

THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE PAULINE THEOLOGY OF
PTOCHOS AND *PTOCHEIA* TO THE CONTEMPORARY
UNDERSTANDING OF *POOR* AND *POVERTY*

INTRODUCTION

It is a fact that vast majority of the world's population is *poor*. Every society has its experience or share of poverty and oppression. What must the Christian's attitude toward *poverty* and the *poor* be? The Body of Christ must be the model of mutual interdependence and active catalyst for transformed relationships in the world.

This research seeks to study the following problem: What are the implications of Paul's theology of "*ptochos*" and "*ptocheia*" in the Pauline literature to the contemporary perceptions of *poor* and *poverty*?

The first sub-problem is, what is the Pauline theology of *ptochos* and *ptocheia*?

The second sub-problem is, what implications can be drawn from the Pauline usage of the Greek words *ptochos* and *ptocheia* to the contemporary perceptions of *poor* and *poverty*?

The study of the Greek words *ptochos* and *ptocheia* utilized the selected epistles of Paul, namely: Galatians,

Romans, and 2 Corinthians. The literary research focused mainly on historical, exegetical, and theological methodologies.

Importance of the Study

The issue of the *poor* and *poverty* has become one of the central themes of contemporary Christian theology and, indeed, has become a controversial question. Several conferences and seminars were held to discuss the issue of the *poor* and *poverty*.¹ In fact, the Church is challenged to do its part in dealing with the issue of poverty.

Daniel Carroll writes,

It is no exaggeration, however, to say that until recently the Church largely was not concerned with the issue of poverty. Its interest in this issue usually remained at the level of individual charity. Recent theological phenomena like the emergence of Theology of Liberation (Latin America), Black Theology (South Africa), *Minjung* Theology (South Korea), *Dalit* Theology (India), and Water Buffalo Theology (Thailand) are a reaction to and supplementary result of the Church's neglect of the problem of poverty or general economic questions.²

¹For example, in October 17-23, 1993 at New Delhi, India, WEF Theological Commission Consultation held a conference with a theme "Evangelization of the Poor." See Bong Rin Ro, ed., *WEF-TC Consultation on the Evangelization of the Poor - Sharing the Good News with the Poor* (Seoul, Korea: World Evangelical Fellowship Theological Commission, 1993), 46. In March 1-5, 1995 at Agra, India, the Third Oxford Conference on Christian Faith and Economics was held to consider "The Impact of the Market Economy on the Poor." See *Transformation* 12:3 (July/September, 1995): 32.

The concern of the researcher is that the current perceptions of the Body of Christ will be reevaluated through the critical study of Paul's theology of *ptochos* and *ptochēia*. This study is helpful and important because of some major reasons.

First, the paper has presented Paul's biblical injunction on giving of offerings as well as the proper administration of the collected funds. Consequently, the church members' attitude and spirit in sharing their resources could be influenced by the examples of the churches in Macedonia and Achaia. As a result, this study will help clarify and identify the contemporary attitude and expression in the "giving" of the present-day members.

Second, this research has also emphasized the importance of the role of the pastor in the social ministry of the church to the poor. Samson affirms that the minister is first and foremost a 'carer of souls.' One cares for the body, yet in relation to the soul. In addition, it gives the minister an important and necessary role in the life of individuals.³ Thus, the pastor is the

²M. Daniel Carroll, "Liberation Theology Comes of Age: Clarifying an Assessment," *ExpTim* 98 (October 1987): 170-171.

key person in educating the members in the social ministry function of the church.

Third, this paper has provided a biblical model for social ministry to the *poor* taken from the teachings of Paul. It has also offered a biblical basis for pastors' social involvement in terms of social services and social action.

Fourth, this study will bring to the reader's attention Paul's perspectives of *poverty* and the *poor*. In so doing, it will provide a basis for further reflection and action by those who care for hurting people. Thus, this research paper will give a deeper study on the issue of suffering that relates to poverty.

Finally, the study has proposed that Paul's teaching about *ptochos* and *ptocheia* is a timely and positive message to Christian churches and organizations. It will encourage Christian institutions to reevaluate their philosophy, broaden their perspective and methodology concerning social ministry.

³Engracio T. Samson, "Identifying the Shamanistic Characteristics of Elijah in Light of Vladimir Propp's Morphology of the Folktale and Two Basic Shamanistic Experiences," Th. D. diss., Asia Baptist Graduate Theological Seminary, (Baguio City, 1995), 10.

CHAPTER I

THE PAULINE THEOLOGY OF *PTOCHOS* AND *PTOCHEIA*

This chapter explores the theology of Paul on *ptochos* and *ptocheia*. The researcher investigates the nature, causes and effects of *poverty* to church and society during Paul's time as well as Paul's concern for *ptochos* and *ptocheia*. The researcher will limit to exegete the following passages, which include: Gal. 2:10; Rom. 15:26-27; 2 Cor. 8:1-2, 9).⁴

Exegetical Studies of Related Passages for *Ptochos* and *Ptocheia* in Selected Pauline Literature

The world during Paul's time was marked with differences between the large group of poor people and a small, rich upper class.⁵ Many agree that closely related to wealth and poverty in Paul's time is the issue of social status.⁶

⁴See Rom. 15:26; 2 Cor. 6:10; Gal. 2:10; 2 Cor. 8:2,9 and 2 Cor. 9:9).

⁵See Conrad Boerma, *The Rich, the Poor and the Bible* (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1980), 54-5.

Exegesis of Galatians 2:10

Greek Text (transliterated): *Monon ton ptochon hina mnemoneuomen, ho kai espoudasa autou touto poiesai.*

Translation: "Only that we should keep on remembering the poor, which very thing I have made a diligent and eager effort to do."

In Gal. 2:1-10 Paul tells of a trip to Jerusalem. His second journey to the Holy city was undertaken to attend the conference with the purpose to use it as proof in his defense of his apostleship. The other concession made by the Gentile Christians was the financial collection for the poor in Jerusalem.⁷

Monon ton ptochon hina mnemoneuomen. In the preceding phrase, the Greek construction is unusual, as the verb here is introduced in a subordinate clause but without a main clause.⁸ "*Monon*," that is, one item in the agreement was emphasized, the care of the poor. This is not a request added to the agreement, but a part of the agreement itself.⁹ The verb *mnemoneuomen* in the present tense implies

⁶Ibid.

