

THE DIVINE BENEFACTIONS OF PAUL THE CLIENT

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1. Introduction

The language and imagery of patronage and clientage permeate the letters of Paul; failure to comprehend and to engage this language and imagery enfeebles Paul's work, both as it is preserved in his letters and in the communities he founded.¹ Such failure also overlooks a feature that adds considerably to the distinction and pertinence of Paul's letters. It is clear from Paul's usage of the language of patronage and clientage that the Apostle to the Gentiles operated consciously and comfortably within the social institution of patronage and clientage, that he knew his God to be a great and generous benefactor, and that he was conscientious to act according to the 'rules' governing interaction between patron and client known throughout the Levant.² This is not to say that

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2. While the rules and expectations of patronage and clientage are most commonly associated with, and most elaborately and explicitly worked out on the social landscape by, the Romans, patronage and clientage can be seen to offer a general frame of reference also for the Greeks, the Roman Greek east, and the Greek Jews. See J. Hellegouarc'h, *Le vocabulaire latin des relations et des partis politiques sous la république* (Paris: Société d'Édition: Les Belles Lettres, 1963); J. Campbell, *Honour, Family and Patronage* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964); C. Moussy, *Gratia et sa familia* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1966); E.

at times Paul was not justifiably wary of the institution of patronage and clientage (especially, it would appear, in his interaction with the Corinthians).³ What I mean to say is that the use of such language is more often than not a seamless part of Paul's epistolary discourse. For the purposes of this study, I am most interested in Paul's use of that language as it appears in his references to his conversion (1 Cor. 9:1,

Gellner and J. Waterbury (eds.), *Patrons and Clients in Mediterranean Societies* (London: Duckworth, 1977); R.P. Saller, *Personal Patronage under the Early Empire* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982); S.N. Eisenstadt and L. Roniger, *Patrons, Clients and Friends* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984); A. Wallace-Hadrill (ed.), *Patronage in Ancient Society* (London: Routledge, 1989); C. Ando, *Imperial Ideology and Provincial Loyalty in the Roman Empire* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000); E. Badian, *Foreign Clientelae (264–70 B.C.)* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1958); D.C. Braund, *Rome and the Friendly King: The Character of the Client Kingship* (London: Croom Helm, 1984); P. Harland, *Associations, Synagogues, and Congregations: Claiming a Place in Ancient Mediterranean Society* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003); T.R. Stevenson, 'The Ideal Benefactor and the Father Analogy in Greek and Roman Thought', *Classical Quarterly* 42 (1992), pp. 421-36; F.T. van Straten, 'Gifts for the Gods', in H.S. Versnel (ed.), *Faith, Hope and Worship: Aspects of Religious Mentality in the Ancient World* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1982), pp. 65-151; P.H. Harland, 'Honours and Worship: Emperors, Imperial Cults, and Associations at Ephesus (first to third centuries CE)', *Studies in Religion / Sciences Religieuses* 25 (1996), pp. 319-34; S.C. Mott, 'Greek Ethics and Christian Conversion: The Philonic Background of Titus II 10-14 and III 3-7', *NovT* 20 (1978), pp. 22-48; *idem*, 'The Power of Giving and Receiving: Reciprocity in Hellenistic Benevolence', in G.F. Hawthorne (ed.), *Current Issues in Biblical and Patristic Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), pp. 60-72; *idem*, 'The Greek Benefactor and Deliverance from Moral Distress' (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 1971). A few contend that patronage and clientage are also a meaningful framework within which to interpret ancient Israelite culture. See N.P. Lemche, 'Kings and Clients: On Loyalty between the Ruler and the Ruled in Ancient "Israel"', *Semeia* 66 (1994), pp. 119-32; H. Olivier, 'God as Friendly Patron: Reflections on Isaiah 5:1-7', *In die Skriflig* 30 (1996), pp. 39-58; J.H. Neyrey, 'Josephus' Vita and the Encomium: A Native Model of Personality', *JSJ* 25 (1994), pp. 177-206; P. Spilsbury, 'God and Israel in Josephus: A Patron-Client Relationship [Ant 1-11]', in S. Mason (ed.), *Understanding Josephus* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), pp. 172-91.

3. P. Marshall, *Enmity in Corinth: Social Conventions in Paul's Relations with the Corinthians* (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1987); A.D. Clarke, *Secular and Christian Leadership: A Socio-Historical and Exegetical Study of 1 Corinthians 1-6* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1993); J.K. Chow, *Patronage and Power: A Study of Social Networks in Corinth* (JSNTSup, 75; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992).

16-17; 15:8-10; Gal. 1:11-17; Phil. 3:4b-11). While studies of ‘Paul and patronage’ do not abound to the same extent as do studies of ‘Paul the convert’,⁴ patronage and clientage as a part of Paul’s lived reality and as a source for his vocabulary is being treated with increasing academic seriousness and vigour.⁵ The semantic field of patronage and clientage goes well beyond the surface description of Hellenistic daily life; the language is also part of the ethos of this culture and those who inhabit it.

2. Ancient Mediterranean Patronage and Clientage

At its simplest, the ancient patron and client relationship is characterized by the patron’s provision of some good (tangible or intangible),⁶

4. A startlingly incomplete list might include: W. James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (New York: Penguin, 1902); K. Stendahl, ‘Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West’, *HTR* 56 (1963), pp. 199-215, further developed in *Paul among Jews and Gentiles* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976); S. Kim, *The Origin of Paul’s Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981); B.R. Gaventa, *From Darkness to Light: Aspects of Conversion in the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986); A.F. Segal, *Paul the Convert: The Apostolate and Apostasy of Saul the Pharisee* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), J.D.G. Dunn, ‘Paul’s Conversion—A Light to Twentieth Century Disputes’, in S.J. Hafemann and O.H.J. Adna (eds.), *Evangelium Schriftauslegung Kirche: Festschrift für Peter Stulmacher zum 65 Geburtstag* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1997), pp. 77-93.

