

FAMILY MATTERS
AN EXEGETICAL AND SOCIO-HISTORICAL
ANALYSIS OF FAMILIAL METAPHORS
IN 1 THESSALONIANS

by

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ABSTRACT

Building upon recent insights of classical research re family life in antiquity, this investigation combines the study of the family as social reality and as metaphor in order to explore the relationships between Paul and the Thessalonians and the Thessalonians' relationships to one another. An in-depth investigation of 1 Thessalonians – Paul's earliest extant letter – is justified since it is here that we find a heavy preponderance of fictive-kinship terms.

Chapter 1 reviews the most recent literature where we note that Paul's familial metaphors are briefly considered within the broader social context of Pauline Christianity. Some scholars assume (e.g. Meeks et al.) that the terms 'brother/sister' indicate that Paul's earliest communities are non-hierarchical in structure. Others (e.g. Castelli) argue that Paul's paternal role is solely understood in hierarchical terms and take little account of the composite nature of such a role. A full survey of parent-child and brotherly relations in antiquity, and the implications this might have for Paul, is called for.

The theoretical base under-girding this study, that of 'metaphor theory', is then set out. Using the insights of linguists (e.g. Lakoff and Johnson) a basic working definition for metaphor is established. It is highly likely that Paul is drawing on a familiar source field (the family in antiquity) to describe Christian relations as a family. Other aspects of metaphors such as extension and coherence are discussed in relation to Paul and their usefulness to this investigation.

An in-depth study of aspects of family life (i.e. parent-child and brotherly relations) in the ancient world is carried out in chapters 2, 3 and 4. A broad range of sources literary and non-literary (Jewish and non-Jewish) are studied to determine the normal social expectations of household members. In chapters 2 and 3 parent-child obligations are the focus whilst chapter 4 deals with brotherly responsibilities. A number of stock meanings for both relationships are identified. For example, fathers are superior to their children, exercise authority over them, and are to be an example for them to follow. Parents are expected to love their offspring but whereas a mother's role is to nurture her children, a father is supposed to instruct them. Children reciprocate by loving, obeying, honouring and caring for their parents. Brotherly relations could also be hierarchical – younger siblings are to respect and obey older brothers. Whilst brothers are expected to love one another, to work together in the interests of family harmony, and to uphold the family name in the face of outsiders, they show little concern for outsiders themselves. What is striking to note in chapters 2, 3 and 4 is that the norms or common assumptions of Jewish family members were little different from those of non-Jewish families.

In chapter 5 Paul's role as parent (2:10-12), particularly his fatherly responsibilities towards his Thessalonian children, is examined. The apostle fulfils these fatherly functions along the lines of a *paterfamilias* in the regulation and control of the community. By so doing Paul is mirroring the expectations of fathers in the ancient world. This included, for example, his superiority, authority and the obligation to instruct and love his offspring. In response, the Thessalonians are expected to reciprocate by

obeying and showing affection towards Paul. The study of Paul's paternal role is followed by a treatment of his unusual maternal role as nursing mother as well as the possibility of the apostle having described himself as an 'infant' and an 'orphan'.

Chapter 6 discusses Paul's use of the term ἀδελφός in 1 Thessalonians and sets the scene for the exegesis of three passages on brotherly relations (4:3-8, 4:9-12 and 5:12-15). In chapter 7 (4:3-8) we examine how Paul addresses the real/potential issue of sexual immorality. Clear boundary lines are seen to exist between the brotherhood and outsiders. Holiness should mark this community and, in order to avoid contamination from the outside world and to maintain the honour of the brotherhood, Paul advocates each brother to take his own wife as a prophylaxis to desire (vv. 3-5). In vv. 6-8 two scenarios are presented: either Paul goes on to stress the harm caused to the community by one brother trying to take another brother's wife or he is concerned lest a brother should try to cheat another brother in a business or inheritance matter. Both make good sense against the background of sibling expectations.

In chapter 8 (4:9-12) we discuss how Paul deals with the related aspects of φιλαδελφία and work. Most of the brothers are showing φιλαδελφία and Paul even commends them for demonstrating this to other brothers unknown to them. However, such praise is qualified because certain brothers are becoming over-dependent upon other brothers who continued to work. This is causing internal disharmony and aggravation to outsiders due to the excessive evangelism of some brothers. Paul resolves the internal tensions by using brotherly love as a counter-strategy to put restraints upon how this concept is understood. The external difficulties are diffused by Paul calling upon the wayward brothers to return to work so that the Christian family-name may not be sullied in the eyes of οἱ ἔξω

In chapter 9 (5:12-15) the issue of work is again addressed by Paul but here his main concern is to resolve the (internal and external) conflicts through the proper ordering of the affairs of the brotherhood. In keeping with brotherly relations in antiquity, he calls upon the entire community to love and respect those brothers who were to rule and admonish other brothers (i.e. 'idlers', ἄτακτοι). These aberrant brothers may have retaliated against those in authority or against outsiders and Paul calls for no reprisals. We noted how Paul differs from other ancient authors in that he urges kindness towards *outsiders themselves*. Attention was also drawn to the difference in rank between the brothers which, coupled with the hierarchical relations between Paul and the Thessalonians, could mean that these early Christian communities are not as non-hierarchical in structure as is sometimes thought.

A concluding chapter draws the arguments together and analyses the main findings.

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PREFACE

This thesis is the culmination of work going back a number of years. My interest in Paul's familial metaphors was aroused some 14 years ago whilst teaching a course on Romans to ministerial students in the Samuel Bill Theological College in Nigeria, W. Africa. I subsequently wrote a dissertation on Paul's adoption motif whilst teaching at the Evangelical Theological College of Wales. This has led naturally to the present study – an investigation of other familial expressions in 1 Thessalonians.

I would like to record my thanks to a number of folk who have helped me in the writing of this thesis.

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ABBREVIATIONS

<i>ABD</i>	David Noel Freedman (ed.), <i>The Anchor Bible Dictionary</i>
<i>AGJU</i>	Arbeiten zur Geschichte des antiken Judentums und des Urchristentums
<i>AJP</i>	<i>American Journal of Philology</i>
<i>ANRW</i>	Hildegard Temporini and Wolfgang Haase (eds.), <i>Aufstieg Und Niedergang der römischen Welt: Geschichte und Kultur Roms im Spiegel der neuen Forschung</i> (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1972-)
<i>ATR</i>	Anglican Theological Review
<i>BAGD</i>	Walter Bauer, William F. Arndt, F. William Gingrich and Frederick W. Danker, <i>A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2 nd edn, 1958)
<i>BETL</i>	Bibliotheca ephemeridum theologiarum lovaniensium
<i>BI</i>	<i>Biblical Interpretation</i>
<i>BJRL</i>	<i>Bulletin of the John Rylands Library of Manchester</i>
<i>BJS</i>	Brown Judaic Studies
<i>BTB</i>	<i>Biblical Theology Bulletin</i>
<i>Bib</i>	<i>Biblica</i>
<i>BNTC</i>	Black's New Testament Commentaries
<i>CBQ</i>	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
<i>ConBNT</i>	Coniectanae biblica, New Testament
<i>CIG</i>	A. Boeckh et al. (eds.), <i>Corpus Inscriptionum Graecarum</i> (see Bibliography)
<i>CIJ</i>	J. –B. Frey, (ed.), <i>Corpus Inscriptionum Iudaicarum</i> (see Bibliography)
<i>CIL</i>	T. Mommsen et al. (eds.), <i>Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum</i> (see Bibliography)
<i>CLE</i>	F. Buecheler (ed.), <i>Carmina Latina Epigraphica</i> (see Bibliography)
<i>CPh</i>	<i>Classical Philology</i>
<i>EB</i>	The Expositor's Bible
<i>EBib</i>	Etudes bibliques
<i>EKKNT</i>	Evangelisch-Katholische Kommentar zum Neuen Testament
<i>EvQ</i>	<i>Evangelical Quarterly</i>
<i>FC</i>	Thomas P. Hatton (ed.), Fathers of the Church
<i>FRLANT</i>	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments
<i>G &R</i>	<i>Greece and Rome</i>
<i>GTA</i>	Göttingen Theologische Arbeiten

<i>HTR</i>	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
HTS	Harvard Theological Studies
HNT	Handbuch zum Neuen Testament
<i>IG</i>	<i>Inscriptiones Graecae, editio minor</i> (Berlin, 1973)
<i>IrishBS</i>	<i>Irish Biblical Studies</i>
ICC	International Critical Commentary
<i>IDBSup</i>	<i>Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, Supplementary Volume</i>
<i>Int</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JETS</i>	<i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
<i>JCPHSup</i>	<i>Journal of Classical Philology Supplement</i>
<i>JQR</i>	<i>Jewish Quarterly Review</i>
<i>JRS</i>	<i>Journal of Roman Studies</i>
JSHRZ	W. Kümmel (ed.), <i>Jüdische Schriften aus hellenistisch-römischer Zeit</i> , Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1973-
<i>JSNT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
JSNT Sup	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament, Supplement Series</i>
<i>JSOT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
<i>JSP</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of Pseudepigrapha</i>
<i>JTS</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
<i>JTSA</i>	<i>Journal of Theology for South Africa</i>
KEKNT	Kritisch-Exegetische Kommentar über das Neue Testament
KST	Kohlhammer Studienbücher Theologie
LEC	Library of Early Christianity
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
LSJ	Liddell – Scott – Jones, Greek-English Lexicon
LXX	The Septuagint
MNTC	Moffat New Testament Commentary
MBTH	Münsterische Beiträge zur Theologie
MUS	Münchener Universitäts-Schriften
NCBC	The New Century Bible Commentary
NIBC	New International Biblical Commentary
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament
NIGTC	New International Greek Testament Commentary
<i>NovT</i>	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
NovTSup	Novum Testamentum, Supplements
NTC	New Testament Commentary
NTD	Das Neuen Testament Deutsch
<i>NTS</i>	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
OBET	Orbis Biblicus Et Orientalis

<i>OTP</i>	James Charlesworth (ed.), <i>Old Testament Pseudepigrapha</i> , 2 vols., London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1983, 1985.
NTTS	New Testament Tools and Studies
<i>RAC</i>	<i>Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum</i>
SBEC	Studies in the Bible and Early Christianity
SIHC	Studies in the Intercultural History of Christianity
SP	Sacra Pagina
<i>SPA</i>	<i>Studia Philonica Annual</i> (ed) David T. Runia
SBL	Society of Biblical Literature
SBLDS	SBL Dissertation Series
SBLMS	Society of Biblical Literature Monograph Series
SBT	Studies in Biblical Theology
SHCT	Studies in the History of Christian Thought
SNTSMS	Society of New Testament Studies Monograph Series
SNTW	Studies in the New Testament and Its World
<i>TBT</i>	The Bible Translator
<i>TDNT</i>	Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich (eds.), <i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i> (trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley; 10 vols.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964-)
<i>TynBul</i>	<i>Tyndale Bulletin</i>
<i>TZ</i>	<i>Theologische Zeitschrift</i>
<i>VD</i>	<i>Verbum Domini</i>
<i>WBC</i>	<i>Word Biblical Commentary</i>
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
<i>ZB</i>	Züricher Bibelkommentare
<i>ZTK</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche</i>
<i>ZNW</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>

PART I

ISSUES AND APPROACHES

1. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

1. 1 Introduction

In recent years insights from the social sciences and classical studies on the family¹ have given us a greater understanding of the dynamics of family life in the ancient world. Classical research in particular – and to an extent Jewish studies as well² – has provided new information on the ancient family as a *social* organism and the respective roles and functions of leading members, especially fathers, in relation to their children. New Testament scholarship is becoming increasingly aware of the usefulness of this research; unfortunately, it has not been fully harnessed and applied to help us understand better ‘family’ nomenclature or relations in the New Testament writings in general or the corpus Paulinum in particular. To be sure, there have been investigations of the so-called *Haustafeln* (Household Codes)³ and the ἐκκλησία as the *familia Dei*,⁴ but few studies have sought to make any real *connection* between the *social institution* of the family in antiquity and the notion of early Christian communities as ‘families’ or *fictive-kinship*

¹ The following is a sample of the many classical studies that have appeared: B. Rawson, “Children in the Roman *Familia*,” in B. Rawson (ed.), *The Family in Ancient Rome: New Perspectives* (London/Sydney: Croom Helm, 1986), pp. 170-200; eadem, “Adult-Child Relationships in Roman Society,” in B. Rawson (ed.), *Marriage, Divorce and Children in Ancient Rome* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), pp. 7-30; E. Eyben, “Fathers and Sons,” in Rawson (ed.), *Marriage, Divorce and Children*, pp. 114-43; S. Dixon, *The Roman Family* (Baltimore/London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992). Such classical research has not been matched by studies of the Jewish family – although see the recent volume edited by Shaye J.D. Cohen, *The Family in Jewish Antiquity* (BJS 289; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1993).

² See, for example, M. Peskowitz, “Family/ies in Antiquity: Evidence from the Tannaitic Literature and Roman Galilean Architecture,” in Cohen (ed.), *The Jewish Family*, pp. 9-36.

³ E.g., J. E. Crouch, *The Origin and Intention of the Colossian Haustafel* (FRLANT 2.109; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1972).

⁴ E.g., P. von Allmen, *La Famille de Dieu: La Symbolique familiale dans le paulinisme* (OBET 41; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1981).

groups.⁵ Jerome Neyrey, commenting on the synoptic gospels, highlights the general paucity of research in this area:

More serious consideration needs to be given to the basic *social institution of antiquity, namely the family* and the role of the *paterfamilias*. Further studies in Q would do well to investigate the role of families in socialising new members and exercising social control. *Issues of family and (fictive) kinship remain underdeveloped in scholarship*⁶

This neglect not only relates to the gospels but to the Pauline letters as well which is surprising, given the fact that ‘Paul’s theology was inextricably related to social reality’.⁷

But it is also remarkable for the fact that Paul’s letters are replete with familial terminology.⁸ It is not my brief to undertake an exhaustive study of all the familial expressions in the Pauline writings. Rather, my task is a more modest one, namely, to carry out an extensive study of such nomenclature in (one of) Paul’s earliest extant letters, namely, 1 Thessalonians.

I have chosen 1 Thessalonians for the fact that here Paul’s usage of such familial language is not only the most frequent, but also the most varied. For example, God is spoken of as ‘father’ on four occasions (1:1, 3:3; 11, 13).⁹ Paul also likens himself to a

⁵ One exception to this is the important collection of essays edited by H. Moxnes, *Constructing Early Christian Families: Family as Social Reality and Metaphor* (London: Routledge, 1997).

⁶ J. N. Neyrey, “Loss of Wealth, Loss of Family and Loss of Honour”, in P. F. Esler (ed.), *Modelling Early Christianity: Social Scientific Studies of the New Testament in its Context* (London: Routledge, 1995), pp. 139-58 (156-57) (emphasis added).

⁷ A. J. Malherbe, “God’s New Family in Thessalonica,” in L. Michael White and O. Larry Yarbrough (eds.), *The Social World of the First Christians: Essays in Honor of Wayne A. Meeks* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), pp. 116-25 (121).

⁸ See, for example, R. Banks’, *Paul’s Idea of Community: The Early House Churches in their Historical Setting* (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1979), pp. 52-61, who was one of the first scholars to take an interest in the familial metaphors. My research interest in the apostle Paul’s familial metaphors has been long-standing. See Trevor J. Burke, “Adoptive Sonship (HUIOTHEA) in the Pauline Corpus” unpub. MPhil. diss. University College of North Wales, Bangor, 1994.

⁹ In the past, scholarship has been occupied with the study of family relations under the rubric of ‘God as Father’ (e.g. Banks, von Allmen). I do not deny the usefulness of this approach but, given the fact that Paul

‘father’ (2:11), to a ‘nursing-mother’ (2:7), and the Thessalonians to his ‘children’ (2:11; cf. 5:6-7). The apostle even appears to invert these parental roles by describing himself as an ‘infant’¹⁰ (2:7) and an ‘orphan’ (2:17). However, Paul’s favourite and most frequently used familial expression in this epistle is the term ‘brothers’– he employs it no less than nineteen times during the course of the letter (e.g. 1:4; 2:1, 9, 14, 17 etc.).¹¹ The frequency (in proportion to the total number of verses) with which he uses this term is greatest in 1 Thessalonians, exceeding every other letter in the Pauline literature. In keeping with this fraternal terminology, the apostle also uses the composite expression ‘brotherly love’ (φιλαδελφία, 4:9) to describe the depth of relations that existed between the Thessalonians. In short, familial language dominates the landscape of 1 Thessalonians; indeed, so striking are the number of familial metaphors in this letter that Abraham J. Malherbe has very recently remarked: ‘[it] teems with the language of family’.¹²

Consistent with this use of familial terminology is the highly affective character of Paul’s description of the relationship between himself and his converts. Once again it is not only the frequency but also the intensity of the ‘philophrenetic language’ which is noteworthy.¹³ For example, Paul speaks of the Thessalonians as his ‘beloved’ (1:4) and,

also refers to *himself* as a ‘father’ (2:11) and the Thessalonians as his ‘children’ (2:11), I am more concerned with situating and understanding these terms in their proper socio-historical context and how this may have influenced Paul’s metaphorical usage of such expressions in the shaping and organising of his community.

¹⁰ There is an important variant here where ἡπιιοι ‘gentle’ is the normally accepted reading. However, see chapter 5.4 for a discussion of νήπιιοι as a possible reading and of Paul’s role as ‘infant’.

¹¹ I include here the two instances of brother in the singular in 3:2 and 4:6. See the table on p. 212 n 3 comparing the frequency of the term ‘brother’ in 1 Thessalonians to some of Paul’s other letters as well as a treatment of his usage of brotherly language in this letter.

¹² Malherbe, “God’s New Family,” p. 121.

¹³ W. A. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the First Christians* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), p. 86.

following his eviction from Thessalonica, writes in very emotional terms of his ‘deep affection’ (2:8) and ‘intense longing’ (2:17) to see them.

The prevalence of this familial language in 1 Thessalonians invites further reflection and investigation. It also prompts a number of questions: why, for instance, does Paul describe his relationship to the Thessalonians, and the Thessalonians relations with each other, in familial terms? From where did such nomenclature originate? And how prevalent were such expressions in antiquity of which Paul was a part? What did these terms mean and convey to the hearer? Were familial relations among the ancients patriarchal or non-patriarchal? And what are the functions of this terminology in 1 Thessalonians?

As already stated, although there have been studies which have examined the importance of familial terminology in other New Testament letters, so far as we are aware no one has carried out an in depth study of such terms in 1 Thessalonians.¹⁴ This investigation will fill the lacuna not only in the Thessalonian literature, but will hopefully go some way towards helping us better understand a number of aspects of family relationships in the ancient Mediterranean world.

1.1.1 Terminology

One of the problems with which we are confronted when discussing the ‘family’ in antiquity is what terms to employ. Although Paul does not use the expression οἶκος in 1

¹⁴ For other letters, see for example, D. L. Balch, *Let Wives be Submissive: The Domestic Code in 1 Peter* (SBLMS 26; Chicago: Scholars Press, 1981); J. H. Elliot, *A Home for the Homeless: A Sociological Exegesis of 1 Peter, Its Situation and Strategy* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991); D. C. Verner, *The Household of God: The Social World of the Pastoral Epistles* (SBLDS 71; Chicago: Scholars Press, 1983).

Thessalonians, he does use it in 1 Corinthians – a church which was established only a short time afterwards - in relation to Stephanas (1:16; cf. Gal. 6:10): ‘I baptised the household (οἶκος) of Stephanas’. In Corinthians, the term οἶκος denotes the *members* of Stephanas’ household and this is how we will use and understand the term ‘family’ in this investigation.

Part of the difficulty with the question of which terminology to employ is the fact that in the ancient world there were no Greek, Latin or Hebrew words which directly translate the English term and meaning of ‘family’ or ‘house’. The Greek οἶκος, οἰκία, Hebrew בית, and the Latin *domus* can all refer to the physical building, but can also mean the household, including material possessions and slaves, immediate blood family or family lineage. Similarly, the Latin expression *familia* whilst narrower in meaning to that of *domus* nevertheless embraces all persons under the authority of the *paterfamilias* (head of the household). So when we refer to the term ‘family’ as it was understood in antiquity, it is not a reference to the nuclear family with which we are so familiar today. This is not to say that the nuclear family did not exist; clearly it did,¹⁵ but it does not appear to have functioned separately, hence there is no nomenclature used to describe it.

Having said this, we will approach the study of the ‘family’ from the standpoint

¹⁵ C. Osiek, “The Family in Early Christianity: ‘Family Values’ Revisited,” *CBQ* vol. 58 (1996), pp. 1-24; P. Lampe, “‘Family’ in Church and Society of New Testament Times,” *Affirmation* (Union Theological Seminary in Virginia) vol. 5 [1992], pp. 1-20. In this respect, R. P. Saller (“*Familia, Domus, and the Roman Conception of Family*,” *Phoenix* 38 [1984], pp. 336-355 [355]) writes: ‘Neither *familia* nor *domus* has as a regular meaning the nuclear family, and yet much evidence suggests that this was the dominant family type ... though the Romans had no word for it, they drew a conceptual circle around the mother-father-children triad and made it the centre of primary obligations’. *Contra*, D. B. Martin, “The Construction of the Ancient Family: Methodological Considerations,” *JRS* vol. 86 (1996), pp. 40-60.

of a 'system of relationships'¹⁶ two of these will be our primary concern: Paul's relations with his converts (father-child, *inter-generational*)¹⁷ and the Thessalonians' relationships with each other (brother-brother, or *inter-familial*).

Again, any study of 'family' in the ancient world also requires clarification of other important terms such as hierarchy and patriarchy. Clearly the former describes the structure, rank and order of a particular group but in the ancient world many different kinds of hierarchies existed – some could be kin-related (i.e. patriarchal – father, son and so on) whilst others were more political in orientation. In this thesis, since we are studying relations in a (fictive) kin-group, the two terms 'hierarchical' and 'patriarchal' are practically synonymous.

A consideration of the 'family' also brings into play the subject of gender. Who is Paul addressing when he uses the term ἀδελφοί: males only, or males and females? Certainly Paul's communities comprised men and women – he not only speaks of male believers as brothers (ἀδελφοί, e.g. 1 Thess. 2:1) but he also specifically addresses women believers as sisters (ἀδελφή, Rom. 16:1; 1 Cor. 7:15). Also, the term ἀδελφοί, it can be argued, is a generic expression; therefore when Paul uses it he does so in a general manner to denote males and females. Having said this, there may be times when he uses the term in the singular (ἀδελφός) where the context demands a more restricted reference to males only (e.g. 1 Thess. 4:6).

¹⁶ On this, see the helpful discussion by Moxnes (ed.), "What is Family?: Problems in Constructing Early Christian Families," in *Constructing Early Christian Families*, pp. 13-41.

¹⁷ See the essay by John M. G. Barclay ("The Family as Bearer of Religion in Judaism and Early Christianity," in Moxnes [ed.], *Constructing Early Christian Families*, pp. 66-80 [66]) who investigates the 'family' from the perspective of an 'inter-generational social unit'.

A study of this terminology from the view-point of gender is an important one. It raises, for example, the question of the position that Paul takes *vis-à-vis* male and female roles compared with other ancient authors whose writings we shall also investigate. Does Paul, or do writers in antiquity, include females in their use of the expression 'brothers'? Some take the view that Paul does not, but that he is male exclusive in his usage of this term.¹⁸ Others are of the opinion that Paul is more female/male inclusive.¹⁹ Clearly more research is required in this area but for the purposes of the present inquiry we shall take the view that neither Paul nor other writers of the ancient world consciously exclude sisters. Although some of Paul's letters are addressed to specific individuals (e.g. Philemon), most are in fact written to churches and this would have included men and women.

1.1.2 Structure of this Study

This investigation is interdisciplinary in composition and draws on other disciplines including sociology, linguistics and metaphor theory. The study comprises three main parts.

Part 1 will set the scene for our investigation and will include a survey of the most relevant research literature. Here the contribution of past scholarship will be critiqued, gaps and weaknesses assessed, and the need for this study posited. We shall also discuss the usefulness of metaphor theory to our investigation and how it can assist us in our

¹⁸ E.g., L. Fatum, "Brotherhood in Christ: A gender hermeneutical reading of 1 Thessalonians," in Moxnes (ed.), *Constructing Early Christian Families*, pp. 183-97.

¹⁹ K. Schäfer, *Gemeinde als 'Bruderschaft': Ein Beitrag zum Kirchenverständnis des Paulus* (Bern: Peter Lang, 1989), p. 289; E. Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (New York: Crossroad, 1983), pp. 177-84, 205f.

study of Paul's use of his familial metaphors. Methodology, objectives and approach will be discussed and set out.

Part 2 will consist of an intensive and in depth investigation of the 'family' in antiquity. By doing this I hope to root Paul firmly in his rightful socio-historical context. Two main relationships shall be considered both of which are determined by the fact that Paul refers to himself as parent (i.e. 'father', 2:11 and 'nursing-mother', 2:7) to his Thessalonian 'children' (2:12) and to the Thessalonians as 'brothers' to one another (e.g. 1:4). A broad and eclectic range of primary source material (Jewish and Graeco-Roman), literary as well as non-literary, will be presented and discussed. Here I shall focus on the normal social expectations or common assumptions of the above mentioned family members and will identify a number of stock meanings and associations of the parent-child and brother-brother relationships. Comparisons and contrasts between Jewish and non-Jewish families will also be addressed.

Part 3 is exegetical and deals with Paul's relations with the Thessalonians. Here the earlier primary source material adduced in part 2 of the thesis will be employed to determine to what extent, if at all, Paul is reflecting the norms and presuppositions of family relations in antiquity. Also, the stock meanings and associations earlier identified in relation to the parent-child relationship (e.g. hierarchy, authority, nurture, affection etc.) will be used to help us clarify Paul's parental relations ('father' and 'nursing-mother') with his Thessalonian 'children'.

Again, such common assumptions will also be used to help us understand Paul's and the Thessalonians' relations to one another as 'brothers'. Here we shall argue that Paul

utilises typical first-century expectations associated with brotherly relations in the ancient world to regulate the affairs of the community and to diffuse the conflicts (inside and outside) which it was facing. In 4:3-8 Paul deals with the problem of sexual immorality (and business matters) while in 4:9-12 he addresses the issue of brotherly love within the wider context of proper working practices and how this impacts on the brotherhood and outsiders. In 5:12-15 Paul again refers to the need for the Thessalonians to work hard, but specifically appeals for proper order in the community's affairs, especially the need for the entire brotherhood to respect, love and obey those brothers who were in authority over them.

Part 4 concludes the thesis with an analysis of our main findings.

But first, we need to put our own study into its proper context. To help us do this, we shall now carry out a survey of the most recent and relevant research literature.

1.2 Survey of Previous Research

One of the earliest monographs to address the subject of Paul and his communities was Robert Banks' *Paul's Idea of Community: The Early House Churches in their Historical Setting*. Banks laments the preoccupation of scholars with other metaphors used to describe the ἐκκλησία (e.g. body) to the exclusion of the 'household/family' which 'has all too often been overlooked or only mentioned in passing.'²⁰ According to Banks, the frequency of familial nomenclature means that 'the comparison of the Christian

²⁰ Banks, *Paul's Idea of Community*, p. 53.

community with a “family” must be regarded as the most significant metaphorical usage of all... More than any other image utilized by Paul, it reveals *the essence of his thinking about community*.²¹

However, Banks’ emphasis, as far as the paternal imagery is concerned, is on the need for ‘Christians to see themselves as members of a *divine family*’;²² he does not, for example, address the issue of Paul’s paternal relations with his spiritual offspring and what it means to belong to the Pauline family. Also, whilst Banks regards the term ‘brother’ to be ‘Paul’s favourite way of referring to the members of the communities to whom he is writing,’²³ he completely overlooks 1 Thessalonians as a fruitful source for such a term. Moreover, he only includes one chapter (a mere nine pages) on the ‘community as a family’.²⁴ Nevertheless he has drawn attention to this neglected metaphor and undoubtedly paved the way for future investigations.

In recent years social studies and the application of the social-sciences have had a huge impact upon our understanding Paul’s relationship with his churches. In his slender but important work, *The Social Pattern of Christian Groups in the First Century*, E. A.

²¹ Banks, *Paul’s Idea of Community*, p. 53 (emphasis added).

²² Banks, *Paul’s Idea of Community*, p. 54 (emphasis added).

²³ Banks, *Paul’s Idea of Community*, p. 55.

²⁴ It is worth noting that despite the debt owed to Banks in this area of research, some scholars feel that he has overplayed his hand in the emphasis he gives to the familial metaphor within the wider framework of ecclesiology; see for example, Stephen C. Barton (“Paul’s Sense of Place: An Anthropological Approach to Community Formation in Corinth,” *NTS* vol. 32 [1986], pp. 225-46 (225)) who makes a good case for a *distinction* between church and household. According to Barton, 1 Cor. 11:17-34 and 14:33b-36 – women speaking and church meals – are two instances ‘*where the line is to be drawn between church and household*’ (author’s emphasis). Banks’ monograph raises the question of whether the ‘family’ is the ‘root’ or ‘controlling’ metaphor, or just ‘one’ metaphor among many which provides another dimension in our understanding of the diverse nature of the *ekklesia*. As the deliberately ambiguous (main) title of my thesis implies, I am more inclined to think – on statistical grounds and the sheer range of vocabulary used by Paul – that the family is not only an important metaphor but is the most pervasive one which he employs in describing the Church.

Judge presented a clear picture of the social setting of the Mediterranean world in which the apostle Paul lived and moved. In particular Judge (along with other scholars before him)²⁵ helped to emphasise the relationship between early Christian communities and the household model, where the latter has influenced Paul's conception of the former.

W. A. Meeks' book *The First Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul* is an important contribution to understanding the social and cultural milieu of Pauline Christianity. Essentially Meeks' volume is a 'social-history' which focuses upon human beings as group members immersed in given societies in the past (e.g. voluntary associations, synagogue, philosophical school etc.). When discussing the formation of the *ekklesia* what is 'especially striking', states Meeks, 'is the language that speaks of members of the Pauline groups as if they were a family'.²⁶ He also takes cognizance of the fact that these early Christians perceived themselves to be 'children of God *and also of the apostle*' who referred to one another as 'brothers and sisters'.²⁷

As well as providing a historical description of the different types of groups in the ancient world (e.g. voluntary associations, synagogues etc.), Meeks also includes that of the household. Regarding the latter, he discusses the question of the *structure* of Paul's communities and contends that the composition of the Pauline communities stands in *contrast* to the hierarchical structures of first century society. Fictive kinship terms like "brother" and "sister"... contrast the group's life with that of the "world": the closely

²⁵ E. g., F. V. Filson, "The Significance of the Early House Churches," *JBL* vol. 58 (1939), pp. 105-12.

²⁶ Meeks, *First Urban Christians*, p. 86.

²⁷ Meeks, *First Urban Christians*, p. 86 (emphasis added).

structured, hierarchical society of the Graeco-Roman city'.²⁸ Moreover, Meeks views the structure of the Pauline communities as standing in *contrast* to that of household: 'the structure of the οἶκος... was hierarchical ...yet...there were certain countervailing modes and centres of authority in the Christian movement that ran contrary [to it]... and certain egalitarian beliefs and attitudes that conflicted with the hierarchical structure'.²⁹ But if, as often happened, the *paterfamilias* was usually the first member of a household to embrace the Christian gospel, did not the patriarchal structures of the household determine to a large degree the leadership structures of these early Christian communities? ³⁰

We shall examine this issue and Meeks' conclusions in the course of our discussion.

Within the last twenty-five years, the advent of feminist studies has also provided valuable input into the debate concerning the nature and structure of early Christian churches. One of the main protagonists in the discussion has been Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza. Schüssler Fiorenza marshals evidence from the synoptic gospels (Matt. 23:8-10; Mk. 3:31-33) and Paul (Gal. 3:28) to argue that Jesus' command, "Call no man on earth father," is the bedrock for the new eschatological community to be founded on the basis of egalitarianism. There is no room for fathers in this egalitarian community.

According to Schüssler Fiorenza: 'the discipleship community abolishes the claims of the patriarchal family and constitutes a new familial community, one that does not include

²⁸ Meeks, *First Urban Christians*, p. 89.

²⁹ Meeks, *First Urban Christians*, p. 76.

³⁰ See for example R. A. Campbell, *The Elders: Seniority Within Earliest Christianity* (SNTW; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1994), pp. 118-119.

fathers in its circle'.³¹ Essentially Schüssler Fiorenza's thesis is one of degeneracy by which the early Christian communities *started* out as non-patriarchal only to become through time more rigid and patriarchal in structure.³²

Schüssler Fiorenza's views raise a number of important questions. Can Jesus' words to his disciples to "Call no-one 'father,'" be a(ny) basis for drawing *historical* conclusions *vis-à-vis* the structure of early Christian communities? It is, for example, significant that 'as an *address* ἀδελφός does not... occur on the lips of Jesus'.³³ Moreover, if Paul uses the familial expression 'father' in 1 Thessalonians – his earliest extant letter – could it not imply that some form of hierarchy exists between himself and his converts? And if it does, how then can it be contended that the early Christian communities *began* as *non-patriarchal* in composition only to become later more patriarchal in structure? And what of brothers – does Paul allow for any distinction in rank or seniority between them?

N. R. Petersen, although not directly addressing the subject of the structures of early

³¹ Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, p. 147. Similar views are also articulated in Schüssler Fiorenza's other writings (e.g. *Bread Not Stone: The Challenge of Feminist Biblical Interpretation* [Boston: Beacon, 1984], p. 75) where she states: 'According to Mark's Gospel, the discipleship of equals is the community of brothers and sisters who do not have a "father". It is the "new family" that has replaced all the natural, social kinship ties of the patriarchal family. It does not consist of rulers and subjects, of relationships of superordination'.

³² This is partly due to a number of factors. In the first instance, since many scholars view 1 Timothy as non-Pauline and therefore later, assumptions are made that the structures of the *ekklesia* became more rigid and complex with the passing of time. Thus, J. M. Bassler, for example, ("The Widow's Tale: A Fresh Look at 1 Tim. 5:13-16", *JBL* vol. 103 [1982], pp. 23-41) argues that the later hierarchical structure of the *ekklesia* in the Pastoral Epistles are an indication that the church has *shifted* from a non-patriarchal construction, and has adopted hierarchical and patriarchal patterns in keeping with contemporary society. Recently, S. S. Bartchy ("Undermining Ancient Patriarchy: The Apostle Paul's Vision of a Society of Siblings" *BTB* vol. 29 [1999], pp. 68-78 [77]) seeks to lay the 'blame' for the *later* hierarchical and patriarchal nature of the church at the door of the Roman Empire and its rulers.

³³ H. von Soden, "ἀδελφός," *TDNT* vol. 1, pp. 144-46 (145) (emphasis added).

Christian communities, nevertheless, in his *narrative* understanding of Philemon, discusses this within the context of the family metaphors.³⁴ Indeed, as we shall discover, Petersen not only provides input into the discussion regarding the structure of early Christian communities, he also addresses other concerns of particular interest in this thesis, namely, Paul's *authority* and *power*. As regards the familial nature of the community, Petersen spends little time on discussing the meaning of certain family terms such as father, children, brothers and sisters, since Paul leaves us in no doubt concerning his meaning of these expressions. The more important question, according to Petersen, is the *outworking* of relations between, in the first instance, Philemon and Onesimus, and between Paul, Onesimus and Philemon. Crucial for Petersen is the distinction between the master-slave relationship which pertains to the *world* whereas the brotherly relationship belongs to the new community of the *ekklesia*. Thus, as far as Philemon's relations with Onesimus are concerned, Petersen is of the view that the latter, Philemon's erstwhile slave but now brother in Christ, cannot possibly relate to him both as slave *and* brother.³⁵

Concerning Paul's relationship with Philemon and Onesimus, Paul never identifies himself as Philemon's father even though, according to Petersen, the apostle employs

³⁴ N. R. Petersen, *Rediscovering Paul: Philemon and the Sociology of Paul's Narrative World* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985).

³⁵ Petersen (*Rediscovering Paul*, p. 289) states: 'It is logically impossible to relate to one and the same person as both one's inferior and one's equal'. However, John M.G. Barclay ("Paul, Philemon and the Dilemma of Christian Slave-Ownership," *NTS* vol. 37 (1991), pp. 161-86 [182 n. 84]) qualifies Peterson's conclusion by pointing out that it is the *context* which determines how a 'slave' and a 'brother' relate to each other. There is no problem, for example, when a 'slave' and a 'brother' relate to each other in 'two entirely different spheres (as for Stoics)...[where] it is possible to be superior in one sphere but equal in another'. Tensions only arise, argues Barclay, 'when two relationships operate in the *same* sphere (e.g. in everyday behaviour and the personal relationships of the home)' (emphasis added).

‘metaphor[s] of indebtedness’³⁶ which imply that he is Philemon’s father in the same sense that he is Onesimus’ father. The reason Paul does not overtly employ the father-child metaphor in this letter, in Petersen’s opinion, is because of its ‘inherently hierarchical... implications... which does not allow for the change in position that Paul represents for himself and Onesimus and that he desires for Philemon’.³⁷ The rhetorical tone of the letter is such that Paul ‘backs off from his superordinancy and stresses his equality’.³⁸ Thus, Petersen states: ‘in the church there is but one family, and all members are brothers and sisters, *not* fathers or mothers, sons or daughters’.³⁹ In short, all patriarchal structures within the community collapse and are replaced by a level playing field. We shall examine Petersen’s claim that *all* relationships within Paul’s communities are non-patriarchal. Although Paul in his letter to Philemon may not explicitly refer to himself as ‘father’, he does so in his first letter to the Thessalonians. We shall look closely at the implications of this for understanding Paul’s paternal relations with his Thessalonian ‘children’.

On the question of Paul’s paternal role, mention must also be made of Elizabeth Castelli’s monograph, *Imitating Paul: A Discourse of Power*. Castelli shows a heavy dependence upon the post-structuralist historian Michael Foucault and advances the thesis that Paul’s claim to authority as the ‘father’ of his communities is *not* benign,⁴⁰ but a wholly authoritative claim carrying the weight of the full juristic rights similar to

³⁶ Petersen, *Rediscovering Paul*, p. 128.

³⁷ Petersen, *Rediscovering Paul*, p. 131.

³⁸ Petersen, *Rediscovering Paul*, p. 131.

³⁹ Petersen, *Rediscovering Paul*, p. 157 (emphasis added).

⁴⁰ E.A. Castelli (*Imitating Paul: A Discourse of Power* [Louisville Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991], p. 109) states: ‘the paternal metaphor does not necessarily evoke a sense of kindness or love’.

that of a father in the Graeco-Roman world. She also views Paul's fatherhood as *one* aspect of Paul's hierarchical and authoritarian stance which is channeled through his call to "mimesis" (imitation). Such authority is derived from his identification with Christ, and his 'self-ascribed role' and special authority to speak as 'contentless conduit'⁴¹ – an authority which stems from, and is based upon, the Lord whom he represents.

Castelli rightly roots Paul's paternal imagery in the Graeco-Roman culture of the first century where the father possessed total authority over his offspring. Her insights into important areas like power relations and how they are created and sustained are useful and commendable. However, under-girding her whole approach is the fact that all manifestations of power, including that of the apostle Paul's, are to be viewed with a degree of suspicion. Also, when we read Castelli we are left with a view of Paul as one who controls – intentionally or otherwise – his churches with such authority that 'sameness' is of such importance that it removes any degree of individuality or difference within his communities. If followed to its logical conclusion we are left with Pauline communities lacking in initiative and so uniform that they can only be described as clone-communities.⁴²

In the course of this investigation, we shall discuss the question of how Paul, as *πατήρ*, exercises his authority among his Thessalonian converts. Castelli, on the basis of

⁴¹ Castelli, *Imitating Paul*, p. 99.

⁴² When we compare two communities like Thessalonica and Corinth, where Paul employs the father-child metaphor, we are immediately struck by the differences *not* the similarities between them, even though Paul, at times, did not always appreciate such differences. For example, John M. G. Barclay ("Thessalonica and Corinth: Social Contrasts in Pauline Christianity," *JSNT* vol. 47 [1992], pp. 49-74) has elucidated, in one area, such differences by the way that these two communities related to *outsiders*.

the primary evidence, argues against any benign associations with the paternal role. Is this the case? If Paul's relations with his converts is a hierarchical one, does this necessarily preclude the fact that he was able to show affection towards them? Is there any evidence in contemporary sources of Paul's day to demonstrate that fathers showed love towards their children? And if there is, what bearing could this have upon Paul's paternal relations *vis-à-vis* his Thessalonian offspring?

We turn now to a recent German monograph by K. Schäfer, *Gemeinde als 'Bruderschaft': Ein Beitrag zum Kirchenverständnis des Paulus* (see n 19). Schäfer's thesis is one of the most comprehensive treatments of brotherly relations. Its importance for us lies in the fact that we are not only interested in Paul's relations with his convert 'children' (i.e. inter-generational) but also the Thessalonians' relations to one another (i.e. inter-familial). According to Schäfer, Paul's letters are devoid of all traces of patriarchalism. He not only considers the 'Bruderschaft' as one way in which Paul describes the early Christian communities, but he also, like previous scholars, regards the 'brotherhood' model as *contrasting* with the 'household' or 'family' model.⁴³ Thus, οἶκος and φιλαδελφία become what Schäfer describes as "*Kontrastgesellschaften*".⁴⁴

Extensive though Schäfer's thesis is, the major weakness is that his study of brotherly relations is not understood against its socio-historical context. Thus, brotherhood and

⁴³ Schäfer (*Gemeinde als 'Bruderschaft'*, p. 369), not surprisingly, questions the Pauline authorship of the Pastoral epistles on the grounds that they portray household metaphors which obviously do not fit in with his general hypothesis.

⁴⁴ Schäfer, *Gemeinde als 'Bruderschaft'*, pp. 19, 37, 353-55, 358, 369, 443-44.

sisterhood become for him a *theological symbol* for a non-patriarchal community.⁴⁵

Schäfer does not fully acknowledge that most early Christian communities were established through the conversion of a household – he is aware of this, but denies that it has any significant role to play in the shaping of the early churches.⁴⁶ The castigating of patriarchalism leads Schäfer to neglect the role of the household and in doing so he provides a very one-sided view of the structure and composition of the early church.

To conclude our survey we consider two important Scandinavian studies. First, K. O. Sandnes' study, *A New Family: Conversion and Ecclesiology in the Early Church with Cross Cultural Comparisons*, seeks to employ insights from social cultural anthropology to argue that the *ekklesia* functioned as an 'alternative family' for those who embraced the Christian gospel.⁴⁷ Drawing on the insights of sociologists Berger and Luckmann, he recognises that if conversion is to 'succeed' it will best do so in an environment that resembles the natural family in which primary socialisation occurred. The 'ideal environment' in which new converts can be nurtured and grow is that of a 'family-like congregation'⁴⁸ which also 'compensates' in some way for the loss of the old family ties. However, such a correlation is partial rather than complete.⁴⁹

⁴⁵ Schäfer (*Gemeinde als 'Bruderschaft'*, p. 19) states: 'Der Begriff "Bruderschaft" ist hier als Chiffre für eine bestimmte, partizipatorische Sozialgestalt der Gemeinde verwendet'.

⁴⁶ We do not deny that there are, in the corpus Paulinum, instances of *individuals* who also embraced the Christian gospel (cf. 1 Cor. 1:14 Crispus and Gaius; 1 Cor.7:12-16 spouses, but not their partners), but the evidence suggests that there were probably more households than individuals who did so (e.g. 1 Cor. 1:16; Acts 10:24, 44-48; 16:15, 33); see Osiek, "The Family," pp. 14-16.

⁴⁷ Sandnes (*A New Family: Conversion and Ecclesiology in the Early Church with Cross-Cultural Comparisons* [SIHC 91; Berne: P. Lang, 1994], p. 82) states: 'The new family is a new family in terms of both replacement and its being a new kind of family'.

⁴⁸ Sandnes, *A New Family*, p. 14.

⁴⁹ Sandnes, *A New Family*, p. 82.

Sandnes also harnesses a useful array of primary source material in helping to describe the family in antiquity. For example, he describes the responsibilities of parents towards their children and the importance of the principle of reciprocity as well as discussing the obligations of brothers towards one another. However, whilst Sandnes recognises the patriarchal structure of the new ‘familia of God’ (*familia Dei*), a good deal of his exegetical work centres around brotherly relations.⁵⁰ In this regard, his overall thesis would have been bolstered had he discussed Paul’s paternal role towards his converts.

Also surprising is the fact that when Sandnes discusses the familial nomenclature in the synoptic and Pauline writings he completely omits any detailed discussion of 1 Thessalonians where such terms are found in abundance. Indeed in chapter 7 of his monograph, (“Examples of Philadelphia”), he does not treat the important pericope 4:9-12, the very locus where the expression φιλαδελφία occurs, and where the necessity to work and provide for one’s own family is as much an expression of ‘brotherly love’ as, for example, hospitality (a subject he discusses at length).

In a later essay Sandnes⁵¹ comes to a *via-media* position *vis-à-vis* the composition of early Christian communities. He concludes that our perceptions of the *ekklesia* as a brotherhood (non-patriarchal) or a family (patriarchal) are not as contrasting as might have been previously thought. Rather, there is a *convergence* of the household and

⁵⁰ See Sandnes (*A New Family*, pp. 130-170). And yet Sandnes (*A New Family*, p. 109) earlier points out that ‘reading Paul’s concept of the believers as a brotherhood in light of what Acts relates about the conversion of households throws doubt upon simplistic models of Pauline Christianity as an egalitarian fellowship’.

⁵¹ Sandnes, “Equality within Patriarchal Structures: Some New Testament Perspectives on the Christian Fellowship as a brother- or sisterhood and a Family,” in Moxnes (ed.), *Constructing Early Christian Families*, pp. 150-65.

brotherhood structures where the latter are embedded in the former. Thus, the Christian community is an admixture of non-patriarchalism within ‘a structure which also embodies hierarchical relationships’.⁵² Such modifications, argues Sandnes, are well illustrated in Paul’s letter to Philemon: Onesimus, a slave who became a believer, is considered by Paul as a ‘brother’. Hence two types of terminology, master-slaves and brotherhood, present a clear picture of ambiguity and tension – non-patriarchal structures are developing while old patriarchal structures of household remain *in situ*.

These later reflections are interesting, given the fact that Sandnes himself earlier admits that brothers, particularly older brothers, were part of the *patriarchal* structure in the ancient world. In the second part of our investigation, we shall carry out an intensive examination of primary source material to determine the extent, if at all, to which brotherly relations in antiquity were non-patriarchal.

Finally, we turn to R. Aasgaard’s recent thesis, “ ‘My Beloved Brothers and Sisters!’: A Study of the Meaning and Function of Christian Siblingship in Paul, in its Graeco-Roman and Jewish Context”, University of Oslo, 1999. Aasgaard has carried out an exhaustive treatment of ‘siblingship’ in the Pauline Corpus and is of the view that ‘the frequency of sibling address in Paul emerges as extremely striking’.⁵³ Aasgaard’s study is, in part, similar to our own investigation in that he is chiefly concerned with the meaning and function of the fictive-kinship terms ‘brother’ and ‘sister’. Crucially, he endeavours to locate this metaphor in its proper socio-historical milieu and employs some

⁵² Sandnes, *A New Family*, p. 151.

⁵³ Aasgaard, “ ‘My Beloved Brothers and Sisters!’ ” p. 302.

important primary source material to achieve this aim. For example, he uses Plutarch's treatise "On Brotherly Love" as a case-study for brotherly relations and rightly concludes that 'the sibling metaphor in Paul to a large extent derives its meaning from a socio-historical context'.⁵⁴ However, Aasgaard's thesis is, at times, overly dependent upon Plutarch's treatise and does not consider enough other sources as well.

In relation to his exegesis, Aasgaard treats important passages such as Rom. 8:29, 1 Thess. 4:9-12/Rom. 12:9-13, 1 Cor. 8:11:1/Rom. 14:15:13, 1 Cor. 6:1-11 and Philemon and shows how the sibling metaphor functions in each of these passages. Unlike Sandnes, Aasgaard concludes that Paul does not use sibling nomenclature as compensation for the loss of old familial ties, but 'simply employs and adapts the notions generally associated with social sibblingship and living in a family to that of Christian relations.' In his opinion, '*Paul is in dialogue with the family of Antiquity,*'⁵⁵ and in this dialogue '[Paul] appears to use the sibling metaphor as part of... a strategy for *Christian "infiltration"* into the network of the family, the basic social network of Antiquity'.⁵⁶

Aasgaard's thesis is evidence that scholars are beginning to harness the socio-historical material in antiquity to help us better understand the meaning of the fictive kinship terms used in Paul. However, at times he relies more on secondary evidence to argue his case, than on the primary evidence. Again, if, as Aasgaard has rightly illustrated,⁵⁷ sibblingship is *more* frequently employed in 1 Thessalonians than any other Pauline letter, one would have expected him to have given more consideration to further

⁵⁴ Aasgaard, " 'My Beloved Brothers and Sisters!, ' " p. 342.

⁵⁵ Aasgaard, " 'My Beloved Brothers and Sisters!, ' " p. 346.

⁵⁶ Aasgaard, " 'My Beloved Brothers and Sisters!, ' " p. 346.

⁵⁷ Aasgaard, " 'My Beloved Brothers and Sisters!, ' " p. 303.

passages in 1 Thessalonians where brotherly relations are addressed (e.g. 4:3-8; 5:12-15).

1.2.1 Summary

This concludes our brief survey of recent research. There is much to glean from previous studies; however, further work remains to be done. Whilst some scholars have focused on one particular aspect of familial relations, e.g. ‘brothers’, to the exclusion of others, this study is different in two main respects. First, as already noted, we will restrict our study of such familial terminology to one letter, namely, 1 Thessalonians. Secondly, we will seek to address *all* the familial terms which Paul uses to describe *his* relations with the Thessalonians and their relations *to one another*. Concentrating our efforts in this way will enable us to determine answers to the questions raised earlier. For example, to what extent if at all, does Paul’s presentation of the Christian family relate to his own socio-historical context? Does his use of familial metaphors reflect the common expectations of family members of the period? And were family relationships in antiquity, including those of brothers, hierarchical? These are important questions which our survey has raised and which demand to be answered.

1.3 Metaphor and Meaning

Since our investigation is focusing upon a number of familial metaphors in 1 Thessalonians, it is fitting at this stage of our inquiry to provide a definition of some of our terms. So, how is metaphor defined and what are the distinctive features of this figure of speech? From where do Paul’s familial metaphors originate? And, when Paul uses familial metaphorical language does he do so in a consistent or coherent manner?

1.3.1 A Definition of ‘Metaphor’ Janet Martin Soskice⁵⁸ has rightly made the point that metaphorical language is often poorly understood so that instead of helping to throw light onto a particular topic it can obscure our comprehension. Given that this is so, the nature and function of metaphors in the New Testament in general and the corpus Paulinum in particular make it necessary that we explore and understand something of their function before we endeavour to interpret them.

Metaphor can be understood from different perspectives. For example, *The Oxford Dictionary* defines metaphor as ‘the figure of speech in which a name or descriptive term is transferred to some object different from, but analogous to, that to which it is properly applicable’. According to this view, metaphor functions in a *substitutionary* capacity. For example, we may wish to say that a man consumes too much food but instead we might say that he is a ‘pig’. Since the context indicates that it is a human being who is being referred to, the full sense of ‘pig’ is not meant, therefore the interpreter searches for a secondary use of ‘pig’ to fit the context and finds it in the common association of greedy eating with the pig. The conclusion the reader is meant to come to is that the man is a glutton, but instead of stating, ‘He is a glutton’, the phrase ‘He is a pig’ is employed instead.

Another and much more useful approach is to focus on the *cognitive content and meaning* of metaphors.⁵⁹ Such a method was adopted by Lakoff and Johnson who

⁵⁸ J. M. Soskice, *Metaphor and Religious Language* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985).

⁵⁹ E.g., G. Lakoff and M. Johnson, *Metaphors we Live By* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1980), p. 5. Contemporary metaphor theory continues to be debated, especially the issue of the cognitive content of metaphor. The precise meaning of the cognitive content of metaphor divides linguists, but there is general agreement that metaphor does not simply decorate or illustrate. Rather, it invites reflection and insight and may even cause the reader to change his/her mind; see Eva Fedder Kittay (*Metaphor: Its Cognitive Force and Linguistic Structure*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987) who argues the case for the cognitive content of

maintain that the function of metaphor is about ‘*understanding* and experiencing of one kind of thing in terms of another kind of experience’.⁶⁰ On the basis of this definition and in relation to the apostle Paul, we can say that he is employing metaphors since he takes familial terms and expressions from the realms of social reality and applies them in another (a different) sphere – the realm of Christian relationships.

Usually a metaphor is denoted by the use of the word ‘like’. When Paul employs parental terminology in 1 Thessalonians and refers to himself ‘as if a nursing-mother’ (ὡς ἕάν τροφὸς, 2:7), and ‘as a ‘father’ (ὡς πατήρ, 2:11), technically speaking he is employing similes. However, the distinction is grammatical rather than substantive, and most discussions of metaphor and its function consider both types of figures of speech. All metaphors consist of two parts: the imprecise element which is to be explained, and the alien, or unexpected element which is used to supply the explanation.⁶¹ Linguists define metaphor as an understanding/experience that has been taken from one realm and transferred to another. As regards the realm or ‘thing’ from which the metaphor is taken linguists employ a variety of different terms to describe this e.g. the ‘source domain’, ‘vehicle’, ‘secondary subject’ or ‘donor field’. Likewise, a number of different terms are used to describe the area or ‘thing’ to which the metaphor is then applied, such as, the ‘target domain’, tenor’, ‘primary subject’ or ‘recipient field’. As far as our investigation

metaphorical language. The strongest case against the cognitive view is advanced by Donald Davidson, “What Metaphors Mean,” in S. Sacks (ed.), *On Metaphor* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1978), pp. 29-46.

⁶⁰ Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors we Live By*, p. 5.

⁶¹ Kittay, *Metaphor*, pp. 316-24, states that this surprising element of metaphor may cause a change in understanding thereby enabling the reader to gain a new perspective about the subject in question. She rather graphically (and metaphorically!) describes this shift in perspective as a rearranging of the furniture of the mind.

is concerned, the family in the ancient world is the ‘source domain’ and the ‘familial’ relationships between Paul and the Thessalonians and the Thessalonians with each other the ‘target domain’.

Again, if metaphors are to be a useful means of communication it needs to be understood that this will only occur ‘*when the person using the figure and the person reading or hearing the words give the words the same content*’.⁶² If there is any discrepancy between these two, ‘*it is not too much to say that...they might as well be speaking two different languages*’.⁶³ Thus, if the apostle Paul’s usage of familial nomenclature is far removed from what was commonly expected of families in antiquity, then the correlation would be weak and as a result the impact is lessened and our findings rendered less useful. It is our view, however, that Paul in using metaphor is working with what *he* considers a familiar source-field. Indeed, there is good reason to think that there is a shared world of meaning about families from which he is drawing, but we will have to prove this (in Part II) and in particular check whether his Jewish assumptions re family are likely to be consistent or inconsistent with those of his non-Jewish hearers.

1.3.2 The Characteristics of Metaphor As previously noted, metaphors are essentially didactic in nature – they challenge assumptions and enlarge our understanding and comprehension. Moreover, we are often unaware of the fact that metaphors are part and parcel of our everyday communication by which a point or message is vividly and

⁶² P. Cotterell and M. Turner, *Linguistics and Biblical Interpretation* (London: SPCK, 1989), p. 299 (emphasis added).

⁶³ F. Lyall, *Slaves, Citizens and Sons: Legal Metaphors in the Epistles* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), p. 20 (emphasis added). The same applies to the responsible exegete who needs to be wary of trying to impose his/her twentieth century understanding of what it means to be a ‘father’ or a ‘brother’ onto the biblical text.

graphically portrayed. At times metaphors have been regarded merely as a linguistic tool and reduced to the point of being looked upon as a literary method/device or an ‘adornment to language’⁶⁴ in order to illustrate some point or idea. However, this is to miss their essential function and, hence, the dynamic of metaphorical language. For example, in Hosea 5:12 we have two metaphors which present God in terms of a moth and dry rot in a house.⁶⁵ The term ‘moth’ is the *vehicle* (or secondary idea) of the metaphor, i.e. the thing known to us, but we are unexpectedly invited to make the leap as this word is suddenly transferred to an entirely new sphere, to God, the *tenor* (or primary idea) of the metaphor. Moreover, it is in the abruptness of the designation of God as a *moth* and *dry rot*, that the dynamic effectiveness of the metaphor lies. There is something about a moth and dry rot which enables us to grasp something about God never previously considered. Thus, metaphorical nomenclature draws attention to some characteristic shared by two terms, a characteristic not normally associated as belonging to them both, but nevertheless a feature which when presented commends itself to the recipient of the metaphor as suitable and enlightening.⁶⁶ In this way the metaphor functions as a very effective teaching tool and is not a ‘flowery’⁶⁷ substitute for

⁶⁴ Cotterell and Turner, *Linguistics*, p. 301; see also Steven J. Kraftchick, “Death in Us, Like in You: The Apostolic Medium,” in D. M. Hay (ed.), *Pauline Theology*, vol. 2 (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1993), pp. 156-81 (163).

