντες) and are burdened, and I will give you rest” (Matt 11:28).

4.2.4 Economic Benefits of Professional Voluntary Associations

One final point needs to be examined when considering the urban realities of manual labourers, and that is their involvement with professional voluntary associations. Here, we will delve a little deeper into the economic advantages of a labourer’s membership in a professional voluntary association.

Contrary to the view expressed most strongly by Finley that “the communal activity [of professional collegia] was restricted to religious, social, and benevolent affairs,” and that the collegia themselves were neither “guilds trying to foster or protect the economic interests of their members” nor “regulatory or protective agencies in their respective trades,” evidence can be deduced that associations worked to secure the economic interests of their members.

Labourers within associations were able to protect their economic interests by erecting boundaries, thereby ensuring that membership in their associations remained exclusive. One method to establish such boundaries was through the regulation of membership. For example, a

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106 Finley, Ancient Economy, 81 and 138. MacMullen, Roman Social Relations, 76, follows Finley’s lead claiming that collegia were “more interested in the pursuit of honour than economic advantage;” cf. Burford, Craftsmen, 159-64.
number of workers who dealt with ivory and citrus-wood stipulated that only those who practiced the same trade would be admitted as members to their collegium.\textsuperscript{107} In this association, particular members were designated as \textit{curatores} in order to vet potential candidates.

Another method to ensure membership in an association remained exclusive was by demanding new members pay entrance fees. The statutes of the ivory and citrus-wood merchants likely contained a regulation for entrance fees, but unfortunately, the precise sum can no longer be read.\textsuperscript{108} Membership dues could be collected for attendance at each meeting, with some associations stipulating that dues were still to be paid regardless if the member was absent.\textsuperscript{109}

Exclusivity of membership enables economic benefits to transpire. Although \textit{P. Mich.} 5.243 is damaged and missing a portion of its beginning, this text of the \textit{nomoi} of an unidentified association provides a solid example of how regulation of behaviour and fostering a sense of collegiality can have economic impact.\textsuperscript{110} The relationship between collegiality and economic interests can be seen in the various fines and fees levied for infractions: it is a much worse offence to slander or prosecute a fellow member than it is to shove in front of another at a banquet. The association is encouraging dispute resolution by the members themselves, as opposed to bringing the quarrel before local authorities. If the latter option were chosen, it would in all probability prove to be more costly in effort, money, and resources than informal measures taken within the guild. By limiting or negating potential negative economic impact

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{107} \textit{CIL} 6.33885. \\
\textsuperscript{108} \textit{CIL} 6.33885, lines 24-25. Other examples of initiation dues include \textit{IG} II\textsuperscript{2} 1298, 1368; \textit{IG} V/1 1390. \\
\textsuperscript{109} For dues paid during meeting attendance, see, \textit{IG} XII/1 155; \textit{CIL} 14.2112; \textit{IDelos} 1519; 1521; \textit{P.Mich.Tebt.} 243; \textit{P.Cairo.Dem.} 30605, 30606. In \textit{abstentia}, \textit{IG} II\textsuperscript{2} 1339 where absent members pay a reduced rate. \\
\textsuperscript{110} \textit{P. Mich.} 5. 243, lines 1-12 (\textit{BL} IX, 160).
\end{flushright}
among the membership, associations would be able to better ensure co-operation, growth, and economic stability for its members.\footnote{Such charter provisions are characteristic of what have been termed “trust networks.” See Charles Tilley, \textit{Trust and Rule} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); cf. Venticinque, “Common Causes,” 47.}

Another example illustrates that in a world of precarious employment prospects, associations were able to adopt measures to ensure efficiency, distribution and profits. The \textit{nomoi} of the salt merchants of Tebtunis \textit{(P. Mich. 5.245)} clearly illustrate the regulations of trading zones and internal competition. This text is of interest for two reasons. First of all, the association was foraying into the economic sphere, by allocating trading areas among its members, setting minimum prices, and dealing with sales to outside merchants. This text speaks to an association monitoring and regulating prices, thereby gaining increased proportions of profit and economic advantage for the membership.

Secondly, the division of trading rights for salt and gypsum between Orseus and Harmiusus may point to the fact that these two men enjoyed a higher level of social status, honour, or wealth, relative to other members within the association. Thus, the attainment of some sort of elevated status within the association had tangible economic benefits, in this case exclusive trading rights. The implications for such economic advantages are readily to be seen. Given that many urban labourers could not count on stable employment, any venue that allowed them to mitigate such uncertainty in whatever small way would have been most advantageous.

Although there were certainly gradations of wealth and social status among labourers, many, if not most, occupied positions of vulnerability. The life of the urban manual labourer within the Greco-Roman world was a precarious one, defined by erratic employment, threat of poverty, and dangerousness of work. Nevertheless, through membership in an association, those labourers who could afford membership and related dues could attain some economic benefit.
4.3 Cultural Assumptions Surrounding Manual Labour in the Greco-Roman World

This section of the dissertation does not intend to argue that all manual labourers faced scorn in the wider social environment. Evidence does, however, point to the conclusion that among the elite, handworkers were thought to be of low social status and honour. Given our previous assertion that this ideology did not remain the idiosyncratic musings of a small segment of the population, arguably some handworkers, especially those occupying a low social position on the pyramid of occupations, would have encountered hostility.

4.3.1 Agricultural Pursuits as Ideal

Agriculture shaped Mediterranean societies, but agricultural production was subject to a political and social ruling system that through redistribution, concentrated wealth in the hands of an elite minority. As Garnsey and Saller maintain, “the system of acquisition and transmission of property was the basis of the Roman framework of social and economic inequality.”\textsuperscript{112} With property came honour, social status, and influence. Land was the most recognized form of wealth and power in the ancient world and was esteemed to be the fountainhead of all values, both material and moral. On the flip-side to this equation lay manual labour, which was derided by the elite as contrary to the natural order in its quest for profit.

\textsuperscript{112} Peter Garnsey and Richard Saller, \textit{The Roman Empire: Economy, Society and Culture} (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 36.
Farming was the chief preoccupation for the vast majority of the population throughout antiquity, and it was thought that work on the land was the pinnacle of all values.\footnote{Xenophon, \textit{Oec.} 5.17; cf. Hesiod, \textit{Op.} 302-309; Aristotle, \textit{Pol.} 1258a34-38; 1258b9-21; Cicero, \textit{Verr.} 2.2.28, 155, 175; 2.3.52, 108, 120; 2.4.46; 2.5.184.} In early Greek culture, work was oriented towards the natural order, and there emerged a separation between agriculture and the crafts. The essential basis for the ancient city was a community of small and independent farmers who were freeborn and owned land. Those who were foreigners had no political rights, and as non-citizens they could not own their own land. Thus, they turned to manufacture, commerce, handwork, and trading. Owning land was deemed to be a privilege reserved only for members of the civic community, and foreigners were barred from buying even a small parcel of land belonging to the city.\footnote{Mossé, \textit{Ancient World at Work}, 49; Applebaum, \textit{Concept of Work}, 27.} Although the historical evolution of Greek and Roman cities altered this original social structure, the social ideal throughout antiquity remained the citizen-soldier in possession of his own land.

Such devaluation of manual labour seems to stem from views on the ideal form of acquisition and concepts of use and exchange. For Aristotle, it was the household and agriculture, with their production for use, that was the arena of natural acquisition.\footnote{Aristotle, \textit{Pol.} 1257a30-1257b38; cf. Plato, \textit{Leg.} 743d.} Labourers, traders, money lenders only had an end view of money, and such ends were conceived of as unlimited, unnatural, and unjust.

This concept that labourers were solely interested in making money and profit also led to the idea that handworkers could not be relied upon to defend the interests of the state in times of war. When Cristobulus asked Socrates what trade he should pursue, the answer was “agriculture and the art of war.”\footnote{Xenophon, \textit{Oec.} 4.1.} As a citizen, the farmer was expected to take up arms, leave his home and
fields, and defend his homeland. Upon the cessation of hostilities, the farmer would then return to his fields. The labourer had no connection with the land, lending to the perception that the worker had no enduring ties or loyalty to the city, perhaps even refusing to assist the state:

If in the course of a hostile invasion, the farmer and the labourer (τεχνίτης) were to sit separate, and each asked whether they voted for defending the country or fleeing from the open . . . in these situations then men who deal with the land would vote for defending it, the craftsmen (τεχνίτης) for not fighting, but sitting placid, as they have been reared, aloof from work and danger.117

Aristotle argued that it was only proper for land ownership to be held in the hands of citizens, but large landowners should have others work their land so as to have the necessary time to train and engage in war, politics, and the art of government.118 For Aristotle, pursuit of philosophy was the noblest end, but this could only be mastered by education and training, both of which were only available to the free man.119

Throughout the Roman Empire, as in ancient Greece, the system of values granted prestige to wealth based on land, while wealth and work derived from labour was treated with contempt and disdain. Cicero masterfully articulates the familiar theme from the ancient world, that is, respect for agriculture and the prestige of farming as a way of life.120 Cato echoes the same sentiment: “It is from the farming class that the bravest men and the sturdiest soldiers come, their calling is most highly respected, their livelihood is more assured and is looked on with the least hostility, and those who are engaged in that pursuit are least inclined to be disaffected.”121

117 Xenophon, Oec. 6.5; cf. Plato, Resp. 2.369-372.
118 Aristotle, Pol. 1291a21.
119 Ownership of land as the ideal source of wealth and an unequivocal necessity for a proper man to live a life replete with virtue are attributes not restricted solely to antiquity. The gentiluomini according to Machiavelli’s definition are, “those who live in idleness on the abundant revenues of their estates, without having anything to do with their cultivation or with other forms of labour essential to life” (Machiavelli, Discorsi, 1.55.7).
120 Cicero, Off. 150-51.
121 Cato, Agr. 1.4.
Therefore, in order to begin to understand the derision directed towards labourers, we need to place such concepts in the framework of the Greco-Roman Empire as a whole. This was an agrarian society where wealth was in land and concentrated in the hands of the elite. With ownership of property came virtue, honour and influence. Trimalchio, the freedman of the *Satyricon* reflects this concept, although surely exaggerated, when addressing his dinner-guests:

If you don’t like the wine I’ll have it changed . . . it comes from an estate of mine which as yet I haven’t seen. It’s said to adjoin my estates at Terracina and Tarentum. What I’d like to do now is add Sicily to my little bits of land, so that when I go to Africa I could sail there without leaving my own property.\(^\text{122}\)

The mockery here is what Finley terms the *reductio ad absurdum*, that is, the extension of accepted values to the point of unreasonableness. Thus, Trimalchio was reflecting accepted doctrine, albeit embellished: he was boastful about his wealth and equally pleased with his ownership of land and resulting self-sufficiency.\(^\text{123}\) If agricultural pursuits were conceived of as the fountainhead of all values, both material and moral, labour was the unnatural process of exploitation for material gain.

### 4.3.2 Work in the Divine Realm

As early as the Near Eastern mythic traditions a sharp distinction is maintained between work related to the gods and work performed by humans. In the Atrahasis myth, the ruling gods address Nintu, the goddess who created humanity, requesting that she “create *lulla* (man) that he may bear the yoke, let him bear the yoke assigned by Enlil, let man carry the toil of the gods.”\(^\text{124}\)


\(^{\text{123}}\) Finley, *Ancient Economy*, 36.

The first image in the Hebrew Bible captures work existing without suffering and affliction (Gen 2:15). However, this ideal state is contrasted with the curse in Gen 3:17-19, where man is driven from Paradise and is required to work in much tribulation. In Ecclesiastes, human labour is connected to an unjust world order (Eccl 3:16-21; 4:1-3; 4:4-6; 9:9-15) and is incapable of making any practitioner happy (Eccl 2:1-11; 2:22-23). Rather, the only enjoyment in life is that provided by God (Eccl 2:24-26; 3:12-13, 22; 5:17-19; 8:15; 9:7-10).

Much like the state of affairs described in the Garden of Eden, early Greek authors conceived of their own golden age when everything blossomed and flourished naturally, and there was no need for humans to work. According to Hesiod, once humans lived like the gods, and they were free from toil and affliction.\(^{125}\) In time, though, humans lost their pristine piety and the earth was inundated with decay, “for now is there truly a race of iron; men will never rest from labour and hardship by day, or from perishing by night.”\(^{126}\) Hesiod’s poetry reflects a disesteem for labour, which is elsewhere reflected in his description of how human work was a consequence of the conflict between Zeus and Prometheus.\(^{127}\) Aeschylus elaborates on the myth of Prometheus and how the god gave to humans fire, art, technology, and the crafts. Although the theft of fire helped humans craft their tools, this act required retribution, the result of which is the equation between subsistence and toil.\(^{128}\)

In Roman accounts of the history of technology, divine beings had no part to play in labour. While the most interesting history is recorded by the Roman poet Lucretius, Vitruvius’


\(^{128}\) Aeschylus, *Prom*. 479-529.
recollection is also of particular interest as he was once a craftsman.\textsuperscript{129} In the beginning, humans lived like animals, ignorant of social organization, shelter, and means of regular food supply. With the discovery of fire in the forest, however, came the foundations of social organization and communication through speech, which led to the development of tools and related crafts. From this point onwards society became more civilized.

For Lucretius, the discovery of fire was the result of pure chance because a tree was struck by lightening accidentally. For Vitruvius, chance again plays a part as a tree was ignited by accident only after the branches were rubbed together by strong winds. With this emphasis on chance, divine beings are fully exculpated from the advent of labour and technology. Indeed, in Diodorus’ account, when Hephaistos discovers fire, he is not yet a divine being but merely a representative of humans.\textsuperscript{130} These accounts contain two important points: first, divine beings had no participation in matters of labour; second, labourers themselves did not act ingenuously or with forethought. Rather, they simply responded to external stimuli.

Focussing more narrowly on the relationship between labour and the divine realm, in the Greco-Roman pantheon of gods, manual work was an activity divine beings did not undertake. Cicero ponders the activities of the gods, concluding that they did nothing but find joy in virtue:

\begin{quote}
God does nothing; he is not involved in any occupation, he does not undertake any tasks. He simply finds joy in his wisdom and virtue and knows with absolute certainty that he will forever enjoy pleasures both consummate and eternal. This is the god we should call properly happy; that god of yours seems truly overworked . . . But if some god or other is present within the world, who governs it and steers it, who regulates the course of the stars, the change of the seasons, and the deviations and patterns of everything that exists, and who watches over land and sea to protect human life and human interests - what a tedious and laborious business he is involved in.\textsuperscript{131}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{129} Lucretius, \textit{De Rerum Natura}, 5.940ff; Vitruvius, 2.1.

\textsuperscript{130} Diodorus, 1.13.3.

\textsuperscript{131} Cicero, \textit{Nat. d.} 1.7.
That the God of the Jews was described as a ceaseless worker was disharmonious in Greco-Roman thought. In the third-century debate between Origen and Celsus, Celsus scorned the conception of the divine figure as reflected in Genesis. Celsus emphasized the paradoxical nature of a story that simultaneously attested to the omnipotence of a god whom it also described as engaged in labour.\footnote{Origen, \textit{Cels.} 6.50, 60-62; cf. Cicero, \textit{Nat. d.}, 34.}

This debate both highlights and stigmatizes the incoherent belief that creation can be untaken by a divine figure. Thus, the idea of a divine being engaged in work was highly unusual.

4.3.3 Manual Labour, Slavery, and Lack of Independence and Virtue

From a purely practical point of view, the sight of slaves throughout the Empire employed at heavy labour or with menial tasks equated some forms of work with the idea of bondage. There are instances where free labour and slave labour worked side-by-side receiving the same pay, as the accounts of the building of the Erechtheum show.\footnote{\textit{IG} I² 374.} All workers engaged in the same work, and all received the same pay.

It is not surprising that labourers, no matter their legal status, should be equated with slavery among some strata of the ancient population. Not only did their work put them in a position of dependence with the user or consumer, but throughout the ancient world free labourers worked alongside their servile counterparts in the building industry, in workshops, and...
in the mines. \(^{134}\) Thus, one of the chief stigmas attached to labour in ancient ideology was that it was slavish, a point captured by the Stoic Panaetius:

> . . . all those workers who are paid for their labour and not for their skill [have] a servile and demeaning employment; for in their case the very wage is a contract to servitude. Those who buy from merchants and sell again immediately should also be thought of as demeaning themselves. For they would make no profit unless they told sufficient lies, and nothing is more dishonourable than falsehood. All handicraftsmen are engaged in a demeaning trade; for there can be nothing well bred about the workshop. \(^{135}\)

For Panaetius, the banausic pursuits were tantamount to slavery, and consequently, a free person who took up a trade was perceived to be engaging in a humiliating activity. \(^{136}\)

The equation between labourers and slaves can further be witnessed in a Roman tradition recorded by Suetonius. It was held that if a bird of ill-omen was found perched on the Capital, all artisans and slaves were to be ordered out of the city by the pontifex maximus. Only after they withdrew would the customary formula of supplication be read out which the citizens would repeat in unison. \(^{137}\) We see that both artisans and slaves were equated with one another, and the equivalency between labourers and slaves suggests that those who worked with their hands were denied legitimacy within the polis.

