



Patronage and People:
Paul's Perspective in Philippians

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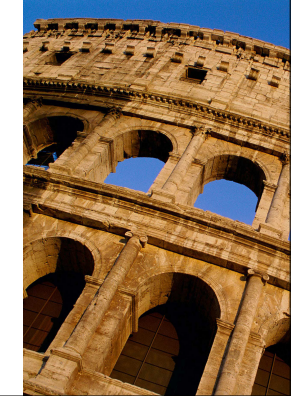
Patronage in the Roman world

- Mutual responsibilities
 - 'giving and receiving' cf. Phil 4:15
 - asymmetry, imbalance of power

2

And besides, not to flatter ourselves, what value is there in a poor man's serving here in Rome, even if he be at pains to hurry along in his toga before daylight, seeing that the praetor is bidding the lictor to go full speed lest his colleague should be the first to salute.

Juvenal, *Satires* 3.119-20



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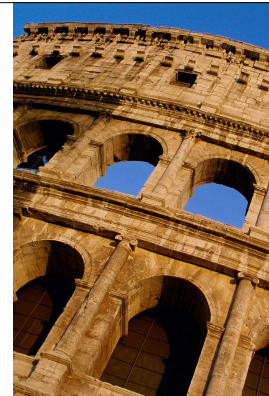
Patronage in the Roman world

- Mutual responsibilities
 - 'giving and receiving' cf. Phil 4:15
 - asymmetry, imbalance of power
 - public knowledge

4

It is no easy matter, anywhere, for a man to rise when poverty stands the way of his merits: but nowhere is the effort harder than in Rome, where you must pay a big rent for a wretched lodging, a big sum to fill the bellies of your slaves, and buy a frugal dinner for yourself. You are ashamed to dine off delf; but you would see no shame in it if transported suddenly to a Marsian or Sabine table, where you would be pleased enough to wear a cape of coarse Venetian blue.

Juvenal, *Satires* 3.164-70



5

Patronage in the Roman world

- Mutual responsibilities
 - 'giving and receiving' cf. Phil 4:15
 - asymmetry, imbalance of power
 - public knowledge
- Patronage produces a hierarchical social structure
 - some possibilities for upward social mobility

6

Paul's receipt of financial support

- General policy: maintaining financial independence
- Phoebe the deacon Romans 16:1
 - she is προστάτις 'of many, and also of me myself'
 - feminine form of 'patron'
 - hospitality at her home in Cenchræe
 - not 'helper'
 - cf. Jesus in Luke 8:1-3

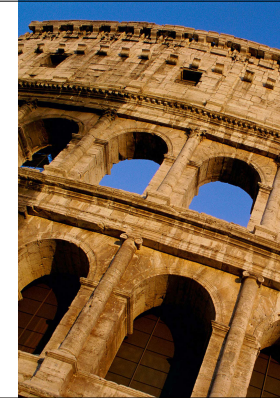
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Paul's receipt of financial support

- General policy: maintaining financial independence
- Phoebe the deacon Romans 16:1
- Paul in Corinth Acts 18:1-5

8

1 After this Paul left Athens and went to Corinth. 2 There he found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had ordered all Jews to leave Rome. Paul went to see them, 3 and, because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them, and they worked together—by trade they were tentmakers. 4 Every sabbath he would argue in the synagogue and would try to convince Jews and Greeks. 5 When Silas and Timothy arrived from Macedonia, Paul became wholly occupied in proclaiming the word, testifying to the Jews that the Messiah was Jesus.
Acts 18:1-5 (NRSV adapted)



9

Paul's receipt of financial support

- General policy: maintaining financial independence
- Phoebe the deacon Romans 16:1
- Paul in Corinth Acts 18:1-5
- No outright rejection of patronage
 - but Paul not entirely dependent on gifts from others
 - working with his hands

10

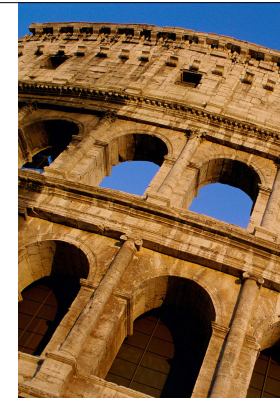
Reading Philippians in the light of ancient patronage

- a 'thankless thanks'?

