

**PHILEMON AND ONESIMUS AS PATRON AND
CLIENT IN THE ANCIENT MEDITERRANEAN:
AN ECONOMIC READING OF THE LETTER OF
PHILEMON IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN
CONTEXT**

Obusitswe Kingsley Tiroyabone

Dr. Wilhelm Meyer

Supervisor

**Submitted in fulfilment of the academic requirements for the degree of Master of
Theology in the Graduate Programme in Biblical Studies, University of Kwa-Zulu
Natal, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa.**

March 2015

DECLARATION

I, Obusitswe Kingsley Tiroyabone, declare that

1. The research reported in this thesis, except where otherwise indicated, is my original research.
2. This thesis has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university.
3. This thesis does not contain other persons' data, pictures, graphs or other information, unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other persons.
4. This thesis does not contain other persons' writing, unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other researchers. Where other written sources have been quoted, then:
 - a. Their words have been re-written but the general information attributed to them has been referenced
 - b. Where their exact words have been used, then their writing has been placed in italics and inside quotation marks, and referenced.
5. This thesis does not contain text, graphics or tables copied and pasted from the Internet, unless specifically acknowledged, and the source being detailed in the thesis and in the References sections.

Obusitswe Kingsley Tiroyabone

13 March 2015



Supervisor: Dr. Wilhelm Meyer

13 March 2015

DEDICATION

The work done in this research is dedicated to my parents Rre Goitsemodimo Joseph and Mme Thuano Ruth Tiroyabone who, not having been able to study themselves, desired earnestly and worked tirelessly for their children to be able to fulfil this dream. All that I am and all that I hope to be – I owe it all to them.

This work is also dedicated to my sisters Bonolo, Remoneilwe and Thatano whose support has been unwavering throughout my academic journey. They have stood firm on my side and their support and encouragement will never be forgotten.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Firstly I acknowledge my supervisor Dr Billy Meyer who has worked tirelessly to ensure that I complete this research. His assistance has been enormous and his patience evidenced in how he always listened to my ridiculous ideas and reshaped them into proper arguments. Prof. Peter-Ben Smit of the VU University in Amsterdam was also instrumental in the success of this project through his assistance and support during my stay in Amsterdam.

I would also like to acknowledge my spiritual parents, Rev. Zinqayi January and Rev. Walter Gill, who have seen in me what I did not see. Throughout my academic career they have been very supportive and encouraging. My friends Mantima Thekiso, Vusi Songo and Senzo Ndlovu have also been supportive during my research and demanded that I should not embarrass them. Bagaetsho, ke a leboga, seatla mo godimo ga se sengwe!

CONTENTS

Abstract	7
Abbreviations	8
Introduction	9 – 11
Chapter 1: Methodology	
Introduction	12
Postcolonial theory	13 – 16
Postcolonial biblical criticism	16 – 20
Economic approaches	20 – 22
African contextual hermeneutic	22 – 23
Contextualization	24 – 25
Distantiation	25
Appropriation	25 – 26
Ideo-theological framework	26 – 27
Conclusion	27
Chapter 2: The economy of South Africa	
Introduction	28
Transition into the new regime	28 – 29
The Reconstruction and Development Programme	29 – 30
The Growth, Employment and Redistribution Programme	30 – 31
Black Economic Empowerment	31 – 32
Economic inequality in South Africa	32 – 35
Economic inequality in the world	35 – 36
Economic relations in the postcolonial era	37 – 38
Conclusion	39
Chapter 3: The ideo-theological formation of the reader	
Introduction	40
Wesleyan approach to economics	40 – 43
Wesleyan evangelical economics	43
Gain all you can	43

Save all you can	43 – 44
Give all you can	44
Methodism and the working class movements of England	44 – 45
Khumo le lehuma di lala mmogo	45 – 48
For the good of our people	48 – 50
Conclusion	50

Chapter 4: Some matters regarding the letter

Introduction	51
The geographical setting of the household	51
Place of writing	52
The Ephesus hypothesis	52
The Rome hypothesis	52 – 53
Regarding authorship	53– 54
Regarding the main characters	54
Paul	54
Philemon	54 – 55
Epaphras	55
Onesimus	55 – 56
Conclusion	56

Chapter 5: A literary analysis of the text

Introduction	57
Rhetoric of the letter	57 – 59
Greetings (1-3)	59 – 61
Philemon's love and faith (4-7)	61 – 63
Paul's plea for Onesimus (8-14)	64 – 68
Manumission (15-16)	68 – 71
Both in the flesh and in the Lord	71
The continued plea (17-22)	72 – 74
Final greetings (23-25)	74

Chapter 6: A postcolonial runaway slave hypothesis

Introduction	75
The runaway slave hypothesis	75 – 76

A postcolonial runaway slave hypothesis	76 – 80
Conclusion	80
Chapter 7: How can reading slavery and patronage in the ancient Mediterranean assist the postcolonial reader in interpreting postcolonial patronage in South Africa?	
Introduction	81
Slavery in the Greco-Roman world	81
The identity of a slave	82 – 84
Duties of a slave	84 – 85
Good and bad slaves	85 – 86
Fleeing slavery	86 – 87
Onesimus' escape	87 – 88
Manumission	88 – 90
The system of patronage in the Greco-Roman world	90 – 93
Economic scales in the ancient Mediterranean world	93 – 96
Social categories in the ancient Mediterranean world	96 – 99
The question for the postcolonial reader	99 – 101
Conclusions	102 – 103
Bibliography	104 – 110

ABSTRACT

The letter of Philemon has throughout the history of interpretation been read as the story of a slave that ran away from his master, met Paul in prison and was now being sent back to his master after his conversion, bearing with him a letter that pleaded for his forgiveness. The history of interpretation is however not clear as to what happened between the slave and his master. Exploring the ancient socio-economic world of the Mediterranean, this thesis explores what Paul actually wanted Philemon to do, what likely happened between Philemon and Onesimus, and the implications of such action for the postcolonial reader. The paper explores a number of possibilities for interpretation during the postcolonial era and asks how an economic hermeneutic may be applied in studying biblical texts.

ABBREVIATIONS

ANC	African National Congress
BCE	Before Christian Era
BEE	Black Economic Empowerment
CE	Christian Era
EFF	Economic Freedom Front
ES	Economic Scale
GEAR	Growth, Employment And Redistribution
PS	Poverty Scale
RDP	Reconstruction and Development Programme

INTRODUCTION

When I first read the letter of Philemon I was left with the impression that Paul sought reconciliation between Philemon and Onesimus after which the two were to continue their lives as spiritual brothers. This is because throughout the history interpretation, the narrative has always been sold as a letter of reconciliation between a master and his slave. However I became interested in the term “brother” and what it meant for the master and his slave.

In 2013 I pondered upon the current political economy of South Africa and observed how unequal the country remained even in the new dispensation. Nineteen years after 1994 and the country was as unequal as ever. I then saw a link between the South African context and the Philemon narrative, asking myself what it means for one to accept another as a brother. Moreover, I wondered what it meant for a master to accept his slave as a brother. Would any equality ensue, and if so how would the master make his slave equal? I sought to bring this area of research in line with a comparison to South Africans who were unequal in the old dispensation before they saw each other as “brothers”, but were still unequal in the new dispensation. Thus I felt that as the country reached twenty years of democracy, biblical interpretation can contribute to an analysis of the economic inequality that exists in apartheid South Africa and post-apartheid South Africa, as well as the economic inequality that exists between a master and his slave and a patron and his client. Moreover, I became convinced that the text needed to be liberated from the traditional view of brotherly love and be opened to other modes of interpretation in the postcolonial era.

The objective of this study is to answer the following question: How can reading slavery and patronage in the ancient Mediterranean world assist the postcolonial reader in interpreting the postcolonial patronage in South Africa today? The research will establish a relationship of master and slave between Philemon and Onesimus and the subsequent relationship of patron and client between the two. Moreover, the research will explore the role of postcolonial patronage in the economic situation of South Africa since 1994 and then establish how the Greco-Roman slavery and patronage can be read in the context of the postcolony.

There are three main things that this thesis observes. Firstly, the thesis explores what it could possibly be that Paul wanted Philemon to do regarding his slave Onesimus. Secondly, I investigate what likely happened between Philemon and Onesimus upon his return to Colossae and lastly I observe what this could mean for the postcolonial reader.

In chapter one I observe the methods used in this thesis – their foundations and their current models. I will explore the postcolonial theory, how it has developed throughout its history and how it led to postcolonial biblical criticism. Within postcolonial biblical criticism I will observe how the contemporary reader may engage in an economic reading of a text using economic approaches as well as the African contextual hermeneutic.

Chapter two moves the focus of the research to the context of the reader in which I establish the economic inequality that exists within the postcolonial context and how this impacts the lives of South Africans. It is this chapter that deals with the contextualization phase of the African contextual hermeneutic. Within this chapter I will discuss the transition from the economic policies of the apartheid era to those of the present government. I will concentrate on the Reconstruction and Development Programme; the Growth, Employment and Redistribution programme as well as Black Economic Empowerment. I will then move to a discussion of economic inequality in South Africa as well as in the world. Finally the chapter will observe economic relations in the postcolonial era.

The third chapter establishes and explores my ideo-theological predisposition to the narrative in Philemon and proposes that such an ideo-theological predisposition may be applicable in the interpretation of the text. This ideo-theological predisposition is brought to the fore for me as the reader to assert that when approaching any letter I am already predisposed to it and its interpretation cannot be universal. In this chapter I will discuss a Wesleyan approach to economics and the Wesleyan evangelical economics. Observing the effect of such approaches to economics, I will discuss the heritage of Methodism with regard to the working class movements of England. I will then move on to introducing a Setswana idiom *khumo le lehuma di lala mmogo* and the philosophy of the Zulu princess Mkabayi ka Jama: *For the good of our people*. I will argue that I approach the Philemon narrative already exposed to these theological and ideological positions on economics.

In the fourth chapter I will observe some matters regarding the text to begin the distantiation phase of the African contextual hermeneutic. Firstly I will ground the narrative at the Lycus river by establishing the geographical setting of the household of which Philemon and Onesimus were part. The chapter will then observe the different hypotheses regarding the place where Paul wrote the letter. I will then briefly discuss the main characters Paul, Philemon, Epaphras and Onesimus and their roles in the Philemon narrative.

Chapter five is the second part of the distantiation phase of the African contextual hermeneutic in which I as the reader distance myself from the text and let it be other and speak as it was originally intended by the author. In this chapter I will do a literary analysis of the letter and ground my argument in verse sixteen.

In chapter six the thesis reaches a climax where the appropriation phase of the African contextual hermeneutic begins. The context of the text is brought into discussion with my context as the reader in postcolonial South Africa. In this chapter I will illustrate the history of the interpretation of the letter and show the prevalence of the runaway slave hypothesis when reading the letter. I will then establish my objections to some of the hypotheses and accept the runaway slave hypothesis with my own modification and propose a postcolonial runaway slave hypothesis.

The last chapter completes the appropriation phase of the hermeneutic. It is in this chapter that the context of slavery in the Greco-Roman world is brought into discussion, observing matters such as the duties of a slave and the identity of a good and a bad slave. I will then propose that it was from such a system that Onesimus fled. Having made such a proposition, I will observe how Onesimus may have been granted manumission by Philemon and what manumission would mean for Onesimus in the context of patronage in the Greco-Roman world. Focusing on the economic interpretation of the letter and seeking to answer how reading slavery and patronage in the Mediterranean can assist the postcolonial reader in interpreting the postcolonial patronage in South Africa, I will then discuss the different economic scales in the ancient Mediterranean world. Moreover, in this chapter I will look at the different social categories in the Mediterranean and the different social classes of South Africa in a conversation. Lastly, the chapter will explore the implications of this interpretation for the postcolonial reader.

CHAPTER 1

Methodologies

Introduction

The interpretation of a text is an important task of theologians; it is essential that the decoder of the message interprets the text accurately and with integrity. Also, the interpretation of a text is meaningless if it does not speak to its decoders, the relevance of a text is deduced through interpretation. Ukpong (2000:24) has argued that “the goal of interpretation is the actualization of the theological meaning of the text in today’s context so as to forge integration between faith and life, and engender commitment to personal and societal transformation”. It is important that the interpreter uses the text for the transformation of society. Texts must speak to the contexts of today. The relevance of the text rests on its appropriation of the context.

It is my conviction that reading the letter of Philemon must be done in light of the context of today and it has to speak to the context in which I live. My purpose is to discover the theological meaning of the letter in relation to the South African context. Such interpretation can only be done using the necessary tools to achieve meaning and relevance for the reader and to avoid misinterpretation and a misrepresentation of scripture. Responsible interpretation is necessary in order to achieve relevant interpretation of the text. Using theories and methods assist the interpreter in achieving this goal.

This chapter will expound the methods used to argue the interpretation at hand. The letter of Philemon has been interpreted in various ways, with different results. In this research I aim to bring in another focus of interpretation, namely an economic approach. It is necessary to use methods that will not only aid me to achieve this purpose, but also ensure that the interpretation is done correctly and responsibly. Further, the text is read in postcolonial South Africa and thus a postcolonial reading is necessary. Together with the postcolonial theory as well as economic approaches to Pauline literature, the African contextual hermeneutic will be used for interpretation in this thesis. In this chapter I will discuss the postcolonial theory and the development of the postcolonial biblical criticism. I will then explore economic approaches to Pauline literature as well as the African contextual hermeneutic as a postcolonial method. The key research question at hand is how reading slavery and patronage

in Philemon can assist the postcolonial reader to interpret South Africa's contemporary socio-economic situation. This chapter will illustrate how this question will be answered.

Postcolonial Theory

The postcolonial theory is a contemporary method that amongst other things studies social phenomena in light of the past and the present. There are two main objectives of the postcolonial theory. Firstly to investigate the unequal relationship between colonizer and colonized in the colonial era and secondly to investigate the unequal relationship between the powerful and the powerless in the postcolonial era. There are a number of major points that are central to postcolonial studies in both the social and theological studies. I now turn to a few of these.

Fanon argues that colonialism left a denting mark in the minds of the colonized by spreading the myth that the way, culture and behaviour of the colonizer was superior to that of the colonized and rendered the colonized to be unimportant and worthy of suppression and subjugation (1986:110). Fanon introduced an interesting aspect to the study of postcolonialism because he motivated that the black person should not to want to follow the ways of the white person and be like them, but to rather resist even the language of the oppressor and assert their own (1986:19 – 21). He rejected the notion that the black man was inadequate and needed the white man to lead him (1986:111 – 112). Most importantly Fanon called on the formerly colonized to escape their past that is marked by colonial oppression and venture into an owned future of free race (1986: 225).

Said discussed the relationship between the colonized (orient) and the colonizer (occident). Said argues that the West perceived the native orient as "irrational; deprived; childlike; different" while they saw themselves as "rational; virtuous; mature; normal" (1977:51 – 52). The occident had total disregard for the orient and the orient's self-worth or even a propensity to think and establish themselves. They needed the occident in all their affairs to introduce them to civilization. Said argues that the Western colonizers titled the nations of Arab origin as the orient and called themselves the occident while asserting that the occident was much stronger and more powerful and masculine as opposed to the orient that was weak and passive and without history (1977:52). Said further notes that "the Oriental is depicted as some-thing one judges (as in a court of law); something one studies and depicts (as in a curriculum); something one disciplines (as in a school or prison), and something one

illustrates (as in a zoological manual)” (1977:52). Thus the image of the West regarding the colonized was of weakness and inferiority. The colonizers saw it necessary to introduce the orient to a culture more fitting than their inhumane ways of living. Said argues that one of the main deaths caused by imperialism was the suppression of the native cultures (1993:234). According to Said, imperialism tended to allow only cultural discourses that emanated from within itself and because of that postcolonial subjects are suspicious of and avoid theories of the West (1993: 234). Said goes on to observe that in modern times whenever cultural exchange is thought of, there is involved in it the idea of domination and forcible appropriation where someone loses and someone gains (1993: 235). The heritage of imperialism is mainly gain and advancement at the expense of another, the idea that in order to advance another must be subdued. This heritage unfortunately has sunk in the veins of the formerly colonized such that they have carried over such a baton. Said further argues that in order for the colonized to be liberated fully, men and women of the colony must stand up and take charge; resist the pressures of imperialism; insist on liberation and emphasise the integrity of their own culture (1993: 241).

Said has suggested three ways that can be employed in decolonization, a task still relevant in today’s world. In the first instance Said suggests an insistence on the right to see the history of the community in its entirety and to restore the colonized nation to itself with a proud culture (1993: 259 – 260). The postmodern world in which we live suppresses this aspect and impresses upon the native that moving forward proposes forgetting what is behind and creating a new hybrid culture that includes everyone. As much as including everyone is important, the history of the native culture and indeed its preservation is an important task. This history that was lost was destroyed under colonial rule and the modern native in an attempt to decolonize themselves must bring it to the fore as an important part of themselves. A hybrid culture, if it emerges in the modern era, should not disregard past culture. That it was developed in the iron ages does not make it any less important, any less relevant.

Secondly Said suggests that resistance is not only reacting to imperialism, but conceiving human history by breaking down the cultural barriers, disrupting the Western narrative of the native and liberating the mind with independence (1993: 260). In the third instance Said suggests that a move from a separatist nationalism to an integrative human community as well as human liberation can be noticed (1993: 261). This integrative human community is one that does not define another as “the other”, but simply as another, one with whom I can

live and walk into the future. In this decolonizing attempt the liberated does not avenge their colonization and punish the oppressor, but they invite the former oppressor to live together with them and move forward together in a new community.

Bhabha took the conversation further and emphasized the need for cultural identity and embrace. Bhabha observed that throughout history and the shaping of colonial rule to postcolonial rule there are boundaries that have to be taken note of, boundaries not ending but beginning (1994: 142 - 143). According to Bhabha, cultural boundaries are to be especially noted for they define a person and entering into a hybridity of culture may hamper that progress, taking note of the fact that colonial rule made it a point that the culture of the oppressed was destroyed (1994: 162 - 163). This is an important contribution to postcolonial thinking for the reason that postmodern thinking seems to advocate for a hybridity of culture, but does not make space for the embrace of indigenous culture, nor does it embrace indigenous knowledge systems. Postcolonial thinking seeks to emphasize the relevance if not the importance of indigenous knowledge and cultural systems that was destroyed by the colonists.

Mbembe has presented striking similarities between the colonial and postcolonial governments arguing that the African people do not know any form of real government other than that passed on to them by their former imperialists (2001: 67). However, in the present chapter my focus on Mbembe's work is on the formed opinion of the colonizer regarding the colonized. According to Mbembe, the colonizers of Africa saw the indigenous people as "a rather haphazardly developed set of almost naked organs: fuzzy hair, flat nose, thick lips, face covered with cuts. He/she stinks; every time the Negro says something, he/she gesticulates wildly; crushed by age-old atavism, he/she is unable to control his/her instincts, and is quite incapable of thinking for him/herself or of knowing right from wrong; his/her gestures and attitudes are quite primitive" (2001: 180). Mbembe continues to note that according to the colonisers, the colonized were "creatures all over black, and with such a flat nose that they can scarcely be pitied" (2001: 180). Mbembe notes that the colonizers thought "that it is hardly to be believed that God, who is a wise Being, should place a soul, especially a good soul, in such a black ugly body....It is impossible for us to suppose these creatures to be men, because, allowing them to be men, a suspicion would follow that we ourselves are not Christians" (2001: 181). Most attractive of Mbembe's summary is his opinion of the colonisers: "The mouth that kisses itself is thus the very one that, simultaneously, wounds,

leaves scars, and eradicates life” (2001: 181). It is from this mouth that the postcolonial reader attempts to liberate the colonized. Though free physically, the colonised still needs liberation of the mind, soul as well as socio-economic standing in the postcolonial era.

Postcolonial studies stem from such negative views by the West. The image that was presented by the former imperialists of the colonized prompted the modern scholars to challenge them by introducing the postcolonial theory. The thinking of postcolonialism does not seek to show the atrocities of colonialism, but rather to emphasize the importance of the formerly colonized. This cannot be done without first recognizing that there was a great deal of damage done to the colonized. It is when the modern scholar has recognized such a past that they can now propose new ways of looking at life, culture and systems. Postcolonial thinking evaluates the relations between the powerful and the powerless and seeks to emancipate and liberate the powerless. The relationship between the coloniser and the colonised has been an unequal one throughout history. Even in the postcolony the relationship remains unequal. In fact the unequal relationship is now evident in a new kind of colonisation: the formerly colonised are now colonising each other. As a postcolonial reader I observe such phenomenon in my context and read the letter of Philemon in an attempt to discover how the context of slavery and patronage in Philemon can aid the contemporary reader in interpreting the highly unequal socio-economic situation of South Africa past and present.

Postcolonial Biblical Criticism

West has argued that postcolonial biblical criticism is a method that has not been utilised to a great extent in the southern part of Africa (2008: 146). He argues that only Dube, Punt and Nzimande have shown considerable interest in the method, suggesting that South African scholars are sceptical of the method despite its enormous possible contribution to the discourse of our time (2008: 147 – 149). It is my conviction that this method cannot be ignored in studies of the postcolony. How we interpret the Bible today relates to our postcolonial situation and ignoring postcolonial biblical criticism could lead to an irrelevant interpretation. Biblical criticism has to move from the past into the current and engage with the current context of the postcolony, whether it be reading colonialism or reading postcolonialism in the text.

Punt also proposes that the letters of Paul could be read with a postcolonial eye. A postcolonial reading of Paul's letters enables an examination of Paul's challenge to the powers of the day as well as how the powers impacted him. Observing our context today, it is important to consider the impact of these colonial dynamics in and outside of Paul's letters (Punt, 2012: 205). This is the endeavour of my present focus, reading the text with a postcolonial eye and attempting to liberate the players in both the text and the context of today. The postcolonial theory provides an important contribution to the scholarly discourse today. It has also influenced postcolonial biblical criticism which is also employed in this research. The text of Philemon is read with an attempt to appropriate it with the context of South Africa. This exercise is postcolonial biblical criticism because it investigates the colonialism present in the text and seeks to liberate those oppressed in the text.

According to Segovia, the reality of imperialism is structural and created a system of centre and margins where the empire occupied the political, economic and cultural centre, but left the conquered subordinated to the margins politically, economically and culturally (2000: 126). Segovia argues that cultural, ideological and hegemonic questions are crucial for postcolonial biblical criticism, because of such a heritage of imperialism (2000: 126). Thus, postcolonial biblical criticism may be defined as a tool that investigates the hegemonic relations between centre and margins during the colonial and postcolonial eras in both the text and the contemporary context. Segovia notes that the postcolonial biblical critic seeks to discover, amongst other things, how the margins look at a text and how it influences their thinking, but also how the centre views the world and life and in turn treats the margins (2000: 126).

Sugirtharajah has noted that "postcolonial studies emerged as a way of engaging with the textual, historical and cultural articulations of societies disturbed and transformed by the historical reality of colonial presence" (2002: 12). "The term 'postcolonial' is used to designate the cultural, economic and political contact of the coloniser and the colonised and the chain of reactions that it ignited" (Sugirtharajah, 2002: 12). The term admits to the "lasting effects of colonial contact" (Dube, 2001: 215).

In this method the main things are firstly analysing the strategies which the colonisers used to construct images of the colonised (Sugirtharajah, 2002: 12). This will be observed in how the Greco-Roman world crafted the image of the slave in the ancient Mediterranean world as well as how they also crafted the image of the client and his relations with his patron and as a

lower class citizen. Onesimus will be placed in this context and an observation will be made as to how he relates with his master and later patron Philemon.

Secondly the method seeks to study how the colonized themselves used and went beyond those strategies so that they can present their identity, self-worth and empowerment (Sugirtharajah, 2002: 12). I will note the provisions of the institution of slavery that allowed a slave to approach a friend of his master to seek mediation between himself and his master and posit that Onesimus in an oppressed situation sought to liberate himself by using that provision. In other words, as a postcolonial biblical critic, I will evaluate how the previously disadvantaged people in South Africa were made subjects of colonial oppression and how they themselves used the systems in place to rise up against it and assert themselves. This will be appropriated with the Philemon narrative.

Postcolonial biblical criticism is also a critical method of interpretation that attempts to study the uneven and complex situations of power that resulted from colonialism and other forms of marginalization (Punt, 2012: 192). The method seeks to investigate the relationship of power that is in play, determining who is at a higher and more advantageous position and who is at a lower and less advantageous position and study the dynamics of this relationship. This is done not only in the text, but also in the contemporary context of the reader. It will be observed how the institutions of slavery and patronage marginalized Onesimus socially and economically and how Philemon was always at a higher and powerful position. This uneven power situation needs to be explored in the interpretation of Philemon in order to discover how Onesimus ended up as part of the marginal. It is important to note that the method does not seek to investigate the hegemonic relations only, but it does so in order to liberate those on the margins.

Sugirtharajah argues that “the greatest aim of postcolonial biblical criticism is to situate colonialism at the centre of the Bible and biblical interpretation” (2002: 25). What postcolonial biblical criticism does, contends Sugirtharajah, “is to focus on the issue of expansion, domination and imperialism as central forces in defining both the biblical narratives and biblical interpretation” (2002: 25). The Bible was used in many instances in the history of the world to advance the course of colonialism primarily because the Bible itself contains images of colonialism. The postcolonial interpreter must take cognisance of this fact and attempt to liberate the subjects of colonialism in both the text and the context of the reader. According to Punt, postcolonial studies engage the geopolitical relationship

between centre and margins as well as metropolis and periphery (2012: 192 - 193). Studies in the postcolony do not reflect only on the injustices of the past in the colonial era, but injustices of the present as well. The principal agenda is studying the relationship between the margins and the centre.

Sugirtharajah observes that postcolonial biblical criticism does not only look at the dynamics of colonial domination, but also at the capacity of the colonised to resist it, either openly or covertly (Sugirtharajah, 2012: 14 – 15). Thus postcolonial biblical criticism seeks to discover and liberate the characters in the narrative that previous colonial interpretations would have downplayed. The form of interpretation as argued above is determined by the position of the reader. Thus the interpreter reads with the lens they are exposed to, their situation and in many instances interpreters have downplayed the ability and capacity of the oppressed to stand for themselves. The postcolonial method challenges the interpreter to give voice to the oppressed and make known their plight.