⁷John Knox, *Interpreter's Bible: The Epistle to the Galatians*, vol. X, ed. George A. Buttrick (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1953), 650.

⁸Donald Guthrie, "Galatians," *Century Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1973), 83).

continual memory.¹⁰ In this context, the verb does not necessarily imply that the poor had been forgotten. The meaning here is that "we should continue to think about," or "should constantly be concerned for."¹¹ Hence, the verb *mnemoneuomen* refers to a specific, ongoing financial subsidy.¹²

The word *ptochos* can be referred to the condition of some economically poor believers in Jerusalem, because the genitive is partitive. It refers to the "physically poor," that is, the term can hardly be understood as a "*terminus technicus*" for the Jerusalem congregation.¹³ Therefore, Paul does not use *ptochos* as a

⁹See A. T. Robertson, "The Epistles of Paul," *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, vol. IV (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1931), 286.

¹⁰Guthrie, 83.

¹¹Daniel C. Arichea, Jr., and Eugene A. Nida, *A Translators Handbook on Paul's Letter to the Galatians* (London: United Bible Societies, 1975), 38.

¹²Hans Dieter Betz, *Hermeia - A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible: Galatians* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), 102.

¹³Matthew Black, *New Century Bible Commentary: Romans* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1973), 205.

title for Christians, but primarily the poor members of the Jerusalem church¹⁴

Kai espoudasa autou touto poiesai. The aorist verb *espoudasa* (lit. "made haste") could simply mean, "to be eager," where Paul wrote that remembering the poor was the very thing he had been eager or anxious to do.¹⁵ It does not refer merely to the apostle's state of mind, but to his activity in relieving the necessities of the poor saints at Jerusalem (cf. Acts 11:30).¹⁶

Exegesis of Romans 15:26-27

Romans 15:26

Greek Text (transliterated): *Eudokesan gar Makedonia kai Achaia koinonian tina poiesasthai eis tous ptochous tou hagion ton en Yerousalem.*

Translation: "For Macedonia and Achaia were pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem."

¹⁴F. F. Bruce, *New International Greek Testament Commentary: Commentary on Galatians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1982), 126.

¹⁵*The New Testament Greek-English Dictionary* "Ptochos," by T. Gilbrant and T. I. Gilbrant.

¹⁶Kenneth S. Wuest, *Galatians in the Greek New Testament for the English Reader* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1962), 68.

In this section of Paul's letter (15:22-33)) there is a noticeable change of style and of tone. Paul now deals with very personal matters and is quite deliberate in the way in which he expresses himself. Moreover, Paul had an immediate and a future plan to go to Spain.¹⁷ The evangelistic work has been completed in Greece and Asia Minor. For several years he has been engaged in taking an offering for the poor at Jerusalem (cf. 1 Cor. 16:1-4; 2 Cor. 8:1-9:15); and now that money must be delivered.

Eudokesan gar Makedonia kai Akaia koinonian tina poiesasthai. "The 'poor' among the saints"(v. 25) is a term for the needy among the Christians in Jerusalem.¹⁸ Verse 26 explains the previous verse. The verb *eudokesan* always implies that a decision has been made because the people were happy to make it.¹⁹ The said term expresses the voluntariness of the offering, the fact that it is the

¹⁷See Raymond Carlson, "Romans-Corinthians," in *The New Testament Study Bible*, eds. Ralph Harris, Stanley M. Horton, and Gayle Garrity Seaver (Springfield, MS: World Library Press, Inc., 1991), 237-8.

¹⁸Joseph A. Fitzmyer and Raymond E. Brown, eds., *The Jerome Biblical Commentary: The Letter to the Romans* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1968), 330.

¹⁹Barclay M. Newman and Eugene A. Nida, *A Translator's Handbook on Paul's Letter to the Romans* (London: United Bible societies, 1973), 285.

result of a decision freely and responsibly taken by the churches concerned.²⁰

Although the Greek reads simply *Makedonia* and *Akaia*, Paul evidently means by this "the churches in Macedonia and Greece."²¹ "*Koinonia*," the word translated "offering" is a word, which in other contexts may mean "fellowship" or "sharing." However, the use of it denotes the concrete contribution collected (cf. 2 Cor. 9:13). The contribution made ("*poiesasthai*") was an expression of Christian fellowship.²² The phrase, "the poor among God's people," is literally "the poor of the saints" (see v. 25 and 1.7). The "*ptochous*" are not just those who have lost honor, but include those who are hungry as a result of famine.²³

²⁰J. A. Emerton and C. E. B., "The Epistle to the Romans," *The International Critical Commentary*, vol. 2 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark Limited, 1979), 771.

²¹Barclay Newman and Eugene Nida, *A Translator's Handbook on Paul's Letter to the Romans* (London, England: United Bible Societies 1973), 285.

²²See on 12:13.

²³See Mark R. Gornik, "The Rich and Poor in Paul's Theology," available from <http://www.modernreformation.org/mr92/julaug/mr9204richpoor.html>; Internet; accessed 01 December 2002.

The phrase *ton hagian ton en Yerosalem* are naturally understood as partitive: the collection is intended for the benefit of those of the Jerusalem brethren who are particularly poor. It means that not all were poor, but Acts 4:32-5:11; 6:1-6; 11:29f. and Gal. 2:10 prove that many were.²⁴

Romans 15:27

Greek Text (transliterated): *Eudokesan gar, kai opheiletai eisin auton· ei gar tois pnematikois auton ekoinonesan ta ethne opheilousin kai en tois sarkikois leitourgesai autois.*

Translation: They themselves have decided to do it. But, as a matter of fact, they have an obligation to help those poor; the Jews shared their spiritual blessings with the Gentiles, and so the Gentiles ought to serve the Jews with their material blessings.