⁶⁵ Cotterell and Turner, *Linguistics*, p. 300. I am indebted to Cotterell and Turner for some of the points that follow.

⁶⁶ A. Hough (*God is not ‘Green’: A Re-Examination of Eco-Theology* [Leominster: Gracewing, 1997], p. 114) notes that we should be aware of the fact that a metaphor does *not* make a *literal* statement. In relation to this, Hough comments that the phrase, ‘the clouds were like cotton-wool’, clearly does not mean the clouds *are* cotton-wool. He points out that ‘through its scale of meaning a metaphor does convey a truth even though it is, itself, literally a false statement’. A metaphor does not allow us to literally make conclusions about what a thing/person is or is not. Rather, Hough concludes, ‘a metaphor... says something *new* about [a subject], something which could be said in no other way’ (emphasis added).

⁶⁷ Kraftchick, “Death in Us”, p. 163.

colourless language. It is, in short, a method of speaking which contributes positively to the communication and teaching process itself.

Linguists also grade metaphors according to their 'quality'. For example, M. Black makes the clear distinction between extinct, dormant and active metaphors.⁶⁸ According to this understanding, the former no longer functions as a metaphor while the dormant has the potential to come alive. The latter, according to Lakoff and Johnson, falls within the creative category.⁶⁹ These two linguists have also graded metaphors into three groups, namely, *dead*, *new* and *conventional*, the latter of which structure our thinking and conduct. In short, they are, as the title of their book makes clear, the 'metaphors we live by'.⁷⁰ The question we must address in this study is how Paul's use of his kinship metaphors would be heard and understood in his own day. Were they so traditional to the extent that they have little meaning? Or were they so central and fundamental in the apostle Paul's time and usage that they are pregnant with content and meaning? In later times a term like 'brother' may have become meaningless, but was this the case when Paul used it in his day? ⁷¹ It also needs to be said that even if Paul's metaphors were conventional this does not mean that they are meaningless – quite the opposite. Could it

⁶⁸ M. Black, "More about Metaphor" in A. Ortony (ed.), *Metaphor and Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 19-41 [33-35]; von Allmen, (*La Famille de Dieu*, p. 190) also writes: "Dans les textes que nous avons étudiés jusqu' ici, Paul n'avait jamais fait appel qu' à l'un ou à l' autre de ces thèmes. Il n'était pas à la fois le père et la mère. La conclusion s'impose, sur le plan de l'image: nous avons ici affaire à des *métaphores vives...*" (emphasis added).

⁶⁹ Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors we Live By*, pp. 53-55.

⁷⁰ Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors we Live By*, pp. 53-55 (emphasis added).

⁷¹ See the essay by E. Lassen ("The Roman Family: Ideal and Metaphor," in Moxnes [ed.], *Constructing Early Christian Families*, pp. 103-120 esp. pp. 110-114) who argues that familial metaphors were so much a part of Roman life and culture that they would have been readily understood (and in certain cases despised) by Christian usage of them.

not be the case that metaphorical language can be used unconsciously precisely because it is so much a part of everyday speech? In other words, these familial metaphors could have become so well established and embedded in the language and understanding of Paul and the Thessalonians that they were used without thinking.

If we are to determine whether a metaphor is dead or alive close attention must not only be paid to the ‘immediate literary context’ (or ‘cotext’ as it is sometimes called) but also the historical context. It is not enough to know how a word was employed among a particular language group because there can be considerable variation among speakers of the same language.⁷² In relation to an ancient text such as a letter of the apostle Paul’s, we need to have a general knowledge of how a term was used at the time when the text was composed. But as Gregory Dawes continues, something more is required because if we are ‘to judge whether or not a metaphor is alive, we need to understand how it is being used *by this particular author on this particular occasion*’.⁷³ In short, ‘we must construct the “context of utterance” and intention of the speaker’.

We turn to one more area that is of relevance here, namely, the characteristic of *extending* a metaphor. Can we expect complete identity between the *donor* and the *recipient* fields? In other words, when we are making the comparison between the family in antiquity and Paul’s ‘family’ in Thessalonica, are we to understand one exactly in terms of another? Is there always complete overlap between the two, or are there areas where the two do not fit? In relation to this, it is important to note that metaphors can in

⁷²Gregory W. Dawes, *The Body in Question: Metaphor and Meaning in the Interpretation of Ephesians 5:21-33* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), p. 77.

⁷³ Dawes, *Body in Question*, p. 77.

some circumstances take on new meaning.⁷⁴ This occurs in two ways: first, when a metaphor highlights unused aspects of the donor field in a creative manner, and secondly, when it attracts new aspects from outside, from other donor fields or metaphors. For example, the phrase ‘man is a slim wolf’ is an instance of the former whereas the phrase ‘man is a cyberwolf’ adds a new dimension and hence connotation. By so doing the metaphor has acquired something of a life of its own.⁷⁵ Thus a metaphor such as ‘God is Father’ may add new meanings not only to what God is like but also to how we perceive and understand human fathers. Again, if, as is the case in 1 Thessalonians, Paul applies certain female metaphors i.e. nursing-mother (2:7) to describe his role towards the Thessalonians, we will look closely at why he should do so and what aspects of parenthood he intends to convey by (a man) describing himself in this way. Rather than simply dismissing the assertion of Paul as ‘nursing-mother’ as ludicrous or mistaken, the reader is jolted into further reflection on exactly what Paul is saying here.

We will, in the course of this study, be alert to any new dimensions and connotations associated with Paul’s use of these familial metaphors. By employing familial metaphors Paul lifts the lid for us as regards his experience and understanding of Christian relations. There may well be parallels between the family in antiquity but we need to look for areas where this is not the case, and where new meanings from outside the primary donor field may be in operation. In such cases *Paul’s own thinking and understanding* may provide

⁷⁴ Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors we Live By*, p. 139; see also G. B. Caird, *The Language and Imagery of the Bible* (London: Duckworth, 1980), pp. 154-59.

⁷⁵ See the most helpful discussion by John Riches, “Parables and the Search for a New Community,” in J. Neusner, P. Borgen, E.S. Frerichs and R. Horsley (eds.), *The Social World of Formative Christianity and Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988), pp. 235-63 (241-43).

new and fresh insights not previously recognised before.

1.3.3 The Nexus Between Metaphors As already mentioned, this study will include not one but the entire range of metaphors which Paul employs in this letter to describe his relations to the Thessalonians and the Thessalonians relations to each other (e.g. ‘father’, 2:11; ‘child’, 2:11; ‘nursing-mother’, 2:7; ‘orphan’, 2:17; and ‘brother’, e.g. 1:4); indeed, metaphors can be related to one another and form groups or structures which linguists refer to as a ‘metaphor complex’ or ‘metaphor system’ or ‘metaphor cluster’. Thus the statement ‘man is a wolf’ may be parallel to ‘man is a bull’ both of which can be subsumed under the general category and highlight the recipient field ‘man’. In the relationship between metaphors, whether they are organised in parallel or hierarchically, it is crucial to make the distinction between consistency and coherence.

According to Lakoff and Johnson, metaphors are only consistent if they form a ‘single image’.⁷⁶ Further, they are coherent provided they ‘fit together’. That is to say, ‘wolf’ and ‘bull’ are coherent because they belong to the same general category. Thus, as far as coherency is concerned in relation to the apostle Paul, when he uses terms such as ‘father’, ‘children’ and ‘brother’ they are drawn from different aspects of the same ‘source domain’ (i.e. the family in antiquity) but are applied to the ‘target domain’ not in order to create a ‘consistent whole’ but in such a way as to illuminate the latter from different perspectives. On the other hand, his uses of these metaphors is not consistent since their donor fields though related are different. Moreover, as Lakoff and Johnson

⁷⁶ Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors we Live By*, pp. 87-105.

point out, metaphorical ideas or concepts are rarely consistent.⁷⁷

The apostle Paul's familial metaphors appear at first glance to be related and to form a metaphor cluster. But when Paul uses his familial metaphors is one necessarily dependent on or subordinate to another – or just parallel to it? This is worth exploring a little further since this thesis is concerned with the parent-child and brother-brother – metaphors which at first glance appear to be related. As regards the parent-child metaphor, the metaphors God/Father and Jesus/Son are clearly related to God/Father and believers/children in that God is the Father to both. A natural inference from this is to conclude that since Jesus and Christians are sons then they must to all intents and purposes be brothers. However, Paul never makes these *horizontal* connections in his letters; instead, Jesus' brotherhood is worked out in some other way e.g. via the Spirit or it is qualified by a phrase like 'the *first-born* among many brothers' (Rom.8:29).⁷⁸

Again, the metaphors God/Father and Christians/children and Christians/brothers can also be correlated logically, in that their brotherly relations are derived from their common relationship to God as Father. However, it is instructive to note that Paul never makes these horizontal connections in his use of familial metaphors. For instance, in Gal.3:26-4:1 where Paul employs the metaphor of adoptive sonship the emphasis is wholly on the vertical (God-sons/children) rather than the Galatians' relations as brothers.

The same impression is gained from a consideration of other metaphor clusters - God as Father and believers as children, and Paul as father/mother and Christians as children. In both cases the focus is on the relation of Christians to God and to Paul as their father

⁷⁷ Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors we Live By*, pp. 94-96.

⁷⁸ Aasgaard, "My Beloved Brothers and Sisters!", pp. 148-50.

and as a result they do not fit together on the level of metaphor. Similarly, the metaphor clusters – believers as Paul’s brothers, Paul as father and Christians as children - which Paul employs in his letters and particularly here in 1 Thessalonians do *not* belong to the same donor field even though they may share the same recipient field i.e. Paul’s relations between himself and the Thessalonians. In fact Paul uses different metaphors in this one letter in a bewildering and at times conflicting manner. For instance, he presents himself as a father and nursing-mother but then (paradoxically) appears to present himself as an infant and an orphan! He also refers to the Thessalonians as his offspring and his brothers.⁷⁹

It will be immediately apparent from all this that the picture portrayed is a complex one to say the least. Whilst we have seen that Paul does not extend his metaphors horizontally, at other times in 1 Thessalonians he appears to invert his parental relationship to his converts by referring to himself as an orphan. Note should also be taken of the fragmentary character and use of Paul’s familial metaphors which ought to warn us about jumping to conclusions on the basis of one letter alone. Whilst the apostle’s use of such figures of speech may not be consistent, they are nevertheless coherent and by using familial metaphors Paul explicates a variety of relations between those involved – in this case between himself and the Thessalonians.

In this investigation we will consider Paul’s metaphors in two main ways, namely, *Paul’s relations with the Thessalonians* (inter-generational) and the *Thessalonians’*

⁷⁹ The fact that Paul never refers to *himself* as the Thessalonians’ brother in this letter (or anywhere else for that matter) is immediately striking. Paul prefers to use parental metaphors, especially ‘father’, to describe his relationship to his converts; see discussion in chapter 5.2.1 later.

relations (inter-relational) with one another. Although the term ‘family/household’ does not occur in 1 Thessalonians, Paul’s use of terms like ‘father’, ‘children’ and ‘brother(s)’ clearly belongs to the same field. The following are the main relationships which we will investigate:

PAUL:	as father	(2:11)
	as nursing-mother	(2:7)
	as infant	(2:7)
	as orphan	(2:17)
THE THESSALONIANS:	as Paul’s children	(2:11)
	as brothers and sisters	(e.g. 1:4; 2:1; 4:6-9)

1.3.4 Summary

The importance of metaphor and metaphor theory and its usefulness in this investigation have been recognised. To assist us in this study we have drawn on the work and insights of a number of linguists, particularly, Lakoff and Johnson, and M. Black to provide a methodological framework for our study of Paul’s familial metaphors in 1 Thessalonians. A basic working definition for metaphor was also established, namely, that the role and function of metaphor is to understand one thing in terms of another. Given that Paul uses metaphors there is reason to believe that he considers this to be a familiar source-field. Because these family metaphors are so well established they are central to Paul’s perception of Christian relations.

Metaphors are also an important didactic tool and not simply a linguistic variation of speech. They add to the process of communication itself and may provide fresh understanding. Paul uses familial metaphors because they were still meaningful and readily understood by his readers. That is to say, when the apostle refers to himself as 'father', for example, familiar bells would have resounded in the ears of his hearers. Familial metaphors were also able to be extended: they can acquire new meaning through extension and we shall be alert to this fact and whether Paul's use of such metaphors take on novel connotations. Paul's kinship metaphors are part of clusters of metaphors which at times are consistent and at other times not. However, they show coherence since they are drawn from a common source domain and used to illuminate relationships within the target domain.

Given that Paul's use of metaphor shows an awareness of a familiar source-field and given that we need to prove there is a shared world of meaning about families from which he is drawing, there is sufficient justification for carrying out an intensive study of ancient assumptions about family relations to test this hypothesis. It remains to be seen whether or not it is possible from the ancient material to isolate dominant meanings of these terms as the donor field (see chapter 1.4 following for our methodology). If there are stock meanings associated with the parent-child (e.g. hierarchy etc.) and brother-brother (e.g. honour/respect) relationships and these meanings are indeed the basis of the source of Paul's familial metaphors, then they will undoubtedly be useful (in Part III) in helping to clarify the range of meanings that the apostle wishes to convey in his understanding of his relations with the Thessalonians and the Thessalonians' relations with

each other.

1.4 Methodology Adopted in this Research

Having discussed metaphor and metaphor theory and how it can assist us in this enquiry, we turn now to the methods we shall adopt in the pursuit of our study of Paul's familial metaphors in 1 Thessalonians.

When Paul likens himself to a 'father' and his Thessalonian converts to his 'children' or themselves to 'brothers' how would such metaphors have been heard? What did this language connote; that is to say what were the implications of such familial nomenclature? Moreover, in what way did children *expect* their parents to conduct themselves, and how in turn did parents expect their children to behave? Was the parent-child relationship a hierarchical one and underpinned by authority? Also, is there any evidence to suggest that fathers manifested affection towards their offspring? And how was such love shown? Again, what was commonly expected of fathers in the ancient world *vis-à-vis* their obligation to educate their children? And, in all this, what was expected of children in this relationship? Was it based upon the principle of reciprocity?

As regards brotherly relations, was brotherly love a distinct characteristic of this relationship? Were brothers expected to show honour towards one another? And is there any evidence among writers in antiquity to suggest that brotherly relations are essentially hierarchical or non-hierarchical? And if there is, what implications could this have for how we view the structures of early Christian communities?

In order that we might answer these questions and grasp the sense of the metaphors

Paul employs, we need to look beyond the apostle Paul himself and carry out an intensive study of the nature of the family in antiquity. Since Paul used family metaphors in a positive manner – why else would he have felt comfortable in using them? – we shall focus on the *standard assumptions* or *common expectations*⁸⁰ of the ancient family. Paul was the founder of the Thessalonian community and it is unlikely that he would have employed negative images of *himself* in his effort to see the church grow.⁸¹ In this investigation we are not so much interested in actual social practice – which obviously could be very different to the normal social presuppositions - *vis-à-vis* familial relations but rather in the distinctive characteristics and expectations that lie behind Paul's reference to these familial metaphors. Parents might expose or beat⁸² their children quite often, but if Paul refers to himself as a 'father' to his Thessalonian 'children' (2:11), it was presumably with certain norms or assumptions in mind, and we need to know what people thought fathers or brothers *ought* to be.

In the course of our investigation we shall be focusing on both literary and non-

⁸⁰ Moxnes ("What is Family?", p. 18) states regarding this: 'What are the sources for studies of family in the context of early Christianity? The major sources are texts, Christian as well as Jewish, Greek and Roman authors. It is common among all these sources that they offer statements of *ideals* and norms, not just data on people's actual behaviour...the emphasis is upon the *shared presuppositions*, not upon the specific types of social behaviour' (emphasis added). For comment on these *common assumptions* in Jewish and non-Jewish families see Cohen, "Introduction," in Cohen (ed.), *The Jewish Family*, pp. 2-3; H. von Lips, *Glaube – Gemeinde – Amt: Zum Verständnis der Ordination in den Pastoralbriefen* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck: & Ruprecht, 1979), p. 126; R. Aasgaard, "Brotherhood in Plutarch and Paul: Its Role and Character," in Moxnes (ed.), *Constructing Early Christian Families*, pp. 166-182 (180 n 5). For a brief discussion of the ideals of the Roman family see Lassen, "The Roman Family," p. 107.

⁸¹ S. H. Polaski makes the important point that Paul is never presented (in Acts), nor presents himself (in his letters), in a negative light; see *Paul and the Discourse of Power* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), p. 129.

⁸² Seneca, for example, is critical of excessively severe parents. He uses the phrase 'worst of fathers' (*pessimus pater*) for the father who supervised his children with constant whipping for even the most trivial of misdemeanours (*De Ben.* 1.16.3; cf. Quintilian 1.3.13); see the discussion by R. Saller, "Corporal Punishment, Authority, and Obedience in the Roman Household," in Rawson (ed.), *Marriage, Divorce and Children*, pp. 144-165.

literary sources in order to determine whether or not they reflect such conventional attitudes. We will survey as broad a range of sources as possible in an effort to identify stock meanings of, or associations with, familial terms, whether or not these stock meanings have anything to do with actual experienced reality. Given the fact that Paul likens himself to a father (2:11) to his Thessalonian ‘children’ we shall endeavour to identify from our primary sources certain aspects of the father-child relationship - was it hierarchical, and was it the norm for fathers to exercise authority and educate their offspring? (2:12). And did fathers ever show affection for their children (2:8)?

Similarly, in relation to Paul’s role as ‘nursing-mother’ (2:7), we shall seek to determine from our sources the common assumptions associated with this role – did it include nurture, care and love? In addition, Paul also identifies a number of features associated with the Thessalonian brotherhood - e.g. brotherly love (4:9; 5:14), respect (4:4-6; 5:12), difference in rank and status (5:12-15), brotherly admonishment (5:12), co-operation in work (4:11-12; 5:12) - and we shall comb our primary source material to determine whether these were the normal presuppositions of brothers in the ancient world.

Admittedly actual experience of, for example, fathers, brothers and children would probably vary according to social level and personal family life (and no doubt in other areas as well), but people might still know what they think a father, son, or brother should be or do. By considering a broad range of socio-historical material we will hopefully have a useful comparative context for studying Paul’s role as father etc. in 1 Thessalonians. More important, this should situate Paul in his proper historical context thereby

enabling us to determine how he may have employed these aspirations for the purposes of clarifying his relationship with his converts.

First, as regards the literary sources, I will present a broad range of evidence from Jewish and Graeco-Roman texts to determine whether or not they are describing common expectations or if they are perpetrating a distinctive viewpoint. Are there, for example, any differences between Jewish and Graeco-Roman families at different times or at different social levels in the ancient world? Or were Jewish families such that their expectations, *vis-à-vis* familial relations in general and parents and children in particular, were entirely consonant with, and barely indistinguishable from, those of Graeco-Roman society?

In all of this, essentially what we are looking for are those *standard assumptions* which are representative of a broad swathe of opinion – not idiosyncratic sources which hold to an ethnic or minority position or a philosophical ideal which is out of line with the majority opinion. Also, if there are common assumptions, how long would such assumptions hold? Are there likely to have been changes in these over a period of time? We will closely scrutinise our primary sources to see if, for instance, life setting or indeed *genre* distort normal social expectations.

As well as investigating a wide range of literary sources, we will also integrate the findings from some important non-literary texts into our study. This will include, for example, epigraphic evidence, which, according to van der Horst and as far as Jewish inscriptions are concerned, are important because it is here that we find a strong tendency

to *idealise*.⁸³ It is this predilection to idealise that makes epigraphy a most useful source for this part of our investigation. We will include evidence from grave inscriptions (Jewish and Graeco-Roman) of the 'lower classes'. By 'the lower classes' we mean 'slaves, freedmen and the poor freeborn who failed to distinguish themselves in any way.'⁸⁴ In this respect, it is sometimes presumed that epitaphs were only the preserve of the social élite, but Saller and Brent have cogently argued that they 'cut through the strata of society from top to bottom'.⁸⁵ Of course, not all or even most inscriptions are representative of the lower classes but it is here, more than elsewhere, that we are given some insight into the thoughts, hopes and fears of the common people.⁸⁶ We shall investigate whether the stock meanings or traditional attitudes of parents, children and brothers mentioned earlier are also representative of 'popular culture' in the ancient world.

Another important source which will give us access to popular thought and opinion are dream handbooks.⁸⁷ One of the best known surviving manuals of dream interpretation

⁸³ P. W. van der Horst, *Ancient Jewish Epitaphs: An Introductory Survey of a Millennium of Jewish Funerary Epigraphy [300 BCE-700CE]* (Kampen: Kok Pharos Publishing House, 1991), p. 11.

⁸⁴ B. Rawson, "Family Life among the Lower Classes at Rome in the First Two Centuries of the Empire," *CPh* vol. 61 (1966), pp. 71-83 (71).

⁸⁵ R. P. Saller and B. D. Shaw, "Tombstones and Roman Family Relations in the Principate: Civilians, Soldiers and Slaves," *JRS* vol. 74 (1984), pp. 124-156 (127). Saller and Shaw go on to state: 'The wish to perpetuate some memory of oneself after death was not confined to the wealthy, just as in many other pre-modern urban centres, where the poor have gone to considerable lengths to avoid the anonymity of the mass graves of paupers and to assure for themselves the basics of burial in a genteel manner' (127).

⁸⁶ van der Horst, *Ancient Jewish Epitaphs*, p. 11. T. H. Nielsen ("Athenian Grave Monuments and Social Class," *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies* vol. 30 (1989), pp. 411-20 [419]) also insists that Athenian grave monuments are not indicative of wealthy citizens but include 'a cross-section of the Athenian citizen population'.

⁸⁷ Ancient horoscopes are another useful means of providing insights into the common expectations of the lower-classes. In this respect L. Thorndike ("A Roman Astrologer as a Historical Source: Julius Firmicus Maternus," *CPh* vol. 8 [1913], pp. 415-35) has carried out a historical study of Books 3 and 4 (from a total of 8) of the astrologer Julius Firmicus Maternus. The value of these writings, states Thorndike, lies in the fact that 'in trying to predict the future the astrologers really depict their own civilisation', thereby giving

upon which we will draw is the *Oneirocritica* of Artimedorus of Daldis (second century CE). As this is a *practical* handbook on the interpretation of dreams, its concerns remain close to the everyday concerns of the common person.⁸⁸ Dreams of *all* persons – not just those of royalty or the élite – are included, thereby giving us ‘indirect access to the desires and attitudes of the lower classes’.⁸⁹ Artimedorus’ handbook includes dreams about a number of subjects such as health, finance, business transaction and, importantly for us, *social relations*. The latter includes dream references in relation to family members (e.g. parents, children and brothers) and Artimedorus’ interpretation of these reveal something of the hopes, aspirations and fears of family members for one another.

These are some of the questions and issues that we will address in this investigation. Clearly an understanding of these matters is important and will render what we discover in the Pauline material more intelligible as well as providing the necessary backdrop against which to interpret 1 Thessalonians more adequately.

us an insight into what was going on in their own day. Admittedly Firmicus as a historical source is late – 4th century CE – nevertheless he deals with family matters in addition to a plethora of other subjects. For example, he refers to family dissension 18 times, family affection 17, and brotherly conflicts on 8 occasions. See also R. MacMullen “Social History in Astrology,” *Ancient Society* vol. 2 [1971], pp. 105-16.

⁸⁸ D.B. Martin, *Slavery as Salvation: The Metaphor of Slavery in Pauline Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), p. 20. The work *Oneirocritica* comprises 5 books of which books 1-3 are dedicated to Cassius Maximus and books 4-5 to his son Artimedorus. References to Artemidorus are taken from *The Interpretation of Dreams (Oneirocritica)*. Translation and Commentary by Robert J. White (Park Ridge, N. J.: Noyes Press, 1975).

⁸⁹ Martin, *Slavery as Salvation*, p. 20

PART II

PRIMARY SOURCE EVIDENCE

2. PARENTS AND CHILDREN IN THE THE ANCIENT WORLD: JEWISH EVIDENCE

2.1 Introduction: Philo, Pseudo-Phocylides and Josephus

Parents and children in general, and fathers and sons in particular, feature quite significantly in the writings of Jewish authors of antiquity.¹ In this respect, three authors are of special interest to us, namely, Philo of Alexandria, Pseudo-Phocylides² and Josephus the historian. However, before we investigate their writings in depth, it is appropriate for us to provide some justification for their inclusion. Here we not only need to know something about these authors but must also understand their respective literary contexts and any particular axes they might be grinding in making their remarks.

Philo of Alexandria (c. 20BCE-c. 50CE), the philosopher and eclectic thinker, is undoubtedly the most prolific extant Jewish author of the Graeco-Roman world.

Moreover, Philo more than any other author in antiquity, writes of the obligations

¹ As noted earlier, it is the family in *classical antiquity* as opposed to the Jewish family which has been the subject of intense study in recent years. In this respect, Cohen ("Introduction," in *The Jewish Family*, p. 2) provides the reason for this state of affairs: 'The explanation for the scholarly reticence about the Jewish family is not the lack of evidence. The explanation, rather, is the *lack of interest*' (emphasis added).

² A number of scholars have also come to the conclusion that Pseudo-Phocylides was from Alexandria on the basis of what he states in v. 102, 'It is not good to dissolve the human frame'; this is taken to be an allusion to anatomy and Alexandria was the only city in antiquity where dissections were known to have taken place; see P. W. van der Horst (*The Sentences of Pseudo-Phocylides with Introduction and Commentary* [SVTP 4; Leiden: Brill, 1978], pp. 9, 184). John M. G. Barclay (*Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora from Alexander to Trajan [323 BCE-117CE]*, p. 337) however, points out that the above statement may be an allusion to 'secondary burial and even if dissection is here in view, one did not have to live in Alexandria to abhor it'. More recently, P. W. van der Horst has asserted that Philo was a "contemporary, compatriot, and coreligionist" of Pseudo-Phocylides; see "Pseudo-Phocylides Revisited", *JSP* vol. 3 (1988), pp. 3-30 (26).

parents had in the rearing of children and of the responsibilities children had towards their parents.³ Philo lays great stress upon the ‘sanctity of family’⁴ and his writings are (one of) the most important Jewish witnesses to parent-child relations in the ancient world.

To be sure, Philo’s primary concern is not to address this relationship; rather one of his main aims is to develop an allegorical interpretation of scripture. Nevertheless, there are references to the family in almost every treatise⁵ and comments regarding parents and children in particular appear in almost every extant discourse of the *Exposition of the Law*.⁶ For instance, in his introduction to the series, *De Vita Mosis* – Moses is by far the most important of the biblical characters to Philo⁷ – the philosopher condemns the exposure of infants (*Mos.* 1.10-11).⁸ In his work entitled *De Abrahamo* he discusses the near sacrifice of the much loved son Isaac by his father Abraham while in *De Josepho* the author provides a graphic description of the love of Jacob for Joseph the son of his

³ E. g., O. Larry Yarbrough, “Parents and Children in the Jewish Family of Antiquity,” in Cohen (ed.), *The Jewish Family*, pp. 39-59 (56).

⁴ E. R. Goodenough, *Introduction to Philo Judaeus*, (Lanham University Press of America, 1986) p. 166.

⁵ Yarbrough, “Parents and Children in the Jewish Family,” p. 41 n 12.

⁶ Reinhartz, “Parents and Children: A Philonic Perspective,” in Cohen (ed.), *The Jewish Family*, pp.61-88 (39). It is worth noting that as far as Philo’s nomenclature for parents is concerned he generally speaks of ‘parents’ (οἱ γονεῖς, masc. pl.). He also uses the singular ὁ πατήρ as in *Virt.* 192, but in many other instances when Philo employs the term ‘parents’ he has the male parent in view. Thus, the relationship of most interest to him is that between father and son. Regarding his terms for ‘children’, Philo most often employs the noun παῖς which is indicative of the fact that the child is the inferior party in the parent-child relationship. This is most clearly demonstrated in those passages where Philo stresses the responsibility of children to care for their elderly parents (e.g. *Dec.* 113-18).

⁷ S. Sandmel, “Philo Judaeus: The Man, his Writings and his Significance,” *ANRW* II 21.1 (1984), pp. 3-46. Sandmel also writes, ‘In his biographical treatment, Philo follows Scripture, but he adds many items not found there, for example, an imaginative description of Moses’ broad and deep education,...and the quality of his mind (*Mos.* 1.18-24)’ (21).

⁸ All quotations of Philo, unless otherwise stated, are from the Loeb Classical Library edition.

latter years.

But it is arguably Philo's treatises entitled *De Decalogo* and *De Specialibus Legibus* which are most fruitful and applicable to our investigations. Here he deals with a number of legal issues in relation to parents and children within the context of the biblical (fifth) commandment to honour one's parents (*Dec.* 106-20; *Spec. Leg.* 2.224-41). In this respect, it is important to mention that Philo's explication of the biblical laws, e.g. the honouring of parents by their children, has been taken to mean that he offers little of his personal views on these matters.⁹ But a careful examination of Philo's comments in relation to biblical law shows that there are times when he not only follows the teaching of scripture but *adds* details which actually go beyond the boundary of biblical exegesis. For instance, in his thorough treatment of the fifth commandment he enjoins honour to be shown not only to parents but *also* to elders, the latter of which are not mentioned in Ex. 20:12 or Deut. 5:16. Further, he vigorously condemns infanticide and exposure of infants, issues upon which scripture is signally silent (cf. Ex. 21:22; Lev. 22:27).¹⁰ Again, Goodenough argues that in *Spec. Leg.* 2.232 where Philo is commenting on the biblical text of Deut. 21:18-21 which advocates beating as an initial form of punishment, the philosopher adds to this imprisonment and degradation.¹¹ These examples are sufficient to illustrate our point that Philo is not merely concerned to give an exposition of biblical teaching but his remarks in regard to

⁹ F.C. Colson is of the view that there is little evidence that Philo deviates from the biblical descriptions of the special laws in *De Specialibus Legibus* 1-4 to suggest that he was trying to accommodate and reflect the law as practised in his *own* community; see Colson, *Philo*, vol. 7, pp. xii-xiii, n (g).

¹⁰ For a detailed treatment of Philo's views regarding infanticide see A. Reinhartz, "Philo on Infanticide," *SPA* vol. 4 (1992), pp. 42-58.

¹¹ E. R. Goodenough, *The Jurisprudence of the Jewish Courts in Egypt* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1929), pp. 69-70.

the relationships between parents and children shed some light on his *own* thinking and ‘its social and legal ramifications as he saw them’.¹² More important than this, and in keeping with our methodology, is the fact that Philo’s comments on this relationship also provide a window into the stereotypical views or the *normal social expectations* of the parent-child relationship.¹³

The second author we will examine is Pseudo-Phocylides, who also lived during the first century BCE-first century CE. Pseudo-Phocylides,¹⁴ is the name we give to the author of the Sentences or *Sententiae*, a collection of aphorisms arranged in the form of a didactic poem.¹⁵ Although this work is multicultural in its literary and material background – Pseudo-Phocylides integrates Greek and Jewish ethical traditions together – the writer draws extensively from certain sections of the Pentateuch (i.e. Ex. 20-23; Lev. 18-20 and Deut. 5 and 27).¹⁶ The author’s purpose for writing has been variously construed and he may have been motivated by a desire to encourage fellow Jews, or to gain sympathy from a pagan public (without thinking that he could convert them), or

¹² Reinhartz, “Parents and Children,” p. 64.

¹³ Reinhartz (“Parents and Children,” p 88) emphasises the difficulties which these ancient relationships present for the modern to understand; nevertheless, she continues, there is no mistaking ‘the *assumptions* behind Philo’s remarks on parents and children’ (emphasis added). For a non-technical treatment of the assumptions of Jewish and non-Jewish authors see W. A. Strange, *Children in the Early Church: Children in the Ancient World, the New Testament and the Early Church* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1996), pp. 19, 30.

¹⁴ Although the author is a Jew he has chosen to write under a Greek pseudonym, the reason for which may be related to his purpose(s) in writing (cf. n 17).

¹⁵ For a discussion of the literary presuppositions of the *Sententiae* see W.T. Wilson, *The Mysteries of Righteousness: The Literary Composition and Genre of the Sentences of Pseudo-Phocylides* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr; [P. Siebeck], 1994), p. 6.

¹⁶ Wilson, *Mysteries of Righteousness*, p. 5. Wilson's study specifically argues that the *Sententiae* functions as a gnomic poem that epitomises the ethical teachings of Torah and other materials deemed to be of value for Hellenistic Jews living in a pluralistic society.

even to win people over to his own way of life.¹⁷

Another possible reason for writing – and one that is very much related to our inquiry – is that Pseudo-Phocylides tried to provide a ‘pagan’ manual of ethical instruction which could be used by Jewish school-*children*, and of which Jewish *parents* would approve.¹⁸ In light of this, it is interesting that the *Sententiae* contains a substantial block of instructions (i.e. vv. 175-227) whose general framework resembles some of the so-called *Haustafeln* found in the Pauline corpus, in Hellenistic Judaism, as well as in some Graeco-Roman writings.¹⁹ Thus although the poem comprises only 230 lines, it is important for the fact that it addresses, among other issues, the duties and obligations of parents to children and vice versa within this wider context of household management.²⁰

¹⁷ These three purposes are posited by van der Horst; see *Sentences*, p. 70. On the other hand, Wilson (*Mysteries of Righteousness*, p. 6) does not view Pseudo-Phocylides as a “God-fearer” or that his intended audience was pagan. Rather, he sides with E. Lohse, who contends that the writer, ‘[has] placed these sentences in the mouth of a Greek thinker who lived centuries earlier in order to show that already in ancient times the wisdom of the Greeks was influenced by the spirit of Moses, with the result that Jewish Torah and Greek ethics were thoroughly in agreement.’; see *Theological Ethics of the New Testament* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991) [originally, *Theologische Ethik des Neuen Testaments* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1988)], pp. 22-23.

¹⁸ This suggestion was made by W. C. van Unnik to van der Horst which the latter subsequently took up and developed; see “Pseudo-Phocylides Revisited,” p. 30. We must also take account of the fact that the writer may have more mature adults in mind since there are directives on sexual conduct.

¹⁹ P. Wendland’s seminal essay (“Die Therapeuten und die philonische Schrift vom beschaulichen Leben,” *JCPHSup* vol. 22 [1896], pp. 693-772, esp. p. 709) has focused scholarly attention on the similarities of these verses with the Jewish ‘codes’ found in Philo’s *Hypothetica* 8.7.1-20 and particularly Josephus’ *Contra Apionem* 2.190-219. In *Ap.* 2.190-219 and *Sent.* 175-227 there are similarities in literary construction as well as instructions regarding household duties (e.g. the raising of children, obligations to parents and elders etc.); see Wilson, *Mysteries of Righteousness*, p. 123. For literature on the *Haustafeln* see, for example, K. Berger, “Hellenistische Gattungen im Neuen Testament,” *ANRW* II 25.2 (1984), pp. 1078-86; P. Fielder, “Haustafel,” *RAC* vol. 13 (1986), pp. 1063-73; Crouch, *Origin and Intention*, pp. 74-101; D.L. Balch, “Household Codes,” in D.E. Aune (ed.), *Graeco-Roman Literature and the New Testament* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988), pp. 25-50.

²⁰ There are also instructions elsewhere in the poem concerning the proper treatment of children by social ‘outsiders’. For example, in a paragraph where the author deals with the mistreatment of those who are unable to defend themselves, Wilson (*Mysteries of Righteousness*, p. 127) translates v. 137 as, ‘Pay due respect to *children* (παῖσι)’; *contra* van der Horst (*Sentences*, p. 205), who prefers πᾶσι, ‘Render to *all*

Our third Jewish author is the historian Flavius Josephus (c.37-c.105 CE). Generally speaking, Josephus' purpose in writing is essentially historical; he is rightly viewed as an apologist for the Jewish people in the midst of a hostile Graeco-Roman world. Indeed, the very purpose for him writing the *Antiquities* and *Contra Apionem* was to defend himself and extol Judaism. That Josephus portrayed himself as a Jew is not contested by scholars, but the fact that he wrote all of his works – during the latter half of his life - whilst living in Rome needs to be properly accounted for.²¹ According to John Barclay, Josephus may not have been as acculturated as Philo, for example, nevertheless his 'works show us a Diaspora Jew making a supreme – and in fact the last extant – effort to interpret Judaism for non-Jews in the Graeco-Roman world'.²² Despite the fact that Josephus clearly portrayed himself as a Jew,²³ 'much of his writing was aimed at convincing both Jews and Romans that the practice of Judaism was not incompatible with living in a Roman society.'²⁴

Martin Goodman goes further and suggests that Josephus was not only a Roman citizen (by adoption) but that '*he might have regarded himself as in some sense Roman*'.²⁵ Josephus, he suggests, was probably 'well integrated into Roman

their due'. In the same context Pseudo-Phocylides warns against maltreating children, 'On tender children do not lay a hand in violence' (v. 150).

²¹ Barclay (*Jews in the Mediterranean*, p. 346) regards Josephus' living in Rome as so significant that it 'influences his literary output in many ways'.

²² Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean*, p. 368.

²³ M. Goodman, "Josephus as Roman Citizen," in F. Parente and J. Sievers (eds.), *Josephus and the History of the Graeco-Roman Period: Essays in Memory of Morton Smith* (Leiden: Brill, 1994), p. 333. Barclay (*Jews in the Mediterranean*, p. 368) also points out: 'it is quite clear that Josephus would never have allowed his Jewish heritage to be melted into some general amalgam.'

²⁴ Goodman, "Josephus as Roman Citizen," p. 334

²⁵ Goodman, "Josephus as Roman Citizen," p. 335 (emphasis added).

society'²⁶ and was like other Jews of the era who regarded themselves as having 'dual loyalties' – 'Romans of the Jewish faith'.²⁷ Using the last of Josephus' works, *Contra Apionem*, Goodman, instead of regarding this work as being a Jewish apology (as is usually the case), suggests the book's 'general assault on Greek culture' may be a literary device used by the author by which he 'selects those aspects of Judaism most easily defended to a gentile readership'.²⁸ Goodman also identifies specific Jewish familial qualities (e.g. submissiveness [201], honouring of parents [206]), qualities which are 'the reverse of those espoused by fickle Greeks in Rome'. Significantly, Josephus goes on to draw up a list of nations whose customs compare *unfavourably* with the excellent Jewish qualities above but notably omits Rome, the reason for which, according to Goodman, 'may... have been... a desire to show, by careful selection in his description of the Jewish way of life, that in *many important aspects Jews and Romans shared the same ideals*'.²⁹

We shall be looking for such *ideals* not only in the last of Josephus' work, but also across his other writings and particularly how they impact on the parent-child relationship. As in our discussion of the Philonic corpus and Pseudo-Phocylides, our concern here is with the standard *expectations* of parents and children. It is not necessary for us to provide an exhaustive survey of Josephus' writings³⁰ but to select pertinent

²⁶ Goodman, "Josephus as Roman Citizen," p. 329.

²⁷ Goodman, "Josephus as Roman Citizen", p. 331.

²⁸ Josephus, according to Goodman ("Josephus as Roman Citizen," p. 334), in his attacks on the Greeks does not describe Judaism as *compatible* to Greek culture, as other writers have done. Rather he claims that the Jewish manner of living is *superior*. Interestingly, the characteristics that he isolates are strikingly similar 'to those aspects of Roman *mos* that Latin authors trumpeted when they too wanted to compare themselves favourably to Greeks'.

²⁹ Goodman, "Josephus as Roman Citizen", p. 335 (emphasis added).

³⁰ All quotations from Josephus' writings, unless otherwise stated, are from the Loeb Classical Library edition.

sections which illustrate the common assumptions of this relationship.

We turn now to an investigation of the writings of these three authors. We shall confine our investigations to those aspects of parent-child relations which we earlier noted and which impinge upon and are mostly directly related to 1 Thessalonians – e.g. hierarchy, authority, nurture and care, affection, honour, and obedience etc.

2.2 Parents' Responsibilities towards their Children

2.2.1 Procreation In response to the question, “What were Jewish families for?”, the clear answer would be to perpetuate the family line. Procreation was a privilege but primarily a responsibility of every Jewish adult. Philo informs us that Moses, for example, only participated in sexual relations for the purposes of procreation which the philosopher calls ‘the lawful begetting of children’ (*Mos.* 1.28). In fact Philo provides an indication of the influence of Stoic dogma upon his own thinking when he addresses men who, he states, must only engage in sexual intercourse for the purposes of procreation rather than as ‘pleasure lovers [who] mate with their wives, not to procreate children and perpetuate the race, but like pigs and goats in quest of enjoyment which such intercourse gives’ (*Spec. Leg.* 3.113; cf. *Praem.* 108). According to Philo, all sexual relations were expected to take place within the normal framework of marriage (*Spec. Leg.* 1.326-32).

Pseudo-Phocylides concurs and views the activity of procreation as in keeping with “Nature” (φύσις): ‘Give nature her due, beget in your turn as you were begotten’ (*Sent.* 176). Josephus’ comments too are in line with this Jewish tradition (e.g. *Ps.* 127:3-5; *Sir.* 26:19-21) in that he views the ideal of all marriages as the continuation of one’s ancestry, where children were regarded as a family’s chief blessing (*Ap.* 2.199-203). Sexual

intercourse is not for lust or 'pleasure's sake' but rather 'only for the procreation of children' (*Ant.* 4.260; *Ap.* 2.199).³¹

2.2.2 Hierarchy 'Conceptually as well as cosmologically Philo's whole approach was hierarchical'.³² One expression of such a hierarchy is the parent-child relationship which is the fundamental bed-rock of the ideal Jewish family life. Philo, in his comments on the fifth commandment, clearly illustrates this principle,

In the fifth commandment on honouring parents we have a suggestion of many necessary laws drawn up to deal with the relations of old and young, rulers to subjects, benefactors to benefited, slaves to masters. For parents belong to the superior class of the above mentioned pairs, that which comprises seniors, rulers, benefactors, and masters, while children occupy the lower position with juniors, subjects, receivers of benefits and slaves (*Dec.* 165-66; *Spec.Leg.* 2.226-27).

This hierarchical relationship between parents and children, states Philo, is grounded in the creative activity, a characteristic which parents share with God; parents 'are to their children what God is to the world, since just as He achieved existence for the non-existent, so they in imitation of his power, as far as they are capable, immortalize the human race' (*Spec. Leg.* 2.225). Thus, the role of human parents is, in some sense, similar

³¹ L.H. Feldman (*Josephus and Modern Scholarship 1937-1980* [Berlin and New York: Gruyter, 1984], pp. 492-527) contrasts this with the Mishnah which 'recognises...mere companionship [as] a purpose of marriage, [and] permits a man to marry a woman incapable of bearing children if he had already fulfilled the commandment, "Be fruitful and multiply" '(Yevmoth 6.6-7). In relation to the subject of procreation, some scholars think that perhaps Josephus was influenced by the Essenes. Josephus does indeed inform us that one group of Essenes married, but, since they did so only to beget children, they abstained from marital intercourse throughout their wives' pregnancies (cf. *Bell.* 2.161). On the other hand, Feldman (*Josephus and Modern Scholarship*, p. 520) suggests Philo as a more likely source, given the fact that Philo states that Moses only participated in sexual relations in order to beget children (cf. *Mos.* 1.28).

³² For a discussion of how this hierarchical aspect inculcates Philo's 'worldview'; see W.H. Wagner, "Philo and Paideia," *Cithara* vol. 10 (1971), pp. 53-74 (55).

to that of God in that they ‘copy His nature by begetting particular persons’ (*Dec.* 51).³³ Pseudo-Phocylides’ remarks are also hierarchically oriented evidenced by the fact that honour is to be shown first to God and then to one’s parents (*Sent.* 8). Josephus also concurs in that he too views all relationships as hierarchical – be they male or female – and turns to the Torah for corroboration: ‘The woman, says the law, is in all things inferior to the man’ (*Ap.* 2.199). According to Josephus, the parent-child relationship is an integral part of this hierarchical framework since this is not only part of God’s design but also his desire for society as a whole. In this arrangement parents are their children’s elders and ‘God is the most ancient of all’ (*Ap.* 2.206).

2.2.3 Authority Closely associated with the hierarchical nature of the parent-child relationship is the issue of authority. According to Philo, ‘parents...have received authority over their offspring’ (*Spec. Leg.* 2.231). Even, ‘the mere sight of the father and mother, can silently prevent the son from some intended wrong-doing’ (*Mut. Nom.* 217; *Apol.* 7.3 and 5). Philo also employs the metaphor of the relationship of master and servants to describe the parents’ authority over their children, invoking a model of ownership and absolute obedience:

Parents have not only been given the right of exercising authority over their children, but the power of a master corresponding to the

³³ Although this hierarchical relationship between parents and children stems from the creative activity shared with God, elsewhere Philo provides clues that this hierarchy between parents and children is not in every way the same as its philosophical rationale i.e. the innate superiority of the creator to the created. For example, he sounds the caveat that ‘a man should know himself and banish from the soul the grievous malady of conceit. For there are some who have prided themselves on their power of fashioning as with a sculpture’s cunning the fairest of creatures,...closing their eyes to the Cause of all that comes into being’ (*Spec. Leg.* 1.10-11). Again, there are other hierarchical relationships which cannot be explained according to Philo’s reasoning (e.g. that between a teacher and a pupil, master and servant); yet Philo assumes or accepts them (cf. *Spec. Leg.* 4.184; *Spec. Leg.* 2.226).

primary forms under which servants are owned, one when they are home-bred, the other when they are purchased. For parents pay out a sum many times the value of a slave on their children (*Spec. Leg.* 2.233)³⁴

However, in keeping with Philo's general view of the superiority of the male over the female³⁵, as regards matters of authority in the household it is the 'father [who is] the head of the house' (*Mut. Nom.* 217). On the basis of this authority 'fathers have the right to upbraid their children and admonish them severely even if they do not submit to threats conveyed in words, to beat and degrade them and put them in bonds' (*Spec. Leg.* 2.232).³⁶ Even 'fathers of a most affectionate kind' (φιλοστοργότατοι), states Philo, 'formally disinherit their sons and debar them from their home and kinship when the

³⁴ The patriarchal focus of Philo's discussion has provoked a debate as to whether the author was drawing from Roman law regarding the *patria potestas* (i.e. the absolute power which a father had over his household), or whether his views are merely to be regarded as nothing more than an explication of scripture. In this respect I. Heinemann (*Philons griechische und jüdische Bildung* [Breslau: M. and H. Marcus Verlag, 1932], p. 250) followed by Goodenough (*Jurisprudence of the Jewish Courts*, pp. 13-14) are both of the opinion that the patriarchal focus of Philo's discussion of parental discipline were greatly influenced by Roman laws relating to *patria potestas* (paternal power) - the absolute power that the patriarch held over all the members of his household right up until his death. Heinemann, commenting on *Spec. Leg.* 2.232, argues that Philo (and Josephus) are assuming *patria potestas*, which had already in the first century been an aspect of Roman law and family life in Egypt. Goodenough concurs with Heinemann and insists that "the parent is described in Roman terms throughout". Indeed, just as the Roman father is owner of his children, argues Goodenough, so it is for Philo; children, like slaves, are born into their parents' household and cost them money. Colson admits that Heinemann and Goodenough 'may be right in tracing here the influence of the Roman *patria potestas*'; see *Philo*, vol. 7, p. 629.

³⁵ Cynthia Briggs Kittredge, *Community and Authority: The Rhetoric of Obedience in the Pauline Tradition* (HTS 45; Pennsylvania: Trinity Press International, 1998), pp. 44-51, has demonstrated how Philo and Josephus use the semantic field of obedience (ὕπακούειν and ὑποτάσσεσθαι) within the context of family relationships (husband-wife and parent-child) thereby emphasising the inequality of power or authority in these relationships.

³⁶ Colson (*Philo* vol. 7, p. 450) suggests that the reference to degradation in this quotation may be to setting the children degrading tasks, as in Plato, *Laws* 866. In a further note (*Philo*, vol. 7, p. 629) on this verse Colson compares Deut. 21 where the incorrigible son is brought before the "elders", after which (LXX) he is denounced to the "men of the city", who then stone him. He notes that nothing is said of the right of either the "elders" or the "men of the city" to examine the accusation, but the account savours more of a judicial proceeding than Philo's words suggest.

depravity which they show overcomes the peculiar and intense affection (εὐνοίαν) implanted in them by nature' (*Virt.* 192). Josephus is also of the view that, in relation to the direction of the household, 'authority has been given by God to the man' (*Ap.* 2.199).

On matters of authority and correction, Pseudo-Phocylides' tone however is softer in that he sounds the caveat that parents ought not to be heavy handed towards their children. Parents, he stresses, are 'not [to be] harsh with [their] children, but gentle' (ἥπιοι, *Sent.* 207).³⁷ In vv. 208-9 the poet omits the father's right to chastise, possibly in order to maintain healthy relations between a father and his son;³⁸ instead he emphasises that it is the mother or the elders of the family or indeed the chiefs of the people who should mete out the punishment.³⁹

2.2.4 Nurture and Care In addition to the responsibility for every married couple to continue the family line, parents were also expected to be committed to raising and nurturing their offspring. This was in keeping with a long Jewish tradition of thought (e.g. Gen. 42:1-2; Ex. 2:1-10; Ruth 4:16). The obligation on parents to nurture children is a recurring theme in the Philonic corpus, and the author goes to some length to discuss

³⁷ Interestingly the same Greek word is employed by Paul in 1 Thess. 2:7, if we were to accept the variant reading ἥπιοι 'gentle'. See chapters 5.1 and 5.3 for discussion of this variant. In relation to this, van der Horst ("Pseudo-Phocylides and the New Testament," *ZNW* vol. 69 [1978], pp. 187-202 [197]) suggests that there is a literary relationship between Pseudo-Phocylides, Philo and Josephus and 'that writings like those of these three authors were, in turn, sources for some New Testament authors' (emphasis added). If so, could Pseudo-Phocylides' text have been one possible influence on Paul's use of the above Greek term ἥπιοι in 1 Thessalonians 2:7?; see also A. J. Malherbe, "Gentle as a Nurse: The Cynic Background to 1 Thess. ii," *NovT* vol. 12 (1970), pp. 203-17.

³⁸ Yarbrough, "Parents and Children in the Jewish Family," p. 46.

³⁹ The Old Testament text which Pseudo-Phocylides has in mind here is Deut. 21:18ff. van der Horst (*Sentences*, pp. 248-9) draws attention to the different emphases between Pseudo-Phocylides and Philo (*Spec. Leg.* 2.232) and the biblical text, 'whereas Philo (over against Deut.) omits the mother's right of chastisement...Ps. Phoc. omits the father's right and emphasises that of the mother. Whereas Deut. XXI 18ff. is directed against the son, Ps. Phoc. 208f. seems to be directed against the father'.

it. The reason that children are brought into the world, he informs us, is so that they might ‘partake of the gifts of Nature’ (*Spec. Leg.* 3.111) which are twofold – birth and breast-milk (*Virt.* 130).⁴⁰ If, as Philo has already stated, the first gift that a mother gives to her child is birth, the second ‘is the afflux of milk’ which ‘flows so gently fostering the tender growth of every creature’.⁴¹

Again parents, he states, have ‘brought them [children] out of non-Existence’ who as a result [are] ‘entitled to nurture’ (*Spec. Leg.* 2.239). Philo also insists upon the importance of keeping the human mother and her infant together (*Spec. Leg.* 2.138; cf. *Hyp.* 7.8). In this instance, he manifests an acute awareness of the deleterious effects of separating a mother from her new born child since, what ‘could be more brutal than to bring in from outside other pangs to add to the pangs of travail by separating the mothers straightway from their offspring’ (*Virt.* 128). Such a severance, he continues, would undoubtedly leave

the mothers...in great distress, because of the maternal affection natural to them, particularly, at the time of motherhood, when the breasts, whose flowing fountain is obstructed through lack of its suckling, grow indurated and strained by the weight of the milk coagulated within them and suffer a painful oppression (*Virt.* 128; *Spec. Leg.* 3.199-200).

Not surprisingly, Philo is particularly scathing of parents who fail in this regard and

⁴⁰ Philo condemns the practise of infanticide; see Reinhartz, “Philo on Infanticide,” pp. 42-58.

⁴¹ As noted earlier, Philo’s comments in *Virt.* 129-133 are based upon the OT text Lev. 22:27 which prohibits the sacrifice of a new-born animal on the basis that such a severance would cause great suffering to the mother. From this law - see n 34 for the similarity between the father’s role in Alexandrian Jewish society and that of the Roman *paterfamilias* - Reinhartz (“Philo on Infanticide,” p. 57) argues that Philo addresses his comments to men (fathers?) who could be the main instigators in separating mothers from their offspring by demanding that an infant should die. However, this is not conclusive and, in any case, Philo shows a good degree of insight into the painful effects such separations might bring (cf. *Virt.* 128).

who are 'outshone' by strangers who demonstrate more concern for their children's welfare:

Suppose some passing travellers, stirred by humane feeling, take pity and compassion on the castaways and in consequence raise them up, give them food and drink and do not shrink from paying all the other attention which they need, what do we think of such highly charitable actions? Do we not consider that those who brought them into the world stand condemned when strangers play the part of parents, and parents do not behave with even the kindness of strangers? (*Spec. Leg.* 3.116).⁴²

Josephus too in the biographical section of his writings states that both mother and father were expected to play their full part in raising and caring for their offspring since both he and his brother were brought up 'by both parents' (*Vit.* 6). In book 4 of his *Antiquities* the historian provides a description of the *ideal* parents as those 'devoted [to] the utmost care to [their off-spring's] upbringing', who also ensured they 'had everything ...they needed'. In short, parents were 'to spare nothing that appeared profitable for [their children's] welfare' (*Ant.* 4.261).

2.2.5 Affection It is possible, given the fact that many of Philo's comments on parent-child relationships occur in legal texts, to conclude that he is solely interested in the *duties* required by both parties. From the mostly legal texts studied so far one might be tempted to think that Philo provides little or no evidence of an understanding of the parent-child relationship as an affective one. But this would be to disregard the fact that even within the legal framework of Philo's writings there are clear indications of the

⁴² The context here is that of the exposure of infants and the phrase 'the kindness of strangers' in the Graeco-Roman world designated the philanthropic acts of strangers who picked up abandoned infants; see J. Boswell, *The Kindness of Strangers: The Abandonment of Children in Western Europe from Late Antiquity to the Renaissance* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1988), pp. 156-60, 428-29.

value he places on the affection of parents for their offspring. There is ample evidence in Philo's *De Specialibus Legibus* of such affection, but it is important to note that Philo reminds his readers that the law contains no directives concerning the love which a parent should show towards his/her child (*Spec. Leg.* 2.239).⁴³ The reason for this is that such love is 'earned and taught by instinct and requires no injunction' (*Spec. Leg.* 2.240). Thus, Philo is always working on the *assumption* of an affectionate relationship between parents and their children and vice versa. Therefore it is inappropriate, he states 'to include in the enactments of a lawgiver an instruction on the duty of filial affection, for nature has implanted this as an imperative instinct from the very cradle in the souls of those who are thus united in kinship' (*Spec. Leg.* 2.239).⁴⁴

In this respect, it is instructive to note that both Josephus and Philo's comments on fathers in the biblical narratives go beyond scripture and provide some additional insights of their own. For instance, in the Abrahamic story, Josephus' own interpretation of events, more so than the biblical accounts, helps to 'heighten the pathos of the narrative'.⁴⁵ Here Josephus relates how a son born to his father in his latter years is worthy of special affection. Isaac is described as one 'passionately beloved of his father' ("Ἰσαακὸν δὲ ὁ πατὴρ Ἀβραμὸς ὑπερηγάπα), and a 'child who called out the affection of his parents' (*Ant.* 1.222). This aspect is sharpened and particularly poignant in

⁴³ According to Reinhartz, ("Parents and Children," p. 81) 'in the course of such exposition [i.e. within the context of the biblical laws], it is clear that love and affection, particularly of parents towards children, was considered by Philo to be not only a desideratum but in most cases a very powerful aspect of parenthood'.

⁴⁴ Whereas Philo's discussions of family affection reveal a degree of mutuality of this aspect of the parent-child relationship, Aristotle states that parents' love for their offspring is both greater and longer; see chapter 3.2.5 later.

⁴⁵ L. H. Feldman, "Josephus Flavius Revisited: The Man, his Writings, and his Significance," *ANRW* II. 21.2 (1984), pp. 763-862 (797); Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean*, p. 357.