One attribute that was esteemed throughout the Greco-Roman world was independence. Here lies the notion of self-sufficiency exhibited, for instance, in Trimalchio’s claim that he was able to supply all of his own wine from his estates. Agriculture was in part so highly esteemed precisely because it afforded landowners the sense of autonomy, or as Aristotle states, “it is

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\(^{134}\) Herondas recalls Cerdon’s shoemaking shops with thirteen slave assistants. See also, \(P.\ Ox\ y\) 2.262; 41.2957.

\(^{135}\) For the opinions of Panaetius we have to rely on Cicero’s \(De\ Officiis\) (1.150f.).

\(^{136}\) See also Lucian, \(Somn.\) 9.13. Valerius Maximus argued that a man born free would degrade himself if he put himself in the place of a slave, that is, if he engaged in manual labour (9.1.8). Cf. Livy 22.25.28 who characterized the consul in command at Cannae as ignoble due to his origins: “He [Terentius Varro] sprang from an origin not merely humble but vile. His father was a butcher who sold his own meat and employed his son in this slavish occupation.”

\(^{137}\) Suetonius, \(Claud.\)
ignoble to practice any sordid craft, since it is the mark of a free man not to live at another’s beck and call."  

Work was judged to establish a relationship of dependence between the producer and the consumer, the corollary of which developed the notion that the handworker existed solely for the sake of the user. The product, and thereby its producer, were defined by service to the person who uses it, and as such, the labourer’s work, no matter his skill, was considered to be a form of slavery. The idea was about the primacy of the user over the producer:

There are a number of arts in which the creative artist is not the only, or even the best judge . . . A house, for instance, is something which can be understood by others beside the builder: indeed the user of a house - or in other words the household - will judge it even better than he does. In the same way a pilot will judge a rudder better than a shipwright does, and the diner - not the cook - will be the best judge of a feast.  

Poiesis, or production for a stated end, as opposed to praxis, which has no other purpose beyond itself, is a form of servile dependence and an activity not worthy of the free man. Poiesis can further be defined as consisting of a manufacturing operation whereby the producer, through the intermediary of the produced good, enters into a relationship of dependence to the consumer or user. The labourer, in this conception, is no more than an instrument or vehicle for the consumer to have his needs or wants met. Artisans, like slaves, are ruled by others.

For Aristotle, no person could be truly free if under the constraint of necessity. In his ideal city he constructed a world where citizens would be free from the demands of work so they could devote themselves entirely to politics, philosophy, and contemplation. To cement the point, it was claimed that “no man can practice virtue who is living the life of a mechanic.”

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140 Aristotle, *Pol.* 1278a. Legislation attributed to the Spartans seemed to have the same end in mind. The true Spartan was the soldier-citizen, who was forbidden to engage in manual labour, so that he might have “an abundance of leisure” (Plutarch, *Lyc.* 24).
The same sort of sentiment is expressed by Plato, who made the explicit equation
between the outward and internal effects of labour. For Plato, manual work actively degraded
the mind,\textsuperscript{141} and thus, a life free from the compulsions of labour was a precondition for virtue, as
labours of any sort “mutilate the soul.”\textsuperscript{142} Indeed, labourers, or as Plato refers to them as “men
with imperfect natures,” possess “bodies [that] are mutilated by the arts and crafts, so too their
souls are doubled up and spoiled as a result of being in mechanical occupations.”\textsuperscript{143}

Therefore, virtue for the Greeks was not simply an abstract habit of the mind, but a
physical quality of the body. The person who labours is consumed solely with the material
realm, and the soul is thereby thought to be constricted to resemble the matter which it worked
and manipulated. According to these Greek philosophers, a soul absorbed with passion for
monetary gain is by necessity closed off from all thoughts of the beautiful and divine.\textsuperscript{144}

Such a sentiment was not restricted to the ancient Greek thought-world, but had traction
throughout the Roman period. Stoicism has often been seen as having a positive view of labour,
and as such, differs dramatically from most other philosophies in antiquity.\textsuperscript{145} Stoic doctrine,
however, cannot be so easily subsumed under the rubric of a positive portrayal of work. In many
cases, Stoic practical morality was founded on accepted cultural norms regarding the vicissitude
of engaging in a trade.

\textsuperscript{141} We have already seen earlier in this thesis that within the social hierarchy of occupations, crafts which
possessed an increased level of intellectual activity were perceived as having more status than others.

\textsuperscript{142} Plato, \textit{Resp.} 495c.

\textsuperscript{143} Plato, \textit{Resp.} 495c-496a.

\textsuperscript{144} Aristotle, \textit{Pol.} 1337b9-14.

\textsuperscript{145} See, for example, Van Den Hoven, \textit{Work}; Hartley, “Portrayal of Work,” 122-23.
Stoicism was one of the main philosophical schools of the Roman period,\(^{146}\) and stressed that the universe was a rational entity subject to rational explanation. Cosmic occurrences and human actions both derive from *logos*, and as a consequence, nature, God, and humans are all interconnected as a derivative of being rational agents. Stoicism, in its view of humanity, does touch upon the nature of work, and although some positive attributes can be mined,\(^ {147}\) Stoic attitudes to labour are far from glowing.

We have already had occasion to draw upon Dio’s *Euboean Discourse* in our previous discussion of the social hierarchy of occupations, in which it was suggested that the urban poor could live a virtuous life but only if they lived in such a manner so as to remain open to the attainment of this quality.\(^ {148}\) Although some occupations were more conducive to the good life, other occupations were by their very nature opposed to such a life of virtue.

That the Stoic attitudes towards labour echoed existing conventions can also be seen in the Roman Stoic philosopher Marcus Aurelius who asserts that what is spiritual is held in higher esteem than that which is material.\(^ {149}\) We are reminded here of Seneca’s argument that philosophers could in no way be held responsible for the creation of labour given that philosophers, by their very nature, turn their mind to higher immaterial concerns.\(^ {150}\) Broadly speaking, therefore, Stoic practical morality was built on cultural descriptions of what it meant to be a manual labourer.


\(^{147}\) Notably Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*.

\(^{148}\) Dio, *Or.* 7.108.


\(^{150}\) Seneca, *Ep.* 90.7ff.
That work at a trade is antithetical to virtue is reflected in Ben Sira, where wisdom and toil are propounded as mutually exclusive. According to the Greek text of Sir 38:24, “scribal wisdom is dependent on the opportunity of leisure, and whoever is free from toil can become wise.” The potter does not have leisure to pursue wisdom because he labours endlessly at the wheel, using both his hands and feet, so that he can “finish his work” (Sir 38:29). In a similar way, the smith “contends with the heat of the furnace,” “sears his flesh,” and “deafens his ears,” in order to “complete the projects” (Sir 38:28). Although Ben Sira does acknowledge the necessity of those who engage in such activities (Sir 38:31-32), he repeats that the life of a labourer precluded virtue and wisdom. Labourers were those who were “not sought for the council of the people,” were “not prominent in the assembly,” nor did they “deliberate about judicial regulations or expound on discipline and justice” (Sir 38:32, 33).

Derogatory statements concerning labourers is a common motif throughout Egyptian literature, spanning various periods.151 Papyrus Lansing, for instance, defames a number of occupations:

The washerman’s day is going up, going down. All his limbs are weak, from whitening his neighbour’s clothes . . . The maker of pots is smeared with soil, like one whose relations have died . . . The carpenter who is in the shipyard carries the timber and stacks it. If he gives today the output of yesterday, woe to his limbs! . . . Come, let me tell you the woes of the soldier, and how many are his superiors . . . He is hungry . . . he is dead while yet alive.152

Further, in the Satire of Occupations, a father reminds his son of the freedom from toil enjoyed by the scribe: “I have seen many beatings; set your limits on books! I watched those seized for labour; there’s nothing better than books!”153 Even though such texts were certainly

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satirical, exaggerated, and intended to be hyperbolic, in order to be effective, the caricature of labourers needed to be based on some modicum of reality.

The contempt of manual labour seen throughout the Greek world and evidenced within various Egyptian tracts, continued to find expression in the Roman world. Roman playwrights of the first and second century heaped scorn upon the handworker, and to earn one’s living by one’s hands was repugnant to Roman values. The shopkeeper, whose livelihood depended on sales, reserved his civility only for those with money to spend. No virtuous person would work for money, although he could honourably perform a service for another out of friendship. In fact, Roman law made a sharp distinction between locatio-conductio (work for wages) which was considered dishonourable and mandatum (work for no pay) which was thought to be honourable. Lucian captures the antithesis between virtue and labour well:

. . . if you turn your back upon these men so great and noble, upon glorious deed and sublime words, upon a dignified appearance, upon honour, esteem, praise, precedence, power and offices, upon fame for eloquence and felicitations for wit, then you will put on a filthy tunic, assume a servile appearance, and hold bars and gravers and sledges and chisels in your hands, with your back bent over your work; you will be a grounding, with grounding ambitions, altogether humble; you will never lift your head, or conceive a single manly or liberal thought, and although you will plan to make your works well-balanced and well-shaped, you will not show any concern to make yourself well-balanced and sightly; on the contrary, you will make yourself a thing of less value than a block of stone.

This section has explored some of the cultural assumptions surrounding manual labour in the Greco-Roman world. Labour was thought to stand in the way of the attainment of virtue, an ideal attained only through the practice of agriculture. In various conceptions of divine activity,

\[154\] For example, Seneca, Ep. 90.30. Cf., Ep. 88.21, where it is stated that the artes vulgares et sordidae concern “the common sort [which] belong to workmen and are mere hand-work; they are concerned with equipping life . . . There is in them no pretence to beauty or honour.” Plutarch, Per. 2.1f. says that labour with one’s hands suggests indifference to things of a higher order. No self-respecting youth would desire to be Phidias or Polyclitus because of admiration for their work, simply because labourers are not worthy of esteem.

\[155\] E.g., Juvenal, Sat. 1.24.10.224; Martial, 3.16.59.

\[156\] Juvenal, Sat. 3.86-108, 212ff; 5.132-37.

\[157\] Dig. 17.1.1.

\[158\] Lucian, Somn. 13.
the gods did not engage in manual toil, and deities that did work were scorned. Further, in a world that idealized self-sufficiency, labourers were conceived as being in a permanent state of dependence. Related to this, any free person who took up a trade was perceived to be engaging in a slavish activity. This was the ethos that surrounded the world of ancient work. As Hock states, “stigmatized as slavish, uneducated, and often useless, artisans, to judge from scattered references, were frequently reviled or abused, often victimized, seldom if ever invited to dinner, never accorded status, and even excluded from one Stoic utopia.”159 The life of the labourer, in both reality and perception, was replete with toil and hardship.

4.4 Conclusions

This chapter has explored the manual labourer in the Greco-Roman world, both as a body and as a rhetorical persona. There were certainly gradations of wealth and varied employment prospects for the handworker; however, some broad themes and experiences encountered by the majority of labourers were laid forth.

Regarding the hardships experienced by labourers on a daily basis, handworkers faced irregular employment prospects resulting in constant threats of falling below subsistence level. Free labourers, however, were in a more precarious position than their counterparts with ties to servility, as the latter’s training and continued ties to their former owners enabled them to take advantage of work not available to the freeborn. No matter the work undertaken, though, it could be dangerous and was often physically exhausting. Labourers found their own sense of belonging and pride through membership in voluntary associations. Here, their participation not

159 Hock, Social Context, 36.
only enabled them to distinguish themselves from their fellow workers, but also enabled certain economic benefits. Thus, the urban reality of the handworkers in the Greco-Roman world was a difficult one.

As to the rhetorical persona of the manual labourer, some very broad cultural assumptions were laid forth. Given that we have seen the downward emulation of elite values in inscriptions, benefactions, and funerary monuments, it is not too much to suggest that the ideology pertaining to those who worked for wages likewise trickled down to the non-elite. We have already seen how the baker Eurysaces emphasizes in his epitaph his role in the public sphere and how Isidorus Eudaemon clarifies that he was not just a general labourer, but a well-to-do perfumer. Among the non-elite, therefore, some of these cultural assumptions may have been directed at those labourers inhabiting a lower rung on the social pyramid of occupations.

We can now draw in some of our conclusions from previous chapters: 1) Paul habitually described his own life as a manual labourer as a source of hardship, stigma, and social shame; 2) among the Corinthian community, there did exist some who “remained in the world,” mimicked elite sensibilities, and had aspirations to higher status; 3) there existed in the Greco-Roman world a social hierarchy of occupations where some forms of labour were afforded more public status than others; 4) the majority of manual labourers faced a life of erratic employment and lived at or near subsistence levels; 5) an ideology existed which privileged agricultural pursuits and lives of virtue and leisure, whereas handworkers were thought morally unfit to possess such qualities.

Given that elite ideology did not remain benign tracts of a small minority of persons but through the process of downward emulation, the non-elite mimicked the prevailing ethos, and given that Paul’s working for wages appears as a point of dishonour in his peristasis catalogues,
and given that there existed some *parvenus* among the Corinthians who were influenced by the relentless competition for social status, honour, wealth, and power, the impact of Paul’s manual labour on his apostleship within Corinth needs full consideration. Can scholars legitimately continue to claim on the basis of 1 Cor 9:1-18 that Paul was ever offered material resources, choosing instead to work? Can scholars continue to claim that Paul’s life as a manual labourer did not call his status as an apostle into question, at least for some within the Corinthian Christ-community? Based on all of the arguments and conclusions reached thus far, such questions deserve attention, and it is to such a task that the following chapter will now turn.
Chapter Five:

Rereading 1 Cor 9:1-18 in Light of the Implications of Paul’s Manual Labour

5.1 New Translation of 1 Cor 9:1-18

This chapter is the culmination of everything that has thus far been argued; it is where the implications of Paul’s manual labour will impinge upon our understanding of his apostleship in Corinth. The purpose of this chapter is to examine anew a text from which scholars have typically derived their understanding of the relationship between Paul’s manual labour and his apostleship.

Up to now, scholarship has been fairly unanimous in its interpretation of Paul’s handwork as a matter of choice. As the review of scholarship in chapter one demonstrated, the scholarly consensus affirms that Paul’s manual labour was a means of self-support which the apostle freely undertook when he refused to exercise his right to receive support from the Corinthians. Thus, 1 Cor 9:1-18 functions either as Paul’s exemplum to the community to forego their own rights
when the situation demands it,\(^1\) or is Paul’s defence against those who question the apostle’s decision to work as a labourer after rejecting or refusing Corinthian offers of material assistance.

In this latter interpretation, Paul not only has to defend the practice of his apostleship as such, but also whether his reluctance to take advantage of his “right” to support implied that the right itself was in question, that is, that Paul was not a true “apostle.”\(^2\)

To arrive at these readings, however, commentators have routinely mistranslated or neglected several features of 1 Cor 9:1-18. To name but one example, the common denominator among all of the above interpretations is the exclusion or misreading of 1 Cor 9:6 where Paul admits that he had no social power but to work (ἠ μόνος ἐγώ καὶ Βαρναβᾶς οὐκ ἔχομεν ἐξουσίαν μὴ ἔργαζεσθαί). This is seemingly a crucial confession, yet this verse has received at the most mere scant attention. Scholars have thus far not been able to explain, and have therefore ignored or misread this admission, and have constructed their interpretations around this blind spot. The basic problem is that traditional interpretations have not actually been able to account for the text as it stands. By contrast, my reading will both not ignore anything but also explain all of the peculiarities of its rhetoric.

I offer below my own translation of 1 Cor 9:1-18, and where appropriate I have highlighted instances where differences in translation occur between my own reading and that of

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the NRSV. Some of these modifications, alongside other neglected features of the text, will provide the subheadings for the arguments which follow. My translation is as follows:

1 Am I not free?²⁴ Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are you not my work in the Lord?²⁵ 2 If to others I am not an apostle, at least I am to you. For you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord.

