

**'IF A MAN DOES NOT WISH TO WORK. . .'
A CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL SETTING FOR
2 THESSALONIANS 3:6-16**

Bruce W. Winter

In writing to the Thessalonians Paul reminds the church of the teaching he gave them concerning work when he was with them.

...with toil and labour we worked day and night, that we might not burden any of you. It is not because we have not that right, but to give you in our conduct an example to imitate. For even when we were with you, we gave you the command, 'If any one does not wish to work, let him not eat' (εἴ τις οὐ θέλει ἐργάζεσθαι μηδὲ ἐσθιέτω). For we hear that some of you are living in idleness, mere busybodies, not doing any work. Now we command and exhort such persons in the Lord Jesus Christ to do their work with quietness and earn their own living. Brothers, in the doing of good you must not grow weary (2 Thess. 3:8-11).

Paul repeats to the church his original exhortation elsewhere 'to do their work, to earn their own living, as we charged you, so that you may command the respect of outsiders, and be dependent on nobody', 1 Thessalonians 4:10-12.

In a recent discussion of the refusal of certain Christians in Thessalonica to work, R. Russell has made the observation that 'whatever encouraged their behaviour preceded these eschatological problems because disorderly behaviour existed from the beginning'.¹ He argues that the problem was a social rather than an eschatological one. To what may this problem be attributed? A number of suggestions have been made.

Russell himself argues that 'the opportunities for employment were limited, and with scarcity of work idleness was more widespread and wages even lower'. Thus, as a result of unemployment, some had become poor and had received support from members of the congregation who had means.² If this is correct, then Paul's solution was an unsympathetic and

¹R. Russell, 'The Idle in 2 Thess 3.6-12', *NTS* 34 (1988) 108.

²Russell, 'The Idle' 112, 108.

impractical one, for if any were unemployed through lack of job opportunities, then *ipso facto* they could not eat, 2 Thessalonians 3:10b.

A. Malherbe speculates that the fact that 'the converts abandoned their trades and took to the streets (as Cynic preachers did), helps to explain Paul's preoccupation with his own and his converts' employment'.³ Dio Chrysostom in his Alexandrian oration provides first century evidence of the Cynic teachers offering their instruction free of charge in contrast to others who accepted fees. They begged for support on street corners from all and sundry.⁴ However, the esteeming of Christian teachers on the one hand in 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13 and the exhortation to 'admonish the idlers' on the other hand which follows immediately, seems out of place if it is true that the unemployed have left their work to preach as the Cynic teachers did.

Was the reluctance to work related to attitudes to manual labour, 'working with their hands'? The view has been canvassed that the first century's disdain for manual work was at the heart of the Thessalonian problem.⁵ Artisans certainly were not esteemed even if their work was admired. Plutarch states, for example, that 'while we delight in the work [of craftsmen and artisans], we despise the workman...it does not necessarily follow that, if the work delights you with its graces, the one who wrought it is worthy of your esteem'.⁶ This is but one comment reflecting the upper class's attitude to manual workers. This, however, does not explain why some in Thessalonica assumed responsibility to provide for their fellow citizens whom it is assumed they despised.

2 Thessalonians 3:6-8 would seem to imply that there was a convention of *providentia* which existed prior to Paul's

³A. Malherbe, *Paul and the Thessalonians* (Philadelphia, Fortress Press 1987) 101.

⁴Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 32.9.

⁵e.g. I.H. Marshall, *1 and 2 Thessalonians* (London, Marshall Morgan and Scott 1983) 223.

⁶*Lives, Pericles*, I.4-II.1, 2. In denigrating their opponents the sophists who were from the social élite boasted they knew nothing of labour, πόνον οὐκ εἰδότες, and they spoke ill of those whom they describe as easy to despise (εύκαταφρόνητοι), Philo, *Det.* 33-4.

initial coming to Thessalonica, and one which he set about resolving while still there. He refers to 'the tradition you received from us.'⁷ For you yourselves know how you ought to imitate us . . . we worked day and night . . . to give you in your conduct an example to imitate'.

The purpose of this paper is to suggest the *providentia* convention of a patron/client relationship as the cause of the unwillingness of some in Thessalonica to work. It is proposed to discuss (I) The patron/client relationship (II) Paul's call not to be dependent on a patron (III) *providentia* in the face of famines in Macedonia as the possible cause for the setting aside of Paul's teaching, and (IV) Paul's teaching on the role of Christians as benefactors not clients.