Philo's remarks regarding the patriarch Abraham when he was asked to choose between the son of his later years and obedience to God. Here Isaac is described as the patriarch's 'darling (ἀγαπήτον) son' (*Abr.* 196) whom '[Abraham] had a most potent incentive to love... for somehow parents dote on their late-born children...' (*Abr.* 195). In emotive language the author tells us that the patriarch, 'cherished him [Isaac with] a great tenderness' (ἰσχυρᾶ τινί κεχῆρησθαι φιλοστοργία, *Abr.* 168).

Something of the all-absorbing passion and sacrifice parents are prepared to make on behalf of their offspring is also evident in the following comment by Philo: 'For parents have little thought for their own personal interests and find consummation of happiness in the high excellence of their children, and to gain thus the children are willing to hearken to their commands to obey them in everything that is just and profitable' (*Spec. Leg.* 2.236). Certainly the philosopher knows and warns parents of the danger of over-indulgence of one's offspring. Nevertheless, even within this context there is no mistaking the intensity of the love expressed:

Parents cherish their children with extreme tenderness (ἐπειδὴ γὰρ γονεῖς παῖδας ὑπερβαλλούση χρώμενοι φιλοστοργία) because they are fast bound to them by the magnet forces of affection (δυνάμεσιν ὄλκοις εὐνοίας συνδεδεμένοι τὸ λίαν αὐτῶν) [and] exceeding tenderness (φιλόστοργον) (*Spec. Leg.* 2.240).

When we turn to Philo's allegorical works there is further evidence of affection. For example, he refers to the biblical matriarch Rebecca as calling her son Jacob 'child' (Gen. 27:43 LXX: τέκνον), a term which Philo states is 'expressive of a kindly feeling

(εὐνοίας) and suited to a tender age' (*Fug.* 39-40). Philo's comments here, whilst made in the context of his allegorical interpretation of Rebecca as Patience and Jacob as the Man of Practice (*Fug.* 46-47), nevertheless imply a certain view of the parent-child relationship as one typified by 'kindly feeling' of the parent towards her child. In short, Philo views parents and their offspring as so integrally related or as he puts it, 'inseparable parts', because they are bound 'by the love ties of... affection which unites them' (ἐκγόνους διήκουσι φίλτροις τε ἐνωτικῆς εὐνοίας, *Spec. Leg.* 1.137).

Parental affection is also echoed in non-élite Jewish sources as the following Jewish epitaph⁴⁶ demonstrates: 'Here lies Faustina daughter of Faustinius her father, 14 years (and) five months old, who was the only child of her parents. Two apostles and 2 rabbis spoke a lament over her, and she caused a very great grief to her parents'.⁴⁷ Again, in Beth She'arim a Jewish tombstone of an eighteen year old girl states that she 'is leaving to her father endless grief'.⁴⁸

2.2.6 Example The notion of imitating others was widespread in the ancient Mediterranean world, and could take various forms. For example, in the Jewish tradition, Philo (*Spec. Leg.* 4.83) makes reference to the good who are to be imitated while Pseudo-Phocylides (*Sent.* 77) refers more abstractly to the need to avoid the imitation of evil. However, the imitation of a father is one which is specifically tied and extended to the imitation of the 'fathers' i.e. the fathers of the people or nation. Josephus comments in

⁴⁶ Many of these Jewish epitaphs are late and post-date the New Testament era nevertheless, they do shed some light on common assumptions which probably held true for earlier periods.

⁴⁷ *CIJ* 611 - cited in van der Horst, *Ancient Jewish Epitaphs*, p. 147.

⁴⁸ *IG* XIV 1648 - cited in van der Horst, *Ancient Jewish Epitaphs*, p. 49.

this regard, 'the Law...enjoins sobriety in the upbringing from the very first. It orders that they [i.e. children] be taught to read, and shall learn both the laws and deeds of their forefathers, in order that they may imitate (μιμῶνται) the latter' (*Ap.* 1.204; cf. 1 Macc. 2.51).

2.2.7 Education 'To secure the future of the Jewish community it was not enough to have children; they had to be educated in the ancestral faith. It was a proud and justifiable boast of the Jewish people that their education of the young was unsurpassed in its thoroughness and comprehensiveness.'⁴⁹ Such confidence was not misplaced and was founded upon the regular weekly instruction which a Jew received in the synagogue, whereupon it was transmitted to the home (*Hyp.* 7.14). Elsewhere Philo informs us that Jews have been trained by their parents 'from a very early age' as the following quotation from *Legatio ad Gaium* makes clear, 'Since Jews esteem their laws as divine revelations, and are instructed in the knowledge of them from their youth, they bear the image of the Law in their souls...They are taught, so to speak, from their swaddling-clothes by their parents...and by those who bring them up...to believe in God, the one Father and Creator of the World'(*Leg.* 31; cf. *Leg.* 115, 210; *Praem.* 162; *Spec. Leg.* 1.314; 2.88). Both Philo and Josephus refer to the laws and the 'ancestral customs' as having been 'engraved'⁵⁰ on the soul of all young Jews (*Leg.* 210; *Spec. Leg.* 4.149; *Ap.* 2.178).

⁴⁹ Strange, *Children in the Early Church*, p. 13.

⁵⁰ I owe these references to John Barclay, "The Family as Bearer of Religion," pp. 69-70. Barclay discusses - among other things - the importance of education, particularly the Torah, in Jewish family life. I'm also grateful for the reference to *Jos.* 254 where Philo notes the perils facing children who are away from the parental home on their own and without a 'monitor'. Children, in such circumstances are likely to change to 'alien ways'.

Parents are also like God, in that they create through begetting offspring, but they are

also in the position of instructors because they impart to their children from the earliest years everything that they themselves may happen to know, and give them instruction not only in various branches of knowledge which they impress upon their young minds, but also in the most essential questions of what to choose and avoid, namely, to choose virtues and avoid vices and the activities to which they lead (*Spec. Leg.* 2.228).⁵¹

The above references could give the impression that both parents were generally obligated to instruct their offspring. Education, however, was the primary responsibility of the male parent as is clear in *Spec. Leg.* 2.29 where Philo states that the father ‘is to beget good intentions and noble and worthy actions, and then to foster [his] offspring with the water of the truths which education and wisdom abundantly supply’. Other instruction – albeit in very élite families – included physical training in the gymnasium and virtually the whole ambit of education which is as close as one gets to the ancient equivalent of the 3 R's – such as writing, arithmetic, geometry, music and philosophy (*Spec. Leg.* 2.230).

As regards the raising of children, both Josephus (*Ant.* 4.261) and Pseudo-Phocylides (*Sent.* 206-217) make mention of this, but whereas Josephus highlights the commonly held expectation for children to be taught ‘the laws and deeds of their fathers’ (*Ap.* 2.204), the latter is silent on these matters. Indeed, the instruction of offspring is a matter of great pride for Josephus, a duty which cannot be compared to other manual tasks:

⁵¹ Part of the text in this verse has been corrupted and as a consequence has been interpreted differently. Colson's, *Philo*, vol. 7, p. 448 n 2, understanding of this verse is at variance with Cohn (*Hermes*, 1908, p. 202) who does not view it in a strictly educational sense. Colson (*Philo*, vol. 7, pp. 628-29) however, in a later note not only understands this verse to be addressing the education of offspring but tentatively suggests that it provides us with an instance of parental instruction at three main stages, namely, early childhood, boyhood and later adolescence.

‘our ground is good, and we work at it to the utmost, but our chief ambition is for the education of our children’ (*Ap.* 1.12). The Jewish tradition of education is distinguished because of the emphasis that it placed upon the ‘instruction of children’ (παιδοτροφία, *Ap.* 1.60-61). This priority is again clearly manifest in the following comment: ‘we take most pains of all with the instruction of children, and esteem the observation of the laws, and the piety corresponding with them, the most important affair of our whole life’ (*Ap.* 1.12). Most striking is the emphasis which Josephus, when speaking of Moses, places upon the home as the locus where these laws are best put into effect:

Our legislator... did not leave practical training in morals inarticulate; nor did he permit the letter of the law to remain inoperative. Starting from the very beginning... from infancy... and the private life of the home (καὶ τῆς κατὰ τὸν οἶκον ἕκαστον διαίτης), he [Moses] left nothing, however insignificant, to the discretion and caprice of the individual... what persons he should associate... For all this our leader made the law the standard rule, that we might live under it as under a father... and be guilty of no sin through wilfulness or ignorance (*Ap.* 2.173-74).⁵²

2.3 Children’s Responsibilities towards their Parents

So far we have seen in our primary material the unmistakable hierarchy of the parent-child relationship as well as the clear responsibilities of parents towards their offspring. Our Jewish sources also leave us in no doubt as to the duties and obligations expected of children – the ‘lower subjects’ in this relationship.⁵³ Perhaps the most important principle upon which parent-child relations in antiquity were based was

⁵² The author of 4 Maccabees also informs us that the seven martyred brothers were taught by their father ‘the law and the prophets’ (4 Macc. 18:10-19). See chapter 4.10 for a discussion of 4 Macc. concerning brotherly relations.

⁵³ Yarbrough (“Parents and Children in the Jewish Family,” p. 48) adroitly sums up the perception of the parent-child relationship in antiquity: ‘Children were there for the parents, *not* parents for the children’ (emphasis added).

that of 'giving for a return'. This principle of reciprocity is the fundamental basis of the parent-child relationship in the ancient world where children who tend for their parents, especially in their advanced years, can expect in later life to benefit from the same treatment.

2.3.1 Reciprocation Josephus, within the context of more general discussion on children's misconduct and disobedience, reminds parents to admonish their offspring so that they are aware of the need to 'tend their [parents in] old age...who should receive from them everything they needed' (*Ant.* 4.260-63; cf. *Ap.* 2.206). Similarly, Philo states that the manifestation of kindness to parents is, in fact, the basis of all other forms of relationship, 'For to whom else will they show kindness if they despise the closest of their kinsfolk who have bestowed the greatest of boons?' (*Dec.* 112). Among the ancients, parenthood included a life-long responsibility towards their children matched by the fact that there were reciprocal duties on the part of offspring to cater for their parents well beyond the period of childhood itself (*Opif.* 104-05). Having said this, Philo recognises the fact that children 'were unable to make a complete return' towards repaying their parents. Nevertheless, great indignation occurred when offspring failed to make even the slightest attempt at redressing the imbalance (*Spec. Leg.* 2.237).⁵⁴

2.3.2 Honour During the whole of antiquity parents naturally expected obedience (*obsequium*) and respect (*reverentia, pietas*) from their children.⁵⁵ All three of our

⁵⁴ Similar sentiments are echoed by Josephus (*Ant.* 4.262); see also Aristotle *Ethc. Nich.* 1.11.17.

⁵⁵ See Eyben, "Fathers and Sons," pp. 114-43; J.W. Hewitt, "Gratitude to Parents in Greek and Roman Literature," *AJP* vol. 52 (1931), pp. 30-48. Also see Sir. 3:8-11: 'Honour your father by word and deed...it is a disgrace for children not to respect their mother'.

authors concur that after God, one's parents were due the greatest honour. In the case of Philo, he employs his *De Decalogo*, which contains an explication of the fifth commandment, as his primary text for understanding the responsibilities which children are to exercise towards their father and mother (Ex. 20:12 [LXX]); in fact all of the children's obligations towards their parents are subsumed under this one commandment. Thus, it is within this context that honour is a priority since, a child was to 'honour... next to God thy father and mother' (*Spec. Leg.* 2.235). Pseudo-Phocylides in verse 8 of his poem states that a child's chief responsibilities are 'first of all [to] honour God' (πρῶτα θεὸν τιμᾶν) and 'thereafter your parents (μετέπειτα σείο γονῆας). And Josephus declares that 'honour to parents and the law ranks second only to honour of God, and if a son does not respond to the benefits received from them – for the slightest failure in his duty to them – it hands him over to be stoned (*Ap.* 2.206; cf. Philo, *Spec. Leg.* 2.247).⁵⁶

According to Josephus, respect for elders mirrors a basic reverence for God as well as for the hierarchical order God desires for society as a whole. Any child who scorns his parents' instruction and advice, especially his father's, scorns God and the Torah (*Ant.* 4.262). Failure to honour the male parent was keenly felt by God since, he '[God] regards himself as a partner in the indignity done to those who bear the same title as himself, when they obtain not from their children that which is their due' (*Ant.* 4.263). The historian justifies the above position where 'the young [show reverence] to all the elders' by asserting that 'God is the most ancient of all' (*Ap.* 2.206).

⁵⁶ Josephus also states that the death penalty is invoked in situations where parents are harmed (*Ap.* 2.217; cf. also *Ant.* 4.264-65; cf. Deut. 21:18-21; Philo, *Spec. Leg.* 2.232; 2.243). Whether the death penalty was employed is difficult to determine, although in cases like these it is more likely that Josephus is following biblical law rather than *actual* practice of his day.

These are sentiments with which the poet Pseudo-Phocylides is in agreement. Towards the end of his poem, where he discusses personal relationships within the household, Pseudo-Phocylides states that respect is to be shown towards the elderly – both inside and outside the family;⁵⁷ this includes due reverence to an elder equal in descent and of comparable age with one's own father: 'Revere those with grey hair (γέρουσιν) on the temples and yield your seat and all your privileges to old persons (γεραῶν). To an old man of equal descent and of the same age (γέραιρε)⁵⁸ as your own father give the same honours' (vv. 220-22).⁵⁹

Philo also uses his explication of the biblical texts to remind children of the list of expenses incurred by parents in the raising of them (e.g. nurses, tutors,⁶⁰ clothes etc.). His purpose for reminding offspring of such costs is '[that] with all these facts before them, they [children] do not do anything deserving of praise who honour their parents, since any one of the considerations mentioned is in itself quite a sufficient call to show reverence'. Quite the opposite, continues the philosopher, 'they deserve blame and obloquy and extreme punishment who do not respect them as seniors nor listen to them as instructors... nor obey them as rulers' (*Spec. Leg.* 2.234).

One of the more ironic examples of a son's concern for his aging father – given the

⁵⁷ Both Philo (*Spec. Leg.* 2.237) and Josephus (*Ap.* 2.206) discuss the topic of respecting elders within the context of the command to honour one's parents, although Pseudo-Phocylides too may have derived this instruction from the fifth commandment (cf. *Sent.* 8); see van der Horst, *Sentences*, p. 254.

⁵⁸ The etymological word play in vv. 220-22 is quite striking and underscores the point that respect is due to those advanced in years.

⁵⁹ Perhaps what is so significant about all of Pseudo-Phocylides' remarks *vis-à-vis* the family is the fact that as a Jew he can put these sentiments into the mouth of a (venerable) Greek. It suggests (in his view at least) that Jewish and the best non-Jewish ethics are in agreement on these 'conservative' family values.

⁶⁰ Note here the upper-status assumptions.

anguish he and the other sons caused their father some time earlier regarding their treatment of Joseph – is delineated in Josephus' comments on Gen. 44. Having found the silver cup in Benjamin's sack, the brothers had to return to the city where Joseph, still unrecognised by his brothers, resided. Judah then intercedes on behalf of his younger brother Benjamin but now his primary concern is for his aged father Jacob who has suffered enough pain, already at the loss of Joseph. The text emphasises the drama and intense emotion⁶¹ of the occasion, but chiefly illustrates the concerns of the sons for their elderly father:

For my own part had not our father let us see by his grief for Joseph how deeply he feels for the loss of children, I should never, on our own account, have made this plea for acquittal. But now, it is from no pity of ourselves, young though we be and to die ere we have yet enjoyed what life has to give; it is from consideration of our father and compassion for his old age that we present this petition to thee... respect the old age of one who must live and die in solitude in losing us and grant this boon in the name of fatherhood... take pity on our father and the sufferings that he will endure if bereaved of his children (*Ant.* 2.147-53)

Philo, as we have observed earlier, is clearly aware of the need to show respect for parents and how failing in this domain can be detrimental to *internal* familial relations. However, he is also fully cognizant of the fact that offspring who do not honour their parents will be patently evident to those *outside the family*; therefore, children should remember 'to honour them [parents]' not only by 'trying both to be good and to seem good' but 'to be good by seeking virtue' and to ensure that this is accompanied 'by a reputation *for worth and the praise of those around you*' (emphasis added) (*Spec. Leg.*

⁶¹ P. Bilde, *Flavius Josephus between Jerusalem and Rome*, (JPSP 2; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1988), p. 81.

2.235).

2.3.3 Obedience Closely allied to the *ideal* that children were to honour their parents was the expectation that the latter were also to be obeyed. In order that children might attain the desired goal which their parents had for them, Philo insists that the former should be ‘willing to hearken to their commands and to obey them in everything that is just and profitable; for the true father will give no instruction to his son that is foreign to virtue’ (*Spec. Leg.* 2.236).⁶²

Josephus similarly reminds his readers that children were not only expected to follow their parents’ teaching, but their example as well. However, there was no cast-iron guarantee that this would always happen. In this regard, Josephus provides an interesting insight into how the old dictum ‘like father like son’ might fall foul of normal expectations. For instance, in his comments on 1 Samuel, Samuel for all his spirituality and example, did not see these same qualities replicated in the conduct of his own sons.

Here he states that the prophet’s sons

afford us an evident example and demonstration of how some children are not of like disposition with their parents; ... though born of good parents... these wicked men turning aside from their father’s good causes and taking a course that was contrary to them, perverted justice for the filthy lucre and gifts and bribes... they practised what was contrary ... to the will of their father who had taken a great deal of care, and made a very careful provision [for them] (*Ant.* 4.2).

Perhaps the assumption here was that if Samuel had gone to such lengths in taking care of

⁶² During Philo’s time the command to obey one’s parents in everything is absolute. However, this appears to have been redefined, in certain circles, by Musonius Rufus et al. some time later (i.e. middle to the latter half of the first century). See chapter 3.4.11 and our discussion of Musonius Rufus’ tractate, “Must One Obey One’s Parents Under All Circumstances?” The author of 4 Maccabees also addresses the question of the extent to which a child is obligated to obey a parent. In 4 Macc. 2:10 he states: ‘The law prevails even over affection for parents so that virtue is not abandoned for their sakes’. Thus the law takes precedence over obedience to parents.

his children he could expect his offspring to imitate him. Having said this, the above instance ought to be seen against the more positive picture portrayed of Isaac who as a child 'called out the great affection of his parents and endeared himself to them yet more by the practice of every virtue, showing a devoted filial obedience' (*Ant.* 1.222).

2.3.4 Care As we have noted earlier, Philo includes an extensive treatment of how offspring are to care for their parents. We have little information at our disposal to gather a fully informed opinion one way or the other as to whether there were neglectful practices *vis-à-vis* elderly parents in society; in any case we are more concerned with the ideal than actual social reality. What we can glean however, from Philo at least, is that he addresses adult children who can never think that there is, or will be, a time when they have outgrown the need to provide for parents. Children ought to honour their parents in old age by caring for them, as they themselves were cared for in their childhood.⁶³

Looking after one's parents in their later years of life is probably the greatest 'debt' which children owed to their parents. Just as parents' responsibilities towards their offspring extended well beyond childhood, so children had an obligation to parents well into later life. They were expected to 'return benefit for benefit' (*Dec.* 113). Philo argues that nature is a schoolmaster from whom human beings should learn: e.g. from 'storks [which]... stay in the nests when they are unable to fly, while their children fly...gathering from every quarter provision for the needs of their parents'. Indeed such is their devotion that 'the younger birds [make] light of the hardships sustained in their quest for food' because they are 'moved by piety and the expectation that the same treatment will be

⁶³ Similar advice is given in *Sir.* 3:12: 'O son, help your father in his old age'.

meted out to them by their offspring'. Caring for 'parents at the end of their lives' is, according to Philo, a 'debt they [children] cannot refuse' (*Dec.* 116-17). The philosopher's point in all this is that if birds and the animal kingdom do this by 'natural instinct' (*Dec.* 113-15) how much more should humankind, who have the extra benefit of instruction, also do it.

2.3.5 Affection As previously noted, love between parents and children is demonstrated in different ways and is a mutual thing. We have also observed how Philo assumes that parents will love their children, an 'assumption [which he uses] to account for the specific formulation of particular laws, *and in particular, the omission of any commandment that children love their parents*'.⁶⁴ Children's love for their parents is learned by instinct (*Spec. Leg.* 2.240), hence it is not necessary for Philo to include instruction on the duty of filial affection. Josephus also states that the love between parents and their children is reciprocal and in his account of the near-sacrifice of Isaac informs us that whilst 'the child called forth the affection of his parents', Isaac also 'endeared himself to them' (*Ant.* 1.222).

2.4 Summary

Despite the fact that our three Jewish authors have different agendas, they have much to say and agree on concerning the normal social expectations of parent and child relations. One of the striking features of the parent-child relationship is the disproportionate responsibilities which our writers make *vis-à-vis* parents and children – parental

⁶⁴ Reinhartz, "Parents and Children," p. 82 (emphasis added).

obligations far outweigh those of one's offspring.

Parental responsibilities are many-faceted and we have identified a number of stock meanings or associations across our sources. For example, all three authors emphasise that this relationship is essentially an hierarchical one. Whilst Pseudo-Phocylides deems parents worthy of respect because they stand next in line to that of God, both Philo and Josephus use the Torah to justify the view that a hierarchical framework is not only God's arrangement for society as a whole, but for the family as well. As such, children belong to the inferior class, whilst fathers are superior and better suited to rule.

Arising out of this hierarchical relationship is that of authority which is in the hands of both parents, even though the father is regarded as the head of the house. Parental authority is one of the issues which Philo especially emphasises in that parents appear to exercise some sense of ownership of their offspring. However, Pseudo-Phocylides seems to soften this by stressing that parents ought not to be too heavy-handed, but gentle, in the treatment of their children.

Not only was procreation a common expectation of married couples in the ancient world, so also was the nurture and care of children. Philo, for instance, singles out infants as being especially vulnerable and identifies the ensuing dangers of separating a nursing-mother from her new born child. Closely allied to this was the assumption that parents were to show affection towards their offspring. All children could expect love from their parents and, in this regard, the intensity and tenderness of Philo's description of parental love is particularly noteworthy. Moreover, Philo and Josephus in their accounts of the Abrahamic and Joseph narratives, provide vivid descriptions – beyond that of the biblical

accounts – of the affection of an elderly father for a son born in his latter years.

Fathers in particular were also responsible for the education of their children. Whilst Philo and Josephus emphasise the importance of the Torah in teaching children from the law, Pseudo-Phocylides is silent as regards this. Josephus also underscores – in the case of Moses – how important it was to teach children within the context of the home, whilst Philo emphasises the comprehensiveness of the learning process - the answering of children's questions, the pitfalls to avoid, as well as the influences that education has upon their thinking and direction in later life. We also noted how Jewish authors (e.g. Josephus) view the idea of imitating a father as extending to the imitation of the 'fathers' i.e. fathers of the people or nation.

In response, children also had obligations towards their parents and were expected to reciprocate in light of all that their parents had done for them. Superior to everything else in the parent-child relationship was the fact that it was founded on this principle of 'giving for a return'. Such obligations extended well beyond the period of childhood itself. Both Philo and Josephus state that children should care for their parents in old age, though the former notes that one's offspring are unable to repay fully the debt they owed to their parents. Parents' could also expect to be shown love in return, an assumption evident in Philo's writings, for example, where no express command is given for children to do so. Children were also supposed to heed and obey their parents' instructions. This too was in keeping with the hierarchical nature of the relationship where obeying one's parents was one way of showing respect and honour for them. Philo even makes the point that any failure on the part of children to demonstrate respect towards their parents would

be patently obvious to those outside the family.

3. PARENTS AND CHILDREN IN THE ANCIENT WORLD:NON-JEWISH EVIDENCE

3.1 Introduction

So far we have looked at the norms and conventional attitudes of parents and children in Jewish families. We now turn our attention to the Graeco-Roman sources. Here our evidence of household management, and the parent-child relationship in particular, is wide-ranging and includes such authors as Aristotle, Plutarch, Seneca, Musonius Rufus, Epictetus and Hierocles. Taking such a broad sweep will give us a wider and hopefully more accurate representation of the duties and obligations expected of parents and children. As in the case of our earlier Jewish evidence, we will consider similar aspects of the parent-child relationship which will enable us to make the appropriate comparisons and contrasts.

At the outset it ought to be mentioned, that unlike our Jewish sources, the topos of household management is one subject, among many, which Graeco-Roman writers repeatedly and directly address. More specifically, the literary records of the Graeco-Roman world are replete with references to parents and children. This is partly due to the understanding philosophers had regarding the importance of the household as the basic building-block of society.¹ For example, according to Aristotle, the *oikia*, the

¹ See Aristotle, *Pol.* 1.12.1-3 and Plutarch, *Lycurgus* 19.2. See R.G. Mulgan, *Aristotle's Political Theory: An Introduction for Students of Political Theory* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), p. 21: '[Aristotle] gives especial emphasis to the naturalness of the household as if this were the most solid part of the argument'.

family, precedes and is more fundamental than the *polis*: ‘the first community ...is the family’ (*Pol.* 1.9.5; cf. *Eth. Nic.* 8.12.7). The household was a reflection of the political authority of the state or *polis* with the head standing in the place of the king and representing the household to the wider political unit.²

In this part of our study we will begin with the Aristotelian philosophical tradition of household management before discussing a broader selection of material. Although Aristotle may be more removed from our other authors of the first century, his usefulness lies in the fact that he is in greater agreement with them on most of these matters than on any other subject he wrote about. Also, unlike our previous Jewish material where we treated the evidence on a topical basis, we will discuss our first two authors (Aristotle and Plutarch) separately since they both stand out from other writers of their day. However, in our treatment of the Stoics, there is sufficient merit to consider them together since, like the Jewish authors already considered, they are similar in time and outlook. Also, as far as the latter are concerned, the remarks of Epictetus and Seneca, for example, need to be understood against the wider, and sometimes raging, Stoic-Cynic marriage debate in the ancient world; here, marriage which almost invariably resulted in the birth of children and the accompanying fatherly responsibilities of education, socialisation etc, sometimes conflicted with the higher call of the philosopher.

Again, we are particularly interested in the standard expectations regarding parents and children which are representative of a broad swathe of opinion rather than those sources

² Although the ideal *polis* is first and foremost in Aristotle’s thinking, when it comes to discussing it in detail he appears to make it subservient to the family; see W.E. Bolland and A. Lang, *Aristotle’s Politics: With a Translation and Short Introductory Essays* (London: Longmans, 1877), p. 65.

which reflect minority positions or philosophical ideals which are out of line with the majority of opinion.

3.2 Aristotle

Aristotle (c. 384-322 BCE), one-time student of Plato and Greek political theorist, has, in the course of his philosophical discussions, much to say on the subject of household management. In Aristotle's Politics 1,³ written c.335 BCE, and the topos 'On Household Management,' he discusses, among other subjects, the responsibilities and obligations of parents towards children, and children towards parents. In contrast to Plato – Aristotle's teacher who regarded the household as a miniature city-state – Aristotle stressed that the household is an entity in its own right.⁴ The household was a paradigm of the political order and, like the polis itself, comprises people of different rank. Thus any proper understanding of household management must take into consideration the fact that some members of the household are fit to rule (e.g. fathers, owners) while others (e.g. children, women, slaves) are to serve (*Pol.* 1.1.2).⁵

Aristotle's thinking regarding the household reflected commonly held views of

³ Needless to say the term "politics" in Aristotelian thought is more wide-ranging than our contemporary understanding of this term. As C. Lord (*The Politics of Aristotle: Translation with Introduction* [Chicago/London: University of Chicago, 1984], p. 1) points out, 'The subject matter of the *Politics* is "politics" in its original sense - the affairs of the polis, the classical city-state...Politics in its original sense is at once narrower and broader than politics in the contemporary sense...The *Politics* trespasses on ground that would today be claimed by the disciplines of economics, sociology, and urban planning, as well as moral philosophy and the theory of education'.

⁴ W. Deming, *Paul on Marriage and Celibacy: The Hellenistic Background of 1 Corinthians 7* (SNTSMS 83; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 55; B. S. Strauss (*Fathers and Sons in Athens: Ideology and Society in the Era of the Peloponnesian War* [London: Routledge, 1993], p. 40) also states, 'Aristotle asserts a fundamental, qualitative distinction between polis and *oikos*'.

⁵ All citations of *Aristotle's Politics* are from the translation and introduction by B. Jowett and H.W.C. Davis (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1923). Citations from *Nicomachean Ethics* are from the Loeb Classical Library (ed.) H. Rackham.

his time which were subsequently developed in the Roman era: if one upsets the structure of the home then the rest of society was soon affected.⁶ In short, according to Aristotle, not only is every *polis* comprised of *oikoi*, but the *polis* cannot be good unless its *oikoi* are also good (*Pol.* 1.3.1-2; 1.13.15-16).

PARENTS' RESPONSIBILITIES TOWARDS THEIR CHILDREN

3.2.1 Procreation Aristotle's writings automatically assume a natural progression from marriage to household to city-states, insisting that this is the work of nature (*Pol.* 1.3.1; *Eth. Nich.* 8.12.7). His philosophical views are in contrast to the Sophists in that he stresses that the patriarchal relationships in household and city are not based upon social convention but 'nature'⁷ and he insists that all discussion of political ethics and household management ought to begin with marriage. According to Aristotle, the primary reason for a man joining with a woman is to beget children; the goal/aim of every marriage is the production of legitimate offspring (*Pol.* 1.2.1).

3.2.2 Hierarchy Aristotle maintains that there are fundamental differences among what he considers to be the primary relationships in the household. A household comprises three relationships which include those between the father and his children (where the father rules over them), a master and his slave, and a husband and his wife

⁶ W. A. Meeks, *The Moral World of the First Christians* (London: SPCK, 1986), p. 113.

⁷ See Schüssler Fiorenza (*Bread Not Stone*, p. 73) for a fuller discussion of this point. Also, whilst Aristotle regards the household as a natural progression, the Stoics put a moral edge on this by insisting that marriages, households, and city-states not only come about naturally but in fact *ought* to come about; see D.W. Hamlyn, *A History of Western Philosophy* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1987), p. 74; Strauss (*Fathers and Sons in Athens*, p. 73) also remarks: 'A life of marriage and parenthood was a *given* for almost everyone in the Athenian citizen class, and hence hardly needed to be explained' (emphasis added).

(*Pol.* 1.3.2). Given the fact that some within the household are better fitted to rule while others are to be ruled, it is not surprising to learn that, for Aristotle, authority and subordination undergird every structure of every household in which the man is considered more rational than the woman and where the child is immature, 'A husband and father rules over his wife and children...although there may be exceptions to the order of nature, the male is fitter for command than the female, just as the elder and full-grown is superior to the younger and immature' (*Pol.* 1.12.1).

Aristotle likens the child's relationship to his father as to a god and employs regal language to express it. As such the father governs his children in a hierarchical relationship, but nonetheless one between free people: 'The father is a kind of god to his children, a full head and shoulders above them, and rightly so, for the father is a king (βασιλικός), not like the elder brother of his children' (*Pol.* 1.12.3). In book 8 of his manual *Ethica Nichomachea* where the philosopher considers the *ideal* life, or the ideal life of activity in accordance with virtue, Aristotle compares various forms of authority in the household with authority in the state. Once again the hierarchical aspect is underscored, 'The friendship of a king for his subjects is one of superiority in beneficence; the friendship of a father for his child is of the same kind...for it is natural for a father to rule his children...as for a king to rule his subjects' (*Eth. Nich.* 8.11.2). The primary responsibility of the male is 'the government of a wife and children and of a household' which, Aristotle declares, '[is] called household management' (*Pol.* 3.3.7).

3.2.3 Authority We have already noted how fundamental the 'three-tiered' hierarchy of the household is to Aristotle's thinking. Authority and subordination are

necessary because the man is the most rational, the woman is less rational, and the slave irrational. Further, Aristotle in his *Ethica Nichomachea* compares various forms of authority in the household with authority in the state. Both assume that man is political in outlook who functions best in a properly organised society. In his discussion of the various forms of constitution, he remarks:

one may find likenesses and so to speak models of these various forms of a constitution in the household. The relationship of father to sons is regal in type, since a father's first care is for his children's welfare. This is why Homer styles Zeus "father", for the ideal kingship is paternal government. Among the Persians paternal rule is tyrannical, for the Persians use their sons as slaves. The relation of master to slaves is also tyrannic, since in it the master appears to be right, that of the Persian father is wrong; for different subjects should be under different forms of rule (*Eth. Nich.* 8.11.6; cf. *Pol.* 1.4.5-6).

Here Aristotle goes further than merely suggesting that the authority of men/fathers is natural and essential; he also makes it clear that there are right and wrong ways of ruling. It is wrong, for example, for a father to be tyrannical.⁸ However, hierarchical authority is right and just in itself. In this respect Aristotle argues that a father's rule must be informed by the consideration – and here his thought is out of line with modern non-patriarchal thinking – that 'there is no such thing as injustice in the absolute sense towards what is one's own; and a chattel⁹, or a child till it reaches a certain age and becomes independent, is, as it were a part of oneself, and no one chooses to harm himself; hence there can be no injustice towards them, and therefore nothing just or

⁸ This stands in contrast to some of the Neopythagoreans' (first centuries BCE and CE) views (e.g. Callicratidas) of a father's despotic rule over their children; see Balch, *Let Wives be Submissive*, pp. 36, 56-58. See also Eph. 6:4 and Col. 3:21.

⁹ i.e. a slave.

unjust in the political sense' (*Eth. Nich.* 5.6.8).

Throughout his life the child is not regarded as ever being separated from the father and is always dependent upon him (*Eth. Nich.* 5.6.8).¹⁰ Later, in the same treatise, Aristotle takes this notion further by stating that the child was viewed as a part of the parents and *owned* by them: 'that which springs from the thing belongs to the thing from which it springs' (*Eth. Nich.* 8.12.2). This aspect of ownership is made more clear in the following comment: 'Children are a good possessed by both parents in common, and common property holds people together' (*Eth. Nich.* 8.12.7).

3.2.4 Nurture The procreation of children, the so-called 'business of nature', brings an accompanying responsibility, namely, 'to furnish food for that which is born' (*Pol.* 7.17.1). Aristotle acknowledges that 'after children have been born, the manner of rearing them' will greatly affect 'their bodily strength' (*Pol.* 7.17.1). Using the animal kingdom and uncivilised peoples as examples, it is important, in Aristotle's view, that 'the food which has the most milk' is 'best suited to the physical development of children' (*Pol.* 7.17.1). In discussing the analytic-genetic development of the household into village and the village into a colony which is 'composed of the children and grandchildren' he tells us that their development and growth is due to the fact that they are all 'suckled with the same milk' (*Pol.* 1.2.6). This responsibility, of providing food for their children, is one which 'always remains [with] the parent' (*Pol.* 1.10.3-4). In short, every infant has a right to be nurtured; 'such care', concludes Aristotle, 'should attend

¹⁰ W.L. Newman (*The Politics of Aristotle: With Introduction, Essays, Critical and Explanatory Notes.* vol. 1 [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1887], p. 192) writes regarding this text, 'The language...[here] treats the child... - ἕως ἄν ἦ πηλίκον καὶ μὴ χωρισθῆ - as "part and parcel" of his father' (emphasis added).

[children] in the first stage of life' (*Pol.* 7.17.3).

3.2.5 Affection Aristotle discusses the subject of parental affection within the wider context of friendships – a category which, for the philosopher, embraced many aspects of social and political life. There are varying degrees of friendship within families and none are closer than that of 'the affection of parent for child' (*Eth. Nich.* 8.12.2).

Aristotle notes that the love between a parent and their child was a mutual but nonetheless hierarchical emotion. Moreover, parents' love for their children is not only greater but longer, 'For parents love their children as part of themselves' and 'progenitor is more attached to progeny than progeny to progenitor' (*Eth. Nich.* 8.12.2). Children love (φιλεῖν) their parents 'as part of their being' (*Eth. Nich.* 8.12.2) but not as much as their parents love them. The reason that 'the affection of the parent exceeds that of the child in duration' the philosopher tells us is because 'parents love their child as soon as they are born' whereas in the former, 'children [love] their parents only when time has elapsed and they have acquired understanding' (*Eth. Nich.* 8.12.2).

According to Aristotle, 'parental affection is stronger in the mother' (*Eth. Nich.* 8.12.3) the reason being that 'parenthood (ἡ γέννησις) costs the mother more trouble' (*Eth. Nich.* 8.7.7; cf. 8.12.3). There can be no mistaking 'the pleasure that mothers take in loving their children' and 'through knowing them and loving them, do not ask to be loved by them in return' (*Eth. Nich.* 8.8.3). Rather, she is merely 'content to see them prospering' (*Eth. Nich.* 8.8.3). However, although a father's rule may be due to 'seniority', nevertheless, adds Aristotle, he also governs with 'affection' (*Pol.* 1.5.2).

3.2.6 Education A final area requiring consideration is that of the obligation of parents regarding the instruction of their offspring. Aristotle specifically states that ‘parents have bestowed on them [i.e. their children] the greatest benefits in being the cause of their existence and rearing, and later of their education’ (*Eth. Nich.* 8.12.5).

Although the responsibility of educating children fell to state officials – including that of the pre-school age (i.e. up to the age of seven) (*Pol.* 7.17.7) – parents also have an important role to play.¹¹ According to Aristotle, all ‘parents should train their sons’, not as something necessary or useful but as something ‘liberal (ἐλευθερά) or noble (καλή)’ (*Pol.* 8.3.10).

Although Aristotle recognises that public education has its advantages, nevertheless, private education is superior:¹² ‘individual¹³ treatment is better than a common system’ (*Eth. Nich.* 10.9.15). Moreover, when public education fails, ‘it is the duty of the individual to assist his own children’ (*Eth. Nich.* 10.9.14). An integral part of children’s moral education¹⁴ is listening to ‘paternal exhortations’ (οἱ πατρικοὶ λόγοι) since ‘family habits have authority in the household’ (*Eth. Nich.* 10.9.15).¹⁵

¹¹ Although the state, in Aristotle’s view, is basically responsible for the education of the child, G. Howie (*Aristotle on Education* [London: Collier-Macmillan, 1968], p. 82) stresses that ‘the parent-child relationship is the *ideal* educative relationship because of the parent’s sympathetic understanding of the child’s individual needs. Public education must take its cue from this’ (emphasis added).

¹² Note here the élite assumptions.

¹³ It is clear from the context that by using the term ‘individual’ Aristotle is here referring to the parent and, more likely, the father.

¹⁴ In this regard Newman (*Politics of Aristotle*, pp. 190, 195) comments, ‘He [the father] will entrust the education of his boys after the age of seven to the officers of the State, and will leave the full command of the internal affairs of the house to his wife, making this her province in which she is to be supreme, *except so far as the moral training of children is concerned, for this is to be his own affair*’ (emphasis added).

¹⁵ The context here may seem somewhat unclear. The point that Aristotle appears to be making is that just as the law and custom have their influence upon the family, so a parent has authority over his offspring. However, in the case of the latter, such authority is greater because ‘of the ties of relationship and of

In all this we ought to remember that offspring need time to develop and grow because ‘children are understandably immature’; their development ‘is not only a personal matter’ but one which is immediately relative ‘to ...[their] teacher’¹⁶ (*Pol.* 1.3.12).

CHILDREN'S RESPONSIBILITIES TOWARDS THEIR PARENTS

3.2.7 Reciprocation towards Parents Aristotle acknowledges that the responsibilities of offspring towards their parents are regarded as compensation for all the trouble that parents go to on their children’s behalf. ‘Parents’, he informs us, ‘have the first claim on us for maintenance, since we owe it to them as a debt, and to support the authors of our being’ (*Eth. Nich.* 9.2.8). Just as parents expend their energies in raising and nurturing their offspring, so children are expected to give in return, ‘The one who is benefited in purse or in character,’ states Aristotle, ‘must repay all the regard that he can’ (*Eth. Nich.* 8.14.4). Like Philo who we considered earlier, Aristotle recognises that such ‘debts’ cannot be repaid in full to either parent: ‘no-one can render...any part what is due to a mother’ (*Eth. Nich.* 8.8.3) and ‘a son is always in his father’s debt’ (*Eth. Nich.* 8.14.4). Whilst a virtuous son will endeavour to repay the debt owed to his father, ‘a bad son will look on the duty of supporting his father as one to be avoided, or at all events not to be eagerly undertaken’ (*Eth. Nich.* 8.14.4).

3.2.8 Obedience In the course of his discussion on friendships, Aristotle poses

benefits conferred that unite the head of the household to its other members; he can count on their natural affection and obedience at the outset’. (*Eth. Nich.* 10.11.14-15).

¹⁶ Jowett and Davis (*Aristotle's Politics*, p. 52 n 3) cite Bernays (no reference provided) who understand the son’s teacher to be, in this instance, ‘his *father* who guides him’ (emphasis added).

the pertinent question, 'Does a man owe his father unlimited respect and obedience?'¹⁷ (*Eth. Nich.* 9.2.1). Whilst he does not doubt the fact that a child ought to obey his father, Aristotle is aware that differing degrees of honour are owed to people of differing rank or status. 'All people,' he declares, 'have not the same claim upon us'; indeed 'not even a father's claim is...unlimited'. Moreover, it is important to note that 'since the claims of parents and brothers, comrades ...are different, we ought to render to each that which is proper and suitable to each' (*Eth. Nich.* 9.2.7).

3.2.9 Honour Very much related to obedience is the 'honour also due to parents' (*Eth. Nich.* 9.2.8). Honour to parents is proper and fitting and is similar to that due 'to the gods, though [it is] not indiscriminate honour' (*Eth. Nich.* 9.2.8; cf. 8.14.4). The honour accorded to an individual is commensurate with the position he holds in society and differing honours are accorded to parents. Therefore 'one does not owe to one's father the same honour due to a great philosopher or general, but one owes to one's father the honour appropriate to a father, and to one's mother that appropriate to her' (*Eth. Nich.* 9.2.8). Despite the fact that children should endeavour to repay their parents they ought to know that 'no one could ever render them the honour they deserve' (*Eth. Nich.* 8.14.4).

3.2.10 Affection We have already noted the fact that children love their parents but they do not do so to the same degree that their parents love them. Nevertheless, it is this hierarchical nature upon which the parent-child relationship is based and which is the determining factor that invokes the latter's affection, 'The affection of children for

¹⁷ See section 3.4.11 below and the discussion regarding a similar question asked by Musonius Rufus, "Must One Obey One's Parents in All Circumstances?".

their parents, like that of men for the gods, is the affection for what is good, and superior to oneself (*Eth. Nich.* 8.12.5).

3.3 Plutarch

L. Mestrius Plutarchus (c. 50-120 CE), the Greek-born writer, philosopher and rhetorician, is representative of the middle Platonist school of philosophy¹⁸ – hence the reason for treating him separately – but also employs elements from Aristotelian and Stoic thought. Perhaps Plutarch’s greatest legacy is the volume of his work – it is one of the most extensive corpuses of any author in antiquity. Even though Plutarch’s works may lack the originality of other authors of his day nevertheless what he writes (mostly) reflects common opinion, thus making them very useful for our present purposes. His literary output, coupled with his proximity to the New Testament writings,¹⁹ also makes his work an important Greek source for the study of Christian backgrounds.

Most important for our investigations is Plutarch’s *Moralia* which includes material on philosophical, cultural, religious and social matters. These seventy-eight miscellaneous essays and letters include short treatises on themes of popular philosophy, the most relevant for our investigations being *De Amore Proles*, *Consolatio Ad Uxorem* and *De Fraterno Amore*. Plutarch’s work may lack the intellectual rigour of the philosophical

¹⁸ Babbitt (*Moralia*, vol. 1, p. xiv) writes concerning the platonic influence upon Plutarch, ‘He was an earnest follower of Plato, not without blind adulation of the neo-platonists but with a warm admiration for the high ethical standards set by Plato’. For further discussion of Plutarch as a platonic interpreter see R. M. Jones, *The Platonism of Plutarch and Selected Essays* (New York/London: Garland, 1980), pp. 68-151; C. Froidefond, “Plutarque et le platonisme,” *ANRW* II 36.1 (1992), pp. 184-233.

¹⁹ On the question of sources, Christian historians have long recognised the close similarities between Christian ethics and Plutarch’s ethics. However, such similarities are due more to their dependence on the same sources than the latter being influenced by Christianity; see Babbitt, “Introduction,” p. xvii; H. D. Betz, “Introduction,” in Betz (ed.), *Plutarch’s Ethical Writings and Early Christian Literature* (SCHNT 4; Leiden: Brill, 1978), pp. 1-10.

writings generally associated with the classical period, and of an Aristotle whom we have just considered.²⁰ Nevertheless, as an aristocrat and a member of the cultural élite his treatises are presented in an acceptable manner for an ‘educated’ Greek-Hellenistic and Roman audience. He does not directly address the topos of household management but his comments on parent-child relations occur within the wider context of familial relations (i.e. marriage, family-bereavement, affection for children and brotherly love). In essence Plutarch's ethics are characteristic of the *idealist*²¹ and are negative in tone, having grown out of his perception of the general moral decadence of society in his own day.²²

PARENTS' RESPONSIBILITIES TOWARDS THEIR CHILDREN

3.3.1 Procreation In his tractate *De Amore Proliis* Plutarch turns to Nature to illustrate how the animal kingdom provides valuable lessons regarding the procreation and care of offspring. Superior to all other concerns in the animal kingdom is the importance of reproduction: ‘the male does not consort with the female during all seasons, for the end and aim is not pleasure,²³ but procreation and the begetting of offspring’ (*De Amor.* 2/493F). ‘All irrational animals’, states Plutarch, have ‘a love of offspring’ and such concern finds its origin in Nature (*De Amor.* 3/495C). As regards human procreation, Plutarch, in his treatise *Conjugalia Praecepta* asserts that this activity

²⁰ Betz, “Introduction,” p. 4.

²¹ Betz, “Introduction,” p. 4.

²² According to Plutarch, this malaise and moral sickness of humankind is specifically his reason for writing the treatise *De Fraterno Amore* (cf. 1/478C).

²³ Philo makes a similar point; see *Spec. Leg.* 3.113; *Praem.* 108.

is the 'most sacred' kind of sowing (*Con. Prae.* 42/144B).²⁴

3.3.2 Hierarchy and Authority As in the case of our Jewish authors already considered, Plutarch also puts parents on a hierarchical scale and regards them as being second in rank to that of the gods: 'Both Nature and the Law, which upholds Nature, have assigned to parents, after gods, first and greatest honour' (*Frat. Amor.* 4/479F). As such – and here one can see how Plutarch's view of philosophy is essentially didactic in nature – it teaches men 'to yield to those in authority' (*De Lib.* 10/7E) and within the context of the household this was one's parents.

As a Greek writer, Plutarch's ideals are worth comparing with other Greek, non-élite sources of his time. It is not surprising to find that here also hierarchical relations between parents and their offspring are the distinguishing characteristic of this relationship. Artemidorus, the Greek philosopher, in his dream-handbook views dreams as consisting of individuals each of whom is accorded a certain degree of status. In typically hierarchical manner, parents stand fourth in line as those worthy respect:

Among the people who are worthy of credence... I maintain the gods are first. For it is contrary to the nature of gods to tell lies. Then priests. For they enjoy the same respect as the gods. Then kings and rulers. For to rule is to have the power of a god. Then parents ... for they are also like the gods: parents because they bring us into life (Bk. 2.69).

According to Artemidorus the head represents one's father, the foot a slave, the knees a brother. Moreover, since '..the head symbolises the father' one ought to 'consider the

²⁴ P. Walcot ("Plutarch on Sex," *G & R* vol. 60 [1998], pp. 166-87 [166]) points out, 'When it comes to sex, Plutarch is no revolutionary keen to experiment...He clearly shares the long-established and *common* Greek prejudice whereby sexual activities are...something...forced upon man by...biological necessity and ...therefore to be experienced rather than enjoyed' (emphasis added).

upper parts of the body as indicating those who are more excellent and more honoured, but all the lower parts as indicating those who are inferior and subordinate [in regard to the head]...’ (Bk. 4. 24-25).

3.3.3 Nurture and Care Procreation brings with it the responsibility for parents to nurture and care for their children. As an example of ‘the love of animals for their children’, Plutarch cites Homer²⁵ where ‘the bird... brings to her nestlings “whatever morsel she can catch, though she fares ill herself” and, adds the philosopher, ‘at the cost of her own hunger’ (*De Amor.* 3/495C). Such emotions are, at times, a rebuke to those (i.e. humankind) who do not follow the lead of Nature:

Are we, then, to believe that Nature has implanted these emotions in these creatures because she is solicitous for the offspring of hers, and dogs, bears, and not rather, because she is striving to make us ashamed and to wound us [and to]...disparage human nature as being the only kind that has no disinterested affection and that does not know how to love...? (*De Amor.* 2/495F).

Nevertheless, even if the emotions of animals find expression in practical care for their offspring, according to the philosopher, these are greater in humankind (*De Amor.* 3/495C).

In relation to the nurture of young offspring, it is striking that on three separate occasions in the treatise *De Liberis Educandis* ascribed to Plutarch,²⁶ the author insists on the mother, as opposed to a nurse-maid, feeding and nurturing her own young: ‘mothers ought...themselves to feed their infants and nurse them themselves.’²⁷

²⁵ *Il.*, ix. 324.

²⁶ There is disagreement amongst scholars regarding this being an authentic essay from the pen of Plutarch.

²⁷ There is a striking similarity between this and what the apostle Paul writes - especially if we take it that he is likening himself to a nursing-mother - in 1 Thess. 2:7: ‘like a nursing-mother caring for her own

For they will feed them with a livelier affection and greater care, as loving them (ἀγαπῶσαι τὰ τέκνα) inwardly, and, according to the proverb, to their finger-tips' (*De Lib.* 5/3C). As far as fatherly care and provision is concerned, these were regarded as life-long commitments: 'fathers do not cease rearing children, and most of all, those who least need them' (*De Amor.* 4/497A).

Similar views are articulated by Artemidorus in his dream hand-book where he reminds his readers of a number of 'common customs' of his day which included the expectation of parents 'to nurture children' (Bk. 1.8). In addition, inscriptional evidence emphasises the common assumption that children were to be reared but also makes it clear that such nurturing was not an easy task. One epitaph from the second century BCE speaks of the ΜΟΧΘΟΣ ΤΡΟΦΟΣ – 'the hard work of bringing up a child'.²⁸

3.3.4 Affection As in the case of procreation, the love of parents (in antiquity) – fathers as well as mothers – for their children has nearly always been considered a law of Nature.²⁹ Plutarch is no different in this respect, as the following text illustrates: 'in the case of man...Nature by introducing him...to human kindness, has furnished noble and beautiful and fruitful seeds of all these in the joy we have in our children and our love for them, emotions which accompany their first beginnings' (*De Amor.* 3/495C).

But it is not only Nature which is instructive as regards humankind bestowing love upon their offspring: primitive society – contrary to what we might think – is also

children'. Also, note Plutarch's comment a little later in the same tractate: '...mothers should themselves nurse and feed what they have brought into the world' (i.e. her own children) (*De Lib.* 5/3D).

²⁸ Cited in T. Wiedemann, *Adults and Children in the Roman Empire* (London: Routledge, 1989), p. 39. I have been unable to trace the original source of this quotation.

²⁹ See also for example, Cicero, *De Off.* 1.11.

instructive as regards the raising of children. In primitive society one would have thought, writes Plutarch, that children would have been the object of hostility and malice given the fact that their birth could in fact put the mother's life in great jeopardy and danger. On the contrary, states Plutarch – citing a Homeric child-birth³⁰ –

while she [the mother] was still in the throes of it and the pain of travail, alike bitter and sharp, actually present in her entrails...even then the affection (φιλοστοργία) for offspring implanted by Nature would...lead the mother: still hot and suffering and shaken with her pangs, she did not neglect or avoid her child, but turned to it and smiled at it and took it up and kissed it (*De Amor.* 4/496D).

In spite of the fact that parents (not only the father) usually hoped more for the birth of a son than for the birth of a daughter, it would be misleading to think that a father always liked a son more than a daughter.³¹ According to Plutarch, the opposite seems to be the case: 'Mothers appear to have a greater love for their sons because of a feeling that sons are able to help them, and fathers for their daughters because of a feeling that the daughters have need of help' (*Con. Prae.* 36/143B). Such affection is spelt out by the philosopher in no small detail in *De Amore Proliis* where a nursing-mother's love for her child finds no equal. The new-born infant 'is an object for none to touch or lift up or kiss or embrace except for someone who lives with natural affection (ἡ τοῦ φύσει φιλοῦντος)'. Compared to other animals which have their 'dugs hanging loose beneath the belly' in women 'they grow above on the breast where mothers can kiss (φιλήσαι) and embrace (περιπτύξαι) and fondle (κατασπάσαθαι) the infant' (*De.*

³⁰ *Il.*, xi. 269-71.

³¹ See Eyben, "Fathers and Sons", p. 119.

Amor. 3/496C). ‘Mothers’, according to Plutarch, ‘come to be more kindly disposed (φιλητικώτεροι) towards their children, and [are] more inclined to show them affection’ (*De Lib.* 5/3C). Plutarch even goes as far as to suggest that ‘the end and aim of bearing and rearing of a child is not utility, but affection’ (φιλίας) (*De Amor.* 3/496C).

All this in no way negates the love that a father has for his children.³² A father places affection for his offspring above personal achievement and honour: ‘No father is fond (φιλότεκνος) of oratory or of honour or of riches as he is of his children’ (*Frat. Amor.* 5/480C). But arguably the clearest window into paternal affection is that depicted in Plutarch’s letter to his wife entitled, *Consolatio Ad Uxorem* where we have an example of a father grieving over the death of a child.³³ This particular correspondence gives us ‘an unusual glimpse into Plutarch’s domestic life’³⁴ and is ‘testimony to the quality of family life in Plutarch’s circle that he stands out among the ancients for his sympathetic and congenial attitudes to ... children’.³⁵ The letter was written on the occasion of the death of Plutarch’s two-year old daughter, Timoxena. It is also worth noting that this was not the first time tragedy had visited Plutarch’s family since it appears that he had already

³² Eyben (“Fathers and Sons,” p. 119) writes, ‘Paternal love was...a reality in Antiquity’.

³³ This is not an isolated incident because antiquity is replete with examples of parents grieving over the death of a child; see Pliny’s letter to the elder statesman Spurrinna on the premature death of a son (*Ep.* 3.10, 16; 4.2,7). Likewise Quintilian graphically describes the effect which the death of his two young sons (ages 5 and 9) had upon him. Such experiences, he tells us, were, ‘the worst of tortures’ (*Inst.* 6 Praef. 6) and ‘cause...for tears’ (6 Praef. 7), ‘my agony’ (6 Praef. 8) and ‘my own sorrow...my own sad heart’ (6 Praef. 10); see also Seneca, *Ep.* 99.1f; 66.26. In similar vein M. Golden (“Did the Ancients Care when their Children Died?” *G & R* vol. xxxv No. 2 [1988], pp. 152-63 [156]) affirms the fact that parents in antiquity cared very deeply when a child passed away. He states: ‘A real sense of loss and deep grief exists’. One example of the manifestation of such care is depicted in the ancient funerary rites and burial customs where it was sometimes the case that a dead child would have been buried within the precincts of the house as ‘a mark of the parents’ unwillingness to give up a treasured child completely’.

³⁴ H. Martin Jnr. and J.E. Phillips (“Consolatio Ad Uxorem,” [Moralia 608A-612B] in Betz (ed.), *Plutarch’s Ethical Writings*, pp. 394-441 (395).

³⁵ D.A. Russell, *Plutarch* (Duckworth: London, 1973), pp. 5-6.

lost two sons. Regarding one of these the eldest son, Plutarch informs us that the mother ‘had nursed him at [her] own breast...and it showed true mother love’ (*Consol.* 5/609 E).³⁶ In relation to the long-awaited birth of a daughter and her subsequent death Plutarch’s affection and grief are transparently obvious in the following passage as he recalls her memory. The text is worth citing in full in light of the fact that ‘there are few passages in ancient literature to touch the sentiment of this remembrance of a dead child’:³⁷

You know this yourself, you who have reared so many children in partnership with me, all of them brought up at home under our care. And I know what great satisfaction lay in this – that after four sons the longed-for daughter was born to you, and that she made it possible for me to call her by your own name. Our affection for children so young has, furthermore, a poignancy, all of its own: the delight it gives is quite pure and free from all reproach. She had herself, moreover, a surprisingly natural gift of mildness and good temper, and her way of responding to friendship and of bestowing favours gave us pleasure while it afforded us an insight into her kindness (φιλανθρώπια, *Consol.* 2/608D).

Plutarch concludes: ‘...it is yielding to a parent's love to long for and honour and remember the departed’ (*Consol.* 4/609B).