3 My defence to those who are judging me is this what follows.⁶ 4 Is it not the case that we have the social power to eat and drink? 5 Is it not the case that we have the social power to take about a sister as wife, as also the other apostles and the brothers of the Lord and Cephas?⁸ 6 Or is it the case that only I and Barnabas do not have the social power not to work?⁹ 7 Who soldiers with his own provisions? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat from its fruit? Who shepherds sheep and does not eat from the milk of the sheep? 8 Is it the case that I say these things on the basis of human criteria or is it the case that the law also says these things? 9 For in the law of Moses it is written: “You will not muzzle a threshing ox.” Is it the case that God is

³ 1 Cor 9:1-3 are all constructed in the first-person singular (cf. 1 Cor 9:15-18).

⁴ Paul’s introduction of the notion of ἐλεύθερος is in direct contradistinction to the connotations of servility attached to his manual labour.

⁵ These four questions are all construed with the negatives οὐκ . . . οὐκ . . . οὐχὶ . . . οὐ . . . thus anticipating an affirmative set of answers.

⁶ The NRSV translates ἀνακρίνω as Paul anticipating, rather than responding to, criticism. Thus, the NRSV translation, “this is my defence to those who would examine me.”

⁷ 1 Cor 9:4-7, 10-14 are written in the first-person plural.

⁸ The questions of 1 Cor 9:4-5 begin with μὴ οὐκ, thus anticipating an affirmative answer (cf. 1 Cor 9:1-2).

⁹ The question in 1 Cor 9:6 is introduced differently than the preceding questions. The μὴ in 1 Cor 9:6 does not anticipate the opposite response, as in 1 Cor 9:4-5 (cf. 1 Cor 9:8-9), but rather reveals Paul’s inability not to work.
concerned for the oxen\textsuperscript{10} 10 or is it the case that on our account altogether he speaks? It was written on account of us because the ploughman ought to plough in hope and the thresher in hope of partaking. 11 If we have sown spiritual things among you, how much more if we harvest your material things. 12 If others share in your social power, do we not \{share in your social power\} even more?

We have not used this social power,\textsuperscript{11} but we endure all things, in order not to give any hindrance to the gospel of Christ.\textsuperscript{12}

13 Do you not know that the ones who work in the temple eat from the temple, the ones who serve at the altar share in the altar? 14 In the same way, the Lord commanded the ones who proclaim the gospel to live\textsuperscript{13} from the gospel.

15 But I\textsuperscript{14} have not used any of these things. Nor am I writing these things in order that they might happen in my case. For it is better for me to die than - my boast no one will make of no account.\textsuperscript{15} 16 For if I preach the gospel, it is not my boast. For necessity/distress\textsuperscript{16} is imposed upon me. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel. 17 For if I do this freely, I have a

\textsuperscript{10} 1 Cor 9:8-9, through use of μὴ, expect that the true answer is the opposite answer (cf. 1 Cor 9:4-5).

\textsuperscript{11} Note that Paul does not state that he has refused Corinthian offers of material support, only that he has not made use of the social power he has argued is his.

\textsuperscript{12} Just as Paul begins to explain his reasons for not making use of the food and drink he has just argued are his, he stops to append two additional details of supporting evidence. I suggest that this is a revelatory “Freudian slip.”

\textsuperscript{13} NRSV = “should get their living by the gospel.”

\textsuperscript{14} 1 Cor 9:15-18 (cf. 1 Cor 9:1-3) are composed using the first-person singular.

\textsuperscript{15} Most translators have tried to smooth over Paul’s broken text by erasing the disjointed structure. The NRSV reads “For I would rather die than have any one deprive me of my ground for boasting.”

\textsuperscript{16} The word here is ἀνάγκη, which Paul uses elsewhere to highlight his hardship as a manual labourer (2 Cor 6:4; cf. 2 Cor 12:10).
reward. But if not freely, I am committed with a duty. 18 What then is my reward? In my preaching of the gospel, I offer the gospel without cost so as not to make use of my social power in the gospel.

5.2 Key Features of/Problems with 1 Cor 9:1-18

Paul’s proximity to hunger and thirst as one who worked with his hands is missing from most scholarship on these chapters. In a section of the letter occupied with concerns about the right to eat, we cannot fail to remember Paul’s refrain of his own hunger and thirst as a manual labourer (1 Cor 4:11; 2 Cor 11:27). It is somewhat ironic that the concerns addressed in 1 Cor 8:1-11:1 involve when and in what venue it is permissible to eat, whereas in 1 Cor 9:1-18, Paul’s own proximity to hunger and thirst as a manual labourer are factors calling his apostleship into question. I will strive to acknowledge the non-sense of Paul’s claims: as one who is subject to hunger and thirst as a handworker, the implications of which echo profoundly amongst a powerful number within the Corinthian Christ-community, Paul argues that he is entitled to their food and drink. Given what I have already presented with regards to the social context of the Corinthians, such an argument would come across as absurd, indeed.

The usual readings thus far have failed to ask the following questions: What does Paul mean when he states that he had no right not to work? Why would Paul justify his right to apostolic support at great length, only then to immediately state that this right will, in fact, not be exercised? Clearly, there lies another issue under Paul’s argumentation. As C. K. Barrett acutely

17 The terms ἀνάγκη, ἄκων, and ὀικονομία represent traditional images of servility.
recognizes, “Paul would hardly have spent so long on the question of apostolic rights if his own apostolic status had not been questioned in Corinth.”

In sum, traditional scholarly interpretations fail to adequately consider or they misrepresent the following:

1. Paul acknowledges that his perceived lack of freedom (1 Cor 9:1a) has called his entire apostolic message into question (1 Cor 9:1b). This initial proclamation of freedom is included because as a manual labourer, the Corinthians would have viewed Paul in relation to servility.

2. Paul endeavours to demonstrate that he is an apostle based on very different criteria than that which the Corinthians would expect or recognize (1 Cor 9:1c-2). Paul’s (re-) definition of apostolic standards makes sense when we recognize that his legitimacy as an apostle fails when measured on conventional criteria.

3. What follows 1 Cor 9:3 is Paul’s defence against those who are judging him. Contra the NRSV translation, this is not a hypothetical defence.

4. Paul’s questions in 1 Cor 9:4-5 begin with μὴ οὐκ, thus anticipating an affirmative answer. The questions posed in 1 Cor 9:8-9 likewise begin with μὴ, expecting that the true answer is the opposite answer. The question in 1 Cor 9:6, however, is structured differently. It does not expect that the opposite answer is intended, nor is it another example in support of Paul’s right to Corinthian material goods. The form and substance of 1 Cor 9:6 have been ignored and mistranslated in scholarship, as will be shown later in this chapter.

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5. The idiosyncrasy of Paul’s argumentation is significant and telling, specifically that Paul first thinks it necessary to establish his ἐξουσία to receive support prior to any explanation of his “refusal.” Paul’s sustained exempla in 1 Cor 9:7-14 are unnecessary if Paul had already been receiving, or was offered, recompense for his labours.

6. Paul’s interruption of thought in 1 Cor 9:12b to append additional reasons to support his contention that as an apostle he is entitled to reap the fruits of his labour is a curious “Freudian slip” that has thus far been ignored by traditional scholarship. Furthermore, Paul begins to explain why he has not made use of the ἐξουσία he has just argued must also be his. Traditional scholarship misreads this verse, arguing that Paul is explaining why he has refused material support. In fact, Paul says no such thing. Rather, Paul only states that he has not made use of his ἐξουσία, but it is the “social power” that he is arguing is his as opposed to that recognized among the Corinthians.

7. In 1 Cor 9:15-18, Paul claims freedom in his manual labour and contrary to the general cultural assumptions involving those who worked with their hands, Paul presents his handwork as evidence of his divine commission. The general non-sense of these affirmations have yet to be recognized within traditional scholarship.

Each one of the above points is a key feature to an understanding of the dynamics at work within 1 Cor 9:1-18, yet each one has been mistranslated or neglected in scholarly interpretations. I will redress these blind spots. I will argue that 1 Cor 9:1-18 reveals that Paul was never offered material support by the Corinthian Christ-community. Paul’s life as a manual labourer called his apostolic legitimacy into question for some among the Corinthians (1 Cor
9:1-12a, 13-14), and Paul, out of necessity, presented his weakness as evidence of his divine commission (1 Cor 9:12b, 15-18).¹⁹

Manual labour runs like a red thread throughout these eighteen verses. In a text where Paul defends his apostleship we cannot fail to remember that Paul’s apostleship was inside his work as a manual labourer; the two, in the eyes of the Corinthians, were synonymous.²⁰ That this entire chapter revolves around issues of material support (1 Cor 9:12b, 15-18) and Paul’s legitimacy as an apostle (1 Cor 9:1-12a, 13-14), suggest that it was Paul’s working as a manual labourer, and all of the implications thereof, that raised questions regarding the legitimacy of Paul’s apostleship. Paul not only asserts his freedom as an apostle, defends his apostleship, and proclaims his right to Corinthian material support, but he redefines his slavish position. He is not slavish, he says, because he has worked as a manual labourer, but rather, he is not free, pace 1 Cor 9:1, because he has been entrusted with a divine commission. Paul does not accept that the Corinthians even have a μισθός (1 Cor 9:18) for him; rather, his μισθός is not one of material subsistence at all.²¹ Behind this redefinition of apostleship, and redefinition of μισθός, lay the fact that Paul had never been offered material support by the Corinthians.

This chapter will suggest that rereading Paul’s claims in 1 Cor 9:1-18 in light of his life as a manual labourer point towards the conclusion that Paul’s apostleship generally, and his apostolic authority specifically, were neither acknowledged nor accepted by some within the Corinthian congregation. Although Paul suggests that he has not made use of his apostolic

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¹⁹ We can recall here Theissen’s point: “The theological question of an apostle’s legitimacy is indissolubly linked with the material question of the apostle’s subsistence” (Gerd Theissen, The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity: Essays on Corinth, trans. and ed. John H. Schütz [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982], 54).  
²⁰ As the history of scholarship in chapter one demonstrated, scholars have traditionally separated apostleship and manual labour leading to misreadings of Paul’s apostleship generally, and this text specifically.  
²¹ Cf. 1 Cor 9:11 where Paul compares the less important material goods with the more important spiritual goods.
rights, opting instead to “endure all things” (ἀλλὰ πάντα στέγομεν; 1 Cor 9:12b), Paul’s abused body as a labourer testifies to the weakness of his claim to apostolic authority, and consequently, to the apostolic right of material support. Taking seriously the implications of Paul’s admission that he worked with his hands, a new reading of 1 Cor 9:1-18 will be proposed, suggesting that this is the discourse of a man without a choice trying to defend his claim to apostleship precisely by making a virtue out of a vice.

5.3 1 Cor 9:1-2: Paul’s Claims to Apostleship

Throughout 1 Cor 9:1-18, ἐλεύθερος (1 Cor 9:1, cf. 1 Cor 9:19) and ἐξουσία (1 Cor 9:4, 5, 6, 12a, b, 18) are concepts drawn upon by Paul to defend his apostleship against criticism, and these terms structure his argument throughout 1 Cor 9:1-14.22 I will argue in this section that Paul’s introduction of the notion of ἐλεύθερος in 1 Cor 9:1a confirms that it was precisely the connotations of servility attached to handwork that have caused problems among some within the community (1 Cor 9:1b). Paul, therefore, is forced to draw upon different criteria of apostleship than that expected or acknowledged by the Corinthians (1 Cor 9:1-2). Paul’s intent is to stress that he is free in status as opposed to servile in status, and that he is an apostle and as such, has the right to receive recompense for his apostolic labours.

22 Ben Witherington III, another proponent of reading chapter 9 as an exemplary argument, proposes to read this text as a digression, one intended to provide relief to the audience after the strong tone of the immediately preceding discussion. Drawing upon Quintilian’s definition of a digression (Inst. Or. 4.3.16) who counsels that a change in subject matter is necessary lest the audience be put off, Witherington suggests that “Paul shifts the focus from the Corinthians’ conduct to his own in ch. 9, giving them an opportunity to reflect . . . [on] the logical consequences of their un-Christian attitudes and actions, rather than just condemning them” (Witherington, Conflict and Community in Corinth: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995], 191). The problem with Witherington’s argument is that the staccato volley of questions with which chapter 9 begins does not provide the Corinthians with room-for-pause. If anything, Paul continues his argument with even more vigour than that reflected in the previous chapter.
Paul’s arguments in these two verses can be construed as follows: “No matter the fact that I work as a manual labourer, I am still a free man; I am an apostle, as your own existence demonstrates; I am your apostle and therefore entitled to your material support.” In these first two verses, Paul establishes that irregardless of his means of self-support, he is no less free than others within the community. In constructing these verses, Paul limits his discussion to his own person through use of the first-person singular. It is Paul’s personal freedom and his own apostleship that have been cast under an umbrella of doubt because of the stigma attached to his life as a manual labourer. As Hans Conzelmann recognizes, “he [Paul] does not speak about the freedom of Christians in general, but about his own particular freedom . . . his own particular apostleship.”

5.3.1 Paul’s Proclamation of Freedom and Apostleship (1 Cor 9:1a-b)

Paul’s two initial questions - οὐκ εἰμὶ ἐλεύθερος; οὐκ εἰμὶ ἀπόστολος; - both in the first person singular, demonstrate that Paul is making his own person the subject of discussion. These

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23 Paul will return to the first-person singular in 1 Cor 9:15-18 (1 Cor 9:4-7, 10-14 are written in the first-person plural) where his means of self-support again come to the fore.


25 In some manuscripts, the first two questions are reversed (D F G Ψ Maj a b syב). The text as read is supported by some of the oldest and best manuscripts including by P46 א A B P 33 104 365 629 630 1175 1739 1881 pc vg cop Tert. Given the strong external evidence, coupled with the fact that freedom is the dominant theme throughout 1 Cor 8:1-11:1, the text as is stands is more likely the original sequence. This places the question pertaining to Paul’s freedom in the focal position.
two questions, along with the following two questions, are construed with the negatives οὐκ . . . οὐκ . . . οὐχὶ . . . οὐ. . . thus anticipating an affirmative set of answers.26

The first question of 1 Cor 9:1-18 is made the focal question precisely because Paul, who himself concedes his manual labour brought about social scorn (1 Cor 4:13; 2 Cor 11:7), was not counted as among the free. As one who toiled with his hands, Paul was perceived to be in a continual relationship of dependence upon others, no more than an instrument whereby others could have their goods supplied and physical wants met. Amongst certain members of the Corinthian community, Paul’s toil was regarded as slavish, a position that implied all that was not free.

Lincoln Galloway argues that Paul’s initial two questions are simply rhetorical in nature, since “the Corinthians will readily concede that Paul is free.”27 Galloway interprets freedom as an expression of divine activity that invests the individual with a new identity in God. The problem with this interpretation, however, is that freedom for both Paul and the Corinthians, at best, was rooted not only in divine expression, but also in social realities.

There is a similarity between Paul’s initial question and that posed by Epictetus: “And what do I not have? Am I not without pain? Am I not without fear? Am I not free? (οὐκ ἐμὴ ἐλεύθερος;)”.28 The parallel in question, however, is only coincidental. The context of Epictetus’ discussion is his desire to extol the person who can exist without all of the material trappings of

26 Cf. Fee, First Epistle, 394; Thiselton, First Epistle, 667; Russell Sisson, “The Apostle as Athlete: Socio-Rhetorical Interpretations of 1 Corinthians 9” (Ph.D. diss., Emory University, 1995), 46; Abraham J. Malherbe, “Determinism and Free Will in Paul: The Argument of 1 Corinthians 8 and 9,” in Paul in his Hellenistic Context, ed. Troels Engberg-Pederson (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 239. Willis, “Apostolic Apologia,” 34, suggests that because these questions anticipate a positive answer, Paul is here not engaged in a defence. Willis’ argument falls apart at the next verse where Paul states ἀδικεῖ γε ὑμῖν ἐμή, making it clear that Paul is facing some who question his authority.


28 Epictetus, Diss. 3.22.48.
the world. In Epictetus’ discussion of freedom, the body can be free of material things. Paul’s claim of freedom, however, is in direct opposition to the servile connotations of his handwork, and he claims for himself a freedom that entitles him to the material support of the Corinthians. Therefore, the questions of freedom, leadership, and legitimation are intimately linked to one another.

Robinson Butarbutar suggests that the criticism of Paul’s apostolic status and freedom revolve around the dual questions of Paul’s vision of the Lord and whether the Corinthians are the seal of his apostleship. Butarbutar fails to explain, though, the ways in which freedom and Paul’s vision of the Lord and activity amongst the Corinthians are related to one another. Why would Paul’s freedom be called into question if he had not seen the risen Lord? There is again the failure to read Paul’s discussion of freedom in light of the surrounding social context and specifically, his life as a manual labourer.