11

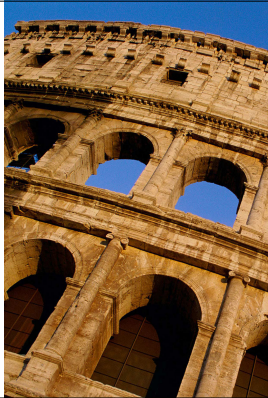
Listen to the words of petitioners. No one of them fails to say that the memory of the benefit will live for ever in his heart; no one of them fails to declare himself your submissive and devoted slave, and, if he can find any more abject language in which to express his obligation, he uses it.

Seneca, *Ben.* 3.5.2



12

I may dispense with writing to you with a great show of thanks; for it is to those who are not friends that we must give thanks in words.



Chairas, 29 August AD 58

13

Reading Philippians in the light of ancient patronage

- a 'thankless thanks'?
- is Paul subverting social conventions?
 - 'partnership' *κοινωνία*

14

Philippians 1	Philippians 4
v 3 'I give thanks to God'	v 10a 'I rejoiced in the Lord'
v 3 'remembrance of you'	v 10a 'you renewed'
v 4 'joy'	v 10a 'I rejoiced'
v 4 'request for you all'	v 10c 'because you were concerned'
v 5 'partnership, participation'	v 15 '[the church] participated'
v 5 'gospel'	v 15 '[of the] gospel'
v 5b 'from...until now'	v 15 'in the beginning'
v 6 'the one who began a good work in you'	v 13 'in the one who strengthens me'

15

Philippians 1	Philippians 4
v 7a 'to be concerned concerning you all'	v 10b 'to be concerned about me'
v 7b 'fellow-participants'	v 14 'being fellow-participants'
v 7b 'chains'	v 14 'suffering'
v 9 'overflow'	vv 12, 18 '[to] overflow'
v 11 'having been filled'	vv 18, 19 'I have been filled'
v 11a 'fruit'	v 17 'profit' (same word)
v 11b 'Jesus'	v 19 'Jesus'
v 11c 'glory...of God'	v 20 'the glory to God'

16

10 I rejoice in the Lord greatly that now at last you have revived your concern for me; indeed, you were concerned for me, but had no opportunity to show it. 11 Not that I am referring to being in need; for I have learned to be content with whatever I have. 12 I know what it is to have little, and I know what it is to have plenty. In any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of being well-fed and of going hungry, of having plenty and of being in need. 13 I can do all things through him who strengthens me. 14 In any case, it was kind of you to share my distress. 15 You Philippians indeed know that in the early days of the gospel, when I left Macedonia, no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving, except you alone. 16 For even when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me help for my needs more than once. 17 Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the profit that accumulates to your account. 18 I have been paid in full and have more than enough; I am fully satisfied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent, a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God. 19 And my God will fully satisfy every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus. 20 To our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen.

Philippians 4:10-20

17

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Philippians 4:10-20

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Other evidence

- material things as held in stewardship by humans
 - 'What do you have that you did not receive? And if you received it, why do you boast as if it were not a gift?'
1 Corinthians 4:7
- Paul and Phoebe Romans 16:1-2
 - 'Paul commends Phoebe's actions so that the Roman church might act similarly towards her. She is not to be their benefactor, even as Paul is not their benefactor. Rather the goal is reciprocity.' (Lynn Cohick)

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Other evidence

- material things as held in stewardship by humans
- Paul and Phoebe Romans 16:1-2
- Paul and Philemon
 - Paul requests hospitality v 22
 - 'our beloved co-worker' v 1
 - 'give me benefit' v 21
 - Paul could command Philemon vv 8-9
 - 'obedience' v 21
 - Philemon owes Paul his very life v 19
 - Jesus/Christ at the centre
 - Philemon as Paul's 'partner'

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