5. F.W. Danker, *Benefactor* (St Louis: Clayton Publishing House, 1982); D.B. Martin, *Slavery as Salvation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990); D.A. deSilva, ‘Exchanging Favor for Wrath: Apostasy in Hebrews and Patron-Client Relationships’, *JBL* 115 (1996), pp. 91-116; H.L. Hendrix, ‘Benefactor/Patron Networks in the Urban Environment: Evidence From Thessalonians’, *Sem* 56 (1991), pp. 39-58; B.J. Malina and J.H. Neyrey, *Portraits of Paul: An Archaeology of Ancient Personality* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996); R.S. Ascough, ‘Benefaction Gone Wrong: The “Sin” of Ananias and Sapphira in Context’, in S.G. Wilson and M. Desjardins (eds.), *Text and Artifact in the Religions of Mediterranean Antiquity: Essays in Honour of Peter Richardson* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2000), pp. 91-110 ; and essays in R.A. Horsley (ed.), *Paul and Empire: Religion and Power in Roman Imperial Society* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 1997).

6. For an account of some of the things a patron might offer, see R.A. Kearsley, ‘A Civic Benefactor of the First Century in Asia Minor’, in S.R. Llewelyn (ed.), *New Documents Illustrating Early Christianity* (North Ryde, Australia: Ancient History Documentary Research Centre, 1994), VII, pp. 233-41;

and the client's obligation to express reciprocity and show gratitude, since clients were never expected to repay a debt in kind.⁷ Clients increased the honour of their patron in a number of ways, but like all things having to do with honour and shame, it had to be performed in the public court of reputation.⁸ The importance of expressing gratitude cannot be underestimated, and examples of it abound.⁹ Seneca even went so far as to claim that thieves, tyrants, and murderers are less despicable than those who fail to show adequate gratitude to their benefactors.¹⁰ Reflected throughout the literary and material realia is the preeminent importance of expressing public gratitude, lest one be blamed for dishonouring one's patron.¹¹

J.H. Elliott, 'Patronage and Clientism in Early Christian Society: A Short Reading Guide', *Forum* 3 (1987), pp. 39-48.

7. Aristotle, *Rhet.* 1385a19; Seneca, *de Ben.* 1.5.5; 2.24; 3.19.1.; Pliny, *Ep.* 10.51. Also many inscriptions found in W. Dittenberger, *Orientis Graeci Inscriptiones Selectae* (2 vols.; repr. Hildesheim: G. Olms, 1902–1903) [OGIS] 339.60-61; 267.36; and W. Dittenberger, *Sylloge Inscriptionum Graecarum* (4 vols.; Hildesheim: G. Olms, 1915–1924) [Syll3] 372.20-28. See C.C. Edgar (ed.), *Zenon Papyri in the University of Michigan Collection* [Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1931], pp. 22, 38-39. See also, P.Ryl. 233 and P.Oxy. 1220 (in A.S. Hunt and C.C. Edgar [eds.], *Select Papyri* [LCL; London: William Heinemann, 1932], I, pp. 323-50).

8. J. Pitt-Rivers, *The Fate of Shechem: Essay on the Anthropology of the Mediterranean* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1977), p. 21.

9. P.Lond. 1912.28-34b, in *Select Papyri*, II, p. 80; IBM 111; 455; J. Benedum, *ZPE* 25 (1977), no. 2, pp. 270-72 (repr. in Danker, *Benefactor*, p. 59); *ZPE* 25 (1977), no. 3, pp. 272-74 (repr. in Danker, *Benefactor*, p. 61). For general examples of the necessity of expressing gratitude to a patron, see Seneca, *de Ben.* 1.1.3, 4-8, 13; 2.22.3; 7.29.2-7.30.1; *Ep. Mor.* 81.21-23, 31; Cicero, *Off.* 1.47-48; Dio, *Orat.* 31.37, 65; Philo, *De dec.* 165-67. On the obligation of gratitude, see Mott, 'The Power of Giving and Receiving', pp. 60-72; see also A.M. Duff, *Freedmen in the Early Roman Empire* (Cambridge: W. Heffer & Sons, 1958); J.W. Hewitt, 'The Terminology of "Gratitude" in Greek', *Classical Philology* 22 (1927), pp. 142-61.

10. *de Ben.* 1.10.4. See also *TAM* 11/3, p. 905 (found in Danker, *Benefactor*, p. 122, col. VIII, ll. 12-15).

11. For examples of benefactors who have written chastising letters to clients who have dishonoured them see, P.Brem 11 (= *CPJ* 2.444); P.Oxy. 1348; *Epistula* 46 (repr. in R.J. Panella, *The Letters of Apollonius of Tyana* [Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1979]). Also the formulaic references in myriad honourary inscriptions that seek to draw attention to the fact that the obligation of reciprocity has been duly discharged—"that they might know that they will receive thanks (*IG* II2 1297)—sug-

To the ancient Mediterraneans, the gods were an obvious source of benefactions, and it is not surprising to learn that the basic ‘rules’ of human patronage and clientage applied equally to divine patronage and clientage.¹² Chrysippus, for example, calls the gods εὐεργετικοὺς καὶ φιλανθρόπους (beneficent and loving of people).¹³ In an inscription from the second–first century BCE, a devotee of Isis writes an encomium that enumerates many gifts received from Isis, among which are salvation, justice, the Greek language, and urban tranquility.¹⁴ The language of oracles also implies that the gods were approached and supplicated as patrons and benefactors. For example, people flocked to the oracle sites to ask the god questions concerning future plans, but also for ways they might secure future divine benefactions.¹⁵ Clearly, worship, prayer and sacrifice all function as ways of honouring divine benefactors, as presumably would proselytization.¹⁶

gests that perceptions of reciprocity were paramount (see also van Straten, ‘Gifts for the Gods’, p. 71; Mott “Greek Benefactor”, pp. 68–71.)