That questions surround whether or not Paul should be perceived as free, and therefore also as an apostle, should come as no surprise when it is recalled that manual labourers, in some circles, were regarded as servile, abject, and contemptible. Indeed, they were deemed to be synonymous with slaves, and thus thought to have no time for the cultivation of virtue or moral fortitude. We can recall here Aristotle’s maxim that “it is ignoble to practice any sordid craft, since it is the mark of a free man not to live at another’s beck and call.”

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30 Aristotle, *Rh*. 1367a32. Cf. Lucian, *Sonn*. 9.13. Xenophon of Ephesus (5.8.3-4) relates the lament of Habrocomes, a free person, who was humiliated when forced to take up stonemaking. Valerius Maximus argued that a man born free would degrade himself if he put himself in the place of a slave, that is, if he engaged in manual labour (9.1.8). Cf. Livy 22.25.28 who characterized the consul in command at Cannae as ignoble due to his origins: “He [Terentius Varro] sprang from an origin not merely humble but vile. His father was a butcher who sold his own meat and employed his son in this slavish occupation.” Refer back to section 4.4.3 for examples of the ideology that connects handwork with slavery.
Cultural assumptions within Corinth regarding manual labour would call into question Paul’s claim to apostolic authority. Bengt Holmberg expounds on precisely this point, emphasizing the organic and diffused nature of authority structures, where there exists a “complexity of authority in the Primitive Church - a charismatic form of authority that is continuously being institutionalized and re-institutionalized through the dialectical interaction of persons, institutions and social forces at many different levels within the structure of the Church.”

In Holmberg’s understanding, there exists a whole host of theological, contextual, and social factors that interact in any definition of what it means to be defined, or to define oneself, as an apostle.

It would be erroneous to presume that there were specific criteria that a candidate had to meet before being considered “an apostle,” a check-box so-to-speak. Rudolf Schnackenburg makes precisely this point when he suggests that “Paul did not know of a uniform concept of apostleship which had clear-cut criteria.” Be that as it may, even without clearly delineated rules, it stretches the imagination to presume that one who works at a vulgar trade would epitomize the characteristics of a recognized and accepted apostle. This is all-the-more applicable in Corinth, a city whose residents embodied the ancient Mediterranean drive for honour and social status.

Therefore, these first two introductory questions demonstrate that Paul’s freedom, and related recognition as an apostle to the Corinthians, have been brought into question by some


within the community. This initial proclamation of freedom is included because as a socially dishonoured handworker, the Corinthians would have viewed Paul in relation to servility.

5.3.2 Paul's Basis of Apostleship (1 Cor 9:1c-2)

The stigma attached to Paul’s life as a manual labourer has forced him to defend his claim to apostleship. In this vein, Paul emphasizes that his apostleship is based on his vision of the (risen) Jesus (1 Cor 9:1c), a criterion which is foundational for Paul (οὐχὶ Ἰησοῦν τὸν κύριον ἡμῶν ἑόρακα; cf. 1 Cor 9:16-17; 15:8; 2 Cor 11:5; 12:11-12; Rom 11:13; Gal 1:16). Paul poses this question precisely to establish himself as an apostle, and such a defence was a priority for Paul, given that his legitimacy as an apostle was intimately linked to the authenticity of his gospel (2 Cor 10-13; cf. Gal 1-2). Even though the Corinthians were bringing into doubt Paul’s freedom and apostleship due to the fact that he worked as a manual labourer, Paul is claiming that indeed he is an apostle because of his vision of the resurrected Jesus.

Paul’s fourth question (1 Cor 9:d) and second criterion for the legitimacy of his apostleship - οὐ τὸ ἔργον μου ὑμεῖς ἐστε ἐν κυρίῳ (cf. 1 Cor 3:6, 10; 4:15) - refers to his founding role in the Christ-community of Corinth, which thereby entailed a position of apostolic authority. Paul’s point is that the very existence of the Corinthian community authenticates his apostleship. Although Paul’s manual labour had come to call his apostolic legitimacy into question some time after his initial founding of the community, by virtue of his paternity, Paul contends that he is their apostle.

33 The fact that Paul appends his own resurrection vision and defines this as the last appearance (1 Cor 15:8-9) is significant. Paul is here claiming for his own vision the same vocational connotations as the resurrection experience of the original followers of Jesus (cf. Matt 28:19; Luke 24:47).
Paul’s additional descriptor, ἐν κυρίῳ, likely has a double function. On the one hand, there is a call to community harmony. Rather than there being different factions “in Paul,” “in Christ” and in any number of other apostles (cf. 1 Cor 1:12), the existence of the community is solely “in the Lord.” On the other hand, given the questions that have been raised about the legitimacy of Paul’s apostleship, the existence of the Corinthian Christ-community “in the Lord” stamps Paul’s ministry with the divine seal of authenticity. Hence Paul is not engaging in a “mock defence speech” or appealing to “example” in the rhetorical sense identified by Mitchell, that is, as an illustration in support of an argument.34 Rather, the physical evidence that is the community of the Corinthians is one demonstration of Paul’s apostleship.

In 1 Cor 9:1c-d, Paul is demanding that the Corinthians accept him as an apostle by virtue of both his vision of the resurrected Jesus and their very existence as a Christ-community. Paul could not claim to have been a direct disciple of Jesus, nor did Paul have the support or commission of any other community on which to rest his claim to apostolic authority.35 Therefore, Paul claims for his conversion experience the significance attributed to other dominant apostles’ experiences of the risen Christ (Gal 1:16; cf. 1 Cor 15:1-8) and affirms that the very existence of the Corinthian community attests to his apostleship. This latter claim makes it clear that Paul is contending with social history, that is, with the development of the Corinthian Christ-community, his life as a labourer has called his apostleship into doubt.

Paul continues to pursue his apostolic legitimacy in the following verse (1 Cor 9:2) and Paul’s admission that his apostleship has been called into doubt (εἰ ἄλλοις σὺν εἰμὶ ἀπόστολος,

34 Mitchell, *Rhetoric of Reconciliation*, 130. Cf. Smit, “Rhetorical Disposition,” 485 who contends that Paul is here supplying a pre-emptive answer to “presumed questions which critical listeners might ask.”

ἀλλά γε ὑμῖν εἶμι) provides the guidepost by which to read Paul’s subsequent claims in 1 Cor 9:1-18. There is a fundamental problem that the apostle is addressing here: Paul’s perceived lack of freedom (οὐκ εἰμί ἐλεύθερος;) has called his entire apostolic message into question (οὐκ εἰμὶ ἀπόστολος;).

Who the “others” (ἄλλοις) are is not clear, because Paul has not explicitly identified these particular detractors.36 Although it is a somewhat “intractable task” to attempt to identify Paul’s examiners,37 1 Cor 9:12a, 14 make it clear that there are some in the community who have been receiving the type of support that Paul is arguing for as his “right” (εἰ ἄλλοι τῆς υμῶν ἐξουσίας μετέχουσιν, οὐ μᾶλλον ἡμεῖς; 1 Cor 9:12a). The Corinthian offers of material support to them have put the apostle on the defensive; here are others acknowledged by the community as legitimate leaders in contradistinction to Paul. Paul, therefore, is redefining what it means to be an apostle, and on his criteria, he would most certainly be eligible for such support.

In 1 Cor 9:2b, Paul essentially restates the assertion, “You are my work in the Lord” (1 Cor 9:1d), substituting the phrase “my seal of apostleship” (ἡ γὰρ σφραγίς τῆς ἀποστολῆς υμεῖς ἐστε ἐν κυρίῳ) for “my work.” It is significant that Paul again places the prepositional phrase ἐν κυρίῳ in the emphatic final position (1 Cor 9:1d), modifying both the subject υμεῖς and

36 Although Fee (First Epistle, 396) acknowledges that the problem between Paul and the Corinthians is internal, that is, the “others” are from within the Corinthian community itself, he does leave open the possibility of outsiders beginning to question Paul’s apostleship and sowing seeds of discord (2 Cor 10-13). Paul D. Gardner (The Gift of God and the Authentication of a Christian: An Exegetical Study of 1 Corinthians 8-11:1 [Lanham: University Press of America, 1994], 71), remains ambivalent on the presence of others in the community. While accepting that there may be some who question Paul’s apostleship based on his rejection of material support, he also entertains the idea that the “others” is simply a rhetorical device, used “to confirm Paul’s apostleship as the premise for the forthcoming argument;” cf. Malherbe, “Determinism and Free Will,” 239. Butarbutar (Paul and Conflict Resolution, 112) suggests that the culprits were both from among the Corinthians, who were aligned with other leading figures in the community (1 Cor 1:10-4:21) as well as outside missionaries who accepted financial support from the Corinthians. Theissen (Social Setting, 27-67) argues that Paul’s critics were the charismatic itinerant preachers who practiced poverty as instructed by Jesus in the synoptic tradition (Luke 10:7-8; Matt 10:9-10). C. K. Barrett suggests that the “others” were Cephas’ followers (First Epistle, 204), and Witherington, ignoring the plural ἄλλοις (1 Cor 9:2, 12a) suggests the “others” is Apollos (Conflict and Community, 208).

37 A phrase used by Butarbutar, Paul and Conflict Resolution, 112.
the predicates “my work” (τὸ ἔργον μου) and “my seal of apostleship” (ἡ σφραγίς μου τῆς ἀποστολῆς).\textsuperscript{38} Paul uses the phrases “in the Lord” and “in Christ” interchangeably, pointing to work that has been conducted within the sphere of Christ’s activity, either via Paul’s own apostolic labour or that of other apostles (1 Cor 4:15; Rom 16:12-13). I suggest that what Paul is doing here is taking attention away from his own person, the one whose freedom is in question, and stating that his role as an apostle is through the agency of Christ (cf. 1 Cor 9:16-17). Paul’s final claim to legitimacy in this verse is to underscore the integral relationship of mutual dependence between the apostle and the Corinthian Christ-community.\textsuperscript{39} Paul drily implies that if he is not an apostle, the Corinthians deny their own existence ἐν κυρίῳ (1 Cor 15:12-19).

In sum, in these first two introductory verses in 1 Cor 9:1-18, Paul makes clear that his freedom and related recognition as an apostle, have been brought into question by some socially prominent members within the community. This is not a divine freedom under contention,\textsuperscript{40} but the perceived lack of everyday freedom in socially dishonoured manual labour.

I have suggested that Paul’s manual labour, and the related connotations of servility, have forced Paul to establish apostolic criteria very different from those drawn upon by some or many of the Corinthians. In a discussion revolving around the twin axes of material support (1 Cor 9:12b, 15-18) and the rights of an apostle (1 Cor 9:3-12a, 13-14), the very fact that Paul’s opening salvo (1 Cor 9:1-2) demands an acceptance of Paul’s freedom suggests that his perceived lack of this quality has called his entire apostleship into question, the result of which, I suggest, was the denial of the right to material support.

\textsuperscript{38} Sisson, “Apostle as Athlete,” 50.

\textsuperscript{39} Paul uses the image of the “seal” elsewhere to refer to the Spirit as the “seal” of God’s ownership (2 Cor 1:22; cf. Eph 1:13; 4:30). As Conzelmann points out, however, here the emphasis is less on ownership than on “legally valid attestation” (First Epistle, 152 n. 11).

\textsuperscript{40} Contra Galloway, Freedom in the Gospel, 162
Paul first needs to establish his freedom and apostolic legitimacy prior to moving to a discussion, by way of analogy, of the material rights due to those who labour. This subsequent demonstration is predicated upon Paul’s acceptance as an apostle, a point he has tried to make in 1 Cor 9:1-2, although an apostleship based on very different criteria than those the Corinthians currently acknowledge.

5.4 1 Cor 9:3-12a, 13-14: Paul’s Rhetorical Peculiarity

Paul’s argument in 1 Cor 9:3-12a, 13-14 has a single unifying theme, that is the “right” or “social power” of apostles to solicit support from their communities. Paul begins by noting that the questions and analogies that follow constitute his defence against the doubts that have been raised against him (1 Cor 9:3). Although the questions contained in 1 Cor 9:4-5 may anticipate a positive response, that is, agreement with Paul’s attestations that he does have the right to Corinthian food and drink, 1 Cor 9:6 makes it explicit that such recompense was not forthcoming.

Paul’s admission that he had no social power not to work is then followed by a series of cascading questions, all of which pronounce on a single theme: Paul’s “right” to their support. It is within this section of 1 Cor 9:1-18 that it becomes clear that Paul has never been offered material assistance by the Corinthian Christ-community. If the apostle had been offered material support, why would he go to such lengths to prove the validity of such a “right,” only to immediately state that he has renounced it?

Indeed, Paul is so zealous to affirm his apostleship that when he starts to explain in 1 Cor 9:12b the reasons he has not exercised his apostolic social power, he breaks off to append two
additional details of supporting evidence. The net result is an impassioned defence of his apostleship, a defence I will suggest unnecessary if Paul’s apostolic legitimacy had not been called into question in the first place by virtue of the fact that he toiled as a manual labourer. Although Theissen observes that “what is remarkable is that Paul feels he must justify in such detail his right to support, even though he came under attack in Corinth precisely because he renounced it,” this is an observation that has not yet been adequately addressed within traditional scholarship.

5.4.1 Paul’s Defence to Those Who are Judging Him (1 Cor 9:3)

Paul’s defence (ἀπολογία) to those who have questioned him begins in 1 Cor 9:3. There is some debate among commentators, lexicographers, and grammarians as to how best understand the present participle ἀνακρίνω. Barrett, for instance, translates this as a conative, “those who would like to examine me,” while Willis reads this as a future, suggesting that “Paul is anticipating criticism rather than answering a previous complaint.” Neither the grammar nor the context support such interpretations. The word order of 1 Cor 9:3 demands that what follows αὕτη (“this”) is what is under discussion. Capturing the present aspect of τοῖς ἀνακρίνουσίν and the word order of the Greek, 1 Cor 9:3 should be translated as “my defence to those who are judging me is this . . .”

41 Theissen, Social Setting, 42.

42 Barrett, First Epistle, 201-202; Willis, “Apostolic Apologia,” 34. Cf. RSV, NRSV, both of which translate this verse as “my defence to those who would examine me.”

Those who have rejected the presence of an apostolic defence in 1 Cor 9:1-18 have done so at the expense of a literal translation of 1 Cor 9:3. We can draw attention to Mitchell’s claim that Paul uses the term ἀπολογία “to justify rhetorically his use of himself as the example for imitation.”\(^{44}\) In my opinion, Mitchell does not sufficiently grapple with the problem that Paul’s supposed self-sacrificial behaviour, that is, his renunciation of apostolic support, is applicable to no other person but himself. Mitchell suggests that scholars who interpret ἀπολογία as indicative of apostolic defence must “reconstruct the charge against which Paul defends himself here. But given the line of this argument, the only possible charge which one can unearth is an historically implausible one: *that Paul did not take the Corinthians’ money.*”\(^{45}\) But why precisely is this charge historically implausible? Mitchell responds by disclosing her own personal biases, specifically “that such an accusation would ever have been made is, in my view, scarcely possible.”\(^{46}\) This is a conclusion not based on the social situation in Corinth, nor the realities of what it meant to be a socially low manual labourer, revealing more about Mitchell’s own conception of Paul, than about the historical situation of the apostle himself.

Further, both ἀπολογία and ἀνακρίνω are examples of forensic terms.\(^{47}\) Uses of ἀνακρίνω in the New Testament are concentrated mainly in Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians (1 Cor 2:14, 15; 4:3, 4; 9:3; 10:25, 27; 14:24; cf. Luke 23:14; Acts 4:9; 12:19; 17:11; 24:8; 28:18), suggesting that “judgment” and “examination” were paramount concerns in Corinth.\(^{48}\) As Gardner

\(^{44}\) Mitchell, *Rhetoric of Reconciliation*, 246.

\(^{45}\) Mitchell, *Rhetoric of Reconciliation*, 246; emphasis original.


\(^{47}\) See, Acts 22:1; 1 Pet 3:15 where the noun ἀπολογία refers specifically to a speech of defence.

\(^{48}\) Paul also uses other terms denoting judgement or examination in 1 Corinthians: συγκρίνω (1 Cor 2:13); διακρίνω (1 Cor 4:7; 6:5; 11:29, 31; 14:29); διακρίσις (1 Cor 12:10); κρίνω (1 Cor 2:2; 4:5; 5:3, 12, 13; 6:1, 2, 3, 6; 7:37; 10:15, 29; 11:13, 31, 32).
surmises, these are “Corinthian” words, and “we may deduce that the Corinthians were prematurely adjudging others.”