These sentiments are also typical of non-élite sources at that time. For example, one inscription from the early second century provides a clear instance of parental affection for a child who had died prematurely. The epitaph of seven year-old Marcianus describes the response of his parents: ‘What a cruel day dawned for my parents, that ninth day which carried me off from the laments of my wretched mother and father alike. What

³⁶ This was all the more honourable given the fact that the breast-feeding had left the mother’s nipple so bruised and infected it required surgery (cf. *Consol.* 5/609E).

³⁷ Russell, *Plutarch*, p. 90.

great *expectations* had been mine, if destiny had allowed' (emphasis added) (*CIL* 6.7578).³⁸ Again a father's affection and grief are transparently obvious in the following Latin inscription: 'My baby Acerva was snatched away to live in Hades before she had had her fill of the sweet light of life. She was beautiful and charming, a little darling as if from heaven. Her father weeps for her, and because he is her father, asks that the earth may rest lightly on her forever' (*CIL* 14.1731).³⁹ And another father refers to his dead nine year old daughter as 'my darling Asiatic' whose passing has 'left me a sad old age' (*CIL* 11.3771).⁴⁰ Similarly, Artemidorus in his dream handbook states that to dream of certain types of sicknesses has an important predictive element as far as offspring are concerned. But, special note should also be taken of the endearing description of children. To vomit one's food signifies a lack of nourishment, but for a childless man and woman 'to void [their] own bowels or entrails ... signifies the loss of their *dearest possession*' (Bk.1.33).

3.3.5 Discipline In relation to discipline, Plutarch states that 'fathers...should not be utterly harsh and austere' towards their children.⁴¹ The philosopher likens a father to a physician who mixes together the bitter and sweet in his treatment of his patients: 'fathers should combine the abruptness of their rebukes with mildness' (*De Lib.* 18/13E). On the question of discipline and corporal punishment Plutarch informs us that children and

³⁸ Citation and translation in K. R. Bradley, "Dislocation in the Roman Family," *Historical Reflections/ Reflexions Historiques* vol. 14 (1987), pp. 33-63 (49).

³⁹ Citation and translation in K. Hopkins, *Death and Renewal* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), p. 221.

⁴⁰ Citation and translation in Hopkins, *Death and Renewal*, p. 227.

⁴¹ Plutarch's remarks bears a resemblance to the first part of Pseudo-Phocylides statement, 'Be not severe with your children, but be gentle' (*Sent.* 207).

slaves are to be treated differently: 'Children ought to be led to honourable practices by means of encouragement and reasoning, and most certainly not by blows nor by ill treatment; for it is surely agreed that these are fitting rather for slaves than for the freeborn' (*De Lib.* 12/8F).⁴²

3.3.6 Example In the ancient secular world of the first-second century, imitating some kind of moral exemplar (e.g. teachers-pupils) was a common feature. It was also normally assumed that fathers in particular were expected to model appropriate behaviour for their children, especially sons, to imitate. Plutarch, in the concluding part of his treatise *De Liberis Educandis*, shows a clear awareness of this and emphasises the need for fathers to live circumspectly. 'Fathers', he insists, '...above all' should not misbehave in front of their offspring. Instead he exhorts them to 'make themselves a manifest example (παράδειγμα) to their children, so that the latter, by looking at their fathers' lives as at a mirror, may be deterred from disgraceful deeds and words' (*De Lib.* 20/14B).

3.3.7 Education One final domain which Plutarch discusses in relation to parents' obligations towards their offspring is that of education. Generally speaking, Plutarch has great confidence in education (*De Virt.* 1/439B).⁴³ The work *De Liberis Educandis* which is an introit to Plutarch's writings reflects the 'educational conditions of

⁴² Seneca (*De Clem.* 1.16.3) also disapproves of the excessive punishment of children by fathers. Cicero (*De Rep.* 3.37) also makes a distinction between the way children and slaves were 'governed': 'different kinds of domination and subjection (*et imperandi et seruiendi*) must be distinguished. A father governs his children who obey readily (*propter oboediendi facilitatem*), but a master must coerce and break (*coercet et frangit*) his slave'.

⁴³ Meeks, *Moral World*, p. 43.

[the] time'⁴⁴ as well as the view that the earlier education begins the better:

For just as it is necessary, immediately after birth, to begin to mould the limbs of the children's bodies in order that these may grow straight and without deformity, so, in the same fashion, it is fitting from the beginning to regulate the characters of children (*De Lib. 5/3E*).

It is at this early stage of life that children's 'minds are still tender' and receptive to 'lessons...infused deeply into them' (*De Lib. 5/3E*).

Following Plato's lead, such education includes 'telling stories to children'. Indeed, the education of one's children is so important that the choice of teacher will determine how one's offspring will turn out; in the end one gets what one pays for but, cautions the author, 'many fathers, however, go so far in their devotion to money... that in order to avoid paying a larger fee, they select as teachers for their children men who are not worth any wage at all – looking for ignorance which is cheap enough' (*De Lib. 7/4F*). In the end 'badly educated... sons', says the writer, 'when they are enrolled in the ranks of men' are 'of no use' and as a result 'fathers regret that they have been false to their duty in the education of their sons' (*De Lib. 7/5A-B*).

CHILDREN'S RESPONSIBILITIES TOWARDS THEIR PARENTS

Most of Plutarch's comments *vis-à-vis* the expectations of children towards their

⁴⁴ W. Barclay (*Educational Ideals in the Ancient World* [London: Collins, 1957], p. 89) remarks that 'Plutarch...[in] his essay *On The Education of Children*...in [effect says] that the greatest educational advantage that a child can have is good parents and a good home'. Meeks (*Moral World*, p. 61) also writes in regard to the father's responsibilities: 'Education began of course within the family. Even though schools had become common by imperial times, the *father remained primarily responsible...for educating his dependants*' (emphasis added).

parents are found in his treatise *De Fraternali Amore* and particularly in section 1-6 of the treatise, normally considered to be more theoretical/*ideological* than the more practically oriented chapters 7-20.

3.3.8 Reciprocity: Nurture and Care Plutarch concurs with the general thinking of his day, namely, that parents expected their children to support and look after them in their old age: ‘There is nothing which men can do that is more acceptable to gods than with goodwill and zeal to repay to those who bore them and brought them up the favours “long ago lent them when they were young” ’ (*Frat. Amor.* 4/479F). Failing to care for parents in their latter years is no light matter as there is no ‘greater exhibition of an impious nature than neglect of parents or offences against them’ (*Frat. Amor.* 4/479D). Children may be forbidden to do wrong to all others ‘yet’, stresses Plutarch, ‘to our mother and father if we do not always afford, both in deed and in word, matter for their pleasure, even if offence be not present, men consider it unholy and unlawful’ (*Frat. Amor.* 4/479D).

This principle of reciprocity is one also enunciated by Artemidorus when he reminds his readers that ‘children guide and lead their parents when they grow old’ (Bk. 1.26). It is also one which is found in many inscriptions. For example, one Greek epitaph from the second century CE refers to a dead child as a ‘lost harvest’ while the notion that children had an obligation to give their parents a decent burial as repayment for having brought them into the world is clear from the following prose epitaph from Trebiati in Umbria: ‘[the] child died before he was able to reciprocate his well-deserving parents’

(CLE. 93).⁴⁵

3.3.9 Honour Respecting parents is important too, because they stand at the centre of the family and as such are to be honoured more than others. Like Pseudo-Phocylides (*Sent.* 8) and Josephus (*Ap.* 2.206) whom we considered earlier, Plutarch also regards parents as worthy of honour next to the gods (*Frat. Amor.* 4/479F). Indeed, there is nothing more acceptable to the gods than that of honouring one's parents; likewise there is nothing more “godless” than their neglect. Furthermore, dishonour is not only shown to parents when their offspring fail to personally care for them but there is, for Plutarch, a “disrespect by association” in the sense that contempt is also shown when children do not care for the very persons/possessions held dear to their parents: ‘parents are grieved by sons who maltreat a servant honoured by mother and father, and neglect plants or farm-lands in which their parents took delight’ (*Frat. Amor.* 5/480B).

3.4 The Stoics: Seneca, Musonius Rufus, Epictetus and Hierocles

3.4.1 Introduction

We will now turn to some of the more important writers from the school of Stoic philosophy and here our survey will include Seneca, Epictetus, Musonius Rufus and Hierocles (early second century).⁴⁶ Again, in order that we might understand these

⁴⁵ Cited by Wiedemann, *Adults and Children*, p. 48. The inscription is found in F. Buecheler (ed.), *Carmina Latina Epigraphica* (Leipzig, 1921), No. 1097, 1f. Another Latin inscription also expresses the idea that children were expected to give their parents a decent burial as recompense for having brought them into the world: ‘The son set up this altar to his dear parent, and returned the honour that was due, even if late’; see Wiedemann, *Adults and Children*, p. 40.

⁴⁶ The Stoic school of philosophy was founded in Athens, three centuries prior to Seneca's birth, by Zeno of Citium (335-263 BCE). Zeno's teachings were subsequently refined and developed by his successors, most notably by Chrysippus of Soli (c. 280-207 BCE) the “second founder” of Stoicism. For a brief resumé

writers' remarks on parents and children, it is important for us to know something about their background, structures of thought, and the respective contexts in which they were writing. We begin with two authors, namely, Seneca and Epictetus because of the similarities of their struggle with the philosophical life and marriage-parenthood.

Lucius Annaeus Seneca's (c. 4BCE-65CE) writings are a popularised Stoic 'philosophy of life' directed at the more intelligent reader. His works include a large number of tragedies but it is his dialogues (e.g. *De Beneficiis*, "On Benefits") and epistles which are the most significant for our present purpose. The work *De Beneficiis* is a discursive treatment of giving and receiving, of benefaction and gratitude – characteristics highly regarded in the ancient social world – whilst the *Ad Lucilium epistulae morales* address questions from his Stoic perspective and contain a number of comments concerning the parent-child relationship.⁴⁷ Seneca's writings are also important because he was a contemporary of Paul. As his language and thought is probably nearest to that of the apostle,⁴⁸ his works 'remain a contemporary document of irreplaceable value

of the rationale of Stoicism and Seneca's espousal of its principles see J.M. Cooper and J.F. Procope (eds.), *Seneca: Moral and Political Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. xvi-xxvi.

⁴⁷ Seneca's forced suicide provides for us a very graphic and influential model of his Stoic beliefs in action. Suicide is a subject which recurs in his writings. On this subject, see J.H. Rist, "Seneca and Stoic Orthodoxy," *ANRW* II 36.3 (1989), pp. 1993-2012. For the Stoic approval of suicide as a reasonable departure from the trials of life see Seneca's *Ep.* 78.1. However, although a Stoic, Seneca's remarks on household management also reveal both an awareness and a retention of the Aristotelian outline. In *De Beneficiis* he recognises the mutual responsibilities and cohesive function which any relationship within the household brings as the following comment illustrates: 'Every obligation that involves two people makes an equal demand upon both. When you have considered the sort of person a father ought to be, you will find that there remains the not less great task of discovering the sort that a son should be...In the exchange of obligations each in turn renders to the other the service that he requires, and they desire that the same rule of action should apply to both' (*De Ben.* 2.18.1-2).

⁴⁸ See for example J.N. Sevenster, *Paul and Seneca* (SNT 4; Leiden: Brill, 1961) for a discussion of Pauline passages such as Rom. 1:19-20, 26; 11:36; 12:1; 1 Cor. 3:21-23; 6:12 etc. However, though there are similarities of language and thought Sevenster has demonstrated that, as far as Seneca is concerned, most similarities are only formal, and underneath such language lie very different concepts of God, humanity etc. Seneca is also a relative of one Gallio mentioned in Acts 18:12.

for the study of the first century CE'.⁴⁹

Seneca does not specifically address the topic of household management; nevertheless his comments reveal a knowledge of it as an important philosophical category '[which] advises...how a father should bring up his children' (*Ep.* 94.1-2).⁵⁰ In particular, his discussions of parent-child relations are somewhat ambivalent, occurring, as they often do with Stoic authors, against a wider debate on marriage-parenthood which, at times, saw them drawn in two directions; for some philosophers, marriage-parenthood did not sit comfortably alongside the call to the philosophical life. Thus, on the one hand, Seneca (like Epictetus slightly later) states that the philosophical life is the higher calling, while on the other, he regards his primary responsibility and civic-duty to be married. Nevertheless in his ninth epistle, Seneca suggests that there are times when the conflict between philosophy and marriage-parenthood can be satisfactorily resolved and where marriage and the raising of children are fully compatible with the pursuit of philosophy (*Ep.* 9.17-19).

Epictetus (c. 55CE-135CE), one of the most influential teachers of Stoicism of his time, in his *Discourses* and the brief compendium *Encheiridion* displays a similar ambivalence towards the *ideals*⁵¹ of marriage-parenthood.⁵² This is due in part to the

⁴⁹ H. –J. Klauck, *The Religious World of Early Christianity: A Guide to Graeco-Roman Religions* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2000), p. 346.

⁵⁰ All quotations of Seneca, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the Loeb Classical Library translation.

⁵¹ A. J. Malherbe ("Self-Definition among Epicureans and Cynics," in B.F. Meyer and E.P. Sanders [eds.], *Jewish and Christian Self-Definition* Vol. III [London: S.C.M., 1982], pp. 46-59) states that Epictetus 'has often been taken to represent the true Cynic without due allowance being made for his Stoicizing or ...that he is presenting an *ideal*' (emphasis added).

⁵² According to W. A. Oldfather (*Discourses*, vol. 1, p. xix), 'no ancient author speaks as frequently of them [i.e. children], or as sympathetically...They are one of his favourite parables ... Though he is...aware

fact that he endeavours to integrate Stoic and Cynic thinking into one philosophical system. This dialectic is nowhere better illustrated than in the differences of allegiance between the layman and the philosopher; in the case of the former, his primary loyalty lies with his family whereas in the latter it is with himself: ‘The first difference between a layman and a philosopher: The one says, “Woe is me because of my child... woe because of my father”; and the other ...”Woe is me,” ...because of myself”’ (*Diss.* 3.19.1).

On the one hand, Epictetus regards the Cynic's calling as so special that parenthood ought to be given up for the higher calling as a philosopher to oversee society. In chapter 22 of book 3 of his *Discourses*, Epictetus addresses the question as to ‘who do[es] mankind the greater service?’; is it ‘those who bring into the world some two or three ugly-snouted children to take their place or those who exercise oversight, to the best of their ability, over all mankind?’ (*Diss.* 3.22.77). In response, Epictetus understands the duties of the *ideal* philosopher to include the monitoring of the behaviour of the dutiful householder and checking on ‘those who have children’ (*Diss.* 3.22.72). His thinking is such that he regards all mankind as a family for whom the Cynic had responsibility: ‘Man, the Cynic has made all mankind his children, the men among them he has made sons... in that spirit he approaches them and cares for them all...It is as father he does it’ (*Diss.* 3.22.81-2).⁵³ On one occasion he even used his own celibate status as an example

that a child is only an incomplete man, he likes their straightforwardness...and yearns to get down on hands and knees and talk baby talk with them’.

⁵³ Elsewhere Epictetus speaks of God as the father and householder (οἰκοδεσπότης) of society with the Cynic as his representative (cf. *Diss.* 3.22.1-8).

to be absolved from the burden of familial obligations, ‘Look at me, I am without a home,...I have neither a wife nor children’ (*Diss.* 3.22.47-8).

On the other hand, whilst for the Cynic having a family was an exception, for others it was the rule. Epictetus recognises that the professional call of a Cynic is not for everyone and there is room in his thinking for the Stoic vision consisting of a *kosmos* of city-states, households, marriage and the raising and nurturing of offspring. According to Epictetus, parenthood is part of the ‘purpose’ (ἡ πρόθεσις) or ‘business at hand’ (τὸ προκείμενον) in a man’s life and contributes to the good and well-being of the city-state (*Diss.* 2.23.37-8; cf. 3.21.5-6). As a philosopher he even criticises Epicurus who, despite knowing that man is a social (and political) animal, is asked, ‘How, then can we still be social beings, if affection for our own children is not a natural instinct? (πῶς οὖν ἐτι κοινωνικοί ἐσμεν οἷς μὴ φυσικὴ πρὸς τὰ ἔγγονα φιλοστοργία;) Why do you dissuade the wise man from bringing up children?’ (*Diss.* 1.23.3-5). ‘Yet’, concludes Epictetus, ‘despite the fact that he [Epicurus]⁵⁴ knows this, he still has the audacity to say, “Let us not bring up children” ’ (*Diss.* 1.23.7).

Musonius Rufus’ (c. 30CE-100CE) fragmentary evidence,⁵⁵ on the other hand, reveals none of the tensions of our previous two authors – one of whom was his student Epictetus

⁵⁴ However, T. Brennan (“Epicurus on Sex, Marriage and Children,” *CPh* vol. 91.4 [1996], pp. 346-52 [347]) has recently argued, on the basis of new evidence regarding Epicurus’ will, that instructions were given to his executors to care for various children until they come of age, as well as arranging for the daughter of Metrodorus to be married. In the case of the latter, the executors were Epicurean philosophers whom he exhorts to ensure that children are reared. Brennan carefully concludes, ‘Epicurus advised against marriage and child-rearing for the *most part*, but permitted it in *exceptional cases*’ (emphasis added).

⁵⁵ All citations of Musonius are from C. E. Lutz, “Musonius Rufus ‘The Roman Socrates,’ ” *Yale Classical Studies* vol. 10 (1947), pp. 3-147. References are to fragment, page and line of the Greek text of this edition.

– in that he expects a to live with his wife, raise offspring and establish a household.

According to Musonius Rufus, whether a person is a layman or philosopher, there are no exceptions to this rule: ‘...can it be that the man who chooses the single life is more patriotic, more a friend and a partner of his fellow-man, than the man who maintains a home and rears children? It is clear...that it is fitting for a philosopher to concern himself with...having children’ (*frag.* 14.94.36-96.3; *frag.* 14.92.36-38). Thus, in *general* terms at least, Musonius Rufus provides us with a very positive picture concerning parenthood and the nurturing of children. Musonius Rufus’ writings (and others) are also significant in that they raise the twin issues of the *value* (“Should Every Child That Is Born Be Raised?”) and *subordinate role* of children (“Must One Obey One's Father Under All Circumstances?”) in antiquity. We will return to such questions during the course of our discussion but it is sufficient at this stage to register these points.

Lastly, Hierocles, an early second century Stoic, is in general agreement with Musonius Rufus, having been ‘strongly influenced’ by him ‘particularly on the subject of marriage and the family’.⁵⁶ Hierocles provides a summary of ‘popular’⁵⁷ social ethics which bear a resemblance to the duties of the *Haustafel*. His primary concern is to ‘provide...justification for the duties he *assumes to be commonly known and accepted*’⁵⁸ by family members (i.e. parents, children and brothers), thus making his views very useful for our present purposes.

Having briefly set our authors in their cultural and philosophical milieux, we are now

⁵⁶ Lutz, “Musonius Rufus,” p. 20 n 82.

⁵⁷ A. J. Malherbe, *Moral Exhortation: A Graeco-Roman Sourcebook* (LEC 4; Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1986), p. 85.

⁵⁸ Malherbe, *Moral Exhortation*, p. 85 (emphasis added).

in a position to be able to turn to the texts of these writers. Again we shall be scrutinizing these sources for the standard assumptions they might show regarding parent-child relations.

PARENTS' RESPONSIBILITIES TOWARDS THEIR CHILDREN

3.4.2 Procreation Seneca, like Plutarch whom we have just considered, makes reference to parenthood as a hallowed calling. In book 3 of his treatise *De Beneficiis* Seneca declares that parenthood is a 'sanctified state' hence it is 'expedient that they should raise children' (*De Ben.* 3.11.1). Three of our authors – Musonius Rufus, Epictetus and Hierocles – discuss the subject of procreation/family and agree that these play a necessary part of the future provision for the city-state. Indeed, the former is not only of the view that sexual intercourse should only be practised for the purposes of procreation but also that ⁵⁹ '[the city-state] would not last if there were no procreation of children' (*frag.* 14.92.36-7).

According to Musonius Rufus, the degree of influence a man could exert in society was commensurate with the size of his own family

the raising of many children is ...honourable and...a man who has many children is honoured in the city...has respect of his neighbours [and] has more influence than his equals if they are not equally blessed with children' (*frag.* 15.98.1-5).⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Musonius Rufus (not to mention Seneca and Epictetus) was addressing Romans within the ambit of Rome itself. In this regard Bradley ("Dislocation in the Roman Family," p. 35) states: 'the object of marriage for the Romans, and its most important function, was the procreation of children'.

⁶⁰ Rawson ("Adult-Child Relationships," p. 18) informs us that at important social occasions (e.g. dinner-parties, birthdays, etc.) and public events (e.g. theatre performances) spectators were clearly divided into

Just as a man with many friends is more powerful than one with none, so it is for a man who has many children (*frag.* 15.98.6-8). Epictetus discusses the importance of parents and children in contributing to the city-state and by so doing demonstrates, more than most, his social concern. Among the duties which he lists to be of particular importance include the begetting of children (παιδοποιεῖσθαι) and the care of parents (γονέων ἐπιμελεῖσθαι) (*Diss.* 3.7.25). As a general principle regarding duties, and above everything else, Epictetus states, ‘Your father has a certain function, and if he does not perform it, he has destroyed the father in him, the man who loves his offspring, the man of gentleness within. Do not seek to make him lose anything else on this account’ (*Diss.* 3.17.5). Epictetus views procreation as an indispensable part and provision for the city state. He is scathing of the Epicurean vision where children are conspicuous by their absence and he admonishes the latter by inquiring

In the Name of God, I ask can you imagine an Epicurean state? One man says, “I do not marry”. Neither do I, says another... “No, nor have... children”... Where are the citizens [for this city-state] to come from? (*Diss.* 3.22.47-8).⁶¹

The raising of children might only be one activity among many others; nevertheless it is one which he regards as among ‘the preferred actions of life’ (*Diss.* 3.7.28). On another occasion Lucian (c.120 CE-180 CE) the satirical Athenian recounts how Epictetus once rebuked the Cynic Demonax for not having children: ‘[it] is also...fitting for a man who pursues philosophy, namely, to leave behind for nature another in his place’ (*Dem.* 55).

different categories. ‘Children’, states Rawson, ‘will have noticed the preference given to men who were fathers of citizen children, reinforcing the importance in Roman society of raising children’.

⁶¹ Deming (*Paul on Marriage*, p. 86) comments on this text, ‘As opposed to Musonius’ *ideal* of a philosopher, Epictetus’ Cynic has much more of a “do as I say not as I do” attitude’ (emphasis added).

3.4.3 Hierarchy and Authority We have already observed how our Jewish authors view parents as next in rank to that of the gods (Philo, *Spec. Leg.* 2.235; Josephus *Ap.* 2.206; Pseudo-Phocylides, *Sent.* 8). Similar views are echoed in our Stoic sources. According to Hierocles, parents are to be honoured third in line to that of the gods and one's fatherland (3.39.34-36). Parents he continues, are 'most like the gods [because they are] made far superior to the ephemeral power of the artists' (4.25.53)⁶²; indeed, the very name parent far exceeds most other names and 'is the most eminent of all the ones that have been mentioned' (4.25.53). Hierocles, like Aristotle earlier, not only views parents as having authority over their offspring but that they also exercise 'ownership' of them, as the following remark demonstrates, 'For whose possession should we be than those through whom we exist?' (4.25.53).

Musonius Rufus also makes reference to God as 'superior' but significantly goes on to say that man, in this respect, 'should be thought of as being like him' (*frag.* 17.108.16). Seneca too in the context of reminding his readers that no one – not even parents and children – should allow themselves to be outdone in terms of benefits, specifically tells children that they should 'give way to their [parents] authority ... whether it was unjust or harsh... [and be] submissive' (*De Ben.* 3.37.1-3).

3.4.4 Nurture and Care In his tractate "How to Conduct Oneself Toward One's Parents", Hierocles reminds children that parents are their 'greatest benefactors' –

⁶² For the quotations from Hierocles I am using the English translation by Malherbe, *Moral Exhortation*. Hierocles' work is preserved in excerpts made by Stobaeus in his philosophical handbook written in the fourth century CE. The references (e.g. 4.25.53) are in accordance with Stobaeus' book, chapter and excerpt number as found in the Greek text of C. Wachsmuth (vols. 1-2) and O. Hense (Vols. 3-5), *Ioannis Stobaei Anthologium* (Berlin: Weidmann, 1974).

they not only ‘guard our homes and live with us’ but also ‘supply us with the most important things’ (4.25.53). Whilst Hierocles might focus more on the recompense which children are expected to provide for their parents, nevertheless, the inference is clear, namely, that they only do so because they ‘imitate their [parents’] care in rearing us when we were newly born’ (4.25.53).

In his treatise *De Beneficiis* where Seneca is concerned with the activity as well as the motives of *beneficium*, he likens a father’s care for his children to that of seeds planted in the ground; they need not only to be planted but require to be tended and nurtured: ‘We must add to generosity every possible kindness. Can there possibly be any greater benefits than those a father bestows upon his children? Yet they are all in vain if they are discontinued in the child’s infancy – unless long-lasting devotion nurses its first gift’ (*De Ben.* 2.11.5). Seneca recognises the mutual responsibilities of any relationship and, as far as parents are concerned, they are to so care for their offspring that they do not provide them ‘with an excuse...and make them less willing to return gratitude’ (*De Ben.* 3.36.3). Musonius Rufus discusses issues of nurture and care within the wider context of the subject of whether every child that is born should be raised. He responds affirmatively and argues that poverty ought not to be an excuse for not feeding and rearing offspring (*frag.* 15). Moreover, Musonius, like other Graeco-Roman authors of the period, cites Homer (*Il.* ix. 323f.) to remind parents that they should copy the behaviour of birds who bring food to their young whilst they themselves should be prepared to go in want (*frag.* 15.98.23-24).

3.4.5 Affection From what we have observed from our sources so far, there can be little doubt that parents in the ancient world loved their children; nevertheless there were differences between how a male and female parent demonstrated this. Seneca is a case in point and in his *De Providentia* he grapples with the problem of why God as a loving father may sometimes allow evil to invade the lives of his ‘cherished children’; it is because He wants strength to be developed out of adversity. So it is for human parents, but the manner by which a mother and father go about achieving their goal/aim are quite different, as Seneca describes:

Do you not see how fathers show their love in one way, and mothers in another? The father orders his children to be aroused from sleep in order that they may start early upon their pursuits, even on holidays he does not permit them to be idle, and he draws from them sweat and sometimes tears’. [On the other hand], ‘the mother fondles them in her lap, wishes them out of the sun, wishes them never to be unhappy, never to cry, never to toil (*De Prov.* 2.5; cf. Juvenal, *Sat.* 14.189f.).⁶³

As far as paternal affection is concerned, there was the danger, especially during the late Republic or the early Empire, that fathers became too accommodating towards their

⁶³ The issue of affection in the Roman family has recently been the subject of much scholarly debate. P. Veyne (“La Famille et l’amour sous le haut-empire romain,” *Annales: économies, sociétés, civilisations* vol. 33 [1978], pp. 33, 35-63) advances the view that Roman family relations were cold in the late Republic, but gradually assumed a more affectionate character as the empire progressed. Other scholars argue to the contrary. For example, S. Dixon (“The Sentimental Ideal of the Roman Family,” in Rawson [ed.], *Marriage, Children and Divorce*, pp. 99-113 [103]) states that ‘the sentimental ideal possibly originated and certainly flourished in the late Republic and... its expression in literature reflected a conventional ideal of the age’. Regarding some of this literature, M. Manson in an influential article (“The Emergence of the Small Child in Rome {Third Century BC-First Century AD},” *History of Education* vol. 12 [1983], pp. 143-59) argues persuasively that the Romans began to take a greater interest in children and childish characteristics from the late Republic on (*contra* Bradley “Dislocation,” p. 49 n. 37). Manson traces the development of nomenclature for the small child (*infans, infantia*) and argues that these terms are exclusively employed by such writers as Cicero and Quintilian in the first centuries BCE and CE where they designated a small child under the age seven. He also postulates that the child became more personalised and terms of affection and affectionate gestures are more prominent. During this period children began to be portrayed more in Roman art suggesting a deeper appreciation of their value and worth.

offspring. One such father no doubt speaks for many others as described by the elder Seneca: 'This brashness of his is partly my fault: he was too indulgently brought up; he thinks he may do anything; he has never asked me anything' (*Controv.* 2.3.3). Indeed, Seneca (and others e.g. Quintilian 1.2.6-8) warn against it, 'There is nothing that makes the child hot-tempered so much as a soft and coddling upbringing (*mollis et blanda*). Therefore, the more an only child is indulged, and the more liberty a ward is allowed, the more will his disposition be spoiled. He will not withstand buffets who has never been denied anything, whose tears have always been wiped away by an anxious mother, who has been allowed to have his own way' (*De Ira* 2.21.6).⁶⁴

The issue of overindulgence also brings into play another aspect, namely, that of parental discipline. In general, overly strict parents were loathed and Seneca scathingly criticises fathers who supervise their offspring by repeatedly beating them for even the most incidental of misdemeanors, 'There is more than one kind of power: a prince has power over his subjects, a father over his children...will he not seem the worst of fathers (*pessimus pater*) who controls his children by constant whippings for even the most trifling of offences?' (*De Clem.* 1.16.3).⁶⁵ A father may have been a powerful figure

⁶⁴ Sometimes a son himself came to a similar conclusion about his own father: 'there had been no rigorous discipline, no rules imposed by a well-conducted home to form a youth's character and lead him away from the vices normal to his age. "In a way I was sent ahead into debauchery by my father" ' (*Controv.* 2.6.7).

⁶⁵ In this respect Saller ("Corporal Punishment, Authority," p. 165 n 33) states, 'The whip was not the symbol of the Roman father's authority'. A little later in the same article Saller also makes the important and persuasive point that, 'If the father had been a severe and repressive figure in Roman culture...it would have been odd that emperors were so concerned to represent themselves as *pater* in contrast to *dominus*...The rationale for this image was surely precisely the fact that *fathers exercised a benign authority*' (emphasis added).

but the term ‘father’ also ‘stands for love’⁶⁶ and according to Seneca, ‘A father’s power is most forbearing in its care for the interests of his children and subordinates his own to theirs’ (*potestatem patrium, quae est temperatissima liberis consulens suaque post illos reponens*) (*De Clem.* 1.14.3).

We have already noted that one of the clearest examples of paternal affection is a father’s response to a child taken ill or who has died. In relation to the former, Epictetus in chapter nine of book 1 of his *Discourses* where the topic of family affection is addressed, was conversing with an official who asked him about his own experience of marriage, to which the official retorted, ‘Wretched’. Epictetus responded, ‘How so? For men do not marry and beget children just for this...but rather to be happy’ (*Diss.* 1.11.3). The official then goes on to disclose the reason for his present state of mind, ‘I feel so wretched about the little children that recently when my little daughter was sick and was thought to be in danger I could not bear even to stay at her sick bed, but up and ran away until someone brought me word that she was well again’ (*Diss.* 1.11.4).⁶⁷ Epictetus responded by asking whether the man felt that such an action was justified, to which he replied he was only ‘acting naturally’ (φυσικῶς) and ‘in accordance with nature’ (τὸ κατὰ φύσιν). His assumptions on these matters are clearly in evidence in his conclusion: ‘this is the way...all, or at least, most fathers feel’ (Τοῦτο... πάντες ἢ οἱ γε πλεῖστοι πατέρες πάσχομεν, *Diss.* 1.11.5-6; cf. 1.23.3-5).

⁶⁶ Eyben, “Fathers and Sons,” p. 120; moreover the emperor’s title was *pater patriae* (‘father of the Fatherland’).

⁶⁷ Even though this father had left his child because he could not bear to see her sick, nevertheless he believed he was ‘acting naturally’ and affectionately (cf. *Diss.* 1.11.23-28).

Epictetus' views are also borne out by Hierocles where, in the wider context of how children ought to care for their parents, he reminds the former that 'parents... especially love us' (4.25.53). A similar point is made by Epictetus in book 2 of his *Discourses* when he addresses a question to the father of Admetus who wishes that he could exchange places with his ailing child: 'Do you imagine that he did not love (ἔφιλει) his own child when it was small, and that he was not in agony when it had fever, and...did he not say over and over again, "If only I had the fever instead?" ' (*Diss.* 2.22.12). Likewise Seneca informs us that a father cherishes his children irrespective of their mental or physical well-being:

Would any man judge his children so unfairly as to care more for a healthy son than for one whom was sickly, or for a tall child of so unusual stature more than for one who was short or of middling height?... Virtue regards all her works in the same light, as if they were her children, showing equal kindness to all, and still deeper kindness to those who encounter hardships; for even parents lean with more affection towards those of their offspring for whom they feel pity (*Ep.* 66.26).

3.4.6 Example Although none of our (Stoic) authors specifically address the need for fathers to be models for their offspring, Seneca, for example, does recognise that the best models are supposed to be *men* 'who teach us by their lives, men who tell us what we ought to do...and then prove it by their practice' (*Ep.* 52.8).⁶⁸ We also saw earlier how Hierocles refers to the fact that when children care for their parents' physical needs they are merely 'imitating' the care which the latter gave to them (4.25.53).

⁶⁸ Juvenal also warns fathers of the need for them to be ethical models for their children to follow and of the repercussions of failing to do so: 'Let your infant son stand in the way of the sin that you are about to commit...some day he shall show himself like to you, not in form and face only, but also your child in vice, following in all your footsteps...' (*Sat.* 14, cited in Lampe, ' "Family in Church", p. 4.).

3.4.7 Education Education is a subject which Musonius Rufus addresses at length and, in his view, ought to begin as soon as possible. In discussing the subject of children's education – specifically the question of “Should daughters receive the same education as sons?”⁶⁹ – he writes: ‘straight from infancy they ought to be taught that this [virtue] is right and that is wrong...that this is helpful, that is harmful, that one must do this, one must not do that’ (*frag.* 4.46.35f.). Thus, ‘from this training understanding is developed in those who learn, boys and girls alike, with no difference’. In the same treatise on education he states that children ‘must be inspired with a feeling of shame toward all that is base’ (*frag.* 4.48.1-2). Education is a life-long experience and should ‘continue throughout life’; indeed he insists that ‘there is not one set of virtues for a man and another for a woman’ (*frag.* 4.44.9-10). Given that ‘men and women are born with the same virtues, the same type of training and education must, of necessity, befit both men and women’ (*frag.* 4.46.1-2). In Musonius’ opinion, philosophy is the highest form of education.⁷⁰

Similarly, the Roman⁷¹ author Seneca states that the greatest help that can be given to children is to provide them with a sound upbringing. Parents are not only responsible for

⁶⁹ Lutz, “Musonius Rufus,” p. 27. When Musonius refers to education he is, of course, thinking of philosophy: ‘If you ask me what doctrine produces such an education, I shall reply that as without philosophy no man would be properly educated’ (*frag.* 4.48.19f.).

⁷⁰ Note should be taken of how unusual and elitist Musonius Rufus’ comments are here.

⁷¹ Interestingly education is a chief concern in the writings of another Roman author, namely, Cicero. Wiedemann (*Adults and Children*, p. 87) writes concerning the education of Cicero’s children: ‘Although the boys were sent to study with the best teachers in Greece, Cicero as a Roman father still feels that teaching is ultimately the *paterfamilias*’ responsibility: his treatise on moral philosophy, *De Officiis*...was not just dedicated to, but intended for, his...son...Cicero explicitly tells Atticus, “Who can teach better than a father his son?” (*qua de re enim potius pater filio?* (*Att.* 6,7; 15,16; 15,13a). Wiedemann (*Adults and Children*, p. 156) writes a little later in regard to the ancient world: ‘the father remained the *ideal* teacher’ (emphasis added).

their children's birth, but also for the outcome of their instruction: 'These rules apply to our children. In our case, however, our lot at birth and our education give us no excuse ...it is their consequences that we must regulate' (*De Ira* 2.21.1).

CHILDREN'S RESPONSIBILITIES TOWARDS THEIR PARENTS

3.4.8 Reciprocation Towards Parents We have already seen the importance of the principle of reciprocity in the ancient world as far as our Jewish and the Graeco-Roman sources we have so far consulted are concerned. This is also borne out in our Stoic sources. For instance, Hierocles repeats the presupposition that children, try as they might, can never repay all that their parents pass on to them:

we must begin with the *assumption* that the only measure of our gratitude to them is perpetual and unyielding eagerness to repay their beneficence, since, even if we were to do a great deal for them, that would still be far too inadequate (emphasis added) (4.25.53).

Seneca echoes this point, namely, that a child's deeds rendered to his parents can never outweigh the debt owed to them: 'Whatever I have bestowed on my father... even if it is great, falls short of the value of my father's gift to me, for, if he had not begotten me there would be no gift' (*De Ben.* 3.30.1). Moreover, Seneca tells us that even though a son receives benefits from his father, the son is to look for the 'repayment of benefits with the hope of surprising' him' (*De Ben.* 3.36.3).

3.4.9 Nurture and Care In book 2 of *De Beneficiis* Seneca's remarks indicate that parents were to so care for their children that they did not leave their offspring with an excuse for not fulfilling their responsibilities of looking after them (*De Ben.* 3.36.3).

Epictetus also states concerning a son that he is 'called' to take care of his own father (*Ench.* 30). But, arguably, it is Hierocles' instructions to children to look after their parents' physical needs which are one of the most sensitive and detailed among the ancients. In his treatise on "Brotherly Love" Hierocles refers to the duties expected of family members, including children:

We have... provided clear counsel on how we *should* deal with our relatives, after having earlier taught how we should treat ourselves, our parents... (emphasis added) (4.27.20).

Hierocles makes much of the fact that carrying out even the most mundane of tasks brings the greatest pleasure to parents: 'Children contribute to their parents' joy by performing even seemingly servile duties such as washing their feet, making their beds, and standing ready to wait on them' (4.25.53).⁷² He concludes: 'Just as people are cheered by their association with family and friends as though it were a procession which escorts them on their way, so also parents who are about to depart from life are particularly gratified by and hold dear the close attention their children pay them' (4.25.53).

3.4.10 Honour Honouring one's parents is important given the fact that they stand at the centre of the family and as such are to be respected more than others. Parents were dishonoured when their children failed to care personally for them. As with our Jewish sources already considered, next to God parents were to receive the greatest honour. However, Seneca personalises this by drawing attention to the fact that 'in the

⁷² T. Parkin ("Out of Sight, Out of Mind: Elderly Members of the Roman Family," in B. Rawson and P. R. C. Weaver [eds.], *The Roman Family in Italy: Status, Sentiment, Space* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997], pp. 123-48 [134]) states regarding the Roman family: '[the] moral duty of caring for one's aged parents... may have extended to sharing one's roof with them'.

case of a 'father' one ought 'not [to]...dishonour [him]'; the implication, in this instance, being that to show disrespect towards one's own father is also to dishonour 'Zeus, the God of Fathers' (*Diss.* 3.11.4). On a slightly different but related note, Hierocles makes the point that to honour one's parents is, by *association*, to show honour to relatives and friends whom *they* hold dear: 'Children should therefore love their parents' relatives ...and...their parents' friends and in fact all whom they hold dear' (4.25.53). His summary on this matter is that 'it will especially please parents that their children are seen to honour those whom they love and consider highly'(4.25.53).

3.4.11 Obedience A normal social expectation of households in antiquity was that children were to submit to their parents. Any failure to obey parents would bring conflict within the family. The harmony of the family was a priority for all of its members to uphold. In this respect it is appropriate that we should turn to Musonius Rufus' writings since he specifically addresses this question ("Must One Obey One's Father Under All Circumstances?") thereby making his discussion one of the most extensive of its kind in antiquity.

It ought to be said that the question of the submissiveness of children was not a new inquiry since Aulus Gellius informs us that the issue of whether one's father should always be obeyed was a frequent topic of debate among Greek and Roman philosophers (*Att.* 2.7.1).⁷³ It is within this context that Gellius' three options are directed towards helping children: 'first...[of] all a father's commands must be obeyed (*parendum*);

⁷³ That other philosophers were concerned with this question, and that they sometimes held differing views is seen in Epictetus' remarks in *Encheiridion* 30. Also, the Neopythagoreans take this argument further. For example, Pericytone (*On the Harmony of a Woman* [145. 7f. Thesleff. Trans. Taylor, *Ethical Fragments* 63-64) states that a child should obey his parents 'whether their rank in life is small or great; that he should 'never oppose them in anything they may say or do'; and that he 'should submit to them even when they are insane'.

second...in some he is to obeyed, in others not; ...third ...it is not necessary to yield to and obey one's father in anything' (*Att.* 2.7.6-10). The last instruction is dismissed by Gellius as 'altogether shameful' (*nimis infamis*), since the reasoning behind it is 'both silly and foolish' (*frivola et inanis*).

Gellius states that if a father commands one to do wrong, he ought not to be obeyed; if he commands one to do right, one does not obey because it is a *command*, but on the grounds that it is *right*. Gellius rejects the first option also on the basis that fathers do sometimes command their offspring to do wrong. The 'via media' (*media sententia*), he concludes, is 'the best and safest' (*optima atque tutissima*). In such circumstances where a father does give such a command to do wrong he must be denied 'gently and respectfully' (*Att.* 2.7.13).

Musonius Rufus picks up this discussion when he was asked the question, "Must One Obey One's Parents Under All Circumstances?", by a young man whose own father forbade him to study philosophy. In the first instance Musonius replied that obedience (*πείθεσθαι*) to one's mother and father is a 'good (*καλόν*) thing' and which he 'certainly [can] recommend' (*frag.* 16.100.24). But the philosopher qualifies this by stating that it is not disobedient to refuse to do something which one knows to be 'wrong or unjust or shameful' (*κακὰ ἢ ἀδίκα ἢ αἰσχρά*); here Musonius gives the example of a son who refuses to steal money entrusted to him upon the orders of his money-loving father. One is only disobedient, states Musonius, if one refuses to carry out 'good and honourable and useful orders (*εὖ καὶ καλῶς καὶ συμφερόντως*)' (*frag.* 16.102.17).

As far as the issue of the subordination of offspring is concerned, Musonius would seem to retain the value of obedience but redefines it. Parents desire what is good for their children and obedience is not simply complying with their instructions; rather it is more a matter of doing good whether one's parents command it or not. In response to the original question posed by the young man above, Musonius turns him to a higher authority, namely, that children owe obedience not only to their human fathers but primarily to Zeus 'the common father of all men and gods'. It is to this father, Musonius concludes, that children owe the greater allegiance. Thus, he informs his inquirer, 'If you obey your father, you will follow the will of man; if you choose the philosopher's life, the will of God' (*frag.* 16.106.4-5).

On the other hand, Epictetus is not so swift to discard the claim that a child ought not to obey one's parents in every circumstance. Epictetus declares, for example, that one of the duties required of one who pursues the life of a philosopher was 'to give way [to one's father] in all things' even to the point of submitting 'when he reviles you'. This was an obligation owed to all fathers irrespective of their moral qualities, since, 'nature' gives one a father without making him either good or bad (*Ench.* 30). He also stresses that 'in the case of a father' one ought 'not [to]...dishonour [him]', the inference being in this instance that to demonstrate disrespect one's father is tantamount to dishonouring 'Zeus, the God of Fathers' (*Diss.* 3.11.4). In book 2 of his *Discourses*, Epictetus provides us with a description of an *ideal* son in the following terms:

to treat everything that is his as belonging to his father, be obedient to him in all things (πάντα ὑπακούειν), never to speak ill of him to anyone else, nor to say anything that will harm him, to give way to him in every-

thing and yield him precedence, helping him as far as is within his power (*Diss.* 2.10.7).

Clearly Epictetus' views on obedience are not 'radical' but conventional in that they occur in a list of social relationships of master and slave and father and son.

The subject of the obedience to parents is one which is also discussed in non-élite sources. For example, Artimedorus states that the hierarchical nature of the parent-child relationship is such that parents are 'among the people who are worthy of credence and whose words [in a dream] one must believe and obey' (Bk. 2.69). Later in Book 3 of *Oneirocritica* Artimedorus describes that to dream of oneself having a contagious disease is a good sign whereas to dream of someone else, especially if it is one's offspring, having a similar condition does not augur well for the future. In fact, 'if he is the dreamer's son, he will not live a way of life that please his father' (Bk. 3.47). The same point is borne out when one dreams of physical abnormality: 'to have more ears than the normal two is auspicious for a man who wishes to find someone who will obey him, such as a wife, children...' (Bk. 1.24). The presuppositions underlying all these remarks is that parents, especially fathers, were to be obeyed.

3.5 Summary

Our non-Jewish primary sources have also proved to be a fruitful source for the identification of a number of ideals or normal social expectations *vis-à-vis* parents and children in the ancient world. At the outset, it is important to note that our Graeco-Roman authors are working from a different agenda to that of our previous Jewish writers. Here the assumptions regarding parents and their offspring are often found within the wider

context of the debates on marriage/parenthood and household management. As regards the former aspect, some of our philosophers' comments on this relationship reveal a tension between the philosophical life and marriage and parenthood whilst for others this was not a problem. In relation to the latter, the view held by some (e.g. Aristotle) that the household, the bedrock of society, was even more fundamental than that of the *polis*.

All our authors agree that parents are the superior party and children the inferior party in the relationship. Aristotle stresses that all relations, including those within the family, are essentially hierarchical and, like Philo and Josephus whom we earlier considered, views fathers as the 'fitter' and more rational subjects to rule over their children. In this hierarchical relationship Plutarch, for instance, emphasises the fact that parents rank second in line to that of the gods, whereas Hierocles differs slightly in this respect and argues that they are rank third, after that of the gods and one's country. Aristotle, however, stands apart and even likens the father's authority to that of the gods or a king.

As a consequence of this hierarchy, the father is the authority figure in the household and Seneca, Plutarch and Aristotle all concur on this. Both Aristotle and Hierocles agree with Philo in that they view parents as owning or possessing their offspring. Fathers were also expected to be an example for their offspring to follow; and whilst Graeco-Roman authors (e.g. Plutarch) show a specific awareness of this, Jewish writers (e.g. Philo and Josephus) speak more generally of this in relation to the 'fathers' of the nation.

Parents were also expected to nurture and care for their children and this was regarded as a life-long responsibility. Fathers too were figures of authority, however it should be noted, according to Seneca for example, that they also stood for love. In this regard, the

broad swathe of opinion across our primary evidence demonstrates that love was a defining characteristic of this relationship. Aristotle's views are probably representative of many when he states that parents loved their children with a greater intensity and duration than their children could ever love them. Whilst there was no doubting the fact that both parents loved their children, Seneca, for example, states that fathers and mothers demonstrated their love in different ways. As far as affection goes, Plutarch provides some of the most intense descriptions of parental love; nevertheless, there is a general consensus across our sources, élite and non-élite, that a child who was taken ill or who had died evoked some of the greatest outbursts of emotion and affection by parents.

Generally speaking, whilst mothers were responsible for nurturing their offspring, fathers took care of their children's educational requirements. Aristotle, for example, recognises that although education was the prerogative of the state, private instruction by a father was superior. Moreover, the same author also states that moral education included listening to a father's exhortations within the context of the family. Other sources (e.g. Plutarch and Musonius Rufus) stressed the importance for fathers to begin the education of their children at the earliest possible moment and the effect this can have on regulating character.

Our Graeco-Roman writers also identify a number of responsibilities which children were obligated to provide for their parents. Aristotle, Hierocles and Seneca, like Philo earlier, all recognise the commonly held assumption in the ancient world, namely, that children were expected to give back what they had taken from their parents; nevertheless, all our sources make the point that even their best efforts could never match their parents'

provision for them.

One of the ways in which children were expected to repay their parents was to care for them, especially in their latter years. Hierocles is notable for the many practical descriptions he provides as to how children were supposed to look after their parents; in so doing, he states, children are merely imitating the latter. It was particularly instructive to note that failing to care for one's parents was closely bound up with honour. Parents were to be honoured next to the gods and in this regard both Plutarch and Hierocles recognise a kind of honour by association - to respect one's parents is also to hold in esteem persons and things dear to them. slightly

Children were also expected to love their parents, and they were supposed to obey them too. In relation to the latter, Musonius Rufus and Epictetus (his student) especially address the question of the subordination and obedience of offspring to their parents. Whilst the former appears to suggest that in certain extreme situations a son is at liberty to obey a higher authority than that of his father, Epictetus is of the opinion that among the many characteristics of the ideal son is to submit to his father in *all* circumstances.

Overall Conclusion to Chapters 2 and 3

In chapters two and three we have been primarily concerned with the normal social expectations of parents and children in the ancient world. It has not been our concern to determine how these relations worked out in practice which could be very different from the standard assumptions. Careful selection of the primary material both literary and non-literary was made to ensure as broad a representation of the sources as possible.

Having investigated both Jewish and non-Jewish sources – literary and non-literary – we have been able to identify a number of stock meanings or associations in regard to this relationship. Parents were supposed to provide legitimate offspring. More important, the parent-child relationship was essentially a hierarchical one where parents, especially the father, exercised authority over his children. Both parents were under obligation to care for the many needs of their child and were, for instance, expected to show love towards them, even though fathers differed from mothers in how they thought this ought to be done. For example, one of the father's main responsibilities was to provide instruction for his offspring and live by example, whilst a mother's main obligation was to nurture the child.

In turn, the principle of reciprocity was an important one in the ancient world and children were also expected to perform certain duties for their parents. These included showing affection, caring for them in later life, as well as honouring/respecting and obeying them. What is particularly striking about our evidence is the degree of similarity or common ground between the Jewish and non-Jewish sources *vis-à-vis* the standard

assumptions of parents and children. At the outset of this investigation, one might have assumed that Jewish and Graeco-Roman authors would have perpetrated different viewpoints as far as family values are concerned; instead, we have found the opposite to be the case. Whilst, for instance, the *content* of education/instruction might differ across our sources nevertheless, the duty of Jewish and non-Jewish fathers to provide it is the same. What is so remarkable about these portrayals of family life in the ancient world are not their differences, but rather their commonplace nature. Indeed all the evidence points to the fact that Jewish views of familial values, expectations etc. were entirely compatible with, and hardly distinguishable from, those of Graeco-Roman society. We conclude that, for the most part, and certainly as far as the typical expectations of parent-child relations are concerned, Jewish families were little different to their non-Jewish counterparts at the turn of the eras.

These findings and similarities are significant and will hopefully be useful as far as Part III of our investigation is concerned. Given that there is so much common ground between the two traditions, there are sufficient grounds and justification for us mixing together Jewish and non-Jewish evidence in our study of brotherly relations. It is to this that we now turn our attention.

4. BROTHERLY RELATIONS IN THE ANCIENT WORLD

4.1 Introduction

Having examined the normal social expectations of parent-child relations across a broad range of Jewish and non-Jewish material, we return to these sources in our study of brotherly relations. How did brothers in the ancient world relate to one another? Was there, for example, a pecking order among siblings? And, if there was, did this give rise to tensions, and how were such conflicts resolved? Also, were brothers expected to demonstrate affection towards one another, and what part, if any, did respect and honour have to play in these relationships? In all this, we are again primarily concerned with the conventional attitudes of brotherly relations, rather than the practical out-workings of such relationships (which could obviously be very different from common assumptions).

We begin this part of our investigating with the writings of Plutarch whose common opinions and eclectic interests are probably representative of most, and therefore set the scene not only for our other non-Jewish authors, but for our Jewish sources as well.

Also, given that we have already established that as far as the normal standard expectations of parent-child relations in antiquity are concerned there was not much difference between Jewish and non-Jewish families, we will proceed cautiously and treat the brother material together. Once we have investigated the writings of the philosopher Plutarch, we will consider other relevant non-Jewish material before going on to study the relevant Jewish sources. We will also integrate, as we go along, important relevant

material from our non-literary texts.

NON-JEWISH EVIDENCE

4.2 Plutarch

Plutarch's treatise *De Fraternali Amore*, "Concerning Brotherly Love," is an excellent source of platitudes concerning brotherly relations.¹ Its importance for us lies in the fact that it is the only complete text left from antiquity which has brotherly relations as its central focus.² According to H. D. Betz, Plutarch's essay is the 'only systematic presentation of what antiquity has to say about the ethics of "brotherly love"'.³ Indeed, the author's purpose in writing must be viewed against the background of the 'crisis of family relations'⁴ in his own day and the philosopher's 'despair when he looks at his own people'.⁵ He states: 'according to my observation, brotherly love (φιλαδελφία) is as rare in our day as brotherly hatred (μισαδελφία) was among men of old' (*Frat. Amor.* 1/478C). The writer's hope is that by addressing his fellow Roman citizens such *ideals* may once again be revived.⁶

¹ All citations from Plutarch, unless otherwise stated, are from the Loeb Classical Library.

² Although see 4.6 below for a treatment of Hierocles on this same subject.

³ H. D. Betz, "De Fraternali Amore (Moralia 478A- 492D)," in Betz (ed.), *Plutarch's Ethical Writings*, pp. 231-63 (232). See also H.-J. Klauck, "Brotherly Love in Plutarch and 4 Maccabees," in D. L. Balch, W.A. Meeks, W.A. Ferguson (eds.), *Greeks, Romans, and Christians: Essays in Honour of A. J. Malherbe* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), pp. 144-56.

⁴ Betz, "De Fraternali," p. 233.

⁵ Betz, "De Fraternali," p. 234.

⁶ Aasgard ("Brotherhood in Plutarch and Paul," p. 167) is right when he states that the *ideals* which apply to other familial relationships in antiquity '[are] attached to this relationship [and that] similar attitudes can be detected in Plutarch and Paul'.

4.2.1 Brotherly Love

That the subject of brotherly relations, and brotherly love in particular, is important to Plutarch is evident from the fact that he deems it important enough to treat it separately. This in itself is noteworthy since there is no occurrence of a special study on the subject of brotherhood in antiquity as part of family ethics. Plutarch employs the noun φιλαδελφία to denote the meaning of ‘brotherly love,’ and uses it a number of times e.g. in the title, 1/478C, 5/480C, 6/480F, 11/483C, and 21/491F. The adjective φιλάδελφος (“brother-loving”) also occurs in 1/478B and 18/489A. Apart from Plutarch (and the apostle Paul of course) the word φιλαδελφία and its closest cognates is only known to occur about ten times among the ancients (e.g. Lucian of Samosata, *Ver. Hist.* 2.16 and Babrius *Fabularum Scriptor*, *Myth.* 47).⁷

In general, relationships between brothers are to be characterised by love. Plutarch informs us that ‘brothers love (φιλοῦντες) and feel affection for each other’ (*Frat. Amor.* 5/480B), and he goes on to relate the example of Timon for whom his ‘brother’s... affection ... has always transcended and still transcends all the rest’ (*Frat. Amor.* 16/487E). Brotherly love, he declares, is manifestly different from all other kinds of love; whereas with friends one chooses another to befriend, in the case of brothers – where the element of choice is absent – one is born into a family and therefore under obligation to love them. For this reason the brother ‘who is of the same blood and upbringing and born

⁷ See C. J. Brady, “Brotherly Love: A Study of the Word Philadelphia and Its Contribution to the Biblical Theology of Brotherly Love”, p. 7f. Unpub. diss. Fribourg 1961.

of the same father and mother [ought to] concede and allow some faults' (*Frat. Amor.* 8/482A).⁸

According to Plutarch, brotherly love is founded upon one basic principle – brothers share a common, biological origin: 'nature from one seed and one source has created two brothers, or three, or more, not for difference and opposition to each other, but that by being separate they might the more readily co-operate with one another' (*Frat. Amor.* 2/478E).⁹ It is also instructive to note how Plutarch regards the two familial relationships with which our thesis is primarily concerned (i.e. parent-child and brother-brother) as closely related, so much so that to conduct oneself accordingly towards another *brother* is to *honour* one's *parents*: 'what deed or favour or disposition, which children may show toward their parents, can give more pleasure than steadfast goodwill and friendship toward a brother?' (*Frat. Amor.* 4/480A).¹⁰ There is no greater gift which a parent can bestow than that of a brother, because a brother is 'truly the most precious and delightful of all possessions they have received from them' (*Frat. Amor.* 6/480E).

Plutarch goes even further and states that brotherly love is evidence of love for parents, 'Now, as regards parents, brotherly love (φιλαδελφία) is of such sort that to love one's brother is forthwith proof of love for mother and father' (*Frat. Amor.* 6/480F). Moreover,

⁸ Betz ("De Fraterno," p. 247) writes, 'Whereas friendship must follow the principle of, "first judgement and then love," brotherhood follows the reverse rule, because φιλία has priority by nature: ἡ φύσις συγγενέννηκε τὴν φιλιάν'.

⁹ Etymologically the word ἀδελφός is a compound expression formed from the copulative prefix *a* and from *delphus* "the womb" giving the meaning "born from the same womb"; see Michael J. Wilkins, "Brother, Brotherhood" *ABD* vol. 1, pp. 782-3.