I. The Patron/Client Relationship

Russell suggests without further analysis that because the poor 'developed a relationship (friendship) with a benefactor or patron whereby they would receive support, money or food in exchange for the obligation to reciprocate with an expression of gratitude', so too some of the Christian 'urban poor... may have formed a client relationship and obligation to the benefactor'.⁸

What did such a relationship involve? Saller writes,

The aristocratic social milieu of the Republic continued into the Principate, and with it the basic notion that a man's social status was reflected in the size of his following—a large clientèle symbolizing his power to give inferiors what they needed. If a man's *clientela* was indicative of his current status, his potential for mobility depended on the effectiveness of his patrons whose wealth and political connections could be indispensable. Perhaps partly because of the unchanging social structure and values, financial institutions developed little, and so Romans appear to have continued to rely largely on patrons, clients

⁷ παρέλαβσαν an aorist tense, v. 6, the implication being that both by word and example Paul in Thessalonica drove home this message, undertaking what he himself did not need to do because of his right of local support while preaching the gospel, 1 Cor. 9:6, 12b, 14 citing the dominical fiat.

⁸ Russell, 'The Idle' 112–3.

and friends for loans or gifts in time of need, and assistance in financial activities.⁹

At the heart of patronage was the social convention which was called 'giving and receiving'.¹⁰ This meant more than simply an expression of gratitude at the time of receiving a gift. Once financial support had been given and received, then this created a relationship which could be further exploited by the receiver. The very return of profuse thanks for a gift was the means of asking for more support:

The act of benefiting set up a chain of obligations. The beneficiary had an obligation to respond to the gift with gratitude; his expression of gratitude then placed the original benefactor under obligation to do something further.¹¹

One of the requirements of a client was that he should attend the morning greeting, *salutatio*, in the reception room of his patron and receive a gift of food or money.¹² Indeed, 'without the existence of the institution of patronage, the free poor would not have received their daily bread'.¹³

There certainly were some in the church who were wealthy and therefore potential benefactors. The name of Aristarchus from Thessalonica in Acts 19:29 and 20:4 is possibly one such person—if he is the same person as Aristarchus, son of Aristarchus who heads a list of politarchs in that city, then he

⁹R.P. Saller, *Personal Patronage under the Early Empire*, (Cambridge, CUP 1982) 205. See also P. Marshall, *Enmity in Corinth: Social Conventions in Paul's Relations with the Corinthians* (WUNT; Tübingen, J.C.B Mohr 1987) 143.

¹⁰P. Marshall, *Enmity in Corinth* 157–164.

¹¹S.C. Mott, 'The Power of Giving and Receiving: Reciprocity in Hellenistic Benevolence', in G.F. Hawthorne (ed.), *Current Issues in Biblical and Patristic Interpretation: Studies in Honor of Merrill C. Tenney* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans 1975) 60–72 esp. 63 'the expression of gratitude placed a valid claim for further benefits upon the benefactor'. "'Gratitude for one favour is the best method of securing another'", *ibid.*, citing C.B. Welles, *Royal Correspondence in the Hellenistic Period: A Study of Greek Epigraphy* (New Haven, Yale University Press 1934) 108.

¹²N. Lewis and M. Reinhold, *Roman Civilization Sourcebook II: The Empire* (New York, Harper and Row, 1966) 240 citing Juvenal, *Satires* III ll. 129–130 on paying morning respects to a patron.

¹³P. Garnsey, *Food and Famine*, 214; M.I. Finley, *The Ancient Economy*, (London, 1985²) 198–204 on distributions and the poor.

certainly would have been a person of means.¹⁴ Jason who appears to have been Paul's host in Thessalonica and sent his greeting to the church in Rome, may well have been a man of means.¹⁵ There were 'not a few of the leading women' who became converts according to Acts 17:4.¹⁶ As such they were not precluded from giving public and private benefactions as illustrated from the inscription to Junia Theodora c. AD 43.¹⁷

If some patrons were now Christians, what would have happened to their clients? A Christian patron would still have been under an obligation to support non-Christian clients, for changing his religion would not have abrogated his responsibility. There is good reason to suppose that converted patrons would have made every attempt to share their new found faith with the former, for they would have constituted an immediate sphere of influence. Becoming a Christian would not have automatically relieved a patron of his obligation to continue to give help to Christian clients if they asked for support. In fact, refusal to do so would have created a relationship of enmity which could affect relationships in the

¹⁴See C.J. Hemer (ed. C.H. Gempf), *The Book of Acts in the Setting of Hellenistic History* (Tübingen, J.C.B. Mohr 1989) 236.