As Paul insists in 1 Cor 4:3-4, the apostle is not subject to the judgement of others, because the Lord alone is the judge. The implication of 1 Cor 4:3-4 (cf. 1 Cor 2:14-15) is that the Corinthians are in the process of evaluating him; this is not a hypothetical situation, and what follows demonstrates that the issue under contention was related to Paul’s apostolic authority, the right to be supported by the community, and manner of self-support. In 1 Cor 9:3, Paul reveals that he is being judged, and the Corinthians have found the apostle wanting. What follows is Paul’s defence of his apostolic legitimacy.

5.4.2  Paul’s Admission that He has No Social Power Not to Work (1 Cor 9:4-6)

Paul begins his defence in 1 Cor 9:4 by raising the question of whether he and Barnabas are somehow different from the other apostles as far as “having the right” (ἔχομεν ἐξουσίαν) due to apostles. Paul’s questions and analogies in 1 Cor 9:4-7, 10-14 are all constructed using the first person plural, whereas 1 Cor 9:1-3, 15-18 are in the first-person singular. I suggest that Paul has defended his own apostleship in 1 Cor 9:1-3, because his apostolic legitimacy has come under attack due to the stigma attached to his work as a manual labourer. Paul returns to his use of the first-person singular in 1 Cor 9:15-18 because here Paul addresses his means of self-support. In these latter verses, Paul frames his endurance of handwork (1 Cor 9:12b) as

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49 Gardner, Gift of God, 73-77.

50 The mention of Barnabas as a fellow handworker can likely be traced back to the circulation of oral traditions, specifically that Paul and Barnabas were known to have worked as labourers.
something about which he can boast, but in order for his boast to be successful, Paul first needs to prove that he is no different from any other worker who receives recompense for his labour. Therefore, in 1 Cor 9:4-7, 10-14, Paul employs the first-person plural to demonstrate by way of analogy that his apostleship and claim to the right of material support are akin to that due others.

Paul raises the issue of whether he and Barnabas enjoy the same “rights” as do the other apostles in a series of three questions:

\[\text{ἡ οὐκ ἔχομεν ἐξουσίαν φαγεῖν καὶ πεῖν; \ η οὐκ ἔχομεν ἐξουσίαν ἀδελφὴν γυναῖκα περιάγειν \ ως καὶ οἱ λοιποὶ ἀπόστολοι καὶ οἱ ἀδελφοὶ τοῦ κυρίου καὶ Κηφᾶς; \ ἢ μόνος ἐγὼ καὶ Βαρναβᾶς οὐκ ἔχομεν ἐξουσίαν μὴ ἐργάζεσθαι; }\]

Fee suggests that the double negative \(ζ\ ο\) which introduces the first two questions (1 Cor 9:4-5) indicates that what is expected is a negative response to a negatively expressed question. Defined in another way, a positive response was anticipated through the use of a double negative.\(^{51}\) Thus, Paul expects the Corinthians to agree with the proposition that he and Barnabas enjoy these rights. Fee continues to argue, however, that the Corinthians are already aware that Paul has all of these rights as an apostle.\(^{52}\) If such were the case, however, why would Paul expound to such a degree his entitlement to these rights? The more logical scenario is that after Paul’s strenuous affirmation of his freedom and his apostleship, he proceeds to name the rights due to him as one who is an apostle amongst the Corinthians.

The critical word in each of these questions is ἐξουσία, but here it does not carry the same connotations as the term did in 1 Cor 8:1-13, where the nuance of “freedom” predominates. In the present context, the emphasis is on “authority” or “social power.” Ἐξουσία in Mediterranean

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\(^{51}\) Fee, First Epistle, 402 n. 27.

\(^{52}\) Fee, First Epistle, 401.
antiquity can denote the power of the free man to decide his own course of action, and this is the meaning of ἐξουσία in 1 Cor 9:4-6 where Paul lays claim to his apostolic rights. Scholars who interpret 1 Cor 9:1-18 as an exemplary argument read Paul’s ἐξουσία through the lens of imitative behaviour: just as the Corinthians in 1 Cor 8:1-13 have the ἐξουσία to eat and drink food associated with idols, so Paul has the ἐξουσία to support, but has refused it for the sake of others. Hartley, for instance, states that “Paul presents himself as an example of one who, out of consideration for the weak, waives his freedom for their sake. He has abstained from his apostolic ἐξουσία so as not to hinder his mission or burden those to whom he preaches.” The problem with this interpretation is that the text does not lend itself to such a reading, and Paul’s forceful insistence, which is to say his need to insist, on his “social power” or “authority” moves the discussion away from the assumed self-confidence of such self-exemplary behaviour.

What are the rights which the Corinthians have surmised that Paul and Barnabas did not enjoy? With regards to “the right to eat and drink,” some interpreters suggest that the issue, relating back to the previous discussion on idol-meat, picks up on the freedom to eat certain food. One problem with this interpretation is that in 1 Cor 8:1-13, the issue involved eating idol-food and eating it in idol-temples, whereas here, the issue is both food and drink. This

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53 For example, Sophocles, Fr. 88.11; Thucydides, 7.12; Plato, Gorg. 461e; Resp. 554c; Xenophon, Mem. 6.24

54 Helenann Hartley, “‘We worked night and day that we might not burden any of you’ (1 Thessalonians 2:9). Aspects of the Portrayal of Work in the Letters of Paul, Late Second Temple Judaism, the Graeco-Roman World and Early Christianity” (Ph.D diss., Oxford University, 2004), 185-86.

combination suggests that what is at issue is not idol-food, but an assertion of Paul’s right to the Corinthians’ material assistance, that is, their food and drink.56

The following question involves whether the apostles have the right to go about with a believing wife,57 and this has led to a host of interpretations, mostly focussed on whether Paul and/or the other apostles were married.58 I suggest that the axis of the question revolves not around the marital status of apostles, but rather, the social power of an apostle to expect the same provisions for his wife who accompanies him. Paul is not listing different rights, that is, his ἐξουσία to eat and drink and his ἐξουσία to be married. Rather, the privileges referred to in 1 Cor 9:4-5 have as their common denominator the form of material support to which the apostles are rightly entitled. In constructing these questions with μὴ οὐ, Paul desires a positive response; he wants the Corinthians to agree with him that he does have the ἐξουσία to their material support.

Paul likewise constructs the questions 1 Cor 9:8-9 with μὴ, again having the expectation that the true answer is the opposite answer. Thus, “is it the case that I say these things on the basis of human authority?” (1 Cor 9:8) is framed in such a way so as to lead the audience to reply that this is not the case, that is, these things are not on the basis of human authority. The questions in 1 Cor 9:4-5, 8-9, thus, are all introduced with μὴ, anticipating the opposite answer to the question posed.

Paul’s question in 1 Cor 9:6 is introduced differently - the negatives in this verse do not anticipate an opposite answer, but reveal that Paul did not have the right not to work. The form of this question demonstrates that this is not yet another example of Paul’s claim to Corinthian

56 Cf. 2 Thess 3:8-9.
57 Gk. ἀδελφὴν γυναῖκα, literally “a sister as a wife.”
58 Thiselton, First Epistle, 680-82, surveys some of the opinions.
material support, but rather, reveals that no such support was forthcoming from this community.59 This is a realization that has gone unnoticed in scholarship.

Those who contend that 1 Cor 9:1-18 is an example of paradigmatic behaviour seem to have the hardest time explaining 1 Cor 9:6, and tend to disregard this verse altogether in their analyses. This should come as no surprise, however; it is difficult to reconcile the argument that Paul’s choice to work is paradigmatic in nature, when Paul in reality had no choice at all. An article written by Wendall Willis, for example, excludes 1 Cor 9:6 from consideration completely.60 The same omission is found in the dissertation of Helanann Hartley.61 Hartley insists that the main point of 1 Cor 9:1-18 is “to show how one can and ought to abstain from one’s freedom and privileges if the situation demands it.”62 She can only make her argument, however, by ignoring Paul’s admission that he had no privilege from which to abstain.

Scholars who do incorporate 1 Cor 9:6 into their interpretations either pass over or misread Paul’s confession. For instance, Thiselton blatantly ignores Paul’s claim in this verse, limiting his discussion to the role of Barnabas as a “missionary pastor” and the precise definition of ἐργάζεσθαι.63 Mitchell fails to carefully read 1 Cor 9:6 and ends up with a misleading translation, arguing that this verse is one example of various exempla which “demonstrate without a doubt that, since Paul is an apostle, he has certain ἐξουσίαι.”64 In fact, the opposite is


63 Thiselton, First Epistle, 682-83.

64 Mitchell, Rhetoric of Reconciliation, 247.
true: in 1 Cor 9:6 Paul is not claiming that he has a right, but concedes that no such right exists for him!

Scholars who interpret 1 Cor 9:1-18 as an apostolic defence similarly misconstrue Paul’s admission in 1 Cor 9:6. Hock misreads this verse entirely, arguing that Paul is here claiming that he had “every right not to have to work for a living . . . or, more positively stated, to live from the preaching of the gospel.”\(^6\) Contra Hock, rather than claiming any rights in this verse, the apostle simply concedes that he has been offered no such right. Theissen reads much of 1 Cor 9:1-18 as reflective of a conflict between two different types of missionaries, and although he notes the exegetical peculiarity of 1 Cor 9:1-18,\(^6\) Theissen ignores Paul’s admission that among the Corinthians, he never had the recognized social power not to work. Seemingly, Theissen found it difficult to reconcile his argument that Paul’s asceticism was a privilege when 1 Cor 9:6 admits only of lack-of-choice. Finally, Marshall names the concept of freedom as the controlling term throughout 1 Cor 9:1-14, writing that “Paul is free in status as opposed to servile in status . . . his behaviour is consistent in every instance with his being a free person.”\(^6\) Marshall fails to consider 1 Cor 9:6, however, where Paul speaks not of freedom, but the lack thereof. To include one more misstep, Collins, ignoring what Paul concedes, writes that “not only did Paul work for a living; he steadfastly refused the support of others, occasional support from his beloved Philippians being the only documented exception to his general rule (so Phil 4:16), and that may have been due to the assistance of Paul’s female coworkers in Philippi.”\(^6\)


\(^{67}\) Marshall, Enmity in Corinth, 293, 295.

\(^{68}\) Collins, First Corinthians, 337-38.
suggests that Paul refused the support of the Corinthians in a verse where Paul has just admitted that he has no right not to work!

Missing from all these interpretations is a literal reading of 1 Cor 9:6: Paul was never offered the opportunity not to work; that is, he was never offered material support.\(^{69}\) The implication of this question is not that the Corinthians had a problem with the fact Paul had not taken support from them, but precisely that he supported himself in such a demeaning trade.

Paul has attempted in 1 Cor 9:1-2 to establish and document his own criteria upon which he argues his apostolic legitimacy should be based. Some within the community, however, were questioning Paul’s legitimacy as an apostle, doubts that Paul will answer with his defence (1 Cor 9:3). With the rhetorical questions in 1 Cor 9:4-5, the common denominator of which equals issues of food and drink, that is, apostolic renumeration, Paul contends that both he and Barnabas have a right to the Corinthian material support. When Paul later asks, εἰ ἄλλοι τῆς ὑμῶν ἐξουσίας μετέχουσιν, οὐ μᾶλλον ἡμεῖς; (1 Cor 9:12a), it is clear that there were others within the community who have been accepted as apostles, and who have partaken of the Corinthian food and drink. Paul’s question in 1 Cor 9:6 acknowledges that he was not offered such material support from this community.

\(^{69}\) This literal reading of 1 Cor 9:6 is supported by what this dissertation has uncovered elsewhere, that is, Paul’s own descriptions of his manual labour, the social hierarchy of handwork, and the stigma attached to this form of work.
5.4.3 The Idiosyncrasy of Paul’s Argumentation (1 Cor 9:7-12a, 13-14)

Paul elaborates on the questions he posed in 1 Cor 9:4-5, now demonstrating by way of analogy, that just like others who work, the apostles are entitled to renumeration in the form of basic living provisions, that is, food and drink. Paul’s first proofs are drawn from everyday life: the soldier, the farmer, and the shepherd (1 Cor 9:7). Showcased here are analogues wherein workers receive recompense for their labour. As Herbert Gale recognizes, however, these analogies “are not merely illustrative. They are obviously intended to constitute an argument: what is true in these areas of activity ought also to be true for Paul (and Barnabas).”

Thus, no soldier serves at his own expense, every vinedresser eats the grapes, and every shepherd drinks of the milk. The last two examples, namely, planting a vineyard and tending a flock, refer specifically to the recompense as “eating.” Although not as obvious, the renumeration due to the soldier can also be read as related to daily needs, if the soldier is seen as being fed from the booty of war campaigns. Further, as Schrage demonstrates, often corn, meat, fruits and nuts were given to soldiers as opposed to pay (it seems unlikely that a soldier would be expected to carry with him his own food and meat). Thus, ὀψώνιον should be

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71 Gale (Analogy, 104-105) has seen in this analogy certain allusions to Scripture, specifically Deut 20:5-6 and Prov 27:18, 26. Although this Scriptural background is certainly a possibility, it is not as obvious, or as necessary, to Paul’s argument as in 1 Cor 9:8-10.
72 φυτεύω. Paul’s only other usage of this verb occurs in 1 Cor 3:6-8, where it refers to his planting of the gospel message among the Corinthians.
73 C. C. Caragounis, “ΟΨΩΝΙΟΝ: A Reconsideration of its Meaning.” NovT 16 (1974): 51-52, has demonstrated convincingly that the recompense the soldier expected was not in monetary wages or salary, but that of provisions. Uses of this term in the papyri denote the supplying of provisions (e.g., PSI 368, 16; P.Oxy. 898, 31; P.Oxy. 3531: “pay for the provisions yourself until I send you some money”).
74 W. Schrage, Der erste Brief an die Korinther, EKKNT 7/1-3 (Dusseldorf: Benziger Verlag, 1995), 2:296-97.
interpreted as rations, not necessarily as pay in the monetary sense of the term. These three
extamples all work in tandem to illustrate Paul’s basic premise, namely, that all apostles are
entitled to renumeration for the work they do in the form of basic living provisions.

Paul’s reasoning that apostles, including himself and Barnabas, are entitled to receive
support from their communities does not rest solely on an appeal to accepted social codes
governing the recompense due to workers. He provides further evidence by appealing to Jewish
scripture (1 Cor 9:8-10). Here, Paul turns to an argument from authority to demonstrate to the
Corinthians that he does have the right to receive their support.

Paul asks two compound questions and these questions shift Paul’s argument from the
common sense level to a legal and scriptural one. After developing what I have termed the
“common sense” or “natural” argument, Paul appeals to the authority of the Jewish scriptures.

With an explanatory γὰρ clause, Paul cites “the Law of Moses” to support what the
preceding analogies illustrate.75 The first citation from Deut 25:4 demonstrates by analogy from
scripture, like the analogies from 1 Cor 9:7, that the labourer is permitted to partake of the
material benefits of the harvest.76 There has been some debate, however, as to whether this
analogy is yet another claim for Corinthian material assistance.

Conzelmann, for instance, posits that given that the function of Deut 25:4 is “essentially a
rule for the protection of animals,” this text is “contrary to Paul’s exegesis [which is] God’s

75 This is the only occurrence of this phrase in Paul (cf. Luke 2:22; 24:44; John 7:23; Acts 13:38; 15:5;
28:23; Heb 10:28). Paul refers to the law in 1 Cor 14:21 (with no mention of Moses) and in 1 Cor 14:34 (again with
the omission of Moses as well lacking an explicit introductory formula).

76 Cf. 1 Tim 5:18. This text alludes to the agricultural practice of driving an ox attached to a threshing-
sledge in order for the grain kernels to be released from the stalk. The Israelites were forbidden to muzzle the ox, in
order that the labouring animal could eat some of the grain. Scriptural witnesses such as P46, A, B, C, K, and most
miniscules follow the LXX translation of Deut 25:4 by repeating the more literary form for muzzle, ψιφίσμα. As
Metzger notes, however, based on internal evidence, it is more probable that copyists would change the less literary
κηφισματες, to the more literary word, as opposed to the other way around (Bruce Metzger, A Textual Commentary on
the Greek New Testament, 2d. ed. [Stuttgart: UBS, 1994], 492). Therefore, it is more likely that Paul used the more
common word.
concern with higher things.” Conzelmann, though, extracts Deut 25:4 from its surrounding context, which indeed involves the care expressed towards humans. Thus, Deut 24:1-22 deals with the compassionate implementation of divorce (Deut 24:1-4), exemption from military service for the newly married and the limits of pledges of debt (Deut 24:5-9), the minimum wage to be paid to labourers, and care for resident aliens, widows, and orphans (Deut 24:10-22).