Dube argues that in postcolonial studies we must read for decolonization. For Dube, this includes “reading against the sanctioning of unequal power relations in the biblical text and colonial projects” (West, 2000: 27). Punt on the other hand observes that “postcolonial thinking goes beyond simply describing the binaries of oppressor and oppressed, in order to expose and rewrite these relations”. Postcolonial approaches, argues Punt, inquire into both the structural and relational nature of life for those living on the down side of power and the sustaining power of the imperial venture and its operations (2012: 192). The interpreter must inquire the structural relation of the context they are investigating, either in the past or present context. As Sugirtharajah notes, postcolonial perspectives are not just concerned with what happened in the colonial struggle, but also what is happening today in the new dispensation (2012: 23).

Dube (2001: 213) uses a Setswana myth of a hen that is neighbours with a hawk. The hen borrows a needle from the hawk, but unfortunately loses it into the sand while sewing. The hawk vows to take the hen’s chicks until its needle is returned, forcing the hen to search for the needle. Dube argues that Western cultural and economic systems force the African people to be like the hen, searching through the sand trying to recover the needle so that they may return it to the West. The task of the postcolonial reader is to liberate the hen (Africa) so she no longer has to look to the hawk (the West) for mercy (Dube, 2001: 216). Nzimande has noted that a postcolonial reading of the text brings us to observing the powerlessness of the

weak in the hands of the mighty (2009: 249). According to Nzimande, postcolonial readers condemn the class prejudice between the colonizers and the colonized, exploiters and exploited, superior and inferior, haves and have-nots (2009: 249). The powerlessness of the weak in the hands of the mighty is not only seen in the biblical texts, but also in the contemporary situations that prevail in the world today. Those on the receiving end seem to be plunging even further on the low side, while the powerful continue to advance. Dube argues that there are questions to be posed in an interpretative process and proposes some questions that ought to be employed in a postcolonial conversation. She asks: “Does this text have a clear stance against the political, cultural and economic imperialism of its time? How are the readers reading the text – as colonisers, the colonised or collaborators? Which side of the text am I journeying as a reader?” (2004: 124) It is my contention that these are some of the most critical questions in the postcolonial agenda. The interpreter must unpack these issues in the text and claim their position as the reader, from which side they are reading.

Rukundwa argues that the postcolonial method has limitations as a hermeneutical tool (2008: 347). He argues that cultures are different and understand things differently and as a result the method may lead to a cultural shock to other cultures (2008: 347 – 349). In disagreement to this view it is important to note that the postcolonial readers seek to establish their own context in the postcolony and certainly contexts will differ, but the method shall be applicable to all in postcolonial states. The postcolonial readers interpret their own contexts in relation to the biblical text. How the postcolonial reader in South Africa interprets the Bible may not be the same as how the postcolonial reader in Indonesia interprets the Bible. It is important that both readers appropriate the text to their present day postcolonial contexts. Similarly even within South Africa various ideo-theological frameworks exist, but the postcolonial reader asserts their own framework when approaching the text. Thus I would posit that the postcolonial reader should be and remain aware of their postcolonial situation and interpret it responsibly.

Economic Approaches

Scholars have argued that Paul had no real concern for the economic situations of his hearers (Longenecker, 2010: 1). Longenecker disagrees however, arguing that in fact Paul showed considerable concern for the wealth and poverty situations of his time (2010: 1 – 2). Thus economic interpretations can be deduced from Pauline letters for the contemporary context.

Peter Oakes argues that there are three types of economic approaches to a text; three ways in which we can get engaged with a text from an economic perspective.

Firstly, Oakes argues that economics provides the analytic framework for interpretation. In this approach the reader assesses the socio-economic location of the writer, the likely readers and other significant figures in the context (2012: 78). Then the text is interpreted by analysing which socio-economic groups' interests are promoted by the text and how this is done (Oakes, 2012: 78). This approach seeks to determine clearly the uneven economic positions of the characters in the text and discover how and by whom their interests were advanced. In this aspect the social profiling proposed by Steven Friesen could be employed. Friesen has laid out a table of social economic statuses of the members of Pauline congregations, to which I shall later return in chapter seven. When put in use, this method will enable me to observe where Philemon and Onesimus were socio-economically situated and the difference that existed between them. Moreover, I will observe the socio-economic statuses of the people of South Africa and the differences between the different classes. Economics will provide the analytic framework for interpretation because the socio-historical criticism of the text will be done through an economic lens.

Secondly, economics is the aim of interpretation. This means that the interpreter reads the text in order to discover economic information about the community members of the first-century world more broadly (Oakes, 2012: 79). The interpreter must endeavour to illustrate that world economic systems existed in the context of the first century and then provide relevant information about its dynamics in order to aid the present context (Oakes, 2012: 79). The fact that the Mediterranean world had slaves, masters, patrons and clients indicate that there were social categories and groups in that world and that these groups were unequal. In this approach I will read the economic situations of the ancient Mediterranean for the purpose of interpreting Philemon, discovering the socio-economic world in order to better understand the text of Philemon and appropriate it for the contemporary context. This approach is also done in the historical-critical analysis and may observe different economic systems in order to achieve this. In this thesis I will observe the economic systems of slavery and patronage and how they related to the parties involved in the text.

The importance of this approach is that I go to the text in search of economic information and do not rely on obvious information. The text of Philemon will be read not to discover slave - master relations, but the economic aspects of such a relationship and attempt to liberate the

text from a pious brotherly reading to an open reading where different information can be deduced from it. Whether or not the literal text reveals economic information, there is economic information which this approach seeks to observe. A model that can be put in use to achieve this goal is an advanced agrarian model that has been proposed by Gerhard Lenski in Oakes (2012). Lenski divides the non-elite members of ancient society into categories of power, linked with privilege and prestige (Oakes, 2012: 62). For this model to work, data must be procured that makes it possible to categorise first century citizens into socio-economic statuses to illustrate that there was indeed an economic system in that time.

Lastly, Oakes argues that economics provides resources for interpretation. At the end of this approach, there should be evidence that first-century disciples of Christ or early Christians were in a socio-economic situation that allowed them to live in mutual economic support of each other (Oakes, 2012: 80). In this approach the interpreter seeks to observe how the early Christians could have shared their resources, using the information noted on the economic situations of the early Christians (Oakes, 2012: 80). This approach will enable me as the reader to discover if it was possible for Philemon and Onesimus as fellow Christians to live in mutual support of each other without the constraints of either slavery or patronage and, if so, attempt to discover if this was the case. This discovery will aid me in interpreting Philemon for the South African context: discovering the mutual beneficiation of the first century Christians to provide a model or theology for the unequal citizens of postcolonial South Africa.

It is in my opinion necessary that all three approaches should be used in interpreting the text in order to give adequate information to the reader and to achieve a meaningful interpretation of the text. Approaching the economic study of a text from different angles ensures that the reader is exposed to a wide range of knowledge and is enabled to provide a responsible interpretation of the text and still be able to appropriate it to their contemporary context. The postcolonial theory leads to postcolonial biblical criticism, to which I am aligned. Within the postcolonial biblical criticism framework, I would argue, there are contemporary methods and models that enhance and promote the reading of the Bible from the margins as well as from reading communities. One such model is the African contextual hermeneutic which encourages me to read the Bible from my own context: reading with the economically marginalized section of the population, as a Motswana and as a Methodist. I now turn to a discussion of this model.

African Contextual Hermeneutic

The African contextual hermeneutic is commonly known as the Tripolar method. It brings to it three poles in exegesis, namely: the text and its context, the context of the reader and an appropriation between the text and its context and the contemporary context of the reader. The method is African in a sense that its main aim is to contextualise hermeneutics, taking the conversation from text and context to text, context and reader. The African reader is brought in to interpret the text in light of the African situation and taking cognisance of the African indigenous knowledge systems that can be used in the interpretation of the text. The method was designed during a difficult time in the history of South Africa when apartheid was the ruling system. Because scholars engaged with the system in writing, their productions were seen with suspicion by the ruling force. However, Draper argues that the emphatic presence of the reader is not a political ploy even though at the time of its inception the South African situation was volatile and causing academics to be cautious in their writing. It is because no text has absolute meaning that the method brings the reader so close; the text speaks to someone in a certain context in a certain way (2001: 149).

Grenholme and Patte showed the problem with the bipolar exegesis, namely that the shape of exegesis had only two poles, that of the text and the contemporary context. For these scholars, the bipolar was not enough and it had a missing element. Grenholme and Patte were attempting to introduce what they called scriptural criticism (Draper, 2002: 15). Draper agreed that there is something missing in the process, an element that causes the reader to be lingering between text and context without a firm position (2002: 16). West observes that the reason is that there is a presence that seeks acknowledgement and we can discern an emerging presence, hovering between the textual pole and the contextual pole. West argues it is the reader: the conversation or engagement between the text and the context is enabled by the reader (2009: 250). The method places great emphasis of the exegesis on the reader, the reader cannot be left behind. The reader takes a central role in the exegesis; the reader reacts to a context they are situated in and then goes to the text and its context thereby leading the conversation. Draper argues that all three poles must be treated justly for its proper application (2001: 155). There should not be an overemphasis of any pole over another, all three poles should be well established in the interpretation process. However, Draper further notes that we must give priority to the context of the reader because the reader approaches the Bible already predisposed by their social, economic, political and cultural context (Draper,

2002: 16). West noted this predisposition as an ideo-theological framework (2009: 254), to which I shall later return.

Contextualization

Though we may have the Bible at our disposal today and are in fact using it, we acknowledge that it was originally intended for other people in other places in another time. Then we move to knowing who we are in the conversation, what our situation is and how we relate to the communication offered by the text. This process is called contextualization (Draper, 2001: 152). This is an important aspect of the method and it is here that the presence of the reader is established, the context that gives rise to the reader's concern. Then finally we move on to deciding on the nature of the communication taking place and its implications for our context. This is called appropriation (Draper, 2001: 152). It is the point at which our context, the text and its context come into conversation in order that relief may be granted to the reader.

It is this part of the model that recognises that a text has no absolute meaning, and that though the author may have intended it for specific readers in a specific context and time, it is now at the hands of different readers in a totally different context (Draper, 2001: 156). The readers of today have different problems and are in a different context that leads them to read the text in a different way to that of the original audience. That context is important; it gives life to the interpretation process and illuminates the process of the text. When West noted that the reader cannot be left behind, his statement was in fact suggesting that the reader must be at the forefront of the process. The shape of exegesis in today's world cannot be acceptable if it does not grant the reader more importance and felt presence.

The African contextual hermeneutic recognises that time is important and time matter. The time in which we are living matters as well and the situation we are faced with today shapes our response to the sacred text. The process of exegesis is not concerned totally with how the text was written and to whom, but moves to realising what the text means today, to the readers of today (Draper, 2001:157). Draper asserts that contextualization focuses on the context of the reader today, the problems faced by the contemporary reader and the questions that the present day reader brings to the text (2001: 157). Readers always approach the text with an agenda; there is always a predisposition to the text. The African contextual hermeneutic seeks to embrace and enhance that position rather than suppress it. I argue that it

is conducive for the readers to approach the text already predisposed to it, however establishing that predisposition responsibly.

In the contextualization process the model seeks to make an analysis of the contemporary situation, establishing the concerns that bring the reader to the sacred text. An analysis of the context of the reader can be observed by analysing the psychological or social situation of the reader if the text is being read by an individual or a socio-economic or the historical or cultural analysis of the community if the text is being read by a community or group (Draper, 2001: 157). This is done by entering into other fields of study to gain an expert and current knowledge of the context being established. In this project, knowledge of the economic systems of South Africa is of vital importance as it enables the reader to be grounded in a proper understanding of the context and not just offer their own anecdote.

Distantiation

Draper notes that “we have to allow the text to be different to us and intended for other people and letting the text be other”, this is called distantiation (2001: 152). The reader or reading community has to acknowledge the language, the style of writing, and the socio-historical and literary context of the text (Draper, 2001: 155 – 156). Dealing with this aspect as Draper observes will require different critical tools such as literary, redaction, historical or narrative criticisms or its combinations (2001: 157). In the application of this model the interpreter distances themselves by employing various critical methods to obtain a fair context of the text. A literary analysis of the text is also of vital importance as it adds to the rigour and validity of the interpretation process. The readers still have in mind their agenda in interpreting the text and the aim is still the same, however at this point the readers attempt to be totally objective in discovering the literary world of the text.

Appropriation

The high point of the exegetical process is the appropriation point where the horizon of the text and its context meets with the horizon of the reader and their context, thereby having a conversation leading to action (Draper, 2001: 158). This is the crux of the argument of the tripolar method, the emphasis that the conversation between text and context needs a reader to facilitate it and that it cannot happen by itself. There needs to be an active engagement of the reader; the reader leads and takes ownership of the process. This the reader does by bringing their own pre-dispositions to the text – their ideo-theological framework, their

contemporary context – and then listens to the text through the historical-critical and literary analyses of the text. A conversation then emerges. West argues that appropriation acts as an intercessory between the text and the context of the reader (2009: 252 – 253). Appropriation embraces all participants of the process and ensures that there is praxis coming from the side of the reader at the end of the exegesis. Draper notes that appropriation suggests praxis; what the faith community believes will likely become what they do (2001: 158).

Ideo-theological framework

Draper argues that it is important to note that the Bible is a sacred text, intended for faith communities, and how the faith communities interpret this sacred text is of importance and relevance for the wider social spectrum (2001: 155). It is important because such an interpretation will shape how the community thinks not only about the text, but about other social influences in society. Thus it is important that a correct and accurate interpretation be brought to the disposal of the reader. It is also important because the text can bring hope and a message of liberation to those on the margins, the downtrodden and forgotten. The text can also change drastically the position and thinking of the reader. West concurs with this position, arguing that Draper is indeed like many other interpreters, choosing to serve the poor in the interpretation process and indicates that he uses the sacred text for transformation praxis (2009: 252).

West argues that our contexts prompt us through our ideological commitments to them and through their ideological formation of us. The sacred text also pushes us through our theological orientation towards it and its theological formation of us; reading a text shapes a person. This is central to the appropriative moment. How and with what we connect text and context has to do with our ideo-theological faith framework (2009: 254 – 255). In a recent article on the method, Draper places the notion of an ideo-theological framework in the beginning of the application of the hermeneutic. He observes that “the South African reader should start with contextualization, with the acknowledgement of the pre-understanding she or he brings to the text, the reason for reading it and the questions being addressed” (2014). In fact, says Draper, “every reader reads from her or his context, either explicitly and meaningfully or implicitly and misleadingly – for to claim universality of meaning for any reading is false consciousness” (2014). West observes that when it comes to appropriation the text and context, the reader cannot just engage without there being an ideological and theological predisposition in the reader’s mind (2009: 255). We approach the text coming

from a faith community that already has its theological stance (Draper, 2014). Thus the reader needs to acknowledge their faith allegiance and take cognisance that this faith allegiance is likely to shape how they read the text.

Coming to this text I am already predisposed through my theological teaching as a Methodist and my ideological thinking as a Motswana. The idea of an ideo-theological framework being at play gives me a chance to acknowledge that as a Methodist there is a doctrinal position to which I pay allegiance to. As a Methodist I believe in the Wesleyan evangelical economics¹ and this shapes my thinking about economic issues. The hermeneutic allows me to read the text through that lens and suggest how the Wesleyan economics can aid the postcolonial reader in the challenge facing South Africa. Moreover, I am Motswana (a Tswana person)² and there are ideological teachings which I have grown up being taught through idioms and legends. One such idiom being *Khumo le lehuma di lala mmogo*, literally translated meaning “wealth and poverty lie together”. The African biblical hermeneutic through the ideo-theological framework allows me as a postcolonial reader to apply this old idiom and others in my interpretation of both the text and the contemporary situation. This framework will be dealt with in chapter three.

Conclusion

Methods work better when interjected with other methods to illuminate the interpretation process. The postcolonial theory interjects with a number of other theories of the modern times such as economic approaches, the Queer theory and the critical imbokodo reading as well as feminist approaches. Within approaches to the Pauline letters I have chosen to focus on the economic approaches as the world of today laments much on that area as does my present focus. However, I submit that these economic approaches would work better as a hermeneutic that seeks to critique the economic systems of our time. At present the approaches seek to investigate largely the economic state and systems of the first century world, and do not critically analyse the economic state and systems of the present time. In this respect I now move to an analysis of my context which is the economic life of South Africa.

¹ This is the Wesleyan / Methodist approach to economics. The issue is broadly dealt with in Chapter 3

² There are 11 official ethnic groups in South Africa of which the Batswana people are part (Tswana speaking).

CHAPTER 2

The economy of South Africa

Introduction

Within the African contextual hermeneutic is the pole of contextualisation, wherein I focus on my context as the reader. Contextualisation aims to establish the contemporary context of the reader to which the interpretation seeks to speak. The African contextual hermeneutic emphatically stresses that the reader is an important part of the interpretation process and cannot be left behind. The present chapter seeks to establish the socio-economic problem that has been identified in South Africa, namely a high level of economic inequality. I now move to exploring the issue as has been observed in our postcolonial society. In this chapter I look at the economic policies that have governed South Africa from the apartheid era to the present government. This chapter looks at the Normative Economic Model; the Reconstruction and Development Programme; the Growth, Employment and Redistribution programme as well as Black Economic Empowerment. I will then move on to observing the high economic inequality in our country and in the world, as well as its causes and its results. I will also observe the relations of the ruling class with the lower class in the postcolony as well as the power imbalances in the postcolony.

Transition into the new regime

Each era of government has an ideology that underlies its economic policy (Diakonia, 2006: 13). Every regime that takes over any government has an economic policy to bring into effect, a policy that seeks to advance an agenda of that regime. Taking over a government is no simple task, particularly when there are strong economic policies and economic growth in place. The African National Congress (henceforth ANC) had been guided by the Freedom Charter when it faced the task of taking over the government systems. In the Freedom Charter a powerful statement is contained: “The people shall share the wealth of the country” (1955). However, the reality of the situation is that the ANC lacked the capacity within it at the time to articulate an economic policy that would achieve this (Marais, 2011: 102). The party soon realised that the international community had concerns about the way forward of the country in terms of investor confidence. Moreover, the apartheid regime had been using a neo-liberal approach to the economy which thus far had been working all over the world (Marais, 2011: 102). This economic policy had huge disparities along racial lines in South Africa and the

new ruling party inherited a country with economic and social inequality (Lester, Nel & Binns, 2000: 230).

At this juncture the party became cognisant of the fact that it could not just implement a new economic policy, but was left with no choice but to keep the old (Marais, 2011: 102). Finding themselves in a complex situation, the ruling party had to resort to brewing new wine in old wineskins. Lewis notes that South Africa presented a number of features of an “upper-middle-income developing country”, especially with its rich mineral resources. Its rate of growth however, was strongly influenced by apartheid (1990: 21). The ANC had to work on the existing economic policy of the old regime in order to avoid unsettling investor confidence.

The neo-liberal approach that the apartheid government used was the Normative Economic Model which focused on “privatisation, trade liberalisation, spending cuts and strict monetary and fiscal discipline as the way forward” (Marais 2011: 103). Having no alternative at the time, the ANC had to jump in and use the existing model (Lewis, 1990: 21). At the heart of the working economic model of the apartheid government was a limited workforce of the minority white people (Marais, 2011: 103). The separation of jobs according to race ensured that only the white people would be enabled to partake in the life of the economy (Lewis, 1990: 21). However, soon before the end of their regime the apartheid government realised that in order to grow the economy they needed more skilled workers than they had within the white minority, meaning that they would have to tap into the black labour market to get skilled labour (Lewis, 1990: 21). This was still at a very small scale and when the new regime took over they did not have a big enough skilled black workforce to drive the economy. They were then faced with the challenge that training of the black workforce could only start at this juncture (Marais, 2011: 97 –98).

The Reconstruction and Development Programme

Soon after taking over the government and having trained some of the members within its ranks, the ANC embarked on a Reconstruction and Development Programme (henceforth RDP) which was intended to develop those who were previously disadvantaged. RDP was designed to transform the socio-economic situation of South Africa (Roux, 1999: 151; Binns, *et al.*, 2000: 248). The aim of RDP was to invest in people so that in the long-term poverty could be reduced by empowering people to take care of themselves (Roux, 1999: 151). The

new policy was aimed at “reducing the poverty of the majority of South Africans and thereby reducing the inequalities and injustices of colonialism and apartheid” (Aliber, 2002: 13).

Jones notes that RDP focused on the alleviation of poverty and reconstructing the economy through the redistribution of land, housing, and health resources (2011: 69). During the period of this policy the government was focused on re-imagining the country and creating a new identity where everyone could have access to all the basic needs (Jones, 2011: 69). Lundahl & Peterson note that it was much easier to set up goals for RDP than to actually make them a reality and because of the slow growth rate of the economy the programme could not be carried out over the five years that was originally intended (2004: 728). The government had great ideas on how to improve the social lives of the people, but lacked the adequate capacity to effect sustainable economic practices to achieve them. This became the cause of death for RDP – a system failure.

The Growth Employment and Redistribution Programme

Realising that the economic growth rate was not aiding its RDP agenda, the ruling party soon changed its stance and shifted to a new economic policy: the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (henceforth GEAR) policy (Marais, 2011: 98). The intention of the GEAR policy was to improve economic growth at a fast rate and redistribute the wealth accumulated in the growth to people through development and more employment (Roux, 1999: 152; Binns *et al.*, 2000: 254). With GEAR the government aimed to develop the country by taking part in the global economy and attaining an annual six percent growth and the creation of 400 000 jobs by the year 2000 (Padayachee, 2005: 556). At this point the government was still focused on improving the socio-economic situations of the people, but was forced once again to admit that economic growth was not realising fast enough for that. Marais argues that GEAR failed and the circles within the ruling party advocated for its immediate abandonment, even by those who had been its champion (2011: 99). The government came to grips with the fact that GEAR had failed to achieve most of its goals, though there had been signs of relative change, and soon dropped the policy (Binns *et al.*, 2000: 255). The two economic policies of the new regime had not managed to bring about a sharing of the wealth. Inequality was still one of the main economic problems of the country. Emkes observes that South Africa has always been a prisoner of inequality beginning with settler colonialism, through the capitalism of apartheid, even to the point of democracy (2012: 200). The plague of inequality continued to harass South Africa.

The main cause of the inequality is income distribution; the country generates enough income, but the way it is distributed is the problem. This is still by and large a result of the policies of the colonial and apartheid eras (Marais, 2011: 101). Because it could not change the way of distributing income as a result of global economic concerns, the government sought to fast track job creation in order to bring the lesser in income on par with the higher (Marais, 2011: 101).

Black Economic Empowerment

The road was still being travelled; new ways of solving the economic crisis of inequality were being sought. The government then came up with the Black Economic Empowerment (henceforth BEE) strategy aimed at reducing the gap between the minority wealthy white people and the poor majority black people (Marais, 2011: 140). BEE was seen as a way of bringing the black people from the margins of the economy into the centre of the economy, thereby advancing the economic interests of the majority. However, this has not been the reality, in fact quite the contrary. Instead of creating a large black middle class, BEE created a small black middle and upper class. Marais argues that the black economic empowerment system was created primarily to create a black capitalist elite and a small black middle class (Marais, 2011: 140 –141; Handley, 2008: 68). This means that the main aim of BEE was to see black people also entering into the small percentage of wealth along with the minority white elite and ultimately not to achieve the goal that all people should share in the wealth of the country as espoused by the Freedom Charter.

I am in agreement with Emkes who opines that “the policy, which the ANC has vigorously pursued since taking office, has been a failure; it has failed to redistribute assets to the majority black community and resulted in the enrichment of a few BEE dealmakers” (2012: 200). The majority black community remains in the periphery of the economy and they are still not sharing the wealth of the country. Instead of closing the gap between the rich and the poor, BEE has only further widened the gap. Emkes further notes that “BEE has resulted in the enrichment of a small enclave of black shareholders” (2012: 201). BEE has served as one of the main contributors of our skewed economy instead of attempting to remedy such a situation. The policy did not bring the majority from the margins of the economy, but only improved the standing of those already in the centre. Adequate municipal services are much better in suburban areas; good education can be found in the private schools where rich people can afford to take their children and malls are built in remote areas which only those

with motor vehicles can reach comfortably. The ordinary people remain in the margins while the black middle class is reserved for a selected few.

Marais argues that this was done on purpose by the ruling party (2011: 142). He argues that the ANC wanted a power elite that would control the economic powerhouse of the country and still remain loyal to the ruling party (Marais, 2011: 142). Marais observes that this phenomenon can be seen with other liberation movements that took over governments after colonialism (2011: 142). This idea may aid the leadership of the ruling party in some way, but it does not aid the course of justice; it does not help the majority that are on the margins of a thriving economy. As much as South Africa is a developing economy, it is one of the strongest economies in Africa and many in the continent see South Africa in a very positive light, but on the ground its inhabitants are subjects of a great inequality.

The government has recently adopted the National Development Plan with a new vision for South Africa: Vision 2030 (NDP, 2011: 415). In this plan, it is noted that South Africa is a highly unequal country and the future of a person is still determined by the situation of their birth. The plan seeks to eradicate poverty and reduce inequality drastically by 2030 (NDP, 2011: 415 - 417). However, the plan still holds BEE as a necessary policy (NDP, 2011: 418). The negative and destructive element of the policy which is advancing only a small portion of the population is not acknowledged, nor are there any plans laid to out to deal with such an element. There is still no real intention to remedy the failure of BEE, but an insistence that the policy works when it in fact benefits a few only.