¹⁵Acts 17:5–7 Romans 16:21, and R. Jewett, *The Thessalonian Correspondence: Pauline Rhetoric and Millenarian Piety* (Philadelphia, Fortress Press 1986) 120 *contra* G. Theissen, 'Social Stratification in the Corinthian Community: A Contribution to the Sociology of Early Hellenistic Christianity', *The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity*, (Philadelphia, Fortress Press 1982) 95, believes that the social status of Jason remains an open question.

¹⁶Some have doubted the integrity of the account of the social composition of the new church in Acts 17:4 because of the exhortations to the idle to work in the Thessalonian *corpus*. Even if the Acts account contained no references to people of status in the church in Thessalonica, the existence of a few wealthy members would need to be presupposed. As Jewett, *Thessalonian Correspondence* 120, comments after reviewing J. Murphy-O'Connor, 'Archaeology', *St. Paul's Corinth: Texts and Archaeology* (Wilmington, Michael Glazier 1983) Part 3, 'the archaeological evidence in the Greek cities renders it essential to assume the presence of a few patrons whose houses were large enough to serve as centres for house churches'.

¹⁷D.I. Pallas, 'Inscriptions Lyciennes trouvées à Solomos près de Corinthe', *BCH*, 58 (1959) 498–500 for the texts and L. Robert, 'Recherches épigraphiques', *REA* 62 (1960) 324 ff. no. 7 for the dating of the decree c. AD 43. For a discussion of the role of Roman women see A.J. Marshall, 'Roman Women and the Provinces', *Ancient Society*, 6 (1975) 108–27 and R. MacMullen, 'Women in Public in the Roman Empire', *Historia*, 29 (1980) 208–20.

church, especially if they met in a Christian household or households for worship.¹⁸

II. 'Dependent on nobody'

Juvenal in his satire on 'How Clients are Entertained' belittles the 'plan of life' some have who 'still deem it to be the highest bliss to live at another man's board', *ut bona summa putes aliena vivere quadra*. He describes the inferior food a client may be served at a dinner at which his patron is given the very best.¹⁹ At the dinner the client speaks to his patron in the hope of soliciting a gift from him:

No one asks of you such lordly gifts as Seneca or the good Piso or Cotta used to send to their humble friends: for in the days of old, the glory of giving was deemed grander than titles or fasces. All we ask of you is that you should dine with us as a fellow-citizen: do this and remain like so many others nowadays, rich for yourself and poor to your friends.²⁰

A client may live in the unrealistic hope that his patron will bestow a gift of 400,000 sesterces, the sum required for the client to become a knight, *census equestris*, making him *ex nihilo* into his 'dear' friend but placing him under a deep obligation. However his patron may be mean, for if the client's wife produced three boys, at the birth of each he would 'order little green jackets to be given to them, and little nuts, and pennies too *if they be asked for*, when the little parasites present themselves at his table'.²¹ Such an existence was inappropriate for Christians who were to be 'dependent on nobody' (μηδενὸς χρεῖαν ἔχητε) for they were to work with their own hands 'as we charged you'. This teaching was given *in situ*, 1 Thessalonians 4:11–12, and 5:14. Paul himself would not be dependent upon the Thessalonian church while he was there, although he was within his rights to do so. Working 'night and day' he felt that he had provided an example for

¹⁸P. Marshall, *Enmity in Corinth* 20.

¹⁹Satire V, ll. 2, 80 ff.

²⁰Satire V, ll. 110–13.

²¹Satire V, ll. 132–5, 142–5.

them to imitate, 2 Thessalonians 3.8–9.²² Paul's purpose was to wean such persons away from the welfare syndrome, be the source a wealthy Christian or non-Christian patron.

Furthermore Paul is concerned that Christians should 'command the respect of outsiders', 1 Thessalonians 4:12. As those who laboured with their hands certainly did not command the respect of the well-to-do outsiders,²³ it is therefore possible that the outsiders to whom Paul refers had been patrons of some of the Christians. A client had a financial source to call upon for his daily food. If on the other hand, he makes no further claims on his patron would he not earn the respect of his patron?