The verb "eudokesan" is the same verb in the previous verse. It underlines the freedom and independence of the decision of the Macedonian and Achaian churches.²⁵ The force of "kai" in this context is emphatic

²⁴A. T. Robertson, "Word Pictures in the New Testament," *The Epistle to the Romans* (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2000), 423.

²⁵Emerton and Cranfield, 372.

(RSV, NEB "and indeed"), and so rendered "but, as a matter of fact" by the TEV.²⁶

Moreover, the term "*opheiletai*" was used by Paul in a figurative sense. The term may express an obligation, something that one can reasonably expect or demand of another.²⁷ "They are their debtors" is transformed by TEV to read, "they have an obligation to help."²⁸

Even though the collection was the result of freewill offerings, the Gentile Christians acknowledged by it their indebtedness to the mother church of Jerusalem, that is, the recognition that "salvation comes from the Jews" (Jn. 4:22; cf. Rom. 9:4.²⁹ For Paul the collection of money is more than a mere financial affair. Paul is concerned with developing an ecumenical fellowship, which recognizes a kinship with all Christians who make up the Body of Christ.³⁰ Caring for the poor points to the dual

²⁶Ibid., 285.

²⁷ Literally, *opheiletai* refers to being indebted financially, or figuratively to being indebted morally. See Ibid.

²⁸Newman and Nida, 285-6.

²⁹See Carlson, 239.

³⁰Henlee H. Barnette, *Introducing Christian Ethics*, (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1961), 74-5.

necessity of both a propositional and an incarnational dimension to the life and mission of the church. Paul's mission, therefore, has both a social and an evangelistic responsibility.³¹

The clause *ei gar tois pnematikois auton ekoinonesan ta ethne* literally reads "for if the Gentiles shared in their spiritual things." The "if" clause (*ei gar*) refers to a condition that is true to fact, and so maybe rendered as a statement as in the TEV.³² "The Gentiles" are "the Gentile believers." "Their material blessings" may be translated as "the things, which they have received from God." "Spiritual things" is best taken in the sense of "spiritual blessings (so also RSV)." Paul used *pneumatikois* to refer to those spiritual good things, which have been mediated to the Gentiles through the original Jerusalem church.³³ Paul showed that true spirituality is demonstrated in loving and caring for one's fellow human being.³⁴

³¹Ibid.

³²Robertson, 386.

³³Emerton and Cranfield, 774.

³⁴Gilbrant, 230.

" ... *opheilousin kai en tois sarkikois leitourgesai autois.*" Most translations take the Greek preposition (*en*) to mean "with" and "fleshly things" to mean "material blessings" (*RSV*). But the NEB understands the preposition to have the meaning of "in" and so takes "fleshly things" as a reference to the material needs of the Jews: "the Gentiles have a clear duty to contribute to their material needs."³⁵

The word *leitourgos* has a more sacral overtone than does *diakonos*.³⁶ The figurative priestly service is still in mind, and to it belongs the privilege and duty of providing for the poor saints.³⁷ Paul regards this ministering to the bodily necessities of the saints as a priestly service for Christ and truly a religious service.³⁸ This sense of moral obligation had prompted Paul to suggest the offering³⁹ with reference to tangible or

³⁵Newman and Nida, 286.

³⁶Gilbrant, 54.

³⁷Peter Lange, *Commentary on the Holy Scriptures: Romans* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, n.d.), 442.

³⁸Albert N. Arnold and D. B. Ford, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (Philadelphia, PA: The American Baptist Publication Society, n.d.), 300.

material possessions.⁴⁰ Therefore, *sarkikois* here denotes the things which pertain to the flesh in the sense of the material resources necessary for the well-being of the body.⁴¹

Exegesis of 2 Corinthians 8:1-2,9

The city of Corinth provides a good example of the interrelationship between status, wealth, and poverty in the Christian community. The citizens of Corinth were composed of freemen, slaves, rich and poor, Greeks, Jews, and Romans. The Corinthian church was composed in the main of the despised, the poor, and the humble (see 1 Cor. 1:27).⁴² It is in this context that Paul urges the rich Corinthian members to complete their collection for the relief of the needy Christians in Jerusalem.

³⁹John A. Witmer, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: Romans*, eds., John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983), 498.

⁴⁰See John Murray, ed., *The Epistle to the Romans*, vol. II (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1975), 219.

⁴¹Ibid.

⁴²Wayne A. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), 73.

2 Cor. 8:1

Greek Text (transliterated): *Gnoritzomen de humin adelphoi ten charin tou theou ten dedomenen en tais ekklesiais tes Makedonias, . . .*"

Translation: "We draw to your attention, brothers, the grace of God given to the churches of Macedonia, . . ."

The verb *gnoritzomen* is translated, "we draw your attention to."⁴³ The word may have originated as a combination of the root *ginosko* ("to know") and *horitzo* ("to determine, cause to happen") with the resulting idea of causing someone to know something that he did not know or understand before.⁴⁴

Paul used the affectionate term *adelphoi* ("brethren") to address the Corinthians.⁴⁵ The opening ascription is to God's generosity (*charis*) in his gifts-in-grace. "The grace of God" is the key term. Grace is manifested in the collection in the churches, poor as they are.⁴⁶ This *charis* given to his people looks ahead to 8:9

⁴³See Gilbrant, 632.

⁴⁴Gilbrant, 632.

⁴⁵*The New Testament Greek-English Dictionary* (1990), s.v. "The Second Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians," by Russel Wisheart.

⁴⁶The Romans had lacerated Macedonia, hence, its poverty was deep-down to the bottom. See Robertson, 442.

where Christ's self-offering is in view and is seen as the act of supreme "grace." The link-term is in 8:5 where the Macedonians "gave themselves" (*heautous edoken*) both to the Lord and to the apostolic mission (*kai hemin*, "to us").⁴⁷

2 Cor. 8:2

Greek Text (transliterated)): "... *hoti en plle dokime thlipseos he perisseia tes charas auton kai he kata bathous ptocheia auton eperisseusen eis ton plouton tes aploketos auton.*

Translation: "... how that in much testing by proof of adversity, abundance of their joy and according to their deep poverty have abounded in the wealth of their generosity."