12. Aeschylus, *Agamemnon* 510; Aristophanes, *Birds* 825; Plutarch, *Coriolanus* 2.3.17; Diogenes, *Περὶ βασιλείας* 270.5–11. See J.K. Chow, ‘Patronage in Roman Corinth’, in Horsley (ed.), *Paul and Empire*, pp. 104–25 (119).

13. Found in H. von Arnim (ed.), *Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta* (4 vols.; Leipzig: Teubner, 1903–1924), II, p. 1115. See also Epictetus, *Diss.* 1.4.32; 1.10.3; 2.23.5; *Syll3* 708.25, 30; 709.47; 731.19; 1172.9–10; 1173.9–10; *OGIS* 458; Diodorus Siculus 16.11.1; P.Tebt. 56; B.J. Malina, ‘Patron and Client: The Analogy Behind Synoptic Theology’, *Forum* 4 (1988), pp. 2–32. For the imperial cult, see various essays in Horsley (ed.), *Paul and Empire*, pp. 10–86; P. Garnsey and R. Saller, *The Roman Empire: Economy, Society, and Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), p. 167; Saller, *Personal Patronage*, p. 23; S.R.F. Price, *Rituals and Power: The Roman Imperial Cult in Asia Minor* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984); *idem*, ‘Gods and Emperors: The Greek Language of the Roman Imperial Cult’, *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 104 (1984), pp. 79–95.

14. The encomium reads (ll. 5 and 13) ‘...may words of praise not be lacking in the face of the magnitude of your benefaction [εὐεργεσίας]’: *SEG* 281; repr. in G.H.R. Horsley (ed.), *New Documents Illustrating Early Christianity* (North Ryde, Australia: Ancient History Documentary Research Centre, 1981), I, pp. 10–11.

15. R.C.T. Parkes, ‘Oracles’, in S. Hornblower and A. Spawforth (eds.), *The Oxford Classical Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 3rd edn, 1996), pp. 1071–72.

16. This is based on the analogical assumption that since more clients bring a human patron increased honour, the same would hold true for divine patrons. It also imagines that a proselyte as client goes out and makes converts, not by force, but by advertising the benefits to be obtained from entering into a relationship with a

3. New Testament Evidence

Evidence that patronage and clientage was thoroughly understood by the New Testament writers is found throughout the New Testament.¹⁷ This is reflected in the fact that the various writers use the language of patronage and clientage very adroitly. Whether they are endorsing or criticizing it as a social system, it is clear from their use of it that they are themselves embedded within the system. For example, God is presented as a benefactor¹⁸ who provides various goods: the spirit, miracles (Gal. 3.5), seed to the sower and bread for food (2 Cor. 9.10), consolation (2 Cor. 1.4 and 7.6-7), righteousness (Phil. 3.9), peace (Rom. 1.7; 1 Cor. 1.3, and the opening of each of his letters), wisdom (1 Cor. 1.30; 12.8), the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6.19; 12.7), salvation (Rom. 1.6; 3.11; Phil. 1.28),¹⁹ power (Rom. 15.19; 1 Cor. 2.4), protection (1 Cor. 10.13), faith (1 Cor. 12.9), even Paul's mission itself (Phil. 1.6).²⁰ According to Danker, God's giving up Jesus (Rom. 8.32) reflects the ultimate benefaction by not withholding even what would be considered dear.²¹ The fact that it was exceedingly uncommon for a patron to actually deprive him/herself on behalf of a client only serves to emphasize the drawing power Paul's representation of his God would have had to an ancient audience.

(divine) patron. See for example Danker, *Benefactor*, pp. 173-75; Aelius Aristides, *Speech for Asclepius* 40.6-8; Mk 1.45–2.2.

17. The same can be said for the Hebrew Bible and LXX, though to a more limited degree than for the New Testament. See the term *hesed* not as a technical term of patronage and clientage but nonetheless as something that comes from God and is therefore, semantically, a divine benefaction (Exod. 20.6; 34.6; Lev. 17.11-36; Num. 14.18; Deut. 7.9, 12; Judg. 8.34-35; 1 Kgs 3.6; Isa. 55.3; Joel 2.13; Jon. 4.2; Ps. 86.15; 103.8; 145.8; Neh. 9.17). In the decidedly more Hellenistic Wisdom of Solomon, Sophia and God are represented as benefactors (Wis. 3.5; 11.5, 13; 16.2, 11; Ps. 77.11 (LXX); 3 Macc. 3.19; 6.24 = Seneca, *de Ben.* 1.10.4).

18. Rom. 10.9-13 illustrates explicitly how Paul imagines the patron-client relationship between God and believers: God is a generous benefactor and can be honoured by calling on him, by confessing 'with your lips that Jesus is Lord' (Rom. 10.9) and by believing 'in your heart that God raised him from the dead' (Rom. 10.9; cf. Jn 5.38). See also Jas 4.1-6; Acts 10.38; Lk. 18.35-43.