Contra Conzelmann, I would argue that the context of Deut 25:4 adheres to Paul’s point throughout these verses, which is the just treatment of those who are defenceless or weak. This coheres with how Paul described his own life as a manual labourer, and how he would have been perceived in the eyes of the Corinthians. As a handworker, he would have been defenceless, prone to hunger and thirst, and subject to abuse, as Paul concedes. The purpose of the analogy from Deut 25:4 thus serves a dual function. On the one hand, just as the “worker,” that is, the ox, reaps material benefit from its labour, so too, should Paul. On the other hand, bearing in mind the larger literary context of Deut 25:4, as one defenceless and whose handwork made him ταπεινός in the wider sphere, Paul is calling for dignified treatment by the Corinthians. Given the context of 1 Cor 9:1-18, this dignified treatment hinges on being offered material support.

As Richard B. Hays points out, Deut 25:4 “functions as an elegant metaphor for just the point that Paul wants to make: the ox being driven around and around on the threshing floor should not be cruelly restrained from eating the food that his own labour is making available . . . so, too, with apostles.”

That Paul applies this analogy to his present situation is clear from his elaboration of the second part of the rhetorical question, δι’ ἡμᾶς γὰρ ἐγράφη ὅτι ὁ ἀροτριῶν

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77 Conzelmann, First Epistle, 154-55.

ἀροτριᾶν καὶ ὁ ἀλοῶν ἐπ᾽ ἐλπίδα τοῦ μετέχειν. Paul may be drawing upon the metaphorical language of Sirach 6:9: “Come to her (Wisdom) like one who ploughs and sows, and wait for her good harvest.”79 Paul is not necessarily citing further scriptural testimony. Rather, he may be highlighting the principle already stated but this time in metaphorical language, knowing that Sirach describes a divine labourer, Wisdom. Together, these work in support of Paul’s point, specifically that he is entitled to the Corinthians’ material support.

In 1 Cor 9:11 (εἰ ἡμεῖς ὑμῖν τὰ πνευματικά ἐσπείραμεν, μέγα εἰ ἡμεῖς ὑμῶν τὰ σαρκικά θερίσομεν;) Paul further illustrates his point through use of the cause/effect principle of sowing and reaping. This not only functions as a conclusion to Paul’s assertion, but dramatically compares the difference of scale between material goods (σαρκικός) and spiritual goods (πνευματικός).

This is very similar to Paul’s argument in Rom 15:27, which claims a reciprocity between the Gentiles partaking of spiritual blessings (πνευματικός) and the collection for the poor in Jerusalem as material blessings (σαρκικός). The argument Paul makes is one of “how much the more.”

Paul’s work in Corinth has been that of “sowing” the gospel message, and as such he has the social power to the expected spiritual benefits. But if Paul does have the ἐξουσία to these spiritual benefits, how much more does he have the ἐξουσία to the (less important) material benefits, especially since he has founded the community (cf. 1 Cor 3:10-11).

79 It is not entirely certain that Paul is alluding to Sir 6:9, although the parallels between both texts make this an attractive agreement. It is also conceivable that Paul’s source may be well-known traditional lore, such as that later recorded in the Mishnah (m. B. Mes. 7.2).
What is interesting in these verses, however, is that whereas in 1 Cor 9:7-10, Paul’s analogy dealt with the ἐξουσία of all apostles to partake of the fruits of their labour, in 1 Cor 9:11-12a, Paul restricts his argument only to his and Barnabas’ ἐξουσία (μέγα ἐι ἡμεῖς ὑμῶν τὰ σαρκικά θερίσομεν). By narrowing his argument to only Barnabas and himself, the implication is that Paul is contending with some of the Corinthians over issues of material support. Paul sets himself up as one, along with others who are due recompense, an unnecessary strategy if his own means of apostolic support had not been called into question. That Paul is forced to defend his apostleship and apostolic authority is further confirmed when Paul concedes in the following verse that “others” (ἄλλοι) have received the type of support Paul is claiming as his right. Paul writes, “If others share in your social power, do we not [share in your social power] even more?”

The Greek allows for more than one possible construction: τῆς ὑμῶν ἐξουσίας μετέχουσιν allows for the genitive ὑμῶν to be understood as a subjective genitive,80 i.e., “share in the rights you grant,” or “what you grant them as a right,” or as an objective genitive,81 i.e., “share in the rights that are theirs given their work among you.” Given the immediate context, wherein Paul is continuously claiming to be an apostle, while some in the Corinthian community are questioning precisely Paul’s suitability for such a role, it seems more probable to translate ὑμῶν as an objective genitive, that is “to partake of the social power that is Paul’s by virtue of his apostleship.”

At first glance, Paul’s assertion that he has more of an ἐξουσία to the Corinthian assistance than others, seems to be the end of his argument for the recompense due to apostles in general,

81 The position of Fee, First Epistle, 410; Schrage, Der erste Brief, 2:304 n. 157.
and his own food and drink in Corinth, in particular. In 1 Cor 9:12b, however, with a series of οὐ . . . ἀλλὰ contrasts, Paul begins to explain not only that he did not partake of his rightful support, but his reasoning behind this decision.⁸² Abruptly, though, Paul drops his train-of-thought and in 1 Cor 9:13-14, he picks up the previous argument once again, offering further examples of recompense for one’s labours. Specifically, in 1 Cor 9:13, Paul draws attention to the custom of temple servants who eat from the food of the altar, and in 1 Cor 9:14, Paul refers to Jesus’ command that those who preach the gospel “live by the gospel.”

In the case of temple service, this is seemingly a more compelling argument which is not based on analogy, as with the farmer and the soldier, for example, but on established precedent no doubt familiar to the Corinthians (σὺν οἶδατε ὅτι; 1 Cor 3:16). What makes this illustration compelling, of course, is that those who are involved in the sacred sphere are compensated for their work; this presses the argument closer to home.

Specifically in this illustration, the recompense for such labour is an “eating” of the temple food (οἱ τὰ ἱερὰ ἐργαζόμενοι⁸³ [τὰ] ἐκ τοῦ ἱεροῦ ἐσθίουσιν). This illustration picks up on the motif of eating from the fruits of one’s labour (1 Cor 9:7), and the basic contention that Paul does have the social authority to food and drink (1 Cor 9:4). In an urban centre such as Corinth, in a community which consisted of both Jews and Gentiles, this comparison may have had more resonance than those previous agricultural examples given. Both in Jewish and pagan temples, the priests who served at the altar shared in the sacrificial food itself. Regarding the former, the scriptural background that priests have a right to a portion of what has been offered in sacrifice is

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⁸² Fuller attention will be paid to 1 Cor 9:12b in the following section.

⁸³ Although this verb regularly means “to labour,” and “to toil,” here it has the meaning of those who are employed in sacred duties. This does not necessarily exclude the nuance of “labouring at” something, but the primary reference is the mode of employment in parallel circumstances.
attested in both biblical and extra-biblical tradition. Although there was no temple for the Jews in Corinth, there would likely have been a synagogue in which they could worship. Of course, behind this example could also lie the Jerusalem Temple, where priests routinely performed sacrificial acts, including the consumption of burnt offerings (cf. Num 18:8-31).

Similarly, the Gentile Corinthians, those who formerly worshipped idols (cf. 1 Cor 12:2), would have drawn upon their previous knowledge of sacrificial offerings, where priests had the right to eat a portion of the meat. Even if the Corinthians no longer associated with temples, they would have understood the comparison between priests sharing in some form of support by virtue of their position and their work.

It is therefore not critical to determine which temple Paul has in mind. For the present purpose, it is sufficient to suggest that temple activity, no matter the specificities of its form, resonated with members of the Corinthian Christ-community. What is necessary to acknowledge is the larger point that those who serve in the temple share in the material benefits of what has been sacrificed. Nasuti reads 1 Cor 9:13 as referring not only to physical recompense, specifically, the eating of what has been sacrificed, but as also containing a spiritual meaning.

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84 For example, Lev 2:10; 5:13; 6:9-11, 18, 22, 23; 7:6-10, 14, 30-34; 10:1-13; Josephus, Ant. 3.224-36.

85 Peter J. Tomson, *Paul and the Jewish Law: Halakha in the Letters of the Apostle to the Gentiles* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 46, has demonstrated that the Jewish diaspora communities organized themselves around the synagogue, “a building which not only served for prayers and festivities but also for study, administration, law courts, meetings, welfare work and other communal affairs.”

86 Stanley K. Stowers has suggested that the central focus of some pagan sacrifices was the eating of the noble entrails (e.g., liver, lungs, heart, kidneys) by the elite participants. See Stowers, “Greeks who Sacrifice and Those who do Not: Toward an Anthropology of Greek Religion,” in *The Social World of Early Christians: Essays in Honor of Wayne Meeks*, ed. L. Michael White and O. Larry Yarbrough (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 326-27.

87 Although the context of 1 Cor 8:1-13 suggest that some still did.

88 Richardson, “Temples,” 98-104, argues that Paul is referring specifically to the Jerusalem Temple and the support enjoyed therein, although most exegetes do not find it necessary to pinpoint the precise background (e.g., Barrett, *First Epistle*, 207; Fee, *First Epistle*, 412).

Although Nasuti is correct in drawing attention to the fact that, for Paul, sharing in the temple has more than physical connections, I would still maintain that the primary purpose of Paul’s inclusion of this example remains his claim to material rights. Paul’s mention of σαρκικός in 1 Cor 9:11 determines that he is speaking in a material sense. This verse is not, therefore, just another example or superfluous to the overall argument, but rather is a further example of Paul’s right to Corinthian material support.

In 1 Cor 9:14, Paul uses the word of Jesus, and the nature of its authority, to support his right amongst the community. By beginning with ὡς καὶ (“in the same way”; cf. 1 Cor 2:11; 11:12; 12:12; 14:9, 12; 15:22, 42), Paul introduces yet another argument which is drawn from authority. Whether or not Paul knew “a Jesus-saying” is a vexed issue, since he otherwise indicates no knowledge of the materials now found in the synoptic tradition (pace 1 Cor 7:10-11). For our purpose, however, it is not important to establish whether Paul did or did not draw upon a Jesus-saying, but rather Paul’s intent in drawing upon the putative command of the Lord.

Most translations of this verse, including the NRSV, RSV, and the NIV, read “those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel.” This translation is based on their following interpretation of 1 Cor 9:15-18 in which Paul states that he refused to get his living from the gospel in Corinth. With the interpretation “should,” Paul is not viewed as being in direct disobedience to the command of the Lord. As Horrell has pointed out, however,

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92 Commentators who are uncomfortable with Paul disobeying a direct command of the Lord fail to contend with 1 Cor 7:11 where Paul does so when it comes to his advice on marriage and divorce.
διατάσσω normally takes the dative case, “a translation which makes ‘those who proclaim the gospel’ the direct object of the Lord’s command.”93 Paul’s intent, thus, in drawing upon the putative command of the Lord was to emphasize to the Corinthians that the apostles are entitled to receive from the community “food and drink.” Therefore, on both contextual and grammatical grounds, 1 Cor 9:14 must be translated “in the same way, the Lord commanded the ones who proclaim the gospel to live from the gospel.”

Paul argues for his ἐξουσία to Corinthian food and drink (1 Cor 9:4-12a, 13-14), an ἐξουσία that he then claims to have refused (1 Cor 12b, 15-18), a refusal thus in opposition to the Lord’s putative command (1 Cor 9:14). Scholars shade their translation of 1 Cor 9:14 so that Paul does not seem to be disobeying a command of the Lord, but these readings are unduly influenced by Paul’s claims in 1 Cor 9:15-18.94 Such translations miss the literal and contextual argument, which is precisely that the apostles, Paul included, are to receive renumeration for their labours, just as the Lord commanded. I suggest that in a series of questions and analogies that all work cumulatively to establish Paul’s right to the Corinthians’ food and drink, 1 Cor 9:14, functions as the ultimate supporting proof.

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94 Scholars fail to recognize that Paul’s claims in 1 Cor 9:15-18 are really quite non-sensical and contradictory. I will acknowledge Paul’s “double-speak” in the following section.
5.5 1 Cor 9:12b, 15-18: Making Virtue out of Vice

In this final section I will argue that in 1 Cor 9:12b, 15-18, Paul returns to a discussion of his own person through use of the emphatic ἐγώ, precisely to counter the doubts raised by his life as a manual labourer. Paul no longer looks outside to soldiers, or farmers, or temple functionaries as a justification of his right to receive support, but returns to a discussion of his own apostleship (cf. 1 Cor 9:1-2). Here, Paul boasts of his enduring hardships, that is, his manual labour.\(^{95}\) Paul paints his humiliation as an aspect of his life which showcases the power of the Lord through him (cf. 2 Cor 12:9). Paul claims to find freedom in his manual labour, but the general non-sense of this affirmation has yet to be recognized within traditional scholarship.

5.5.1 Paul’s “Freudian Slip” (1 Cor 9:12b)

Following his affirmation that as the provider of spiritual goods among the Corinthians he is therefore entitled to their material support, in 1 Cor 9:12b Paul reveals that he has not made use of his social power. Whether or not this ἔξουσία was ever granted is not stated specifically, only that Paul has not made use of the ἔξουσία he has just spent the last nine verses contending is his. What is this ἔξουσία to which Paul is now referring? He is alluding to the previous analogies whereby those who work receive a share of their labour; for Paul, these are material benefits (σαρκικός; 1 Cor 9:11), or in context of the section as a whole, the right to food and drink.

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\(^{95}\) Although Paul does not explicitly state that he supported himself by his own handwork, it is implied in 1 Cor 9:12b where he states that “we” [Paul and Barnabas; cf. 1 Cor 9:6] “endure all things” (πάντα στέγομεν).
Rather than partaking of these material benefits for which Paul has zealously argued, he states: ἀλλ’ οὐκ ἔχρησάμεθα τῇ ἐξουσίᾳ ταύτῃ, ἀλλὰ τάντα στέγομεν, ἵνα μὴ τινὰ ἐγκοπὴν δῶμεν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ τοῦ Χριστοῦ. Paul begins to paint his manual labour in light of his divine commission of which he expands in 1 Cor 9:15-18. The issue is one of how Paul can continue to maintain his integrity amongst the Corinthians in the face of his life as a stigmatized and abused handworker.

The στέγω to which Paul refers is the hardship he faced as a manual labourer. Paul has endured hunger and thirst, ill-repute and abuse, as chapter two of this dissertation has made clear.

As Arthur Dewey notes, the honour of an individual is placed in doubt when one “has not balanced his verbal claims with socially understood reality.” Dewey continues that “one should keep in mind that there were ‘objective criteria’ for determining the validity of such claims to authority: letters of recommendation, ecstasy, wonder-working, rhetorical and interpretive competence . . .” which Paul “evidently did not meet.” Given that Paul did not have these accepted badges of honour, but rather, was a hungry and abused manual labourer, he begins to place his handwork in a new light, as a hardship endured for the sake of the Corinthians. Paul will claim his legitimacy among the Corinthians precisely by presenting his labour as an aspect of his life which points to his divine commission.

But why did Paul endure such hardship? Before he can get to this part of his answer, he interrupts his argument by adding additional reasons why, as an apostle, he should receive material assistance. If Paul’s only concern was to demonstrate why he did not accept the offer of

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material support from the Corinthians, why interrupt his thought by adding additional reasons why he should be offered such support in the first place?

This is a very important observation, a “freudian slip” of sorts, that underscores that traditional interpretations of these verses are insufficient. Hartley, for instance, barely stops to note this interruption. Nasuti explains 1 Cor 9:12b, 15-18 as Paul’s use of an inclusio, Smit sees 1 Cor 9:15-18 as Paul’s expansion on what he introduced in 1 Cor 9:12b, and Marshall, Sisson, Butarbutar, and Mitchell, ignore this interruption altogether. These interpretations are not able to account for the text as it stands.