Paul's understanding of "*dokimos*" lies in the Old Testament principle that God tests and judges those He loves.⁴⁸ The *dokime*, would be properly the trial, which subjected them to a test.⁴⁹ Martin affirms that their affliction is related to their extreme poverty (lit. down to the depth,").⁵⁰ Moreover, this *thlipseos* ("affliction") does not refer simply to their "poverty," but rather to

⁴⁷Gilbrant, 491.

⁴⁸Gilbrant, 162.

⁴⁹Lange, 138.

⁵⁰Martin, 253.

ill-treatment from non-Christians. *Perisseia tes charas* signifies the overflowing of their joy, which opened their hearts to contribute generously for the relief of their brethren.⁵¹

Given this situation, Paul assumed the task of demonstrating his commitment to the community in Jerusalem by calling upon other congregations to support this new congregation financially.⁵² The Macedonian churches demonstrated generosity ("*ploutos*") in their poverty and served as a model for Christian giving.⁵³

2 Cor. 8:9

Greek Text (transliterated): *Ginoskete gar ten charin tou Kuriou hemon Yesou Christou oti di' humas eptocheusen plousios hon hina, humeis te ekeinou ptocheia ploutesete.*

Translation: "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ who - for your sakes and though he was rich - became poor, so that you by that poverty might become rich."

Ginoskete gar ten charin tou kuriou hemon Yesou Christou. The preposition *gar* ("for") attaches what

⁵¹Lange, 138.

⁵²Ibid.

⁵³Gilbrant, 224.

follows to both parts of the preceding verse.⁵⁴ The verb *ginoskete* ("you know") implies that Paul is stating something with which he presumes his readers are very well acquainted.⁵⁵ The occurrence of the verb *ploutetso* ("to make wealthy, rich") in 1 Cor. 1:5, 2 Cor. 6:10 and 9:11 carries with it spiritual enrichment although in the last reference material blessings are also to be included.⁵⁶

... *oti di' humas eptocheusen plousios hon hina humeis te ekeinou ptocheia ploutesete.*" The phrase "*plousios hon*" (concessive particle) is translated, "even though he was rich."⁵⁷ Christ's temporal life is here expressed as "being rich." The riches of Christ, then, are "His pre-existent status."⁵⁸ The verb *eptocheusen* ("he

⁵⁴Ralph Martin and F. Davidson, "Romans," in *The New Bible Commentary*, ed. D. Guthrie (London, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 1970), 262-3.

⁵⁵Victor Paul Furnish "2 Corinthians," in *The Anchor Bible*, vol. 32a (Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Co., Inc.), 1985), 404.

⁵⁶Gilbrant, 223.

⁵⁷Cleon Rogers, Jr. and Cleon Rogers III, *The New Linguistic and Exegetical Key to the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1998), 408.

⁵⁸See F. Craddock, *The Pre-existence of Christ in the New Testament* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1968), 99-106.

became poor") means he became poor or he was reduced to abject poverty. It is an ingressive aorist,⁵⁹ pointing to the inception of the poverty (cf. esp. Phil. 2:7-8 and Rom. 15:3). Christ's poverty in part consisted of his giving up for a time the riches of his heavenly existence.⁶⁰ The verb in the subjunctive mood with *hina* expresses purpose.⁶¹ Through Christ's poverty, the church receives in exchange abundant and lavish riches of grace (2 Cor. 2:4; 5:18, 9:15), which become the foundational resource for mutual sharing.⁶² It is the basis and example for Christian giving.⁶³

⁵⁹Aorist makes it evident that the whole event of the Incarnation is referred to and viewed as one act.

⁶⁰Gornik, 5.

⁶¹Rogers and Rogers, 408. See further Glenn Schwartz, "Guideposts for Giving," *Mission Frontier* 23:3 (September 2001): 20.

⁶²Gornik, 5.

⁶³David Brown "1 Corinthians-Revelation," in *A Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*, vol. 111, eds. Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, and David Brown (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1948), 828. See Meeks, 65-6.

Summary of the Theological Concepts about *Ptochos*
and *Ptocheia* in Pauline Literature

The researcher recapitulates theological concepts gleaned from Paul's theology of *ptochos* and *ptocheia* based on the above exegesis of selected passages.

First, Paul understands *ptochos* in the literal sense, i.e. those who in some serious situation lacked the basic necessities to sustain life. Therefore, by "poor," he means the believers who were in economic need. This need was met by his collection from other churches.

Second, Paul's concept of *ptochos* and *ptocheia* is to be understood in terms of his apostolic ministry. Relief, solidarity, and love for the *poor* are fundamental to his apostolic office. Paul tells his readers that in response to Jerusalem pillars' request to remember the *poor*, he is already fully engaged in this task, and that it is nothing additional to the exercise of his apostolic office.

Third, Paul's caring for the *ptochous* has both a propositional and an incarnational dimension to the life and mission of the church. Paul affirmed that true Christian spirituality is demonstrated in loving and caring for other Christians and other people outside the Body of

Christ. Each member of the Body of Christ (Church) has a clear duty to contribute to one's material needs needed for every day life.

Fourth, exegesis of selected passages revealed Paul's doctrinal basis of all Christian giving for the poor. In 2 Cor. 8:9, through Christ's poverty, the church receives in exchange abundant and lavish riches of grace. Their giving is modeled after Christ, who sacrificed himself to meet our needs (8:8-9). It becomes the basis and example for Christian giving.

Fifth, Paul's practical response through a fund campaign project would help alleviate *ptocheia* and widespread suffering of the *ptochous*. In Paul's ministry, the *ptochous* were not forgotten but remembered for an ongoing financial assistance. He organized it to meet a permanent demand for continuous help. In consequence, it aided to the understanding of the Church's mission to other nations.

Sixth, Paul enjoined the rich members of the church to help the poor in generous giving. Paul alludes to the grace of God whereby the rich members should give generously. Paul stressed that running the risk of poverty through generosity brings spiritual blessing (see 2 Cor. 8-

9). Paul must be addressing the rich Christians that the proper use of wealth was almsgiving and sharing, as exemplified by the Apostle Paul.⁶⁴ Paul demands that those who had possessions share with others in "simplicity" and to distribute to the necessity of the saints (Rom. 12:8,13). Paul, therefore, enjoins the sharing of wealth to the *poor* as a ministry of service.