III. *Providentia* in Times of Famine

Tacitus declared that AD 51 was an 'ominous' year. 'There were earthquakes and subsequent panic in which the weak were trampled under foot'. He also notes that there was a shortage of corn again as a consequence famine. These were construed by some as 'a supernatural warning'.²⁴ Famine and earthquakes were seen as divine portents not only by pagans but also by Christians who attached significance to these disasters as but the beginning of the tribulation.²⁵ This may well account for the heightened eschatological concerns of the Thessalonians.²⁶ It does not necessarily follow that the expectation of the *parousia* resulted in the Thessalonian Christians refusing to work.²⁷

²²R. Hock, *The Social Context of Paul's Ministry* (Philadelphia, Fortress Press 1980) 48 'we may assume a paradigmatic function for his paraenesis on work'.

²³See p. 304.

²⁴Tacitus, *Annals* XII.43,

²⁵Mk. 13.8, Mt. 24:7–8.

²⁶1 Thess. 5:13 and 2 Thess. 1:5–2:12. For a similar reaction in Corinth see B.W. Winter, 'Secular and Christian Responses to Corinthian Famines', *TynB* 40 (1989) 92–3.

²⁷For the most recent treatment in a long line making the connection between the *parousia* and work in Thessalonica see R. Jewett, 'The Millenarian Model', *Thessalonian Correspondence*, ch. 9. He bases this on sociological investigations into millenarian movements including the twentieth-century cargo cult, and presupposes a dispossessed or oppressed class in Thessalonica, an idea derived from W. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of*

How did the Council and the People in Greek cities handle the enormous problems associated with famine which threatened its peace and welfare? 'The grain supply provides the mainsprings of hatred and popularity. Hunger alone sets cities free, and reverence is purchased when rulers feed the lazy mob.'²⁸ Officially, the authorities might appoint a *curator annonae*, curator of the grain supply, whose task it was to ensure that grain was available at a reduced price in the market place either by purchasing grain and dumping it on the market at a substantially reduced price thus forcing down the price, or by initiating a corn fund with donations from wealthy benefactors to subsidize the price of grain likewise.²⁹

How did various groups in Greek cities cope with the actual shortages during famines? The monthly corn dole in Rome was sufficient. For more than a century in the imperial capital the corn dole was the right of a vast number of inhabitants for whom this concession was not based on need but citizenship. Did Roman citizens in Thessalonica receive the corn dole as their counterparts did in Rome, or were these citizens actually from Rome who claimed the dole when absent from the capital? We know that in a later period Roman citizens in Oxyrhynchus were entitled to the monthly corn dole,³⁰ and they came from three groupings. There were those who had established their eligibility on the grounds that their parents were Alexandrian and Roman citizens. Others who were people of means and had undertaken liturgies thus qualified, and yet others who had one metropolitane parent.³¹ Whether this applied in Thessalonica is not known, but if it did, then Rome and Oxyrhynchus are a guide as to who would

the *Apostle Paul*, (New Haven, Yale University Press 1983) 73 that the 'typical' Christian in the Pauline churches was 'a free artisan or small trader'.
²⁸*Pharsalia*, III 55–8.

²⁹See C.P. Jones, *The Roman World of Dio Chrysostom* (Loeb Classical Monographs; Cambridge, Massachusetts and London 1978) 19.

³⁰R.J. Rowland, 'The "Very Poor" and the Grain Dole at Rome and Oxyrhynchus', *ZPE*, 21 (1976) 69–72.

³¹See J. Bingen, 'Declarations pour l'epichrisi', *Chronique d'Egypte*, 16 (1956) 116; C.A. Nelson, 'Epikrisis: The Identity and Function of the Officials', *Akten XIII Internationalen Papyrologenkongresses*, (ed.) E. Kiessling and H.A. Rupprecht, (München, 1974) 309–14. For discussion of the status and numbers in Oxyrhynchus see Garnsey, *Food and Famine* 265–6.

have been eligible, *viz.*, mostly well-to-do citizens. There may have been a few in the Thessalonian congregation who qualified if the dole was given to Roman citizens in that city.

Certainly wealthy householders could afford to buy grain whether at an inflated or subsidized prices, and indeed they may have stored sufficient grain for all, including their slaves, in expectation of food shortages. There were legal obligations in the first century for a master who had conditionally manumitted his slave and, in effect, had become his patron. He was bound to him to feed him as his freedman if the latter were unable to do so himself.³² So the freedman and the slave were cared for.