19. See also Rom. 5.9-10; 7.24-25; 9.27; 10.1, 10, 13; 11.24, 26; 13.11; 1 Cor. 1.18; 5.5; 15.1-2; 2 Cor. 1.6; 2.15; 5.17; 6.2; 1 Thess. 2.16; 5.8-9; Phil. 1.19; 2.12; 3.20.

20. Note also the list of other gifts in 1 Cor. 12.7-10.

21. See Danker, *Benefactor*, pp. 332-36.

In addition to the image of God as a benefactor, Paul uses what is nearly technical language within patronage and clientage, especially χάρις-root words,²² which appear some ninety times in the undisputed letters.²³ For example, Rom. 2.4 and 10.12 refer explicitly to God's generosity as benefactor and ask how anyone could dishonour the riches of this kindness (τοῦ πλούτου τῆς χρηστότητος).²⁴ At 1 Cor. 3.10 Paul claims that his very ability to lay the foundation of the church in Corinth was a 'benefaction of God' (χάριν τοῦ θεοῦ). Terms like εὐχαριστῶ and εὐχαριστία also function explicitly in a system of patronage and clientage. In sixteen of twenty-two occurrences of these words, Paul explicitly thanks God, his divine patron and benefactor.²⁵ The terminology, however, does not have to be present for the sentiment to be. For example, at 1 Cor. 4.7, Paul reflects the necessary relationship between benefaction and gratitude when he asks, 'What do you have that you did not receive? And if you received it, why do you boast as if you did not receive it?'²⁶

4. *Paul's Conversion*

To this point I have avoided referring to Paul's conversion passages when enumerating examples of patronage and clientage in the New Testament in order to sidestep the potential trap of tautology: using evidence of patronage and clientage derived from Paul's conversion passages in order to analyze those same passages. That patronage and clientage appears to have been Paul's default *topos* for discussing his conversion suggests a few things. First, it suggests that he chose this vocabulary because the analogy struck him as apt. We can assume further that Paul presumed others (i.e. his readers/hearers) would have

22. Saller, *Personal Patronage*, p. 21; deSilva, 'Exchanging Favor for Wrath', p. 100.

23. χάρις κυρίου 8 times in letter openings (see also 2 Cor. 8.9). By contrast, Mark and Matthew have no occurrences, John has 4, and Luke/Acts 25. See Danker, *Benefactor*, pp. 333-44.

24. Danker, *Benefactor*, pp. 325-26. See 2 Cor. 6.6 and Gal. 5.22 for χρηστότης as a virtue.

25. Rom. 1.8, 21; 14.6; 1 Cor. 1.4, 14; 14.18; 2 Cor. 4.15; 9.11, 12; Phil. 1.3; 4.6; 1 Thess. 1.2; 2.3; 3.9; 5.18; Phlm. 1.4.

26. See also 1 Cor. 10.30. For non-Biblical examples of the χάρις-root words in a context of patronage and clientage see P.Grenf. 68; *Syll3* 587; BGU I 19.21; BGU IV 1085.5; P.Oxy. 941.

been able to understand the analogy he used to describe human interaction with the gods. This also suggests that it is a helpful analogy for *us* to use in understanding how Paul talks about his conversion. As a note of caution, we ought to be careful not to assume that we can know precisely how Paul himself understood his conversion, since there is no self-evident connection between one's vocabulary and one's internal thought structure.²⁷ The most we can note and address here is that Paul uses the language of patronage and clientage, and that he must do so for a reason.

One passage that is typically cited as supporting Paul's conversion is 1 Cor. 9.1: 'Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are you not my work in the Lord?' What is most revealing about this is his reference to having seen (έώρακα) Jesus, a sentiment that becomes more meaningful as we read on. At 1 Cor. 15.8 Paul writes that Jesus appeared (ῳθη) to him last of all. Gods appearing to humans was understood as a benefaction (P.Oxy. 11.1381; Aelius Aristides, *Sacred Tales* 2.292.14; 4.341.3; 4.345.14; *IG* IV.2 126). Paul's language at Gal. 1.11-17, and especially his implication that he was but a passive participant, operates within this cultural domain. He claims that the gospel did not come to him from humans but δι' ἀποκαλύψεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (v. 12). Finally, at Gal. 1.16 Paul's writes that God was well pleased ἀποκαλύψαι τὸν οὐτὸν ἐν ἐμοί, ἵνα εὐαγγελίζωμαι αὐτὸν ἐν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν. In each of these cases, the revelation or vision is something Paul receives from God, and thus is a divine benefaction. This is embellished elsewhere. For example, in close proximity to the reference to his vision at 1 Cor. 15.8, Paul uses the word χάρις three times (1 Cor. 15.10). The typical translation of χάρις as 'grace' obscures the clear connection that Paul draws between the reception of the vision that changed him, and the χάρις that makes him what he is. While, as a translation, 'grace' has pleasant theological nuances, it hardly reflects the meaning the word has in the context in which it functions, namely that of divine patronage. Instead, translating χάρις in a way that Paul's contemporaries would have understood the

27. J. Havens, 'The Participant's vs. the Observer's Frame of Reference in the Psychological Study of Religion,' *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 1 (1961), pp. 79-87; B. Taylor, 'Recollection and Membership: Converts' Talk and the Ratiocination of Commonality,' *Sociology* 12 (1978), pp. 316-24; P. Fredriksen, 'Paul and Augustine: Conversion Narratives, Orthodox Traditions and the Retrospective Self,' *JTS* 37 (1986), pp. 3-34.

term brings this verse into startling relief: ‘By the *benefaction* of God I am what I am, and his *benefaction* which was given to me was not in vain, but I toiled beyond all of them, not I but the *benefaction* of God which is with me’ (1 Cor. 15.10, emphasis added). The χάρις to which Paul refers here appears to be the vision, though as we shall see below there is another benefaction from God that profoundly shapes Paul’s life.