Lastly, Paul's theology of giving is demonstrated through economic sharing. The sharing community in Jerusalem is "*koinonia*" (cf. Acts 2:24, 42-47; 4:32-51; Rom. 12:13; Gal. 6:6; Phil. 4:15; Rom. 15:26; 2 Cor. 8:4; 9:13). In Paul's Christological model, within this new community of haves and have-nots called the church, socio-economic barriers are broken down (2 Cor. 8:4, 9:13; Gal. 6:6). The mutuality of the sharing (*koinonia*) of gifts and resources will move them toward "equality" (2 Cor. 8:13,14), though not a common community of goods. Equality is closing the gap between rich and poor in the body of Christ so no one lacks. The sharing of resources was to be

⁶⁴Tiano, Noel, "Luke's Teaching About the Poor and Its Implications for the Social Responsibilities of Luzon Southern Baptist Church Workers," Th. D. diss., Asia Baptist Graduate Theological Seminary (Baguio City, 1993), 33.

with the poor (Gal. 6:2, 10) and other churches (2 Cor. 8:34; 9:15; Rom. 15:25-27). Thus, financial gifts become sharing, not "giving" (Rom. 15:26; 2 Cor. 8:4; 9:13).⁶⁵

⁶⁵Richards, 276.

CHAPTER II

THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE PAULINE THEOLOGY OF *PTOCHOS*
AND *PTOCHEIA* TO THE CONTEMPORARY UNDERSTANDING
OF *POOR* AND *POVERTY*

The preceding chapter discussed the Pauline theology of *ptochos* and *ptochēia*. In this chapter, the researcher identified the following implications of Paul's theology of *ptochos* and *ptochēia* to the contemporary understanding of *poor* and *poverty*, namely: biblico-theological, ethical-economic, socio-political, contextual-situational, and practical-incarnational implications. The analysis is based on the literary research of the preceding chapter.

Biblico-Theological Implication

The following is the biblico-theological implication: poverty is a physical problem. It can be observed that the economically *poor* are very much affected physically. Many are malnourished resulting to all kinds of diseases including their mental capacity to think and

decide to improve their economic condition to the extent that they cannot provide themselves with the basic necessities of life such as food, shelter and clothing. Because of the above life situation there has been less economic development and a constant deterioration of the standard of living.

Similarly, Paul used *ptochos* to refer to the condition of economically poor believers in Jerusalem (Gal. 2:9-10; 6:10; 2 Cor. 8:14; cf. Acts 6:2.). They are the "physically poor." They are those who in some serious situation short of the basic necessities to sustain life (cf. 1 Tim. 6:8).

Ethical-Economic Implications

Collection of Funds for the Poor Relieves Poverty

The question posed is, 'Is it ethical to collect funds for the poor people?' As such people may think that this activity might lead into dependency resulting to laziness from lack of personal initiative. However, accountability on this issue is enjoined with the recipients. As noted in chapter one, the famine-stricken communities were financially supported by the collection made by believers elsewhere. *Diakonia* ("service") is

foundational to Christian life and community. Paul's idea suggests that collection should be directed to the poor (see 2 Cor. 8:4; Rom. 15:26; Gal. 2:10). In a world of inequality, enmity, injustice and greed, the church is called to live out the biblical model for the Christian community.

Distribution of Relief Goods is an Expression
of Christian Love

Paul urges the rich Corinthian members to complete their collection for the relief of the needy Christians in Jerusalem (2 Cor. 8-9). He solicits generous participation in the collection by referring to the exemplary behavior of the Macedonian churches (in view of their own profound "poverty" (2 Cor. 8:2). Poor relief of various kinds was thus established, though sharing of goods was not attempted.⁶⁶

Wealth is to Be Shared for Use by the Needy

It could not be denied that the *poor* sees poverty as material deprivation. It also reveals the marginalization and the oppression of the poor. The

⁶⁶Ibid.

marginalized are the unemployed, the beggars, abandoned children, prostitutes, and others. The exploited are the "working poor" as well as the rural and urban workers. Therefore, they are not to be generally blamed for their poverty. For them, poverty means lack of opportunity, etc. It has been observed that the reciprocity of resources, both spiritual and economic, during Paul's time, worked together to forge a new unity. The sharing of resources was to be with the poor (Gal. 6:2,10) and other churches (2 Cor. 8:34; 9:15; Rom. 15:25-27). Paul demands that those who had possessions share with others in "simplicity" and to distribute to the necessity of the saints who were needy (Rom. 12:8,13). Paul does not command the distribution of wealth to bring about a leveled society, but the rich are to see their wealth as a gift God has given them to help alleviate the needs of fellow human beings.

Possessions and property must be looked after, assessed and distributed in such a way that every member of the community has his fair share. One man's prosperity is closely connected with that of others. You cannot be rich by yourself.⁶⁷ In this way, the wealth of the rich is

purged and transformed into mutual help and support. The poverty of the poor is transformed in the same way.

Poverty is an Economic Reality

The poor are those who are dependent only and for their livelihood on agriculture. They are bond-labourers and suppressed by the rich. Others, because of their landlessness and joblessness, have to accept whatever wages they can get to stay alive. Also, the "small landowners" are finding their livelihood threatened by the advance of "agribusiness." Economically, poverty results from the denial of their labour, which deprives them of their dignity and opportunity.

However, in Paul's Christological model, within this new community of haves and have-nots, called the church, socio-economic barriers are broken down (2 Cor. 8:4, 9:13; Gal. 6:6). The mutuality of the sharing ("*koinonia*") of gifts and resources will move them toward "equality" (2 Cor. 8:13,14), though not a common community of goods. As stated previously Paul used the term *ptochos*

⁶⁷Conrad Boerma, *The Rich, the Poor and the Bible* (Philadelphia' PA: The Westminster Press, 1980), 69.

to refer to the condition of economically poor, that is, those who in some serious situation lacked the basic necessities to sustain life. They are those who were in economic need.