To whom had the lower groups, that is, the non-slave labourers and artisans looked in order to cope in a time of famine? 'Mutual support between ordinary citizens linked by kinship, proximity of residence or friendship, and exemplified in the interest-free loan, was a defence against poverty, hardship and the personal patronage of the wealthy'.³³ While the last was something which the Athenians wished to avoid for ideological reasons,³⁴ there were always those who were happy to have a patron support them in time of want, or indeed, permanently. There was a famine in AD 51. Another possibly occurred a little later if Corinth shared the same grain shortage with Thessalonica.³⁵

It has been suggested that idleness did not create an internal problem for the church in the first letter but it only does so in the second letter.³⁶

³²A.M. Duff, *Freedmen in the Early Roman Empire* (Cambridge, W. Heffer 1958) 98 and K. Hopkins, *Conquerors and Slaves* (Sociological Studies in Roman History I; CUP 1978) 148.

³³Garnsey, *Food and Famine* 80.

³⁴P. Millett, 'Patronage and its avoidance in Classical Athens,' in A. Wallace-Hadrill (ed.), *Patronage in Ancient Society* (London and New York, Routledge 1989) 15-47.

³⁵For evidence of a further famine after AD 51 see my, 'Secular and Christian Responses to Corinthian Famines', 99 for the date of 53 or 54. 2 Cor. 8:1 notes the extreme poverty of the churches of Macedonia which may well be related to a severe grain shortage and made Paul's Jerusalem collection even more difficult; cf. Phil. 4:14. See also Garnsey, *Food and Famine* 261, on famines in Greece in the 40s and 50s.

³⁶P. Marshall, *Enmity in Corinth* 172.

The problem of idleness in the church is said to sound like a new topic in 2 Th. 3:11, whereas it sounds old in 1 Th. 4:11; moreover it is strange that Paul refers back to his own example in 2 Thessalonians rather than to his previous letter.³⁷

Would a famine subsequent to the writing of 1 Thessalonians not account for the fact that now the problem was 'a new topic'? It was new in the sense that it is now an internal one for the church because for the first time the Christian ἐκκλησία, distinct from the city's ἐκκλησία, is faced with the problem of how to react to members who needed help to purchase grain. It would have been available, but, as has been noted, it was the price that could be crippling for artisans and non-slave labourers. The solution was its provision at a cheap price or as a gift, depending on circumstances. Christian compassion would have demanded that they did so.

The Thessalonian epistles do not state that the church as a whole was feeding those who refused to work.³⁸ There is no evidence that the congregation had set up a soup-kitchen, even if that were to happen subsequently in a Jewish synagogue in the third century AD.³⁹ Some members of the congregation appear this time to have sought out the patronage of a rich Christian as against secular private benefactors, for the purpose of obtaining money to buy grain or a handout of free grain. Others with Christian patrons could have easily resumed a patron/client relationship. It would not have been severed simply because clients had to ask for money or food in the intervening period and had worked instead.

Once the need had passed did those who were assisted now assume a client/patron relationship and by means of their profuse thanks continue the cycle of giving and receiving? Subsequent to the writing of 1 Thessalonians Paul learnt that some who did not wish to work had in fact reverted to a patron/client relationship.

³⁷I.H. Marshall, *1 and 2 Thessalonians* 25–6.

³⁸*Contra* I.H. Marshall, *1 and 2 Thessalonians* 226 who argues that Paul is not telling the church to cut off their supply of food to the idle, but rather admonishing the idle to change their ways.

³⁹J. Reynolds and R. Tannenbaum, *Jews and Godfearers at Aphrodisias* (Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society Association Supp 12; Cambridge, Philological Society 1987) 27.

IV. Christians as benefactors not clients

Paul's proscription on feeding was directed towards 'brethren' who were to keep away from any brother who is living in idleness, 2 Thessalonians 3:6. This serious apostolic injunction which was commanded 'in the name of the Lord Jesus' was as much a binding admonition on the rich and the generous not to give, as it was on others not to ask, 2 Thessalonians 3:6, 14.⁴⁰ Paul's intervention with this command 'to keep away from a brother who is idle' may have been the only way of relieving the patron of his obligation without the latter's refusal to provide food being seen as an act of enmity within the church.⁴¹

The reference to 'those not working but being the busy bodies' (μηδὲν ἐργαζομένους ἀλλὰ περιεργαζομένους) suggests that the idle tended to create problems, 3:11. περιπατοῦντας ἐν ὑμῖν ἀτάκτως in 2 Thessalonians 3:11 refers not simply to the workers' idleness but to their disorderly conduct. This is normally taken to refer to their activity in the church.⁴² It could however be a reference to activity required of a client in support his patron's cause in πολιτεία.⁴³ Paul would not have wished his converts to create strife in the city following his own hasty withdrawal after Jason stood surety for his good behaviour. The Thessalonians had themselves encountered problems subsequently.⁴⁴

⁴⁰The term 'brethren' as an inclusive term for Christians would not rule out this injunction applying to patronesses or to their οἰκονόμοι who would have had the responsibility for distributing food in a household.