Economic inequality in South Africa

Economic inequality is not a new phenomenon in South Africa. As noted earlier, South Africa has been an unequal country from as early as settler colonialism. From pre-democracy it was already clear that South Africa was amongst the most unequal of the upper-middle-income developing countries (Lewis, 1990: 26). Binns *et al.* argue that space matters in the economic debate. They argue that poverty is most prevalent in the African areas, the places designated to black people by the apartheid government (2000: 235). To a certain extent poverty amongst black people in South Africa was manufactured by the powers that ruled the colonial and apartheid regimes; they saw to it that black people were located in areas that did not allow them to participate in the economy and restricted them in business dealings (Marais, 2011: 146). As noted earlier, the apartheid government created a small black middle

class to participate in the work centre only when they realised that they did not have enough white people to do everything.

Marais has noted that income distribution in South Africa is highly unequal (2011: 208). Noting from Statistics South Africa, Marais observes that the wealthiest ten percent of income earners received fifty-one percent (51%) while the poorest twenty percent of the population received only one point four percent (1.4%) of the total income in 2005/2006 (2011: 208). Scott & Tucker also make this observation, noting that at the time of the transition, South Africa had an extremely unequal distribution of income (1992: 55). They argue that high inequalities are indicators that there is no democracy of outcomes, regardless of what one may say about the political regime (1992: 55). Statistics South Africa has produced a findings report on the poverty trends in South Africa. This study has discovered that the poverty statistics have dropped slightly from fifty seven point two percent (57.2%) of the population in 2006 to forty five point five percent (45.5%) in 2011 (Stats SA, 2014: 12). The study has also observed that twenty point two percent (20.2%) of the population, which is ten point two million people, live in extreme poverty (Stats SA, 2014: 12). While the study does observe the trend or statistics of people living in extreme wealth, it also however, notes that the share of national consumption between the rich and the poor is still high (Stats SA, 2014: 13). This is indicated in the richest twenty percent of the country's population enjoying sixty one percent of consumption, while the poorest twenty per cent only accounts for four point three percent of national consumption (Stats SA, 2014: 13).

Economic inequality is not only to be found in racial patterns. As Marais observes, affirmative action and BEE ensured that the black middle class grew and a small elite of the wealthy was established amongst the black population (2011: 210). Because of this growth in the black middle class, the prevalent notion is that the country is wealthy and prosperous, therefore we can all enjoy in the wealth. This, however, may not be the case because this small growth does not represent the prosperity of the country (1992: 55; Aliber, 2002: 5). When the ANC took over the governing of the country they promised a sharing of the wealth by all the people, but the wealth is now being shared by only a small group of people. The gap continues to widen more and more and the poor is visibly being plunged even further into poverty. As Emkes points out, "inequalities amongst the black population have increased, with the affluent becoming more affluent and the poor becoming poorer. South Africa now fosters a new inequality: the disparity between rich and poor has widened to an almost

unbridgeable chasm in the last two decades” (2012: 201). One of the results of apartheid can be seen in the inequality that is rising within races as it has been observed to be at 0.62 amongst blacks and 0.5 amongst white people (OECD, 2013: 18).³ The programmes by government to improve the lives of the people have not benefitted the poor black people, but rather those who were already well-off (Lundahl & Petterson, 2004: 737).

The devastating effect of this skewed economy can be seen in its impact on the health of ordinary South Africans. In an ethnographic research done in 2005, Chaunetta Jones found that the unequal economic situation of South Africa had a direct impact in the lives of ordinary people (2011: 67). Jones observes that poor people in Grahamstown whose CD4 count warranted them to receive a disability grant did not want to stop receiving the grant and as a result they would not take their Anti-Retroviral Treatment because that would boost their CD4 count and thereby disqualify them from the grant (2011: 67 – 68). Poverty is linked and has become intertwined with health, education and social engagements, because if one does not earn enough you cannot afford all the things you would ordinarily want to afford. Unequal distribution of income does not only affect the bank account, but all aspects of life.

Economic inequality in South Africa is too high; the difference between the upper class and the lower class is a big one. While there is a small group of the top earners amongst the black population, there is still a large group of those who do not earn much if any at all and the economy remains skewed to a great effect. When travelling on the N1 in Johannesburg one comes across a shocking reality of two countries in one geography: One of the richest suburbs in the country, Sandton, is on the one side while an informal settlement of Alexandra extension is on the other side. Just a stone throw away from each other are the two extremes of our economy – the poorest of the poor and richest of the rich. Twenty years into democracy and the inequality has not been addressed, instead it has been worsened by signs of class systems within the black community.

The Gini coefficient measuring inequalities in different countries by the World Bank estimates that a country having a measurement of 0 has perfect equality and a country having a measurement of 1 has perfect inequality (World Bank). The latest measure of South Africa done in 2009 puts South Africa at 0.6 – one of the highest in the countries listed (World Bank). According to Statistics South Africa, the Gini coefficient measured through the living conditions survey in 2008 to 2009 was at 0.7 (Statistics SA). This points out that South

³ OECD measured inequality in South Africa and Israel to seek a comparison.

Africa is the most unequal country in the world, the difference between the “haves” and the “have nots” is a huge one. As already established, this gap is not just between black and white, but largely amongst the black people as well. Lundahl & Petersson argue that the ANC underestimated the time it would take to bring about economic change (2004: 737). They argue that the economy grows too slowly for per capita to increase and as a result African people have waited too long and it seems they will continue to wait for economic change (2004: 737). Moreover, economic power is held by the by racially defined middle and upper classes while there is an emerging black elitist class (Binns *et al.*, 2000: 275).

Economic inequality in the world

Economic inequality is rife not only in South Africa, but all over the world. Piketty has noted that “the richest ten percent own around sixty percent of national wealth in most European countries, and in particular in France, Germany, Britain, and Italy” (2014: 184). “The most striking fact is no doubt that in all these societies, half of the population own virtually nothing: the poorest fifty percent invariably own less than ten percent of national wealth, and generally less than five percent” (2014: 184). The concern of inequality is not that there are people who earn a lot of income or own a lot of capital, but the concern is the difference between such a person and the poorest person. Whilst it is not held that people should aspire to be rich, it is held that the difference in income between the rich and the poor is strikingly high, it cannot go unnoticed and unchallenged.

Piketty also notes that the middle class did not exist a century ago and was created during the last century (2014: 187). He observes that today’s middle class was as poor as the lower class a century ago and the wealth distribution comprised of the richest ten percent pocketing ninety five percent of the income and the poorest ninety percent pocketing only five per cent of the income (2014: 187). The argument by Piketty is that the creation of the middle class in the world has not reduced poverty or inequality to a large extent. Whilst it has created a difference, it is not to say that a substantial change has been effected because the top elite still take home the largest portion and the poorest people still take home the smallest portion (2014: 187). Moreover, though the middle class is far from being poor, they are also still far from being in the top elite and thus the creation of the middle class did not accelerate a move to an egalitarian mode of living, but rather perpetuated the reality of inequality, albeit at more levels (Piketty, 2014: 188).

Piketty observes further that the two main causes of capital inequality is a hyper-patrimonial society, in which wealth belonging to a small group of the elite remains so through generations by inheritance, and a hyper-meritocratic society which awards the highest income to those who work extra such as super managers or winners (2014: 190). In other words, the patrimonial society allows for a particular portion of wealth to remain in the hands of certain families through inheritance. This can be observed by the unchanging reality of a financially secure white population as opposed to a struggling black population in South Africa. Because the wealth of white people was crafted during the colonial era through the land act and several other policies, they remain on the more secure side of the economy because the wealth is passed down through patrimonial links.

The meritocratic system is of no help either because for one to be part of it they have to be skilled and highly so. With the current state of public education in South Africa, the poorest of the poor hardly ever get a chance to advance to the meritocratic society. And even if they do study to a certain level they become content with it because it at least puts food on the table and taking time out to study further does not put food on the table. The meritocratic society is a highly competitive society which requires one to be well resourced and connected to get best out of it; the poor are only just trying to get into the door (Piketty, 2014: 191). Moreover, the meritocratic system has advanced the notion that it is the hard workers that advance and those that do not advance are said to be lazy and unproductive whereas this is not necessarily the case. The system then says its participants should at all times seek to get better and better, always on the path of accumulating as much as possible, sometimes at the expense of others (Piketty, 2014: 191).

Two systems can emerge in one society, the super managers could be the heirs of hyper-patrimonial gains and the children of the super managers can inherit their wealth (Piketty, 2014: 191). This means that economic inequality can be perpetuated for generations and generations because the wealth lies in the hands of the few who reproduce the inequality through these systems. Thus in decades or centuries to come nothing may have changed unless something radical is done to transform the economy. As Piketty observes of the former reality when nothing is done: “If this happens, the future could hold in store a new world of inequality more extreme than any that preceded it” (2014: 191).

Economic relations in the postcolonial era

Mbembe observes critically the relations of power between the government and its citizens in the present postcolonial era. He argues that what we are now seeing in Africa is a different political economy which seeks to establish itself through exploitation and coercion (2001: 93). The economic inequality in South Africa more than the hyper-patrimonial and hyper-meritocratic systems is perpetuated by the government's failure to address corruption and the perceived preferential option of a small black elite at the expense of the poor. The officials in power are themselves linked to corporations that exploit the poor and they are in fact earning profits from them. Mbembe goes on to note that the link between the rulers and the ruled in the postcolonial era, as was in the colonial era, rests on the assumption that the rulers have a right to enjoy everything (2001: 125). This can be observed in the arrogance of the ruling party regarding corruption matters levelled against the government. There seems to be a notion that because the ruling party liberated the country they have the right to enjoy the wealth of the country alone and exclude the poor. According to Mbembe, the downfall of the condition of life for the ordinary people leads to a battle between life and death and they sink deeper into poverty to the brink of death, until ultimately being exposed to need, hunger and labour (2001: 146). For the middle and upper class the issue of the economy may be just about getting more shares on the stock exchange or getting a house in a more upmarket area or even getting the latest expensive car. However, for the ordinary person on the street, one who is sinking deeper into poverty as the wealthy advance, it becomes a matter of life and death, for without basic needs there cannot be survival.

Bond suggests that the biggest and most vulnerable victims of capitalism in the twenty-first century are the workers (1999: 6). He argues that the workers are the people who actually produce output, but the value of output enhances the capitalists and not labourers (1999: 6 – 7). As argued above, the meritocratic societal value encourages its participants to work as hard as they can to achieve maximum output and advance their gains. However, this only works out for the capitalist because the labourer cannot decide where the value gained should go and they are left on the periphery – vulnerable and exploited. The system then advances the capitalist's gains and further widens the gap between the labourer and the capitalist. Bond continues to note that this kind of system is made worse by the competition within capitalism which leads to the labourer being unable to afford even the product they have output (1999: 7). Moreover, to maintain competitiveness, argues Bond, the capitalist has to adopt the latest

machinery and equipment and is forced to release labour, attaining growth more than the markets can bear leading to an over accumulation of capital (1999: 7). When such practices occur in the capitalist system it is the labourers at the bottom of the pyramid that suffer the most; they lose jobs and increase the unemployment and poverty statistics while the capitalist gains more value and further widen the inequality gap (Bond, 1999: 7).

Mbembe opines that in South Africa it may seem on the surface as if the economic divide happens between those with access to income earning formal sector opportunities and those who have become structurally unemployable (M&G, 2014). However, notes Mbembe, that is not the case: In fact the majority of the citizens do not have property and those who do have property are unsure of how long they will still have it since the rate of dispossessions is increasing in the black middle class (M&G, 2014). The hyper-meritocratic system has sold the idea that one should own property to create an image of success and many people in the black middle class are trying their best to achieve that, trying to be not lazy, but because financially they are not secure, they find themselves falling into the trap of dispossessions. Mbembe goes on to observe that while the construction of the self in the apartheid regime was based on the whites owning the property and blacks selling their labour at a cheap price, the construction of the self in the post-apartheid era is based on how much property one owns. This Mbembe argues has been exacerbated by the government's shift from control to consumption (2014).

Conclusion

There has been a sentiment echoing in the circles of the Youth League of the ANC and later in the recently formed political party The Economic Freedom Front (EFF), of a radical economic transformation. The EFF is calling for “economic freedom in our lifetime”, proposing a number of things that could be done to achieve this. The propose, among other things, the nationalization of mines and land restitution. I am not so concerned about the party and its manifesto as much as I am concerned about the idea of economic freedom in our lifetime. Lundahl & Petersson have opined that because of the various challenges the government has faced in the past twenty years, the ordinary black people might have to wait much longer and perhaps admit that the dream can only be realised by the next generation (2004: 275). However, I am of the opinion that the government has not devised a radical enough economic policy that will change the lives of the people. Central to this thesis is that when Paul asked Philemon to take Onesimus as a brother it implied that Philemon had to do

something radical to improve the economic situation of Onesimus so they may be at the same level as brothers. Twenty years ago our country went into such an arrangement, but those in the higher level of the economy did not do all they could to bring others to their level. Nothing radical has happened to improve the lives of the people and Onesimus the black people remains in the margins, he remains but just a slave.

CHAPTER 3

The ideo-theological formation of the reader

Introduction

The ideo-theological framework within the African contextual hermeneutic has vital importance and adds value to the interpretation process. Value in a sense that it emphasizes not only the role of the reader, but also the reader's predisposition to the text, an understanding that the reader belongs to a particular faith community and that the reader has some knowledge they bring to the text. The African contextual hermeneutic seeks to bring that predisposition to the fore, rather than suppress it. It has to be clear from the beginning that the reader approaches the text with such an understanding. The postcolonial theory proposes that there are knowledge systems and understandings of life that the African people had before the arrival of colonialism. Such knowledge is still in many respects relevant for life today and the postcolonial reader seeks to uncover them and bring them to the fore in today's world. In the present chapter I will present my ideological and theological predisposition to the letter of Philemon in the form of the Wesleyan approach to economics and observe how this approach was effected during the rise of the working class movements in England. I will also present two African indigenous knowledge formulations that may be employed in the study and approach to economics in South Africa. I will present a Setswana idiom, *khumo le lehuma di lala mmmogo*, as well as the philosophy of the Zulu princess Mkabayi ka Jama: *For the good of our people*.

Wesleyan approach to economics

By way of introduction, in his address at the funeral of the late British former Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, Richard Chartres, Anglican bishop of London, paid tribute to the work of the Methodists in Great Britain (The Telegraph, 2013). According to Bishop Chartres, the country owed much gratitude to the Methodists for their involvement in the industrial struggles of the people of Britain (The Telegraph, 2013). It was the Methodists, argued Bishop Chartres, who often took the lead in challenging the political and economic plight of the people and demanded justice; it was from this heritage of Methodism that Thatcher was born into (The Telegraph, 2013). What prompted the Methodists to be active in political and economic issues was the teaching of their church. It was Wesley's belief that there can be no holiness without social holiness; holiness of the heart had to translate to social holiness

(Jennings, 1990: 102). If a Methodist was unwilling to come into contact with the poor, serve the poor, give to the poor, feel the plight of the poor or smell the stench of the poor, they were deemed to be unworthy to be called a Methodist (Jennings, 1990: 102).

According to Jennings, Wesley believed that justice and mercy are central to the divinity of God (Jennings, 1990: 102). The God of the Bible speaks for the weak, defenceless, poor and needy. Those gods who do not have this characteristic are merely just idol gods, not because they were made with human hands, but because they do not have the very heart of being God (Jennings, 1990: 103). God cannot be God without this. Divinity cannot be divinity without this. The being of God is fundamentally being able to hear and heed the afflicted (Jennings, 1990: 103). Wesleyans believe that the true being and deity of God consists precisely in hearing and heeding the cry of the violated and humiliated; the cry of the poor and the marginalized (Jennings, 1990: 104). It was this belief that prompted Wesley's approach to economics: he was convinced that God is on the side of the poor, that God has a preferential option for the poor (Jennings, 1990: 104). Wesley believed that at all times God would stand up for and uplift the poor (Jennings, 1990: 104). Thus it is the conviction of the Methodists that they ought to stand together with God on the side of the poor – Methodists can never leave the poor behind.

In one of his sermons, Wesley opined that Jesus was firmly on the side of the poor (Jennings, 1990: 105). According to Wesley, Jesus warned those who were listening to him that their standing before God is not determined by their belief in Christian doctrine, nor their association with the Christian community, but by whether they have fed the hungry and clothed the naked (Jennings, 1990: 105). This understanding of Wesley was incorporated into the doctrine and teachings of Methodism. It is the conviction of Methodism that without feeding the hungry and clothing the naked, we have no standing before God. Thus it is established firmly in a Methodist that they should endeavour to look for the naked and clothe them, look for the hungry and feed them. For Methodism, it is also important to know that the God of justice and mercy will restore and change the outlook of the oppressed. Our God lifts up the oppressed and restores them to a higher state.

This position of Methodism then calls them to ask a few questions, not only in the days past, but more importantly in the days present: Who are the poor in our congregation and in our community? The presence of the poor in the congregation and the community is to be sought vigorously so that the church can seek a way of helping them out (Jennings, 1990: 105). If a

Methodist church does not do this, then they are not living up to their true Wesleyan heritage. How do we reach out to the poor? What plans can be put in place to add on to the stride of the eradication of poverty? According to Wesley these are the questions a Methodist should have in their approach to the poor.

When it came to the economy, Wesley maintained that the advancement of the economy is good and bears positive fruits, but it should never be given first preference before service to God (Jennings, 1990: 99). God is the creator of all things and as such He is the source of all human prosperity (Jennings, 1990: 99). Wesley said that we are only stewards of what God has given us and because what we have belongs to the master, we cannot simply do as we please with these, but we do what the master wants us to do (Jennings, 1990: 100 – 101). For Wesley, God has given us possessions so that we provide stewardship over them according to the wishes of God the master. According to Madron, Wesley maintained that even the property that we have belongs to God and at any time God as sovereign may take it (1983: 107). In other words, if these possessions yield some wealth for us, we should do what the master wants, which is to give to the poor as much as we can. Wesley warns that we will not see the poor and hungry and reach out to them if we are wrapped up in our own comfort zones (Madron, 1983: 107). The Gospel requires that we go out into the world and reach out. Wesley maintains that we give to God by giving to the poor and not to the church.

Wesley's definition of wealth is "simply having more than what is necessary" (Jennings, 1990: 106). According to Wesley, if you can afford to have a roof a roof over your head, food and clothing, and still have more money left, then you are rich (Jennings, 1990: 107). Moreover, it was Wesley's conviction that anything more than what you need to survive should be given to the poor (Jennings, 1990: 107). Further, Wesley believed that acquiring more than is necessary is theft, it was Wesley's dream that the Methodists would live like the community that is described in Acts 2 and 4, sharing with each other (Jennings, 1990: 108).

This is part of my theological predisposition to the text. When I am confronted with a text that has some inequalities politically, socially or economically, my Wesleyan theology is brought into play. I cannot ignore my Methodist approach to economics when I am dealing with the text of Philemon. My questions are: Who are poor and who are rich within the text, and how do they relate to each other? Is there mutual beneficiation between the parties involved or is one taking home more than the other? Are the rich characters in the text in a position to help the poor and are they doing so? Thus when reading a text my mind ponders

on these questions and I begin my reading already predisposed and having a mind of what should be applicable in a context of poverty or inequality.

Wesleyan evangelical economics

Feed the hungry, clothe the naked, help the stranger, the widow, the fatherless. This is the command Wesley gives. He also said when it comes to the use of money that we should gain all we can, save all we can and give all we can. These are what we call the Wesleyan evangelical economics. It was Wesley's belief that these should be the guiding principles on how a Methodist should approach matters of money.

Gain all you can

According to Wesley, the people called Methodists were to work hard, take part in the industries, corporations or business and gain as much money as they could (Jennings, 1990: 115). Wesley believed that hard work was the route to success and he did not object to people getting rich; he rather encouraged people to gain wealth (Jennings, 1990: 115). In the present day analysis of Wesley's position I am of the conviction that Wesley is not against capitalism in its entirety. Wesley would encourage present day capitalists to advance economically and gain as much as they can. However, they should never do so at the expense of the poor; the poor should never be exploited in order for the capitalist to gain more. The capitalists' ambition to gain as much as they can should not overshadow their eyes so much that they do not see the plight of the poor. Wesley wanted people to live like he did, but he wanted it to be out of choice and not compulsion. The important thing in this part of the teaching is for the Christian to gain as much as they can through hard and honest work and avoid laziness at all times.

Save all you can

Unnecessary spending of money was totally rejected by Wesley. He insisted on saving and he taught the Methodists and spread such teaching throughout England that the Methodists were to encourage their fellow men to save as much as they can (Jennings, 1990: 115). Minimal spending was to be the drive of the Methodists, always seeking to save (Jennings, 1990: 115). Thus the corporate gluttony of over-accumulation noted in the previous chapter would not be welcomed by Wesley. If the capitalists would listen to Wesley then they would discover that having gained as much as you can, you should save it, put it aside for the work of God since

it is not our own but God's and should be put in work to advance God's mission. In his understanding of stewardship, Wesley was convinced that saving that which has been gained is taking care of what God has entrusted on our hands.

Give all you can

Gaining as much as you can and saving all those gains meant in Wesley's teaching that such gains should be given to the poor (Jennings, 1990: 116). Wesley was not against gaining money, but he was against the accumulation of wealth whilst people remain poor (Madron, 1983: 109). He felt that one should give all that was beyond his needs to the poor (Madron, 1983: 109). Madron observes that Wesley instructed the rich in the societies "Be ye, ready to distribute to everyone, according to his necessity" (1983: 108).

This position according to Wesley was not only to be practiced by Methodists in house, but was to spread throughout England that not only the Methodists, but all people should practice this (Madron, 1983: 108). Wesley was so convinced of this that in 1744 he directed the conference that until the Methodists had all things in common they were to bring all that they had as extras to the next service (this endeavour was however unsuccessful) (1983: 108). Thus when confronted with the situation of economic inequality in South Africa my immediate response as a Methodist is to ask why have the rich not helped the poor? When the gap is so wide, why are the wealthy not giving some of their wealth to the poor? Is it so inconceivable that after working hard to gain all that I have I may see humanity in the faces of the poor and give them what I do not need, the extra that I have? This theology runs at the back of my mind and it is difficult for me to read the text of Philemon without having such questions in my mind.

Methodism and the working class movements of England

Without giving a church history lesson I want to observe just a few significant contributions of Methodist lay preachers in the economic struggles of England. Wearmouth reports that the period of 1800 to 1850 saw a difficult economic tenure for England Prices went up, but wages remained the same and led many to go struggling and hungry (1947: 15 – 16). According to Wearmouth, there were uprisings throughout England challenging the reaction of the government to these troubles and the government's lack of assistance in this regard, but such uprisings were quickly silenced with political activists being jailed (1947: 18 – 20). The Methodists, however, would be undeterred. Determined to bring about economic reform in

England, the Methodist organised meetings to challenge the economic plight of the working class (Wearmouth, 1947: 36). Methodist preachers used the pulpits to advance this cause. Teachers who were Methodist used the classrooms to advance the cause and often they were arrested for such action, but they would not be deterred (Wearmouth, 1947: 37). However, the Methodists entered into a period of discomfort when the threat of their preachers continued from the government and eventually the conference resolved to be more loyal to the king and government (Wearmouth, 1947: 43). Such attitude on the part of Methodists did not last for very long however. When the industrial revolution quietened and trade unions emerged, Methodists were involved (Wearmouth, 1947: 183). The Methodists began their work in the mines by introducing the miners to education and later the need to stand for their rights (Wearmouth, 1947: 184). Methodist preachers were involved in the organising of trade union actions and were often part of the leadership of the unions (Wearmouth, 1947: 184 – 185).

The spirit of economic reform amongst the Methodists was once more prevalent and spread all over England (Wearmouth, 1947: 185). As Scotland observes, the Methodists were once again leading the actions of trade unions in East Anglia (1981: 22). Scotland further observes that the Methodists led this revolt amongst the countryside poor, those working on the farms and mobilised them to cry out to the ruling elite (1981: 22). The influence of economic action by the Methodists was also seen in Durham where Methodism enjoyed a large following (Moore, 1974: 169). It was here that the trade unions were formed and spread throughout England and the Methodists were involved in proposing a radical change in the economic life of the workings class (Moore, 1974: 169).

It was the approach to economics taught by Wesley that drove the Methodists to take leadership in acting against economic injustice. The social holiness of which Wesley spoke meant bringing about change and transformation in the social lives of people. The social lives of the people at the time included economic struggles and according to Methodist conviction, such a life was to be transformed. Thus a true response to the plight of the poor in a Wesleyan approach is to be on the side of the poor and marginalised.

Khumo le lehuma di lala mmogo

One of the fundamental positions of the postcolonial theory is that before colonialism came, the pre-colonial people had an existing way of life. Indigenous people had knowledge systems, they had thoughts and understandings and they had approaches to life. The arrival of

colonialism demanded on the part of the imperialists that their subjects forget their way of life and adopt the more “civilised” way of the West. Not only was their autonomy crushed, but also their culture, their customs, their beliefs and their knowledge. As argued in chapter one, Western imperialism rendered the knowledge of the people as irrelevant and without sense. The postcolonial reader seeks to re-establish that presence – that ownership of knowledge that was once taken from the indigenous people. This is done in many ways, one of which is my present endeavour, re-presenting the pre-colonial understanding of economics. Mji & Owusu-Ansah argue that indigenous knowledge rooted in Africa is important for research in Africa as it gives not only an African worldview, but also the experienced knowledge of Africans (2013: 2). Afrocentric studies promote the cultural immersion of research and an emphasis on indigenous African understanding of issues such as economics, health and philosophy (Mji & Owusu-Ansah, 2013: 3). Afrocentric research does not seek to negate the importance of Western forms of research and understanding, but rather seeks to explore the vast amount of knowledge and understanding that is within the African people when researching about Africa (Mji & Owusu-Ansah, 2013: 4). Using this Afrocentric approach within my ideo-theological framework, I seek to present that there were approaches and understanding of the concept of economy in pre-colonial times. One such understanding being *khumo le lehuma di lala mmogo*, to which I now turn.