The Poor Needs Help from the Rich

Money and possessions are necessary because poor people need them to live a decent life. The rich becomes an instrument capable of acting justly and rediscovering the joy of corporate living. The poor people's chance to have a better life lies on the generosity of the rich to share their material blessings. However, dole-outs are discouraged and corresponding accountability from the poor is expected. Aptly, the saying states, "Give a man a fish and he will have a meal, teach him how to fish and he will have food for life."

In 2 Cor. 8-9, Paul urges the rich Corinthian members to complete their collection for the relief of the needy Christians in Jerusalem. Paul alludes to the grace of God whereby the rich members should give generously to the welfare of the poor. Paul stressed that running the risk of poverty through generosity brings spiritual blessing (see 2 Cor. 8-9). There is freedom and

independence of their decision to give. Paul was saying that the wealthy are to be rich in good deeds and economic sharing toward the poor (1 Tim. 6:18; cf. 2 Cor. 8:21).

Socio-Political Implications

Poverty is caused by Graft and Corruption

Red tape is rampant. Hence, poverty is the result of corruption for many years. Sadly, government officials and employees are taking bribes, charging interest, making unfulfilled promises, and plundering. Some officials have even become callous to the sufferings inflicted by injustices to the *poor*. Thus, the poor people are overlooked by government officials. However, in Paul's ministry, the *ptochous* were not forgotten but remembered for an ongoing financial assistance. His relief project was designed to meet the needs as well as alleviate the widespread suffering of the poor. He organized the said project not for his needs but to meet a permanent demand for continuous help of the poor.

Unemployment Results in Poverty

In the Philippines, unemployment stood at 9.8% in 1992. Per capita GNP growth at that time registered at

.06%. By 1993, with the dramatic rise to 2.77% in per capita GNP growth, unemployment went down slightly to 9.3%. At the end of 1994, with even higher growth at 5.1%, unemployment paradoxically rose up to 5.5%, unemployment increased to 11.9%. This shows that the income gaps had worsened from 1992 to 2002. Truly, a scenario of jobless growth!⁶⁸

In Paul's time, there was a large number of poor people living in Jerusalem. Christians suffered due to religious ill-will and social persecution by the Jewish religious groups. As a result, many Christians were unable to find work to support themselves and their families due to religious ill-will, social persecution, and over-population.

Contextual-Situational Implications

Poverty Leads to Prostitution

There are women who are forced by economic pressures to sell their bodies. There are those who

⁶⁸<http://www.socwatch.org.uy/1996/philippi.html>. See John Perkins, *Beyond Charity: The Call to Christian Community Development* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1993), 97.

believe that it is their only means of survival. Others used this as stepping stone to have a better life such as using their income for education and support for younger siblings and/or family (isolated cases reveal that daughters of poor parents sold or rented them for money).

Though Paul is silent on this, according to Brian Rosner, the immoral lifestyle of the Corinthians, prostitution in particular, was a part of their social, economic and religious existence.

Squatting by Homeless People is a Result of Poverty

In the Philippines, the Department of Social Welfare and Development estimated that there are about 1,200,000 homeless street children. This number rises annually by 6,365 children.⁶⁹ It cannot be denied that a number of homeless, especially homeless children, who roam and beg in the streets. This problem has threatened the divine justice and human dignity.

In the context of Paul's day, the Roman economic system brought class divisions among the people. The class

⁶⁹Michael Scott Knight, "Literary Research About Street Children: Around the World and Specifically in the Philippines," (Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2001), 22.

distinctions among the Romans were based mainly on wealth. There was a great contrast between rich and poor in the Roman world. Though Paul does not mention of the same situation, the effect of these so-called social classes resulted to poor people living in wooden houses crowded closely together in the countryside, whereas the upper-class Romans lived in luxurious town houses.

Practical-Incarnational Implications

Relief Efforts for the Poor are an Important Testimony for Christian Ministry

Paul uses the term *koinonia* (here "contribution") to emphasize the sense of sharing in a common cause (in this case, the relief of the needy Christians in Jerusalem) at some cost. For Paul, the intimate fellowship in the body of Christ has concrete economic implications, for he uses precisely the word *koinonia*, to designate financial sharing among believers (Gal. 2:10). Indeed, this financial sharing was just one part of a total fellowship. Economic sharing was an obvious and crucial part of Christian fellowship and ministry for Paul.

Rich churches Should Financially Share
with Poor Churches

Paul assumed the task of demonstrating his commitment to the community in Jerusalem by calling upon other congregations to support the new congregation financially. He made the Macedonian churches as a clear example for the rich Gentile Christians. Accordingly, in 2 Cor. 8:1-2, Gal. 2:10, and Rom. 15:26-27 (see also 1 Cor. 16:1-4), the Apostle Paul had this desire to collect an offering from the Gentile churches, which were somewhat wealthy, in order to give it to the poor saints in Jerusalem who were in dire need.

The Rich Can Make Use of their God-given Wealth
to Help the Poor

Out of their generosity, voluntarily individual rich Christians or local churches have the chance and opportunity to extend monetary help or other means for the poor members. The poor hopes that conversion will take place in the hearts of the rich and they should live by God's grace. Their possessions will no longer be the basis for their life nor a destructive power. That the rich Christians (first century) among them gave with overflowing generosity to meet a desperate need in the body of Christ

indicates not naïve idealism but unconditional discipleship. They dared to give concrete, visible expression to the oneness of believers. This implies good stewardship as indicated in I Cor. 4:1, and 2 Cor. 8:8.

Poverty can be Minimized by the Pooling
of Resources for the Needy

The church at Jerusalem is a classical illustration of a larger sharing of life. "All who became Christians were together and held all they had for the common use. They sold their property and goods, and shared the proceeds according to their individual needs" (Acts 2:43-47, cf. 4:32-5:11). Paul alludes to this activity. Wherever people meet closely on a footing of equality, sharing is inevitable.⁷⁰ The pooling of resources issues a call to the recovery of an economically heterogeneous church, which is fully committed to justice for the poor. Partnership relationships between rich and poor churches would be formed with the idea of pooling resources for God's mission in the city. One practical step for churches of economic means is to, at minimum, tithe building programs and

⁷⁰See also Walter Rauschenbusch, *Christianity and the Social Crisis* (London: The Macmillan Co., 1911), 120, 122.

mission budgets to congregations in poor urban

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neighborhoods that have programs or projects in need of
funding assistance.