The connection between the vision and χάρις is drawn again in Gal. 1.15-16: Jesus was revealed in Paul διὰ τῆς χάριτος αὐτοῦ. Whenever Paul refers to the revelation given to him, he speaks of it as a benefaction. The term grace is apt in so far as it suggests this was a gift that could not be paid back. Yet, benefactions as a rule were not repaid in kind. More than anything, the vision was a benefaction, literally, from a divine patron, as Paul’s language makes abundantly clear. We should not be surprised then to find that, having received such a benefaction, Paul felt compelled to show public and vociferous gratitude and loyalty (more on this shortly). This reciprocity was expressed by Paul’s toil in spreading the news to the gentiles (a grand form of giving thanks) and by his considerable toil as an apostle of Christ.

Blameless behaviour is also part of a client’s expression of gratitude. Blamelessness is part of the domain of honour and shame.²⁸ In the setting of patronage and clientage, this means that a client’s honourable conduct reflects positively on, and thus transfers honour to, the patrons while dishonourable behaviour brings shame to the patron and jeopardizes the relationship. Paul’s quality of being ἀμεμπτος (Phil. 3.6), therefore, is not simple piety, but is part of his obligation to conduct himself honourably to the benefit and honour of his patron. The emphasis Paul places on blameless behaviour when writing to the Thessalonians (1 Thess. 2.10; 3.13; 5.23) suggests that such behaviour reflects well on God, and that Paul and they will eventually reap the benefits of such conduct (salvation). Hence, when we read in Phil. 3.5-6 that Paul was zealous for the traditions of his fathers, blameless as to the law, and so on, we see (among other things) conduct from a client that honours the divine patron.²⁹ This passage also reveals that Paul did not

28. J.J. Pilch, *Introducing the Cultural Context of the New Testament* (New York: Paulist Press, 1991).

29. E.P. Sanders’s (*Paul and Palestinian Judaism* [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1977]) suggestion that Jewish observance of the law was a response (what I would refer to as ‘gratitude’) to having already been *chosen* (the ‘benefaction’, again in

change patrons, nor even did his desire to please that patron change.³⁰ It might be the case that Paul changed brokers from Moses (or perhaps from the priestly cult) to Jesus—though this would be difficult to prove, and is well beyond the scope of this article. The subsequent changes in Paul’s behaviour (1 Cor. 15.8; Gal. 1.13-15, 22-24; Phil. 3.8) were the natural extension of having a new broker as well as discovering that God was to be pleased and honoured in a new manner. The letters tell us that Paul honoured his God in one way at one point, but then undertook another due to a personal revelation and benefaction from God.³¹ But he is clearly under the impression that his behaviour, though different, continues to honour his God.

The whole of 1 Cor. 9.16-17 is a key expression of the terms of the patron-client agreement as Paul sees them. Paul’s mission to the gentiles is not solely philanthropic, nor is it grounds for bragging. Rather, Paul has been entrusted with an *oikovouia*, a very rich term indeed. As Dale Martin shows, *oikovouia* functions within the language of slavery,³² which itself is closely tied to the system of patronage and clientage.³³ An *oikovomoς* was a slave in a unique ‘middle management’ position of administering the affairs of his master/patron. In some cases the master/patron lived in another town, leaving the slave

my terms) supports in a non-technical sense the general portrait of Jews like Paul concerned to show gratitude for benefits received from their God. Thus, this is certainly not a new concern for Paul.

30. ἀρεσκός: Rom. 12.1, 2; 14.18; 2 Cor. 5.9; Phil. 4.18. ἀρέσκω: Rom. 8.8; 1 Cor. 7.32; Gal. 1.10; 1 Thess. 2.4; 2.15; 4.1.

31. Two descriptions of Paul by Malina and Neyrey (*Portraits of Paul: An Archeology of Ancient Personality* [Louisville: John Knox Press, 1996]) reflect what I am suggesting here. First, Paul’s ‘career depended on changing the focus of his formation from being zealous for God’s law to being zealous for God’s Christ’ (p. 205), and secondly Paul ‘was transformed from a figure who defended God’s honor by applying sanctions to those deviants whom he believed challenged God’s honor, to one who defended that same honor by proclaiming a gospel given to him directly by God’ (p. 206).

32. The fact that Zenon was the *oikovomoς* of Apollonius (P.Cair.Zen.) and was not of servile origins suggests that some differences exist between the Greek and Roman office of *oikovomoς*. Nonetheless, it would probably be going to far to suggest that the majority of *oikovomoi* were not slaves (Martin, *Slavery*, pp. 16-17).

33. Martin, *Slavery*, pp. 22-42. See also J.D. Crossan, *The Historical Jesus* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1991), pp. 43-71.

in control of business decisions and probably other slaves.³⁴ The key point, however, as it relates to this passage, is that Paul explicitly claims to have been in a patron/client relationship with his God.³⁵ How, then, are we to make sense of Paul's use of ἀνάγκη, and his curse 'Woe to me if I do not evangelize'? As has been well established by now, the unequivocal demands of reciprocity between patron and client left Paul with little choice in the matter. As a slave of God, Paul is compelled to follow orders, but as an οἰκονόμος he has the added distinction of being a client, and thus of having to live up to the standards of client reciprocity: either he honours his patron publicly, or he risks insulting that patron and incurring the coming wrath (*οὐαὶ γὰρ μοι ἔστιν*).³⁶

5. Patronage and Apostolicity

The last feature of Paul's letters to be analyzed here is the connection among patronage, clientage, and apostleship. The topic of apostleship is a fascinating but complex area of research. Due to the limitations of space, my intent here cannot be to survey even the most important work that has been done on this topic.³⁷ Rather, my intent is to present some ideas and possibilities that might prove fruitful to further work in another setting.