This old Setswana idiom⁴ literally translated means: “wealth and poverty lie together”. According to Batswana people⁵, wealth and poverty are inseparable; they are intertwined in the course of history. This idiom suggests in the first place that a person may be rich today and poor the next day, a person may be poor today and rich the next day. In our understanding as Batswana people, wealth and poverty are both concepts that can be real in a person’s life in one lifetime. Wealth that a person is born with is not guaranteed to last until he dies. The phenomenon of life may change the course of a rich person’s life. In the same way, a poor person is not doomed to poverty for the rest of their life, circumstances may change and they may end up rich. We have seen mighty men fall, rich men ending up penniless and we have seen nobodies turning into great people. This is what the Batswana people have observed in their lives and now posit as an approach to economics. An approach to economics in a sense that once rich, you should not look down on other people, for

⁴ Setswana idioms are generally handed down to generations through oral transmission. There are a few of them that are taught at primary schools.

⁵ Batswana people are one of the eleven official cultural groups in South Africa and they are pre-dominant in the North Western part of the country. The country of Botswana is also mostly populated by Batswana people.

tomorrow you may end up in the same position. But also for the poor person not to despair, for tomorrow might bring something new to restore them.

Secondly, and more important in my view, is the position of the idiom that poverty and wealth are inextricably intertwined. One cannot exist without the other. For wealth to exist for a person, it has to be at the expense of another. This understanding says if there is enough for everyone, all must share equally. If not, some will be wealthy and some poor, with inequality coming into play. Such poverty and wealth will exist in the same community and thus poverty and wealth will lie together in the same bed of one community. Moreover, the representatives of both wealth and poverty need each other; they depend on each other for survival. For the rich person to be able to advance their wealth they need poor people to work for them and for the poor person to earn a living they need to work for a wealthy person. Thus the relationship between the two is important and must be safeguarded in peaceful principles. The idiom also holds that between wealth and poverty one cannot exist without the other. For wealth to exist, there must be poverty and vice versa. If there is equilibrium in resources, then no one will be either rich or poor.

This African understanding is worth considering in our time. When we look at what has been happening in our country in terms of economics, we see that there is no mutual cooperation between the rich and the poor. The high level of inequality has put both sides on far ends. When we observe the Marikana debacle⁶ where the poor mineworkers sought to have their living conditions improved; the rich mine managers were not willing to budge. There was no respect for the poor on the part of the rich which brings to question the understanding of economics in the twenty-first century as well advanced by the West. An African approach would not have yielded the results that were seen on that fateful day when the poor fell down, subdued by death.

When I read the text of Philemon, my Setswana background screams for attention. It asks if I may employ it in reading this text. Philemon is the master and Onesimus is the slave. If the runaway slave hypothesis is to be held, the question is then what could have propelled Onesimus to run away from his master? Were the living conditions of the poor Onesimus so dire that he felt the need to run? Did the rich Philemon do enough to ensure that Onesimus lived well, was taken care of? (At this point it is not yet established if Philemon was rich, but

⁶ On 16 August 2012 miners of the Lonmin mine at Marikana embarked on a strike demanding better wages. Police intervened and eventually shot dead 44 miners, with 78 seriously injured.

an inequality is held) Did he respect Onesimus? Was there mutual peace in this scenario? Thus, when I employ this Setswana idiom I ask where is wealth and where is poverty in this text? Do they lie together and if they do is it a peaceful sleep? Does Philemon accept that as a rich man he may end up poor tomorrow? Is he conceiving that? And does he look at Onesimus and see potential in him that he may be rich tomorrow? This idiom is indeed relevant in today's world, if not absolutely necessary and it ought to be considered seriously. More than the Setswana understanding there are also other African indigenous approaches to economics, to which I now turn.

For the good of our people

This statement is part of the philosophy of the Zulu princess Mkabayi ka Jama⁷, the aunt to the legendary Zulu king Shaka Zulu⁸. Mkabayi was born to King Jama Zulu with a twin sister and according to Zulu custom one of them had to be killed to avoid omens befalling the nation, a custom her father refused to practice (Nzimande, 2009: 239; Shamase, 2014: 16). Because of King Jama's refusal to kill one of his daughters, they became the scapegoats of everything bad that happened to the nation, including the death of their mother when they were only five (Nzimande, 2009: 239 – 240). Realising that the Zulu people still wanted an heir, Mkabayi convinced Mthaniya to marry her father, who then bore the people an heir in the person of Senzangakona (Shamase, 2014: 16). According to Nzimande, Mkabayi refused an arranged marriage to a powerful neighbouring dynasty because she felt obligated to serve her people (2009: 240).

Nzimande argues that some of the characteristics of princess Mkabayi were her “wisdom, trickery, deceit, cunning and the great art of persuasion”, which she used for the good of the Zulu people (2009: 240). Mkabayi was a princess who sought what was good for the nation. Her attitude portrayed the attitude of a leader who wanted the best for her people. Shamase suggests that she had a feminist approach to leadership and argues that her approaches was holistic and called on men and women to dialogue and define the needs and concerns of the nation in an environment that did not consider the class of a person (2014: 21).

⁷ Mkabayi ka Jama means Mkabayi the daughter of Jama. It is an indigenous African way of calling a person.

⁸ Shaka Zulu was the emperor of the united Zulu kingdom during the colonial era and is renowned for his excellent military tactics.

In the series *Shaka Zulu*⁹ based on the diary entries by Dr Henry Fynn who accompanied Lieutenant Francis Farewell in a bid to engage king Shaka, we see glimpses of the power and influence of princess Mkabayi. Of particular note is her philosophy that the director of the series highlights quite emphatically throughout: for the good of our people. On numerous occasions Mkabayi calls on the leaders of the nation to consider what would be good for the Zulu people. When her father king Jama was troubled by the pregnancy of Nandi (the mother of Shaka), Mkabayi encourages her brother Senzangakhona to accept that the elders at this time cannot understand what good the birth of the prophecy child will bring to the people. When Shaka was born and being raised in the Zulu royal kraal, the council men agreed that he was to be killed. However, Mkabayi did not agree and she thought it best for the good of the people that the boy should escape. She orchestrated the escape of Nandi, Shaka and Nomchobo, the sister of Shaka. When Shaka had grown up and was wanted by a number of kings in their military regiments, Mkabayi convinced her brother Senzangakhona to seek his son and proclaim him heir to his throne: for the good of the people she said. When Shaka was unruly and questioning his father, Senzangakhona asked his sister to think of a way of saving him, she responded: “My purpose has never been to save the boy; personally, I only wish what is best for our people”. Again when it was evident that Shaka was abusing his power as emperor of the monarchy, Mkabayi plotted with Mhlangana and Dingane to kill Shaka (Nzimande, 2009: 240), as in her eyes it would be for the good of the people.

I do not excuse the deceitful nature of Mkabayi, which led to the murders of people with the following line held as justification: for the good of our people. However, this is not just a line – it is a conviction, it is a philosophy and for Mkabayi, it was a rule of life. She saw no other purpose in her life than to seek what was good for the people of the Zulu nation. It is this philosophy that most intrigues me about Mkabayi. Moreover I observe that Mkabayi was born and lived before the Zulu people were colonised. Thus, her philosophy was born in the pre-colonial era, a philosophy that saw that the Zulu people live in harmony and peace for a long time because their leader sought what was best for them.

In a country stricken with economic inequality one may ask if those that own the big mines and large corporations ever seek what would be good for the people that work for them. Is the question: What would be good for our employees? Or is it: What would be good for our

⁹ The movie was aired by the South African Broadcasting Corporation. Gugu Nxumalo acted as Mkabayi. Joshua Sinclair wrote the movie and William C. Faure was the director.

profits? It is my argument that if a philosophy such as that of Mkabayi was to be employed in our current economic situation, then we would have a totally different situation. Recognising that the reason for the good profit turnouts is the hard work and toil of the people, it should propel the owners and managers to ask themselves what would be for the good of the workers. This teaching of Mkabayi was born within an African setting of indigenous Africa and that is one of the philosophies we need to be grappling with when approaching the problem of economic inequality.

Conclusion

The chapter has dealt with my understanding of economics that I bring to the text and has observed that such an understanding already plays an effect in my interpretation of the text. I looked at the Wesleyan approach to economics and my African understanding of economics and observed that such knowledge leads me to the Philemon narrative as an economic reader. I ask myself if Philemon at any point ever asked himself what would be good for his slaves. Engaging with the text of Philemon, I wonder if we can see trends in the text where the best interests of Onesimus are considered. Our government leaders are continually accused of corruption, filling their pockets at the expense of the poor and working class. As leaders of the people, do they ever ask themselves what would be for the good of the people? Is it so much to ask that the elected officials should put the interests of the people above their own and simply ask what could be done for the good of the people? Moreover, in any decision the leaders take, could they not evaluate with the question “is this going to be good for our people?” It is my contention that such an approach would go a long way in reducing drastically the gap between the rich and the poor in our country.

CHAPTER 4

Some matters regarding the letter

Introduction

In the previous chapter I elaborated my ideo-theological predisposition to the Philemon narrative and suggested ideo-theological approaches to the narrative as well as to the contemporary context of South Africa. I now move on to a discussion of the letter to Philemon as part of my distantiation: exploring the text and its context. Within the African contextual hermeneutic is the process of distantiation where the reader distances themselves from the text and allow the text to speak to its original audience before interpreting it for their contemporary context. Moreover, within the Philemon narrative some issues are noteworthy before getting into a literary analysis of the text. I want to focus on some of these issues in the present chapter. I will observe the details of the geographical setting of the household from which Onesimus ran and was now going back to. I will then discuss the place of the writing of the letter and the hypotheses proposed as well as the authorship of the letter. Lastly I look at the main characters within this narrative and their place in the plot.

The geographical setting of the household

Based on the coincidence of names between the two letters, some scholars argue that Philemon and Onesimus should be located in Colossae which is located in what is now Turkey (Dunn, 1996: 301). There is some evidence that Colossae was a wealthy populous agricultural town, on the Southern bank of the Lycus River in the territory of Phrygia, 110 miles east of Ephesus (Garland, 1998: 17) in the Southern part of the Roman province of Asia (Dunn, 1996: 20). Other cities of the Lycus valley included Laodicea and Hierapolis (Bruce, 1984: 3). Bruce argues that Colossae was by far the oldest town of these three settlements dating back to 480 B.C.E., when Xerxes passed by on his way to invade Greece (1984: 3). After the period under Persian rule, 546 B.C.E. to 334 B.C.E., and the short-lived empire of Alexander, the area came under the kingdom of Pergamum in 188 B.C.E. (Bruce, 1984: 3). Finally in 133 B.C.E. the king of Pergamum bequeathed his realm to the Romans who reorganised it into the Roman province of Asia (Bruce, 1984: 3).

There also seems to be some evidence that Philemon was a rather wealthy man in Colossae and some Christians congregated at his house for worship (Garland, 1998: 302). Thus, Colossae plays a role in the understanding the letter, if we assume that the main characters

are residents of Colossae and the congregation mentioned in the letter is the congregation of Christians in Colossae (Dunn, 1996: 301).

Place of writing

There is no consensus on the place the letter was written at. The only information the letter gives is that Paul is in prison, it does not say which prison it is or if Onesimus was imprisoned together with Paul. The main hypotheses in discussion are the Rome hypothesis and the Ephesus hypothesis. Fitzmyer agrees with these propositions, however adding another possibility of the prison in Roman Judea (2000: 9 – 10). He argues that the composition of the letter could have been during the time Paul was confined to Caesarea Maritima (2000: 10). Moreover, the position of Caesarea Maritima is closer to the town that Onesimus came from and would have been a less tiring journey (Fitzmyer, 2000: 10). However, the Caesarea Maritima hypothesis has not been given much attention and the Rome and Ephesus hypotheses are the most held by scholars. I now turn to these.

The Ephesus hypothesis

Ephesus was closer to Colossae, being only a week's journey by foot from Colossae and Onesimus could have opted for Ephesus rather than Rome which was much further (Bruce, 1984: 194; Dunn, 1996: 307). The Ephesus hypothesis is further strengthened by the inference of Paul to Philemon that he should keep a room ready for his visit that would happen soon (Dunn, 1996: 308). Thus it would make sense that upon leaving Colossae, Onesimus could have quickly gone to Ephesus to seek a place to hide and then met Paul who convinced him of the message. He could have also heard that Paul was in Ephesus and escaped to go and meet him there. However, I am not convinced of this hypothesis.

The Rome hypothesis

Bruce argues that the letters to Philemon and Colossians were written at the same time, at the same place and reached Colossae at the same time through the same messengers which Onesimus was amongst (1984: 191). Garland agrees, proffering that both the letters of Colossians and Philemon were written in the same city of Rome (1998: 22). Bruce sees an inseparable link between the two letters because Philemon seems to be the leader of the house church at Colossae. For Bruce, when Paul wrote the two letters he intended that one (Colossians) be for the assembly and the other (Philemon) be a personal letter for Philemon. The challenge with this hypothesis is that some scholars view the letter to Colossians as a

deutero-Pauline letter and thus could not have been written in the circumstances proffered by Bruce. However, the hypothesis has to its advantage the fact that there is no firm record of the prison in Ephesus (Bruce, 1984: 195; Dunn, 1996: 308). Moreover, if Colossians was written when Paul was still alive, then the Rome hypothesis is supported since Colossians was conclusively written in Rome (Dunn, 1996: 308). I am more inclined to this hypothesis for the reason that it supports the occasion of Paul and Onesimus meeting. If Paul was under house arrest in Rome, then it is possible for Onesimus to have ended up in his house seeking refuge or begging for food, but later being converted. He could also have gone to Paul's house in an attempt to talk to him regarding his slave conditions in Colossae. Either way, it makes sense that the conditions of the arrest were more flexible rather than a normal prison in Ephesus. If Paul was in prison in Ephesus it would have been too risky for Onesimus to approach a prison where he could have been easily recognized as Philemon's slave, unless if he was caught and placed in the same cell as Paul which also does not make sense since Paul did not have the right to release a prisoner. Thus, the Rome hypothesis is a much more feasible hypothesis.

Regarding authorship

It is generally agreed that Paul is the author of the letter to Philemon and there has been no serious contention to this position (Bruce, 1984: 191; Dunn, 1996: 299 – 300; Fitzmyer, 2000: 8; Kreitzer, 2008: 1 – 2). The date of the writing of the letter depends on the geographical position of Paul when he wrote, a matter without consensus. Three possibilities can be proposed. If the letter was written in Rome, then it was around C.E. 61 – 63, during Paul's two years of detention in Rome (Fitzmyer, 2000: 10). If the place was Caesarea Maritima, then it was probably in C.E. 58 – 60 that the letter was written (Fitzmyer, 2000: 10). If the letter was written during Paul's imprisonment in Ephesus (imprisonment also referred to Philippians and Timothy), then it was around C.E. 55 – 57 that the letter was written (Fitzmyer, 2000: 10). The dating of the letter may seem to be of little importance. However, it is important as it supports different hypotheses of the prison in which Paul was situated when he wrote the letter. Thus I align myself with the hypothesis that places Paul in the prison at Rome when he wrote the letter in C.E. 61 – 63.

Ryan & Thurston note that Philemon stands as one of Paul's seven undisputed letters (2005: 176). They note however, that the only real connection of the two seems to be the Lycus Valley (2000: 177). The letter of Philemon in its theological and pastoral content is more

inclined to the letter to the Philippians which describes Paul in some imminent danger (Ryan & Thurston, 2000: 177).

Regarding the main characters in the letter

The letter as we have it mentions a number of characters, the first being the author Paul, Timothy the co-author, Philemon the addressee (v. 1), Apphia the “sister”, Archippus the fellow soldier and the congregation (v. 2). Onesimus the slave is mentioned (v. 10), so are Epaphras (v. 23), Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, as well as Luke (v. 24). These are seemingly important figures regarding the environment within which Paul found himself, as well as for Philemon and the congregation at his house. There are four main characters on which I wish to focus briefly regarding this point: Paul, Philemon, Epaphras and Onesimus. The letter is written by Paul to Philemon and it concerns Onesimus.

Paul

Paul is one of the main characters in the narrative. As has been established above, he is the author of the letter to Philemon. He is acquainted with Philemon, Onesimus and Epaphras (Dunn, 1996: 303). As the leader of the evangelistic movement, he wrote a letter of mediation for the sake of Onesimus to Philemon and called for reconciliation between Onesimus and Philemon under new conditions (Garland, 1998: 301). Within the narrative Paul acts as the author of the letter and as spiritual advisor to both Philemon and Onesimus.

Philemon

The letter is addressed to Philemon, even though some people are mentioned in it. Dunn proposed the following regarding Philemon: he was well to do, as he had a house large enough to fit the whole congregation and still have a spare room to receive guests; he was possibly an owner of more slaves than Onesimus; he was probably a businessman who travelled frequently; he could also have taken some time off from his business to attend to the evangelistic cause as he is mentioned as a fellow worker; he was also possibly the leader of the church that met in his house (1996: 301). Blanke & Barth also hold this position (2000: 137), as does Fitzmyer (2000: 12 – 13). Kreitzer generally agrees with this depiction, noting that Philemon was wealthy enough to buy slaves and a big house (2008: 40). What we can already see at this point is that Philemon is economically advantaged. He does not seem to be a man of many needs, in fact he is well off. He is living a comfortable life. He is also a slave

owner; he owns Onesimus, the other main character, and as Dunn points out, possibly more slaves.

Dunn suggests that because Philemon was a travelling businessman, he probably met Paul in one of his tours and heard the message leading to his conversion (1996: 301), a position also held by Fitzmyer (2000: 13). Kreitzer suggests that the conversion could have happened during Paul's extended stay at Ephesus (2008: 40). Dunn suggests that Philemon may have met Paul after his conversion (1996: 302). He posits that Epaphras was the one who brought the message to Colossae (1996: 312). I agree with Dunn on this position for the reason that it is my contention that Onesimus was already converted before meeting Paul and as I shall argue below, it is more plausible that Epaphras is the one who brought the message to Colossae. However, he mentioned to the Colossians that Paul was the leader of the evangelistic movement. Philemon may have later met Paul perhaps as Dunn and Fitzmyer suggest in one of his tours.

Epaphras

Epaphras is named twice in Colossians and once in Philemon and it is generally held that Epaphras is the person who brought the gospel to Colossae (Kreitzer, 2008: 34 – 35). He is made important in this setting by the fact that he brought the gospel to Colossae and founded a church there (Dunn, 1996: 22). This fact brings some light into the complexities of the reason why Onesimus fled from Colossae, a point to which I shall return in chapter six.

Onesimus

The other main character to be considered is the slave Onesimus – the silent character. A conversation has emerged between Paul, a respected evangelist, and Philemon his master. It is worth noting how interpreters mainly deal with Onesimus as a passive character in the text. The focus is on Paul: his thinking, his ideology and how he engages Philemon regarding Onesimus. Philemon is focused on as someone who is confronted with a difficult question of either freeing his slave or continuing the master-slave relationship with a different approach. However, Onesimus is mentioned mainly in reference. He is hardly the subject of the study of interpreters.

Dunn quickly mentioned him saying the fact that he was a slave does not tell us much about Onesimus, and then he moved on to talking about slavery (1993: 302). Donfried and Marshall

retained the runaway slave description of Onesimus and summarily referred to him as such (1993: 177), as so did Fitzmyer (2000: 13 – 14). Blanke & Barth observe that his name outlined what his master expected from him (2000: 141). Blanke & Barth however, go on to explore that Onesimus could have been a Phrygian by origin or he could have been born to parents enslaved to Philemon (2000: 142). This is one of the notable interests in the slave in the pre- and modern interpretation of the letter. Kreitzer described him to be a runaway slave that was converted by Paul in prison, but proved himself as an important and worthy servant in the ministry (2008: 46). This is even more notable. Kreitzer suggests that Onesimus was in a dangerous position, a runaway slave in prison, but knew that the way to success was through hard work, a quality that was noticed by Paul. Though he retains Onesimus as a slave, Kreitzer shows how the slave can think and advance his own development. Kreitzer also goes as far as describing him as possibly the Onesimus who later became bishop of Ephesus (2008: 48 – 49).

Conclusion

The present chapter has dealt with socio-economic issues involved in the narrative as well as authorship details and further looked at the main characters in the narrative and how they take part in the plot. There are a number of ways in reading the letter of Philemon. Having observed some of the issues when dealing with this text, I now move on to establishing the style of writing of the letter. Lopez & Penner have observed that in his writings, Paul shows a great skill in rhetoric (2010: 36). They argue that Paul in his letters promotes arguments to communities and individuals sometimes with force and in other times with seduction (2010: 37). The letter at hand has an argument well crafted seductively to achieve Paul's goal. Thus in the reading of this letter a rhetorical approach has to be borne in mind. I now move to an exploration of rhetoric in this epistle.

CHAPTER 5

A literary analysis of the text

Introduction

The distantiation part of the African contextual hermeneutic calls on the reader to allow the text to speak as it was originally written and let the text be other. It is within this process of distantiation that the reader observes the original text in its literary form and explores the message the author originally intended to translate. In the previous chapter I established some of the main issues in the letter as well as the main characters of the text and began a conversation on the style of writing that Paul uses in this epistle. Focusing on the rhetoric of the letter, I will now attempt to do an exposition of the text following the Greek version. Having briefly commented on the rhetoric of the letter I will conduct my exposition in a follow up of the intent of the rhetoric.

When I was still a young boy, my cousin and I used to lay traps for birds and pigeons so we could take them home and show our grandfather and then keep or let the birds free. We would lay the traps and then hide at a distance, observing how the bird comes closer and closer to the trap because of the food and water we have placed at the trap. Once the bird has eaten and is now drinking the water, we then pull the string linked to the stick that holds the cover. The cover drops and engulfs the bird, and it is thereby entrapped. Following this analogy, I want to observe the step by step seduction that Paul uses in his rhetoric of winning Philemon over.

Rhetoric of the letter

With only twenty five verses the letter to Philemon is the shortest in the Pauline literature (Kreitzer, 2008: 4), yet it yields a plethora of opportunities for interpretation by the modern scholar. I say opportunities, because there can be no doubt that the letter poses a series of questions and ambiguities, leaving the interpreter to at times assume and conclude implied meaning. Garland describes reading the letter as watching a movie in the middle, where the plot has already been set and the characters revealed (1998: 294). The rhetoric used in the letter is so skilful that it opens a lot of doors for speculation in interpretation. The traditional focus on the letter has been much on slavery and its impact on the early Christian communities. In more recent years some scholars such as Joseph Marchall have shifted to a sexual reading of the letter, focusing on the sexual obligation slaves had towards their

masters. I prefer to move towards an economic reading of the letter focusing on the equality proposed by the term ‘brother’ in the letter.

From a first glance reading of the letter, its rhetoric style cannot be left unnoticed. It is clear that the author used rhetoric in his crafting of the letter. Rhetoric can be described as the art of persuasion in all spheres of life, whether in court or at church or at a meeting (Lopez & Penner, 2010: 34). The art of persuasion is what we see in this letter. The author does not present his message abruptly and carelessly, but he does so with caution and softness of approach. He does this presenting the different players involved in certain forms to achieve his purpose. Lopez & Penner argue that rhetoric concerns the “shape of our social interactions, our self-perceptions, and belief systems” (2010: 34). Thus in the application of rhetoric speech it is important for the encoder to “tap” on the reader’s self-understanding and perhaps even construct a new self-understanding for the decoder, which can be clearly observed in this letter.

Donfried and Marshall noted that the letter is constructed with great skill to achieve the purpose of persuading Philemon to do what is wanted by the author (1993: 180). Ryan & Thurston argue that this masterpiece of persuasion uses ancient rhetoric which includes all three elements of *ethos*, *pathos*, and *logos* and engages in rhetoric of politeness (2005: 192 – 193). *Ethos* (character) is expressed in the thanksgiving section when Paul thanks Philemon for his loving and generous character and his concern for extending that goodness in this situation (Ryan & Thurston, 2005: 193). *Pathos* (emotion) is the heart of the appeal and seeks to establish fraternal and loving relations between Philemon and Onesimus (Ryan & Thurston, 2005: 193). *Logos* (reason) is present in Paul’s appeal to love. Whilst he may have the authority to instruct, Paul appeals to Philemon through love to act mercifully towards Onesimus (Ryan & Thurston, 2005: 193).

Kreitzer observes that Paul’s skill as a rhetorician and acquaintance with rhetorical styles and arguments of the Greco-Roman world can be noted in the text (2008: 11). The author’s skill of rhetoric is shown in how he envisages his intended audience and frames the rhetoric according to what he knows about the decoder (Donfried & Marshall, 1993: 180). Rhetoric is important in a general sense of world view because its use over the centuries has changed the lives of many, the rhetoric in this letter is critical because the encoder brings in a new argument that was almost unheard of in the context of the time. The fact that he is bringing in an argument of a new possibility ties in well with the observations of Lopez & Penner that

rhetoric is ideological in nature and cannot be seen to be unbiased (2010: 35). The argument here is clearly biased towards Onesimus and the proposal that the encoder posits.

Greetings (1 – 3)

Παῦλος δέσμιος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ καὶ Τιμόθεος ὁ ἀδελφὸς Φιλήμονι τῷ ἀγαπητῷ καὶ
συνεργῷ ἡμῶν

*Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother, To Philemon our dear friend and
co-worker,*

The letter to Philemon begins like other letters in Roman antiquity and those of Paul, with a greeting and salutation (Donfried & Marshall, 1993: 180; Garland, 1998: 315) which would suggest that it is indeed a personal letter from one person to the other (Dunn, 1996: 310; Fitzmyer, 2000: 81). Philemon is a fairly silent figure in the New Testament and throughout the New Testament he is not mentioned except only in this letter (Dunn, 1996: 311).

It is only in the letter to Philemon that Paul begins by identifying himself as a prisoner (Garland, 1998: 315). It can be deduced from Paul's identity as a prisoner that he is writing from prison, of which the whereabouts are disputed (Kreitzer, 2008: 19). The reason for his emphasis that he is in prison calls for speculation. It has been speculated that he does so in an attempt to gain sympathy from the decoder (Garland, 1998: 315). Garland also observes that by identifying himself as a prisoner, Paul likens himself to a slave because a runaway slave would be kept prisoner in chains to keep him from running away. This he does to empty himself from the spiritual director position before engaging Philemon (1998: 316). Dunn notes that it is only in Philemon and Philippians that Paul does this (1996: 310). This assertion is important as it suggests that in opportunities of discussion, hegemonic titles are to be avoided. Paul leads the way in this regard, reducing his status when conversing with Philemon. Perhaps, Philemon ought to adopt the same attitude when conversing with Onesimus upon receipt of the letter. It can also be noted that naming himself as a prisoner Paul begins his rhetoric and lays the ground for the art of persuasion that is yet to follow.