¹⁰ Betz ("De Fraterno," p. 242) comments on this accordingly: 'Parents are grieved by a variety of misbehaviour in which sons may engage, but they become most upset when their sons hate each other' - does the same apply metaphorically to Paul?

the brother who fails to manifest love to another brother reflects poorly on his own father: ‘as regards children... there is no lesson and example comparable to brotherly love on their father’s part’ (*Frat. Amor.* 6/480F). The corollary of this is that to hate one’s brother is tantamount to blaming one’s father and mother for having brought his brother into the world, ‘For he that hates his own brother (ὁ γὰρ μισῶν τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ) and is angry with him cannot refrain from blaming the father that begat (γεννήσαντα) and the mother that bore such a brother’ (*Frat. Amor.* 5/480D).

4.2.2 Structure(s) within the Brotherhood

One of the most striking aspects of Plutarch’s views of brotherly relations is that not all brothers are the same; there are differences. In this respect, the philosopher devotes a substantial part of his treatise to such differences (i.e. chapters 12-17) and their workings. The fact that hierarchies (as opposed to non-patriarchal structures) existed amongst brothers is clear from the following comment: ‘it is impossible for them [brothers] to be on an equal footing in all respects’ (*Frat. Amor.* 12/484C). Particularly significant is the overarching perspective Plutarch has for viewing such differences where brothers who differ in age, nature or social status are regarded as ‘superior’ (12/484D, 14/485C, ὑπερεχόν) and ‘inferior’ (ὁ λειπομένοσ, 14/485C). However, the superior brother must guard ‘against these inequalities...and cure them’ (*Frat. Amor.* 12/484C) and in order that this might happen, the philosopher gives the following directions:

One would therefore advise a brother...to make his brothers partners in those respects in which he is considered to be superior, adorning them with a portion of his repute and adopting them into his friendships, and as he is a cleverer speaker than they, to make his eloquence

available to their use as though they were no less than his; in the next place, to make manifest to them neither haughtiness nor disdain, but rather, by deferring to them and conforming his character to theirs, to make his superiority secure from envy and to equalise, so far as this is attainable, the disparity of his fortune by his moderation of spirit (*Frat. Amor.* 12/484D).

On the other hand, an inferior brother ought not to unduly elevate his brother because

his brother is not the only one, who is richer or more learned or more famous than himself, but that he is frequently inferior to many others (*Frat. Amor.* 14/485C).

One important distinction between brothers is that ‘due to the disparity in their ages’ (*Frat. Amor.* 16/486F). This difference in age between siblings is given an important place in the philosopher’s thinking; nevertheless, there are checks and balances to be observed in this aspect of brotherly relations. For instance, an elder brother should not conduct his relations with his younger brother along paternalistic lines but should always behave in a thoughtful and charitable manner. Likewise, a younger brother should not try to enter into competition or struggle to surpass his older brother but should instead treat him with the respect and obedience he deserves. Whilst

it is fitting that the older should be solicitous about the younger ...and that *the younger should...emulate and follow the older...* let the solicitude of the former be rather that of a comrade than that of a father, and of one who would rejoice in a brother’s success... And in the emulation of the younger let imitation, not rivalry, be present; for imitation is the act of one who admires, but rivalry of one who envies’ (emphasis added) (*Frat. Amor.* 16/487B).

As far as age is concerned, and in the best interests of unanimity, the older brother is to make every effort to overcome such a difference whilst the younger brother is to esteem it. From their earliest days brothers are strongly encouraged to steer well clear of any spirit of striving to win (*Frat. Amor.* 17/487E-F). In addition, older brothers are not to try

to control younger brothers and younger brothers are exhorted not to become petulant. Thus the former is not to ‘claim the right always to dominate and...have precedence over the younger and to have the advantage in every matter where reputation and influence are involved’ (*Frat. Amor.* 16/487B).

Concomitant with this is the admonition to ‘younger brothers’ not to ‘become fractious [nor to] make it their practice to despise and belittle the elder’. The result – on both sides – of neglecting such advice is ‘that the younger [feel] they are being treated spitefully and discriminated against, [and so] resist and try to avoid their elder’s admonitions’ while ‘the elder ever clinging fast to their superiority, fear their brother’s augmentation as though it meant elimination for themselves’ (*Frat Amor.* 16/486F-487A). Again, in relation to the inferior brother, the philosopher states that the increase of his brother’s honour and respect does not diminish his own. Therefore, he ought to contemplate the fact that his brother’s advancement reflects honourably on himself as well: ‘but just as lesser numbers multiply greater and are multiplied by them, so should he give himself increase to his brother and at the same time be increased along with him by their common blessings’ (*Frat. Amor.* 15/485E-F).

4.2.3 Brotherly Roles and Status - the Family and Society

In his elucidation of the differences between brothers, Plutarch employs the human body as a model for brotherly relations. This itself is indicative of the fact that brothers had different roles to perform and – in keeping with standard expectations of ancient family life – each brother was supposed to co-operate with other brothers in the household.

Nature, in the form of a human body, has provided a paradigm for how brothers are to live and work together.¹¹ ‘Brothers’ and ‘twins’ are many of the more important members depicted in the hands, feet, eyes and ears etc. for the purpose of mutual support and to work together in harmony. Plutarch employs the body metaphor in its application to the brotherhood to show that whilst there is to be unity amongst the brothers, it is unity with/in diversity:

for it is not true of the fingers, either, that one which writes and plays instruments is superior to the one which cannot, by either nature or attainment, do so, but in some manner or other they all contrive together and assist each other, having been made unequal, as though of set purpose, and all deriving their power to grasp from the position of the others opposite the thumb, the largest and strongest of them all (*Frat. Amor.* 15/485F-486A).

This example above clearly shows the point Plutarch wants brothers to note: different fingers of the one hand have different duties and roles to perform, yet they have a singularity of purpose and by working together assist each other in achieving it.

Plutarch is also aware of the fact that brothers differ in relation to their place in society and the status accorded to them. For example, as far as the former is concerned, brothers have different circles of friends – some ‘exult in famous friends’ while others cannot (*Frat. Amor.* 14/485D-E). Brothers also have differing degrees of reputation and influence (*Frat. Amor.* 15/486C) – whilst some brothers are ‘admired and courted’ others are ‘not visited by anybody and enjoy no distinction at all’ (*Frat. Amor.* 16/486E). Generally speaking, friendships are good and proper; nevertheless, brothers ought to be

¹¹ In Greek families (and no doubt Jewish and Roman families too) ‘[the] ideal for the household was self-sufficiency’; see S. B. Pomeroy, *Families in Classical and Hellenistic Greece: Representation and Realities* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), p. 141; R. Saller, *The Ecology of the Ancient Greek World*, (New York: Ithaca, 1991), pp. 298-99.

aware that such friendships can put brotherly relations and brotherly love in jeopardy, especially if they take place in the context of public life: ‘undue preference in such matters is not so grand a thing for the friend, as the slight is shameful (αἰσχρόν) and degrading (ἄδοξον) for a brother’ (*Frat. Amor.* 20/491B).

We noted earlier how Plutarch recognises that there are not only differences in terms of ‘the fortunes of brothers’ but more fundamentally, as we have seen, inequalities existed in different areas including age, social status, roles etc. (*Frat. Amor.* 12/484F). In relation to this, it is instructive to note how the philosopher appears to arrange his manual around this dichotomy. Regarding the inferior brother, he should not unduly humiliate himself: ‘a brother should not, like the pan of a balance, incline in the opposite way and be himself lowered when his brother is raised on high’ (*Frat. Amor.* 15/485E).

Plutarch’s aspirations are also echoed by Artimedorus, the Greek philosopher, who states that dreams of different parts of the body have a status significance and represent different members of the family e.g. the head represents the father, the foot a slave etc. In one context, Artimedorus likens brothers to the eyes and significantly, in keeping with the common expectations of élite sources of the time, differentiates between brothers in terms of *status*: ‘if a man has 2 ... brothers, the right eye signifies the older...brother...the left eye the younger...brother’ (Bk. 1.24).

4.2.4 Honour and Respect Accorded to Brothers

We earlier observed how older brothers were to try to overcome their differences, and one way in which this was expected to be done was by showing honour and respect

towards each other. As far as older brothers are concerned,

it is fitting that the older should be solicitous about the younger and should *lead and admonish* (νουθετέω)¹² him' (emphasis added) (*Frat. Amor.* 16/487B).

However, Plutarch qualifies this by reminding the elder brother that it should be done to 'persuade rather than command', to 'rejoice in a brother's successes' and to 'applaud rather than criticise him if he errs'; all this, states the philosopher, shows 'a spirit [which] desires to help, but also more kindness of heart' (*Frat. Amor.* 16/487B).

On the other hand, a younger brother is charged with the responsibility 'to honour (τιμᾶν) and emulate and follow the older' brother (*Frat. Amor.* 16/487B). Furthermore, 'among the many honours (τιμαῖς) which it is fitting that the younger render to their elders, obedience (πειθαρχεῖν) is most highly esteemed... together with respectfulness (αἰδοῦς), [which bring] about a staunch goodwill and favour' (*Frat. Amor.* 16/487C). Plutarch cites the example of Cato who 'won over his elder brother Caepio by obedience (εὐπειθεία) and gentleness' (πραότητι) so much so 'that by the time they both were men, he had so subdued him and filled him with so great respect (αἰδοῦς) for himself that Caepio would neither do nor say anything without Cato's knowledge' (*Frat. Amor.* 16/487C).

Elsewhere, the philosopher's exaggerated language may be apparent when he states –

¹² Interestingly, Paul, in one of the passage on brotherly relations with which we are primarily concerned (i.e. 1 Thess. 5:12-15) uses the same verb (νουθετέω, vv.12, 14 - see chapter 9) when speaking of the correction which some leading-brothers were to exercise in relation to other brothers.

‘it is the act of a mad man to adorn the effigy of a brother and at the same time to beat and mutilate a brother’s body, even so to reverence and honour the name “brother” in others, but to shun the person himself, is the act of one who is not sane’ (*Frat. Amor.* 3/479D) – nevertheless there is no mistaking the point he is making. In sum, Plutarch’s remarks reflect how honour/respect was a common assumption of brotherly relations in the ancient world.

4.2.5 Harmony and Discord amongst Brothers

The *ideal* relationship – and overriding emphasis by Plutarch – between brothers is the need for them to live in unity and harmony (cf. εὐνοία, ὁμονοία, 1/478F; συμφωνία, ἁρμονία, (*Frat. Amor.* 2/479A). According to nature, the agreement of brothers is the very basis of a healthy family life. More particularly

the concord of brothers both family (γένος) and household (οἶκος) are sound and flourish...like an harmonious choir, [they] neither... say, nor think, anything discordant’ (*Frat. Amor.* 2/479A).

Therefore, every effort should be made to guard against dissonance. There is also an intimacy and a harmony about sibling relations which, according to the philosopher, was common currency in his own day and which brothers were to guard jealously: ‘there is a saying that brothers walking together should not let a stone come between them.’ (*Frat. Amor.* 19/490D). Brothers are expected not to ‘create a vicious practice of offending and exasperating one another’ (*Frat. Amor.* 17/487F) and, in the interests of peace, are repeatedly told not to try to outdo each other as athletes do (*Frat. Amor.* 13/485B).

The same note of concord is struck by Artimedorus who holds that dreams of different

parts of the body mean different things. On a general level, to dream of physical abnormality is an ominous sign and can signify conflict within a household: 'to have two noses signifies discord within one's family and relations. Discord because everything is unnaturally two-fold signifies discord with one's family and relations...' (Bk. 1.27).

However, and more positively, to dream of the shoulders – crucial for supporting the structure of the body – signifies the way that brothers ought to conduct themselves and is a good sign for 'shoulders are brothers to one another' (Bk. 1.40). The common assumption under-girding Artemidorus' remarks is that he expects brotherly relations to be harmonious a point he underscores later in book 1 when he likens the knees to siblings: 'frequently the knees refer to brothers or companions, since the knees are themselves brothers to one another and are one's companions in travel' (Bk. 1.47).

But Plutarch also recognises that in certain circumstances, and because of their inherent differences, brothers are not always going to agree. He acknowledges that even as early as childhood a competitive spirit can give way to more serious disputes 'until they are no longer able to control or subdue their contentiousness and ambitious spirit in more important matters' (*Frat. Amor.* 17/487F). Therefore, it is 'of no slight importance to resist the spirit of contentiousness and jealousy among brothers when it first creeps in over trivial matters, practising the art of making mutual concessions, of leaving to take defeat, and of taking pleasure in indulging brothers rather than in winning victories over them' (*Frat. Amor.* 17/488A).

Moreover, 'the man who quarrels with his brother, and takes as his comrade a stranger from the market-place or the wrestling floor, appears to be doing nothing but cutting off

voluntarily a limb of his own flesh and blood, and taking to himself and joining to his body an extraneous member' (*Frat. Amor.* 1/478B). His advice to discordant brothers 'who cannot, by their very nature, share without envy their brother's reputation and influence', [is to] 'divert as far as possible from... those brothers... their own desires and ambitions, so that by their successes they may give pleasure to each other instead of pain' (*Frat. Amor.* 16/486 E). Brothers, who, as he calls it, 'travel different roads [and as a consequence] afford no help' are to avoid 'envy... [and hence be] of greater service to each other' (*Frat. Amor.* 15/486D).

In all this, the philosopher also knows full well that in the event of fraternal relations becoming fractured the long-standing 'great goodwill and affection' (μεγάλην διολλύουσιν εὐνοσίαν καὶ φιλίαν) will mean 'it is not easy to effect a reconciliation' (*Frat. Amor.* 7/481C). Whereas friendships have been 'knitted together through long familiarity' and may be 'easily resumed again', in the case of brothers, 'the bonds' run much deeper and 'once broken...they cannot readily come together'; moreover even 'if they do, their reconciliation bears with it a filthy hidden sore of suspicion' (*Frat. Amor.* 7/481C-D).

It is also important to note how Plutarch draws a distinction between internal and external conflicts. For example, the philosopher makes mention of those *within* the household 'who bring discord... [such as]... a slandering servant, or a flatterer who slips in from outside, or a malignant citizen' (*Frat. Amor.* 2/479A). But discord can also be caused by those *outside* the household. Just as 'diseases' when they enter the body have

deleterious effects 'so slander and suspicion entertained against kinsmen ushers in evil and pernicious associations which flow in from outside to fill the vacant room' (*Frat. Amor.* 2/479B). This only happens, states Plutarch, because brothers do not treat one another properly and even show hatred towards each other. Plutarch also shows an acute awareness of the fact that discordant brotherly relations can lead to rumour and accusations from those *outside the family*:

Therefore it is fitting to cleanse away completely hatred of brothers, which is both an evil sustainer of parents in their old age, and a nurturer of children in their youth. And it is also a cause of slander and accusations against such brothers; for *their fellow-citizens think that after having been so closely bound together by their common education, their common life together, and their kinship, brothers could not have become deadly enemies unless each were aware of many wicked deeds committed by the other. There must be, they infer, great reason for the breaking up of a great goodwill and affection* (emphasis added) (*Frat. Amor.* 7/481C).

The philosopher specifically identifies two areas of potential conflict among brothers, namely, property and inheritance. The old adage, if you want to know what your relatives are really like try dividing up some property among them, was as applicable in the first century as it is today. In the case of the father who is still alive, Plutarch gives the following advice to brothers on this subject: 'as the starting-point of my admonitions, let us take, not the division of the father's goods, as other writers do, but the misguided quarrels and jealousy of the children while the parents are yet alive' (*Frat. Amor.* 9/482D). He then goes on to describe a situation of inheritance in the event of a father who has died, and how brothers are to handle his affairs (*Frat. Amor.* 11/483C).

Plutarch's advice in circumstances *vis-à-vis* inheritance goes against the grain of most of

what was current in his day: ‘when they seek to divide their father’s goods τὴν νέμησιν τῶν πατρώων) they should not first declare war on each other, as the majority do... but they must be on their guard against that day of division, knowing for some brothers it is the beginning of implacable enmity and strife’ (*Frat. Amor.* 11/483D).

4.2.6 Conflict Resolution amongst Brothers

As far as resolving brotherly disputes is concerned, one of the philosopher’s main instructions is that brothers should endeavour to settle their differences internally. ‘To wash one’s dirty linen in public’¹³ was as much a shame at the turn of the first century as it is in modern society: ‘we must see to it that the affairs fight the battle quite by themselves’ (*Frat. Amor.* 17/488B). Again, he enjoins, ‘Let them preferably assemble alone by themselves’ (*Frat. Amor.* 11/483D). The judge in all matters is Justice, ‘keeping our eyes fixed impartially upon the swaying of Justice, as though we were watching a pair of balances’ (*Frat. Amor.* 17/488B). If needed, common friends can act as arbitrators or witnesses, ‘but if any occasions for wrath or blame arises, it is dissipated by the mediation of friends, who take it upon themselves to disperse it, if they are but intimate with both parties’ (*Frat. Amor.* 20/490F).

In order that conflict situations might not arise, the author sets forth concrete examples of what brothers are to avoid. Brothers should be aware of cunning moves to try to outmanoeuvre the other in order ‘to get the better of their brothers,’ only to lose the bigger prize in the end, ‘the most valuable part of their inheritance, a brother’s friendship’ (*Frat. Amor.* 11/483E). Again, practical disputes over inheritance should be resolved with

¹³ The issue of brothers taking one another to court over inheritances, and in such a public manner, was the very issue which Paul was so vehemently opposed to in the Corinthian brotherhood (cf. 1 Cor. 6:1-11).

practical solutions (*Frat. Amor.* 17/488A). As we have already noted, brothers are to bear with the foibles and faults of other brothers *because* they are brothers (not merely friends) (*Frat. Amor.* 8/482A).

Given the fact that brothers are bestowed and *not* chosen and regarded as the greatest inheritance, they are to be tolerated and not tested in the same manner as friends. Citing Homer (*Ody.* xiii. 331) Plutarch states that ‘no boon-companion or comrade-in-arms or guest “is yoked in honour’s bonds not forged by man,” but who is of the same blood and upbringing, and born of the same father and mother. For such a kinsman it is altogether fitting to concede and allow some faults, saying to a brother when he errs, “I cannot leave you in your wretchedness” and trouble and folly’ (*Frat. Amor.* 8/482A).

Plutarch’s remarks are most revealing when he discusses how brothers are to deal with envy and jealousy. Brothers are to do everything they can to avoid these, but when this is not possible he instructs them to direct it towards strangers or *outsiders*¹⁴ as a means of

¹⁴ Betz (“De Fraternal,” p. 254 n 160) is right to state that this stands in contrast to the apostle Paul’s views on outsiders. Whereas Plutarch’s ethics were clearly focused on the family and outsiders are of little concern, Paul’s concerns are more universalistic and his discussion is aimed at earning the respect of outsiders. Betz states: ‘Plutarch’s ethics are clearly limited to the family, including friends, while “the others” are of far less concern for him. Early Christianity was more universalistic, as Paul’s remarks in Gal.6:10 shows: ἔργαζώμεθα τὸ ἀγαθὸν πρὸς πάντας, μάλιστα δὲ πρὸς τοὺς οἰκείους τῆς πίστεως’. See also Klauck (“Brotherly Love,” p. 149) who states regarding Plutarch’s text: ‘This extreme case marks the boundary of a love that *no longer includes the outsider*’; see also A. J. Malherbe, *Paul and the Thessalonians: The Philosophical Tradition of Pastoral Care* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), p. 105. On the other hand, P. F. Esler (“Family Imagery and Christian Identity in Galatians 5:13-6:10,” in Moxnes [ed.], *Constructing Early Christian Families*, pp. 121-49 [143]) is more guarded concerning this contrast between Plutarch and Paul. In relation to the latter, Esler states: ‘...one wonders if Paul is really paying lip-service to such sentiments here and if he can really be distinguished from Plutarch in this way’. As far as 1 Thessalonians is concerned, even though there are there are conflicts between the Christians and non-Christians the evidence in this letter, at least, clearly points to *Paul’s concern for outsiders, or at least for proper behaviour towards them* (e.g. 3:12; 4:12; 5:15). For further comment on this last point see chapter 9.9.

relieving such aggressive feelings and attitudes – brothers, he advises

should turn their malignancy *outwards* and drain it off on those not of their blood (emphasis added) (*Frat. Amor.* 14/485E).

Another particularly striking feature in Plutarch's treatise is that no brother is to pay back wrong for wrong.¹⁵ Rather, the principles of good 'household management' are to be exercised in a spirit of leniency and mutual forgiveness – forgive and forget – and focusing on the good times together:

For either it is in vain and to no avail that Nature was given us gentleness and forbearance, the child of restraint, or we should make the utmost use of these virtues in our relations with our family (συγγενεῖς) and relatives (οἰκείους). And our asking and receiving forgiveness for our own errors reveals goodwill and affection (φιλοστοργίαν) quite as much as granting it to others when they err. For this reason we should neither overlook the anger of others nor be stubborn with them when they ask for forgiveness, but, on the contrary, should try to forestall their anger, when we ourselves are time and again at fault, by begging forgiveness, and, again, when we have been wronged, in our turn should forestall their request for forgiveness by granting it before being asked (*Frat. Amor.* 18/489 C-D).

4.2.7 Summary

The subject of brotherly relations and brotherly love is one which for Plutarch stands as a concept in its own right – *philadelphia* has its own distinctive and characteristic features. In the first instance, brothers were expected to demonstrate brotherly love; indeed, fraternal love is different from love between friends, since brothers share a common biological origin and are obligated to love one another. It is striking how

¹⁵ Again, see the similarity of Paul's language in 1 Thess.5:15 where he gives similar advice to brothers who were erring against one another: 'Make sure nobody pays back wrong for wrong, but always try to be kind to each other and to everyone else'.

Plutarch links the two familial relationships – parent-child and brother-brother – with which we are primarily concerned in this thesis – to emphasise the fact that failure to love one’s own brother reflects poorly on one’s parents. To despise one’s own brother amounts to a condemnation of one’s parents for having brought him into the world.

Brotherly relations are also regarded by the philosopher as essentially hierarchical in nature. This difference in rank and status is especially highlighted by the way the author repeatedly employs terms like ‘superior’ and ‘inferior’ and where he provides advice regarding how both brothers are to conduct themselves. For example, brothers differ in age and the younger brother was expected to accord respect and obedience to an elder brother. Brothers were also expected to co-operate and work together and the philosopher employs the analogy of the body to stress the fact that whilst one brother may differ from another, they function best when they labour in harmony.

However, Plutarch also highlights instances of brotherly conflict. He provides two examples of how disputes in relation to property and inheritance are to be satisfactorily resolved. There is to be a trade off in the sense that the superior brother should give a share of the benefits to the inferior brother thereby softening the divisions, whilst the inferior brother should not unduly elevate the other brother. We also noted Plutarch’s advice to brothers who are envious and jealous of one another and cannot settle their disputes. In order that these tensions might be resolved brothers are instructed to turn their grievances towards those who are outside the brotherhood. And in matters where one brother has been wronged, forbearance should be shown *because* one is a brother; indeed the brother who has been erred against should be forgiven before he even has

occasion to ask for it.

4.3 Aristotle

Aristotle's discussion of brotherly relations, although brief, occurs within the wider context of his remarks on household management. Interestingly, he situates his comments on brothers after the parent-child relationship and prior to the relationship between a husband and wife (*Eth. Nic.* 8.12.1-6), thereby indicating that this is a relationship which is pivotal within the family.¹⁶

More specifically, whilst the friendship between brothers may be in some respects similar to that between comrades, the former has this characteristic 'in an increased degree, provided they are virtuous, or resemble one another in any way' (*Eth. Nich.* 12.8.3-6). The reason for this is that siblings share a common origin and parentage: 'brothers belong more closely to each other, and have loved each other from birth and... [are] children of the same parents'. Moreover, as brothers have been 'brought up together and educated alike...the test of time has been longest and most reliable' (*Eth. Nich.* 12.8.3-6).

4.4 Musonius Rufus

We have already noted Musonius Rufus' interest in the parent-child relationship, especially children, and how they are to conduct themselves towards their parents. It is within this context that he also mentions an important obligation of parents which is to leave behind as many brothers and sisters as is possible. Most important, according to

¹⁶ Cicero (*De Off.* 1. 17.54) [c.106-43 BCE] on the other hand, places brotherly relations third, after that of husband-wife and parent-child.

Musonius Rufus, is the fact that brothers are to be valued above possessions. The reason for this is that brothers are normally expected to be

the strongest supporters (οἱ δ' ἀδελφοὶ βοηθοὶ εἰσι κράτιστοι). One cannot compare a good friend to a brother nor the help which others, friends and equals, give to that which a brother gives (emphasis added) (*frag.* 15.100.6).¹⁷

In particular, the philosopher within the context of a discussion on abortion and childlessness identifies three chief blessings of brotherhood. As the following makes clear, Musonius Rufus' rationale *vis-à-vis* biological brotherhood is *idealised* in the following terms:

What good would one compare to the goodwill of a brother as a pledge of security? What better disposed sharer of common goods could one find than a good brother? Whose presence in misfortune would one desire more than such a brother's? For my part I consider the man most enviable who lives amid a number of like-minded brothers, and I consider most beloved of the gods a man who has these blessings at home. Therefore I believe that each one of us ought to try to leave behind brothers more than money to our children as leave greater assurances of blessings' (*frag.* 15.100.9-16).

4.5 Epictetus

We earlier observed that Epictetus, of all the Stoics, regards social relationships as very important. Such relationships are governed by the principle that a man's particular station in life determines his duties and responsibilities. In other words, if he is a father, a son etc. his obligations are commensurate with the position he holds in society. Such responsibilities also extend to brothers who are an important part of this social network. It is, states Epictetus, a brother's duty to

¹⁷ All citations are from Lutz, "Musonius Rufus," pp. 3-147. Again, references are to fragment, page and line of the Greek text of this edition.

know that [he is] also a brother. Upon his character also there is incumbent deference (ὀφείλεται), obedience (εὐπειθεία), kindly speech (εὐφημία), never to claim as against your brother any of the things that lie outside the realm of your free moral choice, but to cheerfully give them up, so that in the things that do lie within the realm of your free moral choice you may have the best of it (*Diss.* 2.10.8).¹⁸

Brothers are not only expected to conduct themselves in accordance with their designation in life, but such conduct effectively maintains good fraternal relations. But warns the philosopher, ‘if you go off and speak ill of your brother, I say to you, “You have forgotten who you are and what your designation is...” If you were a smith and used your hammer amiss, you would have forgotten the smith you were; but if you forget the brother you are, and become an enemy instead of a brother, will you seem to yourself to have exchanged nothing for nothing?’ (*Diss.* 2.10.10).

In light of this, it should not surprise us to learn that fraternal relations could become fractured. Whenever brotherly conflicts arise, Epictetus’ advice is to allow time to heal the wounds of affliction,

What I seek to know is this, even my own brother refuses to be reconciled with me, I may yet be in accord with nature... Nothing great comes into being all at once; why, not even does the bunch of grapes, or a fig. If you say to me, “I want a fig,” I shall answer, “That requires time”. Let the tree blossom first, then put forth its fruit and I shall finally let the fruit ripen. Now although the fruit of even a fig tree is not brought to perfection all at once and in a single hour, would you still seek to secure the fruit of a man’s mind in so short a while and so easily? Do not expect it, not even if I should tell you so myself (*Diss.* 1.15.1-8).

¹⁸ Note the special Stoic emphasis in this text in that there is a willingness to give up everything in order to gain a brother’s goodwill and favour.

When conflicts between siblings arise, Epictetus' (repeated) advice concurs with that of Plutarch whom we have earlier considered. For instance, there is a striking resemblance between what these two ancient authors have to say in relation to one brother who has wronged another brother¹⁹ – the injured party is not to focus on the blemishes of the other but is to reflect on the fact that he is a brother. Brothers, at all times, are exhorted to exercise special restraint towards one another; moreover, this philosopher's advice shows that as far as these *interrelations* are concerned, *status* has priority over actions:

Everything has two handles, by one of which it ought to be carried and by the other not. *If your brother wrongs you, do not lay hold of the matter by the handle of the wrong that he is doing, because this is the handle by which the matter ought not to be carried; but rather by the other handle – that he is your brother, that you were brought up together, and then you will be laying hold of the matter by the handle by which it ought to be carried (emphasis added) (Ench. 43).*

In short, common *status* is more important than actions, as far as interfamilial relations between brothers are concerned.

Again, whenever household tensions occur the principle enunciated by Epictetus is for the family members 'to give way to our paltry body, to give way when it comes to our property, to our children, parents, brothers, to retire from everything, let everything go, then except only our judgements and it was the will of Zeus that these should be each man's special possessions' (*Diss.* 4.7.33-47). Indeed, 'where you are superior and

¹⁹ Epictetus also provides similar advice in the case of free non-brothers' dealings with slaves i.e. 'brothers' outside the family. For example, on one occasion when a slave was asked to bring warm water but instead arrived with tepid the advice to the 'brother' was to remember their common biological origin and to 'refrain from anger and...not explode...How, then, can a man bear with such persons? – Slave, will you not bear with your own brother, who has Zeus as his progenitor and is as it were, a son of the same seed?' (*Diss.* 1.13.1-5).

stronger there I give way to you; and again where I am superior, you are to retire in favour of me' (*Diss.* 4.7.37).

In summary, Epictetus regards brotherly relations as part and parcel of the wider network of social relationships. Consequently, they are to be governed by the principle that a man ought to behave in a manner that is fitting with society and the position he holds. Characteristics such as kindness and honour/respect are important features of fraternal relations. This, coupled with the fact that brothers are to show 'compliance', and that in certain situations one brother may be 'superior' to the other, hints at some form of hierarchy in this relationship. In this respect, in situations of discord, *status* appears to be more important than conduct – in such circumstances siblings should remember their designation in life, that there is a right and wrong way of conducting oneself, and that special restraint should be exercised.

4.6 Hierocles

Hierocles, a contemporary of Epictetus, is useful because his writings preserve for us a summary of (late) Stoic ethics. According to J.E. Crouch, Hierocles 'gives us our best view of the... popularly oriented Stoic philosophy of the Roman Empire'.²⁰ Hierocles' works have often been viewed as an important source for the study of the *Haustafeln*, but rarely have scholars appreciated their value and usefulness with regard to *sibling relations*.

Chapter 4, Περὶ φιλαδελφίας "Concerning Brotherly Love,"²¹ is most fruitful for our purposes and is a reminder that no man is an island nor 'alone... but [is born] from

²⁰ Crouch, *Origin and Intention*, p. 67.

²¹ References to Hierocles are in accordance with Stobaeus' book, chapter and excerpt number.

parents and in conjunction with brothers, kindred, and other members of the household' (Stob.4.27.20). Amongst the most important familial relationships – Hierocles also deals with relations between parents and children – are those between brothers and chapter 4 opens in a quite striking manner with the reminder of the Golden Rule which, it is claimed, is a particularly appropriate guide for the relations between them: 'Treat anybody whatsoever as though you supposed that he were you and you he. For someone would treat even a servant well if he pondered how he would want to be treated if the slave were the master and he the slave' (4.27.20). And he continues, 'Let this ... be the first admonition, that a man should deal with his brother in the same way he would expect his brother to deal with him' (4.27.20).

Brothers, because of their birth, share a common origin and 'the man who is considering how to treat his brother need begin with no other presupposition than promptly to assume their natural sameness' (4.27.20). Hence, states Hierocles, 'it is pure madness to wish to form friendships with people who have no natural affection for us, voluntarily to form the most intimate relationships with them possible, and yet to neglect those ready helpers and allies who are supplied by nature itself, who happen to be brothers' (4.27.20).

According to Hierocles, among the highest expressions of brotherly love is the ability to pacify an angered brother and make a friend of him. If a brother is unsociable (due to his inferiority) he is to be treated in such a manner that the brother 'overcomes his wildness with beneficence' (4.27.20). Indeed such consideration should be shown even if a brother is rough and stupid, 'For those who deal moderately with reasonable people

deserve no great thanks, but to calm a stupid, gauche person by what is done to him is the accomplishment of a real man and deserves much praise' (4.27.20). In such circumstances brothers should learn to exhort rather than criticise because, asks the philosopher, does not nature teach us that 'the wild animals, which are... hostile... later become domesticated when they are tamed by certain kinds of attention and daily food? And will not the man who is a brother, or even someone who is in no way related, who is every respect deserves attention much more, not change to a milder disposition, even if he should not completely forsake his excessive roughness?' (4.27.20).

In a sense a person's brother is part of oneself – just like eyes, legs and hands – and, as such, siblings are exhorted to work together. Just as it is a physiological impossibility for parts of the body to function without the other parts, so brothers are to understand that they do not stand alone; indeed, such corporeality is to be expressed in a genuine concern for one another (4.27.20). Hierocles, like other ancient authors (e.g. Plutarch), also uses the above (body) analogy to stress the importance of brothers co-operating together but adds that the latter is a pale reflection of how siblings ought to work together. He advances the following reason as to why this is the case:

brothers far more than parts of the body are adapted by nature to help each other. For the eyes, indeed being present with each other, see together, and one hand works together with the other that is present. But the co-operation of brothers with each other is much more varied, for they do things which by common consent are excellent even if they greatly separate from each other, and they greatly benefit each other if the distance that separates them is immense (emphasis added) (4.27.20).

In summary, according to Hierocles, brotherly relations are important and ought to be

seen within the wider social context of the household. He emphasises that healthy brotherly relations are founded upon the principle of the Golden Rule; indeed, one of the greatest manifestations of brotherly love is to mollify a brother who is wrathful. Siblings are different, for example, in sociability (due to inferiority) and ability; such brothers ought to be treated with kindness and toleration. Hierocles gives special attention to the commonly held assumption that brothers do not normally function independently within the family. Instead, he likens them to parts of the body (e.g. eyes, hands etc.) where brothers are not only better adapted, but are also expected, to co-operate together.

4.7 Lucian of Samosata

Lucian (c.120-180 CE), the pagan satirist, is our final source in the study of brotherly relations. His writings are useful in that they provide important evidence of how an *outsider* perceived the Christian movement. It is Lucian's portrayal of Christianity, and in particular Christians, which is invaluable not least because he gives us an insight into how someone who was not favourably disposed to this movement perceived the level of care and concern of its members.²²

Lucian targets Peregrinus, a religious teacher, whom he regards as a charlatan. The hapless Peregrinus, he tells us, became a Christian but tragically ended his life by setting fire to himself at the Olympic games of 165 CE. During his Christian life Peregrinus became a leader and was finally arrested for his Christian confession. Whilst in prison he was provided for by Christian members; moreover, according to Lucian, it was this

²² Sandnes (*A New Family*, pp. 171-75) suggests that from Lucian's portrayal of Christianity two observations can be drawn: 1/. The fact that exploiters could take advantage of the Christian mode of life implies that the many injunctions to practise brotherly love were obeyed and 2/. The fact that an outsider makes such observations is evidence that brotherly love was a marked characteristic of early Christian communities.

sharing way of living which persuaded these naïve Christians to conceive of themselves in terms of brothers and sisters. It is this distinctive characteristic and conception of themselves as a *brotherhood*, which Lucian considers to be the *motive* for these believers providing for Peregrinus during his time in prison. In *Per.* 13, Lucian informs his readers that the level of care which these Christians manifested towards one another was the *rule* rather than the exception.

The conduct of these Christians represents a common pattern,²³ which Lucian states is highly vulnerable to exploitation and manipulation and, in this author's view, Peregrinus is one such case of a person taking advantage of the Christian community's naivety. Significantly, Lucian had discovered that these Christians did such things because

their first law-giver [i.e. Jesus] persuaded them that *they are all brothers of one another* (ὡς ἀδελφοί πάντες εἶεν ἀλλήλων), [as well as] that crucified sophist himself (emphasis added) (*Per.* 13).

As such they are now

living under his laws [and] despise all things indiscriminately and consider them common property (ἀπάντων ἐξ ἰσης καὶ κοινά), receiving such doctrines traditionally without any definite evidence (*Per.* 13).

In tones reminiscent to that of the book of Acts, brotherhood was the basis for Christians helping, encouraging, and sharing with this prisoner at a time of great personal extremity (*Per.* 11-13).

In summary, Lucian, a pagan satirist of the early second century, speaks ironically and

²³ S. Benko, "Pagan Criticism of Christianity during the First Two Centuries AD," *ANRW* vol. 23.2, pp. 1055-1118 (1095).

pours scorn upon Christian piety. His comments are significant because this author has no intention in portraying the Christian movement in a favourable light. He therefore provides us with a unique insight into how a *non-believer* or *outsider* viewed the early Christian community. Most important is the fact that he views the early Christians, because of their hospitality and care for one of their members, as a brotherhood. Lucian is informing his readers that the Christian behaviour he is describing is not a special case but a common pattern. Underlying his remarks are assumptions which he appears to normally associate with Christian brothers, namely, that they were expected to co-operate and work together to help other brothers, especially in times of need. However, Lucian also records this incident because it is in his opinion an example where Christians brothers could be exploited and sponged off, actions of which he felt Peregrinus was personally culpable.

JEWISH EVIDENCE

4.8 Philo

Philo's views on brotherly relations and brotherly love are relatively scarce and, not surprisingly, are found in his extended treatment of the familial narratives concerning Joseph and Moses. However, Philo more than Josephus the historian shows a particular interest in the emotional side of brotherly relations.²⁴

²⁴ Philo also considers that all men are brothers by virtue of their birth: 'Nature mother-like has born and reared all men alike, and created them genuine brothers (ἀδελφούς γνησίους), not in mere name, but in very reality' (*Omn. Prob. Lib.* 79). He also uses the expression φιλαδελφία metaphorically when referring to group membership within the community. For instance, he comments on the ideal of the Essenes'

As regards the affective aspect of brotherly relations, the famous example of the Dioscuri²⁵ brothers, a model of unselfishness and affection towards another sibling, is a case in point: ‘the Dioscuri brothers are said to have shared the immortality between them, for since one of them was mortal and the other immortal he who had been judged worthy of the higher destiny did not think it fit to gratify his selfish instinct instead of showing affection to his brother’ (πρὸς τὸν ἀδελφὸν εὐνοϊαν, *Leg.* 84). Such an ideal stands in contrast to the emperor Gaius (Caligula) who maltreated his adoptive brothers and even banished his own sisters into exile: ‘tell me yourself what deeds like these have you to make you so boastful and puffed with pride. To begin with Dioscuri. Did you imitate them in brotherly love?’ (ἐμιμήσω τοῦς Διοσκούρους εἰς φιλαδελφίαν; *Leg.* 86). In Philo’s considered opinion the infamous Gaius ‘does not rank with the Dioscuri, those best of brothers’ (τοῖς φιλαδελοτάτοις, *Leg.* 92).

Philo also uses the story of Joseph and his brothers to highlight the ideal of brotherly relations and good will. In that part of the story where the brothers are returning home from visiting Joseph in Egypt, they stopped for the night only to discover that the cup was in the youngest brother’s (Benjamin) sack. The brothers immediately returned with the cup and ‘brought [it] before the governor²⁶ [and] showed their brotherly good feeling by their genuine emotion’ (φιλάδελφον εὐνοϊαν, *Jos.* 218). Throughout this

communal life whose ‘persuasion’ (i.e. vocation) is not based upon birth but rather upon ‘the desire to promote brotherly love’ (*Hyp.* 2.1).

²⁵ To put this story into context Colson (*Leg.*, vol. 10, p. 42 n a) writes: ‘Here he [Philo] takes the version of the legend in which Castor the mortal man was actually killed and then Pollux renounced half his immortality to him’.

²⁶ In this case the governor, unknown to the brothers, is their own brother Joseph.

incident, Philo presents Joseph as one who is looking for clear evidence of a change in his brothers who had mistreated him so many years before. The main point in the narrative that Philo appears to be emphasising is that Joseph's treatment of Benjamin, who now replaced Joseph in the family as the youngest brother, is a yard-stick for how his brothers would now treat him and indeed *ought* to have treated him so many years before. Philo informs us that Joseph was particularly keen to see the 'feeling (εὐνοίας) that his brothers had towards his mother's son' (i.e. Benjamin). Eventually all the brothers sat down to eat together and when Joseph 'saw how pleased and overjoyed they were at the honour paid to their brother' he was 'so overcome by family affection' and 'hastened to conclude his reconciliation' (Εἶτ' ἐπι συμβάσεις καὶ καταλλαγὰς ἔετο νικώμενος ὑπὸ φιλοικείου πάθους, *Jos.* 235-237).

4.9 Josephus

Josephus, the historian, obviously does not set out to address the relationship between brothers, nevertheless he does in the course of his writings provide us with some insights into sibling relations. He also demonstrates an awareness that the notion of φιλαδελφία was well known within the Jewish tradition.²⁷ As we have already noted (cf. 2.2.4), Josephus' autobiographical section (*Vit.* 1-6) is one indication of the importance he places on family ties.²⁸

²⁷ Brady, "Brotherly Love," pp. 49 and 53; Schäfer, *Gemeinde als 'Bruderschaft'*, p. 151.

²⁸ See Stephen C. Barton, *Discipleship and Family Ties in Mark and Matthew* (SNTSMS 80; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 36-37. Josephus also shows an awareness of the idealism of the Essenes' community way of living and uses the term 'brothers' metaphorically to describe it: 'their community is truly admirable... They have a law that new members to the sect shall confiscate their

Again, like Philo, Josephus' remarks regarding his namesake Joseph and his brotherly relations gives us an indication of his views on this relationship. Josephus' portrayal of the Genesis narrative is distinctive and 'unique'²⁹ as he recounts the maltreatment handed out to Joseph by his brothers. Josephus describes how, after many years, Joseph had been exiled to Egypt only to meet up again with his brothers. On their second meeting, when Joseph reveals his identity, he pays tribute to his older siblings for what he perceives to be a change in their character: 'I commend you for your virtue (ἀρετής) and that affection for our brother³⁰ (τὴν εὐνοίας τῆς περὶ τὸν ἀδελφὸν ἡμῶν) and find you better than I had expected from your plots against me; for all this that I have done was to test your brotherly love' (φιλαδελφίας, *Ant.* 2.161).

4.10 4 Maccabees

From the writings of Flavius Josephus, we turn to the anonymous³¹ work of 4 Maccabees. Compared to the writings of Philo and Josephus, 4 Maccabees is a much

property to the order, with the result that you will nowhere see either abject poverty or inordinate wealth; ...possessions join the common stock and all, like brethren, enjoy a single patrimony' (μίαν ὡσπὲρ ἀδελφοῖς ἀπάσιν οὐσίαν εἶναι, *Bell.* 2.122; cf. also *Bell.* 2.126). I owe these references to Stephen Barton.

²⁹M. Niehoff (*The Figure of Joseph in Post-Biblical Literature* [Leiden: Brill, 1992], p. 96) . Josephus' contribution, as opposed to the biblical account, adds pathos to the narrative.

³⁰ The brother in question here is Benjamin, who has now replaced Joseph as the youngest brother in the family. The inference is clear, namely, that if the older brothers were able to accept Benjamin, then in Joseph's mind this will signal a change in their behaviour, and they will also be willing to accept him.

³¹ For a long time 4 Maccabees was regarded as a work of Flavius Josephus, or by another person of the same name. However, Anderson ("4 Maccabees," *OTP* vol. 2, p. 533) states that nowhere in Josephus' major works does he 'exhibit anything like the same fluid rhetorical style as 4 Maccabees'. Anderson ("4 Maccabees", *ABD* vol. 4, p. 454) also writes regarding the authorship of 3 and 4 Maccabees: 'The works stands as a unique memorial to an unknown loyalist Jew of the Diaspora, who was open to Greek philosophy and learning without for a moment compromising his Jewish faith'.

more fruitful source *vis-à-vis* brotherly relations.

4 Maccabees presents itself as a piece of epideictic rhetoric – at the outset (1:1) the treatise is described as a philosophic discourse on the ‘supremacy of religious reason over all passions’ (αὐτοδέσποτος ἔστιν τῶν παθῶν ὁ εὐσεβῆς λογισμός, 1:1).³² Indeed, the entire work is an elucidation of the meaning of such ‘reason’, best demonstrated by fidelity to the Torah.³³ And, significantly for our purposes, the book imbues faithfulness to the law by narrating the martyrdom of a *family*, with a particular emphasis upon *brotherly relations*, including brotherly love (chapters 8-14:10, esp. 13:19-14:1).³⁴

John Barclay points out regarding the importance of these familial ties: ‘such blood bonds are dramatised most clearly in the loyalties of the family’ by which the author ‘emphasises the brothers’ filial responsibility to encourage each other to martyrdom despite their inclination to save each other’.³⁵ This sense of brotherly solidarity is skillfully woven into the text by the author at different times much like that of a ‘Greek tragedy’³⁶ when he refers to ‘the brothers as a chorus’ which enables them ‘to speak with a single voice’ (cf. 8:4; 13:8; 14:1, 8).³⁷ However, there is a dialectic between the undoubted loyalty of these brothers towards one another depicted in their actions, and an even greater allegiance – which is in keeping with the entire thrust of the work (cf. 1:1)

³² See H.-J. Klauck (*4. Makkabäerbuch*, [JSHRZ III. 6; Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1989], p. 659), who asserts that the work can safely be regarded as “epideictic speech”.

³³ In 4 Maccabees the noun νόμος occurs no less than forty times and is employed in different ways; see P. D. Redditt, “The Concept of *Nomos* in Fourth Maccabees,” *CBQ* vol. 45 (1983), pp. 249-70.

³⁴ It is not always recognised, but the seven brothers went to their death *before* their mother (cf. 2 Macc. 7:41).

³⁵ Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean*, p. 374.

³⁶ M. Hadas, *The Third and Fourth Books of Maccabees* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1953), p. 100.

³⁷ Hadas, *Maccabees*, p. 100.

and which not even brotherly love could overcome – namely, faithfulness to the law.³⁸

One other point to note by way of introduction is that although the narrative presents ‘an unsurpassed example of realised brotherly love’³⁹, the story could also be understood as a typological or allegorical work.⁴⁰ On a wider canvas, the narrative is heavy in symbolism. For example, one cannot miss the prominence of a name like Eleazer (‘God helps’), and the reader is immediately struck by the anonymity of the main actors in the plot with whose actions one can easily identify. In addition, the number seven resonates with scriptural overtones (e.g. 4:8), whilst the mother who loses her children could be understood as a personification of Israel in the Old Testament (e.g. Jer. 15:9) lamenting over her offspring. More important as far as our methodology is concerned, and as we shall demonstrate later (see pp.156 and 158-60), the harmony (13:25) created by brotherly love is at the same time the *ideal* state of the entire Jewish people (cf. 3:21), an ideal that all children of Israel ought to aim for and practise within the confines of the Torah.

Having considered some preliminary issues, we turn now to a consideration of the characteristics of brotherly relations in the book itself. The narrative concerns one Eleazer, seven brothers and their mother who are central to the entire work (i.e. chapters 8-13). The martyrs are faced with the contentious issue of consuming improper food offered first to Eleazer and thereafter the brothers and their mother.⁴¹ The story-line takes

³⁸ Klauck, “Brotherly Love,” p. 154.

³⁹ Klauck, “Brotherly Love,” p. 154.

⁴⁰ I owe some of the points that follow to Klauck, “Brotherly Love,” p. 154.

⁴¹ Many writers have drawn attention to the similarities between this narrative and the Old Testament prophecy of Daniel. In this regard, Anderson (“Maccabees,” *OTP*, vol. 2, p. 558 n. 13b) comments: ‘Since the events in 4 Macc. purport to belong to the period of the opening of the Maccabean War to which Daniel is usually attributed, it is quite natural for him [the author] to refer to that book’.

the form of what Klauck calls *Rededuelle* “speech duels” where Antiochus the king sets out a case for the course of action he is advocating (e.g. 5:5-13; 8:5-11).⁴² This is then renounced by the seven brothers (5:16-38; 9:1-9) whose martyrdom, from the oldest to the youngest, is then described (9:10-12:20). The magnitude of their achievement and its witness to the power of pious reason is then celebrated. The text (13:19-14:1 with notes) we have chosen is not only central to the entire work but appropriately demonstrates a number of common assumptions of brotherly relations. The text reads as follows:⁴³

13:19 You cannot be ignorant of the charm^a of brotherhood, which divine and all-wise Providence^b has implanted through fathers upon those begotten of them – implanting it, indeed, even in their mothers’ womb.^c **20** There do brothers abide for a similar period; and are molded through the same span, and nurtured by the same blood^d, and brought to maturity through the same vitality. **21** After equal gestation are they brought to birth, and from the same fountains do they imbibe milk, from these embracings are fraternal spirits nourished; **22** and they grow robust by reason of their shared nurture and daily companionship and their training, both in other respects and in our discipline in the Law of God. **23** The bond of fraternal affection [φιλαδελφία] and sympathy is, we see, firstly fixed; but these seven brothers possessed an even closer bond of sympathy with one another; **24** for having trained in the same Law, and having cultivated the same virtues, and having been brought up together in a life of righteousness, they had even greater love for one another. **25** Their rivalry in all excellence strengthened their affection^e for one another, and their concord;^f **26** and the bond of religion made their brotherly love [φιλαδελφία] more fervent. **27** Nevertheless, though in their case nature and companionship and the practices of virtue augmented the charm of brotherhood, yet for religion’s sake those that survived had the fortitude to look on while their brothers were being outrageously misused and tortured to death. **14:1** Nay, they even urged them on to the tortures; and so not only despised physical anguish, but also prevailed over the emotion of brotherly love [τῶν τῆς φιλαδελφίας

⁴² Klauck, *4. Makkabäerbuch*, p. 652.

⁴³ We are using the translation of Hadas, *Third and Fourth Books of Maccabees*. The Greek text is from A. Rahlfs (ed.), *Septuaginta Id est Vetus Testamentum graece iuxta LXX interpretes* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1982).

παθῶν].

Key:

- a This is a translation of the phrase τὰ τῆς ἀδελφότητος φίλτρα (the phrase recurs in verse 17 and 15:13) and means initially an awakening of love, a love potion or magical drink, then the enticement by a stimulant; and finally, an inclination, goodwill.
- b The phrase ‘divine all wise Providence’ is a Stoic concept which recurs in 9:24 and 17:22.
- c The language of the author is strikingly similar to that of other non-Jewish writers such as Xenophon *Cyr.* 8.7.14 ‘Those who are sprung from the same seed, nursed by the same mother, reared in the same home, loved by the same parents...how are they not closest of all?’. See also Plutarch, *Frat. Amor.* 2/478E.
- d The Greek term is εὐνοία commonly found in Plutarch (e.g. *Frat. Amor.* 3/479D, 7/481C etc.).
- e ὁμονοία is also found in Plutarch (*Frat. Amor.* 2/479A, 11/483D, 20/490E-F).

4.10.1 Hierarchy At the outset, it is noteworthy that as these seven brothers face death, it is the eldest brother who is chosen first. One by one, according to age, the brothers were condemned. Thus, it is the older brother’s age, not to mention his noble conduct, that makes him a *beau ideal* for the others to follow. Indeed, in confronting their fate, the oldest brother exhorts his six younger brothers to follow his example: ‘imitate (μιμήσασθε) me, brothers...Do not become deserters in my trial, nor forswear our brotherhood in nobility’ (9:23). In response to the oldest sibling’s exhortation, all six brothers follow, whereupon the seventh brother is heard to confess: ‘I shall not prove deserter to my brothers’ valour. I call upon the God of my fathers to be merciful to our people’ (12:16f.).

4.10.2 Concord During the course of the book the writer makes reference to Nature, according to which family life should be lived out in agreement (συμφωνία,

14:3) and harmony (ὁμονοία, 13:25). This metaphor is used to stress the point that family members, especially brothers, should guard against anything which could cause discord. The writer repeatedly emphasises that a family is like a harmonious choir (ὡς ἔμμελῆς χορός, 14:8; cf. 14:3,6,7) and throughout 4 Maccabees it is the note of unanimity between the seven brothers which is noteworthy.

This notion of harmony within families and among members (e.g. brothers) was a conventional attitude in the ancient world. Under normal circumstances brothers were supposed to preserve the harmony of the family, but what is so striking about this example is that it is in the brothers' extremity (i.e. as they face death) that such harmony is most poignantly noted: 'How holy and harmonious the concord (ἱερῶς καὶ εὐαρμόστου... συμφωνίας) of the seven brothers for piety's sake! None of the seven brothers turned coward nor cowered away from death, but all of them, as though running on the highway to immortality, hurried on to death by torture. Just as the hands and feet were moved in unison (συμφωνίας) with the promptings of the soul, so did those holy youths, as if impelled by the deathless soul of piety, go in harmony to the death, for piety's sake. O all holy seven-fold assembly of brothers in harmony (συμφώνων ἀδελφῶν, 14:3-7).⁴⁴

⁴⁴ The number of compound expressions with the prefix συν occurring in the main passage 4 Macc. 13:19-14:1 is striking. According to Klauck ("Brotherly Love," p. 153), these 'linguistically express the community that the brothers have among themselves'. They are as follows: v. 21, συν-τρέφονται; v. 22, συν-τροφία and συν-ηθεία; v. 23, συμ-παθοῦς and συμ-παθέστερον; v. 24, συν-τραφέντες; and v. 27, συν-ηθεία and συν-αυξόντων. For a similar phenomenon see Plutarch's *De Fraternali Amore* where the frequency of such compound expressions abounds: e.g. *Frat. Amor.* 7/481B-C has 9, 9/482E and 10/483B both have 4 each and 12/484D-E and F have 10 such expressions.

4.10.3 Solidarity In 4 Maccabees, the writer also provides his readers with an excellent indication of the strength of brotherly bonds. Brothers were not only representatives to those outside their own family but also to an outside world, and were expected to defend the family's honour. The strength of solidarity is depicted in the *joint* martyrdom of the seven clearly manifested in the way that the third brother reminds the other brothers of the facts of their natural familial ties: 'Do you not know that the very same father begot me and my dead brothers, and the same mother bore us all, and that I was brought up on the same doctrines? I do not abjure the noble bond of brotherhood' (τὴν εὐγενῆ τῆς ἀδελφότητος συγγένειαν, 10:2). Most striking here is the fact that to an *outside world* these seven brothers were not only united in birth, but were also united in death.

4.10.4 Brotherly Love In 4 Macc.13:19-14:1 the author particularly addresses the subject of 'brotherly love' φιλαδελφία (13:19, 23, 26, 27; 14:1). By so doing he takes up a *topos*⁴⁵ that would not only have been well known to his readers but was a familiar and common theme of moral-philosophical discussions and speeches of exhortation in antiquity.⁴⁶ In this case, the example recorded presents 'an unsurpassed example of...brotherly love'⁴⁷, thereby underscoring the emotional aspect of this relationship.

⁴⁵ The following scholars are of the view that "Brotherly Love" is a *topos* in its own right; Brady, "Brotherly Love," p. 11f.; Schäfer, *Gemeinde als 'Bruderschaft'*, pp. 130-35; H.-J. Klauck, *Die religiöse Umwelt des Urchristentums II: Herrscher- und Kaiserkult, Philosophie, Gnosis*. (KST 9, 2; Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1996), p. 94; Sandnes, *A New Family*, pp. 113-19; Aasgard, "My Beloved Brothers and Sisters!", p. 86.

⁴⁶ See especially Plutarch and Hierocles discussed earlier in chapter 4.

⁴⁷ Klauck, "Brotherly Love", p. 154.

This writer, more than other Jewish author in antiquity, is concerned with this latter aspect of brotherly relations (φιλαδελφία). He begins by reminding his readers that the Divine and human co-operate together in the sense that φιλαδελφία is physiologically implanted by the former, bequeathed by the father, and incubated by the mother: ‘You cannot be ignorant of the charm of brotherhood (τὰ τῆς ἀδελφότητος φίλτρα) which divine and all-wise Providence has implanted through fathers upon those begotten of them – implanting it, indeed, even in their mother’s womb’ (13:19).⁴⁸

This is followed by an emphasis upon the common experiences of these seven brothers. These shared experiences are developed and provide an approved basis and discussion for the ethos and apology of brotherly love in Jewish terms. For example, they share the same: ‘length of time [in the womb]’; ‘blood’(v. 20); ‘powers of life’ (v. 20); ‘drink’(v. 21) ; and as a result ‘they grow stronger from this common nurture’ (v. 22). Such commonality is used to highlight the fact that these brothers were even prepared to co-operate together in death.

The author also underscores the role and importance that social factors (v. 23), not to mention education (παιδεία) which in this instance is the Torah (v. 23), have in brotherly relations. According to Klauck, we have in this passage ‘an undeniably apologetic accent’ which proves ‘not only that Judaism... knows the value of brotherly love, accepted by all in that cultural world, but also that brotherly love in Judaism, through its connection to the law, is qualitatively more valuable and a more powerful

⁴⁸ Hadas (*Third and Fourth Books of Maccabees*, p. 213) comments: ‘The encomium of brotherly love [is]... presented by our author with uncommon virtuosity’. See key note ‘c’, p. 137.

image than is understood and practiced elsewhere'.⁴⁹ "Thus", (οὕτως, v. 23) concludes the writer, all this common training means that the characteristic of 'brotherly love' (φιλαδελφία), 'establishes a strong bond of sympathy...for our seven brothers'(13:23).⁵⁰

But there is a surprising twist – 'a linguistic trick'⁵¹ – in the narrative in that towards the end of the section 13:19-14:1 the writer uses this background to emphasise the fact that in spite of it (v. 27) such brotherly love was not strong enough to overcome loyalty to the law. Instead, and as a proof of the 'supremacy of religious reason over all passions (1:1), the brothers 'mastered the emotions of brotherly love' (τῶν τῆς φιλαδελφίας παθῶν).