Traditional scholarship has read 1 Cor 9:12b, 15-18 as Paul’s explanation of the reasons why he has refused to accept offers of Corinthian material support. Thus Horrell suggests that the point of these verses is “to stress that they [Paul and Barnabas] have indeed given up these rights, refusing to use them,” Marshall that “Paul has refused their offer and chooses to work for wages in Corinth,” and Savage points to a ‘teachable moment’ on the part of Paul, speculating that the apostle, “by waiving his right to support he hopes to promote the welfare of the Corinthian brethren by awakening them to the folly of boasting about their own generosity.”

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98 Hartley, “Portrayal of Work,” 188. Hartley simply notes, “after the interruption in thought,” and then moves on to a discussion of v. 13.


100 Smit, “Rhetorical Disposition,” 487.


102 Horrell, Social Ethos, 210. Horrell fails to recognize that Paul’s use of the first-person singular in these verses restricts the argument to his own rights and not those of Barnabas.

103 Marshall, Enmity in Corinth, 304.

I suggest, however, that 1 Cor 9:12b is a very telling hesitation. Just as Paul is about to explain why he did not make use of this ἐξουσία, as did others, he stops to offer two more illustrations in support of his ἐξουσία (1 Cor 9:13-14). Again, I ask, if Paul’s objective was to demonstrate the reasons he did not accept an offer of material support from the Corinthians, why interrupt his thought by adding additional reasons why he should be offered such support in the first place?

Furthermore, and this is yet another point that has been ignored within traditional scholarship, Paul does not explicitly state that he refused to accept offers of Corinthian support. Scholars read into the text that Paul is refusing such offers from the community but this reading is at the expense of a literal reading of the text, Paul’s statement in 1 Cor 9:6 that he has no social power not to work, and the prolonged exempla of workers who are remunerated for their labours. In fact, in 1 Cor 9:12b, Paul only states that he has not made use of his ἐξουσία, but it is the social power and authority that he is arguing are his, as opposed to that recognized amongst the Corinthians.

5.5.2 Paul’s Redefinition of His Handwork (1 Cor 9:15-18)

All of the data thus far presented lead to the conclusion that Paul was never offered material support by the Corinthians. In 1 Cor 9:15-18, Paul must now defend the legitimacy of his claim to apostolic authority and apostolic rights, while at the same time affirming the appropriateness of enduring the hardships and stigma of working as a manual labourer. What is at issue in 1 Cor 9:15-18 is how Paul can continue to maintain his integrity when he boasts of his authority, apostleship, and rights, in spite of the disconfirming evidence of his weak and slavish
occupation. In response, Paul boasts in his endurance of hardships, since it is an expression of his apostolic relationship to Christ. In Paul’s argument, this is the standard of judgement according to which his apostolic authority in Corinth is determined. Indeed, Paul presents his suffering as objective evidence of divine activity, but such a manifestation was not visible to the naked Corinthian eye.

Paul’s boast in his endurance of hardships begins by removing from the Corinthians any “power” they think they have to refuse his material support (1 Cor 9:15). Given the preceding argument where Paul has vigorously presented his ἐξουσία to receive support, it would not be surprising if Paul’s listeners thought he was asking them to provide for his needs. Anticipating this response, Paul rejects this as his motivation. First, he writes, ἐγὼ δὲ οὐ κέχρηκαί οὐδενὶ τούτων, followed immediately by, οὐκ ἐγράψα δὲ ταῦτα, ἵνα οὕτως γένηται ἐν ἐμοί. Others have clearly made use of their social power (1 Cor 9:12a), but not Paul.

Paul’s boast begins with a sudden interruption of thought, resulting in a broken clause. He writes καλὸν γὰρ μοι μᾶλλον ἀποθανεῖν ἢ - τὸ καύχημα μου οὐδεὶς κενώσει. Paul is not speaking negatively of the act of boasting here, as he does elsewhere in the letter (e.g., 1 Cor 1:29; 5:6); rather, Paul is boasting in what is not honourable. Paul does this elsewhere, boasting, for example, in Christ crucified, weaknesses and sufferings (e.g., 1 Cor 1:30-31; 2 Cor 10-12; Gal 6:14), and here Paul boasts in what he has endured.

What specifically is this boast of Paul’s? It is not a boast in the preaching of the gospel. This is immediately clear from the following verse where Paul states that he is under compulsion

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105 An aposiopesis, that is, the interruption of thought in the middle of a sentence. The reading οὐδεὶς κενώσει receives a {B} by the UBS 4th ed., but is supported by very strong external evidence. Most translators have tried to smooth over Paul’s broken text by erasing the disjointed structure. For various examples and commentary see, Roger L. Omanson, “Some Comments About Style and Meaning: 1 Corinthians 9:15 and 7:10,” BT 34 (1983): 135-39. Given Paul’s passionate defence of his apostleship, the UBS reading is likely correct. Cf. Metzger, Textual Commentary, 492.
(ἐὰν γὰρ εὐαγγελίζω, οὐκ ἔστιν μοι καύχημα · ἀνάγκη γὰρ μοι ἐπίκειται · οὕτω γὰρ μοί ἔστιν ἐὰν μὴ εὐαγγελίσωμαι; 1 Cor 9:16). Logically, since preaching the gospel is a necessity, something over which Paul has no control, the preaching of the gospel is not the explicit source or the reason behind Paul’s boast. 106 The emphasis on the necessity of Paul’s preaching is further elaborated in 1 Cor 9:17, where Paul states that he preaches not of his own free will. 107 Given the inclusio between 1 Cor 9:12b and 1 Cor 9:15, 108 Paul’s boast refers back to his not making use of his perceived rights in the gospel, and by extension, his manual labour.

Paul not only boasts in what is weak and dishonourable here; in 2 Cor 10-13 we find the same sort of issue. There again, Paul notes that he has preached the gospel to the Corinthians without cost, and he boasts of the fact that he has not, and will not, burden anyone in the Corinthian Christ-community (2 Cor 11:7-10). 109 This is a boast of weakness, as made clear in 2 Cor 11:30 (εἰ καυχᾶσθαι δεῖ, τὰ τῆς ἰσθενείας μου καυχήσομαι). The Pauline paradox, “when I am weak, I am strong,” compresses into one statement both the judgement of others that Paul was too weak to be a leader, and his own self-perception that his strength was rooted in the new reality of living in Christ. It was from within that reality that Paul appealed to the Corinthians “through the meekness and gentleness of Christ” (2 Cor 10:1). We also need to remember, however, that Paul’s reality was one of desperation.

In the context of this section of Second Corinthians, Paul’s ταπεινός (2 Cor 11:7) in preaching God’s gospel without charge to the Corinthians is part of those weaknesses and

106 Contra Fee, First Epistle, 417.

107 Contra Malherbe, “Determinism and Free Will,” 251, who argues that Paul preaches willingly. The point is not how Paul felt about his commission, but rather how he presents it to the Corinthians.

108 Indicated by the repetition of the verb χράομαι.

109 Once again, Paul does not explicitly state that he refused offers of support, but only that he preached to the Corinthians without cost. Traditional scholarship has interpolated the former reading into the text.
hardships which would make him strong as an apostle of Christ (cf. 2 Cor 12:10). While the Corinthians find Paul’s work offensive, Paul insists that these hardships actually point to his divine commission, which is the same strategy the apostle employs in 1 Cor 9:15-18. We need to acknowledge, therefore, the conventional non-sense of what Paul is claiming and recognize that among the worldly outlook of the Corinthians, the apostle’s claims are the antithesis of what they would seek in a leader.

Paul’s boast that πάντα στέγωμεν, i.e., that he worked as a manual labourer, is the admission of his humiliating corporeal vulnerability. We can reference here Brent Shaw’s argument that:

> [there existed a] history of the words that were used to describe being low to the ground or prone - tapeinos and allied terms (meaning low, prone, close to the ground, and consistently associated with being poor, weak, insignificant, and womanly). . . . The almost palpable association of moral status and bodily position was so strong and so inalterable that the classical conceptions that pervaded the thought-world of the Greek polis and all its successor ideologies surrendered no ground on this matter. To be tapeinos . . . had an indelible connection with shame, humiliation, degradation, and, inexorably, with that which was morally bad.110

When Paul attempts to counter charges against his apostolic authority in Corinth, he commits what seems like a major tactical error: he boasts in his enduring of hardships, he boasts, albeit only indirectly, in his manual labour.

In one respect, Paul needs to bring up his abasement and humility, because these were clearly already contentious issues in Corinth. Beyond such practical considerations, however, Paul’s labour bespeaks, according to Paul, the power of Christ at work through him. Paul refuses to acknowledge that those who have called his labour into question have mastered him; his labour points beyond himself. If the Corinthians boast of their leaders, of their eloquent wisdom and worldly achievements (1 Cor 1:29; 4:7b), Paul boasts about that which is considered low in society.

Paul not only asserts his freedom as an apostle, defends his apostleship, and proclaims his social power to Corinthian material support, but he redefines his slavish position. He is not slavish, he says, because he has worked as a manual labourer, but rather, he is not free, *pace* 1 Cor 9:1, because he has been entrusted with a divine commission (1 Cor 9:16-18).

These verses are usually interpreted as referring to the compulsory nature of Paul’s preaching activity, an argument supported by the voluntary/involuntary comparison in 1 Cor 9:17. Käsemann and Conzelmann both see a link between the divinely chosen prophets who preach under necessity and the manner in which Paul presents his apostleship. Although the subtext between Paul and the biblical prophets may be present in this text, there is another way to read Paul’s claim.

I suggest that the critical word here is ἀνάγκη (1 Cor 9:16b) which, as chapter two of this dissertation has already demonstrated, can refer to the hardships endured as part of Paul’s life as a manual labourer (cf. 2 Cor 6:4). Käsemann approaches this term as a philosophical concept, one used by Paul to “delineate the character of the divine power as sovereign, inexorable and ineluctable.” This is not an impersonal force but is a direct manifestation of divine power which has made Paul its servant. For Käsemann, the use of ἀνάγκη emphasizes the controlling power of God.

Hock, on the other hand, examines this term through the lens of the debate among philosophers over the appropriate means of support. Whereas the Sophists promulgated charging fees for their teaching, the argument Paul describes in 1 Cor 9:7-14, 15-18 is the apostle’s

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counter-argument for working as a means of support. In the same manner as Socrates who did not charge his pupils fees, suggesting instead that the real gain (κέρδος) was friendship as opposed to money, so Paul’s preaching free of charge (ἀδάπανος) enabled him to gain more converts (κερδαίνω; 1 Cor 9:19).

What has thus far been absent from interpretations of these verses, however, are that the terms ἀνάγκη, ἄκων and οἰκονομία, represent traditional images of servility and denote a person of unfree status. Although Paul has claimed that he does have the authority as an apostle to the Corinthians, it is telling that where he describes his own apostleship, it is through the analogy and language of servility. We need to highlight the contradictions evident here: Paul is claiming, on the one hand, that he is free, he is an apostle, yet, on the other hand, he describes his life as a slave.

Paul’s use of ἀνάγκη, I suggest, has a double-meaning. Indeed, it does have the force of necessity and compulsion, but also the force of hardship and distress. Paul admits that his life as a manual labourer is one of hardship, but he paints this life as something which manifests the

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114 Marshall (Enmity in Corinth, 301-3) and Dale Martin (Slavery as Salvation: The Metaphor of Slavery in Pauline Christianity [New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1990]), both identify οἰκονόμος as a Roman slave with managerial responsibility. This identification has been challenged by John Byron (Slave Metaphors in Early Judaism and Pauline Christianity [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003], 235-55), who suggests that the term has as its meaning the voluntary servant of Christ. I contend that all of these interpretations are attempts to neuter an institution that had corporeal vulnerability and abuse at its core. Marshall specifically is guilty of trying to downplay the image of slavery, suggesting that “Paul could simply have said, ‘I am a slave,’ but he has preferred to liken his apostleship to that of a trusted slave” (Enmity in Corinth, 302). The fact remains that this terminology expresses Paul in relation to slavery, a parallel we have already found in relation to Paul’s life as a manual labourer.

115 An elaboration of this concept is found in 1 Cor 3-4 where Paul draws upon agricultural imagery to describe his apostleship. Although each worker is to be paid according to his labour (1 Cor 3:8), the work done ultimately belongs to the master who owns the field.
power of Christ at work in the apostle.\textsuperscript{116} The measuring stick used by those who have drawn Paul’s labour into debate and have called his apostolic authority into question, is, according to Paul, rendered simply illegitimate.

Paul concludes his argument in 1 Cor 9:17-18 with a discussion of his recompense for his preaching of the gospel. Paul claims that his manual labour has made him free to preach the gospel without cost, but to the Corinthians, manual labour embodied all that was not free. Paul is claiming for his manual labour a freedom that was not conventionally accepted. We need to acknowledge, therefore, the non-sense of what Paul is claiming and recognize that among the worldly outlook of the Corinthians, Paul was the antithesis of what they would have sought in a leader.

As in 1 Cor 9:12b, 15, Paul removes any claim that the Corinthians even have a wage (\(\mu\iota\sigma\theta\omicron\omicron\zeta\)) for him; his recompense is spiritual, not material. The paradoxical nature of these verses is often noted. As Conzelmann surmises, Paul’s reward is not to receive a reward.\textsuperscript{117} This is not entirely accurate, however. The point that Paul makes is that although he has the social power to partake of the Corinthians’ “food and drink,” (1 Cor 9:3-12a, 13-14), to receive the Corinthian \(\mu\iota\sigma\theta\omicron\omicron\zeta\), so-to-speak, Paul’s \(\mu\iota\sigma\theta\omicron\omicron\zeta\) is actually the result of the divine grace granted to Paul as God’s co-worker (cf. 1 Cor 3:8-14).

Paul’s claim to the Corinthian \(\mu\iota\sigma\theta\omicron\omicron\zeta\) is an extension of his previous affirmations that he has the same right as other workers to recompense (1 Cor 9:4-5, 7-12a, 13-14), yet Paul makes

\textsuperscript{116}There are parallels with 2 Cor 6:3-4, where \(\acute{\alpha}\nu\alpha\gamma\rho\epsilon\gamma\eta\) is part of a long list of hardships Paul adumbrates, a list which also includes mention of manual labour. In 2 Cor 6, Paul repeats that he puts no obstacle before his ministry (2 Cor 6:3), a claim echoed in 1 Cor 9:12b. In both of these passages, Paul’s boasting in his endurance of hardships is not in itself an occasion for boasting, except insofar as it exemplifies the apostle’s weakness which showcases the power of Christ through him.

\textsuperscript{117}Conzelmann, \textit{First Epistle}, 158.
this claim in the midst of describing his life as slavish. The implications of Paul’s life as a manual labour demand this “double-speak.” The contradictory nature of Paul’s arguments must be recognized.

That Paul paints his μισθός in this way in 1 Cor 9:17-18 is significant because elsewhere Paul reveals that he did accept a μισθός from the churches (2 Cor 8:2; cf. 2 Cor 11:9; Phil 4:14-20). Amongst the Corinthians, however, Paul radicalizes his argument by denying any possibility that the Corinthians have any real μισθός to offer. I suggest that behind Paul’s claim that the Corinthian Christ-community had no μισθός for him, lay the reality that the Corinthians had never offered him such a μισθός at all.

Paul’s concern in 1 Cor 9:15-18 is to show how he can continue to maintain his integrity when he boasts of his authority, apostleship, and social power, despite the disconfirming evidence of his weak and slavish occupation. In response, Paul boasts in his endurance of hardships, since they are an expression of his apostolic relationship to Christ. Paul presents his suffering as objective evidence of divine activity, and for Paul, this is the standard of judgement according to which Paul’s apostolic authority in Corinth is determined. To the Corinthians, Paul the manual labourer was weak, slavish, and devoid of apostolic authority. Paul responds by taking what has called his legitimacy as an apostle into doubt, his life as a labourer, and presents it as tangible evidence of his divine commission.
5.6 Conclusions

Throughout this chapter, I have argued that Paul’s own proximity to hunger and thirst as a manual labourer were factors which called his apostleship into question among the Corinthians. Paul was never offered material support by the Corinthians (1 Cor 9:1-12a, 13-14), and was forced to claim for his manual labour freedom and virtue that were not traditionally recognized (1 Cor 9:12a, 15-18). I have striven to acknowledge the non-sense of Paul’s claims: as one who was subject to hunger and thirst as a handworker, the implications of which echoed profoundly amongst a powerful number within the Corinthian Christ-community, Paul argues that he is entitled to their food and drink.