καὶ Ἀπφία τῇ ἀδελφῇ καὶ Ἀρχίππῳ τῷ συστρατιώτῃ ἡμῶν καὶ τῇ κατ' οἶκόν σου ἐκκλησία,
to Apphia our sister, to Archippus our fellow soldier, and to the church in your house:

The salutation extends to include key figures in Philemon's entourage. I call them an entourage because they are certainly part of Philemon's inner circle. There have been suggestions as to their family ties with Philemon. However, there is no scholarly consensus.

Apphia – Dunn proposes that Apphia is the wife of Philemon (1996: 311), adding that because she was Philemon's wife she would probably have had something to do with the issue of the household slaves (1996: 311 – 312). Garland agrees with this view, opining that her mention as a sister suggests that she was a Christian and supports the notion that women of that time were active in the assemblies (1998: 317). Kreitzer, among others, opts to call her either the physical sister of Philemon or one of the main members of the congregation at Philemon's house (2008: 33).

Archippus – Scholars are not in agreement as to the identity of Archippus. Some are saying he was the son of Philemon, and others are saying he was a member of the congregation in Philemon's house (Garland, 1998: 317). Dunn prefers to say he was either the son of Philemon or he was there because he was the only one active in the ministry at Colossae other than Philemon and his wife (1996: 312). I want to differ from this position for the reason that if Archippus was a member of the congregation, then he would be included in the referral to the church. The fact that he is mentioned together with Apphia and Philemon suggests closer ties to Philemon that transcend co-members of the church. Moreover, the categorising or the list of the people greeted in my opinion seems to be done in order of importance or seniority. The author starts by greeting Philemon the principal audience, then Apphia, then Archippus and only then the church. Thus this would suggest that the author says first to Philemon; then Apphia; then Archippus or then Apphia and Archippus and then the assembly.

The assembly – The inclusion of the church that meets in Philemon's house in the greeting suggests that the congregation was part of the conversation as well, perhaps to add pressure on Philemon or to say that the congregation also had to accept Onesimus (Dunn, 1996: 313; Garland, 1998: 318; Fitzmyer, 2000: 81). Dunn further notes that the reason Paul does not call them the saints at Colossae could be because there were other house churches in Colossae (1996: 313). More importantly to note is that there is a communal conversation that is called upon here. Perhaps Paul might be saying to Philemon that if the issue is too heavy for you, then call upon your siblings in the faith to assist you.

When decisions are taken in a communal perspective, they are exposed to a variety of opinions and understandings and a more informed decision can be taken. If indeed Paul wanted this to happen in the congregation at Colossae, then it would be interesting to find out the position of other congregants regarding slavery. Garland observes that the society of today does not want religion in its private matters and would rather deal with matters concerning property privately (1998: 322). But to what extent can and should the Christian faith influence our decisions? When a decision one has to take is a moral one, how much should they involve their faith communities? Garland answers by saying Christians are not alone, they are bound to each other through their faith and as such their moral behaviour and decision making should be born out of a communal perspective (1998: 323).

χάρις ὑμῖν καὶ εἰρήνη ἀπὸ θεοῦ πατρὸς ἡμῶν καὶ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ.

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

The two-pronged greeting of grace and peace is typical of Paul's letters and indicates that the focus now moves from Philemon to the congregation (Kreitzer, 2008: 20). Philemon must now read the letter with the congregation, or at least interpret the letter with them. In this way the letter's influence on him will not be limited to him only, but expanded to the other members of the assembly. Fitzmyer notes that it is in the Pauline writing style to offer grace and peace to the decoders (2000: 82), which is another indication of the authenticity of the letter as that of Paul.

Philemon's love and faith (4 – 7)

Εὐχαριστῶ τῷ θεῷ μου πάντοτε μνησίαν σου ποιούμενος ἐπὶ τῶν προσευχῶν μου, ἀκούων σου ἣν ἀγάπην καὶ τὴν πίστιν, ἣν ἔχεις πρὸς τὸν κύριον Ἰησοῦν καὶ εἰς πάντας τοὺς ἁγίους,

When I remember you in my prayers, I always thank my God because I hear of your love for all the saints and your faith toward the Lord Jesus.

Garland proffers that the praise of Philemon in this section does not mean that Paul is trying to soften Philemon, for it is usual that in his letters Paul would give such praises to the recipients (Garland, 1998: 318), but also it testifies to Philemon's character that would have been related by Onesimus or experienced by Paul himself (Dunn, 1996: 317). Such testimony he could have also heard from Epaphras who was with Paul in prison and seems to have been

instrumental in bringing the gospel to Colossae (Bruce, 1984: 208; Kreitzer, 2008: 20). Garland's position that Paul's praise is not necessarily aimed at softening up Philemon because Paul does that in all of his audiences does not hold water in my opinion. The fact that Paul always does it shows his skill in rhetoric and in this letter it is also an application of rhetoric. The art of persuasion depends on how the reader feels and in part how the author makes the reader feel about him or herself. Thus, by praising Philemon, Paul engages in this art of persuasion, putting on another layer into the rhetoric and strengthening it.

ὅπως ἡ κοινωνία τῆς πίστεώς σου ἐνεργῆς γένηται ἐν ἐπιγνώσει παντὸς ἀγαθοῦ τοῦ ἐν ἡμῖν εἰς Χριστόν.

I pray that the sharing of your faith may become effective when you perceive all the good that we may do for Christ.

Critics have found this verse to be very challenging. Kreitzer deems it to pose a serious challenge for interpretation (2008: 21). He observes that the opening phrases are odd and maybe Paul is trying to say the faith of Philemon may somehow prove to be an effective force in his own life or he is showing that such faith should be in all Christians (2008: 21). Garland notes that the connotations of this verse are important as they give us an indication of Philemon and what he is about to be faced with (1998: 322). For Garland, this verse reveals that Paul believes that what we do, the moral decisions we take, and our goodness, must be encouraged by a supportive faith community (1998: 322). Garland further notes that Paul holds that individual moral decisions affect the whole community and such decisions should be taken in the company of a faith community (1998: 322). Other scholars have chosen to focus on the word κοινωνία in their analysis of this verse. Dunn observes that the idea of κοινωνία is a Pauline idea (1996: 318). According to Dunn, Paul sold the idea in his communities that they must share the elements of Christianity as well as the lives of one another and be communal in nature (1996: 318 – 319).

Fitzmyer suggests that this verse is probably the most difficult verse in the letter (2000: 97). However, he has taken the matter further. Fitzmyer offers four possibilities for the meaning of κοινωνία in this verse (2000: 97). In the first instance he posits κοινωνία to mean association; communion; a close association of two or more people in a common interest, cause or bonding (2000: 97). If this position is to be accepted, then it would mean Paul is

saying that the association or communion of the faith which he shares with the other members of the assembly may be effective when he considers what is to be asked of him.

In the second instance he suggests *κοινωνία* could mean participation; sharing; in a sense that Philemon's sharing of the faith might come to be effective (2000: 97). For the sharing of this faith to be more effective, then Philemon must consider the request of the letter in that view. Thirdly, Fitzmyer suggests *κοινωνία* could mean a common donation or contribution (2000: 97). Again, the effectiveness of Philemon's sharing of the faith cannot occur if he does not donate or act generously in matters such as the one that is about to be put before him. In the last instance, Fitzmyer posits *κοινωνία* could mean communication – the communication of Philemon's faith to others (2000: 97). How he presents or portrays this faith could be evident in his decision regarding the matter at hand.

This verse is another layer of the rhetoric, the building up of the persuasion. Paul is clearly playing around with words, but cautiously so. He presents that indeed Philemon has a great faith and it has been attested to by others, but then throws in the idea of *κοινωνία* to lead Philemon to a number of thoughts. The fact that there are multiple understandings of the word *κοινωνία* shows that Paul knew that Philemon would wonder which of the number of meanings of *κοινωνία* Paul actually meant. The art of persuasion continues; the bird gets closer to the trap.

χαρὰν γὰρ πολλὴν ἔσχον καὶ παράκλησιν ἐπὶ τῇ ἀγάπῃ σου, ὅτι τὰ σπλάγχνα τῶν ἁγίων ἀναπέπνυται διὰ σοῦ, ἀδελφέ.

I have indeed received much joy and encouragement from your love, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you, my brother.

Paul continues to appeal to Philemon, profiteering from his good character (Bruce, 1984: 208). Paul also brings into the equation the good word of Philemon he might have heard from Onesimus or Epaphras to present Philemon in a good light, thereby indicating in his rhetoric that Philemon already has a reputation of refreshing the hearts of the saints and this act would just add to the list of his credentials. Yet another layer of persuasion, more convincing; the bird gets even closer to the snare.

Paul's plea for Onesimus (8 – 14)

Διὸ πολλήν ἐν Χριστῷ παρρησίαν ἔχων ἐπιτάσσειν σοι τὸ ἀνήκον διὰ τὴν ἀγάπην μᾶλλον παρακαλῶ, τοιοῦτος ὢν ὡς Παῦλος πρεσβύτες νυνὶ δὲ καὶ δέσμιος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ·

For this reason, though I am bold enough in Christ to command you to do your duty, yet I would rather appeal to you on the basis of love — and I, Paul, do this as an old man, and now also as a prisoner of Christ Jesus.

Paul continues to advance his appeal, in this instance bringing in (i) his boldness to instruct, though he will not and (ii) the connotation of wisdom that comes with age. Dunn observes that Paul's rhetoric skill is displayed here, when he avoids stronger arguments at his disposal, but opts to leaving Philemon to decide for himself (1996: 323; Kreitzer, 2008: 22). Garland on the other hand argues that in this instance Paul is pulling rank, proposing that his position gives him authority to direct Philemon, but because of love he shall make an appeal (1998: 326). When a person is in a higher position they are always caught in between utilising their higher position or not. They have the authority to pull rank, but it is a moral decision not to. There is always a choice, one does not pull rank because it is part of the system to do so; it is a conscious decision one takes. When I was in the military I had a rank and it was my personal decision never to use it to assert authority. This does not mean I was a bad leader, but rather it is my moral formation that led me to lead this way. Paul proves that it is possible to be in control, but not abusive.

Bruce argues that orders can be easily resented from wherever they may come. However, when an appeal is made by a friend it is always hard to resist, especially when such an appeal is made for the sake of love (1984: 211). Dunn agrees with this position, observing that Paul is portraying an attitude of a good leader when he leaves an issue open even though he knows he is right, so that the people in the community can also partake in the decision making (1996: 323). That is an example of excellent rhetoric, leaving open an issue when you know where you want it to go, in fact you are already steering it towards the direction of your choice, but making it as if the other person is the one taking it there. It is the art of persuasion. It is similar to my analogy of catching a bird. We have already set the food, water and roof for the bird to find, but the art of the trap is that the bird thinks it has found the food and water on its own and relaxes for it cannot see what is coming next. I can imagine that Philemon would not be able to apprehend what was coming next. The mentioning of Paul as

an old man shows that Paul may have been adding the wisdom of age in his argument (Dunn, 1996: 327; Kreitzer, 2008: 22). It is a fact that throughout the course of history people have respected the opinion of older people, wisdom comes with age, and Paul is making use of this aspect.

παρακαλῶ σε περὶ τοῦ ἐμοῦ τέκνου, ὃν ἐγέννησα ἐν τοῖς δεσμοῖς, Ὀνήσιμον,

I am appealing to you for my child, Onesimus, whose father I have become during my imprisonment.

The bird has stuck its head into the bowl of food; he is enjoying the food, unwitting of the snare above its head. Paul now gets on to the matter at hand, the plea for the life of Onesimus, his son, a child begotten to him in prison (Kreitzer, 2008: 23). It is worth pondering why Paul uses such language to describe his relationship with Onesimus, although it is not unusual in Paul's letters, he uses it to describe his relationships with his coverts (Kreitzer, 2008: 23). Dunn posits quite adequately that Paul calls Onesimus his son because such language was typical to describe relations between a pupil and a teacher; one depending on a priest or mystagogue (1996: 328). Onesimus had proven indeed useful to Philemon in the ministry of the gospel, but moreover he had learned from Paul the tenets of Christianity and perhaps, even though it is not indicated in the text, Onesimus may have been an outstanding student. Just like a lecturer or teacher may take a special interest in the progress of their brightest students in the modern age, it could have also been the case with Paul and Onesimus. Frilingos suggests that Paul uses his excellent rhetoric to reorganize the family structure in the narrative (2000: 100). According to Frilingos, Paul in this verse asserts himself as Onesimus' father and then assumes the role of fatherhood (2000: 101). Moreover, Paul is now saying his father-child relationship with Onesimus supersedes the master-slave relationship between Philemon and Onesimus and places Onesimus as Paul's child (Frilingos, 2000: 101 – 102).

τόν ποτέ σοι ἄχρηστον νυνὶ δὲ [καὶ] σοὶ καὶ ἐμοὶ εὐχρηστον,

Formerly he was useless to you, but now he is indeed useful both to you and to me.

The name Onesimus was common for slaves and literally means useful or profitable, thereby indicating that the master wishes their slave would be useful or profitable (Bruce, 1984: 213; Dunn, 1996: 328). There is no indication as to whether the name Onesimus was given to him

by his own parents or by Philemon, hoping that he would be an effective, useful and profitable slave. However, the name is worth pondering upon a little. Paul knows the meaning of the name is useful and probably knows who gave him the name and as a master of rhetoric, he uses the name to his advantage, proposing that he indeed is useful without a doubt. He insinuates in this verse that if Philemon may have ever deemed Onesimus useless in the past, whether because of his fleeing or anything else, he is to cast away all the bad impressions he has of Onesimus and now see him as useful. Paul acknowledges that Onesimus may have rendered himself useless, but hurries to implore Philemon to see him in the opposite light.

Marchall proposes that this verse has sexual connotations (2011: 760). According to Marchall, the term that Onesimus is now εὐχρηστον suggests that Onesimus is now “good for use; well used; easy to use; beneficial; profitable; enjoyable” (2011: 760). Marchall suggests that the term χρησις is used sexually in the Greek and means intercourse (2011: 761). What Marchall is positing is that Onesimus may have had sexual relations with Paul whilst in Rome or Ephesus since having sexual relations with slaves was acceptable and normal (2011: 761).

An observation is made that the words χριστός which means useful, and χριστόν, which means in Christ, have the same pronunciation and Paul could have been saying Onesimus was now in Christ or Christ like (Dunn, 1996: 329; Garland, 1998: 327). However, the written word in question is εὐχρηστον and there is no reason to suggest that the word would be pronounced and not read. The inclusion of the assembly in the salutation implies that the letter would be read to the assembly in Philemon’s house, however, the written form says useful and does not say Christlike. Thus I contend that there could be no double meaning of the word in this instance. Moreover, it can be noted that the inclusion of the congregation in the greeting could have been by reference. It could mean that Philemon should extend the greeting from Paul to the church, just in the same manner as Paul extends the greetings of his fellow workers and prison mates without them actually taking part in either the construction or writing of the letter.

ὄν ἀνέπεμμά σοι, αὐτόν, τοῦτ’ ἔστιν τὰ ἐμὰ σπλάγχνα·

I am sending him, that is, my own heart, back to you.

Paul is portraying himself as someone losing a loved one, implying, perhaps that Philemon should note with seriousness the loss that Paul is facing. Such implication also says that Philemon is gaining a worthy brother, but also he is gaining him at Paul's expense, Paul loses in order that Philemon may gain. The rhetoric here is that Philemon should feel some sense of debt to Paul, for Paul is sacrificing his begotten son so that Philemon may have him. The art of persuasion requires that the encoder must make the argument so convincingly that the decoder will see no other option but to yield to the request of the encoder, and Paul does this very well. Marchall posits that this verse further strengthens the argument that Paul and Onesimus may have had sexual relations because *σπλάγχνα* was typical in erotic dimensions of slavery; it may mean a warm body that the master enjoys (2011: 763). Thus Paul may be sending Onesimus back to Philemon, however having enjoyed fruitful sexual relations with him (2011: 763).

ὄν ἐγὼ ἐβουλόμην πρὸς ἑμαυτὸν κατέχειν, ἵνα ὑπὲρ σοῦ μοι διακονῆ ἐν τοῖς δεσμοῖς τοῦ εὐαγγελίου, χωρὶς δὲ τῆς σῆς γνώμης οὐδὲν ἠθέλησα ποιῆσαι, ἵνα μὴ ὡς κατὰ ἀνάγκην τὸ ἀγαθόν σου ᾖ ἄλλὰ κατὰ ἐκούσιον.

I wanted to keep him with me, so that he might be of service to me in your place during my imprisonment for the gospel; but I preferred to do nothing without your consent, in order that your good deed might be voluntary and not something forced.

Returning to my analogy, in order to be able to catch the bird, you have to make sure that the food you have placed in the snare is enjoyable and to the liking of the bird. If it is not, the bird will simply turn away after one bite. Paul has to ensure that his rhetoric stays intact; he has to keep Philemon eating out of the palm of his hand, so to speak. The art of seduction depends on how much the enticer is willing to lure the enticed to their corner until they want nothing else. Paul is seducing Philemon to his corner, luring him to what he is about to ask next. He has already put the subject on the table, but not what he is about to ask. In these two verses he ensures that Philemon is still seduced.

This is the only place in the letter where *εὐαγγελίου* appears and seems to be used to suggest that Onesimus could be given to serve the gospel on Philemon's behalf (Kreitzer, 2008: 25). Garland observes that Paul seems to have debated the issue internally before deciding whether to let go of Onesimus or not (1998: 331). The language Paul uses in this verse indicates reluctance on his part to send Onesimus back, but also that it was his reluctance and

not that of Onesimus (Dunn, 1996: 330). The encoder does not say if Onesimus himself wanted to go back to Philemon or not, Kreitzer opines that it seems that Paul's desire to keep Onesimus seems to be at odds with Onesimus' wish to go back to Philemon (Kreitzer, 2008: 25). In the end he decided to send Onesimus back in a sense of duty towards Philemon, allowing Philemon's interests to supersede his and perhaps indicating that Philemon might do well to allow Onesimus' interests to supersede his own (Garland, 1998: 331).

Manumission (15 – 16)

These two verses are crucial for the argument of this paper, considering what it is that Paul may have wanted Philemon to do with Onesimus. It is in these verses that I make my argument that when Paul called on Philemon to accept Onesimus as his brother, it was not in just a spiritual sense, but in a general sense and including, but not limited to an economic sense. This, however, has not been a focus of scholarly literature. In my analogy I would say the bird has eaten the last crumb in the bowl and has now turned its cheeks towards the bowl of water. As the bird enjoys the soothing feel of the water running down its throat, we pull the string; the stick falls and the roof engulfs the bird. The bird is caught in the snare and has no way out, the goal has been achieved. The rhetoric at hand is now at its punch line; Paul now drops the bombshell on Philemon and makes his appeal in much more detail.

Τάχα γὰρ διὰ τοῦτο ἐχωρίσθη πρὸς ὥραν, ἵνα αἰώνιον αὐτὸν ἀπέχῃς,

Perhaps this is the reason he was separated from you for a while, so that you might have him back forever,

Paul now grapples with the issue at hand, the escape of Onesimus from his master, but he does so very cautiously, soothingly and introduces divine language to persuade Philemon (Dunn, 1996: 333; Garland, 1998: 333; Kreitzer, 2008: 26). Paul advances his argument once again employing his rhetoric skill to convince Philemon. Pulling in divine language is tactful for he knows Philemon to be a spiritual person. The art of persuasion is also to use what is at your disposal to convince the decoder and Paul uses the language of divinity that is common for him and Philemon. The premise is that the separation between Philemon and Onesimus was only temporary and now its ending means a permanent relationship between them, but not in the way it was before.

οὐκέτι ὡς δοῦλον ἀλλ' ὑπὲρ δοῦλον, ἀδελφὸν ἀγαπητόν, μάλιστα ἐμοί, πόσω δὲ μᾶλλον σοὶ καὶ ἐν σαρκὶ καὶ ἐν κυρίῳ.

no longer as a slave but more than a slave, a beloved brother — especially to me but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord.

Much of the scholarly consensus on the theological meaning of the letter is taken from this verse. It is on this verse that the argument for the abolition of slavery has been advanced. It is also on this verse where some have argued for equality as well as manumission. Kreitzer argues that this verse is emphatic in the theological meaning of the letter, and further notes that it is here that Paul asks Philemon to put into practice the Christian message of reconciliation (Kreitzer, 2008: 26).

Dunn and Kreitzer agree that this verse could spell out what Paul was asking of Philemon which is either to free Onesimus of slavery or for both Philemon and Onesimus to enter into a new relationship of master and slave as Christian brothers (Dunn, 1996: 334; Kreitzer, 2008: 26). I contend that the latter position is not to be held. There has to be more to the relationship than the simple request of continuing the slave-master relationship with renewed hearts. I cannot see this as an adequate reason for Paul to devote so much time and rhetoric just to suggest the master and slave should live happily ever after. I am in agreement with the scholars who argue that this was a call for the abolition of slavery. However, along with Dunn (1996: 335), I observe that exiting the slave-master relationship would spell entrance into a patron-client relationship, for as Dunn notes even if Philemon freed Onesimus, the latter would still depend on the former for financial support as they would now move into a patron-client relationship (1996: 335).

Williams suggests that it was an identity of the members of Paul's Christian communities to call each other brother or sister, however the real question in this verse is how a master and his slave would call each other while remaining a master and a slave (2012: 25). Callahan suggests that Paul meant a brother in the real sense (2009: 330), as I shall observe in the next chapter. Williams goes on to ask how baptism in the Christian faith ancient and modern change relationships (2012: 25). The impact of the message of the gospel on ordinary people in their socio-cultural situations is worth serious observation. How does the message and in fact the Christian faith affect the believer's view of the world? The traditional interpretation of the letter that says Philemon and Onesimus were to continue with their slavery relationship

as brothers seems to suggest that even when one has been converted to the Christian faith life should go on as usual. I contend that to be not the case. I am of the position that Paul wanted a change here; there had to be a movement from slavery to brotherhood upon receipt and acceptance of the letter.

Dunn observes another possibility in the relationship, noting that the new relationship would be three way, it would include Paul, Philemon and Onesimus and the treatment of one another would determine the relationship as a whole (Dunn, 1996: 336). In other words, how Philemon treats Onesimus will have a direct impact on his relationship with Paul. The idea of this interdependence of relationships intrigues me. Dunn is proposing that Philemon and Paul cannot have a healthy relationship if Philemon and Onesimus do not have one. The relationship between Paul and Philemon is essentially that of free men, but if it is to remain solid, then Onesimus must be elevated to the status of freed man so that he may also partake in the three-way relationship.

Garland supposes that in these verses Paul called on Philemon and Onesimus to enter into a new relationship where Philemon would now have Onesimus forever, but as a brother and not a slave (1998: 333 – 334). This new relationship as denoted by *καὶ ἐν σαρκὶ καὶ ἐν κυρίῳ* (both in the flesh and in the Lord) will not be limited to the spiritual brotherhood only, but shall extend significantly to their social life of master-slave or patron-client (Dunn, 1996: 336). The social life of which Dunn speaks of has economic implications in them. Both the master-slave relationship and the patron-client relationship has economic dependency. The lesser in status depends on the higher for economic benefits – the difference being that in the patron-client relationship, the client (who is the lesser in power and benefits) has their freedom. Thus, what Dunn is proposing is that Paul wants the social life of the two to be impacted by the decision to manumit Onesimus. This makes room for the possibility, if not the reality, that Paul did not want Onesimus to remain a slave. Even a happy, more obliging slave might I add, but he wanted Philemon to do more for Onesimus. Kreitzer notes that the meaning of this statement is unclear. However, he does note that *καὶ ἐν σαρκὶ* carries anthropological connotations (2008: 27). Frilingos posits that in this verse Paul represents both Philemon and Onesimus as children and himself as the principal father of both (2000: 103). At the end of the rhetoric Paul stands as the pinnacle of the triangle: he is at the helm and Philemon and Onesimus are the connecting angles (Frilingos, 2000: 103). If the two are

at the angles connecting to the one at the helm, it suggests then that there is a level of equality being sought for them.

Both in the flesh and in the Lord

For Garland this statement simply means that Onesimus belongs to Philemon in the flesh legally, but in the Lord he is a brother (1998: 334). This view does not hold water, in fact I find it to be contradictory. By virtue of being Philemon's slave and forming part of his household, it is possible that Onesimus would have been a Christian because once the head of the household was converted, the rest of the household followed. Thus it could be that Philemon already saw Onesimus as a brother spiritually and for Paul to say it all the more when it is already happening does not make sense. Moreover, it is contradictory to say legally Onesimus must be held under subjugation, but spiritually be held equal. What then is the point of Paul's argument? Further emphasising what has already been happening?

I cannot align myself with such a position. As a postcolonial reader I make room for an entirely different possibility. Dunn does well to observe that what Paul requires of Philemon remains unsettled to this day, but perhaps, continues Dunn, "there may be hints and allusions in the language of which the modern commentator is completely ignorant" (1996: 334). I agree with Dunn on this point and I further contend that the text is in need of liberation. The text has for centuries been subjected to a pious brotherly-love reading. As a postcolonial biblical critic it is my aim to attempt to liberate the text from this overextended interpretation. There are other allusions and hints, as Dunn points out, that the modern commentator has to pay attention to. The current milieu of society does not need an over-spiritual reading of the Bible, but needs a contextual, relevant reading of the Bible. I contend that there are other things in this verse that need to be emphasised, things that speak to our context.

According to Fitzmyer, *καὶ ἐν σαρκὶ* denotes the sphere of life that is bound by the interests of the earth. It is limited in its capacities and it is affected by its appetites, its ambitions, and its proneness to sin (2000: 116). Fitzmyer continues to note as in its use in Philemon, the phrase *καὶ ἐν σαρκὶ* indicates Onesimus' basic human status other than his condition as a slave (2000: 116).