CONCLUSION

The question of poverty and the lot of the poor is, without doubt, a major problem facing the world today. It is a special issue of serious concern for theology and the mission of the Church as these are inalienably linked to the context of the people with whom the Church is involved. John Stott says, "If there is one community in the world in which justice is secured for the *poor* and need is eliminated, this should be the church."⁷¹ The research does not attempt to provide a solution to the issue of *poor* and *poverty*. Rather, it seeks to create awareness of the nature, factors, and causes of poverty affecting the *poor* people. Further, it suggests some implications of Paul's theology of *ptochos* and *ptoheia* to the contemporary understanding of *poor* and *poverty*.

⁷¹See Art Beals, *Beyond Hunger: A Biblical Mandate for Social Responsibility* (Portland, Oregon: Multnomah Press, 1985), 202.

Implications of the Findings

This section enumerates the theological and practical implications of Paul's theology of *ptochos* and *ptocheia* to the contemporary understanding of *poor* and *poverty*. These implications are important and significant to the mission and ministry of the Christian churches. They could be mentioned in the following:

1. *There is a need for the Christian churches to be a models and agents for transformed relationships. As the Christian community is the salt and light of the world, Christians must set an example to the people around them. They must begin with themselves and become a model for society. But the Church is more than a model, it is an agent of transformation, a catalyst for change. The leaven of the Christian Church will leaven the whole lump of human society. The Christian message is revolutionary! It changes the lives of all who accept it in true faith. The church is the "responsible community."⁷² The church members, the Body of Christ, by their Christian ideals and convictions is necessarily interested in the sufferings of*

⁷²Truman Douglas, *Why Go to Church* (New York, NY: Harper & Brothers, 1957), 47.

humanity and it will show its concern by its actions.

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2. *There is a need for a mutual interdependence of the Christian member-churches.* Warren asserts that a culture of individualism and independence must be replaced with the biblical concepts of interdependence and mutuality.⁷³ Mutual interdependence means there will be no one-sided approach. We share what we have with each other: financial resources, personnel, experiences, etc. As Padilla puts it, "interdependence comes with a deeper understanding of the nature of unity in Christ and of the situation in which other members of the body of Christ live."⁷⁴ In God's community, there must be a mutual sharing. Padilla further points out, "Life in community cannot be conceived in terms of a situation in which one section of the church is always on the giving end while

⁷³Rick Warren, *The Purpose-Driven Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995; reprint, Manila Philippines: OMF Literature Inc., 1998), 369. A healthy world order would be marked by interdependence among nations and institutions, all blended with self-reliant independence. Peoples and nations, even in a just world, will necessarily depend upon one another, for not even the largest nation-states are completely self-sufficient. See William R. Burrows, *New Ministries: The Global Context* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1981), 22.

⁷⁴C. Rene Padilla, *Mission Between the Times: Essays on the Kingdom* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing House, 1985), 134.

another is always on the receiving end.⁷⁵ We need to learn
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to discover other churches' gifts and resources and to share with ours and others. Then, they all have a responsibility to exercise those gifts and to create an environment in which others can exercise theirs. They need also to respect each other in their limitations and difficulties and try to build each other up, to be sensitive to the need of the other and willing to respond to them.

In his mission, Paul set a model for mutual interdependence of the Christian Church. From Paul's perspective, the Church as the Body of Christ finds its real life in togetherness and interdependence. He emphasized that all members of Christ's body are one and interdependent with each other. Paul taught that the interdependent parts within the body, the Church, needed each other. Each member had a responsibility towards the body. In essence, God wills fundamentally transformed economic relationships among his people.⁷⁶ These biblical precedents challenge the CPBC churches in the twenty-first

⁷⁵Ibid., 137.

⁷⁶Ronald Sider, *Cry Justice! The Bible on Hunger and Poverty* (Broadway, NY: Paulist Press, 1980), 99.

century, when global inequalities become visibly larger 18

than ever, to move toward mutual interdependence, setting a new model, as a particular denomination, for the contemporary world. In the words of David Bosch, "we need new relationships, mutual responsibility, accountability, and interdependence (not independence!)." ⁷⁷

3. *There is a need for the denomination's theological institutions to incorporate social ministry in their respective programs.* One important implication derived from this study is the need for social ministry courses to be offered under academic institutions. The whole existence of these institutions is to teach and train people to do ministry in a way that brings people to the salvation of Jesus Christ, educates the converts, and equips the called men and women of God for ministry. Knight says that the offering of courses that relate to social ministry at institutions, social ministry will become more prominent within the context of the Christian community. ⁷⁸

⁷⁷David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991), 466.

⁷⁸This would also give prominence to the theological aspects that relate to social ministry within the Biblical context. This blend of theological knowledge and

Christian institutions have the theological obligations not only to teach, but also to train students to do social ministry so as to give them a holistic approach in doing ministry.⁷⁹ One of the hindrances that prevents the churches in doing social ministry is the lack of education and training in the seminary and Bible schools.⁸⁰ Knight further notes, "If Christian institutions avoid or ignore the idea of teaching and training future ministers in doing social ministry effectively, then they are ignoring an avenue of ministry that is needed in these current times."⁸¹

4. *There is a need for the churches to recognize social ministry as a viable tool for mission and evangelism, and discipleship.* The church as the body of Christ is imbued by his Spirit and is continuing his ministry. The ministry of Jesus is the norm for the

understanding and the implications of this information through the application of doing social ministry would build more capable and well-rounded ministers and lay workers in the church.

⁷⁹Ibid., 88.

⁸⁰Ibid., 5.