4.10.5 Summary

The writer of 4 Maccabees provides us with one of the more important Jewish sources for an understanding of the common assumptions and ideals of brotherly relations. Remarkably, he narrates how these expectations are seen and played out within the context of a family which is facing death. The author mentions how these brothers in order of seniority – the eldest first – went to their death. Again, and in keeping with the ideals of familial relations in the ancient world, brothers should also live together in harmony, a point repeatedly emphasised by likening them to a choir. Such harmony is all the more poignant given the fact that these brothers were prepared to suffer their fate

⁴⁹ Klauck, "Brotherly Love", p. 152.

⁵⁰ Klauck ("Brotherly Love," p. 154) is right to stress the importance of οὕτως in v. 23 as a general concluding statement of the common experiences shared by the brothers. Strangely though, he omits it in his own translation!

⁵¹ Klauck, "Brotherly Love," p. 155.

together. Brothers who have so much in common 'stick together' and their sense of cohesion is most poignantly underlined in their joint sacrifice. Indeed, their sense of solidarity would have made no small impact upon those *outside* the family.

The writer also shows a special interest in perhaps what is *the* distinguishing feature of brotherly relations, namely brotherly love φιλαδελφία. He is careful to stress that brothers who share a common background, rearing and education etc. ought to love each other and that this was uniquely displayed in their willingness to die together, even though their reason for so doing was their greater allegiance to the Torah. In brief, brotherly love is here both exemplified and overcome.

Overall Conclusion to Chapter 4

We are now in a position to be able to summarise our findings *vis-à-vis* the common expectations of brotherly relations in the ancient world. Here again, a number of distinctive features emerge from our sources.

Whilst a number of our writers discuss brotherly relations within the general framework of familial relationships, some writers (e.g. Plutarch and 4 Maccabees) deem this relationship to be so significant that they treat it separately. Here both non-Jewish and Jewish authors present the relationship between brothers as characterised by ‘brotherly love’ (φιλαδελφία). Again Plutarch and the author of 4 Maccabees draw attention to the need for brotherly love to be shown because brothers share much in common. To be sure, other Jewish writers, such as Philo and Josephus, show an awareness of the expectations of brotherly love, but they do not discuss it at any great length.

Of all familial relationships, there is no one closer than a brother (Aristotle), and no stronger supporter either (Musonius Rufus). Indeed, the close nexus of family relationships is such that brothers who fail to love one another and treat one another properly reflect poorly upon their own father and mother (Plutarch).

Brotherly relations are also hierarchical. Plutarch especially draws attention to the fact that certain brothers are superior whilst others are inferior, even though both are to try to work hard to overcome such differences. Such discrepancies are seen in terms of their natural relations, age and social status. This hierarchy is reflected in the way that

Plutarch, for example, expects the younger sibling to not only honour/respect an older brother, but to obey him as well. Epictetus, more generally exhorts brothers to honour and obey one another. Again, as far as the notion of hierarchy is concerned, it was particularly poignant to note how the writer of 4 Maccabees describes the martyrdom of the seven brothers who died in order of seniority – by so doing the elder brother set an example for his younger brothers to follow.

Another important aspect of brotherly relations was the assumption that they should co-operate with each other. A number of our writers employ the human body as an analogy (e.g. two hands, eyes) for brothers to work together. Brothers were to co-operate for the common good of the entire family and when this is done, according to Plutarch and Hierocles, honour is accorded to the entire family. In this regard, the remarks of one writer, Lucian of Samosata, are particularly important. Whilst our other sources mostly discuss relations between biological brothers, Lucian, an *outsider*, describes the co-operation of Christian brothers and testifies to the fact that such *esprit de corps* could be easily exploited by other brothers.

Despite the fact that our sources repeatedly emphasise (e.g. 4 Maccabees) the ideal of brothers working together in harmony, this does not mean that all brotherly relations were congenial. Conflicts between siblings did occur and when this happened it was expected that such differences should be settled internally. Plutarch identifies two areas where such tensions could arise, namely, property and inheritance. Whilst the same writer emphasises that such disputes should be settled internally and that forbearance and forgiveness were to be shown, Epictetus stresses that when one brother wrongs another brother, common

status should take priority over the offence that has occurred.

In summary, what is so striking about our investigations of brotherly relations in antiquity is the amount of agreement between our Jewish and non-Jewish sources. These findings confirm our previous conclusions regarding the parent-child relationship in the ancient world, namely, that as far as the *norms* or *stereotypes* of brotherly relations are concerned, there is very little difference between these two traditions.

PART III

PAUL AND THE THESSALONIANS

5. THE APOSTLE PAUL AS PARENT

5.1 Introduction

Having investigated the normal social expectations of the parent-child relationship in the ancient world, we turn now to our first piece of exegesis, namely, 1 Thess. 2:10-12.

Paul's letter to the Thessalonians is (one of) the earliest extant usages of parental imagery where he likens himself to a 'nursing-mother' (2:7) and to a 'father' (2:11)¹ to his Thessalonian 'children' (2:11). We will consider both these roles and the possibility of others (e.g. 'infant', 2:7 and 'orphan', 2:17) but, given the fact that the father in the ancient world was the more dominant, we will begin by considering Paul's paternal obligations before turning to his maternal responsibilities.

If Paul was the spiritual father² of his converts, what connotations did such imagery provoke? And how does this, for example, compare, or indeed contrast, with the normal social expectations of fathers in the ancient world? Is there any evidence in the letter to suggest that Paul employed his patriarchal authority to structure a Christian 'family' in which the Thessalonians would understand their respective roles and duties? And how does he, if at all, exercise authority? Also, does Paul as father feel in any way responsible for his converts' moral instruction and education? And does affection have

¹ Paul employs paternal imagery elsewhere to describe the relationship between himself and his churches; see 1 Cor. 4:14-16; 2 Cor. 6:11-13; 12:14. He can also speak of his *co-workers* as his children (e.g. Timothy, 1 Cor. 4:14 and Onesimus, Phlm.10) because they too were converted through him.

² B. Holmberg (*Paul and Power: The Structure of Authority in the Primitive Church as Reflected in the Pauline Epistles* [ConBNT 11; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980], p. 78) writes: 'The image of fatherhood is not only used to characterize Paul's attitude to his own communities, but is also meant as a description of how they should conduct themselves towards their spiritual father'.

any part to play in this relationship? And were Paul's Thessalonian 'children' expected to reciprocate by obeying their 'father'?

As regards Paul's maternal role, what aspects of this does he stress, and how do these differ from his paternal obligations? Again, what grounds are there, if any, for considering Paul as having inverted this patriarchal role by likening himself to an 'infant' (2:7) and an 'orphan' (2:17) – do these functions contradict his role as father? Or do they provide added facets to his fatherly functions? These are some of the questions with which we shall be concerned in this chapter. We begin with Paul's role as 'father'.

5.2 Paul as Father (1 Thess. 2:10-12)

The Greek text of verses 10-12³ reads as follows:

¹⁰ ὑμεῖς μάρτυρες καὶ ὁ θεός, ὡς ὀσίως καὶ δικαίως καὶ ἀμέμπως ὑμῖν τοῖς πιστεύουσιν ἐγενήθημεν, ¹¹ καθάπερ οἴδατε, ὡς ἓνα ἕκαστον ὑμῶν ὡς πατὴρ τέκνα ἑαυτοῦ ¹² παρακαλοῦντες ὑμᾶς καὶ παραμυθούμενοι καὶ μαρτυρόμενοι εἰς τὸ περιπατεῖν ὑμᾶς ἀξίως τοῦ θεοῦ καλοῦντος ὑμᾶς εἰς τὴν ἑαυτοῦ βασιλείαν καὶ δόξαν

In 1 Thessalonians 2:10-12 Paul is arguing on two fronts: first he is providing a defense⁴ in light of the criticism levelled against him by unbelievers and secondly, he posits a

³ Our punctuation is in accordance with the Greek New Testament United Bible Societies Text 3rd ed. B.M. Metzger et al (Stuttgart: UBS, 1983).

⁴ Paul also appeals to God as a witness in 2:5 and repeatedly to the Thessalonians using the disclosure formula οἴδατε ("you [pl.] know") four times in this pericope. For the view that Paul is here presenting a personal defence see John M. G. Barclay, "Conflict in Thessalonica," *CBQ* vol. 55 (1993), pp. 512-30 esp. p. 513; Jeffrey A. D. Weima, "An Apology for the Apologetic Function of 1 Thess. 2:1-12," *JSNT* vol. 68.4 (1997), pp. 73-99; *contra* Malherbe, ("Gentle as a Nurse," pp. 203-17) who queries whether Paul is making a personal apology about specific charges brought against him.

proper model for pastoral practice.⁵ In all this, the apostle is concerned to distance himself from those silver-tongued charlatans who peddle their teachings whilst charging exorbitant amounts for doing so.⁶ This is evident by the number of denials he makes which serve to reinforce the fact that Paul is counteracting personal accusations. For example, he appeals to God ‘who tests our hearts’ (v. 4b) and reminds the Thessalonians of how he spoke the gospel to them ἐν πολλῷ ἀγῶνι (v. 2b). His appeal was not ἐκ πλάνης, ἐξ ἀκαθαρσίας, or ἐν δόλῳ (2:3); nor does he speak ὡς ἄνθρωποις ἀρέσκοντες (2:4). Some of these denials have echoes in other Pauline letters and suggest the matters with which he was being reproached (cf. Gal. 1:10; 2 Cor. 4:2).

Immediately prior to vv. 11-12 Paul appeals to the Thessalonians and again to God as his witness (v. 10) concerning his (and his colleagues’) behaviour whilst he was with them. Grammatically, verse 11 is without a main verb, making it dependent upon the main clause of v. 10 “you were witnesses,” as the parallel ὡς clauses of vv. 10 and 11 suggest. Various attempts at supplying an appropriate verb have been suggested such as, “treated,”⁷ or “counselled,”⁸ but since Paul is here likening himself⁹ to a father in

⁵ A smear campaign had been launched against Paul – which probably included slander – because of his hasty departure after having established the Thessalonian community. His abrupt and forced exit was probably perceived, by outsiders, as indifference at having left the church in the lurch ; see I. Howard Marshall, *1 and 2 Thessalonians* (NCBC; London: Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 1983), p. 5. F. F. Bruce’s (*1 & 2 Thessalonians* [WBC 45; Texas: Word, 1982], p. xxv) comment sums up the attitude and criticisms of the outsiders: ‘A fine lot these Jewish spell-binders are! They come here and persuade you to join their following, but as soon as trouble blows up, off they go and leave their dupes to face the music’.

⁶ Malherbe (“Gentle as a Nurse,” p. 214) has drawn attention to the parallels in language and thought with Dio Chrysostom’s concept of the true philosopher. However, Malherbe does not fully account for the oppressive circumstances against which Paul gives a detailed defence (cf. 2:1-12).

⁷ Bruce, *Thessalonians*, p. 34.

⁸ E. Best, *The First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians* (BNTC; London: Black, 1986), p. 106.

⁹ The use of the first person plural “we” could be problematic for the metaphor/simile because it implies that all three missionaries (i.e. Paul, Timothy and Silvanus) acted as fathers, something Paul does not state

relation to his offspring, “raised them up”¹⁰ is probably better in this context. Paul was not only a father to the Thessalonian believers, but the “founding-father” of the church and therefore felt responsible for the rearing of his spiritual offspring.¹¹

The fact that Paul should cast himself more in the role of a “father” than a “nursing-mother”¹² is not surprising given that he lived in a patriarchal society. Moreover, it is this patriarchal role which undergirds everything Paul is, and does, as a father for his Thessalonian offspring. This is because it was commonly assumed that the patriarch, i.e. the *paterfamilias*, was essentially responsible for the entire socialisation of his own children as they are incorporated into the family and wider community.

Now, in 1 Thess. 2:11, Paul acknowledges that he played just such a role with regard to the Thessalonians’ new beliefs, their new way of life and the new social world of Christian existence to which they had been converted (cf. 1:9-10).¹³ To be sure,

anywhere else in his letters. In Phil.2:22 Paul informs us that Timothy served with him in the gospel ‘like a child with his own father’ and, on this evidence, Timothy is Paul’s child in the faith, not a fellow ‘father’. In light of this we should understand 1Thess.1 where the apostle uses the plural (“we”) as Paul referring to himself without ever suggesting that these co-worker ‘children’ are his equals. A more problematic issue is how we are to understand 3:2-5 where the apostle states in v. 2 “We sent Timothy” only to declare a few verses later that “he” (v. 5) had sent him. Perhaps, like 1Thess.1, this illustrates the difference between social reality and rhetoric which may go some way towards explaining the singular social reality behind the rhetorical plural in 1Thess.2:11.

¹⁰ C. A. Wanamaker, *The Epistles to the Thessalonians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC; Eerdmans/Paternoster: Michigan/Exeter, 1990), p. 106.

¹¹ E. Best, “Paul’s Apostolic Authority___?,” *JSNT* vol. 27 (1986), pp. 3-25 (17).

¹² See B. R. Gaventa, “The Maternity of Paul: An Exegetical Study of Galatians 4:19,” in R. Fortna and B. R. Gaventa [eds.], *The Conversation Continues: Studies in Paul in Honor of J. Louis Martyn* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990), pp. 189-201; eadem, “Our Mother St. Paul: Toward the Recovery of a Neglected Theme,” *Princeton Seminary Bulletin* vol. 17 (1996), pp. 29-44. Interestingly John Chrysostom comments on the female metaphor of giving birth in Gal.4:19: ‘Behold, his *paternal* tenderness!’ (cited in Gaventa, “The Maternity of Paul,” p. 191). Could the ‘mother-in-labour’ metaphor be a response used by males in order to express an emotion that is difficult to express using paternal metaphors? See later in this chapter (section 5. 2) for a treatment of Paul’s role as ‘nursing-mother’.

¹³ See C. A. Wanamaker, “‘Like a Father Treats his own Children’: Paul and the Conversion/Resocialisation of the Thessalonians,” *JTSA* vol. 92 (1995), pp. 46-55.

conversion is a theological matter and Paul informs us that the Thessalonians' conversion was 'a turning to God' (1:9); indeed in chapter 5:1-12 the apostle states that his readers had been called into his kingdom, into a new social world where God's will and rule were in operation, the implication being that the Thessalonians had been called out of their previous social world where God's authority was not acknowledged or accepted.

But conversion also involves becoming part of a new community and, in this regard, it is also important to note that by turning to God these early Christians were also 'welcoming Paul and his co-workers'.¹⁴ Moreover, in the Acts of the Apostles the conversion of the Thessalonians is described as a '*joining of Paul and Silas*' (17:4). And, according to Berger and Luckmann, this is nothing less than a process of *re-socialisation* where the new converts leave behind old ties etc. and embrace new ones, and where Paul and his associates function as 'significant others';¹⁵ by doing this they drew their respective converts into a Christian world of experience with its own knowledge, role values, attitudes and social meaning.¹⁶ These 'significant others are the guides into the new reality'¹⁷ who represent the 'plausibility structure' to the new convert and with whom the disciple must establish a strong affective identification.¹⁸ More importantly, as

¹⁴ Sandnes, *A New Family*, p. 14.

¹⁵ P. L. Berger and T. Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (London: Penguin, 1973), p. 177.

¹⁶ The need for 'significant others', acceptance etc. becomes even more crucial in situations where conversion leads to familial and social dislocation/conflict and such was the case at Thessalonica; see Barclay, "Conflict," p. 515.

¹⁷ Berger and Luckmann, *Social Construction*, p. 177.

¹⁸ Although different in slant to our study, Sandnes (*A New Family*, p. 14) investigates the relationship between conversion, identification and community by comparing East Asian and New Testament filial piety. Sandnes' thesis is essentially ecclesiological where he regards the *ekklesia* as crucial in that it functions as an alternative 'family' for the new convert. He writes: 'The maintenance of the conversion is dependent upon a community, a fellowship in which the new identity is made plausible. The fellowship should resemble the setting of the primary socialisation, that is the family. The theory presented here makes the relationship between conversion and ecclesiology extremely important. Moreover, it recommends that

we are more concerned with Paul's paternal role, this process of re-socialisation will be all the more 'successful' if the new community, i.e. the *ekklesia*, that they join, resembles that of a family in which their primary socialisation occurred.¹⁹

Paul's fatherly activity is further described in verse 11 by the use of three participles παρακαλοῦντες, παραμυθούμενοι and μαρτυρόμενοι (see 5.2.3 below) by which he exhorted his converts to adopt the Christian way of life. They also help to underscore the method by which Paul comforted them in their tribulation by explaining its significance and purpose within the framework of the Christian world-view, as well as his efforts at insisting that they conduct themselves as Christians at all times. By doing all these things and more, Paul (and his associates) socialised, or better resocialised, the pagan Thessalonians (1:9-10) into the distinctively Christian understanding and world experience.²⁰

Given the fact that Paul was a 'father' to the Thessalonians, how exactly did he resocialise these early Christians into the distinctively Christian way of living? To assist us in answering this and other questions, we will now examine in greater detail Paul's role as *paterfamilias* with regard to the Thessalonians. Here we will not only understand the apostle's fatherly functions against the wider backdrop of the letter but will also use the insights gleaned from our primary sources to help us grasp more fully the nature of

ecclesiology should be seen from the point of view of family'. However, whilst Sandnes rightly shows the extensive use of familial metaphors in the New Testament as a whole, including that of the corpus Paulinum, he fails to recognise 1 Thessalonians as a fruitful source of such expressions.

¹⁹ Berger and Luckmann, *Social Construction*, p. 176. See Malherbe, "God's New Family," pp. 116 & 125; See also Trevor J. Burke, "Pauline Adoption: A Sociological Approach," *EvQ* (forthcoming, April 2001) for a discussion of re-socialisation in relation to another important familial metaphor employed by the apostle Paul, viz., adoption.

²⁰ Wanamaker, " 'Like a Father Treats his Own Children,' " p. 49.

his paternal role. Moreover as we shall demonstrate, what is so distinctive, as far as Paul's relations with the Thessalonian community is concerned, is that his aspirations compare favourably with the norms and common expectations of fathers in the ancient world.²¹

5.2.1 Hierarchy Paul could have related to his converts in one of a number of ways. In the first instance, he might have chosen a role which set him on the same level as the Thessalonians,²² or one which made him inferior²³ or another which put him on a superior plane. As noted above, it is not surprising, given the fact that Paul lived in a patriarchal society, that he should adopt the superior-inferior role towards his spiritual offspring. By describing himself as a 'father' (2:11), Paul situates himself in a position above that of his readers.²⁴ It is instructive to note that when Paul uses family nomenclature to describe *his* relationship between himself and his converts he never here – as well as elsewhere in his letters²⁵ – employs the sibling metaphor "brother"; rather he prefers to use parental terminology, and father most especially (cf. 1 Cor. 4:15; 2 Cor.

²¹ see p. 37 n 80; In this respect B. Malina and J. N. Neyrey (*Portraits of Paul: An Archaeology of an Ancient Personality* [Louisville/Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996], p. 160) appropriately comment: 'A fictive family is unlike a normal family in that it is not based upon "naturing" or biological reproduction. Rather, it is concerned with "nurturing" or social support, concern, interest, help...Consequently, "fictive family" in antiquity designates a group that has the structure and many of the values of a patriarchal family: a central person who is like a father, with members who treat each other like siblings'.

²² Although Paul's favourite appellation for the Thessalonians is the term 'brothers' it is a moot point as to whether he, by using this expression, regards their relationship with him or with each other as non-patriarchal (see chapter 9 for fuller discussion of this point). By using the term 'father', it is clear that Paul, at the very least, intends the Thessalonians to know that he is more than a 'brother' to them.

²³ Paul appears to invert this relationship with the Thessalonians when he refers to himself as an 'infant' (2:7) and his being 'orphaned' from them (see 5.4 and 5.5 later in this chapter).

²⁴ It is significant to note that whilst Paul refers to the Thessalonians as *his* brothers – thereby implying that he is their brother - he never actually goes as far as to say the latter

²⁵ Aasgaard, "Beloved Brothers and Sisters!," p. 327; *contra* Bartchy, "Undermining Ancient Patriarchy," p. 69.

6:11-13; 12:14). This parent-child metaphoric-complex expresses a hierarchical social-structural relationship dominant in the ancient world and well documented in our Jewish and Graeco-Roman sources (see chapters 2.2.2; 3.2.2; 3.3.2; 3.4.3).

Such a role is in keeping with the hierarchical social world of Paul's day – where the concept of the household was a dominant one – but it is also in line with the patriarchal structures of the household which *determined* to a large degree the structures of these early Christian communities.²⁶ The household was 'the matrix of the new congregation'²⁷ and as such 'imposed its own quiet hierarchy upon the proceedings'.²⁸ The fact that Paul assumes the role of *paterfamilias* to the Thessalonians is one piece of evidence that he considers this community as *his* household; indeed, it is not surprising to find that the apostle applied such a role to himself and the Thessalonians, and to all the churches that he established.²⁹

Such a hierarchical relationship also means that Paul can make demands of his converts but can, at times, choose not to (1 Thess. 2:6) – and that he expects them to respond like obedient children to their father when he taught and exhorted them concerning their Christian faith and his holy (2:12) and loving manner of life (3:12).

²⁶ Campbell, *The Elders*, p. 118. It is generally accepted by scholars that the earliest Christians met in homes (e.g. 1 Cor. 1:14-16) which as Campbell (*The Elders*, p. 153) rightly points out 'had leaders at the household level, *leaders provided by the household structure itself*'. The significance of households/families accepting the Christian faith not only meant that they were self-contained house-churches, but as Carolyn Osiek correctly concludes: '*familia or οἶκος coincided with ἐκκλησία, as did family leadership and church leadership*' (emphasis added); see Osiek, "The Family," p. 14

²⁷ Campbell, *The Elders*, p. 118.

²⁸ Campbell, *The Elders*, p. 119.

²⁹ Petersen, *Rediscovering Paul*, p. 130. For a discussion of Paul's role as *paterfamilias* to the Corinthian community see S. J. Joubert, "Managing the Household: Paul as *paterfamilias* of the Christian Household Group in Corinth," in Esler (ed.), *Modelling Early Christianity*, pp. 213-23.

Obedience to one's father, as we noted earlier (see chapters 2.3.3; 3.2.8; 3.4.11), was a normal social expectation of children in the ancient world. Having said this, Paul's hierarchical position must be tempered by the natural affection (see chapter 5.2.5 below) which he also felt for the Thessalonian Christians – the apostle's 'loving yet superordinate position'³⁰. This is demonstrated by Paul's desire to appeal (2:11, 12; 4:12; 5:12, 14) to the Thessalonians, the apostle's preferred method of dealing with his spiritual children.

5.2.2 Authority It is a small step from thinking about Paul's hierarchical relationship to the authority of the patriarchal father in the ancient world. As we have already noted, the Thessalonians had come under God's authority but to do so was to come under Paul's 'delegated authority'³¹ (cf. 4:1), since he and his co-workers were entrusted with instructing the Thessalonians on how to please God (4:1). Such instructions (παραγγελία), Paul acknowledges, were not his own but were given 'by the authority of the Lord Jesus' (4:2). Once Paul's converts had accepted the gospel that he and his co-workers articulated, it was only natural for their father-in-the-faith to begin exerting his authority in the whole process of re-socialising them into the distinctively Christian way of life.³²

³⁰ Petersen (*Rediscovering Paul*, p. 131) also states: 'That the behaviour of both the parent and the children is governed by love and affection only *softens* their hierarchical relationships. *It does not replace it*' (emphasis added).

³¹ R.F. Collins, "'This is the Will of God: Your Sanctification' (1 Thess. 4:3,)" in R. F. Collins (ed.), *Studies on the First Letter to the Thessalonians* (BETL 66; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1984), pp. 299-325 (306).

³² E. Best, *Paul and his Converts* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1988), p. 81. Polaski (*Paul*, p. 32) also comments in this regard: 'Paul is *the* authority in the congregation, beside whom there is no other; to reinforce the point he frequently uses the metaphor of fatherhood, with the church as his children. No rivals are to be tolerated'.

The twin aspects of hierarchy and authority were characteristics of the father-figure of the household in antiquity (see chapters 2.2.3; 3.2.3; 3.3.2; 3.4.3). We have already observed how in the Graeco-Roman world the patriarch, i.e. the *paterfamilias*, was regarded as the *owner* (quite literally) of his children (see chapters 2.2.3; 3.2.3; 3.4.3).³³ Since it is our thesis that the normal social expectations of households in antiquity provides a useful comparative and historical context for illuminating Paul's paternal role with his 'children', it is therefore not unreasonable to suggest that, as the founding-father of the Thessalonian community, Paul exercised in some sense 'ownership'³⁴ over the Christians there.

Paul's understanding of authority³⁵ probably stems from the fact that he was the founding-father of the church at Thessalonica; indeed, for Paul, "father" is a role replete with unique claims to authority'.³⁶ It is also important to note here a commonly held ancient ideal, namely, that a father's power and authority were central in the household and if exercised properly determined the degree of peace, order and concord within. As we shall see, all of these aspects are brought to bear in Paul's paternal role with the Thessalonians. A more difficult question however is the kind of authority which Paul exercised among his converts. It has often been assumed that Paul based his authority

³³ I am, however, aware that the real 'power' of the *patria potestas* was waning during Paul's day; see Rawson, "The Roman Family" in Rawson (ed.), *The Family in Ancient Rome*, pp. 1-57; Saller, "Corporal Punishment, Authority," pp. 144-65.

³⁴ Polaski (*Paul*, p. 31) states: 'The churches Paul has founded *belong* to him' (emphasis added).

³⁵ It is important to distinguish between Paul's *power* (the ability to be able to exercise influence and bring about change) and *authority* (a relational concept that is culturally legitimated and accepted by others). See the discussion in Polaski, *Paul*, p. 35; see also Holmberg, *Paul and Power*, p. 9.

³⁶ E.A. Castelli, "Interpretations of Power in 1 Corinthians," *Semeia* vol. 54 (1991), pp. 197-222 (214). Whilst we agree that Paul's paternal role implies hierarchy/authority, Castelli (*Imitation of Paul*, p. 109), wrongly in our opinion, does not regard this role as connoting any benign associations.

upon his call to be an apostle, hence when he uses his authority he does so solely on the basis of his *status*. To be sure, Paul was an apostle who exercised authority but does he exercise *apostolic* authority over his churches, including the ones he himself established?

As regards Paul's apostleship there can be little doubt, since he makes reference to it in four of his letters (e.g. Gal. 2:8; 1 Cor. 9:1; 2 Cor. 8:23; Rom. 11:24). In three of these, namely, Galatians and 1 and 2 Corinthians, Paul has occasion to assert his apostolic position since it was this very thing which was being called into question (cf. Gal. 2:8; 2 Cor. 11:14). He also uses the term 'apostle' in his letter to the church at Rome (a church he had not founded)³⁷ probably because he was not well known there and therefore feels the need to stress his credentials should the suspicions about him in other areas have reached Rome. It is significant that in both these situations, where Paul's apostolic status is under threat or doubted, we never see him issuing instructions on the basis of his apostleship; rather it is in these 'very letters that he uses the paternal image when exercising authority'³⁸ (cf. 1 Cor. 3:1-3a; 4:17; 2 Cor. 6:13; 12:14).

What of 1 Thessalonians – does Paul have occasion to exercise his authority and, if so how does he do this? Paul does indeed mention his apostleship in 1 Thess. 2:7a but not in any defensive or assertive manner as above; moreover, the answer to the above question also impinges and turns upon other related grammatical and interpretative issues such as the punctuation of vv. 5-7,³⁹ and, crucially, whether the original reading in 2:7 is

³⁷ Hence it should not surprise us that Paul does not mention paternal imagery in his letter to the church at Rome, confirmation of the fact that his employment of such metaphorical language is no chance or haphazard affair.

³⁸ Best, "Paul's Apostolic Authority," p. 16.

³⁹ These and the many other related issues concerning this reading will be addressed later (see chapter 5.3). However, I will deal with any relevant contentious issues as they arise in this part of the argument.

ἡπιοί⁴⁰ or νήπιοι.⁴¹ It is difficult to choose between these two options textually since both can be illuminated from the cultural context/primary sources. I have decided to keep both options open, and will here treat ἡπιοί and later (see 5.4) νήπιοι.

Commentators who adopt ἡπιοί as the original reading do so primarily because of the internal evidence for ἡπιοί which ‘seems to suit the context’.⁴² This is seen in the way that the verses can be structured where in vv. 5-8 there is a fundamental contrast between the arrogance or the negative conduct mentioned in vv. 5-6a (‘no flattery’, v. 5),

⁴⁰ If ἡπιοί is the original reading this could have resulted due to a scribe copying a letter, word or phrase once when the original manuscript had it twice (i.e. haplography). Of the two readings, this reading has the weaker *external* manuscript attestation, yet, during the latter half of the nineteenth century, has been the reading adopted by most commentators. On the other hand, a number of scholars do not place a heavy emphasis upon external manuscript evidence, but prefer instead to place more weight upon the *internal* evidence; see, for example, J.K. Elliott, “Thoroughgoing Eclecticism in New Testament Criticism,” in B.D. Ehrman and M.W. Holmes (eds.), *The Text of the New Testament in Contemporary Research. Essays on the Status Quaestionis* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), pp. 321-35. Commentators who accept ἡπιοί as the original reading include: Rigaux, Best, Bruce, Holtz, Laub, Marshall, Marxsen, Morris, Wanamaker, Richard, Malherbe. See also the articles by the following: J. Delobel, “One Letter Too Many in Paul’s First Letter? A Study of (ν)ηπιοί in 1 Thess 2:7,” *Louvain Studies* vol. 20 (1995), pp. 126-33; C. Crawford, “The ‘Tiny’ Problem of 1 Thessalonians 2, 7: The Case of the Curious Vocative,” *Bib* vol. 54.1 (1973), pp. 69-72) tries to get around the problem by understanding νήπιοι as a vocative and not as a nominative.

⁴¹ If νήπιοι is the original reading, this could have resulted due to a scribe copying a letter, word or phrase twice when the original manuscript only had it once (i.e. dittography). It should be noted that the revision committee for the NIV has recently adopted the reading “infants” and an increasing number of scholars now hold to this position, including: F. J. J. van Rensburg, “An Argument for Reading νήπιοι in 1 Thessalonians 2:7,” in J. Petzer and P. J. Hartin (eds.), *A South African Perspective on the New Testament: Essays by South African New Testament Scholars Presented to Bruce M. Metzger* (Leiden: Brill, 1986), pp. 252-59; B. R. Gaventa, “Apostles as Babes and Nurses in 1 Thessalonians 2:7,” in John T. Carroll and Charles H. Cosgrove and E. Elizabeth Johnson (eds.), *Faith and History: Essays in Honour of Paul W. Meyer* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1991), pp. 193-207; S. Fowl, “A Metaphor in Distress: A Reading of ΝΗΠΙΟΙ in 1 Thessalonians 2.7,” *NTS* vol. 36 (1990), pp. 469-73; G.D. Fee, “On Text and Commentary on 1 and 2 Thessalonians,” in E.H. Lovering (ed.), *SBL 1992 Seminar Papers* (SBL Seminar Papers 31; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992), p. 176; Timothy B. Sailors, “Wedding Textual and Literary-Rhetorical Criticism to Understand the Text of 1 Thessalonians 2.7,” *JSNT* vol. 71 (2000) forthcoming; Jeffrey A. D. Weima, “‘But we became Infants Among You’: The Case for ΝΗΠΙΟΙ in 1 Thess. 2:7,” *NTS* vol. 47.1 (forthcoming, 2001).

⁴² B. M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (UBS 3RD ed.; Stuttgart: United Bible Societies, 1975), p. 630.

‘not greedy’ (v. 5), ‘not looking for honour’(v. 6) and the humble or positive characteristics listed in vv. 7-8 : ‘like a nursing mother’, (v. 7); ‘because they loved them’, (v. 8). This also suggests that the first item in 2:7-8 (‘as apostles of Christ”, v. 7a) will also deal with either means or motive, a consideration that would also favour ‘gentle’ over ‘infants’.

As we have already noted, Paul mentions his apostleship in v. 7a in conjunction with the participial phrase ἐν βάρει εἶναι (v. 7a), which could mean financial charges⁴³, in which case Paul is referring to the fact that he is not making financial demands upon his converts. However, the word βάρος (v. 7a) can also denote dignity, influence and authority⁴⁴ which when taken with the term δόξα (v. 6) – used in the Septuagint to translate the Hebrew root *kbd* i.e. “weighty” – gives the following reading: ‘we could have wielded *authority* over you as *apostles* of Christ’. This fits nicely in the context and contrasts with v. 7b and the parental metaphors of a ‘nursing-mother’ (v. 7c) and ‘father’(v. 11).

If the word βάρος (v. 7a) is a reference to the apostle’s authority, it is instructive to note that although Paul states he has every right to exercise it *he chooses not to*. That this is so is evident by the strong adversative ἀλλὰ (v. 7b) which immediately follows where

⁴³ E.g., J.G. Strelan (“Burden-Bearing and the Law of Christ: A Re-Examination of Galatians 6:2,” *JBL* vol. 94 [1975], pp. 266-76) who takes βάρος as relating to financial charges and that this is what Paul has in mind here (and in v. 9).

⁴⁴ BAGD, 133.2 also understand this phrase as denoting authority and translate it thus: ‘insist on one’s influence’; see also Wanamaker, *Thessalonians*, p. 99; Best, *Thessalonians*, 100; Marshall, *Thessalonians*, p. 68. M. Zerwick and M. Grosvenor (*A Grammatical Analysis of the Greek New Testament* unabridged, 4th rev. ed. [Roma: Editrice Pontificio Instituto Biblico, 1993], p. 615) also translate this phrase: ‘*impose one’s weight or authority*’. B. Rigaux, (*Les épîtres aux Thessaloniens* [Paris: Gabalda, 1956], p. 417) understands the noun βάρος in vv. 7 and 9 to be referring to the moral weight of Paul’s apostolic authority.

Paul *initially* draws a contrast between his right to employ apostolic authority and his maternal preference to be as gentle as a nursing-mother with her own children. Although the term ἤπιοι, ‘gentle’, immediately relates to Paul’s role as nursing-mother, in Greek it is also indicative ‘of the kindness of a father’⁴⁵ and anticipates what Paul is about to say in verse 11 where he elaborates more fully on his paternal care, the ‘very antithesis of an uncaring charlatan’.⁴⁶ For example, it is seldom noticed that in ancient Greek literature the theme of a ‘gentle father’ was not an uncommon one, and is evident in the Homeric tradition e.g. ‘first, I have my noble father who was once a king among you here, and was as gentle as a father (πατήρ δ’ ὡς ἤπιος ἦεν, *Odyssey* 2.47, 234; *Il.* 24.770). Also, the Jewish poet Pseudo-Phocylides’ linguistically related (cf. *Sent.* 207) comment is pertinent when he insists that parents are ‘not [to be] severe with your children, *but...gentle* (ἤπιοι)’. Similarly, Epictetus’ expectations concerning the paternal role are stated thus: ‘... [a] father has a certain function, and if he does not perform it, he has destroyed the father in him, the man who loves his offspring, the man of *gentleness* (τὸν ἡμερον) within. Do not seek to make him lose anything else on this account’ (*Diss.* 3.17.5). And Plutarch warns that fathers should not be too severe with their offspring: ‘Take fathers again: I do not think they should be utterly harsh and austere in nature’ (*De. Lib.* 13). To be sure, Paul can and does use his authority when needed. However, it is instructive to note that here in relation to a congregation which he himself had founded Paul’s use of

⁴⁵ A. L. Moore, *1 and 2 Thessalonians* (NCB; New Jersey: Nelson, 1969), p. 38.

⁴⁶ Moore, *Thessalonians*, p. 41.

paternal terminology is a 'lessen[ing of] his overt use of authority'.⁴⁷

5.2.3 Moral Instruction As we noted in Part II of this thesis, the father bore special responsibility for the education of his offspring (cf. 1 Cor. 4:14-17). The apostle's educational role as father must be seen against the background of the letter where, according to Acts 17:1-10, his abrupt departure from Thessalonica saw him leaving behind a fledgling church possibly only a few months old. Left in such a vulnerable position without their founder-father, Paul, in writing to the Thessalonians, views them as novices in the faith; they are very young infant-children, dependent, under-age and immature, and in need of their 'father's' guiding presence.⁴⁸

In the Gracco-Roman world education was perceived as leading the child out of immaturity, ignorance and irrationality and into the responsible life of an adult citizen (Cicero, *De Off.* 1.34.122; 1.2.4; 1.3.7; Quintilian, *Inst. Praef.* 9-12). Paul's converts are therefore in need of moral instruction and teaching so that they might know how to conduct themselves in the many ways which were in keeping with their new Christian life and witness. The need to provide instruction for his young converts not long after their coming to faith strikes a chord with the common expectations of fathers in antiquity whose responsibility it was to begin teaching their children at the earliest possible moment (see chapters 2.2.6; 3.2.6; 3.3.7; 3.4.7). It is precisely this role which Paul fulfilled in relation to the Thessalonians; as their father he saw himself as responsible for the instruction of his children in Christ i.e. the training, and promotion of their spiritual

⁴⁷ E. J. Richard, *First and Second Thessalonians* (SP 11; Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 1995), p. 106.

⁴⁸ A. J. Malherbe, " 'Pastoral Care' in the Thessalonian Church," *NTS* vol. 36 (1990), pp. 375-91

growth and moral progress.⁴⁹ Given the fact that most of Paul's converts in Thessalonica were from the pagan religions, his role as moral instructor is a crucial one if they are not only to grasp the teachings of the Christian faith but also ensure that they put them into practice in their everyday lives. In this regard, Paul's educational role is not too dissimilar to that which Philo describes of parents: '[they] are in the position of instructors because they impart to children from the earliest years everything they...know, and to give them instruction not only in various branches of knowledge which they impress upon their young minds, but also in the most essential questions of what to choose and to avoid, namely, to choose virtues and avoid vices' (*Spec. Leg.* 2.228).

Of course, Paul here never specifically refers to himself as a 'teacher' (although cf. 1 Cor. 4:17) to his churches; nevertheless, he did see himself as having a didactic role, a role which is difficult to separate from, and is best understood as being contained within, the father imagery.⁵⁰ In particular in 1 Thessalonians it is instructive to note that Paul's educational role is intellectually oriented (as well as morally focused), evident by the many times he calls them to remember (cf. 1:2, 3, 4, 5; 2:1, 2, 5, 9, 10, 11; 17; 3:3, 4, 6; 4:2, 4, 5; 5:2, 12) and reflect on what he had taught them when he was in their midst.⁵¹ Part of his fatherly obligations involved supplying his spiritual children with the deeper

⁴⁹ W. A. Meeks (*The Origins of Christian Morality: The First Two Centuries* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993], p. 103) states in regard to early Christian gatherings: 'It was altogether appropriate that, just as in a natural family, moral training, advice, and admonition would take place in these household "meetings"...in these households, it was...the *pater familias*...who gave instruction and monitored the behaviour of these grown-up "children" '.

⁵⁰ Best, *Paul and his Converts*, p. 37; P. Beasley-Murray, "Pastor, Paul as," in G.F. Hawthorne, R.P. Martin and D.G. Reid (eds.), *DPL* (Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 1993), pp. 654-58 (656).

⁵¹ G. Lyons, "Modelling the Holiness Ethos: A Study Based Upon First Thessalonians," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* vol. 30 (1995), pp. 187-211 (205).

knowledge of their Christian faith. This included, for example, the instruction of new converts early on in their Christian experience concerning the reality of suffering (3:13) and the answering of their requests about moral issues such as marriage (4:3-8 see chapter 7 later) an area on which he as a Jew would have a very different outlook from the Graeco-Roman culture of the Thessalonians. In addition, Paul instructed his young converts about the practical importance of working to provide for the members of their own family (4:9-12, see chapter 8 for further discussion) as well as teaching them regarding the timing of the parousia (4:13-18). The words ἕνα ἕκαστον (2:11) have the rhetorical effect of personalising or individualising what Paul is saying to each member of the community and may also support the view that Paul and his associates primarily communicated the gospel to individuals in the social setting of their daily work.⁵²

Arguably the most important aspect of Paul's paternal role in the re-education of his Thessalonian converts is the need to exhort them to conduct themselves in accordance with behaviour becoming of Christians. We have already noted the three participles παρακαλοῦντες, παραμυθούμενοι and μαρτυρόμενοι employed by Paul to describe this aspect of his fatherly role. The first two participles παρακαλοῦντες and παραμυθούμενοι are closely related to one another semantically which makes it difficult to distinguish a precise meaning for either. The former is variously used in the New Testament and can mean 'summon', 'comfort', 'appeal' or 'call to aid'. The apostle

⁵² See R. F. Hock, "The Workshop as a Social Setting for Paul's Missionary Preaching", *CBQ* vol. 41 (1979), pp. 438-50. That Paul employs the phrase ἕνα ἕκαστον rather than ἕκαστον shows his emphasis upon the personal element.

Paul employs it and its nominal cognates together with παρακαλεῖν and παράκλησις elsewhere in his letters (e.g. 5:14; 1 Cor. 14:3; Phil. 2:1).

παρακαλεῖν and παράκλησις occur frequently in the Pauline corpus and in 1 Thessalonians can refer to the proclamation of the gospel (2:13), to giving consolation (3:7) or to the notion of admonishment (4:1). Both these latter aspects, admonishment and comfort, are meant where the verb is used, which is also the case with παραμυθεῖσθαι. If there is any distinction between the two terms it perhaps lies in the fact that whereas παρακαλεῖν means ‘to exhort’ the Thessalonians towards Christian conduct, παραμυθεῖσθαι conveys more the idea of comforting them in light of their previous distress experienced at conversion (1:6). Thus, exhortation and consolation are regarded by Paul as necessary for healthy development within the Christian family.

The third participle μαρτυρόμενοι in verse 12 is a much stronger word and carries a more authoritative nuance; it conveys the sense of ‘insisting’⁵³ or ‘charging’. Thus, Paul’s educational responsibilities included a *strong moral thrust* where he charges his converts about the necessity to live radically different lives compared to their previous way of living (1:9-10; 4:3-8). Paul wanted his convert-children to know what was right and what was wrong. The apostle underscores this latter point by his use of the verb περιπατέω ‘to walk’ (2:12) – one of his favourite metaphors (cf. Gal. 5:16; Rom. 13:13; Col. 1:10) – which, although a neutral concept, is qualified by the adverbial phrase ἀξίως τοῦ θεοῦ, hence setting his converts’ conduct in direct relationship to God and his character. But it

⁵³ Best, *Thessalonians*, p. 107.

should also be noted that in this context Paul uses his own holy lifestyle (“*You are witnesses... of how holy, righteous and blameless we were among you,*” 2:10) which was to serve as a pattern of imitation for the Thessalonians. Thus, the end purpose of Paul’s re-education of his converts is to exhort and charge his converts to conduct themselves circumspectly not only in the light of God’s will but also in accordance with Paul’s own example and their new roles within the Pauline family (2:12). As far as this aspect is concerned, Plutarch’s directions to fathers echo similar sentiments when he states that ‘children ought to be led to honourable practices by means of encouragement’ (τοῦς παῖδας ἐπὶ τὰ καλὰ τῶν ἐπιτηδευμάτων ἄγειν παραινέσεσι καὶ λόγοις, *De Lib. 5/12A*).

5.2.4 Imitation Another aspect of Paul’s fatherly responsibilities towards his offspring, and arising as a direct consequence of it, is the call to follow his example.⁵⁴ The old adage ‘like father, like son’⁵⁵ was, not surprisingly, one which readily applied to early Christian communities and to the apostle Paul. It is striking and significant to note that Paul issues instructions to other churches in general to follow *Christ* (e.g. Rom. 15:1-

⁵⁴ Holmberg, *Paul and Power*, p. 78. The noun in question here is μιμητής which occurs six times in the New Testament; twice each in 1 Corinthians (4:16; 11:1), and 1 Thessalonians (1:6; 2:14), and once in Ephesians (5:1) and Hebrews (6:12). The verb μιμέομαι occurs only four times in the New Testament: twice in 2 Thessalonians (3:7), once in Hebrews (1:7) and once in 3 John 11.

⁵⁵ See L. L. Belleville, “‘Imitate Me, Just as I Imitate Christ’: Discipleship in the Corinthian Correspondence,” in R. N. Longenecker (ed.), *Patterns of Discipleship in the New Testament*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), pp. 120-43. Belleville’s remarks concerning the Corinthians’ imitation of Paul could equally apply to the Thessalonian Christians: ‘Paul appeals to the Corinthians as their “father,” not as their apostle...He “gave” them “birth through the gospel,” thereby forging a *familial union* with them that no other itinerant preacher or pastor could claim. Paul was their father. All the rest were mere “nannies” (*paidagogoi*), numerous though they might be. So it fell to Paul to provide his spiritual children with a model worthy of emulation’ (emphasis added) (p. 121).

7; Col. 3:13) but it is only those churches which he himself has established that he exhorts to follow *him* (e.g. 1 Cor. 4:16; 11:1; Gal. 4:12; Phil. 3:17). There is one important distinction in 1 Thessalonians, namely, that the imitation had already taken place (1:6; 2:14). The notion of imitating Paul is not arrogance on his part because, as we have already noted (e.g. 3.3.6), in the ancient world it was expected that sons would imitate their fathers (Seneca, *Ep. Mor.* 6:5-6; 7:6-9; Quintilian *Inst. Orat.* 2.28; Philostratus *Vit. Ap.* 1.19; 1 Macc. 2.51). Isocrates explicitly exhorts Demonicus to follow the example of his father Hipponicus stating: ‘I have produced a sample of the nature of Hipponicus after whom you should pattern your life as after an ensample, regarding his conduct as your law, and striving to imitate and emulate your father’s virtue’ (*Dem.* 4.11).

If Paul’s use of mimesis nomenclature is not conceited, neither is it to be viewed as a coercive⁵⁶ or manipulative strategy⁵⁷ on his part to achieve his own selfish ends. There are times, for instance, when Paul qualifies the aspect of imitation of himself by stating that to do so is only to follow the example of ‘the Lord’ (1:6). Also, given the fact that Paul’s readers were mostly Gentile converts with no first-hand knowledge of Christ it is not surprising that he should use his own life as ‘a model of the Christ-like life’.⁵⁸ Of

⁵⁶ Castelli (*Imitating Paul*, p. 32) is of the view that Paul’s mimetic language must be read as a discourse of power where total control and sameness are prized over difference. I have critiqued Castelli’s oppressive and one-sided hypothesis in Trevor J. Burke, “Pauline Paternity in 1 Thessalonians,” *TynBul* vol. 51.1 (2000), pp. 59-80.

⁵⁷ See G. Shaw (*The Cost of Authority: Manipulation and Freedom in the New Testament* [London: SCM, 1983], p. 35) who attributes to Paul a manipulative *intent*. According to Shaw, Paul’s claim to divine authority means that he should be held in suspicion and labelled manipulative. For example, he regards ‘aggressive prayer’ (5:23f) as one area where the apostle seeks to manipulate his readers. But Shaw’s argument goes beyond the evidence. Why should Paul be viewed as deliberately manipulative if he urges his converts to manifest the same traits as himself? Such a conclusion seems to assume the existence of a stance outside ideology and completely ignores the fact that Paul was accountable to a higher authority.

⁵⁸ Wanamaker, *Thessalonians*, p. 80.

course the Thessalonians needed to be instructed in the fundamentals of the Christian religion, but equally important was their need to see, especially in their mentor Paul, as well as in others, a life-style that they could copy and follow.

It is this last point which is very often ignored or overlooked in any discussion of imitation in 1 Thessalonians. For the most part, commentators have understood the imitation motif (1:6) in terms of the Thessalonians' reception of the word, or in the persecution experienced as a result of doing so, or in the joy inspired by the Holy Spirit which accompanied the reception of the word.⁵⁹ However, there is good reason, on the basis of vv. 10-12 and the wider context of the epistle, to believe that the imitation which Paul has in view is related to the apostle's *lifestyle* and that it is this which he is keen to encourage in his convert children.⁶⁰

For instance, at the outset Paul uses his own ministry to underscore the example he was to the Thessalonians whilst he was among them: the good news he proclaimed to them 'was not in word only but also in power and with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction *just as* (καθὼς) *you know how we lived among you for your sake*' (1:5). The connecting word καθὼς is often omitted in translation but is important and serves the purpose of linking *Paul's conduct* with what he goes on to discuss, namely, *his own imitation* (and his colleagues') by the Thessalonians (1:6). Thus, it could be argued that the Thessalonians' imitation consisted in their response to the apostle's living and

⁵⁹ Richard (*Thessalonians*, p. 67) notes all three positions but comes down in favour of the third: 'the focus of Paul's thought is not on the "difficulties" nor even on the "acceptance of the word" but rather on the note of "joy" which has resulted in the Thessalonians becoming "an example" to others'.

⁶⁰ Andrew D. Clarke, "'Be Imitators of Me': Paul's Model of Leadership," *TynBul* vol. 49.2 (1998), pp. 329-60 (337-40).

proclamation of the gospel message.⁶¹

This interpretation is confirmed by the way Paul in chapters 1 (1:5) and 2 repeatedly draws attention to what the Thessalonians already know about his manner of life when he was in their midst: ‘for you yourselves... know’ (2:1), ‘as you know’ (2:2, 5, 11), ‘you remember’ (v. 9), ‘you are witnesses’ (v. 10). More specifically, in vv. 10-12 Paul uses the same disclosure formula οἶδατε (2:11) and invites his own converts to reflect on the kind of ‘father’ he was and how this was also patently obvious to his Thessalonian ‘children’ (2:11). In particular Paul (and his colleagues’) behaviour was ‘holy, ‘righteous’ and ‘blameless’ (2:10) and it was this holy lifestyle which was to serve ‘as a pattern of imitation’⁶² for the Thessalonian (2:10-12) believers.

Two other aspects in relation to the imitation of Paul’s lifestyle are found elsewhere in the letter. In 3:12 the apostle speaks of his affection for the Thessalonians and his desire to see that their love for one another and for all men attain *to his own loving standards* – “*just as ours does for you*” (3:12, although see discussion of 4:9-12 in chapter 8). This loving example, manifested in the apostles’ ministry and lifestyle, is held up and used by Paul to challenge the Thessalonians to follow. This might seem an astonishing claim but it is of a piece with what Paul asks of his readers in imitation of himself elsewhere (cf. 1:6). Thus, an integral part of the Thessalonians’ imitation of Paul includes the fact that ‘he is [to be] their example of love’.⁶³

The other issue has to do with work. There are a striking number of references to

⁶¹ Clarke, “Be Imitators of Me”, p. 337.

⁶² Aasgaard, “My Beloved Brothers and Sisters!”, p. 322.

⁶³ Best, *Thessalonians*, p. 149. It is this affective aspect to Paul’s paternity which is conspicuously absent from Castelli’s thesis.

different kinds of work in 1 Thessalonians (1:3; 3:2, 5; 5:3,12). It is instructive to note that in 2:9 Paul makes reference to his ‘work’ (ἐργάζομαι) which together with the terms κόπος and μόχθος clearly denote manual labour that was physically demanding (cf. parallel language in 4:11). The apostle does not soft-pedal on the fact that he had worked hard among the Thessalonians and appears to present himself as model or example of imitation which is plainly there for his converts to see and follow. However, nowhere does he explicitly draw attention to this or openly call the Thessalonians to follow his example. One would have expected him to have done so, given the fact that there were some within the Thessalonian community who were refusing to work with their own hands, but he does not. Why does Paul not overtly push his authority in this instance? Perhaps, like fathers in the ancient world, he expects his converts to have imbibed his worthy example without his need to say anything. In all this, Paul’s authority appears to be hidden, but it is no less real for all that.

5.2.5 Fatherly Affection The mere fact that Paul wrote letters to his churches is evidence in itself of the apostle’s concern and love for them.⁶⁴ To be sure, the Thessalonians were ‘loved (ἠγαπημένοι) by God’ (1:4) but they also became Paul’s own beloved: ‘We loved you so much’ he states, ‘that you have become so dear (ἀγαπητοὶ) to us’ (2:8). His affection is further demonstrated in one of the most emotive pericopes in the Pauline writings (2:17-3:11) where he writes of his ‘intense longing’ to see his

⁶⁴ Banks, (*Paul’s Idea of Community*, p. 77) rightly states that love is the distinctive ‘quality of relationship within the church-community’; see also, Holmberg, *Paul and Power*, p. 79; Beasley-Murray (“Paul,” p. 655) remarks: ‘love - as a parent for a child - is the bed-rock of Paul’s pastoral care’. Some of this material is found in my “Pauline Paternity,” pp. 75-79.

offspring. Indeed, such is the nature and suddenness of the separation that Paul states he ‘could stand it no longer’ (3:1-5). In the interim period Paul sends Timothy, his trusted emissary and associate, to assess the situation and determine something of his ‘children’s’ feelings for him – by so doing Paul evidently believes that he can extend the respect/honour due to him to those he recommends as his co-workers. Given this, we are immediately struck by the similarities of a comment of Hierocles’: ‘it will especially please parents that their children are seen to honour those whom they love and consider highly. Children should therefore love their parents’ relatives and consider them worthy ...as they should their parents’ friends and in fact all whom they hold dear’ (4.25.53). As it turned out, the suspense at waiting for Timothy’s report and the subsequent relief at receiving it only confirmed to the apostle that his converts’ ‘love’ and ‘longing to see us’ was reciprocal (3:6). Although parents loved their children with greater affection than their children ever loved them, both were common assumptions of the household in the ancient world. Paul’s remarks concerning his fatherly affection for the Thessalonians are in keeping with the norms of paternal love in the ancient world. Since he had established the Thessalonian community, it is perfectly reasonable that he should cherish his offspring (see chapters 2.2.5; 3.2.5; 3.3.4; 3.4.5).

Note should especially be taken here of the *intensity and tenderness* of Paul’s paternal language in 2:7-8 – ‘we loved you so much’ etc. – and the ensuing pericope (2:17f.) which calls to mind similar sentiments echoed by Philo and Josephus. The former states that parents love their children with ‘extreme tenderness’ and are bound to them by the ‘magnetic forces of affection’ and ‘tender-heartedness’ (*Spec. Leg.* 2.240). But

perhaps what is most striking in this pericope (2:17ff.) is the unprecedented outpouring of affection by the apostle Paul as he describes the *nature of his separation* from his spiritual offspring. It is this which leaves him anxious and, at times, agitated. This requires further unpacking.

The participle ὀμειρόμενοι, employed in 2:8, is a case in point – it is one sometimes found on grave inscriptions used to describe the sad yearning of parents for their dead children and is an indication of their affection and attraction.⁶⁵ Further, Paul, in 2:17, describes how an(y) absent parent separated (lit. ‘orphaned’ [ἀπορφανισθέντες] from their offspring, see p. 200 for further discussion) misses them and writes of his intense longing to see them. In the first instance the apostle reminds the Thessalonians that he is physically (lit. προσώπῳ οὐ καρδίᾳ, ‘in face not in thought’, 2:17) separated from them. Clearly Paul’s relationship with the Thessalonians was not a case of “Out of sight, out of mind”. By using the above participle, the apostle could very well be likening his separation or loss to that of a death or a ‘bereavement’.⁶⁶ In short, the reason for Paul’s affection may (in part) be his desire to portray ‘himself as a bereaved parent’.⁶⁷ This should not surprise us since Paul could well be reflecting a common expectation of fathers in the ancient world who, upon the death of a child, displayed similar emotive

⁶⁵ Moore, *Thessalonians*, p. 38. This Greek verb is a *hapax legomenon* in the New Testament. See also G. Milligan (“A Rare New Testament Verb,” *The Expositor*, 9th Series [1924], pp. 226-28 [228]) who informs us that it is on a sepulchral inscription from Lycaonia (cf. *CIG* III. 4000) where the grieving parents are said to be ‘greatly desiring their child’ (ὀμειρόμενο(ι) περὶ παιδός). The parents in question are, ‘Kallinikos and Ammia, who are described as ‘the sorrowful father and the murmuring mother’.

⁶⁶ L. Morris, *The First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians* (NINTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), p. 87.