The continued plea (17 – 22)

εἰ οὖν με ἔχεις κοινωνόν, προσλαβοῦ αὐτὸν ὡς ἐμέ. εἰ δέ τι ἠδίκησέν σε ἢ ὀφείλει, τοῦτο ἐμοὶ ἐλλόγα.

So if you consider me your partner, welcome him as you would welcome me. If he has wronged you in any way, or owes you anything, charge that to my account.

Returning to my analogy of catching a bird, the trap we used to catch the birds was not perfect. As we pulled the string, a little noise sounded and upon hearing a bit of it, the bird would move from the spot quickly and by the time the cover falls, the bird could be out of the snare already. In this rhetoric Paul realises that Philemon might not be fully convinced yet, and so he advances the rhetoric. Paul strengthens his appeal by placing Onesimus in his shoes, intimating that Philemon should consider him a partner as he does Paul (Kreitzer, 2008: 27). He switches over to the commercial issue by mentioning partnership. The term κοινωνόν can mean a partnership which Paul and Philemon may have had (Kreitzer, 2008: 27). Receive (welcome) him as you would receive (welcome) me, says Paul. Paul knows full well that Philemon would never receive Paul as a slave and give him the accommodation of a slave. It is an honourable reception that Paul would get. Philemon would go out of his way to make sure that his spiritual leader is well taken of. Dunn notes that in Roman antiquity, welcoming a person into your home could be done with equals only and when Paul puts Onesimus in his own shoes he suggests that Philemon should welcome Onesimus as an equal (1996: 338). Paul knows that and he is taking full advantage of it to strengthen the rhetoric. He is not leaving anything to chance, it is maximum results that he wants, and he is not backing down.

Since Philemon had been defrauded by his slave there was compensation due and since there could have been a moral offence committed by Onesimus, Paul offers himself as guarantor of the debt (Dunn, 1996: 336 – 337; Garland, 1998: 336; Kreitzer, 2008: 27). As Dunn correctly asserts, in this instance Paul was not sure if Philemon would react as a defrauded master or a Christian brother (1996: 337) and he had to write with caution and eliminate all possible reasons that could enrage Philemon. It is unclear however, how Paul intends to settle this debt in prison, but from adding his signature to the letter, it is clear that he is assuming liability for the debt (Fitzmyer, 2000: 117).

Punishment for a runaway slave was severe in Roman antiquity (Garland, 1988: 327). They could be subjected to brutal flogging; branding; being sold to work on a farm, in galleys or mines; crucifixion; being thrown to wild beasts in an arena and even be compelled to wear an iron collar engraved with the name and address of the owner with a command “catch me for I have fled my master” (Garland, 1998: 327 – 328). Garland further observes that forgiveness was not part of Philemon’s world, but his Christian faith demanded him to be forgiving (1998: 328). Paul makes his request based on the previous actions of Philemon of love and kindness, hoping that such virtues will be once again ignited (Garland, 1998: 328). Paul wants to avoid the terrible punishment that a runaway slave could be subjected to, and he assumes all liability. In a way he is saying that if there is punishment due to Onesimus, he will take it all for him. Again, using the art of persuasion, for he knows that Philemon would not do that to “a man of God”.

ἐγὼ Παῦλος ἔγραψα τῇ ἐμῇ χειρὶ, ἐγὼ ἀποτίσω· ἵνα μὴ λέγω σοι ὅτι καὶ σεαυτὸν μοι προσοφείλεις.

I, Paul, am writing this with my own hand: I will repay it. I say nothing about your owing me even your own self.

It appears that at this time Paul now takes the pen from Timothy and adds his signature to the letter (Kreitzer, 2008: 28), attaching more weight to it. He is now pulling all the stops to save Onesimus, even putting his own signature and attaching his name to whatever debt Onesimus owes to Philemon (Dunn, 1996: 339). In my analogy Paul is pulling the string slowly and smoothly to ensure there is no noise and the cover will drop undetected by the bird. Dunn argues that Paul makes use of a double meaning of spiritual and legal partnership between himself and Philemon (1996: 140). He further suggests that the indebtedness in spirituality is that of Paul having brought Philemon to the conversion and the legal indebtedness could possibly be that Paul is a patron of Philemon (Dunn, 1996: 341).

ναὶ ἀδελφέ, ἐγὼ σου ὀναίμην ἐν κυρίῳ· ἀνάπαυσόν μου τὰ σπλάγχνα ἐν Χριστῷ. Πεποιθὼς τῇ ὑπακοῇ σου ἔγραψά σοι, εἰδὼς ὅτι καὶ ὑπὲρ ἃ λέγω ποιήσεις.

Yes, brother, let me have this benefit from you in the Lord! Refresh my heart in Christ. Confident of your obedience, I am writing to you, knowing that you will do even more than I say.

Paul underscores his close relationship with Philemon by addressing him as his brother for a third time (Kreitzer, 2008: 28), ensuring that Philemon remains in love with the rhetoric and his heart remains softened. He also adds intentionally that he is confident Philemon will do even more than that which he asks for. Another element of a good rhetoric is that the encoder must make the decoder feel good about themselves to the point that they will yield to what the encoder proposes. Paul does this well, singing Philemon a lot of praises, and making sure it sinks in that Philemon is a good person.

ἄμα δὲ καὶ ἐτοίμαζέ μοι ξενίαν· ἐλπίζω γὰρ ὅτι διὰ τῶν προσευχῶν ὑμῶν χαρισθήσομαι ὑμῖν.

One thing more — prepare a guest room for me, for I am hoping through your prayers to be restored to you.

Paul moves to enlarging his request to Philemon on the basis of their friendship (Kreitzer, 2008: 28). Here it seems Paul says that he will visit Philemon soon and when he does he expects the two be living together in harmony as brothers (Dunn, 1996: 345; Kreitzer, 2008: 29).

Final greetings (23 – 25)

Ἀσπάζεται σε Ἐπαφρᾶς ὁ συναιχμάλωτός μου ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ, Μάρκος, Ἀρίσταρχος, Δημᾶς, Λουκᾶς, οἱ συνεργοί μου. Ἡ χάρις τοῦ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ μετὰ τοῦ πνεύματος ὑμῶν.

Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, sends greetings to you, and so do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke, my fellow workers. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.

As usual of his letters, after concluding the business of the letter, Paul mentions the greetings of those with him (Dunn, 1996: 347; Kreitzer, 2008: 29). He mentions Epaphras who was influential in the formation of the Christian movement in Colossae as well as other fellow soldiers who testify to the letter. As in all his letters, Paul concludes with the blessing in his own formula (Dunn, 1996: 349; Kreitzer, 2008: 30).

CHAPTER 6

A postcolonial runaway slave hypothesis

Introduction

In the previous two chapters I have dealt with the distantiation part of my exegesis where I dealt with the text as a literary unit, and focusing on some historical aspects of the text. I now move to the appropriation part of the research. The present chapter begins the climax of the exegesis where I bring the text and its first century Mediterranean context in conversation with my context through a postcolonial lens. I will summarise the history of interpretation of the text and assert my postcolonial position on such interpretation. Lastly I will propose a postcolonial runaway slave hypothesis.

The runaway slave hypothesis

The runaway slave hypothesis has been the most held by scholars beginning with John Chrysostom in the third century, John Knox in the sixteenth century and E.J Goodspeed in the modern era (Dunn, 1996: 308 – 309). According to this hypothesis, Onesimus fled from the household of Philemon to Rome or Ephesus having stolen from Philemon. He then met Paul and became converted, however Paul sought to send him back to his master, bearing with him a letter that pleaded for his forgiveness (Marshall, 1993: 176 – 177; Dunn, 1996: 301 – 307; Barclay (J), 1997: 98; Garland, 1998: 295 – 296; Byron, 2008: 116 – 118; Kreitzer, 2008: 46 – 47).

However, there have been challenges to this runaway slave hypothesis. The first of these challenges is a suggestion that Onesimus fled to Paul in Rome as an asylum seeker (Bruce, 1977: 399 – 400). Bruce argued that since Roman law allowed that upon mistreatment of a slave by their master they could approach a friend of the master and seek asylum and ask that the friend mediate between the slave and his master, Onesimus went to Rome to seek Paul in this regard (1977: 400). This position suggests that at the time of leaving Colossae Onesimus already knew that there was a man called Paul, one with close links with his master Philemon and he went to Rome or Ephesus with the sole intent of meeting Paul, a point to which I shall later return. However, this position by Bruce was opposed. Brian Rapske led the opposition to this notion, questioning whether Paul's place of imprisonment could qualify as a place for seeking asylum (Rapske, 1991: 193 – 195). Rapske makes a valuable point: a prison cell can

hardly be a place at which one can seek asylum (1991: 195). However, this point does not totally discredit the argument posited by Bruce.

Sarah Winter also opposed the runaway slave hypothesis, arguing that Onesimus was a Colossian Christian sent to assist Paul in his ministry on their behalf (1984:1). Therefore, the appeal of Paul to Philemon to receive Onesimus as a brother was actually to free him as an emancipated slave so that he can serve Paul freely in the ministry (Winter, 1984: 1 – 2). This position is much less feasible. If this may have been the case, then it would mean Onesimus and Philemon parted ways in good terms, however the letter does not support that. It is clear that when Onesimus left Colossae it was not under pleasant terms, there is mention of a debt that Paul attaches himself to. Thus I contend that Winter's argument is not supported by the contents of the letter.

Allan Callahan is another to oppose the runaway slave hypothesis. He proposed that Onesimus was not a slave at all, or even a fugitive, but he was rather a blood brother to Philemon who had quarrelled with his brother Philemon and sought intervention from Paul (Callahan, 1993: 363 – 365). This is another argument that does not seem plausible on the basis of the contents of the letter. While I support the basis of Callahan's anti-colonial reading of the epistle, I cannot find the necessary support for his argument. The encoder of the letter refers to Onesimus as a slave and only refers to him as a brother when he requests Philemon to accept him as a brother. Paul says Philemon should accept Onesimus no longer as a slave, but a brother. This proves that Onesimus was a slave. It does not make sense that Paul would refer to a Roman citizen as a slave.

A post-colonial runaway slave hypothesis

I am more aligned to the runaway slave hypothesis, however with my own observations. I want to offer a postcolonial runaway slave hypothesis. Sugirtharajah points out that “postcolonial biblical criticism does not only look at the dynamics of colonial domination, but also at the capacity of the colonized to resist it, either openly or covertly” (Sugirtharajah, 2012: 14 – 15). I posit that Onesimus did run away from Philemon's household, however not with the intention of just being a fugitive as traditional interpreters would hold, but with the intent of manumission in mind.

As a postcolonial biblical critic I seek to discover and liberate the characters in the narrative that previous colonial interpretations would have downplayed. I submit that some of the

scholars that opposed the traditional runaway slave hypothesis, by suggesting that Onesimus was either a worshipper in Colossae sent to assist Paul in his ministry, downplay the capacity of Onesimus as a lower status person to escape from a slavery household. Moreover, the majority of scholars who are proponents of the runaway slave hypothesis emphasize the opinion that Onesimus was a slave that made a bad choice of stealing from his master and running away. To put Onesimus in that light is to advance the thinking of former colonizers that slaves had no mentality of their own and had to be thought for. The traditional runaway slave hypothesis already poses Onesimus as a bad person who can only think of stealing from his master who has been good to him.

I believe these scholars write from the perspective of the beneficiaries of both the colonial and postcolonial eras. Their view keeps Onesimus at a lower level, as someone who only thinks of things that will benefit him now; they still represent him as a slave, one who cannot think appropriately for himself. However, I hold that Onesimus used the colonial domination system of slavery to resist it. It was allowed that a slave could approach a friend of his master and seek mediation between himself and master (Dunn, 1996: 304). It was a system of mediation within the institution of slavery and Onesimus used it to his own advantage to seek liberation for himself. Onesimus needs to be liberated from the traditional runaway slave hypothesis, he has been misrepresented and needs to be called out into the fore as an intelligent person who was oppressed by a system of slavery and used the very same system to liberate himself from it. He may still have been a person of lower status outside Philemon's household, but he would have escaped being a slave in the household. Being manumitted would have only taken him to a patronage system, in which he would still be obligated to Philemon, but he would have had his freedom; he could be able to decide what he does, when he wants to.

Beneficiaries of the postcolonial era are no different in this regard. The traditional runaway slave hypothesis is still the most prevalent in the scholarly world. Those who are in the upper echelon of power and influence cannot see Onesimus as anything more than a runaway slave to the extent that scholars still debate what Paul wanted Philemon to do and still arrive at the conclusion that Paul wanted Philemon and Onesimus to continue the master-slave relationship with a renewed attitude. In the postcolonial era this is not acceptable! Slaves and lower class citizens cannot continue to be the subjects of hegemonic structures, they need to be recognized as people who can think for themselves and use the systems at hand to seek

liberation. The capitalist system in South Africa allows that workers may protest and negotiate for better working conditions. The workers at Marikana¹⁰ sought to use that system to liberate themselves from the gap in wages at the mine only to have their hopes destroyed by the structural hegemony. Nzimande posits that the postcolonial reader must observe the powerlessness of the weak at the hands of the mighty (2009: 249). Interpreters in the postcolony are still dominated by the beneficiaries of the colonial and postcolonial eras. Because of this, the traditional runaway slave hypothesis remains prevalent: Onesimus remains a bad runaway slave and Philemon remains with the power over Onesimus' life.

Callahan has made an important contribution to the study of Onesimus. He offers an anti-colonial reading of the letter (2009: 330). Callahan correctly asserts that the traditional interpretation of the letter has throughout been colonial where Onesimus has been read as nothing more than a slave, a bad runaway slave and this has been done by the beneficiaries of the colonial enterprise beginning with John Chrysostom to the present day (2009: 330 – 331). This position does not mean that all interpreters of the letter are colonial beneficiaries, but rather points out that such interpretation have been the dominating mode of interpretation through the history of the interpretation of Philemon. Callahan argues that Onesimus was not a slave, but a brother to Philemon who went to Paul to seek mediation to a dispute encountered between himself and his brother (2009: 333 – 334). This position stems from the argument that reading Onesimus as a slave is colonial (Callahan, 2009: 333). I agree with Callahan in that the traditional reading of Onesimus is colonial and there needs to be an anti-colonial reading.

However I do not agree with his brotherly mediation hypothesis. In fact I posit that in the present era we need a postcolonial reading of the letter and not an anti-colonial reading. An anti-colonial reading is reading against present colonialism which should have been done during the colonial era. Today the context is different, it is postcolonial; we have moved beyond colonialism and we need to read in the postcolony. Thus my postcolonial reading of Onesimus is reading against the previous suppression of his intelligence, worth, capacity to think and importance. Traditional interpreters do not consider these elements when observing Onesimus, but place them solely in the hands of Paul and Philemon. It is Paul who writes the letter with excellent rhetoric trying to convince Philemon, and it is Philemon who has to consider the letter cautiously and act accordingly. But what about the slave? Has the slave no

¹⁰ Mine workers at the Lonmin mine at Marikana protested for better wages on 12 August 2012. A confrontation with the Police ensued and 34 miners along with 3 policemen were killed.

capacity to liberate himself? What is the role of the slave in the text? How is the powerless slave entreated in the hands of the mighty master? A postcolonial reader must look for and emphasize the ignored worth of the colonized.

The recent interpretation of the slave Onesimus by Johnson *et al.* is relevant in this regard. These scholars have taken the conversation further; they ask critical questions about the position of Onesimus in the traditional interpretations of the letter of Philemon. They point out that in the letter Onesimus is spoken of, referenced and even discussed, but his presence is very subtle (2012: 1). Onesimus is quiet in the text, and they comment “after all Onesimus was only a slave, was he not? Slaves have no power, no agency, they are socially dead, they are not given a voice” (Johnson *et al.*, 2012: 1). Johnson *et al.* continue to note that Onesimus has remained silent in Paul’s letter to Philemon, even though he is present. Philemon and Paul are talking, contend these scholars, so Onesimus must just keep quiet (2012: 1). As a postcolonial reader I approach this text with a view different to that offered in the colonial era. I probe the importance of those that appear to be on the margins. Onesimus is on the margins, Paul and Philemon have taken the centre spot. They have occupied the centre and left Onesimus to wander in the margins. I read the letter of Philemon with a focus on those on the margins, bringing them to the fore and presenting their side of the story; giving them a voice in the interpretation process.

Bruce argues that it makes sense that it was in Paul’s house arrest that Onesimus met him and Paul could send him to mission tasks while he remained in chains at his house (1984: 196). Dunn suggests that Onesimus could have gone to Rome with the sole intention of meeting Paul and asking for intervention as it was common for a slave to seek out his master’s friend as a third party (1996: 304 – 305). This position is worth serious consideration by the postcolonial reader. It suggests that Onesimus planned the whole affair. I argue that he knew that his master had been converted into the Christian faith as the whole household was now taking part in worship at the house. He knew that the leader of the evangelistic movement was Paul and that he was in Rome (possibly from gossip or eavesdropping). He then stole from Philemon because he was not going to be able to reach Rome without any money and went to meet Paul. In my observation, Onesimus knew that the new faith proposed new things that had been unheard of in their time. He wanted to be manumitted and upon staying with Paul he proved himself a good worker with the intention that Paul would recommend him for manumission.

Onesimus is not just a slave. He is an intelligent person who uses the very system that oppresses him to liberate himself. He has worth; he is important. I mention these things to point out that Onesimus ran to Rome in an attempt to move away from the periphery to the centre. He had been in the margins for too long and he was determined to occupy the centre spot. Onesimus is not a lower class citizen; he is important in his own right and emphasizes that importance by moving into the centre. He defies the system of slavery that determined his future and reworked it, creating his own narrative, his own future. The Bible must offer such an opportunity to the oppressed and marginalized, not to retain them in the same position. If the Bible is to effect any level of relevance in the lives of people then it must offer them their sense of worth, it must emphasize that they move from the margins to the centre. Callahan points out that the letter was previously used to advance the system of slavery (2009: 332). That cannot continue to happen in the present day. Thus a postcolonial reading of Onesimus in the letter focuses on his importance and capacity to liberate himself as a first class citizen.

Conclusion

In the present chapter I sought to bring into discussion a postcolonial runaway slave hypothesis. I summarised the history of interpretation regarding the letter and observed how it has throughout been colonial. The chapter began the climax of the exegesis by introducing the appropriation phase of the African Contextual Hermeneutic. The letter of Philemon speaks to the broken relationship between Philemon and Onesimus and seeks to mend it, albeit with new conditions. It is the relationship of a master and his slave, born within a culture of slavery. I now turn to the issue of slavery that gave rise to the writing of the letter.

CHAPTER 7

How can reading slavery and patronage in the ancient Mediterranean assist the postcolonial reader in interpreting postcolonial patronage in South Africa?

Introduction

The appropriation phase of the African contextual hermeneutic calls for a meaningful discussion between the text and its context and the reader and his or her context. This phase seeks to make space for the text to speak to the context of the reader with the reader taking an active part in the process. In the present chapter I will observe the institution of slavery in the ancient Mediterranean world and argue that should Philemon grant Paul's request to manumit Onesimus they would enter into another unequal system of patronage. I will then observe how Philemon and Onesimus would then live within the system of patronage. Moreover, I will observe the economic scales in the Mediterranean and bring them into conversation with the economic classes in postcolonial South Africa and observe a postcolonial response to the current crisis.

Slavery in the Greco-Roman world

The institution of slavery occasioned the meeting and relationship of Philemon and Onesimus. Wiedemann observes that the basic definition of a slave may be a human being that does not belong to himself but to another as a piece of property to perform some duties (1984: 17 – 18). Kyrtatas observes that the Greek world saw slaves as no equals of human beings, for them, slaves were morally inferior and to be likened to animals; they were barbarians and by nature they were meant to serve the Greeks (2011: 93). Onesimus fell into that category. The system saw him as less than a human being – a commodity, a property to be sold, bought and put on the market. His worth was not measured by his capacity to think, his standing as a person, his stature, his wisdom, his character or his nobility, but it was measured by his usefulness, how much his hands could do, how much hard work he could endure in chains. His future was not determined by how much he was willing to study or how much he was willing to go in order to advance in life, it was already determined by the system. That system had already decided that he was to belong to another person, after all he was not a Greco-Roman citizen.

The identity of a slave

The identity of the slave through the lens of its proponents is a negative one. This is not the self-identity of the slave, but that of the colonizer. The system created the identity and ensured the slave may not have another identity or even think of creating one for themselves. Wiedemann notes that in Aristotle's thinking, slaves were deemed as property in a full sense of the word and their purchase was seen as household management (1984: 17). Buying a slave was not hiring a housekeeper or gardener, it was simply acquiring property. Roman law regarded slaves as human, but distinguished them as human property other than ordinary property (Joshel, 2010: 38). Thus, slaves were human in part because they could breathe, move and talk, but not human enough. They still needed someone to think for them, decide when and what they would eat, decide when and where they should go. In ancient times, notes Fitzmyer, slavery was part of the fabric of society, hence it was not seen as indecent or inhumane (2000: 25). Those in the upper echelons of power and those who were free-born and did not fall into this category saw nothing wrong with it. For the Greco-Roman world it was acceptable to view a person as a tool.

Wiedemann notes that a slave is a tool. Like tools are needed to perform certain tasks, the property slave was also a tool bought to perform tasks in the household (1984: 17). The slaves together with their wives and children were included as part of the family household of their master (Fitzmyer, 2000: 25). Slaves were dressed in a tunic and simple shoes and could easily be identified as slaves from what they were wearing (Joshel, 2010: 132). The slaves usually slept in one room and shared a bed with as many as three other people (Joshel, 2010: 137 – 138). A slave was worse than a person living on the margins of society: he/she was just a thing.

Joshel observes that when one became a slave either from selling himself or being captured or born a slave, they were regarded as having experienced a social death (Joshel, 2010: 39). A social death is one of the most dreadful things a person can ever endure, to be part in a society, but not be part of it, to serve a society and be not recognized by it. Social death for the slave meant that they kept on living, but ceased to exist. They could no longer be counted amongst the humans. As noted in chapter one, one of the major devastating effects of colonialism was to kill the identity, culture and self-worth of the colonial subjects. The slaves in the Mediterranean, of which Onesimus is part, lost that identity when they became slaves. They lost their culture and could no longer be the kind of people they wanted to be. They lost

their sense of self-worth because the system decided that they are worthless. The hegemonic system squeezed, fractured and destroyed the slaves' identity, as it did in the colonial era and continues to do in the postcolony. I would go as far as saying social death is by far the worst death – to be living, but not really living. There cannot be anything more humiliating than that.

Joshel further notes that the system was so cruel that it would even tear a family apart just to keep the institution going (2010: 150). He notes that family life was often disrupted when the slave owner would sell some slaves to separate wife from husband, mother from child (2010: 150 – 151). The powerless are nothing in the hands of the mighty. The mighty decide what to do with the powerless as well as when and how to do it. An orphaned child of a slave means nothing to a master who lives comfortably with his family inside the house. In the same manner, the poor family that lives in a shack in the informal settlements of the Alexandra¹¹ Township in Johannesburg means nothing to the man passing by to get to his home in Sandton¹² in his expensive car. Even in the postcolony, the marginalized continue to be oppressed by the system that feeds only a few in the upper echelons of society.

There were various ways in which one could become a slave. A slave could sell himself to a master if he had too much debt and wanted to settle it. One could also be a slave by being captured by pirates and sold or rented out to masters. Another way was if a slave was born to slave parents. Slaves could also be placed on the market for sale (Fitzmyer, 2000: 26; Joshel, 2010: 79 – 80). It is not clear however how Onesimus came to be a slave. As noted in chapter four above, he could have come from the neighbouring Phrygia, however that was just a speculation. Onesimus could have been born to slave parents or captured by pirates.

Slaves in the Greco-Roman world were denied any legal rights, they belonged to the absolute ownership and control of another (Wiedemann, 1981: 15). Kyratas observes that the Greeks deemed the slaves as normal property and as such could not have property of their own. Their labour power as well as its produce belonged to their master (2011: 106). Their worth was valued according to what they could do with their hands. However, such fruits could only be enjoyed by their masters and not the slaves themselves. They laboured and toiled for others to reap, for they were just tools, machinery producing profits for its owner. Moreover, because a

¹¹ Alexandra is a township in Johannesburg next to the N1 Highway. Its informal settlement is one of the most impoverished in South Africa.

¹² Sandton is one of the most expensive suburbs in South Africa and it is situated on the other side of the N1 Highway .

slave was just property and had no rights, male slaves had no legal connection to their offspring and were thus cut off from the culture of fatherhood (Glancy, 2002: 9). Another element of a social death is a denial of the right to fatherhood. Having a child for a slave was just producing another piece of property for the master to enjoy the benefits.

Duties of a slave

There were different types of duties for slaves. Slaves were often educated and could be responsible for household duties such as foremen, household managers and estates administrators. However, most were retained for menial tasks (Fitzmyer, 2000: 26). The narrative does not give any information as to what kind of a slave Onesimus was. It is not clear if he was an urban or field slave or even educated or in charge of menial or important tasks. I want to opine however that even if a slave was given a duty as important as being an estate administrator it does not mean that he was important to his master as a valuable employee nor does it change his status as property to be valued and sold on the market. Onesimus, if he was in charge of some important duties, was still a slave and remained property hence his decision to flee from his master.

Other duties of a slave included sexual performance, a master could indulge himself with either his male or female slave and the slave would have to just oblige (Joshel, 2010: 151). Glancy notes that masters had unrestricted sexual access to their slaves (2002: 9). What is even more disturbing is that the masters cared very little what the sexual orientations of their slaves were or even if the slave was romantically involved with someone else. If a male master wanted to have sex with a male slave it did not matter if the male slave was comfortable with that or not and if a female matron wanted to have sex with a male slave it did not matter if the slave was comfortable with it or not. It was just about the sexual satisfaction of the master or matron, regardless of the impact it would have on the slave's personal relationships. Being the property of their masters even in a sexual sense, one would argue that they were treated as sexual instruments: as vibrators.