⁸¹Ibid., 83-4.

church's ministry.⁸² Every function of the members of Christ's Body is a *diakonia* ("service"), and Christ himself is the primary holder of every *diakonia*.⁸³ Bloesch affirms that "social action is in reality the fruit and evidence of the Gospel."⁸⁴ The functional ministry of the church is a sort of translation of its ideal ministry into the language of on-going social activity.⁸⁵

People are all made in the image of God. Since we are created in His image, Christians should act like Him and do the things He has done. The Christian community need not only be emphatic to the plight of the poor and needy but they also need help that only the Christian community can offer them, which is the response of God through individual Christians and organizations.⁸⁶ They

⁸²Franklin Segler, *A Theology of Church and Ministry* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1960), 23.

⁸³H. Richard Niehbur, *The Purpose of the Church and Its Ministry*, (New York, NY: Harper & Brothers, 1956), 31.

⁸⁴Donald G. Bloesch, *Essentials for Evangelical Theology: Life, Ministry, and Hope*, Vol. 2 (San Francisco, CA: Harper and Row Publishers, 1978), 56.

⁸⁵See Visser't Hooft and Oldham, *The Church and Its Function in Society* (Chicago: Willet, Clark and Co., 1937), 144-163.

⁸⁶Knight, 81.

not only has the obligation to do social ministry as Christians, they also have a privilege to show the love and compassion image of God through doing acts of love and mercy in the name of Jesus Christ.⁸⁷

Further, Dr. E. Samson notes that both ministry to the soul and ministry to the body are integral to the church's work.⁸⁸ Likewise, Church pastors and workers are expected to model the biblical teachings and ideals not only on the spiritual dimensions but concerning social ministry as well. As Christian ministers and workers, they are also responsible to teach, to guide, and to mold their members in understanding the so-called social ministry. There is a strong mandate from God's Word regarding ministry to the total needs of persons.

Social ministry finds its basic model for integrating ministry and evangelism in how the early church interpreted the lordship of Christ.⁸⁹ Social ministry

⁸⁷Ibid.

⁸⁸See Tetsunao Yamamori, et al, eds., *Serving with the Poor in Asia* (Monrovia, CA: MARC Publications, 1995), 133-93.

⁸⁹See Darrel R. Watkins, *Christian Social Ministry: An Introduction* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1993), 100.

should not be separated from our identity and real purpose of the church, which is God's mandate of helping people and leading people to Christ. Therefore, social ministry should be a means of churches for witnessing Jesus Christ and making disciples (not Christians) of Christ but should avoid being conditional bait of making "rice Christian"⁹⁰ or increasing numbers of the church.

5. *There is a need to re-educate the churches towards the validity and appropriateness of social ministry.* Poverty is one of the biggest problems in the region. The church, as a community institution, needs to fill the gap left by the government in relation to social ministry. The church needs to continue doing social ministry even when the government is unable because of lack of budget. The problem is that the majority of the churches are not doing social ministry. This could be because the people are not aware of their responsibility to do social ministry as well as the lack of knowledge and skills required in doing social ministry. There needs to be more training and education in the area of social

⁹⁰Jun Vencer, *The Church and Relief* (Quezon City, Philippines: Philippine Relief and Development Services, Inc., 1990), 12.

ministry to help the churches begin working with the Philippine government to help eradicate poverty. Pastors and church workers need to have a clear theology of social ministry in the light of this concern.

Knight further notes that the Church has many resources, including the social minister, gifted staff, and facilities, financial resources, and community resources.⁹¹

5. *There is a need to offer financial assistance for the poor churches.* The quality of life of the poor was found to be far from desirable. Their condition was characterized by low monthly per capita income and poor housing condition. The government welfare services in the community which would have ameliorated their living condition were inadequate if not absent. Thus, they suffered more under poverty. Factors affecting the poor quality of poor people include, low educational attainment, irregular or seasonal work, big household size, unemployment and underemployment of its members of labor force age, and daily maintenance from farming and fishing. In like manner, poor members of churches have the same situation.

⁹¹Knight, 136.

At this juncture, the rich could help emancipate the oppressed, augment opportunities for the less privileged, and enhance benefits for the marginalized people of the community. They could utilize their resources to render praiseworthy service to God through various avenues conducive to members especially to the less fortunate ones. However, Little says, "Experience has taught us that all assistance must be temporary and empowering in order to avoid unhealthy dependency."⁹² Thus, there is a need for the *poor* to view monetary collection and benevolence as a provisional means of support. Therefore, rich Christians, if possible, must witness to the importance of a caring society.⁹³

8. *There is a need to biblically practice stewardship in the churches.* Stewardship is the commitment of life and possessions to the service of Christ. It is not primarily a method of raising money for the church but a means of developing mature Christians. To

⁹²Christopher R. Little, "Whatever happened to the Apostle Paul? An Exposition of Paul's Teaching and Practice of Giving," *Mission Frontiers* 23:3 (September 2001), 26.

⁹³See John F. Sleeman, *Economic Crisis: A Christian Perspective* (Bloomsbury Street, London: SCM Press, 1976), 76.

be sure, a true sense of Christian stewardship will also serve as a financial safeguard against economic problems. Its motivation is gratitude expressed in sacrificial giving to the church, regardless of the circumstances of life.⁹⁴

Tom Sine puts the challenge of stewardship well:

We need to understand, if we are to be the people of God and follow Christ who identifies with the poor, it means more than giving out our leftovers. We need to move back to jubiliary stewardship models. Jubiliary stewardship is based on the assumption that "the earth is the Lord's. If the earth is indeed the Lord's do I get to keep in a world in which 800 million people are not able to survive. We need a whole new theology in all of our churches that understands that we are part of the international body of Jesus Christ. We are called to lives of greater responsibility and greater celebration under the reign of God."⁹⁵

In the same fashion, given a call to be economists in God's house, churches should look to see where God's resources are not being properly distributed in the church and society, beginning with "ourselves."

7. *There is a need to create different training programs and seminars for jobless Church members. The churches should continually provide a program for members to learn a trade or special skill. Moreover, there is a*

⁹⁴Segler, 32.

⁹⁵Tom Sine, "Shifting Christian Mission into the Future Tense," *Missiology: An International Review*, Vol. XV, No.1 (January, 1987): 152.

need for continuing education and further training in the area of entrepreneurship and economic strategy among churches. This continuing and further enhancement of the leaders and members' skills would eventually lead to the effective administration of social services.