⁶⁷ Morris, *Thessalonians*, p. 87.

responses of grief (see chapters 3.3.4; 3.4.5)

Paul also provided practical evidence of his affection for the Thessalonians. For example, he demonstrated his love for them in that he was prepared to work with his hands in order not to be a financial burden to them (2:9; cf. 2 Cor. 12:14-15). By so doing, the apostle furnishes the Thessalonians with what amounts to a graphic and visible expression of his love for them. This is no small point given the fact that Paul had received some small gifts from other churches (Phil. 4:16), that evidently were unable to meet his financial needs; indeed, the Macedonian churches were generally renowned for their poverty (cf. 2 Cor. 8:1-2). But Paul, rather than make financial demands of his spiritual children, chooses instead to be self-supporting thereby displaying his kindly feelings for them. Thus, this characteristic of Paul's paternity, the characteristic of love, is not regarded by him as an ethereal concept. On the contrary, it expresses itself in concrete acts of service and self-sacrifice (2:8).

This aspect of Paul's affection for his converts in no way conflicts with the hierarchical aspect of the apostle's paternal relationship early adduced and for which Elisabeth Castelli rightly argues. However, the hierarchical and authoritative claims Paul exercised over the Thessalonians cannot be separated from the obvious affection he felt for them. Rather the apostle's superior role *and* his love for his converts must be held in tension and, as we have earlier demonstrated in chapter 2, are complimentary aspects of a father's role in antiquity.⁶⁸

⁶⁸ See also C. Filingsos, " 'For my child Onesimus': Paul and Domestic Power in Philemon," *JBL* vol. 119.1 (2000), pp. 91-104 (103 n 60).

5.3 Paul as Nursing-Mother (1 Thess. 2:7)

Not only does Paul liken himself to a father in 1 Thessalonians, but the juxtaposition of this metaphor alongside that of the term τροφός (2:7)⁶⁹ is quite striking. For the apostle, a male, to refer to himself in this manner is highly unusual and which the reader does not expect. But it is not a contradiction; rather, it complements his earlier paternal functions and is to be regarded as another important aspect of his parental role towards the Thessalonians.⁷⁰ As Beverly Gaventa rightly points out: ‘Paul’s use of maternal language is *another way* of cultivating a family relationship among Christians’.⁷¹

Exegetes are divided over the exact meaning of the term τροφός. Some translate it as ‘wet nurse’, but given the fact that Paul actually employs the reflexive pronoun ἑαυτῆς (τὰ τέκνα) it is more likely that he has in mind a ‘nursing-mother’.⁷² By likening himself to a nursing-mother, Paul’s role would appear to be more vulnerable⁷³ but is,

⁶⁹ The background to this metaphor has been much discussed. Malherbe (“Gentle as a Nurse,” pp. 205-08) marshals an array of background material from the Graeco-Roman world to argue that Paul was like an ideal philosopher e.g. Dio Chrysostom, (*Orat.* 4.41; 33.10) and Epictetus (*Diss.* 2.16.28, 39, 44). However, Gaventa (“Apostles as Babes,” p. 202) disputes this on three counts: 1/. Dio, for example, does not say that he himself is like or unlike a nurse; he merely employs the metaphor ‘as an example to illustrate the point rather than as a metaphor to describe himself’; 2/. Dio describes *philosophers* and ‘makes no mention of the activity of a nurse...the image of the nurse appears in a limited number of illustrations’; 3/. ‘the word τροφός does not appear in the text to which Malherbe points’. Instead Gaventa posits that Paul is ‘drawing upon a well-known figure in the ancient world, one identified not only with the nurture of infants but also with continued affection for her charges well into adulthood. Moreover, Paul’s reference to himself (and others) as nurses bears an interesting resemblance to passages in Numbers (e.g. Num. 11:12) and the Hodayoth where Moses and the Teacher of Righteousness, respectively, identify themselves with nursing roles’.

⁷⁰ Gaventa, “Our Mother St. Paul,” pp. 29-44; eadem, “The Maternity of Paul,” pp. 189-201.

⁷¹ Gaventa, *Thessalonians*, p. 33 (emphasis added).

⁷² F. Gillman, “Paul’s ΕΙΣΟΔΟΣ (1 Thess. 2.8): The Proclaimed and the Proclaimer,” in Collins (ed.), *The Thessalonian Correspondence* (BETL 87; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1990), pp. 62-70 (64).

⁷³ Gaventa (*Thessalonians*, p. 33) makes the point that it is the *baby* in the nursing-mother’s care who sets the agenda *vis-à-vis* feeding and changing etc.

nevertheless, an hierarchical one.

As far as the former is concerned, Paul in these verses seems to ‘voluntarily hand over the authority of the patriarch and identifies himself with the subordinate role of the female in society’.⁷⁴ His use of the rare verb θάλπω has been variously interpreted and could mean simply ‘caring’ or ‘nurturing’ but also carries with it a sense of ‘affection’ (i.e. ‘caring fondly’). A most intimate picture of tenderness and loving care is in view which helps to underscore the ‘close familial bond between the care giver and her own children who depend upon her’.⁷⁵ The metaphor of nursing-mother alongside the prepositional clause ἐν μέσῳ ὑμῶν (2:7) gives us an indication of the measure of the intimacy and involvement of the apostle in the affairs of his converts while also describing Paul’s (and his associates’) missionary strategy and treatment of his converts whilst working and evangelizing among them.

The importance of the apostle’s maternal role also distinguishes it from his paternal function in another important way. We have already seen from our primary evidence many references to the nature of parental love, however, we also noted that ancient writers can make a *distinction* between how *paternal* and *maternal* love is expressed (cf. Plutarch, *De Amor.* 3/496C with 5/480C and *Consol.* 2/608D; Seneca, *De Prov.* 2.5). Whilst there is no doubting the fact that both parents loved their children, the manners by which fathers and mothers in antiquity demonstrated their affection are quite different. In this instance, by focusing on the maternal responsibilities Paul is here highlighting how a

⁷⁴ Gaventa, *Thessalonians*, p. 34.

⁷⁵ Gillman, “Paul’s ΕΙΣΟΔΟΣ,” p. 64.

nursing-mother's care and love is distinct to that of a father – the two roles are complementary but are nevertheless distinguishable. Thus, whereas in the latter Paul stresses the fatherly function of teaching and instructing his spiritual offspring (2:10-12), in the former, the apostle has in mind his role of caring and nurturing the infant community.⁷⁶

Of course, Paul does not explicitly state what it is the nursing mother shares with her offspring – whether it was ‘her own life-sustaining milk, her self surrendering love, her protecting presence, her personal warmth or the idea of cherishing them’.⁷⁷ Nevertheless, he does indicate that he and his colleagues were willing ‘to share not only the gospel of God but also their very lives’ (μεταδοῦναι ὑμῖν οὐ μόνον τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ θεοῦ ἀλλὰ καὶ τὰς ἑαυτῶν ψυχάς, 2:8). Thus, something of the sacrifice of a nursing-mother whose role demanded the sharing of her very self is in view here. If Paul's role is like that of a suckling-mother and his very young Thessalonian converts were like unweaned children,⁷⁸ then any separation from them would have been keenly felt. Paul's Thessalonian family was still a very young, infant church and at a crucial stage in its development. In this regard, we have already noted how some of our ancient sources stress that a nursing-mother and her child should always be kept together (see chapters

⁷⁶ Gaventa, *Thessalonians*, p. 33. Bartchy (“Undermining Ancient Patriarchy,” p. 69) misconstrues these two roles when he states: ‘When Paul refers to himself as “father”, as he rarely does, it is almost always as a nurturing parent, not as a ruling patriarch’. However careful note should be taken of the fact that when Paul wants to emphasize the *nurturing* side of his parental responsibility he employs a *maternal* metaphor (2:7). On the other hand, Paul uses the *paternal* metaphor to stress his *educating* role (2:12), a function that corresponds with the obligation of a father in the ancient world.

⁷⁷ Gillman, “Paul's ΕΙΣΟΔΟΣ,” p. 64.

⁷⁸ Best, *Thessalonians*, p. 102

2.2.4 and 3.3.3; 3.3.4) and never separated. The intimacy of the relationship, not to mention the bonds between mother and child would mean that any separation would prove harmful to both parties. On the one hand, the mother would be left in a distressed condition, while on the other, the young infant would miss the essential physical bonding.

As a result of Paul being separated from the Thessalonians one can understand the apostle's anxieties *and* the Thessalonians' vulnerability. Even a cursory read of Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians enables one to detect something of the apostle's anguish and distress as he endeavours to cope with this sense of detachment from his spiritual offspring. Further, if as most commentators agree the Thessalonians were separated from Paul only after a period of few months, one can easily see how such a severance would have had adverse affects upon his converts in that they would miss the *continuation* of the nurturing, bonding, affection and presence of their 'mother' at such a crucial and formative stage in their Christian existence.

5.4 Paul as Infant (1 Thess. 2:7)

Having already considered the possibility for viewing the variant in 2:7 as ἡπιοι, "gentle", (2:7) (see chapter 5.2.2), we turn now to consider the case for νήπιοι "infants" as a possible reading. Since this reading has not enjoyed the support of the majority of commentators, some justification needs to be given for pursuing this particular line of inquiry.⁷⁹ For the sake of space and time, we need only briefly outline the main contours

⁷⁹ In fact the reading ἡπιοι is found in most commentaries during the latter half of the twentieth century and is found in nearly all – with the exception of the Contemporary English Version (American Bible Society, 1995) – English translations to the present (e.g. AV, RV, RSV, NRSV, NEB, NIV, NAB etc.).

of the debate.⁸⁰

First, it is generally recognised by scholars, even by those who adopt the reading ‘gentle’, that νήπιοι “infants” has better external manuscript attestation.⁸¹ In terms of date, ‘νήπιοι’ is found in the oldest manuscripts (P⁶⁵ third century, Sinaiticus [N*] and Vaticanus [B] both fourth century, Ephraemi Syri Rescriptus [C], Claromontanus [D], and Washingtonensis [I] are all fifth century).⁸² This is to be compared with ἡπιοι the earliest date for which is in Alexandrinus (A), dating back to the fifth century. In addition, the reading ‘infants’ has wider geographical support than that of ἡπιοι – it is found in most of the Alexandrian and Western texts and is also supported by the earliest evidence in both the West (Old Latin) and the East (Clement; P⁶⁵).

Secondly, the allegation that Paul always uses the term νήπιοι in a strongly pejorative manner and therefore would not have used this word to refer to himself in 1 Thess. 2:7 requires some qualification. There are occasions where Paul uses this term in a mildly negative manner (e.g. 1 Cor. 3:1; 13:11) but also times where he employs the verbal form νηπιάζω in a positive sense (e.g. 1 Cor. 14:20). This concurs with a recent survey of the Thesaurus Linguae Graecae (TLG) recently carried out by Timothy Sailors in which he

⁸⁰ The case for the reading ‘νήπιοι’ has most recently been put forward by Weima, “‘But We Became Infants’” (forthcoming, 2001); Sailors, “Wedding Textual and Literary-Rhetorical Criticism,” (forthcoming, 2000). See above note 41. I am indebted to both these authors for some of the points that follow.

⁸¹ Even B. M. Metzger (*The Text of the New Testament. Its Transmission, Corruption, and Restoration* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1968], p. 231), an exponent in favour of the reading “gentle”, is prepared to concede that ‘the weight and diversity of external evidence are *clearly in favour* of νήπιοι’ (emphasis added).

⁸² On the other hand, the older a manuscript is may not be a sound basis for concluding that it must contain the original reading.

concludes that *νήπιος* in its various forms in the first century literature (BCE-CE) is employed in a: neutral sense 75% of the time; negative sense 19% of the time; positive sense 6% of the time.⁸³ Thus, to say that Paul always uses this term in a negative manner is not so. In addition, ancient writers on occasion also use the noun *νήπιος* in a positive sense. For instance, Dio Chrysostom employs the yearning of infants to be reunited with their estranged parents as a metaphor for humanity's longing to be with and talk with the gods.⁸⁴ Moreover, both Jewish and non-Jewish writers in antiquity describe the death of babies in wars in ways that emphasises their innocence (e.g. Diodorus Siculus, *Hist.* 20.72.2; Philo, *Flacc.* 68.2; Josephus, *Ant.* 6.133.2). Philo in book 3 of his *De Specialibus Legibus* also claims that 'it is impossible for the greatest liar to invent a charge against them [i.e. infants], as they are wholly innocent' (*Spec. Leg.* 3.119).

Against this, scholars would argue, is the bewildering manner in which the apostle 'mixes' and employs a number of different metaphors – first Paul refers to himself as an 'infant' then as a 'nursing mother' who cares for her own 'children'. This has caused even the most eminent of text-critics to state: 'Paul's violent transition in the same sentence from a reference to himself as babe to the thought of his serving as a mother-nurse has seemed to most editors and commentators to be little short of absurdity'.⁸⁵

However, this so-called 'mixing of metaphors' very much depends on how one

⁸³ Sailors, "Wedding Textual and Literary-Rhetorical Criticism," p. 11.

⁸⁴ 'For precisely as infant children when torn away from father or mother are filled with terrible longing and desire, and stretch out their hands to their absent parents often in their dreams, so also do men to the gods, rightly loving them for their beneficence and kinship, and being eager in every possible way to be with them and to hold converse with them' (*Orat.* 12.61).

⁸⁵ Metzger, *Text of the New Testament*, p. 231.

punctuates vv. 5-7 in general, and vv. 7b-c in particular. If vv. 7b-c are read, ‘but we were *infants* among you, like a *nursing mother* caring for her own children’, then clearly Paul could be accused of mixing his metaphors.⁸⁶ If, on the other hand, v. 7b was punctuated with a full-stop after ‘but we became infants among you’ (v. 7b), then the infant metaphor would conclude the clause vv. 5-7b and also stand in contrast to the nursing-mother metaphor as the beginning of the new clause in vv. 7c-8. Viewed in this manner, Paul employs two separate metaphors when speaking of himself in two separate sentences.

Lastly, the fact that Paul may quickly change or shift (up the hierarchical scale) in his use of metaphors where he likens himself and his colleagues to *νήπιοι* and then to that of a nursing mother is corroborated a little later in 2:17 where the apostle again changes or shifts (down the hierarchical scale this time) from likening himself to a ‘father’ (2:11) to that of an orphan. Note should also be taken of the fact that elsewhere Paul is quite capable of mixing his metaphors (e.g. Gal. 4:19).

But what of the context? If *νήπιοι* is the original reading, does it fit in with the overall tenor of Paul’s argument here? As we earlier noted in this chapter, Paul is presenting an *apologia* in light of the accusations made against him. He repeatedly denies and answers a number of charges, charges which were often associated with wandering charlatans of the day. For example, he rejects the accusations that he or his colleagues engaged in flattery (v. 5a). The Greek term (*κολακεία*) “flattery” which Paul uses is only found here

⁸⁶ Strangely, Gaventa (“Apostles as Babes,” p. 198) who argues for the reading *νήπιοι*, is guilty herself of ‘mixing’ the two metaphors in the same clause.

in the New Testament. In the ancient world the general meaning of this expression was associated with characteristics such as deceptive language, empty rhetoric, false promises and trickery (e.g. Aristotle, *Eth. Nich.* 4.6.9 ; Philo, *Sac. of Ab.* 22). This is set against other ancient authors who recognised the need to speak with *παρρησία* ‘frankness of speech’ (e.g. Seneca, *Ep.* 59.4-7). All these denials, flattery (v. 5a), greed (v. 5b) and honour (v. 6) conclude with the contrasting statement – “but we became infants in you midst” (v. 7b.) thereby highlighting the apostle’s sincerity and innocence, a sincerity and an innocence, as we have already seen, in keeping with the assumptions of infants in the ancient world. As Jeffrey Weima concludes: ‘Little babies are not capable of using deceptive speech, having ulterior motives, and being concerned with receiving honor; in all these things they are innocent’.⁸⁷

For Paul, a male adult, to speak of himself as a *νήπιος* is highly paradoxical and creates a ‘jarring image’⁸⁸, jolting the reader into further reflecting on what he can possibly mean. One wonders why the apostle should invert his paternal role, *his* usual and preferred way of relating to his readers. If *νήπιοι* is the original reading then by referring to himself in this way Paul adds another side to the complexity and diversity of his father role *vis-à-vis* his Thessalonian converts.⁸⁹ By so doing, he expands our understanding of the composite relations which exist between himself and his converts.

⁸⁷ Weima, “But We Became Infants Among You,” p. 25. In like manner Gaventa (“Apostles as Babes,” p. 25) states of this role: ‘they were innocent characters lacking the guile and deceit of a charlatan’. Sailors (“Wedding Textual and Literary-Rhetorical Criticism,” p. 10) also writes: ‘Babies have no ulterior motives for the actions they take; babies are not cognizant of how they are esteemed, what their reputation is, and whether they have honor – they are innocent’.

⁸⁸ Gaventa, “Apostles as Babes,” p. 206.

⁸⁹ See introductory chapter 1.3 re metaphor, esp. 1.3.4.

This in turn may modify his patriarchal role, but it does not deconstruct it altogether – after all Paul behaves in this letter as the father, not as the child! Perhaps the apostle does so precisely because he feels he has nothing to fear from the Thessalonians and is not under any threat from them. Thus, part of the reason for Paul describing himself as an ‘infant’ may lie in the fact that in this letter his authority is not in any danger nor is it being challenged by his converts, hence the ease with which he can risk himself into such a vulnerable and non-authoritarian role.

5.5 Paul as Orphan (1 Thess. 2:17)

If it is accepted that Paul likens himself to an infant (2:7) it should not surprise us that he appears to invert his patriarchal role a second time by using another of his ‘astonishing metaphors for the apostles’,⁹⁰ namely, ‘orphan’ (2:17). The participle ἀπορφανισθέντες (2:17) is in the *passive* voice thus placing the emphasis upon the involuntary nature of the separation (“*being orphaned*”). Clearly, Paul’s severance from the Thessalonians is not a situation of his own choosing. Considerable debate has centred upon whether the idea of being an orphan is clearly present in the expression. Have *Paul* and his colleagues been orphaned from the Thessalonians, or have the *Thessalonian* believers been orphaned from Paul and his colleagues? The close proximity of Paul having already described himself as a ‘father’ (2:11) has coloured many commentators’ interpretation, causing them to opt for the latter.⁹¹ But it should be borne in mind that the verb ἀπορφανίζω in extant Greek literature, where the verb occurs infrequently, is never used to refer to parents who

⁹⁰ Gaventa, *Thessalonians*, p. 41.

⁹¹ E.g., Marshall, *Thessalonians*, p. 85; Wanamaker, *Thessalonians*, 120; Richard, *Thessalonians*, pp. 128-29.

are orphaned from their children but consistently refers to children who are orphaned from their parents.⁹²

Also, as we have seen earlier, the fact that Paul in 1 Thess. 2:7 appears to shift in his use of metaphors there may be good reason to believe that he is doing a similar thing here. Moreover, since Paul employs a rich diversity of familial terminology during the course of this letter it is quite likely he is adding to this here even though it is very rare indeed.⁹³ To simply say, as some commentators do, that Paul is here referring to himself as a parent who has been separated from his children i.e. that the apostle had become ‘childless’⁹⁴ by separation from the Thessalonians, lessens the impact of what the apostle is trying to communicate to his readers. Thus, it is better to take it that Paul and his associates were made *orphans*.

By describing himself in this manner Paul appears to be once again putting himself in a vulnerable position. He is no doubt calling to mind the hasty departure he was forced to make from Thessalonica (cf. Acts 17:1-10) and he uses this term to describe the pain felt at being ‘separated...from his “family”’.⁹⁵ By so doing the apostle is probably

⁹² For this information I am indebted to the study of J. B. Miller, “Infants and Orphans in 1 Thessalonians: A Discussion of ἀπορφανίζω and the Text-Critical Problem in 1 Thess. 2:7,” (unpub. paper delivered Nov 20, 1999 at the Annual Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature, Boston, MA).

⁹³ John Chrysostom (*Homilies on Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Thessalonians, Timothy, Titus and Philemon*. Translated by G. Alexander, John A. Broadus and Philip Schaff. Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, vol. 13 [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988], p. 334) comments on this verse: ‘he has not said “separated” but what was much more...Because he had said above, “as a father his children”, “as a nurse,” here he uses another expression, “being made orphans,” which is said of children who have lost fathers... For if any one should examine our longing, even as little children without a protector, having sustained bereavement, long for their parents, not only from the feelings of nature itself, but also on account of their deserted state, so truly do we feel’.

⁹⁴ Gaventa, *Thessalonians*, p. 41.

⁹⁵ Gillman, “Paul’s ΕΙΣΟΔΟΣ,” p. 67.

identifying with the Thessalonians' sense of abandonment ⁹⁶ at having left everything when they embraced the Christian gospel. In choosing to use this word Paul may be reflecting the typical convert's experience and shows that he is anxious to let his converts know that he understands just how they feel since they have broken with their pagan past and all the social and familial ramifications associated with it.⁹⁷ The apostle's disappearance from the Thessalonica community, so soon after establishing it, was sudden, abrupt and enforced. In the circumstances, one can understand a certain amount of confusion and bewilderment on the part of these vulnerable Thessalonian Christians who have been separated from Paul. In relation to this point it is interesting to note how Hierocles underscores the importance of parents and children being 'allies on all occasions and in all circumstances' (4.25.53) which may go some way towards explaining the Thessalonians' confusion at Paul's unexpected departure from them.

It is also worth noting that this metaphor occurs in a passage well noted for the apostle's use of emotionally charged language (i.e. 1 Thess. 2:17-3:11). Evidently the apostle Paul feels his estrangement and believes that not only have the Thessalonians 'lost out' but that he, to some extent, had 'lost out' as well. We know that his converts had been 'robbed' of their founder-father but Paul has also been deprived as a result of his separation from his spiritual offspring. Perhaps this loss is illustrated in the subtle shift of metaphor from that of 'orphan' (2:17) back to the image of the parent who often

⁹⁶ Malherbe (*Paul and the Thessalonians*, p. 64) writes, 'Through their separation, *Paul had too been made an orphan*, and he was willing to suffer loneliness on their behalf' (emphasis added).

⁹⁷ Meeks (*Moral World*, p. 126) states regarding the significance of this: 'Thus, the letter itself becomes a part of the resocialisation which undertakes to substitute a new identity, new social relations, and a new set of values for those which each person had absorbed in growing up'.

regarded his/her child as “my joy”⁹⁸ (2:19). However, the thrust in these verses is eschatological,⁹⁹ and Paul (as parent), is fully aware that he had begun a good work with the Thessalonians, and the fact that he is desirous to re-visit as soon as possible (2:18) due to his forced absence, reveals something of his concern at losing his eschatological reward, crown and joy (2:19).

Paul’s referring to himself in this way is another most unusual description of his relationship to his Thessalonian converts. Such a designation makes it difficult to assess the apostle’s authority or the strategies of power that are at work here and is clearly one area that requires further research.¹⁰⁰ Be that as it may, one thing that is apparent is that Paul, by referring to himself as an ‘orphan’, must once again have felt confident about his relationship with the Thessalonians. Indeed, as we argued earlier in this chapter, unlike other situations where his authority is being undermined by those *within* those congregations he himself had founded (e.g. Galatians), the apostle is under no such threat here. Moreover, all Paul’s opponents lay *outside* the congregation, hence the ease with which he can put himself into such a non-authoritative role.

5.6 Summary

We are now in a better position to summarize our findings regarding Paul’s parental roles in this letter. At the outset we are immediately struck by the fact that Paul’s parental

⁹⁸ Best, *Thessalonians*, p. 128

⁹⁹ Gaventa (*Thessalonians*, p. 41) comments on this verse: ‘The eschatological element here cannot be overlooked. Although it would be mistaken to say that Paul’s own salvation at the Parousia depends on the standing of his churches, he nevertheless anticipates presenting these churches to the risen Lord as evidence of his faithfulness’.

¹⁰⁰ I am sensitive to Sandra Polaski’s (*Paul*, p. 13) warning that the issue of power relations are not fully comprehended by exploring the social and familial metaphors. What is needed she says is ‘a way of talking about “talking about power” ’.

relations to his Thessalonian children are consonant with the common assumptions of the parent-child relationship in antiquity. To this end a number of stock meanings and associations of this relationship were identified such as hierarchy, authority, affection, moral instruction, obedience etc. and it is these which determine his expectations of them (and theirs of him).

First, as regards his paternal role, Paul's relations^{hip} with his Thessalonian converts was essentially an hierarchical one, based upon the fact that he was the founding-father of the church at Thessalonica. This relationship with his spiritual offspring was along similar lines to that of a *paterfamilias* whose responsibility was to socialize his offspring into the family; this role controls every aspect of Paul's paternal relations with the Thessalonians. As a father, Paul's authority was such that he may even have regarded himself as 'owner' of the church at Thessalonica – it was his household/family. However, if ἡπιοι in 2:7 is the original reading it fits what was commonly expected of fathers in antiquity and for Paul means that his authority *vis-à-vis* his spiritual offspring is tempered by a more gentle formulation. Again, Paul expected his offspring to reciprocate and we have good internal evidence of this, for example, in the Thessalonians' affection for him and that he also assumed that his readers would obey his instructions. These findings are significant in light of the fact that some scholars (e.g. Meeks) argue that the structure of Paul's communities stood in *contrast* to the structure of the household in the ancient world. As we have shown, it is much more likely that Paul, by assuming the role of a *paterfamilias*, shows not only an awareness of the hierarchical structures of the household but also a

willingness to use them in *determining* and regulating the order and organisation of the Thessalonian family.

An integral part of Paul's fatherly responsibilities was the need to provide teaching and instruction as he *re-socialised* his converts into the distinctively Christian way of life. Paul was keenly aware of the Gentile composition of the community and, given the fact that the community was also in its infancy, the need to provide Christian teaching and education on a whole range of questions (e.g. the parousia) and issues (e.g. work etc.) was crucial. The apostle particularly stresses his fatherly obligation to *exhort* and encourage his spiritual offspring with a view to them living morally and honourably in view of outsiders. Concomitant with this, Paul as 'father' expected the Thessalonians to imitate him. Mimesis involved following Paul's personal lifestyle – including the imitation of his example of holiness and love (3:12) and his evangelistic methods.

Whilst Paul's paternal stance towards his converts was hierarchical, this needs to be understood alongside the deep affection and love that he also felt for his converts. The fact that Paul adopts a superior role towards his converts does not preclude him demonstration affection. These two aspects of his paternal role are not mutually exclusive. Thus, Elisabeth Castelli's view that Paul's relations with his congregations are essentially hierarchical, and not benign, is too one-sided and too narrowly driven. In our opinion, although the expression 'father' was a more pointed, much less benign term than some scholars have argued, it was also a richer and more affective term than Castelli has allowed for. Moreover, Paul's enforced separation from his Thessalonian converts is a case in point – his departure left him bereft of his 'family' and, like fathers in antiquity

whose children had died, was tantamount to a 'bereavement'. In response to the situation we find him time and again heaping up emotional language in an effort to describe his own love and feelings for them.

Alongside the 'father' metaphor Paul employs two other images in the letter. First, Paul as a male, in a most striking and unusual manner, describes himself in the female role of a nursing-mother. By so doing, Paul 'amplifies' the father metaphor and appears to be putting himself in a more vulnerable, but nevertheless, hierarchical position. These two parental roles are not contradictory, but complementary – distinct but not interchangeable. Whereas the paternal role stresses Paul's educational obligations towards his converts, the role of nursing-mother emphasises the importance of nurturing and caring for his infant congregation. As regards Paul's function as a nursing-mother, his anxiety and agitation at being so suddenly separated from his unweaned-children are noteworthy and strike a chord with some writers in the ancient world whose expectations were such that the two should not be separated.

In addition, Paul curiously appears to invert these two parental roles by likening himself to an infant and an orphan. If *νήπιοι* "infants" is the accepted reading it too fits in with what was commonly associated with infants in the ancient world – they were innocent, incapable of deception etc., characteristics which with Paul is careful to identify in this letter. Again, he refers to himself as an 'orphan' and a second time puts himself in a vulnerable position perhaps in order to identify with his own converts' sense of vulnerability, not to mention their social and familial isolation experienced upon turning 'from idols to serve the living and true God' (1:9). These two roles add new facets to the

patriarchal Paul – they do not deconstruct it, since the dominating role in the letter is Paul’s function as father. Rather, the juxtaposition of the infant/orphan metaphors set up associations/connotations which rule out certain, potentially oppressive features of the father-role. Moreover, the fact that Paul describes himself using the above non-authoritarian roles is not only evidence of just how agreeable his relations with the his converts was, but also of the fact that he is under no threat from anyone within his Thessalonian family.

6. PAUL AND THE THESSALONIAN BROTHERHOOD

6.1 Introduction

Having earlier investigated the norms or stereotypical attitudes of brotherly relations in the ancient Jewish and Graeco-Roman world, we now turn to a study of the relevant passages in this letter itself (i.e. 4:3-8, 9-12; 5:12-15). However before doing so, it is appropriate that we briefly summarise some of our main findings from the primary source material. This will not only set our material against the background of the relevant Pauline texts but will also enable us to make the appropriate comparisons as we proceed.

We earlier observed in Part II how the concept of brotherly relations in general, and brotherly love (φιλαδελφία) in particular, was a significant and widespread phenomenon in the ancient world such as to merit a separate treatment. Brothers were an integral and important part of the wider familial matrix and had rights, responsibilities and obligations to fulfil in order that unity and harmony might prevail. Since brothers shared a common biological origin and were raised together, they were deeply involved in each others' affairs. Friendship, for example, could not compare with siblingship since no one was as close as a brother. As a consequence brothers were expected to love one another *because* they were brothers.

Moreover, siblings who showed love for one another was also proof of their love for their parents. Indeed it was significant to note that brotherly love was inextricably linked to the normal standard expectations of familial harmony. This is important – in view

of the fact that our investigation is concerned with the wider network of familial metaphors – in that failure to love a brother reflected badly on one's parents to such an extent that it condemned the latter for having brought a brother into the world.

Brothers also differed in various ways (i.e. age, nature and abilities) and hierarchies were a notable feature of their relations. More specifically, we observed how some ancient writers employed the human body as a paradigm to indicate how an older sibling was accorded more honour and status by the younger, even though they both were to try to overcome these differences. Also, an older brother was to lead and admonish a younger brother whilst the latter was charged with the responsibilities of honouring, obeying and respecting the former.

Another distinguishing feature of brotherly relations was the way in which they were expected to live together in unity and harmony. Brothers were the closest of allies and were supposed to avoid situations which could destroy the sense of peace and concord of the whole household. This is not to say that all brotherly relations were harmonious – clearly they were not. Indeed discord could occur specifically in relation to property and inheritance and brothers are strictly enjoined not to let either of these circumstances be opportunities for 'declaring war' on each other. When conflicts arose and one brother had been wronged by another brother, such situations were to be settled internally and were to be governed by the principle of forgive and forget. On this point, some of our sources emphasise that in situations of hostility, it was the norm for the common *status* of brothers to have priority over *actions*.

We also recorded the fact that the household was regarded as a place of work and as a

basic unit of production. Characteristics such as self-sufficiency and hard work were the standard social expectations of all its members. This included brothers, who were supposed to work and co-operate with each other and support the family. When siblings attended to the various duties and responsibilities expected within the family, honour was accorded to the entire household *vis-à-vis* those who were on the *outside*.

Whilst most of the above primary sources address biological brothers, Lucian of Samosata's (*Per.* 13) remarks are particularly instructive for what they can tell us regarding one *outsider's* views of the *Christian* community.¹ Lucian especially draws attention to this community's sharing and caring manner of life towards one Peregrinus, evidence of the fact that these people conceived of themselves as a *brotherhood*.

However, Lucian also believes himself to be exposing a sham and is of the view that in similar circumstances any so-called brother could quickly acquire wealth by imposing upon simple and gullible people. In all this, underlying Lucian's suspicious remarks is the fact that brotherly relations could cause some brothers to become over-dependent on others to the extent that they may even use their position as an excuse to take advantage of others.

With this background in mind, we turn now to Paul's letter itself to determine the importance, or otherwise, of brotherly relations. How, if at all, can our primary source material help to illuminate the apostle's understanding of this relationship? Moreover, are there any differences between how brothers in antiquity related to one another and Paul's

¹ Indeed, Paul specifically addresses the very question of the brotherhood's reputation towards *outsiders* in this letter – see chapters 7, 8 and 9 of this thesis.

expectations of Christian brothers? We have already taken note of the fact that some of our ancient writers address biological brothers (e.g. Plutarch). Is Paul also concerned with this aspect, or is he more interested in ‘brothers’ as a fictive-kinship term? And what can Paul tell us about the concept of φιλαδελφία? How does his understanding of brotherly love compare or contrast with our ancient writers’ understanding? Also, does Paul view brothers as differing in rank or status? And, in the event of brotherly conflict(s), what advice does the apostle give as a means of resolving such disputes? And what part does family honour play in sibling relations? These are some of the questions with which we shall be concerned. But before we look more closely at these important questions in our exegesis of the relevant passages, it is worth plotting the manner in which Paul employs the noun ἀδελφός ‘brother’ in 1 Thessalonians.

6.2 Usage, Characteristics and Function of the term ἀδελφός in 1 Thessalonians

The term ‘brother’ is the most frequently occurring expression which the apostle Paul employs in relation to his fellow Christians. It is one of Paul’s favourite appellations for believers in his letters (e.g. Rom. 1:3; 4:1; 7:1; 1 Cor. 1:10, 11, 26; 2 Cor. 1:8; 8:1; Gal. 1:1; 3:15; Phil. 1:12; 3:1; 2 Thess. 1:3; Phlm. 1:1, 7, 17) and represents ‘the predominant and distinctive capacity of the believing community’.² Of all the apostle’s letters this fictive-kinship expression recurs proportionately most often in 1 Thessalonians i.e. 1:4; 2:1, 9, 14, 17; 3:2, 7; 4:1, 6, 10 [x2], 13; 5:1, 4, 12, 14, 25, 26, 27. Thus, from

² A. Smith, *Comfort One Another: Reconstructing the Rhetoric and Audience of 1 Thessalonians* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1995), p. 104.

beginning to end 1 Thessalonians breathes brotherly language.³

Paul, by choosing to refer to believers as ‘brothers’ so often in his letters, shows just how familiar a designation it was for the members of the Christian community. It is a term that means something more than simply ‘believers’ and, as we shall demonstrate, is not devoid of content or association. In light of this, it is appropriate for us to document how Paul employs this term in the letter as a whole before we undertake any exegeses.

6.2.1 Usage Paul uses the term ‘brother’ in a number of different ways throughout the course of the letter. In every case, with the exception of two (i.e. 3:2; 4:6)⁴, the apostle uses the plural ‘brothers’ and always applies the term metaphorically to refer to those *inside* – never to those outside – the Christian community.⁵ On every occasion, but one, he uses the word in relation to the *Thessalonian* brotherhood, the exception

³ The frequency of Paul’s use of ἀδελφός/οί across some of his writings reveals the following pattern:

<u>Letter</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Total No. of Verses</u>	<u>Ratio</u>
Romans	13	432	1:33 vvs.
1 Cor.	33	437	1:13.2
2 Cor.	9	256	1:28.4
Gal.	10	149	1:14.9
Phil	6	104	1:17.3
1 Thess.	19	89	1: 4.6
2 Thess.	9	47	1:5.2
Phlm.	4	25	1:6.25

⁴ In both these instances the singular is employed.

⁵ For a brief discussion of brotherly terminology in some of Paul’s letters see A. L. Lewis, “‘As a Beloved Brother’: The Function of Family Language in the Letters of Paul” unpub. DPhil diss. Yale University, 1985, p. 115. Oddly though Lewis omits any reference to 1 Thessalonians and in any case his thesis is substantially different to ours in that he focuses on the church as the family *of God*.

being 4:10 where Paul commends his converts for their love for brothers throughout the Macedonian region.

The word 'brother' is used alongside other terms such as 'beloved,' (cf. 1:4) and is also brought together in the compound expression φιλαδελφία. Does Paul by employing this compound term (4:9) wish, in some way, to doubly underscore for his readers the fraternal feeling that exists within the brotherhood? 'Brother' is further used in relation to Paul's fellow-workers who, like him, have been entrusted with the gospel (2:4; 3:2). By referring to his converts as brothers Paul gives an indication that this relationship is a reciprocal but, as we have seen, this may still be a hierarchical one.⁶

In addition, Paul can use this term in the vocative when he is appealing to his converts (4:1) and it is also utilized in regard to his converts when he wants to demonstrate the intimacy of their relationship. For instance, he uses it when he was abruptly separated from his converts (2:17), when he is consoled to learn of the Thessalonians' faith and love (3:6) and when he solicits their prayers on his behalf (5:25).⁷

One important characteristic of the apostle's brotherly remarks in this letter is the manner in which 'brotherhood [is]...linked with *common knowledge*'.⁸ On a number of occasions Paul calls upon the Thessalonians' knowledge (οἶδατε) of his work amongst them, a work he stresses was not in vain (2:1). Again, he invites his readers to remember

⁶ Best, *Paul and his Converts*, p. 132. However, Best's comment on the non-patriarchal nature of brotherly relations does not always apply, as we shall point out in our exegesis of 1 Thess. 5:12-15. Interestingly, Paul, in 1 Thessalonians never employs the phrase ἀδελφοὶ μου 'my brothers' (he does use it in 1 Cor. 8:13) and one wonders whether it is too subtle a point to make that the Thessalonians' fraternal relations among themselves are in some (qualitative?) sense different to their being brothers of the apostle Paul.

⁷ Best, *Paul and his Converts*, p. 133.

⁸ L. Morris, *1,2 Thessalonians*. Word Biblical Themes (Dallas: Word, 1989), p. 79 (emphasis added).

his ‘toil’ and ‘labour’ day and night amongst them (2:9). Indeed, one of Paul’s reasons for writing to the ‘brothers’ at Thessalonica is so that they should no longer remain ignorant (ἀγνοεῖν) concerning those who had ‘fallen asleep’ (4:13). This same note is struck by the apostle when he strongly urges that this letter be read to ‘all the brothers’ *πᾶσιν τοῖς ἀδελφοῖς* (5:27)⁹ – the inference being that no-one is to be uninformed or ignorant of the letter’s contents.

Finally, the term ‘brother’ is applied to certain members of the community whose responsibility it is ‘to lead’ or ‘rule’¹⁰ over other brothers ‘in the Lord’ (5:12); such brothers, states Paul, are to be held ‘in highest esteem’ (5:13). The challenge which these statements represent to those who are of the view that *all* brotherly relations are essentially non-patriarchal in structure will be later investigated; nevertheless we signal it at this stage. In light of this varied and wide range of usage we can conclude that the designation ‘brother’ is a key fictive-kinship term for Paul in 1 Thessalonians.

6.2.2 Characteristics of Brotherly Relations

A Brotherhood grounded in Love Throughout Paul’s first letter to the Thessalonians it is significant to note the number of strategically placed references that he makes to the theme of ‘love’. At the outset of the letter Paul, in his prayer of thanks for the Thessalonians, mentions their love within the context of the triad faith, hope and love (1:3). In chapter 2:8 the apostle informs his readers that ‘we loved you so much

⁹ Morris (*Thessalonians*, p. 79), writes, ‘This is a most unusual way of referring to the reading of a letter, and it would have left the Thessalonians with no doubt that it was important for all to hear it’.

¹⁰ The participle is *προϊσταμένους* (see chapter 9.6 for a discussion of its meaning).

(ὁμειρόμενοι) that we were willing to share with you not only the gospel but also our very lives because you had become so beloved (ἀγαπητοί) to us'. And in 3:6 Paul recounts his sudden departure from his readers and describes in quite emotional terms his feelings for them. However, when Timothy eventually returned, Paul was relieved to hear that the Thessalonians had not wavered in their faith or love towards God or one another, despite the huge trial they had undergone.

In chapter 3:12 Paul's wish-prayer for the Thessalonians is that their love (ἀγάπη) for one another may not only increase but should also extend toward everyone else (εἰς πάντας), just as Paul's does for them. Finally, the theme of love is picked up again towards the end of the letter in 5:13 where certain brothers in authority were to be held in the highest regard 'in love' (ἐν ἀγάπῃ).

From all this we can see that love is elementary to the Thessalonian brotherhood and (as noted earlier), as if to underscore its importance, Paul combines the twin aspects of 'brother' and 'love' in the composite expression φιλαδελφία (4:9). This not only helps to heighten the intensity of fraternal relations but draws attention to 'the special character of the community'¹¹, hence making it a fitting climax to this passage.

One other point worth noting in passing is that the noun φιλαδελφία only occurs in one other place in the Pauline writings, i.e. Rom. 12:10. Outside the corpus Paulinum it

¹¹ O. Larry Yarbrough, *Not Like the Gentiles: Marriage Rules in the Letters of Paul* (SBLDS 80; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1985), p. 80; see also C. Spicq, "La Charité Fraternelle. Selon 1 Th. 4:9," *Mélanges bibliques rédigés en l'honneur de André Robert* (Travaux de l'Institut Catholique de Paris 4; Bloud et Gay, 1956), pp. 507-11.

occurs in Heb. 13:1; 1 Pet. 1:22; 2 Pet. 1:7 – the adjective φιλάδελφος is found in 1 Pet. 3:8.¹² Prior to Paul’s day, this term occurs about ten times and mostly in relation to social relationships.¹³ We do not find it being employed prior to the Hellenistic period. The noun originates from the adjective φιλάδελφος, ‘loving one’s brother,’ which is found sometimes in Attic Greek (e.g. Xen. *Mem.* 2.3.17). The word-group φιλαδελφία/φιλάδελφος in Jewish and Greek literature was almost always employed in relation to love for one’s *natural* brothers and sisters (e.g. 4 Macc. 3:23, 25; 14:1 – with the exception of 2 Macc. 15:14¹⁴ where the word attests a figurative usage). It then came to be applied metaphorically to non-literal brothers and this is how Paul – with other New Testament authors (e.g. Heb. 13: 1; 1 Pet. 1:22) – employs it in his letters.

6.2.3 Function of brotherly language in 1 Thessalonians

Having noted the frequency and range of usage of the term ‘brother’ in relation to the Thessalonians, this prompts the question of the function of such language. Here we must consider the term ἀδελφός within the wider context of the epistle, including the establishing of the *ekklesia* at Thessalonica.

We have explained earlier how Paul’s converts upon their conversion experienced θλίψις (1:6) – and continued to undergo suffering (2:14) – at the hands of their fellow citizens. That the Thessalonian believers experienced affliction is not in any doubt, but

¹² As we have already observed in chapter 4, the term φιλαδελφία is used several times by Plutarch and is also found in other non-Jewish (e.g. Hierocles) and Jewish writings (e.g. 4 Maccabees) .

¹³ Brady, “Brotherly Love,” p. 7.

¹⁴ The text reads as follows: ‘And Onias spoke, saying, “This is a man who loves the brethren and prays much for the people and the holy city, Jeremiah, the prophet of God” ’.

the precise nature of such adversity has been much debated. For instance, Malherbe is of the opinion that such afflictions were merely cerebral in nature and were characterised by ‘the distress and anguish of heart experienced by persons who broke with their past as they received the gospel’.¹⁵ The term θλίψις as it is used in 3:7 could be understood in this light but in 3:3 Paul uses the same term of *external* oppression and it is unlikely that the same word would be employed in two different ways in the one letter. Moreover, in 2:14, Paul states that the Thessalonians had suffered in the same manner as the Judeans which strongly suggests that the persecution was something more tangible and concrete than merely psychological.¹⁶ It is better therefore, as John Barclay argues, to understand the Thessalonians’ experience as replicating that of Paul and Jesus where the oppression is ‘at least vigorous social pressure’.¹⁷ Such ‘social harassment,’ continues Barclay, was ‘an experience which became common for Christians in the Graeco-Roman world’.¹⁸ This social oppression was religiously motivated by outsiders and was due to the fact that the Thessalonians had jettisoned long held ancestral practices.¹⁹

As a result, the Thessalonians’ conversion, which Paul describes as a ‘turning from idols to serve the true God’ (1:9-10), had caused a severance of their social and religious bonds. Moreover, their refusal to participate in the normal social and religious activities

¹⁵ Malherbe, *Paul and the Thessalonians*, 48. This view is challenged by, among others, Barclay “Conflict,” p. 513 n.4; Weima, “An Apology,” pp. 73-99.

¹⁶ Barclay, “Conflict,” p. 514; T. D. Still, *Conflict at Thessalonica: A Pauline Church and Its Neighbours* JSNT Sup 183 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), p. 211.

¹⁷ Barclay, “Conflict,” p. 514.

¹⁸ Barclay, “Conflict,” p. 514.

¹⁹ Barclay, “Conflict,” p. 514. For a development of Barclay’s ‘conflict hypothesis’ see C. S. de Vos, *Church and Community Conflicts: The Relationships of the Thessalonian, Corinthian, and Philippian Churches with Their Wider Civic Communities* (SBLDS 168; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1999), pp. 123-74; Still, *Conflict at Thessalonica*, pp. 255-60.

meant that they had become obnoxious to those around them. There was, as John Barclay states ‘a strong sense of betrayal... Christians deserted ancestral practices, passed on since time immemorial, for a novel religion (if such it could be called) of recent manufacture. The exclusivity of the Christians’ religion – their arrogant refusal to take part in, or to consider valid, the worship of any God but their own – deeply wounded public sensibilities’.²⁰ The upshot of all this was that families were also affected and as Barclay concludes, those ‘family members who broke ancestral traditions on the basis of their new-found faith showed an appalling lack of concern for their familial responsibilities’.²¹

So, although the conflicts at Thessalonica were to do with the Christian converts’ refusal to take part in the usual social and cultic activities expected of them, invariably such conversions could have had an adverse effect on familial relations, especially where one member of a family converted and others did not.²² Indeed it may well be the case that the social harassment from non-Christians included certain family members (*also* outsiders)²³ who did not embrace the gospel message and who may have been directly

²⁰ Barclay, “Conflict,” p. 515.

²¹ Barclay (“Conflict,” p. 515). Whilst this may be so, the New Testament also provides us with evidence of how whole households as a result of their conversion could, at times, be *transformed* and *enriched* (Acts 10:2; 11:14; 16:15, 31; 18:8; 1 Cor. 1:16; 16:15ff.); see R. Greer, *Broken Lights and Mended Lives: Theology and Common Life in the Early Church* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University, 1986), p. 99.

²² Malherbe, *Paul and the Thessalonians*, p. 50.

²³ Barclay (“Conflict,” pp. 520-25) also argues that the Thessalonians were in part responsible for bringing persecution upon themselves. They were ‘not entirely passive’, he states, because the Thessalonians had, upon embracing the gospel, engaged in ‘aggressive evangelistic activity’ to such an extent that they abandoned the work place and suffered a poor reputation with outsiders as a result (cf. chapter 8 and later discussion of these verses). As regards the effects upon the family of the conversion of one member over against another, Still (*Conflict at Thessalonica*, p. 255) comments: ‘Non-Christians would likely have viewed as subversive the sudden and decisive shift of commitment by Paul’s converts from the “real” family to a “fictive”. Furthermore, the Christians’ conversion and the relational ramifications thereof probably created sharp disagreement and considerable discord between believing and unbelieving family members’.

opposed to it and to their family members who had.²⁴ It was common currency at the time that Christians were to be held responsible for every calamity²⁵ and this could well include the reality that Christians were often blamed for the division of households.²⁶

We know that although religiously speaking the Graeco-Roman religion(s) were essentially syncretistic and readily tolerated and assimilated other gods into their religious system, the family was the one area which remained sacrosanct²⁷ so much so that the break-up of the natural household was tantamount to the rejection of the social order.²⁸

Outspoken pagan critics were swift to condemn Christians for what they regarded as the disintegration of the familial and social order. For example, Justin Martyr (2 *Apol.* 2)

²⁴ Still (*Conflict at Thessalonica*, p. 230) rightly points out that '[t]heir [the Thessalonian Christians'] very act of converting to another religion and thereby abandoning their own religious customs would likely have provoked controversy, if not hostility, among the *Christians' family* and friends' (emphasis added).

²⁵ Barclay ("Conflict," p. 515) comments; 'If *anything* went wrong the Christians could get the blame' (emphasis added). This is evident in Tertullian's famously witty quote, 'If the Tiber rises as high as the city walls, if the Nile does not rise to the fields, if the weather will not change, if there is an earthquake, a famine, a plague – straightway the cry is heard, "Toss the Christians to the lion!". So many of them for just one beast?' (*Apol.* 40.2).

²⁶ Malherbe, *Paul and the Thessalonians*, p. 50; Likewise A. von Harnack (*The Mission and Expansion of Christianity in the First Three Centuries* vol. 1 [London/New York: Williams and Norgate, 1908], p. 393) comments: 'How deeply must conversion have driven its wedge into... domestic life! What an amount of strain, dispeace, and estrangement conversion must have produced, if one member was a Christian while another clung to the old religion'; Meeks (*Moral World*, p. 129) also comments: 'The disruption of households was a charge that pagan opponents often levelled against Christianity, as against other cults, and concern about replacement of family loyalties by this new "family of God" may have been one reason for the "affliction" and suffering of the Christians mentioned in this letter'.

²⁷ For examples of these primary texts see pp. 220 and 222. One example of the importance of the family in ancient times is clearly evident in the Roman socio-legal practice of adoption where, in the absence of natural offspring, a son would be adopted to ensure primarily the continuation of the family cult; see Lyall, *Slaves Citizens, Sons*, p. 84.

²⁸ E. R. Dodds (*Pagan and Christian in an Age of Anxiety: Some Aspects of Religious Experience from Marcus Aurelius to Constantine* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968], p. 115) states; 'One ground of resentment, less often emphasised by recent writers but surely not less important, was the effect of Christianity on family life. Like all creeds which claim the *total* allegiance of the individual ... early Christianity was a powerful divisive force. Every town and every house, says Eusebius, is divided by a civil war between Christian and idolaters'.

gives us a concrete example of one way that Christianity actually broke up a family. A certain woman who had lived an impure life was converted to Christianity and after reforming her own life tried to assist her husband to do likewise only to fail in the process. She eventually divorced him with the result that her husband became a persecutor of her Christian teacher. Such was the intimacy of these early communities and of their brotherly/sisterly relations that their pagan opponents accused them of practising incest (Minucius Felix, *Oct.* chps. 9, 31). This opinion seems to have been derived from the concept of the Christian gatherings as “love-feasts” and the role of the holy kiss (e.g. Athengoras, *Suppl.* 32 cf. Origen *C. Cels.* 1.1).

The gospel material highlights the likelihood of such familial divisions (e.g. Matt. 10:21, 34-38; Mk. 13:12; Lk. 12:51-53; 21:16)²⁹ but the note is also sounded that old relationships will be replaced by new familial ties (Mk. 10:29-30). Concerning these prophecies in the gospels Tertullian (*Scorp.* 10) regards them as particularly appropriate to his own day when he comments: ‘*Nemo enim apostolorum aut fratrem aut patrem passus est traditorem, quod plerique iam nostri* (“For none of them [i.e. the apostles] had experience of a father or a brother as a betrayer, which many of us have’). Clement of Alexandria (*Quis Dives*, 22) also underscores the familial tensions that existed for those who converted to Christianity: ‘If ... a man had a godless father or son or brother, who becomes a hindrance to his faith and an obstacle to the life above, let him not live in fellowship or agreement with him’. Similar domestic tensions are in evidence elsewhere

²⁹ See Barton (*Discipleship and Family Ties*, p. 225) on this whole aspect and in which he concludes that ‘discipleship is understood as a priority of the kingdom of God which relativizes all other ties of allegiance and makes possible access to a new solidarity, the eschatological “brothers, sisters and mothers” who do the will of God’.

in Paul's writings (1 Cor. 7:10-16). One can easily see how, against this background, those early Christians who embraced the gospel (cf. esp. 1:9) and refused to participate in normal social and cultural activities could also have been accused of fracturing family relations and society as well. To cause divisions in the family unit was tantamount to helping to bring about the disintegration of society and being regarded as a troublemaker.³⁰

Against this background it is reasonable to conclude that *one* good reason for Paul's usage of the familial expression ἀδελφός is the fact that the severing of natural familial links is an appropriate opportunity for him to begin to re-socialise the Thessalonians. He does this by using a variety of unusual and distinctive terms for those who belong to the new community: ἅγιοί (e.g. 1 Thess. 3:13; cf. 1 Cor. 1:2; Rom. 1:7), ἐκλεκτοί (e.g. 1 Thess. 1:4; cf. Rom. 8:33; 1 Cor. 1:27) etc. As we have already noted, ἀδελφοί is another expression – what Meeks calls 'the language of belonging'³¹ – which helps to emphasise the sense of cohesion and at the same time distinguish 'the fellowship and its boundaries'.³² Employing such an important fictive-kinship term serves the purpose of reflecting 'the new metaphorical relationship entered into by Christians *with one*

³⁰ Malherbe, *Paul and the Thessalonians*, p. 50.

³¹ Meeks, *First Urban Christians*, p. 85. What is so surprising about Paul's talk of the early Christians being re-socialised into a new community is the apostle's own lack of reference to himself undergoing such an experience. In relation to this anomaly B. Witherington (*Grace in Galatia* [Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1998], p. 111) states, 'One gets the strong sense of Paul not being socialised or at least not well socialised into existing Christian communities at the point of his conversion. To the contrary Paul says he immediately went to the mission field in Arabia. From Gal. 2, one does get the sense that later Paul was part of the Christian community in Antioch, something Acts confirms, but even here Paul says very little about the community or his life in that community'.

³² Meeks, *First Urban Christians*, p. 84.

another'³³ and is indicative of the new set of relationships that have come about as a result of their Christian conversion. Thus, brotherly terminology in effect underscores the fact that the Thessalonians belonged to one another within a new Christian family or brotherhood and it is this which identifies and separates them from 'those who do not know God'³⁴ (τὰ μὴ εἰδότα τὸν θεόν, 1 Thess. 4:5). His use of such an expression helps to bind together a community of people who had no previous connection, commitment or social involvement to one another.³⁵ So, the term 'brother' is an organising metaphor by which Paul seeks to re-socialise his converts whilst also helping to offset the disturbance which embracing the gospel brought about.

To be sure, in one sense, there was nothing new in being referred to as a 'brother' or 'sister' – pagan cults and associations referred to one another using this term.³⁶ Indeed pagan critics were often outspoken against Christians addressing one another with such intimate language as 'brother' and 'sister'. For example, as we have seen Lucian of Samosata scathingly criticises the early Christians whom he regards 'as brothers of one another' – for their wholesale acceptance of Peregrinus as a fellow-brother.³⁷ And Minucius Felix reporting Octavius (*Oct.* 9.2) also speaks critically of the closeness of early Christian communities: 'They recognise each other by secret marks and signs and fall in love before they scarcely know each other. Everywhere they practise among

³³ Wanamaker, *Thessalonians*, p. 147 (emphasis added).

³⁴ What Meeks (*First Urban Christians*, p. 94) also terms 'the language of separation'.

³⁵ Meeks, *Moral World*, p. 129; Wanamaker, *Thessalonians*, p. 148.

³⁶ See chapter 4 for the use of this term among, for example, the members of the Qumran sect. Meeks, *First Urban Christians*, p. 87; see also K.H. Schelkle, "Bruder," *RAC* vol. 3 (1954), pp. 631-39; B. Kötting, "Genossenschaft," *RAC* vol. 10 (1978), pp. 144-45.

³⁷ See chapter 4.7.

themselves a kind of cult of lust, so to speak, and indiscriminately call each other brothers and sisters'. Nevertheless, the frequency with which the early Christian movement in general, and the apostle Paul in particular, employed this expression is unprecedented.

However, another, and in our view more important reason for Paul employing the term 'brother' and other related familial expressions (father, nursing-mother, children, etc.), is that the apostle is describing certain well known *familial expectations* prevalent in the ancient world. We have earlier demonstrated (see chapters 2 and 3) that among the ancients there were certain common assumptions associated with how parents thought their offspring should behave and how children expected parents to conduct themselves. And we have shown how it is quite probable that such presuppositions were at work in *Paul's* relationship as 'father' to his Thessalonian 'children' (see chapter 5). Again, we earlier observed (see chapter 4) that these normal social expectations were seen to underlie the way in which brothers in the ancient world conducted themselves towards one another. In our exegesis of the passages that follow, we will pay particular attention to whether or not these same stereotypes lie behind Paul's understanding of how the Thessalonian brothers should conduct themselves towards one another. With these matters before us, we now turn to an exegesis of a number of relevant passages (1 Thess. 4:3-8, 9-12; 5:12-15) where brotherly concerns are addressed.

7. BROTHERHOOD, MORALITY AND OUTSIDERS (1 Thess. 4:3-8)

7.1 Introduction and Context

Commentators are generally agreed that Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians is a single literary unit¹ consisting of two main parts. The first section comprises chapters 1-3, the *narratio*, in which Paul seeks to re-establish contact with his converts and where we find here (as well as elsewhere) many of the philoprenetic phrases² which effectively dramatise the friendly and familial relations between Paul and his nascent community.³ This style of communication also serves the purpose of overcoming the physical distance between writer and recipient and helps to 'warm' the latter to the former.