Slaves' bodies were available for the pleasure of their masters (Glancy, 2002: 21). Male slaveholders could help themselves with either male or female slaves as they existed for satisfaction of the master. If the slave had children from her master it would be an increase of property stock for the slaveholder (Glancy, 2002: 21). Matrons could also help themselves with male slaves, however if they fell pregnant from the slave such would be deemed a disruption in the family. She would probably be divorced and the child deemed illegitimate

(Glancy, 2002: 21). The offspring of a slave is not worthy to be counted as a child of a Roman citizen, but just another piece of property on the asset list of the master. To be used for sex and your offspring disregarded in that manner must be one of the most disgraceful things one could ever endure. Denial of sexual freedom and denial of family ties just to keep the institution of slavery going was the work of the colonial masters.

Good and bad slaves

Slaves were categorised as good and bad slaves. There were qualities that would qualify one a good or bad slave. As in any form of system one would want to be in the category of the good and not the bad. However, in the ancient Mediterranean system of slavery, being a good slave was much more than doing your duties well and on time. A good slave is one who is loyal; obedient; vigilant; looking after his owner's interests and never sleeping on the job (Joshel, 2010: 115 – 116). Enduring a whipping or racking or even burning without complaint was deemed the attitude of a good slave (Joshel, 2010: 117). Thus a slave had to endure a social death; be denied the right of sexual orientation; be denied their family ties and top of that to be regarded as a good slave he had to endure one of the worst kinds of pain. To be humiliated by being absolutely loyal to your master was not enough, so much that the slave had to endure the disgrace of master inflicted pain without complain.

There were also those who were deemed to be bad slaves. I would imagine that even their price tag would reflect a lower price because they are bad slaves. Joshel notes that bad slaves in the eyes of their owners are those who are disobedient, greedy and oversexed. They love food and too much alcohol, are reckless, quarrelsome, lazy, idle and they waste time and fail to do the job (2010: 117). Being lazy was not a right in the Mediterranean institution of slavery; it was the sign of a bad slave. If the slave did not jump to perform his duties diligently he was simply a bad slave. To be a slave was disgraceful enough, but to be considered a bad slave must have been even more disgraceful.

There were all sorts of ways of punishing a slave gone astray. As Joshel notes, slave owners had absolute control over the bodies of their slaves and could inflict whatever punishment they deemed appropriate (2010: 118). Troublesome slaves were marked with brands or tattoos on their faces to indicate that they were troublesome and the crime they had committed (Joshel, 2010: 119). The slaves' legal status of property allowed for the master to do whatever they wanted to do with their bodies. Even if the master suddenly had new ideas

of punishment by just looking at a slave with anger, he was allowed to inflict such punishment. It was his slave, thus he could do whatever he wanted with it.

Fleeing slavery

Slave owners feared the running away of slaves and legislation was put in place to regulate it such as issuing a warrant against a runaway slave (Fitzmyer, 2000: 26). Runaway slaves could seek asylum in shrines or sanctuaries or go to a bigger city and disappear into beggars or robbers or they could flee to a foreign land where they know to be a shortage of labourers (Fitzmyer, 2000: 28). This would mean loss of property and loss of investment for the master. It would also mean a reduction in production machinery. It could also be a nightmare for the master if half of their slaves decided to flee, it couldn't be imagined that Roman citizens could do things for themselves (Fitzmyer, 2000: 28). Thus, there had to be strict measures put in place to avoid the fleeing of slaves, potential punishment had to be severe in order to discourage slaves from running away. However, the law still allowed that they could seek asylum at certain places such as shrines, it was the danger of getting caught that the slaves had to be cautious of because that meant very harsh punishment for them.

According to Fitzmyer, harbouring a runaway slave was in itself a crime because it meant stealing property of another person (2000: 28). Joshel notes that a runaway slave was himself guilty of stealing his owner's property by trying to gain independence (2010: 118). Thus the law of slavery in the ancient Mediterranean made it virtually impossible for a slave to even think of running away. There was enough legislation against running away to discourage a slave to do it. The system was so demeaning that it told someone that attempting to gain independence was stealing yourself from your master. Such behaviour as stealing yourself from your master was unacceptable and severely punishable by law in the Mediterranean. Upon discovery of a runaway slave, a person was under obligation to report that to the nearest municipal magistrate and the local authorities could return them to their master and be recommitted to servitude (Fitzmyer, 2000: 28). However, there was severe punishment permitted by law that was in store for runaway slaves (Fitzmyer, 2000: 28). Any punishment the master saw fit could be inflicted on the runaway slave to discourage him, if not prevent him from ever doing it again.

When a runaway slave had been caught a metal collar would be put around their necks, identifying them as fugitives (Joshel, 2010: 119). A runaway slave could be sold to another master who could be even harsher. He or she could be scourged, branded, mutilated, fitted

with a metal collar, crucified, thrown to the beast or even killed (Fitzmyer, 2000: 28; Joshel, 2010: 121). The slave owner could even hire torturers to come and torture their slaves as punishment (Joshel, 2010: 121). This is the possible punishment that Onesimus faced when returning to Colossae. The letter in his hand sought to ensure immunity from such punishment. However, it was not guaranteed that the letter would achieve such a purpose. Onesimus ran the risk of having a metal collar on his neck by going back. he was in a cruel and pervasive system that saw him as nothing else but property.

Onesimus' escape

The text as we have it does not indicate the reason as to why Onesimus sought to escape from the household of Philemon, or even why he wanted manumission as I have alluded to in chapter four above. However, the evidence is sufficient that slavery was a wretched and horrid system in which no one would comfortably live in. Onesimus lived through this experience, he experienced a social death. It is not clear whether he experienced the social death through capture by pirates or if he experienced it when he was born, which would even be more humiliating.

Assuming that he was born into the social death of slavery it would mean that when he was born, he died. It would mean that he lived his childhood and youth in death. All that was around him were the signs of the death he was experiencing. The small room he shared with other slaves told him everything. The separation from the other members of the household indicated to him that he was less than human. The duties he woke up to, the branding of others before him reminded him that he was dead. All around Onesimus was the sign of social death and he could no longer bear it. It was too much for him; he could not take any more of it and sought to be reborn socially. Whether he left as a bad runaway slave or with the intention of seeking Paul for manumission as I have argued, it is clear that he left to escape the horrid experience of slavery. Onesimus lived in the environment of slavery that I have just described and a minute longer of it would be too much pain. Thus, he took the brave step, the risky step of attempting freedom: he ran from his master. A runaway slave; a fugitive; a thief who has stolen himself from his master, he went on to run away from a system that had already decided his past, present and future, he attempted to loosen himself from the bonds and off he went.

With its risks, running away was one of the best decisions Onesimus had ever taken, he sought to decide for himself what and when he would eat; when and how he would sleep and

with whom he could have sexual relations with. Thus I posit that he went to Rome to seek Paul about whom he had heard as the leader of the evangelistic movement. He may have heard that Paul was under house arrest or not, but he went there to seek Paul and convince him to persuade Philemon to manumit him. Paul then wrote a letter to Philemon that Onesimus was to take with to Colossae and present it as his motivation letter for manumission. If Philemon considered the request seriously, then he would have made use of the system of manumission within the ancient Mediterranean world, to which I now turn.

Manumission

Manumission is the act of freeing a slave, it was a transaction between the manumitor (the slaveholder) and the slave, and it could be done at the will of the slaveholder or at the request of the slave (Zelnick-Abramovitz, 2005: 130). This does not mean that upon request a slave would be manumitted, it depended on the goodwill of the master. Thus, the two possibilities existed, but were unlikely to lead to manumission. Manumission not only meant freedom for the slave, it also meant reduction in property and loss of investment, thus a master would not necessarily manumit a slave easily. If a slave was faithful in their duties they could be rewarded with manumission (Fitzmyer, 2000: 26). Again being a good slave, though it may qualify one to be manumitted, would not necessarily guarantee manumission because the onus was still on the master. Thus one could work hard for a long time with the hope of being recognized and awarded with manumission, but that was only a possibility. After all, why would you want to let go of your best slave when you can still get so much more from him? It could be that since his childhood Onesimus had worked hard as a slave with the hope of being manumitted, but in his youth he was still not manumitted and sought alternative ways of achieving that.

Manumission was done in different ways: *manumissio vindicta* which was done before the magistrate in a legal proceeding; *manumissio censu* was when the censor included a slave in the Roman citizen roll; *manumissio testamento* which was when a master would include in their last will and testament; *manumissio per epistulam* which was when a master wrote a friend a letter saying that his slave has been liberated; *manumissio inter amicos* which was a ceremony conducted by a master in the company of his friends as witnesses to the liberation of the slave (Harrill, 1995: 54).

Thus Philemon had three types of possibilities for manumitting Onesimus. He could make use of *manumissio vindicta*. Upon conviction of the argument presented by Paul to him he

could take Onesimus to the magistrate and declare his intention so that the magistrate could legalise the manumission, which seems to be more honourable of the three possibilities to his disposal. He could also use the *manumissio per epistulam* which is less honourable and written to a friend of his, perhaps Paul. In the alternative he could have used the *manumissio inter amicos* which is more honourable in that by having his friends over, Philemon would have to invite Onesimus to the table of non-slaves and for the first time he would enjoy a meal with people he has had to serve in the past. The ceremony would have been enjoyed by Philemon with the other guests no longer in an unequal state, but now in an equal state where Onesimus relates to the friends of his patron as a freed person with other freemen. However, Flexenhar notes that the last two types would not result into full citizenship (2013: 8). Thus, taking Onesimus to the magistrate using the *manumissio vindicta* would be best for Onesimus.

Flexenhar notes that a manumitted slave had several legal rights in the Mediterranean (2013: 9). He could buy and sell property; he could get married with a Roman citizen and their offspring would be born free (Flexenhar, 2013: 9). Thus, Onesimus had a chance to be reborn to a normal citizenship like a normal person. It is the prospect of such a life, I argue, that led him to risk his life by fleeing from Philemon's household to seek liberation. It may be that Philemon had been kind to Onesimus. He may have taken good care of Onesimus and regarded him a good slave. As master and slave they may have had a good relationship altogether. However I contend that it was not enough for Onesimus and it cannot be enough for anyone living under such conditions. McKeown has noted that there are various complexities concerning slavery (2007: 17). He has noted that the body of literature illustrates that besides negative sides to the master-slave relationship there were also some positive emotional aspects of the relationship that could have enhanced love between a master and his slave (2007: 18 – 19). Such emotional aspects should not be seen as positive and such a position should be rejected outright. The emotional aspects of slavery were imposed on the slaves and if he had his freedom he otherwise was likely not to seek such aspects. Thus to suggest that any slave could have appreciated such emotions is to underscore the negative effects of slavery on the slaves and to suggest that slaves may have enjoyed the system. Onesimus fled in order that he may not have to relate to his master emotionally in a slavery entrapment. If there were to be emotional relations with him and his master they were to occur outside the institution of slavery.

However, such a freedman would still be related to the master as a client to his patron (Harrill, 1995: 53; Fitzmyer, 2000: 26). Being manumitted was seen as a social rebirth, being

relieved from the status of human property to that of a freedman (Joshel, 2010: 42). A critical point in the life of a slave was undergoing this social rebirth. Escaping the social bonds of slavery; the status of belonging to another person; the status of a sexual instrument was the dream of every slave I would imagine. Manumission meant being alive for the very first time. Onesimus sought to experience that rebirth, he wanted to feel alive. He wanted to be his own man and make his own decisions and he risked his life to achieve that.

Being manumitted had its limitations socially and economically, it meant that the former slave was now a client of his former master, in fact manumission was seen as an act of kindness to increase the slave's social standing, but keeping him in the slave mentality (Bradley, 1984: 81; Joshel, 2010: 44). When a slave had been manumitted they still had to perform some duties to their patron which would have been negotiated before manumission, such duties were referred to as the *operae* (Bradley, 1984: 81). The master and his manumitted slave, now a freed man, entered into a new relationship of patronage, to which I now turn.

The system of Patronage in the Greco-Roman world

If Paul's request was that Philemon grant Onesimus manumission, as I have argued, , then their economic relationship changed from that master and slave to that of patron and client. Patron-client systems are relations in society based on generalized reciprocity between social un-equals in which a lower status person in need, called a client, has his needs met by having resource for favours to a higher-status, well situated person called a patron (Malina & Pilch, 2008: 227). Philemon would now be a patron to Onesimus and Onesimus his client. The patronage system would work to benefit both Philemon and Onesimus. Since Onesimus had been a slave, he probably did not have enough money to look after himself, and since he could not acquire property he probably did not have a place to stay. The system allowed for Philemon to take care of Onesimus by granting him favours as his patron and in reciprocation receive some services from Onesimus. The two would continue to live together side by side, however this time with Onesimus no longer being a slave, but a freed person.

When granted a favour, the client promises to pay back the patron whenever and however the patron decides. As the patron grants the favour, they in turn promise to be open for further requests at other times (Malina & Pilch, 2008: 227). Onesimus would of course be indebted

to Philemon in terms of service to pay back the favours granted by Philemon. It is not certain however, how Philemon would want the services of Onesimus to be provided.

When entering a patron-client agreement, the client relates to the patron as to a superior and more powerful kinsman, while the patron ensures that his clients are taken care of as he would his dependants (Malina & Pilch, 2008: 227). Thus, Philemon would remain a much superior person to Onesimus and Onesimus would remain a much more inferior person to Philemon. If this scenario works out as I posit where Paul wants Philemon to manumit Onesimus and he does so, then manumission serves Onesimus only to a certain extent. Manumission allows Onesimus to be a freed person and enter into contracts and sales and be a Roman citizen; he is free politically. However, crucial to his social rebirth is the fact economically he is still not free. He is still indebted to Philemon. He is still dependent on Philemon. Philemon still controls the economic life of Onesimus which in turn runs into his social life. Entering into the patron-client relationship perpetuates the inequality between Philemon and Onesimus. Philemon is mandated by the letter to accept Onesimus as a brother, however manumission limits that acceptance to a client only, for a brother would mean much more than client.

Garnsey & Saller note that one of the main motivations for this system is that one of the things a Roman citizen prided himself in is their place in society and having a position in the social hierarchy, even extending out from his household (1997: 96). Romans were obligated to and could expect support from their families, kinsmen and dependants both inside and outside the household, and friends, patrons and protégés and clients (Garnsey & Saller, 1997: 96). The emperor of Rome acted as a patron of many clients throughout the Roman territories (Garnsey & Saller, 1997: 96). The Roman provinces were led by governors who together with the province's elites were the clients of the Roman emperor (Garnsey & Saller, 1997: 96). The emperor being the powerful and in control of the Roman colonies provided certain securities to his client which reciprocated by being his obedient subjects (Kahl, 2010: 43 – 45). The emperor gave benefits to the Roman people and was regarded as being a good patron. The people returned the favours with respect and loyalty (Garnsey & Saller, 1997: 97). Thus, I argue that the system of patronage did not exist to provide social and economic securities for clients so much as it existed to secure the pride and status of the patron. The system itself was created to be an unequal system and retain the lesser in rank at the lower level and the more powerful in a higher position. The system has already dictated that even if

Philemon manumits Onesimus, the two remain unequal. Onesimus remains a lower-class citizen. Onesimus is not wholly free; he is only free in part. If his freedom was whole, then he would not need to have a subsequent relationship with Philemon. The freedom granted to him through manumission should allow him to be totally independent and free of his former master.

According to Nicols, the exercise of patronage was not regulated by law and disappointed patrons and ungrateful clients could not bring their claims to any court of law (2014: 2). What the two parties relied upon was the fact that they would suffer embarrassment and indignity should the one party dishonour the terms of agreement (Nicols, 2014: 3). Honouring the agreement meant the increase of prestige and dignity to the parties and manifested power and influence (Nicols, 2014: 3). Thus, in the new dispensation resulting from manumission Onesimus would still be at the receiving end of the stick. He has no assurance that his needs will be taken care of except relying on his patron's desire for honour. For Philemon it may be about increasing honour and manifesting power and influence, however for Onesimus it is much more than that. It is about survival, without the benefits received from his patron Onesimus runs the risk of going hungry. Thus the relationship remains unequal, Onesimus is still in the hands of Philemon economically.

Garnsey & Saller note further that one of the things that the clients were to do for their patrons was to gather up at their door step every morning to offer the *salutatio* which is to praise their patrons for their good deeds (Garnsey & Saller, 1997: 99). How can Onesimus be free when he still has to offer praises to a man who has treated him as a slave. The unfair and unjust relationship between the two continues with very similar conditions. Onesimus has escaped the horror of at times working in chains or being denied the right to sexual orientation and family ties, but he remains entangled in an unequal economic life. Socially he has been reborn, however the rebirth still have demeaning conditions; he still has to go to someone he is indebted to each day and salute him for the good deeds he does. Philemon and Onesimus are in a postcolonial state, however the conditions of the colony still control their relationship. They are not wholly free from the colonial relationship that existed between them, in fact they are still in the colonial state.

Garnsey & Saller note another dimension to the unequal system of patronage. According to Garnsey & Saller, the system of Patronage gave patrons a much higher status than their clients even in political circles; patrons had the advantage of standing for elections and

canvassing among other patrons, but they were required to get the support of their clients as well (1997: 99). Thus, in their postcolonial state, Philemon and Onesimus would not enjoy the same benefits of Roman citizenship. Onesimus could not stand for elections and as a statesman promote better legislation regarding the treatment of slaves and client. He is still at a lower status in society; still not powerful; still not influential. The power and influence of society remain in the hands of his former colonizer and he is still to be loyal to his former colonizer should he decide to run for elections. Thus Onesimus continues to be powerless in the powerful hands of his former master.

Within the ancient Mediterranean world there is economic information that can be explored in aid of my argument. Having observed the inequality in the institutions of slavery and patronage, I now move to observing the economic inequality in the citizens of the Greco-Roman world with a postcolonial lens.

Economic scales in the ancient Mediterranean

Following Steven Friesen's poverty scales which measures from poverty scale 1 (the wealthiest elites) to poverty scale 7 (the poor living below subsistence level), Bruce Longenecker suggests that the move be towards economic scales (2010: 44 – 45). According to Longenecker, economic scales are useful in trying to understand the economic statuses of the first century Mediterranean world and enable us to interpret the economic issues in the text (2010: 45). Following Oakes (2012), I noted in chapter one that economics provides the analytical framework for interpretation. Such an analytical framework is provided when the interpreter attempts to discover the economic situations of not only the characters in the text, but also the inhabitants of the world of the text, reading the context in its broadness. This is also observed in the economic situations of the world of the interpreter.

Central to Longenecker's argument is that Friesen's poverty scales place only seven per cent of the population in the middle group which is not plausible enough (2010: 45). He then posits that the middle group should be increased from seven per cent to seventeen per cent since it is the middle class that accounts for most of the population (2010: 46). Moreover, Longenecker argues that poverty scales only measure poverty, whereas it would be more meaningful to measure economic scales so that all components of the population are represented and valued (2010: 46). This is an important contribution to understanding the economic situations of the ancient Mediterranean as Longenecker correctly asserts that the economic scales enable us to better define who the poor are as well as understand the lower

and middle classes better (2010: 55 – 56). My thesis is not on poverty, but on economic inequality and the scales as proposed by Longenecker is helpful in my endeavour. Placing Philemon and Onesimus on economic scales before and after manumission is important. When Philemon and Onesimus had relations as master and slave they were economically unequal. When manumission happened Onesimus was elevated to being a client of Philemon, however their economic situation remained highly unequal. They are in a new dispensation with new conditions, in fact Onesimus now has freedom, albeit with limited rights, but the inequality of their past relations still remains. Onesimus is still situated well behind Philemon economically. They are still not equal and their brotherhood is limited. What kind of brother is Onesimus to Philemon if he still has to depend on him? Are they not supposed to be equal as brothers? How far must Philemon take Onesimus to consider him truly as a brother? The institution of patronage is not enough. It does not bring them to an equal status as brothers.

When, after the liberation movement, the ANC took over the government of South Africa twenty years ago, the different people of South Africa moved into a new dispensation. They were no longer unequal. Everyone had a right to vote and everyone had a right to live wherever they wanted. Politically all citizens are equal, however economically we are not. The hyper-patrimonial and the hyper-meritocratic society which we live in as I have noted in chapter two, has kept those who were economically on the upper side in a more advantageous position and those on the lower side in a disadvantageous position. Twenty years into the new dispensation and the gap between the rich and the poor remains very high. The new dispensation has indeed liberated us from an oppressive system, but economically we have not been liberated. There is still a small group of elites and a large group of the poor, while only the middle class has shifted slightly.

Longenecker places Philemon, the master-turned-patron (as I have posited in the previous chapter), on economic scale 4 or 5 because according to him, the fact that he owned a slave does not indicate that he had some wealth of note (2010: 245). This would place Philemon in the category of (ES4) merchants; traders; artisans (especially those who employ others); military veterans and (ES5) regular wage earners; large shop owners; freed persons and some family farm owners (Longenecker, 2010: 45). This places Philemon in the middle class: neither rich nor poor, but comfortable. He is not rich, but he does not go to bed hungry and he affords a comfortable lifestyle. When one considers another a brother they consider them an equal, someone on the same level as they. Thus if Philemon considers Onesimus a brother equal to him then it would posit that he elevate him economically to the level of an equal, that

he may also live a comfortable life. However, patronage limits that elevation and they remain as unequal as the rich and poor of South Africa. Oakes observes that in the ancient Mediterranean the economic elite would be able to own houses. However, the economic non-elite would be tenants and not owners of houses, which is also an indication of their income and not of wealth (2009: 57). Thus Philemon could be considered to be a normal working man in the middle class who owns a slave(s). The request on him to accept Onesimus as a brother demands upon him that he brings Onesimus to the middle class as an equal.

Longenecker is hesitant to place Onesimus on an economic scale with certainty due to the lack of enough information, arguing that his being a slave would place him between economic scale 5 and economic scale 7 (2010: 249). This would mean Onesimus probably fell in the category of (ES6) labourers; artisans (especially those employed by others); wage earners; small shop or tavern owners and (ES7) unattached widows; orphans; beggars; disabled; unskilled day labourers and prisoners (Longenecker, 2010: 45). It is important to note that these are the lowest economic scales, which puts Onesimus at the bottom of the heap as a slave and also as a client. As a manumitted slave he may easily find himself at ES7 alongside beggars if he does not honour the terms of patronage fully or if Philemon finds him to be not an adequate client. He is heavily reliant on Philemon's generosity even in patronage. While it may seem better to be on ES6, it is not really based on the income received by low scale labourers and artisans employed by others. He is not in a comfortable enough position to be considered an equal brother to Philemon, their situation is still highly unequal. Oakes suggests that slaves did not really have income, even though at times they had some small workshops that did not really have a sufficient client base (2009: 59). I would imagine that their clients would primarily be other slaves who would not have much to pay or even tip.

Having said "the people shall share the wealth of the country", it would be expected that the ANC would have endeavoured upon taking control of the country to bring about a sharing of the wealth of the country and closing the inequality gap. However, twenty years into democracy we still hear of calls to a sharing of the wealth of the country. With this proposed equality of all people, have the economic forces been equalled for all people and if so how? All people are equal in South Africa but there is still so much economic disparities between the people. If the previously oppressed people have been elevated to equal citizenship with their previous oppressors then the economic means should have been made available to ensure that they are truly equal. However this is not the case.

The words contained in the letter to Philemon “receive him, no longer as a slave, but more than a slave, as a beloved brother” have an implication and create a certain expectation that now Onesimus would be a brother to Philemon and not a slave. If indeed Onesimus was to become a brother to Philemon, what are the economic implications involved in this change of scenario? I have argued in the previous chapter that this means the slavery of Onesimus changes to patronage. There are other implications such as social and economic implications to be considered, but they are still not enough, the relationship is still unequal.

Social categories in the Mediterranean

Peter Oakes looks at four people from different social statuses in Roman Pompeii and evaluates their socio-economic situations and then observes their reaction to the message brought to them by Paul (2009: 130). This is an important exercise worth some serious noting. For the purposes of this appropriation I want to follow Oakes in this endeavour in relation to Philemon: Onesimus and the economically unequal people of South Africa. Oakes selected four people from different houses in Pompeii and in different social standings to not only illustrate their social and economic disparities, but also to illustrate the different reactions to the text of Romans (2009: 130) even though at that time Romans was just a letter from Paul to the congregation at Rome and not a biblical text.

In the first instance Oakes talks about Primus the slave who is at the lowest of all social statuses; he is poor; oppressed; looked down upon (2009: 131). Primus’ main concern is that he is a faithful Christian, yet he suffers poverty, while his wicked master enjoys wealth and relates that to the God of justice as proposed by Paul in his letter (Oakes, 2009: 131). Oakes observes that for a low level slave, a senior household member who is a steward and mistreats the slave, the God of justice would be relevant (2009: 134). The conditions of slavery under which Onesimus lived in Philemon’s household are not stated in the text, however the general status of slavery in the Mediterranean maybe assumed. It could be that Onesimus had a senior servant that mistreated him; it could also be that Philemon or his wife or even his child mistreated him. When he hears the message which I have argued in the previous chapter, may have been from Epaphras, he wonders what this could mean for him. He ponders the possible liberation the gospel can bring to his situation. This is not so for Onesimus only, but also the many people in South Africa who daily go and work for people knowing that the fruits of their labour will be enjoyed by other people; they wonder what effect and what positivity the message of the gospel can bring upon their lives. Moreover they

wonder what the God proclaimed in the gospel has to say about the master that advances his wealth even more and does not seek the same for the poor. The letter of Philemon gives the poor in the postcolony an idea that if the system is oppressive one should seek a way to flee from it or discover a loophole in it to liberate oneself using the very system that oppresses them. Philemon sought to flee from that system and worked out a plan to liberate himself, however he found himself in another unjust system; a system that retained him as a lower class citizen.