34. S. Treggiari, 'Urban Labour in Rome: *Mercennarii* and *Tabernarii*', in P. Garnsey (ed.), *Non-Slave Labour in the Greco-Roman World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), pp. 48-64.

35. He uses the same term again, when he asks the Corinthians earlier in the letter (4.1) to think of him as an οἰκονόμος of the mysteries of God.

36. deSilva, 'Exchanging Favor for Wrath', *passim*.

37. K.H. Rengstorf, 'ἀποστέλλω / ἀπόστολος', in G. Kittel (ed.), *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), I, pp. 398-447; W. Schmithals, *The Office of Apostle in the Early Church* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1969); C.K. Barrett, *The Signs of an Apostle* (London: Epworth Press, 1970); J.A. Kirk, 'Apostleship since Rengstorf: Towards a Synthesis', *NTS* 21 (1975), pp. 249-64; R.F. Hock, *The Social Context of Paul's Ministry: Tentmaking and Apostleship* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980); F.F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982); A.C. Clark, 'Apostleship: Evidence from the New Testament and Early Christian Literature', *Vox Evangelica* 19 (1989), pp. 49-82; J.L. Sumney, 'Paul's "Weakness": An Integral Part of his Conception of Apostleship', *JSNT* 52 (1993), pp. 71-91; C. Roetzel, *Paul: The Man and the Myth* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999).

Plenty can be made theologically out of the term ‘apostle’, but at its simplest it pertains to anyone (or anything) sent out with an appointed task.³⁸ In his classic discussion of ἀποστέλλω, Rengstorf shows that the term differs in function from the simple στέλλω or πέμπω in that ἀποστέλλω does not refer simply to the act of sending (as with the simpler words), but to an act of sending that ‘implies a commission bound up with the person of the one sent’.³⁹ By the first and second centuries of the common era, the verb is commonly associated with religious commissioning.⁴⁰ In fact, Rengstorf concludes that one ‘can hardly underestimate the significance of this fact for the linguistic expression of the early church’.⁴¹ This usage is precisely mirrored by Paul. Especially noteworthy is 1 Cor. 1.17, where Paul writes that ‘Christ sent me (ἀπέστειλέν με)... to proclaim the gospel’.⁴² Note also that at 2 Cor. 12.17, Paul uses the same words to describe people *he* has sent for the extension of the mission.

It is not troubling that Paul uses the verb so infrequently, for he uses the associated nominal form, ἀπόστολος, with greater frequency and equal consistency of meaning. As Rengstorf shows, ἀπόστολος refers to ships or naval fleets that are sent out (*Demosthenes, Or.* 18.80, 107), but also to men sent on a mission (*Herodotus* 1.21; *Dionysius Halicarnassus, Ant. Rom.* 9.59; Lk. 19.14) and to commanders of expeditions. Several of the P.Mich.Zen., in particular, refer to people sent out (ἀποστέλλω) in order to implement a wish of someone with power (23.4; 78.1; 98.4).⁴³ Although ἀπόστολος as a designator of messenger-status

38. L.E. Vaage, *Galilean Upstarts: Jesus’ First Followers according to Q* (Valley Forge: Trinity Press International, 1994), p. 19. K.H. Rengstorf (‘ἀπόστολος’, I, p. 437), E. d.W. Burton (*A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians* [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1921], pp. 363-84), and J.B. Lightfoot (*St. Paul’s Epistle to the Galatians* [London: Macmillan, 1914], p. 92) all find little in common between general Hellenistic and New Testament usage of ἀπόστολος because they imbue the word with too great a theological force and lose sight of its simplicity.

39. Rengstorf, ‘ἀποστέλλω’, I, p. 398.

40. Epictetus, *Diss.* 3.22.23; 3.23.46; 4.8.31.

41. Rengstorf, ‘ἀποστέλλω’, I, pp. 399-400.

42. Also by implication Rom. 10.15.

43. ἀποστέλλω in the Synoptic Gospels reflects this same sense. Jesus sends out the disciples (Mt. 10.16//Lk. 10.3), and angels and prophets are sent out by God (13.41; 23.34). In Longus’s romance *Daphnis and Chloe*, the patron Dionysophanes sends several slaves to prepare for his visit to his estate (cf. Mt.

is infrequent in antiquity, the Cynics use it with the same force as they use the verb, that is, ‘with a strong consciousness of mission and related self-consciousness’.⁴⁴ What is surprising at this point is that Rengstorf claims that Paul’s usage does not fit into this pattern, and as is well known, goes on to derive Paul’s usage of the title from the Hebrew *shaliach*.

His suggestion that Paul’s usage is unique is unsatisfactory for three reasons. First, if Paul is using the term in such a new way, it is unlikely that he would have had to defend his use of it so vigorously.⁴⁵ Paul’s questions, ‘Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen the Lord?’, suggest both that his audience understood what the term meant, which implies that he cannot have been using it in such a new way, and that they questioned his right to use it. Secondly, if the Cynics can use the verb and the noun to imply the same divine commissioning, then it stands that Paul can as well. Indeed, the manner in which he uses the term makes this probable. Thirdly, the Cynic and Pauline usages are both enmeshed in the whole institution of divine patronage and clientage. The office and the title ἀπόστολος can hardly be divorced from the context of patron-client relations (human *or* divine).