⁴¹It has been assumed that those from whom the idle were receiving assistance in Thessalonica were all Christians. Russell, 'The Idle' 113.

⁴²Russell, 'The Idle' 107-8.

⁴³See Aristotle, *Politics* 1319B 15. ποιεῖν τὴν πολιτείαν ἀτακτοτέραν. A. Lintott, *Violence, Civil Strife and Revolution in the Classical City* (London & Canberra, Croom Helm 1982) and B. Rawson, *The Politics of Friendship, Pompey and Cicero* (Parramatta, Sydney University Press 1978). This suggestion is far more likely than the argument of Jewett, *Thessalonian Correspondence* 125, who explores the view that the members of the congregation understood Paul's proclamation in political terms and possibly they comprised 'disenfranchised labourers who were known to be restive under Roman rule'.

⁴⁴Acts 17:8 and A.N. Sherwin-White, *Roman Society and Roman Law in the New Testament: The Sarum Lectures, 1960-1961* (Oxford, Clarendon Press 1963) 95-6. See 1 Thess. 1:8, 2:14, 3:3.

Most importantly, Paul reminds the idle that they were not only to engage in paid activity to support themselves (2 Thessalonians 3:12) but they were to be those who by means of their money did good—οἱ καλοποιοῦντες, verse 13. It was not simply a matter of keeping out of trouble nor indeed simply become self-supporting, as important as both of those reasons were. There was a far more over-arching consideration which stood at the centre of Christian reflection and activity, *viz.*, in the doing of good which benefited the lives of others.

Paul's exhortations then do not have as their focus a concern about offending civic order.⁴⁵ His concerns are far wider because of the on-going commitment of Christians to benefactions. Given his commitment to social ethics in the broad sense of a Christian relationalism which aimed to bestow help and blessing on the every day life of other citizens, his deep worry about some Thessalonians' welfare syndrome is explicable.⁴⁶ Christians were not only to command the respect of outsiders by being self-sufficient, but they were to seek the welfare of their city by having the wherewithal to do good to others. Paul's perception of what that meant involved sharing financial resources. The whole discussion in the Thessalonian *corpus*, however, has made it clear that they were not to shower indiscriminately money or goods in kind on all in the church or on the undeserving, that is, those who could but would not work, but to give to real needs.

The section ends with the call that in the midst of doing good, they were not to grow weary.⁴⁷ There may have been those benefactors who were somewhat disillusioned with other Christians because they had continued to exploit them to their own advantage in spite of Paul's specific example and teaching both at and away from Thessalonica. Furthermore, the problems for these Christians may have caused some to question whether in the face of a hostile city, Christian

⁴⁵Russell, 'The Idle' 109 believes 'this exhortation (2 Thess. 3:10) is given so that the Thessalonian believers will not offend the pagans' conception of civic order, περιπατήτε εὐσχημένως in 1 Thessalonians 4:12'.

⁴⁶See my 'The Public Praising of Christian Benefactors: Romans 13:3-4 and 1 Peter 2:14-5' *JSTNT* 34 (1988) 87-103.

⁴⁷Cf. Gal. 6:9 τὸ καλὸν ποιοῦντες μὴ ἐγκακῶμεν.

benefactors should continue to seek the welfare of other citizens. There could have been those who drew the conclusion that Paul was not particularly in favour of generous benefactions. But he anticipates this at the end of his discussion in verse 13 with the injunction, 'You yourselves brethren, must not tire in doing good', ὑμεῖς δὲ ἀδελφοί, μὴ ἐγκακήσητε καλοποιοῦντες. It is clear that here Paul is proscribing neither private nor public benefactions. His direction to all, including the heads of households, was that they should not grow weary in the doing of good.

It was not possible for some of the Thessalonians to opt out of work simply because others would support them. While in secular society 'it was less disgraceful to depend idly on the state or on a patron for subsistence than to earn it by sordid labour',⁴⁸ it was not so in the Christian community—those who did not wish to work were not permitted to be supported by their fellow Christians acting as patrons.⁴⁹

⁴⁸Duff, *Freedmen in the Early Roman Empire* 106.

⁴⁹I am grateful to Mr. A.D. Clarke for the helpful suggestions he made for improving this paper.