Secondly, Oakes looks at Sabina a freed person who worries daily about survival (2009: 138). Having been manumitted, she no longer has her master worrying about what she will eat or wear, but that is now her concern and she listens to the gospel to hear what it will say about her situation (Oakes, 2009: 138). She and her husband still had to rely on their former master who was now their patron for economic support in return of some duties since they were not in a position to provide any political beneficence (Oakes, 2009: 138). Oakes observes further that because of the marginal profitability of the work of stoneworkers, Sabina and her husband could not afford a decent place and had to live in whatever cramped small accommodation they could find and going around to look for jobs while continuing with the daily struggle of survival (2009: 138). The perpetual struggle of survival continues for Onesimus in the new dispensation. Politically he is liberated, but he is now faced with an even more daunting task: survival. He is not wholly free; he is not yet a brother to Philemon, not in a true sense of the word. The poor in South Africa are still very far from the rich and there is also a gap between them and the middle class. They are still struggling for survival and even in the new dispensation they live as Onesimus.

In the third instance Oakes talks about Iris the bar owner's female slave who works as a bar maid and because she has no control over her body, she might have had to have sex with some customers at the instruction of her master (2009: 143). Iris like many other slaves was the subject of sexual exploitation; her body belonged to her master and he could do whatever he wanted with it and Iris listens carefully to message of the letter to the Romans to discover if the gospel might speak to her situation (Oakes, 2009: 143). Onesimus is very much like Iris; he stands to be exposed to sexual exploitation by either Philemon or his wife or even his guests. Being a slave places Onesimus in a situation of social death; though physically alive he is socially dead. I noted in chapter two that twenty per cent of South Africans live in poverty; they are socially dead. When your concern is not what you are going to wear at a party tomorrow, but where your next meal is going to come from then you are socially dead.

Such a person has been stripped off of their dignity; poverty has killed their social life. This happens when the benefactors of the hyper patrimonial links and the hyper meritocratic links are advancing even further and further, stretching the gap from the poor.

Lastly, Oakes considers Holconius who is rather wealthier than the rest (2009: 130). He was a cabinet maker and later a surgeon and owns a house; the congregation also assembles at his house (Oakes, 2009: 130). I would argue that being a surgeon places Holconius on ES3 at the heart of the middle class. He falls in the category of most decrial families; wealthy people who do not hold office; retainers; veterans and merchants (Longenecker, 2010: 45). He is in a comfortable position, living a comfortable life and is far above the level of subsistence living. He is a little higher than Philemon since he may be considered wealthy; but both are more advantaged economically. It is important to note that he was a cabinet maker and later a surgeon. He moved from one place of economic advantage to another. In many respects he represents South Africa's predatory black ruling class. In the old dispensation some of them were in the middle class and some of them were not even in the middle class. However in the new dispensation they are now in the upper middle class and have started a new elite: the predatory black ruling class. They advance further and further in wealth and they leave behind their counterparts with whom they suffered in the old dispensation. They leave Onesimus behind; they find new wealth for themselves and do not invite Onesimus to share; they live more than comfortable lives, but close the door, leaving Onesimus in the open.

As noted in chapter two, South Africa has entered into a new period in history: one in which has been born the predatory black ruling class which has become bedfellows with private capital and advances its own elite gains. Having been liberated with others they now look after themselves only and the wealth of the country is shared by a small minority only. The letter of Philemon has lessons for that elite group as well. When Onesimus has been manumitted and now has the right to purchase property, he should not purchase property in the persons of slaves. He should not mistreat other slaves for he was once one of them and suffered the same plight as them. The Onesimus within the black majority of South Africa has turned predatory and has chosen to lie down on the same bed with Philemon rather than convince Philemon to abandon altogether the practice of slavery. The Onesimus in the black ruling class is more concerned in acquiring more property than setting up systems or programmes that will encourage and uplift other slaves to a better and more comfortable situation. Instead of being the bridge to close the gap between Philemon and other slaves, the

Onesimus in the black ruling class chooses to get more comfortable linen for his bed with Philemon. The focus shifts from liberation to comfort.

The question for the postcolonial reader

Having observed the economic inequality that exists between Philemon and Onesimus as master and slave and also as patron and client and having observed the economic inequality that exists between the citizens of South Africa, the question then becomes how the relations should be in the postcolony. Does it go to say that Philemon should abandon his wealth and share everything he has with Onesimus? Does it mean that the privileged in South Africa should follow the example of John Wesley and live with as little as possible? In an ever competing world that hungry for success the question is what South Africans poor and rich in the postcolony should learn from Philemon.

It is not my position that we should follow the example of John Wesley – the situation in South Africa today is radically different from the situation in seventeenth century England. It is from the teaching of Mr Wesley that I want to draw lessons. As noted in chapter three Wesley taught that having more than what you need simply equates to wealth. Wesley did not argue against people owning private property. However, he considered it to be a symbol of wealth. Thus in Wesley's terms, having more than you need for survival is being rich. However more important to note in Wesley's understanding is that having more than what you need should open your eyes to those who have less than what you have, those who do not have enough for survival. Giving all you can as advanced by Wesley does not mean giving all you have, but it means giving to many as you can and reaching as many people as you can with the wealth that you have. This ties in well with the Setswana understanding that poverty and wealth are inextricably intertwined. Being rich cannot leave your eyes closed from poverty when you hire a person to clean your yard or your kitchen or to make you tea. Poverty lives alongside wealth and the inequality between them cannot be ignored neither in Colossae nor in postcolonial South Africa.

Two things emerge for me as postcolonial reader from this text. Firstly, I notice the helplessness, the powerlessness, weakness and the almost inexistence of the weak at the hands of the mighty. Onesimus as a slave could have been brought from his place of origin by being captured by pirates or he could have been born to slave parents. Either way he was in a position of helplessness; he had no control of the situation and the powers that were sought to sell him like a commodity. Onesimus is helpless and society takes advantage of him. Because

he has been captured or born to people captured he does not have the right or power to establish himself as a human being. Society then takes advantage of his helplessness and sentences him to slavery. This is the same plight of those on the lower level of the unequal economy of South Africa. Because of their helplessness and powerlessness they are at risk of exploitation and abuse. The very same society that is equal to him politically is the society that sentences them to eternal poverty. The letter of Philemon poses a challenge to that society and suggests the helpless can break the barriers of their plight and seek liberation for themselves.

Secondly, I notice the ruthlessness of the rich in their treatment of the poor. The ancient Mediterranean allowed if not encouraged for the mistreatment of the poor by condemning them to the institution of slavery and further humiliation as clients should they ever escape slavery. The rich and elite in the Mediterranean had already pre-destined Onesimus to a life of low class and were determined to keep him there. Even if he attempted to run there was legislation against that as well; severe punishment would befall him. Even if he was manumitted there was legislation for that; he would be limited in rights and would still be dependent on a patron. Society ensured that Onesimus remained a lower class citizen. The elite of South Africa is not different, the situation in the postcolony is still of a gap between the rich and the poor. Society has conditioned that if Philemon has a chance to advance economically he should do so even if it means exploiting and mistreating Onesimus. Onesimus exists to serve Philemon without enjoying the fruits of his labour as much as the poor exist to further the ambitions of the rich in South Africa without enjoying the fruits of the labour.

In reading the narrative of Philemon from the side of Onesimus, Johnson points out that in the traditional reading of the narrative, interpretation has begun from the side of the signifier and not the signified (2012: 94). Johnson argues that it is not only Paul who signifies in the narrative, but Onesimus as well. God is speaking not only through Paul but through the textual tensions in the text (2012: 94). For Johnson, if Onesimus does not speak then he is signified and not the signifier and that limits the voice of God in the text. I am inclined to Johnson's view that in narratives a theological interpretation is primarily what God says and not just what the author is saying, and in some instances the voice of God as heard in the intratextual tensions may differ from that of the author (Johnson, 2012: 94). Traditional interpretation has subjugated Onesimus and made the narrative about Paul and Philemon while Onesimus falls into the background. The importance of Philemon is highlighted while

Onesimus' importance is silenced. Onesimus' voice is not heard and he is constrained to the margins.

Johnson recognises something very important in the suppression of Onesimus' voice in the narrative. He observes that Onesimus' voice must be silenced because it poses danger for the master. A slave can be seen, used and discussed, but he cannot be heard. The voice of oppressed is disturbing to the master (Johnson, 2012: 97). Johnson continues to argue that Onesimus' silence is that "of the petrified, one whose existence is frozen within a frame traced out along the lines of force imposed by those at whose mercy he pursues existence" (2012: 98). This position leads me to the conviction that Onesimus' voice is not only a threat to Philemon and the institution of slavery in the ancient Mediterranean, but also to traditional interpreters who are benefactors of the colonial enterprise.

The suppression of Onesimus' voice advances the notion that slaves should be seen and not heard. Interpreters who benefited from colonialism and those who benefit from postcolonial inequality continue to suppress the voice of Onesimus, lest he should rise to prominence. To insist that Paul wanted Philemon and Onesimus to continue as master and slave is to oppress Onesimus in a postcolonial era and to further embed the marks of colonialism on the lives of the oppressed. To remain on the position that Philemon and Onesimus should have just carried on as master and slave is to engage in a colonial reading in a postcolonial era. The lens manner of reading this narrative cannot be the same as that of John Chrysostom. There have to be new ways of reading this narrative, ways that embrace the oppressed and give voice to the voiceless. As I have observed in chapter 1, Oakes argues that economics provides resources for interpretation. It has been evidenced in the present chapter that there is enough economic data for this text to engage with the contemporary socio-economic context and to limit this text to reading slavery and reconciliation only is to do an injustice to it.

CONCLUSIONS

The objective of this study as I set out in the beginning was to investigate how slavery and patronage in Philemon can help the postcolonial reader in interpreting the socio-economic challenges of present day South Africa. Using the postcolonial framework I exegeted the text in the form the African contextual hermeneutic, bringing my context into conversation with the text and its context.

The research found that the postcolonial theory is a useful method for study within the postcolonial era that we find ourselves in. The postcolonial biblical criticism helps the interpreter to read from the side of the margins and give the marginalised a voice in interpretation. It was also established that South Africa is one of the most unequal societies in the world. The gap between the rich and the poor in South Africa is extremely high and remains high even in the postcolonial era. Having entered into a new dispensation of equality, South Africans remain unequal economically. The study explored the ideo-theological predisposition that the reader brings to the interpretation and found that Wesleyan evangelical economics as well as the Setswana idiom *khumo le lehuma di lala mmogo* may be useful in interpreting both the inequality in the text as well as the inequality in the contemporary context. Moreover the study observed various socio-economic issues in the text and unpacked some of the different levels in the economy of the ancient Mediterranean. Onesimus was studied as an independent person and a space was given to his voice, as well an emphasis on his importance. The study also appropriated the context of the reader with the text and its context and found that within the ancient Mediterranean world Philemon and Onesimus found themselves skipping from one unequal system to another.

Suffice it to say three things have been my focus. The first is what Paul may have wanted Philemon to do and it was addressed in chapter five. Secondly it is what likely happened between Philemon and Onesimus and this was explored in chapter six. The third was what the full implications of Paul's language and rhetoric are from a postcolonial perspective. In chapter six I explored this question, bringing in the summations of chapters one to five in a postcolonial framework.

A postcolonial economic hermeneutic

In light of the above I argue that there needs to be a hermeneutic to be applied in studying situations of economic disparities in both the text and contemporary society. Longecker has

observed that there is not enough evidence to suggest that Paul wanted his followers to give away all they had to others (2010: 288). In fact, Longenecker contends that what mattered the most to Paul is taking care of the needs of the poor (2010: 288). Even in the letter of Philemon I am of the position that Paul did not want Philemon to share all he had with Onesimus as much as help Onesimus to reach an equal or close level with him. Thus the letter does not suggest a socialist approach to economics in the ancient Mediterranean or today's context. Even when applying my theological predisposition to the text I am not convinced that Philemon had to give away all that he had to his slaves. As a Motswana also my ideology does not say the rich should give away all they have to the poor as much as they should be conscious of their existence and live with them, realising their full potential. The primary question for me then becomes what kind of hermeneutic designed in a postcolonial framework could be applied to read Philemon in its ancient Mediterranean context as well as the contemporary context, bringing in a dialogue.

Longenecker argues convincingly that Paul sought to be economically weak so that he could win the hearts of those who were economically weak (2010: 309). Today the context is different. One no longer needs to do that in order to win the hearts of the poor. People today listen to a convincing argument whether it comes from a poor or rich man. Moreover, the quest for survival is also different; having enough means something totally different from what it used to in the past.

The Onesimus in the postcolony is the people who find themselves at the bottom of the socio-economic inequality in South Africa. Because they do not have the desired traits for people to identify with them and aspire to be like them, they fall further into the margins and their voice less prioritised. Philemon gets the limelight and focus of interpretation. This of course leads me to asking how the poor people or those in socio-economic margins are given a voice by the hermeneutical circle. My interpretation of the letter focuses on the inequality between Philemon and Onesimus and I have established Onesimus' presence, yet his very own voice is not heard. How can interpretation bring to the fore the Onesimus and yes, the Philemon in our contemporary context for a meaningful engagement with each other and thereby formulate a hermeneutic in the postcolony? Johnson notes that unless Onesimus is brought into equal conversation he will not have the potential to be a brother (2012: 96). I am convinced that perhaps Philemon (the rich) and Onesimus (the poor) ought to read the narrative together with equal voices and design an understanding that may work for both of them.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Aliber, Michael. 2002. *Poverty Eradication and Sustainable Development*. Cape Town: HSRC Publishers
- Barclay, John M.G. 1997. *Colossians and Philemon: New Testament Guides*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press.
- Barth, Markus & Blanke, Helmut. 2000. *The Letter to Philemon*. Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company
- Binns, Tony; Lester, Alan & Nel, Etienne. 2000. *South Africa: Past, Present and Future. Gold at the End of the Rainbow?* Edinburgh: Pearson Education Limited
- Bond, Patrick. 1999. *Elite Transition: From Apartheid to Neoliberalism in South Africa*. Johannesburg
- Bradley, K.R. 1984. *Slaves and Masters in the Roman Empire: A Study in Social Control*. Bruxelles: Latomus
- Bruce, F.F. 1984. *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*. Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company
- Bruce, F.F. 1984. "Jews and Christians in the Lycus River" in *Bibliotheca Sacra* 141 (Jan. 1984) 3-15
- Business Tech. businesstech.co.za/news/general/53871/south-africas-richest-people-in-2014/. Retrieved 13/10/2014, 10:43
- Byron, John. 2008. *Recent Research on Paul and Slavery*. Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press
- Callahan, Allen Dwight. 1993. Paul's Epistle to Philemon: Toward an Alternative Argumentum. *Harvard Theological Review* 86 (1993) Pgs. 357–76.
- Callahan, Allen Dwight. 2009."The Letter to Philemon" in Segovia, Fernando S. & Sugirtharajah, R.S (eds.) *A Postcolonial Commentary on the New Testament Writings*. New York: T&T Clark

- Diakonia Council of Churches. 2006. *The Oikos Journey: A Theological Reflection on the Economic Crisis in South Africa*. Durban: Diakonia Council of Churches
- Donfried, Karl P. & Marshall, Howard I. 1993. *The Theology of the Shorter Pauline Letters*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Draper, Jonathan A. 2001. "Old Scores and New Notes: Where and What is Contextual Exegesis in the New South Africa?" in Kaufmann, Larry T. & Speckman, McGlory T. (eds.) *Towards an Agenda for Contextual Theology*. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications
- Draper, Jonathan A. (Forthcoming 2014) *African Contextual Hermeneutics: Readers, Reading Communities and their options between Text and Context*. Pietermaritzburg: JTSA
- Dube, Musa W. 2001. "Searching for the lost needle: Double colonization & Postcolonial African Feminism" in *Studies in World Christianity* Volume 5, Pages 213-228
- Dube, Musa W. 2004. "Talitha Cum! A Postcolonial Feminist & HIV/AIDS Reading of Mark 5: 21 – 43" in Dube, Musa W. & Kanyoro, Musimbi (eds.) in *Grant Me Justice! HIV/AIDS & Gender Readings of the Bible*. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications
- Dunn, James D.G. 1996. *The New International Greek Testament Commentary: The Epistles to Colossians and to Philemon*. Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company
- Emkes, Will. 2012. "Black Economic Empowerment and South Africa" in *Contemporary Review* Volume 294, Pages 200 – 208
- Fanon, Frantz. 1986. *Black Skin, White Masks*. London: Pluto Press
- Fitzmyer, Joseph A. 2000. *The Letter to Philemon: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. New York: The Anchor Bible
- Flexsenhar III, Michael A. 2013. *No Longer a Slave: Manumission in the Social World of Paul*. The University of Texas (Masters Thesis)
- Frilingos, Chris. 2000. "For my Child Onesimus: Paul and Domestic Power in Philemon" in *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Vol. 119, No. 1, pages 91-104
- Garland, David E. 1998. *Colossians and Philemon: The NIV Application Commentary: from the Biblical Text to Contemporary Life*. Michigan: Zondervan

Garnsey, Peter & Saller, Richard. 1997. "Patronal Power Relations" in Horsley, Richard A (ed.) *Paul and Empire: Religion and Power in Roman Imperial Society*. Harrisburg: Trinity Press International

Glancy, Jennifer A. 2002. *Slavery in Early Christianity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press

Harrill, Albert J. 1995. *The Manumission of Slaves in Early Christianity*. Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/margaret-thatcher/10000508/Margaret-Thatchers-funeral-Bishop-of-Londons-sermon-in-full.html>. Retrieved 13/11/2014 14:26

Jennings (Jnr), Theodore W. 1990. *Good News to the Poor: John Wesley's Evangelical Economics*. Nashville: Abingdon Press

Johnson, Matthew V. 2012. "Onesimus Speaks: Diagnosing the Hys / Terror of the Text in Johnson *et al* (eds.) *Onesimus our Brother: Reading Religion, Race and Culture in Philemon*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press

Johnson – Debaufre, Melanie. 2012. "Historical Approaches: Which Past? Whose Past?" in Marchal Joseph A. (ed.) *Studying Paul's Letters: Contemporary Perspectives and Methods*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press

Joshel, Sandra R. 2010. *Slavery in the Roman World*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Jones, Chaunetta. 2011. "If I take my Pills I'll go hungry": The Choice between Economic Security and HIV/AIDS Treatment in Grahamstown, South Africa in *Annals of Anthropological Practice* Volume 35, Pages 67 – 80

Kahl, Brigitte. 2010. *Galatians Re-Imagined: Reading with the eyes of the vanquished*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press

Kreitzer, Larry J. 2008. *Philemon*. Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press

Kyrtatas, Dimitris J. 2011. "Slavery and Economy in the Greek World" in Bradley, Keith & Cartledge, Paul (eds.) *The Cambridge World History of Slavery: The Ancient Mediterranean World*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Handley, Antoinette. 2008. *Business and the State in Africa: Economic Policy-Making in the Neo-Liberal Era*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Lewis Jr., Stephen R. 1990. *The Economics of Apartheid*. New York: Council on Foreign Relations

Longenecker, Bruce W. 2010. *Remember the Poor: Paul, Poverty and the Greco-Roman World*. Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company

Lopez, Davina C. & Penner, Todd. 2012. “Rhetorical Approaches: Introducing the Art of Persuasion in Paul and Pauline Studies” in Marchal, Joseph A. (ed.) *Studying Paul’s Letters: Contemporary Perspectives and Methods*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press

Lundahl, Mats & Petersson, Lennart. 2004. “The South African Dream and the Three Stumbling Blocks” in *Development Southern Africa* Volume 21, Pages 727 – 742

Malina, Bruce J. & Pilch, John J. 2008. *Social-Science Commentary on the Book of Acts*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press

Marais, Hein. 2011. *South Africa Pushed to the Limit: The Political Economy of Change*. Cape Town: UCT Press

Marchall, Joseph A. 2011. “The Usefulness of an Onesimus: The Sexual use of Slaves and Paul’s Letter to Philemon” in *JBL* 130, no. 4 (2011): 749–770

Mbembe, Achille. 2001. *On the Postcolony*. California: University of California Press

McKeown, Niall. 2007. *The Invention of Ancient Slavery?* London: Duckworth

Mji, Gubela & Owusu – Ansah, Frances E. 2013. “African Indigenous Knowledge and Research” in *African Journal of Disability* 2(1), Art.#30 5 pages. <http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/ajod.v2i1.30>

Nasrallah, Laura S. 2012. “Spatial Perspectives: Space and Archaeology in Roman Philippi” in Marchal, Joseph A. (ed.) *Studying Paul’s Letters: Contemporary Perspectives and Methods*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press

National Development Plan. Adopted 11 November 2011

- Nicols John. 2014. *Civic Patronage in the Roman Empire*. Leiden: Brill
- Nzimande, Makhosazana. 2009. "Reconfiguring Jezebel: A postcolonial *Imbokodo* reading of the story of Naboth's vineyard (1 Kings 21: 1 – 16)" in De Wit H. & West G. (eds.) *African and European readers of the Bible in dialogue: In Quest of a Shared Meaning*. Cluster Publications: Pietermaritzburg
- Oakes, Peter. 2009. *Reading Romans in Pompeii: Paul's Letter at Ground Level*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press
- Oakes, Peter S. 2012. "Economic Approaches: Scarce Resources and Interpretive Opportunities" in Marchal, Joseph A. (ed.) *Studying Paul's Letters: Contemporary Perspectives and Methods*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press
- OECD. 2013. *Economic Surveys: South Africa*
- Padayachee ,Vishnu. 2005. "The South African Economy, 1994 – 2004" in *Social Research* Volume 72, Pages 549 – 580
- Piketty, Thomas (transl. Arthur Goldhammer). 2014. *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*. London: Harvard University Press
- Punt, Jeremy. 2012. "Postcolonial Approaches: Negotiating Empires, then and now" in Marchal, Joseph A. (ed.) *Studying Paul's Letters: Contemporary Perspectives and Methods*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press
- Rapske, Brian M. 1991. *The Prisoner Paul in the Eyes of Onesimus*. *New Testament Studies* 37 (1991), pp. 187–203.
- Rukundwa, Lazare S. 2008. "Postcolonial Theory as a Hermeneutical Tool for Biblical Reading" in *HTS 64*, Volume 1, 339 – 351
- Roux, Andre. 1999. *Everyone's Guide to the South African Economy*. Rivonia: Zebra Press
- Ryan, Judith M. & Thurston, Bonnie B. 2005. *Philippians and Philemon*. Minnesota: Liturgical Press
- Said, Edward W. 1977. *Orientalism*. London: Penguin

- Said, Edward W. 1993. *Culture and Imperialism*. London: Chatto & Windus Ltd.
- Scott, Bruce R. & Tucker, Bob. 1992. *South Africa: Prospects for Successful Transition*. Cape Town: Juta & Co. Ltd.
- Scotland, Nigel. 1981. *Methodism and the Revolt of the Field: A study of the Methodist Contribution to Agricultural Trade Unionism in East Anglia: 1872 – 96*. Gloucester: Alan Sutton Publishing Limited
- Segovia, Fernando F. 2000. *Decolonizing Biblical Studies: A View from the Margins*. New York: Orbis Books
- Shamase, Maxwell Z. 2014. “The Royal Women of the Zulu Monarchy – Through the Keyhole of Oral History: Princess Mkabayi KaJama” in *Inkanyiso, Jnl Hum & Soc Sci* 2014, 6 (1)
- Statistics South Africa. beta2.statssa.gov.za/?page_id=739&id=. Retrieved 13/10/2014, 10:18
- Statistics South Africa. 2014. *Poverty Trends in South Africa: An examination of absolute poverty between 2006 and 2011*. Pretoria: Statistics South Africa
- Sugirtharajah, R.S. 2002. *Postcolonial Criticism and Biblical Interpretation*. New York: Oxford University Press
- Sugirtharajah, R.S. 2012. *Exploring Postcolonial Biblical Criticism: History, Method, Practice*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell
- The Freedom Charter. Adopted 1955, Kliptown: Johannesburg. <http://www.sahistory.org.za/pages/governance-projects/freedomcharter>
- Ukpong, Justin 2000. “Developments in Biblical Interpretation in Africa: Historical and Hermeneutical Directions” in West, Gerald O. & Dube, Musa W. *The Bible in Africa: Transactions, Trajectories and Trends*. Leiden: Brill
- Wearmouth, Robert F. 1947. *Methodism and the Working Class Movements of England: 1800 – 1850*. London: The Epworth Press
- West, Gerald O. 2008. “Doing Postcolonial Biblical Interpretation @home: Ten Years of (South) African Ambivalence” in *Neotestamentica, Volume 42.1*, Pages 147 – 164

West, Gerald O. 2009. "Interpreting 'The Exile' in African Biblical Scholarship: An Ideo-Theological Dilemma in Post-Colonial South Africa" in Becking, Bob & Human, Dirk (eds.) *Exile and Suffering: A selection of Papers read at the 50th Anniversary Meeting of the Old Testament Society of South Africa*. Leiden and Boston: Brill

West, Gerald O. "Biblical Hermeneutics in Africa" in Stinton, Diane B (ed.) 2010. *African Theology on the Way: Current Conversation*. London: SPCK

Wiedemann, Thomas. 1981. *Greek and Roman Slavery*. London: Croom Helm

Williams, Demetrius K. 2012. "African American Approaches: Re-humanizing the Reader against Racism and Reading through Experience" in Marchal, Joseph A. (ed.) *Studying Paul's Letters: Contemporary Perspectives and Methods*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press

Williams, Demetrius K. 2012. "No Longer as a Slave: Reading the Interpretation History of Paul's Epistle to Philemon" in Johnson *et al* (eds.) *Onesimus our Brother: Reading Religion, Race and Culture in Philemon*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press

Winter, Sara B.C. 1984. "Methodological Observations on a New Interpretation of Paul's Letter to Philemon" in *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 39 (1984), pp. 203–12.

World Bank Gini Index. Data.worldbank.org/indicator/SI.POV.GINI. Retrieved 19/09/2014, 12:04

Zelnick – Abramovitz R. 2005. *Not Wholly Free: The Concept of Manumission and the Status of Manumitted Slaves in the Ancient Greek World*. Leiden: Brill