As with the Cynics and other religious missionaries, and as with military expeditions or simple messengers, the claim to have been sent is *always* a claim of authority; in it lies the explicit claim that one with power, honour and authority—a patron—has sent you and stands behind you.⁴⁶ The one sent is not only a representative of the sender, but *is* the sender by proxy. Naturally, those sent (*οἱ ἀπόστολοι*) have less authority than their sender. Paul sends Timothy (1 Thess. 3.2), so Timothy has the honour of Paul; but God/Jesus Christ sent Paul, so naturally Paul’s authority would be that much greater than Timothy’s (1 Thess. 2.7; Gal 1.1, etc.).⁴⁷ If we draw 1 Cor. 9.17 into this, we see that

11.10//Lk. 7.27). They each carry instructions for the steward of the estate, and in this manner represent the interests and authority of their patron.

44. Rengstorf ‘ἀπόστολος’, I, p. 409.

45. Clark, ‘Apostleship: Evidence from the New Testament’, pp. 54-56.

46. Vaage, *Upstarts*, p. 22: ‘In every case, to say that one was “sent” responded to concerns about authority and authorization’. This is in pointed response to Rengstorf’s claim that the Cynic and Stoic apostles were not concerned with authority as was Paul. Cf. 1 Cor. 1.17; 2 Cor. 12.18; Mt. 10.40; 22.3-4.

47. B.J. Malina, *Christian Origins and Cultural Anthropology* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1986), p. 83.

the offices of ἀπόστολος and οἰκονόμος are closely related, at least in terms of function (though as we saw, an οἰκονόμος is often of servile origins).⁴⁸ Paul, in claiming to be an apostle, claims to have God as his patron, and to be acting as God's representative.

In 1 Cor. 9.1 we see Paul playing the part of the grateful client, representing another feature that can be connected with his status of apostle. With the question οὐ τὸ ἔργον μου ὑμεῖς ἔστε ἐν κυρίῳ, Paul reveals that he is acting to further the good name of his patron. The community of believers that Paul set up in Corinth (and the implied effort that took) provides proof that he is preserving the example of the conscientious client (1 Cor. 9.1). Through the mission to the gentiles, and by establishing communities of gentile believers, Paul is working hard to spread and promote the good name of his patron.⁴⁹ As we have seen already, Paul's concern is neither atypical nor unnecessary. In fact, given the impression the revelation appears to have left on Paul, we would be surprised to learn that he acted in any other way. This is not to suggest that Paul acted against his own wishes, or that he acted solely out of fear of God's wrath. Nonetheless, it is more than coincidental that Paul does act in the singular way his social world expected of him, by expressing his gratitude and promoting the greatness of his patron in his words but even more so in his actions.

It is also culturally typical for Paul to refer to his sufferings as an illustration of the quality of his apostolic office, whether obliquely in the form of 'shameful things suffered in Philippi' (1 Thess. 2.2) or more directly in his numerous peristasis catalogues. For example, 2 Cor. 11.23-27 catalogues the hardships Paul incurred while representing his patron:

with far greater labors, far more imprisonments, with countless floggings, and often near death. Five times I have received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one; three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked; for a night and a day I was

48. The fact that Paul opens many of his letters with the title 'apostle of Jesus Christ' (Rom. 1.1; 1 Cor. 1.1; 2 Cor. 1.1; Gal. 1.1), yet in Phil. 1.1 refers to himself as a servant 'of Christ Jesus', suggests not that Paul ceased to see himself as an apostle but that he perhaps saw the status of apostle and servant of Christ as closely related.

49. Romans 10.2-4 describes the importance of recognizing the worth of the patron. For Paul, Jews who try to establish their own righteousness (Rom. 10.3) fail to do this.

adrift at sea; on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from bandits, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brethren; in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, hungry and thirsty, often without food, cold and naked.⁵⁰

Rhetorically, this peristasis catalogue buttresses Paul's claim that he has worked hard to honour his patron, God.⁵¹ Paul uses his various struggles as proof of perseverance to commend himself both to humans and to his divine patron. Although Fitzgerald does not discuss this catalogue at length, he says of other examples that they show Paul as one worthy of respect and honour.⁵² Among other things, the peristasis catalogues serve as evidence of Paul's lived obligations to his benefactor, for it is axiomatic that the behaviour of the client brings honour or dishonour to the patron.⁵³ In this case, although the hardships are from God, the patient reception of them says much about the willingness of Paul as a client and apostle of God/Jesus Christ.⁵⁴ To assume that Paul's gratitude serves no other function than to endorse good manners or piety overlooks the absolute necessity of honourable behaviour in the client, and the real consequences of failing to act in such a way.⁵⁵

There is a complicating element to consider here. Cultural use of the title ἀπόστολος reflects that it was seen as an office *conferred* upon someone by a patron. Are we not then obligated to understand Paul's apostleship as something that was given to him by God, hence a

50. Note the other hardship catalogues in the Corinthian letters: 1 Cor. 4.9-13; 2 Cor. 4.8-9; 6.3-10; 12.10.

51. See also 2 Cor. 4.8-9; 2 Cor. 11.7; 1 Thess. 2.2; Phil. 2.17.

52. J.T. Fitzgerald, *Cracks in an Earthen Vessel* (SBLDS, 99; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988), p. 203: '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'. See also Plutarch's *Nicias* 5.3.