All the points discussed thus far in this dissertation - Paul’s own degrading descriptions of his life as a manual labourer; the hierarchical nature of the Greco-Roman world and labours performed; the embedded nature of the economy; the difficult work conditions and employment prospects of labourers; the general perception of handworkers as slavish; Paul’s definition of the criteria upon which his apostleship should be based; his claims that as an apostle he has the social power not to work, followed by a concession that he had no such social power; his analogies that labourers should expect to receive a share from their labours; followed by a claim that he chose not to make use of his social power to Corinthian support, boasting instead in the hardships endured as an apostle - lead to the conclusion that the general conception of Paul’s handwork as slavish called his apostolic legitimacy into question, and he had no choice but to present his vice as self-sacrifice. Although Paul suggests that he freely opted not to take advantage of his apostolic “rights,” Paul’s abused body as a labourer testifies to the weakness of his claim to apostolic authority, and consequently, to financial support.
I have identified several key exegetical points that have thus far been ignored or misread in traditional scholarship, all of which point to the fact that Paul’s life as a manual labourer called his apostleship into question. First, Paul’s initial proclamation of freedom in 1 Cor 9:1 is included precisely because as a handworker the Corinthians would have viewed him in relation to servility. Second, because Paul’s apostleship has been called into doubt, he endeavours to demonstrate to his detractors that he is an apostle because of his vision of the resurrected Christ and his founding role in the community (1 Cor 9:1c-2). Third, this (re-) definition of apostolic criteria is followed by Paul’s defence (1 Cor 9:3) of his social power to Corinthian material support. Fourth, although Paul wants the Corinthians to agree that he does have the authority to their food and drink (1 Cor 9:4-5), he immediately concedes that this is a social power that he does not have (1 Cor 9:6). This latter point that has been all-but-ignored by scholars, perpetuating misreadings of the text. Fifth, beginning with 1 Cor 9:7 and continuing through to 1 Cor 9:14 (albeit with a telling interruption of thought in 1 Cor 9:12b), the apostle argues that just like others who receive recompense for their labours, so should Paul. I have suggested that these prolonged exempla are unnecessary if Paul had already been receiving, or was offered, recompense for his labours. Sixth, in 1 Cor 9:12b, Paul commits a revelatory “Freudian slip,” when he begins to explain why he has not made use of the social power he has just argued must be his, too, only to stop to append additional supporting evidence in defence of his social power. Furthermore, traditional scholarship misreads this verse in suggesting that Paul is explaining why he has refused material support. In fact, Paul says no such thing. Paul only states that he has not made use of his ἐξουσία, but it is the “social power” that he argues is his as opposed to that recognized among the Corinthians. Seventh, in 1 Cor 9:15-18, Paul explains why he has not made use of his ἐξουσία. Paul claims a freedom in his manual labour and contrary to the general
cultural assumptions involving those who worked with their hands, Paul presents and redefines his handwork as evidence of his divine commission.

1 Cor 9:1-18, therefore, functions as a defence, but not merely of Paul’s apostleship or his manual labour, but rather the legitimacy of Paul’s gospel message as a whole. Paul’s call for the Corinthians to imitate him (1 Cor 11:1; cf. 4:16) in the cruciform identity of Christ, fall on deaf ears when Paul’s status as an apostle is denied. Thus, the burden of Paul’s apostolic legitimacy in 1 Cor 9:1-18 is twofold. First, he endeavours to define his own claim to authority by establishing proper, divine criteria for such a claim to authority (1 Cor 9:1-2), further demonstrated by way of analogy in 1 Cor 9:3-12a, 13-14. Secondly, having done so, Paul gives evidence that his boast concerning the enduring of hardships is, in reality, merely the appropriate human counterpart to being “entrusted with a commission” and working under divine compulsion (1 Cor 9:15-18). Paul presents his weakness, not as something that hinders his apostolic ministry, but rather, as a facet of his life that affords the best platform from which to display the glory of the Lord.

Paul’s hardship is not in-and-of-itself an occasion for boasting, except insofar as it exemplifies the abject humiliation and weakness which allows the power of Christ to work through the apostle. A new reading of 1 Cor 9:1-18 in view of Paul’s life as a manual labourer, and all the related implications, suggests that this is the discourse of a man without a choice trying to defend his claim to apostleship out of necessity. Indeed, he is truly trying to make virtue out of vice, albeit a virtue that is understood to be the power of God in Christ.
Chapter Six:

Conclusion

The purpose of this dissertation has been to contribute to an understanding of Paul’s life as a manual labourer through an examination of the apostle’s own descriptions of his handwork, the social and economic realities of ancient labour, and societal perceptions held towards those who worked with their hands. Ultimately, the aim is to determine whether or not Paul did have the choice to work by rereading 1 Cor 9:1-18 in light of the implications of the apostle’s life as a handworker.

6.1 Summary of Conclusions

In our review of the scholarly literature in chapter one, it was demonstrated that traditional readings of 1 Cor 9:1-18 fall along a continuum that emphasizes either theological or social factors. Plotted within this spectrum are hypotheses which interpret Paul’s claims through the lens of a debate on the proper exercise of freedom, hypotheses about Paul’s call to imitative behaviour, or necessary apostolic defence given the apostle’s rejection of apostolic support. Each one of these construals assumes at its core that Paul renounced offers of support from the Corinthians, and as a result, chose freely to work as a manual labourer. Numerous interpretive
difficulties with all of these proposals were noted, however, calling in turn for a new reading of 1 Cor 9:1-18.

In chapter two, Paul’s own depictions of his life as a manual labourer were considered. In Paul’s letters to the Corinthians and to the Thessalonians, he refers to his work as a scenario of social shame. For Paul, his life as a labourer, among other things, has made him περικαθάρματα τοῦ κόσμου and πάντων περίψημα (1 Cor 4:13). As a manual labourer, Paul suffered from hunger (πεινάω; 1 Cor 4:11; 2 Cor 11:27), from thirst (διψάω; 1 Cor 4:11; 2 Cor 11:27), from tribulations (θλίψις; 2 Cor 6:4; 11:23-26), hardships (ἀνάγκη; 2 Cor 6:4; 11:27), and beatings (πληγή; 2 Cor 6:5; 11:25). Paul worked night and day (νυκτὸς καὶ ἡμέρας; 1 Thess 2:9), and underscored his absolute fatigue and weariness, hardship and distress by describing his handwork as “labour and toil” (κόπος καὶ μόχθος; 1 Thess 2:9; 2 Cor 11:27; cf. 2 Thess 3:8).

These are not characterizations that signify strength, dignity, and honour, but are synonymous with social stigma, abuse, and humiliation. These depictions are not rooted in the language of dominance but, rather, of servility. Chapter two suggested that the implications of this life must have had a noticeable effect among Paul’s communities, especially a community such as Corinth where there were members who aspired to social standing, reputation, and honour in the wider Greco-Roman world.

Economics, social hierarchy and social status were the focus of chapter three. It was demonstrated that within the world of manual labour, there was a social hierarchy which perceived some forms of work as more deserving of status than others. Often these trades were those where some measure of relative wealth could be accrued, enabling the worker to transform that money into symbolic capital, either through the holding of civic positions or through various
public benefactions. This was an important feature of the ancient world to remember as we moved towards an understanding of the impact of Paul’s manual labour within Corinth. Given the social hierarchy in the ancient world of work, and recalling the ways in which Paul describes his own life as one in which he worked with his hands, it was asked whether traditional scholarship could responsibly continue to claim that Paul’s manual labour did not have significant repercussions on his reception as an apostle amongst the Corinthians.

Before the relevance of this question could be applied to our reading of 1 Cor 9:1-18, chapter four explored the manual labourer in the Greco-Roman world, both as a body and as a rhetorical persona. If we take seriously Paul’s claims that he worked with his hands, we first needed to properly situate the apostle within the ancient context of handwork. Although it was noted that there were gradations of wealth and varied employment prospects for the urban manual labourer, some broad themes and experiences encountered by the majority of labourers were laid forth. Regarding the hardships experienced by labourers on a daily basis, the urban reality of handworkers in the Greco-Roman world was a difficult one, and included concerns over intermittent employment prospects, especially for freeborn labourers, and the dangerous nature of much ancient work.

When we turned to perceptions, or more precisely, the cultural assumptions evident in the Greco-Roman world regarding manual labour, it was not argued that all manual labourers faced continual scorn in the wider social environment, but rather, that those labourers who occupied a low position on the socio-economic pyramid of occupations, would have encountered animosity. An ideology existed, reflected both among the elite and non-elite, that perceived manual labour as inimical to the ideal of agricultural pursuits and handwork as antithetical to divine activity.
There was also reflected an equation between work and slavery, with the consequent lack of time to acquire virtue and independence.

Chapter five was the culmination of the entire thesis; namely, a rereading of 1 Cor 9:1-18 in light of the evidence thus far presented. In a world where the economy was embedded in cultural dynamics, where status was embodied, where there was a social hierarchy of occupations, the bottom rungs of which Paul presumably occupied based on his own descriptions of his manual labour, it was argued that it can no longer be claimed without hesitation that Paul was perceived as a legitimate apostle among the Corinthians, and therefore eligible for financial support. Although Paul pronounced himself an apostle (1 Cor 9:1-2), and thereby deserving of apostolic support (1 Cor 9:12b, 15-18), this claim of legitimacy was not echoed by the Corinthians, who equated Paul’s life as a common labourer with a scenario of social shame.

Paul begins his defence by affirming his freedom (1 Cor 9:1a), a necessary assertion given that the Corinthians would have viewed the apostle’s handwork in relation to slavery. This pronouncement is followed by claims that Paul is an apostle (1 Cor 9:1b) because of his vision of the resurrected Christ and his founding role in the community (1 Cor 9:1c-2). Paul then proceeds to a defence (1 Cor 9:3) of his social power to Corinthian material support (1 Cor 9:45), a social power that he acknowledges he does not have (1 Cor 9:6). Beginning with 1 Cor 9:7 and continuing through to 1 Cor 9:14 (albeit with a revelatory interruption of thought in 1 Cor 9:12b), Paul contends that just like others who receive recompense for their labours, so should he. I have suggested that had Paul been offered material support, such exempla would have been unnecessary.

Whereas 1 Cor 9:1-12a, 13-14, demonstrated that Paul did not possess the social power to receive Corinthian material support because of the stigma attached to his life as a manual
labourer, 1 Cor 9:15-18 is Paul’s (re-)presentation of that which has called his apostolic legitimacy into question. In 1 Cor 9:12b, 15-18, Paul explains why he has not partaken of the social power he has contended is his. Traditional scholarship misreads these verses, suggesting that Paul is explaining why he has refused material support. In fact, Paul says no such thing. Contrary to every cultural assumption involving manual labour, Paul presents and redefines his handwork as evidence of his divine commission. A new reading of 1 Cor 9:1-18 in view of Paul’s life as a manual labourer, and all of the related implications, suggests that this is the discourse of a man without a choice trying to defend his claim to apostleship out of necessity. Indeed, he is truly trying to make virtue out of vice.

6.2 Implications for Scholarship

This dissertation has endeavoured to draw attention to the importance of understanding Paul’s manual labour on his apostleship, both how he understood his own handwork, as well as the implications of his labour for his apostolic reception within Corinth. It has been noted throughout this project that Paul’s handwork has been somewhat of a lacuna within scholarship, with the last concentrated effort to understand this aspect of the apostle’s life published more than thirty years ago.¹ It is hoped that my effort here will help to reignite further inquiry into Paul’s life as an urban craftsman.

Firstly, my research demonstrates that there needs to be greater caution concerning the apparent “rush” to force Paul into the mould of an ancient philosopher, and with this, an appreciation of all of the complexities of Paul’s social and theological context. I hope to have

shown that Paul, as a manual labourer, was not a sovereign power, not primarily a theologian; rather, he was a stigmatized and abused manual labourer whose “theology” bespeaks the language of desperation.

Secondly, when we understand the reality of Paul’s life as a manual labourer, as one who routinely went hungry and thirsty, was naked and homeless, we can better conceptualize the apostle’s message as “power through weakness.” As Paul makes clear in his descriptions of his handwork, his apostleship is a glory and power manifested in weakness, and he has little option but to respond to his detractors that “When I am weak, then I am strong.”

Thirdly, chapter three in particular has contributed to the “Old Consensus” versus “New Consensus” debate. Even amongst the non-elite there existed public competitions for honour, plainly showing how issues of social hierarchy and honour were echoed by those outside of elite circles. As opposed to scholars such as J. J. Meggitt who lump the mass of non-elite into an amorphous whole, it has been shown that among manual labourers, there was a complex social and economic hierarchy at every level. The implications of this socio-economic pyramid, of course, had profound implications for Paul’s apostleship within Corinth.

Fourthly, my research contributes to the debate between the so-called “primitivist” and “modernist” conceptions of the ancient economy. Rather than seeing labourers as simply faceless characters as presented in elite literature, this research draws attention to the ways in which craftsmen lived and worked in their surrounding cultural ethos. Calling into question “modernist” interpretations of the ancient economy, we have seen that honour was paramount among all labourers, no matter their relative social status, and was embedded in economic pursuits. Labourers themselves clearly recognized the potent nature of honour in their social
world, and they sought through various means to place themselves within the surrounding social hierarchy.

Finally, the conclusions reached in this dissertation contribute to our understanding of the role of elite ideology and literature in our conceptions of the ancient world. Although it would be naive to suggest that the viewpoints of moralists and philosophers were the only true views of the situation, it would be equally naive to dismiss them as the idiosyncratic ramblings of unusual thinkers. Elite ideology did not remain the benign thinking of a small minority of persons but through the process of downward emulation, the non-elite mimicked the prevailing ethos. It was precisely this ideology that impacted upon Paul’s apostolic reception within Corinth.

6.3 Proposals for Further Research

This project has paid significant attention to Paul’s own descriptions of his manual labour, placed these depictions within the wider Greco-Roman socio-economic context, and reread 1 Cor 9:1-18 through the lens of Paul’s handwork. Certainly, more work remains to be done with regards to the implications of Paul’s work within his other communities. Chapter two has noted that Paul’s life as a handworker was less of an issue in a community such as Thessalonica than in Corinth, but what about in communities such as Galatia or Phillipi? If we take seriously the fact that Paul worked with his hands, we need to understand that this aspect of his life was not peripheral to his embodied gospel of the crucified Christ. In what other ways did Paul’s handwork impinge upon his proclamation of his good news?

If Paul’s life as a manual labourer was akin to the lives of others who worked with their hands, as I have argued, we need to start to pay attention to Paul’s educational background and
rhetorical skill. Can we still claim that as a manual labourer Paul was literate, had rhetorical skill, and/or expertise in ancestral texts? If so, how do we account for this education as a manual labourer? If not, more research needs to be conducted as to the form and formation of the texts as they stand.

Another fruitful avenue for further exploration is to ask whether the founding of the earliest Christ-communities had anything to do with the concrete reality of the availability of work. Did Paul initially visit Corinth or Thessalonica because of available work opportunities, and then initiate these communities after, or as, he located work in these places? Although we may never be able to concretely establish the motivations for Paul’s travels throughout the eastern portion of the empire, issues of work availability may shed some light on the geographical locations of these earliest Christ-communities.

Further work can also be carried out on the social hierarchy of manual labour in the Greco-Roman world. Chapter three concentrated on some literary and inscriptional texts, and began to plot some trades like goldsmiths and silversmiths, higher on the social pyramid than other trades, such as leather-workers and butchers. What about other trades such as weavers, lawyers, or master craftsmen? Where do they rank on the socio-economic hierarchy? Can the social hierarchy of labour tell us anything about the composition of the earliest Christ-communities; that is, were some of the leaders in these groups urban labourers whose nature of work afforded them higher status than others?

In sum, we have seen that Paul’s life as a manual labourer had a considerable impact on his apostleship in Corinth, to the point that his very apostleship came to be called into question.

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2Hock suggests that Paul travelled in hopes of finding employment (Ronald Hock, *The Social Context of Paul’s Ministry: Tentmaking and Apostleship* [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1980], 28), but leaves this observation unexplored. It would be interesting to track, if possible, ancient opportunities for work, i.e., building projects, army encampments, etc., and note the proximity to the early Christ-communities.
by some within this community. This should surprise us only if we imagine Paul to exist in a socio-economic vacuum, devoid of the ancient implications of handwork. Adolf Deissmann once asked whether Paul lost anything when scholarship pictured him within the urban class of his time. “Yes,” Deissmann answers, “he does lose something: the stilts that people had given him.”

It is hoped that the conclusions reached in this dissertation help to situate Paul, the manual labourer, in the socio-economic milieu of the Greco-Roman empire, and that the apostle’s handwork will no longer be given only a cursory glance by Pauline scholars. Rather, the apostle really was “Paul, the manual labourer.”

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