53. Romans 14.18 and 2 Cor. 9.13-14 illustrate ways of honouring God the patron; see also Fitzgerald, *Cracks*, p. 81.

54. In keeping with appropriate client behaviour, Paul is clearly ambitious to represent and extend the honour of his patron/broker; see also 2 Cor. 5.9; Rom. 12.1-2; 14.18; and Phil. 4.18. Cf. J. Scott, 'Patronage or Exploitation?', in Gellner and Waterbury (eds.), *Patrons and Clients in Mediterranean Societies*, p. 24.

55. See Mk 12:1-12 par.; Rom. 1.18; 10.9-13; 11.22; Gal. 5.4; 1 Thess. 1.10 and 5.9; Longus, *Daphnis and Chloe* 4.10.1; OGIS 383.134-37. See also Horsley, 'Introduction', in Horsley (ed.), *Paul and Empire*, pp. 10-24; deSilva, 'Exchanging Favor for Wrath', *passim*.

benefaction, rather than as a response to the benefaction of the vision? Paul often draws a connection between his vision and his new status as apostle of God/Jesus Christ. Recall that at 1 Cor. 9.1, Paul's two questions appear to work in apposition: 'Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord?' Likewise, at 1 Cor. 15.8-9, Paul writes 'last of all...he appeared also to me. For I am the least of the apostles.' In both cases, revelation and apostleship appear to be juxtaposed. It is possible then that according to Paul, his apostolic office was no less a benefaction than that of his vision. This could find support in 1 Cor. 12.28-29, in which Paul refers to the fact that God offers different people different positions and gifts. All come from God, however, and in this way are unambiguously benefactions from a divine patron. Paul's apostleship would be a benefaction in the same way (though with greater responsibilities) as the many other things he has received from his heavenly benefactor. That the apostolic office was a benefaction to Paul from God is a position maintained by Seyoon Kim, who writes that with the threefold phrase 'by the χάρις given to me' (1 Cor. 3.10; 15.10; Rom. 12.3) Paul refers to the granting of his apostleship.⁵⁶

Clearly we are limited here by a lack of consistency on the part of Paul. It would be entirely culturally consistent for Paul to have referred to his mission as a benefaction from God, and it appears in places that he does this. Yet it is also unmistakable that he refers to the vision of Christ as a benefaction, and in this instance the mission as his expression of gratitude and reciprocity also carries considerable weight. Perhaps the most we can say will appear to some as an easy way out of an exegetical maze—Paul certainly knew his God to be capable of numerous and multiform benefactions, thus both can have been regarded as benefactions at the very same time. It may be that the model of patronage and clientage does not solve this problem in one single and

56. S. Kim, ““The grace that was given to me...”: Paul and the Grace of his Apostleship’, in G. Maier (ed.), *Die Hoffnung festhalten* (Neuhäusen–Stuttgart: Hänsler Verlag, 1978), pp. 50-59. Kim does not understand χάρις to mean ‘benefaction’, but the more traditional ‘grace’ which, though he does not define it, he clearly understands theologically, as suggested by his assumption that the term is synonymous with ἔλεος (p. 51). For a similar approach see also W. Manson, ‘Grace in the New Testament’, in W.T. Whitley (ed.), *The Doctrine of Grace* (London: SCM Press, 1932), pp. 33-60; James Moffatt, *Grace in the New Testament* (New York: Ray Long and R.R. Smith, 1932).

definitive way; it is a valuable model, nonetheless, that provides an embarrassment of riches in terms of possible explanations.

6. Conclusion

In this paper I have attempted to present Paul as his first audiences might actually have perceived him. Paul's was a culture well accustomed to patronage and clientage, both as a social institution and as a frame of reference for casting other experiences. Many ancient Mediterraneans had patrons, and many had clients. At some point in their lives, many would have encountered or made use of a broker. Juvenal's cutting satire of the humiliation suffered by clients with no other options would have been easily recognizable to most, which is to suggest that the *prevalence* of patronage and clientage is not to be confused with its *popularity*.⁵⁷ In addition, ancient Mediterraneans were all familiar with the claims of benefactions received from a divine benefactor, and indeed many could claim to have received such divine benefactions themselves. When Paul claims to have been called by a divine patron who bestows immeasurable bounty on those who honour him and conduct themselves blamelessly, his audience was likely caught between curiosity (they might give Paul a moment to make his point) and boredom (they had heard it all before).

This article has also suggested that Paul describes his apostleship in the same terms as he does his revelation of Jesus Christ. It is difficult to separate the two by vocabulary, yet it seems within the weight of the evidence to suggest that Paul understood his vision and his apostolic status both to be benefactions. Whether Paul's apostleship came in the very same episode of his vision we are in no position yet to speculate.⁵⁸ In the end, we do not need to know this in order to say with certainty that for Paul they are one and the same in quality if not in chronology: they are both divine benefactions that Paul will proudly and willingly reciprocate. Paul was always a grateful client to his patron God, and in that respect nothing changed after his vision of Jesus. Paul has received a benefaction from the Lord; it changes the manner in which, but not the fact that, he honours his God. For the benefaction of the vision Paul honours Jesus by his exclusive loyalty, and by preaching a message of

57. Juvenal, *Satires* 5; see also Scott, 'Patronage or Exploitation?', pp. 21-39.

58. Alan Segal (*Paul the Convert*) speculates, not unfairly, that Paul had more than one mystical experience.

salvation to as many people as possible. For the benefaction of the apostleship, Paul works harder than all those who were apostles before him. He establishes many ἐκκλησίαι and suffers repeatedly for them. Paul presents his suffering as a mark of his virtue as a client, a sign of his honour, and of the extent to which he has gone to obey the one who gave him this office. Paul is his Divine patron's client and apostle.