Having re-established contact with the Thessalonians, the apostle Paul brings this to a conclusion with a prayer-wish (2:17-3:10) in which he describes his intense longing to see his converts. The emotive pericope mentioned above is immediately followed by a short *transitus* (3:11-13) which acts as a bridge between the *narratio* and the *probatio*

¹ E.g., T. Holtz, *Der erste Brief an die Thessalonicher* (EKKNT 13; Zürich: Benziger, 1986), pp. 25-28. However, Richard (*Thessalonians*, pp. 11-19, 29-32) views 1 Thessalonians as a compound letter consisting of two missives (2:13-4:2 and 1:1-2:12 + 4:3-5:28). Richard contends that the first missive recalls the founding of the community, whilst the second reflects the problems which the maturing community faced. Such an interpretation might have implications for how we understand the overall letter, but does not affect our understanding of the passage we are considering; see also J. Murphy-O'Connor, *Paul: A Critical Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 106-10, who regards Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians as comprising two letters - Letter A (2:13-4:2; 5:13-14) and Letter B (1:1, 2-10; 2:1-12; 4:3-12, 13-18; 5:1-11, 12-22, 23-28) respectively.

² Meeks, *First Urban Christians*, p. 86; Malherbe, *Paul and the Thessalonians*, p. 12; Bruce C. Johanson, *To All the Brethren: A Text-Linguistic and Rhetorical Approach to 1 Thessalonians* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1987), p. 71.

³ Malherbe, *Paul and the Thessalonians*, pp. 52, 54.

that follows (4:1-5:22) and where Paul provides a number of arguments, which are generally paraenetic in content (although see immediately below).⁴ That is to say, Paul desires to strengthen and exhort the Thessalonians in their current beliefs and practices.

Chapter 4:1 is not only a transitional⁵ point in the letter but, as already mentioned, marks the beginning of Paul's comments which are paraenetic in content. Traditionally chapter 4:1-12 has been viewed as a paraenetic unity⁶ due to the repetition of the verb περιπατέω 'to walk or conduct oneself' (cf. vv. 1 and 12) and the recurrence of the infinitival phrase 'to abound even more' (περισσεύω μᾶλλον, vv. 1, 10). The apostle, to a large degree, is pleased (4:1) with the Thessalonians' progress in the gospel; nevertheless, the repetition of the above infinitival phrase in v. 10b is suggestive of the fact that such praise is qualified. Indeed, Paul had already given an earlier indication that all was not well with the Thessalonian community when he reminded his converts of how anxious he was to meet up with them again so that he might 'supply what is *lacking* in your faith' (3:10).

This deficiency⁷, the first of two (see 4:9-12 and 5:12-15 for a second in relation to work), is identified by Paul in 4:3-8 as sexual immorality a subject about which he had

⁴ Wanamaker, *Thessalonians*, p. 50; Schäfer, *Gemeinde als 'Bruderschaft'*, p. 130; Richard, *Thessalonians*, p. 211

⁵ The unique wording here Λοιπὸν οὖν (lit. "Finally then") is unusual and does not seem appropriate at this juncture given the fact that over half of the letter is remaining. However, it is worth noting that the word λοιπόν was employed in Hellenistic Greek simply as a transitional particle with the meaning 'therefore'; see M. E. Thrall, *Greek Particles in the New Testament* (Leiden: Brill, 1962), pp. 25-30. This would provide a rendering 'therefore, then' which would mean that Paul's paraenesis that follows may refer to the whole of the preceding argument, rather than to what he has immediately stated.

⁶ Malherbe, *Paul and the Thessalonians*, p. 70.

⁷ G. D. Fee, *God's Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul* (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrikson, 1994), p. 51.

obviously instructed the Thessalonians when he was in their midst (4:1-2). It appears that although ‘the majority’ of the converts ‘are indeed living the Christian ethic... apparently not all are’.⁸ Thus Paul is quite likely referring to a particular difficulty or ‘problem that had *actually* emerged in the community at Thessalonica and that he viewed with considerable concern’.⁹ A number of points persuade us in this direction.

First, the context of the letter would suggest this. We have already noted that there is plenty of internal evidence to indicate that the Thessalonian believers were facing intense opposition (1:6b; 2:2, 14-15; 3:1-5; cf. 2 Thess. 1:4-7) from non-Christians, oppression that was not primarily physical in nature but more in the way of ‘social harassment’.¹⁰

As a result of such harassment, it is possible that these young Christians were being provoked to revert to their old pagan practices, many of which were sexually immoral.¹¹ We cannot be entirely sure about the precise nature of this – was there, for example, pressure brought to bear upon the Thessalonian brothers to return to their mistresses or for some to give sexual ‘favours’ to their owners? Certainly the former was an issue in ancient times, evident in the following remark by Demosthenes: ‘Mistresses we keep for

⁸ Fee (*God’s Empowering Presence*, p. 51) comments, ‘The emphasis in this passage is two-fold: positively, Paul calls them [i.e. the Thessalonians] to “holiness” (ἁγιασμός); negatively, and specifically, *he commands those persisting in sexual immorality to desist...*’ (emphasis added).

⁹ Wanamaker, *Thessalonians*, p. 158f. (emphasis added); see also J.A.D. Weima, “‘How You Must Walk to Please God’: Holiness and Discipleship in 1 Thessalonians,” in Longenecker [ed.], *Patterns of Discipleship*, pp. 98-119.

¹⁰ Barclay, “Conflict,” p. 514. Barclay (“Conflict,” p. 513) has rightly emphasised the need in any reconstruction or understanding of this letter to account for ‘the conflict in Thessalonica between Christians and non-Christians’. This aspect, he continues, has been ‘seriously underplay[ed]’. In this respect, it is worth noting that here in chapter 4, where *brotherly relations* (i.e. 4:3-8 and 4:9-12) are specifically addressed, insider/outsider language is seen in proliferation (see below).

¹¹ J. E. Frame, *The Epistles of St. Paul to the Thessalonians* [ICC; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1912), pp. 14-15; Best, *Thessalonians*, p. 160; Wanamaker, *Thessalonians*, pp. 146, 158-59; Weima, “How You Must Walk,” p. 103.

the sake of pleasure, concubines for the daily care of our persons, but wives to bear us legitimate children' (*Orat.* 59.122). Such attitudes had not changed some three centuries later as is clear from the philosopher Cato who praises men who satisfied their sexual appetite with a prostitute rather than another man's wife. And Plutarch advises brides-to-be that it was better to shut their eyes to the flirtatious activities of their husbands rather than to complain and hence jeopardise good relations with them. In addition, Greek and Jewish authors show an awareness of the fact that sexual activity was often an integral part of pagan religious practice.¹² As a consequence temples in particular had a bad reputation for immorality (Ovid. *Amat.* 1.77-78; Juvenal, *Sat.* 6.486-89; 9.22-26; Josephus, *Ant.* 18.3-4, 65-80). Although sexual immorality may not have been an everyday occurrence in the pagan temples of the city nevertheless such activity 'was by no means rare or unexpected'.¹³

In the second instance, the specificity of the apostle's exhortations in this pericope, together with its strategic location at the beginning of the paraenetic section of the epistle are noteworthy. This, coupled with the unusually coercive and threatening tone of the language (in vv. 6 and 8), when set against the wider background and prevalence of sexual immorality in the Gentile world at this time, strongly suggests that Paul is dealing

¹² Sexual activity played an important part in a number of religious cults in Thessalonica. As a result, temples were often associated with immorality and there is evidence that a number of religious cults incorporated sexual acts as part of their worship practices; see C. Edson, "Cults of Thessalonica (Macedonia III)," *HTR* vol. 41 (1948), pp. 153-204; K. P. Donfried, "The Cults of Thessalonica and the Thessalonian Correspondence," *NTS* vol. 31 (1985), pp. 336-56; R. Jewett, *The Thessalonian Correspondence: Pauline Rhetoric and Millenarian Piety* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), pp. 126-33; R. E. Witt, "The Kabeiroi in Ancient Macedonia," *Ancient Macedonia II: Papers Read at the Second International Symposium Held in Thessaloniki, 19-24 August* (eds. B. Laourdas and C. I. Makaronas; 2 vols.; Thessaloniki: Institute for Balkan Studies, 1973), pp. 67-80.

¹³ Weima, "How You Must Walk," p. 106.

with a *real* situation in the Thessalonian community.¹⁴

7.2 Brotherhood, Boundaries and the Sanctified Life

Even though Paul is addressing the issue of sexual immorality in these verses this focus on the specific *content* of the problem – rather than on the *context/function* – has, in our opinion, often eclipsed the fact that Paul is here drawing attention to an internal difficulty (with external ramifications) in the Thessalonian *community*.¹⁵ Whilst Paul is undoubtedly concerned with morality,¹⁶ the kind of actions proscribed and the sanctions he wishes to see imposed in verse 6 would suggest that the apostle is more anxious about the fact that such morality could threaten the very existence and survival of the *community* itself.¹⁷ More important for our purposes is the striking and significant manner in which the apostle *describes* this community. By choosing to

mention... ‘brother’ in verse 6 [Paul] recalls the *specific identity* of the group to which the believers belong¹⁸

¹⁴ Weima, “How You Must Walk,” p. 103; Best, *Thessalonians*, p. 166; Marshall, *Thessalonians*, p. 111; Wanamaker, *Thessalonians*, p. 191; *contra*, W. Neil (*The Epistles of Paul to the Thessalonians* [MNTC; London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1950], p. 77) who states that ‘the advice given here is prophylactic’; Still (*Conflict at Thessalonica*, p. 237) also states: ‘Paul’s purpose in this pericope (i.e. 4:1-8) appears to be preventative, not corrective’.

¹⁵ Best (*Thessalonians*, p. 158) and Bruce (*Thessalonians*, p. 80) entitle 1 Thess. 4:3-8 ‘Sex’ and ‘On Sexual Purity’ respectively. On both counts, these commentators fail to take cognizance of the fact that Paul is primarily concerned with the *community* (in this case the *brotherhood*) and its distinctiveness in relation to those on the *outside*.

¹⁶ Collins (“ ‘This is the Will of God’ ”, p. 300) states concerning vv. 1-11 that they ‘offer the most ancient documented example of early Christian moral paraenesis’.

¹⁷ Wanamaker, *Thessalonians*, p. 155. C. Roetzel, “The Grammar of Election in Four Pauline Letters,” in D. M. Hay (ed.), *Pauline Theology* vol. 2. *1 and 2 Corinthians* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), pp. 211-33 (215). Wanamaker rightly states that the ‘social function’ of these verses is two-fold: ‘they help to define the boundaries of the community (that is, what it means to be a Christian) over against the dominant pagan society’ while at the same time they develop ‘internal cohesion within the community’.

¹⁸ Murphy-O’Connor, *Paul*, p. 125 (emphasis added).

Indeed, in verse 6 the phrase τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ¹⁹ – the only place where Paul employs the accusative singular in relation to *his readers*²⁰ – is right at the centre of the pericope suggesting that he is primarily addressing internal matters to do with *brotherly relations*. The apostle could have used other terms (e.g. ‘believers’, 1:7) but the fact that he favours this familial expression indicates that Paul ‘presupposes certain ideas about what is right and wrong, good and bad’²¹ for the brotherhood. Moreover, as we shall endeavour to show, it is our view that such assumptions are in fact founded upon the norms of ancient family life which Paul uses to address how Christian brothers should conduct themselves towards one another – in matters of sexual morality – and in view of outsiders.

In addition, chapter 4 has several references to ‘brothers’ and Paul’s comments here on sibling behaviour occur in close proximity to further remarks concerning ‘brotherly love’ (φιλαδελφίας, v. 9; cf. ἀδελφούς, v. 10a and ἀδελφοί, v. 10b) which, although materially distinct from vv. 3-8, nevertheless as already mentioned, deal with how these brothers should ‘live’ (cf. 4:9-12 and 5:12-15). This, together with the convergence of other related aspects of brotherly conduct which were deemed important in the ancient world (e.g. ‘honour’, τιμὴ v. 4),²² would suggest that Paul’s overriding concern in these

¹⁹ According to Arndt-Gingrich, classical authors (e.g. Plutarch, *Marc.* 29.7) employ similar expressions.

²⁰ Paul only uses the accusative (sg.) in one other place, namely, 3:6 when he speaks of Timothy, his *co-worker*, as ‘our brother’.

²¹ Lyons, “Modelling the Holiness Ethos,” p. 189 (emphasis added).

²² Fatum, “Brotherhood in Christ,” p. 190. (emphasis added); Malherbe (*Paul and the Thessalonians*, p. 122) also writes: ‘membership in the family of brothers demands particular conduct’. On the theme of morals in 1 Thessalonians, K. P. Donfried laments the fact that ‘although this decade [i.e. 1980’s-90] has been marked by an interest in the sociological/cultural setting of the letter or in isolated passages or theological themes within it; seldom does the letter itself, in its own right, receive attention as a serious witness to the *ethical*...perspective of Paul’ (emphasis added); see “1 Thessalonians, Acts, and the Early Paul,” in Collins (ed.), *The Thessalonian Correspondence*, pp. 3-26 (3)

verses is to see moral behaviour befitting those who belong to the Christian fraternity. On the basis of this evidence, we can conclude that Paul, in these verses, principally ‘addresses the socio-sexual activities of the *brothers*’²³ and it is in the context of this use of fictive-kinship language that we are to understand the precept he cites in 1 Thess. 4:3-8.²⁴

Closely allied to this point – that Paul is concerned with internal matters *vis-à-vis* *brotherly conduct in the community* – is the fact that in this chapter he is also concerned with the brotherhood’s behaviour in respect of those *outside* of the community. A number of expressions are employed by the apostle in chapter 4 which serve the purpose of reminding the Thessalonians of these boundaries e.g. τὰ ἔθνη τὰ μὴ εἰδότα τὸν θεόν (‘the Gentiles who do not know God’, 4:5), οἱ ἔξω (‘the outsiders’, 4:12) and οἱ λοιποὶ οἱ μὴ ἔχοντες ἐλπίδα (‘the rest who have no hope’, 4:13). The term ‘brother’ was used of members of pagan cults and associations and is therefore not exclusively the reserve of the Christian brotherhood. This prompts the question of how or *what* would distinguish this brotherhood from other fraternal associations of the day? What should be distinctive, if anything, about their conduct?

In this regard, it is instructive to note how Paul here piles up opposing terms of reference – in what have become better known as ‘the language of belonging’²⁵ and ‘the

²³ Yarbrough, *Not Like the Gentiles*, p. 80

²⁴ Meeks, *First Urban Christians*, pp. 85-94.

²⁵ Meeks, *First Urban Christians*, pp. 94-96. Meeks (*First Urban Christians*, p. 101) states in this regard: ‘The assertion that the “gentiles” indulge “in the passions of lust” is ... another example of the labelling of outsiders’.

language of separation'²⁶ – to denote the fact that here we have two contrasting groups, each with its own distinctive characteristics and code of conduct. As far as the former is concerned, there exists the special relationship between ‘brothers’ (4:1, 6) who have been ‘called’ (4:7) by God and whose life-style is qualified as ‘sanctification’ (ἁγιασμός, 4:3, 7, and 8), a term that implies separation from the world outside. On the other hand, such language contrasts with that of ‘sexual immorality’ (πορνεία, v. 3), ‘uncleanness’ (ἄκαθαρσία, v. 7) and ‘passionate desire’ (πάθος ἐπιθυμίας, v. 5a) and ‘the Gentiles who do not know God’ (τὰ ἔθνη τὰ μὴ εἰδότα τὸν θεόν, v. 5b). Thus, clear lines of demarcation are drawn between the brotherhood and those who do not belong.²⁶ In all this, the apostle’s main ‘intention...is to draw attention to *the difference between the life-style of believers* and that of *non-believers*’.²⁷ In fact these two aspects (i.e. the brotherhood and outsiders) are related to the extent that even when Paul employs ‘insider/outsider language [to imply] a negative perception of the outside society’ he is all the time focused on ‘the immediate function of the dualistic expressions [and]...to *reinforce the internal ordering of the group*’.²⁸ Moreover, Wayne Meeks regards morals and community as inextricably linked together to such an extent that ‘making morals means making community’.²⁹ If the former were to break down, the existence of the

²⁶ The fact that Paul is at pains to stress the importance of sexual ethics for the Thessalonian community is not surprising given that pagans were most scathing towards Christians and their life-style; see Minucius Felix *Oct.* 9.2.

²⁷ Murphy-O’Connor, *Paul*, p. 125.

²⁸ Meeks, *First Urban Christians*, p. 95. (emphasis added). Similarly Yarbrough (*Not Like the Gentiles*, p. 83) comments: ‘in addition to characterising the community of believers as the family of God Paul draws attention to the boundaries that exist between them and the outside world. That is, he distinguishes between *us* and *them*’ (author’s own emphasis).

²⁹ Meeks, *Origins of Christian Morality*, p. 5.

latter would, at the very least, be under threat or, at worst, cease to exist. We shall return to these issues in the course of our exegesis.

Structurally, most commentators view chapter 4:3-8 as a thematic unity, although an increasing number are of the opinion that Paul, in vv. 6-8, moves on to deal with a new subject, namely business/commerce (see p. 250).³⁰ The evidence for the first of these views will now be briefly set out. A number of factors are in favour of Paul addressing one subject. First, vv. 3-6, in the Greek, constitute one long sentence. This comprises an opening statement (v. 3a), followed by three connecting infinitival constructions (vv. 3b, and 6). The negative particle μὴ (v. 6a) is therefore resumptive and the phrase ἐν τῷ πράγματι ('in *the*/*this* matter,' v. 6a) refers retrospectively to the issue immediately discussed in vv. 3-5. Verse 7 with its adjoining particle γάρ, and the references to ἀκαθαρσία and ἁγιασμός, is a further linkage to the subject of sexual immorality in vv. 3-5. The argument is then drawn to a conclusion in verse 8. We will now look more closely at the argument for the first view.

In verse 3 the apostle Paul's opening salvo functions as a thesis-like statement: τοῦτο γὰρ ἐστὶν θέλημα τοῦ θεοῦ, ὁ ἁγιασμός ὑμῶν ('This is the will of God – your sanctification!').³¹ Mention of the term ἁγιασμός ('sanctification') in v. 3 is striking

³⁰ Even those scholars (e.g. Rigaux, Maurer, Baltensweiler and Best) who hold to 'a single topos' disagree regarding the exact interpretation of the sexual problem.

³¹ Hence the title of Collins' article (cf. p. 173 n 31). His translation makes good sense if one understands τοῦτο 'this' as the subject and the anarthous phrase 'will of God' as the predicate, the latter probably being a well-known formula. Vv. 3-6 are one sentence in which, according to Collins, 'Hagiasmos serves as a

note of separation that has already been struck in v. 3a. The term πορνεία can mean sexual immorality of any kind, but in the context is better understood as sexual practices outside marriage i.e. ‘fornication’.³³ Thus, in matters of sexual conduct this boundary marker separates the Thessalonian brothers from the pagan community to which they previously belonged and is a timely reminder to them that they are to be different.

The use of such language underscores the ‘deep resocialisation’³⁴ that was part and parcel of the apostle Paul’s missionary strategy. As a result of their conversion (1:9-10), relationships for the Thessalonian brothers had changed, but more importantly, the basic ‘values...acquired in the process of growing up within the family’³⁵ were also undergoing modification. New values, habits and new ways of living would have to be formed which were in accordance with the new community to which they now belonged. An integral part of this process of *resocialisation* was ‘the social *redefinition* that the recent converts had to undergo’.³⁶ This re-interpreting of morals, attitudes, beliefs and patterns of behaviour was a challenge to the Thessalonians especially in light of the fact that such patterns were woven into their very being, thinking and conduct.³⁷ Indeed, these early Christians not only lived in an immoral world but ‘that world also lived in them: in their thinking, in their language, in their relationships’.³⁸ Hence any re-

³³ Maurer, “σκεῦος,” *TDNT*, 7, p. 366; J. Jensen, “Does Porneia mean Fornication? A Critique of Bruce Malina” *NovT* vol. 20 (1978), pp. 161-84; *contra* B. Malina, (“Does Porneia mean Fornication?”, *NovT* vol. 14 [1972], pp. 10-17) argues that this term does not include pre-marital sexual relationships.

³⁴ Meeks, *Moral World*, p. 129.

³⁵ Meeks, *Moral World*, p. 13 (emphasis added).

³⁶ Malherbe, *Paul and the Thessalonians*, p. 51 (emphasis added).

³⁷ Meeks (*Moral World*, p. 12) writes, ‘The Christians, wherever they lived, were under certain pressures from without to conform to the patterns of the larger society’.

³⁸ Meeks, *Moral World*, p. 13.

alignment in terms of attitude and relationships *within* and *without* the brotherhood must be regarded as *progressive* rather than an instantaneous act or decision.³⁹ In the circumstances this cannot have been easy to do, given that these early Christians were probably under enormous pressure to conform to the pattern of society, including a return to their previously immoral way of life. This is borne out by the fact that Paul has to *remind* the Thessalonians of this teaching (cf. 4:1 and 6b) and his use of the term ἁγιασμός highlights that sanctification here is a *process*⁴⁰ rather than a result or outcome of that process. The point is that in relation to the Thessalonian brotherhood and their moral behaviour, habits of a life-time would not be easily broken or new ones acquired overnight. Thus, in Paul's opinion, sanctified lives are to be progressively characterised by brothers living circumspectly towards one another and in view of those outside the community.

7.3 'Take Your Own Wife ...' (vv. 3-5)

Having seen how Paul focuses on sexual morality as an important group boundary, the apostle is only too aware of the devastating consequences which a breakdown in this domain could mean. Clearly it could lead to a blurring of the lines of distinction between these Christian brothers and those who were outside the community. The following verses clearly develop this thinking, even though there is considerable debate

³⁹ Malherbe (*Paul and the Thessalonians*, p. 51) states: 'The Thessalonians' social relationships *within* the community, as well as *between the community* and the *wider society*, were being redefined, evidently not without stress' (emphasis added).

⁴⁰ Wanamaker, *Thessalonians*, p. 150. Collins ("This is the Will of God," p. 309) describes this as 'a *nomen actionis* [which] designates the *process of sanctification* rather than the result of the process' (emphasis added).

concerning the precise meaning of the immoral behaviour.

Verse 4 contains one of two important interpretative cruxes in the pericope: σκεῦος κτᾶσθαι. It is not our intention to rehearse all the points in relation to this but we will concern ourselves with those issues which impinge on the main theme of brotherhood. If, as we have already stated, vv. 3-8 can be taken as delineating a single theme then Paul, having already mentioned the importance of avoiding πορνεία (i.e. ‘fornication’), goes on in vv. 4f. to give specific instructions on how each⁴¹ (brother) is to avoid such conduct. Paul’s advice is for εἰδέναι ἕκαστον ὑμῶν τὸ ἑαυτοῦ σκεῦος κτᾶσθαι ἐν ἁγιασμῷ καὶ τιμῇ. The precise meaning of the noun σκεῦος (lit. ‘vessel’ or ‘tool’) and the infinitive κτᾶσθαι (lit. ‘acquire’ or ‘gain’) is unclear, as is how the Thessalonians are to obey Paul’s instruction ‘in holiness and honour’(v. 4b).⁴² It ought to be said that whatever conclusion one comes to on these questions and the (often disputed) terms and phrases that follow, each point in one’s argument is open to question and could be contested.

A number of commentators, following the lead of patristic writers such as Tertullian

⁴¹ Notice there is a change from the plural in verse 3 to the singular in verse 4 (‘each of you’) and this is picked up and applied in v. 6a τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ.

⁴² A number of commentators have drawn attention to the fact that in 4:3-8 Paul demonstrates how the Thessalonians’ new Christian identity is in accordance with Mosaic rules of purity. His instructions are parallel or equivalent to a Jewish paraenesis based upon the Decalogue (Ex. 20:1-17; Deut. 5.5-21). But according to Fatum (“Brotherhood in Christ,” p. 191), Paul is not just using Mosaic tradition. Rather, the apostle is actually ‘Christianising the Mosaic code of socio-sexual meaning’. B. Rosner provides eight reasons to support the thesis that Paul’s thinking is based upon Biblical/Jewish ethics; see his “Seven Questions for Paul’s Ethics in 1 Thess. 4:1-12 as a Case Study,” in B. Rosner (ed.), *Understanding Paul’s Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), pp. 351-60. G. P. Carras (“Jewish Ethics and Gentile Converts: Remarks on 1 Thess. 4:3-8,” in (ed.), *The Thessalonian Correspondence*, pp. 306-15 [314]) also concludes that the instruction in this passage ‘is what one would expect of a person writing from a Jewish point of view influenced and informed by the diaspora synagogue around the first century’.

and John Chrysostom, take σκεῦος as a metaphor for the ‘body’. Those who hold to this interpretation also take the word σκεῦος in 2 Cor. 4:7 (“we have this treasure in vessels of clay”) and 1 Pet. 3:7 (“husbands...respect your wives as the weaker vessel”) as a reference to the human body. An extension of this argument is to understand the noun σκεῦος as specifically denoting the male sex organ or genitalia⁴³ even though there are no parallels for this usage in the New Testament. However, whilst the reading ‘body’ is a possibility, the major difficulty is with the following infinitive κτᾶσθαι (‘to gain or acquire’) which gives the confusing rendering ‘to gain/acquire his body’. This problem is not insurmountable in that, if κτᾶσθαι is understood in the perfect sense (tense)⁴⁴, then the general meaning is that each person should learn to *control* the body and its sexual urges.

A second and more acceptable interpretation, which goes back as far as the church fathers, is to understand σκεῦος as ‘wife’ and κτᾶσθαι ‘to take/acquire’, the normal meaning of the infinitive.⁴⁵ A number of arguments are in favour of this interpretation.

⁴³ One Old Testament precedent is used as the basis for this view. In 1 Sam. (LXX 1 Kgdms) 21:5 Nob the priest tells David that his men can consume the holy bread but it is only on condition that ‘the young men have kept themselves from women’. In response David states: ‘the young men’s vessels are holy’ (the LXX distorts the meaning of the Hebrew). Scholars who hold to this interpretation are: Bruce, *Thessalonians*, p. 83; Morris, *Thessalonians*, p. 123.; Marshall, *Thessalonians*, p. 108; J. Whitton, “A Neglected Meaning for SKEUOS in 1 Thessalonians 4:4,” *NTS* vol. 28 (1982), pp. 142-43; Wanamaker, *Thessalonians*, pp. 152-53; Weima, “How You Must Walk”, p. 108; T. Elgvin, “To Master His own Vessel: 1 Thess. 4:4 in Light of New Qumran Evidence,” *NTS* vol. 43 (1997), pp. 604-19.

⁴⁴ M. Dibelius (*An die Thessalonicher I-II An Die Philipper* [Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1925], p. 19) views the verb in this manner: ‘allmähliches Zunehmen der sittlichen Herrschaft über den Leib’.

⁴⁵ Commentators and scholars who contend that ‘wife’ is the correct interpretation include: E. von Dobschütz, *Die Thessalonicherbriefe* (KEKNT 10; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1909), pp. 163-65; Frame, *Thessalonians*, pp. 149-50; W. Marxsen, *Der erste Brief an die Thessalonicher* (ZB 11.2;

First, to speak of ‘obtaining’ a wife was a common idiom in Hebrew and Greek usage, reflecting the view of both cultures that the wife passed into her husband’s possession at marriage. For example, Christian Maurer has argued that the phrase *σκεῦος κτᾶσθαι* is Paul’s rendering of two Hebrew phrases *בצל אשה* (“to possess a woman sexually”) and *שמש כלי* (“to use as a vessel”). The question here is whether *κτᾶσθαι* is to be given the ingressive sense (“to gain”) or whether it has a durative meaning, normally expressed by the perfect “to possess”. If *σκεῦος* refers to “woman/wife” then either the unmarried are being urged to marry as a remedy against fornication (ingressive sense) or those who are married are being told to hold their wives in esteem (durative sense).

Maurer has argued that the verb *בצל* can be understood ingressively (“to become lord and master in marriage”)⁴⁶ but so also can the verb *קנה*, a possible equivalent for the verb *κτᾶσθαι*. Moreover, the verb *קנה* became fixed in rabbinic literature where it is understood as a technical term for ‘acquiring a woman in marriage’. It is found, for instance, in the halaka at the start of Mishna Kiddushin (*m. Qidd.* 1:1): ‘A woman is

Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1979), pp. 60-61; Collins, “This is the Will of God,” p. 313; J. Lambrecht, “Thanksgiving in 1 Thessalonians 1-3,” in J. Lambrecht (ed.), *Pauline Studies: Collected Essays* (BETL 115; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1994), pp. 319-41 [335]; Maurer, “*σκεῦος*,” *TDNT*, 7, pp. 358-67; Best, *Thessalonians*, pp. 161-63; H. Koester, “1 Thessalonians – Experiment in Christian Writing,” in F. Forrester Church and Timothy George [eds.], *Continuity and Discontinuity in Church History: Essays Presented to George Huntston Williams on the Occasion of his 65th Birthday* [SHCT, 19; Leiden: Brill, 1979], pp. 33-44 [43]; Yarbrough, *Not Like the Gentiles*, pp. 65-87; J. R. W. Stott, *The Message of Thessalonians* (Leicester: Intervarsity Press, 1991), pp. 83-84; N. Baumert, “Brautwerbung – Das einheitliche Thema von 1 Thess. 4:3-8” in Collins (ed.), *The Thessalonian Correspondence*, pp. 316-39; D. B. Martin, “Paul Without Passion: On Paul’s Rejection of Desire in Sex and Marriage,” in Moxnes (ed.), *Constructing Early Christian Families*, pp. 201-215 (202); P. J. Tomson, “Paul’s Practical Instruction in 1 Thess. 4:1-12 in a Hellenistic and a Jewish Perspective,” pp. 1-16 (*forthcoming*).

⁴⁶ Maurer, “*σκεῦος*,” p. 366.

acquired in three ways... she is acquired (האשה נקנית) through money, a writ, and sexual intercourse'. This argument is further strengthened by an important verse from Ben Sira (Sir. 36:25) where the Greek verb (κτᾶσθαι) translates the verb קנה: – ὁ κτώμενος γυναῖκα ἐνάρχεται κτήσεως (Heb. קנה אשה ראשית קנין) – 'Acquire a wife as the first of your acquisitions'.⁴⁷ Thus, as Tomson rightly states, 'patriarchy is in place [since] according to biblical law the wife is the husband's possession'.⁴⁸

But, as indicated above, to speak of 'obtaining' a wife was also common currency in the Greek world. Xenophon in his *Symposium* responds to those who questioned his marriage to one Xanthippe: 'I have got her (ταύτην κέκτημαι) well assured that if I can endure her, I shall have no difficulty in my relations with the rest of human kind' (*Conviv.* 2.10). In addition, the *Collectio Vindobonensis* attributes to the sage Cleoboulos the admonition, 'Marry (γάμει) someone like yourself, for if you marry (γάμης) someone superior to yourself, you will obtain (κτήση) a ruler and not a partner'.

As regards the use of the term σκεῦος, Maurer posits a number of rabbinic parallels where the Hebrew equivalent of σκεῦος, כלי, denotes a 'woman' with a sexual implication (e.g. *b. Meg.* 12b; *b. Mes.* 84b and *b. Sanh.* 22b).⁴⁹ One of the problems with this evidence is that it is late and we therefore need to look beyond the term כלי to other words and phrases which refer to a woman as a kind of vessel. Indeed there is earlier

⁴⁷ Strack-Billerbeck, vol. 3, p. 632.

⁴⁸ Tomson, "Paul's Practical Instruction," p. 9. See Tomson for an interpretation of 1 Thess. 4:1-11 which combines both Jewish and Hellenistic backgrounds.

⁴⁹ Maurer, "σκεῦος", p. 361; Strack-Billerbeck, vol. 3, p. 632.

evidence in *M. Ketub.* 3.4-5 where the woman is spoken of as an ‘earthen pot’ and where the context is that of marriage law:

Wherein does the violator differ from the seducer? The violator pays [compensation for] the pain and the seducer does not pay [compensation for] the pain; the violator forthwith, but the seducer only if he puts her away; the violator *must drink out his own earthen pot* (יִצַּע), but if the seducer is minded to put her away he may put her away. How does he “drink out of his earthen pot”? [He must marry her] even if she was lame, even if she was blind...if she was found unchaste or was not fit to be taken in marriage...he may not continue [his union] with her, for it is written, And she shall be to him a wife – a wife that is fit for him.

In addition, the rabbinic literature employs different terms to refer to a woman. For example, *b. Ned.* 20b states: ‘One may not drink out of one goblet (כּוּם זֶה) and think of another’ (כּוּם אַחֵר) – the rabbinics interpreted this to mean that a man should not think of another woman when engaged in sexual intercourse.⁵⁰ Similarly, the wisdom literature of the Old Testament (i.e. Prov. 5:15-18) uses several different terms to refer to a woman as a container where clear sexual overtones are intended (e.g. “cistern” בּוֹר; LXX ἀγγεῖον; “well” בַּר LXX πηγή). These examples are sufficient to demonstrate that a number of terms, across different traditions, existed and were commonly employed to describe a woman as a vessel. This coupled with the early date for some, suggest that the metaphorical use of כּלִי and other related terms were in common Hebrew usage in Paul’s time.

If there is any doubt about what Paul is saying in 1 Thess. 4, we need to compare this with other Pauline passages – the interpretative principle being that we must understand

⁵⁰ Yarbrough, *Not Like the Gentiles*, p. 73; Meeks, *First Urban Christians*, p. 228 n 130.

an obscure text in light of clearer texts – on the same subject. Paul, in 1 Cor. 7:2, gives similar advice to that in 1 Thess. 4:3b-4 – the exhortation begins with a reference to sexual immorality (i.e. πορνεία, v. 2a) followed by the charge for ἕκαστος τὴν ἑαυτοῦ γυναῖκα ἔχέτω – “Each man should have his own wife”. Closer examination reveals that as far as 1 Cor. 7:2 is concerned, the first part of the rule is exactly the same, only in more direct speech. Indeed, if both are put side by side the similarities are striking:

εἰδέναι ἕκαστον

ὑμῶν το ἑαυτοῦ σκεῦος κτᾶσθαι
(1 Thess. 4:4a)

ἕκαστος

τὴν ἑαυτοῦ γυναῖκα ἔχέτω
(1 Cor. 7:2)

Not only do both contexts make it clear that sexual immorality is the reason for taking a wife, but as we shall argue, both passages also advise marriage as the prophylaxis for desire/passion (cf. 1 Thess. 4:5 and 1 Cor. 7:9).⁵¹ Finally, it is also instructive to note that Paul in 1 Cor. 7 deals with the related subjects of “outsiders” or unbelievers (v. 14), ‘brothers’ (vv. 12, 29) and ‘holiness’ (v. 14)

If this interpretation is correct, then Paul in vv. 3-5 is addressing the situation of a brother’s *own* marriage (i.e. ‘marriage *ad intra*’)⁵² and how he should acquire his own

⁵¹ Martin, “Paul Without Passion,” p. 202.

⁵² Collins, “This is the Will of God,” p. 316; On the other hand, J. M. Bassler (“Σκεῦος: A Modest Proposal for Illuminating Paul’s Use of Metaphor in 1 Thessalonians 4:4,” in White and Yarbrough [eds.], *The Social World of the First Christians*, pp. 53-66) advances the view that Paul, in 1 Cor. 7:36-38, speaks of “spiritual marriages”. According to Bassler, Paul and the Thessalonians would have understood the term σκεῦος as a metaphorical reference to virginal partners - i.e. those who entered into “spiritual marriages” – where both parties were to remain celibate. However, if Bassler’s hypothetical proposition is right, it is odd that Paul nowhere else in his writings reveals more clear evidence of this teaching, other than the enigmatic σκεῦος in 1 Thess. 4.

wife whilst in v. 6f. there is a shift to the question of how each brother must also respect another brother's wife (i.e. 'marriage *ad extra*').⁵³ As regards the former, in what way are these brothers to take/keep a wife 'in holiness and honour'? And how would this distinguish them from the rest of the mores of society? The apostle does not explicitly say how this is to be done, other than to qualify it with two negative statements which may provide the clue as to what he has in mind. Furthermore, these two negative clauses serve the purpose of illustrating the contrast between the brotherhood (v. 4b) and those outside (v. 5a and b):

'in holiness and honour' (v. 4a)
(ἐν ἁγιασμῷ καὶ τιμῇ)

'not in passionate desire' (v. 5a)
μὴ ἐν πάθει ἐπιθυμίας

'(not) like the Gentiles...' (v. 5b)
(μὴ) καθάπερ καὶ τὰ ἔθνη

It is possible that Paul may be addressing the need for orderly marriages to be recognised by the community as indicated by the terms ἁγιασμὸς καὶ τιμὴ (v. 4b), or he may be underscoring the need to exercise sexual restraint in marital intercourse as the phrase ἐν πάθει ἐπιθυμίας καθάπερ καὶ τὰ ἔθνη τὰ μὴ εἰδότα τὸν θεόν (v. 5) could imply.⁵⁴

However, a better way forward is seen in the apostle's use of the phrase μὴ ἐν πάθει

⁵³ Collins, "This is the Will of God", p. 316; R. R. Rickards ("1 Thessalonians 4:4-6 *TBT* vol. 29.2 [1978], pp. 245-47) also states: "The phrase 'in this matter'...is still about the same general subject of sexual immorality both *within* and *outside* marriage. The addition in verse 6 is specified as that of *not committing adultery with another man's wife*. To go against this point is to 'cheat' " (247) (emphasis added).

⁵⁴ Tomson, "Paul's Practical Instruction," p. 11.

ἐπιθυμίας which highlights the difference between those inside and those outside the brotherhood, particularly in relation to matters of *passion* and *desire*. Certainly Paul can use the term ‘desire’ in a neutral sense as he does earlier in the letter when speaking of his ‘intense longing’ (ἐπιθυμία, 2:17) to see the Thessalonians. But when Paul employs the same expression in sexual contexts, as here, he always does so in a pejorative manner.⁵⁵ Martin further posits that (based on the parallels between 1 Cor. 7 and 1 Thess. 4) Paul viewed marriage not as a mechanism to positively express one’s desire but as a means to extirpate it altogether. This is why the apostle encourages the Christian brothers in 1 Thess. 4 (and in 1 Cor. 7) to take a wife as a means or a prophylaxis against desire. Such thinking – despite being incomprehensible to our twentieth century western way of thinking – would not have been foreign to an ascetic like Paul who never shows any interest in human procreation (in fact we have seen in this thesis that most of his references to parents and children are metaphorical). Rather, the apostle’s real concern is that the Thessalonians should take a wife in order to prevent desire happening – *desire*, not sex, was the issue.⁵⁶ Moreover, the apostle Paul explicitly states that such desire – not to mention *porneia* – is characteristic of those Gentiles who do not know God and who are outside the Thessalonian family. Since passion and sexual desire are part of the polluting cosmos which threatens the community, the way that these brothers are ‘to avoid the pollution is for men to possess and control their “vessels” (their wives) as safe

⁵⁵ D. B. Martin, *The Corinthian Body* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), pp. 215-16. This part of my argument is based on some of Martin’s insights; Meeks, *Origins of Christian Morality*, pp. 142-43.

⁵⁶ Martin, “Paul Without Passion,” p. 202.

receptacles for their sexual overflow'.⁵⁷

This view is entirely consonant with the thinking of Paul's day. For example, some of the Church Fathers viewed *desire*, not sexual immorality, as evil, as the following comment from Clement of Alexandria makes clear: 'If a man marries in order to have children he ought to practice self-control. He ought not to have sexual desire (ἐπιθυμία) even for his wife to whom he has the duty to show Christian love. He ought to produce children by a reverent, disciplined act of will' (*Stromata*, 3.7.58). Clement even goes as far as to state that, 'our idea of self-control is freedom from desire' (*Stromata*, 3.7.57). Not surprisingly, and from a general perspective, sexual intercourse with a wife is condemned since the motive is clearly not procreation but pleasure-seeking; in this respect, we observed earlier how our élite ancient sources repeatedly stressed that sexual intercourse should be purely and exclusively for the purposes of procreation (see chapters 2.2.1; 3.2.1; 3.3.1; 3.4.2). For instance, Musonius Rufus is one among many representative of this view-point: 'sexual intercourse... when it occurs within marriage and is indulged in for the purpose of begetting children... is lawful'. However, Musonius Rufus goes on to state that sexual intercourse is '...unlawful when it is mere pleasure-seeking, even in marriage' (*frag.* 12.86.7-8; cf. also Josephus, *Ant.* 4.260, *Ap.* 2.199).

Similarly, Seneca states that a wise man will experience 'shadows of passions' (*umbras affectuum*), but from such passion itself he will be completely free (*De Ira* 1.16.7). Sexual love, continues Seneca, is a state of disorder and is attributed to a lack of control (*Ep.* 116.5; cf. Cicero, *Tus. Disp.* 35.75; 4.11.25-27). The Stoics also regard

⁵⁷ Martin, "Paul Without Passion," p. 203. Meeks (*Origins of Christian Morality*, p. 143f.) also writes, 'Paul's own specific concern... is the purity of the Christian group, to which "passion of desire" is a threat'.

desire as a disease and if health is one's goal then it is to be found in the complete liberation from the disease of desire and the eradication of passion (*Ep.* 85.3-4; 116). Epictetus too is an example of a Stoic who, whilst grappling with the dialectic between the call to the philosophical life and marriage/parenthood (see pp. 99-101), does not condemn the latter. Rather, Epictetus is particularly scathing of men who fall in love with beautiful girls (*Diss.* 4.1.15); moreover, he goes further to state that in order for one to become a Cynic one must be able to 'completely wipe out desire' (*Diss.* 3.22.13).⁵⁸

Though Paul may differ in philosophical outlook to some of the above sources, we can see similarities in that he too believed that sexual intercourse without desire was a real possibility in marriage. The dynamics of all this are such that in this passage Paul is drawing an invisible boundary around the community and marking it off from the rest of society. The apostle is fully aware of the consequences which desire could have upon corrupting the community from *within*.⁵⁹ Therefore the Thessalonian brothers must learn that their behaviour ought to be consistent with their new identity and that 'being a member of the Christian family carried with it moral responsibilities that distinguished Christians from pagans'.⁶⁰

One other point needs to be made here, namely, that although Paul's injunctions are consonant with the normal social expectations of contemporary writers of his time, his reasoning also sharply differs from them in another respect. For when, for example,

⁵⁸ The word for desire here is ὄρεξις which denotes all kinds of longing, including sexual longings. Also, as a number of scholars point out, Graeco-Roman medical handbooks of the time stressed the dangers of avidly desiring sexual intercourse (e.g. Celsus, *De Med.* 1.1.4).

⁵⁹ Martin, *Corinthian Body*, p. 217.

⁶⁰ Malherbe, *Paul and the Thessalonians*, p. 49.

Musonius Rufus insists on sexual control, he does so in order to preserve the honour of the individual and family. Certainly Paul is concerned about the Christian fraternity's need to uphold the honour of the family name ; indeed, the need to uphold this particularly in view of outsiders was a primary duty for all family members, including brothers.⁶¹ However, and in addition, Paul informs his readers that the pathway of honour lies not in blending in with the surrounding culture (“not like the Gentiles”) but in what would ultimately ‘please God’ (4:1). The inclusion of the term ἁγιασμός makes it clear that the matters under discussion here have to do with *God* and *God's* purposes for the brotherhood and in this way there appears to be an even higher ideal in view here, namely, doing the Divine will.⁶²

7.4 Scenario No. 1: ‘...and Do not Take Another Brother's Wife!’ (vv. 6-8)

If as we have already advanced that vv. 3-8 are a single unit, Paul continues the argument in v. 6a with the prepositional phrase ἐν τῷ πράγματι, (“in *the/this* matter”) – the matter of ‘acquiring your own wife’. However, there is a shift from the issue of how a brother is to acquire his own wife (i.e. marriage *ad intra*, vv. 3-5) to how each brother is to respect

⁶¹ R. Saller, *Patriarchy, Property and Death in the Roman Family* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 93-95; Moxnes, “What is Family?” , p. 28. Meeks’ (*Origins of Christian Morality*, p. 142) rightly regards Paul’s remarks in 1 Thess. 4:3-6 as falling within the “economic” concerns of the household – economic in the ancient sense i.e. the need to maintain the good order of the household and the household’s role within the larger community. One of the dimensions of this household order was the need to ‘assure the honour of the family and its clan’.

⁶² Gaventa, *Thessalonians*, p. 55. We should not miss the God-language in this passage – the noun θεός recurs 4 times in 4:3-8 and 35 times in 1 Thessalonians in total; see N. Richardson, *Paul's Language about God* (JSNT Sup 99; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1994), pp. 197-203.

his *brother's* wife (i.e. marriage *ad extra*, vv. 6-8). The shift in emphasis is evident by the way that Paul, instead of the previous positive infinitives, uses the article with the *negative* particle (τὸ μὴ).⁶³

The attitude that a brother is to have *vis-à-vis* this latter matter is expressed negatively by two participles: ‘μὴ ὑπερβαίνειν’ and ‘(μὴ) πλεονεκτεῖν’ (v. 6a). The first infinitive in classical Greek carries the meaning of ‘to go beyond’ thus ‘to go beyond the bounds’ ‘to transgress’ and in this instance ‘to have illicit sex’ outside marriage.⁶⁴ The second infinitive is employed by Paul along similar lines to that of classical authors and means ‘to take advantage’ (from the verb πλεονεκτέω) and connotes ‘to claim more’ or ‘to want to have more than one’s due’ and so here to want the spouse of another Christian brother. Mention of the terms ἀκαθαρσία and ἁγιασμός (v. 7) can be understood to mean that the apostle still has the issue of sexual immorality in view.

There can be little doubt that Paul would condemn adultery with someone outside the community (cf. 1 Cor. 6:9); however, in verse 6 he is expressly concerned with the effect that such behaviour would have on a Christian ἀδελφός *within the community*; that is to say, where one brother tries to take another brother’s (i.e. a Christian man – the husband or the father of the woman involved) wife. To do so would be to engage in adulterous activity.⁶⁵ As Adinolfi makes clear: ‘L’oggetto delle sopraffazioni e degli onanni

⁶³ Richard, *Thessalonians*, p. 200.

⁶⁴ D. J. Williams, *1 and 2 Thessalonians* (NIBC; Carlisle: Paternoster, 1992), p. 74.

⁶⁵ Collins (“This is the Will of God,” p. 319) states: ‘Paul’s thought in v. 6a is not merely repetitive of the thought which he had expressed in v. 4. Rather he has moved on to another aspect of the virtue of chastity. Previously he had instructed the Christian not only to live with his own wife in a holy and honourable fashion; now he instructs the Christian to respect the marriage of his neighbour. He is warning against adultery’. Jouette M. Bassler also states: ‘Taking a wife in holiness ... means not wronging a brother – a

proibiti da Paolo è il fratello, ἀδελφός, preso qui nel senso metaforico larghissimo di 'prossimo'.⁶⁶ The harmfulness⁶⁷ of this sort of behaviour is underscored by Musonius Rufus, the moral philosopher, who provides the following description of a man who 'wrongs' another man by taking his wife in adultery: 'the adulterer who wrongs the husband of the woman he corrupts ... is less than an honourable person' (*frag.* 12.86.20-21). That Paul is primarily concerned with such behaviour as an offence against the *husband* (in this case a Christian brother) is perfectly understandable against the wider social context of his day in which the patriarchal model of the household and family structures was dominant.⁶⁸ This being the case, the wife was viewed as the man's possession. It also makes good sense in view of the fact that this kind of thing could have been happening outside in society at large. But Paul is chiefly concerned with the fact that it ought not to occur *inside* the community. Such behaviour not only dishonoured the individual but by implication and association it also brought dishonour – not to mention discord – to the entire group, in this case the Christian family.

In the ancient world, faithfulness, and sexual fidelity in particular, was an established assumption or ideal⁶⁹ where the 'the sexual behaviour of a woman is a commodity in the

fellow Christian – through acts of adultery.'; see "Peace in all Ways. Theology in the Thessalonian Letters: A Response to R. Jewett, E. Krentz, and E. Richard," in Jouette M Bassler (ed.), *Pauline Theology vol. 1* (Augsburg: Fortress Press, 1991), pp. 71-85 [83].

⁶⁶ M. Adinolfi, "Le frodi di 1 Tess. 4, 6a e l'epiclerato," *Bibbia e Oriente* vol. 18 (1976), pp. 29-38 (32).

Adinolfi concludes that the verb πλονεκτεῖν either denotes a sexual sin i.e. adultery and other illicit actions, or is associated with the problems raised in relation to certain Greek inheritance customs.

⁶⁷ Marshall (*Thessalonians*, p. 111) is quite emphatic in his description of such behaviour: 'the enormity of the sin'.

⁶⁸ E. g., Meeks, *Origins of Christian Morality*, p. 144; Weima, "How You Must Walk," p. 109.

⁶⁹ Albeit this was more clearly demonstrated in the case of women than men. See P. N. Harrison, "Onesimus and Philemon," *ATR* vol. 32 (1950), pp. 367-94; S. B. Pomeroy, *Women in Hellenistic Egypt*:

possession of her husband'.⁷⁰ Therefore for one brother to engage in sexual intercourse with another brother's wife is tantamount 'to violating the property rights of another male'.⁷¹ Thus 'on this reading, verse 6 refers to the injustice done a male when another male⁷² engages in sexual activity with a woman who "belongs" to him'.⁷³ In this respect, Musonius Rufus expressly criticises such activity: 'Of all sexual relations those involving adultery are most unlawful' (*frag.* 12.86.10-11). Similarly, Pseudo-Phocylides sounds the caveat: 'Go not to bed with your brother's wives' (*Sent.* 183; cf. Lev. 18:16).⁷⁴ It is also instructive to note that despite the fact that Christian brothers might have much in common, Tertullian draws the line when it comes to spouses: 'All things are common among us but our wives' (*Apol.* 39).

To briefly summarise, as far as this first scenario is concerned *sexual sin within the community* has inevitable social consequences and could potentially 'destroy the carefully cultivated sense of kinship among members of the community'.⁷⁵ Even though these (novice) Christians had no previous contact or sense of belonging to each other, the apostle is anxious that, as brothers, they are fully cognizant of how to *behave towards*

From Alexander to Cleopatra (New York: Schocken Books, 1984), p. 98; R. Just, *Women in Athenian Law and Life* (London/New York: Routledge, 1989), p. 136.

⁷⁰ Gaventa, *Thessalonians*, p. 52

⁷¹ Gaventa, *Thessalonians*, p. 52. Such thinking was entirely in keeping with 'the widespread patriarchal assumption that a man owned the woman, not vice versa'; see Carolyn Osiek and David L. Balch, *Families in the New Testament World: Households and House Churches* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), p. 115.

⁷² Fatum ("Brotherhood in Christ," p. 191) states that the brother 'is a social agent... a male agent, making up *the social honour of the family* and has to be defended against transgression and possible usurpation by other agents' (emphasis added).

⁷³ Gaventa, *Thessalonians*, p. 52.

⁷⁴ There is some dispute about the placing of this verse. van der Horst (*Sentences*, p. 232) alerts us to the fact that every manuscript has v. 183 between vv. 194 and 195 but every editor agrees with the present position. The source of the quotation is Lev. 18:16.

⁷⁵ Wanamaker, *Thessalonians*, p. 156; Rosner, "Paul's Ethics," p. 356.

one another as members of a new family.⁷⁶ But, more seriously, when such rules are violated or broken and there is a failure to behave morally towards another brother, this will incur the wrath or judgement of the κύριος⁷⁷ ‘concerning all these things’ (περὶ πάντων τούτων) i.e. these sexual matters (fornication and adultery). And Paul especially reminds his readers that God⁷⁸ has not called (ἐκάλεσεν, v. 7) them to uncleanness ἀλλ’ ἐν ἁγιασμῷ. Rather, and more specifically, it is for the purpose of holiness that God has given the Thessalonians the assistance of his Holy Spirit.

7.5 Senario 2: ‘...Do not Defraud Your Brother in Business’ (vv. 6-8)

As we noted earlier, an increasing number of scholars are of the view that Paul in vv. 6-8 moves on to a new topic, namely, business/commerce.⁷⁹ We will now briefly set out the

⁷⁶ Weima, “How You Must Walk,” p. 109.

⁷⁷ It is a moot point among commentators as to whether it is God or Jesus who judges; see Richard, *Thessalonians*, p. 205. Interestingly, Tertullian reports that Christians were laughed at for proclaiming *God* as judge (*Apol.* 47.12).

⁷⁸ Meeks (*First Urban Christians*, p. 175) comparing Rom. 14:10 and 1 Thess. 4:6 and 8 states ‘There is a hint of the same sanction...about sexual norms..[where]... the primary function of such ...language ...reinforces the sense of uniqueness and cohesion of the community...If the admonitions are heeded, to act in a way appropriate to the community’s well-being. Appropriate behaviour includes internal discipline and obedience to leaders (5:13-22), a quiet life that will seem benign to outsiders’ (4:11f.)’.

⁷⁹ The NEB and RSV footnote this verse, ‘overreach his brother in his business’ and ‘defraud his brother in business’ respectively. Scholars who hold to the view that Paul is discussing the subject of business/commerce in vv. 6-8 include: Dibelius, *Thessalonicher*, p. 19; R. Beauvery, “Πλεονεκτεῖν in 1 Thess 4:6a,” *VD* vol. 33 (1955), pp. 78-85; Holtz, *Thessalonicher*, p. 161. Richard, *Thessalonians*, p. 200; J. C. Beker, *Christian Beginnings: Word and Community from Jesus to Post-Apostolic Times* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1993), p. 160. Also, Zerwick and Grosvenor (*Grammatical Analysis*, p. 618) state: ‘πλεονεκτεῖν...could...refer to dishonesty in business dealings’. Still a third interpretation views Paul in v. 6a as referring to a law-suit. Here, in the absence of a male heir, females were forced to marry their next of kin in order that the inheritance might stay within the family. This gave rise to law-suits in that many male rivals sought to have her hand in marriage; see H. Baltensweiler, “Erwägungen zu 1 Thess. 4:3-8,” *TZ* vol. 19 (1963), pp. 1-13.

evidence for this view.

At the outset it is striking to note that in verse 6 the apostle, unlike the previous positive infinitives, employs the article τό together with a negative particle μή. This might appear to signal a change in subject matter. Secondly, in the case of the double infinitive ὑπερβαίνειν and πλεονεκτεῖν the first of these, found only here in the New Testament, does not demand a commercial meaning but denotes to ‘go beyond or transgress’ and should therefore only be understood in light of the accompanying infinitive πλεονεκτεῖν. The latter occurs a number of times in the Pauline corpus (although its cognates are found in Paul and elsewhere in the New Testament) and has a wider range of meanings (e.g. ‘take advantage of’ ‘outwitting’ and defrauding’). On several occasions it is either employed by Paul in the context of ‘cheating, greed, extortion’ (e.g. 1 Thess. 2:5; 1 Cor. 5:10-11; 6:11; 2 Cor. 9:5; Rom. 1:29) or ‘taking advantage’ in relation to the collection (e.g. 2 Cor. 12:17-18).

Thirdly, the phrase ἐν τῷ πράγματι, and the noun in particular, has a wide, generic meaning and is always dependent upon the context. Literally this phrase means ‘in the matter’ but it could, even though it is not in the plural,⁸⁰ have a *commercial* meaning.⁸¹ For instance, LSJ⁸² lists a third major grouping of the uses of the noun in the plural which include ‘fortunes, cause, circumstances’ and ‘business, esp. law business’. Significantly, a number of these in the *singular* refer to ‘profession,’ ‘activity or

⁸⁰ Richard (*Thessalonians*, p. 201) states that although many assert that *pragma* means “business” only in the plural, ‘it would be more correct to say that when the term has a *commercial* sense it usually appears in the plural’ (emphasis added).

⁸¹ Richard, *Thessalonians*, p. 201.

⁸² LSJ, p. 1457.

conduct,' or dying as 'a better lot'. Also, note should be taken of the fact that BAGD classify πράγμα in 1 Thess. 4:6 under the section 'that which is done, *undertaking, occupation, task*'.⁸³ Thus the phrase ἐν τῷ πράγματι could be legitimately rendered: 'in their activity'. This coupled with the double infinitive ὑπερβαίνειν⁸⁴ and πλεονεκτεῖν would give the meaning: an 'offense against justice, namely stealing from the activity or livelihood of others'.⁸⁵

Such an understanding fits in nicely with the fact that the apostle goes on in verse 6 to speak of "the Lord" (κύριος) as the 'executor of *justice*' (ἐκδικος κύριος). Further weight is given to this interpretation by the fact that the twin issues of sexual immorality and social injustice are typically cited as vices of pagans⁸⁶ and 'immorality and greed' function together in ancient Jewish 'law paraenesis' even though they are clearly separate items.⁸⁷ For example, the poet Pseudo-Phocylides aligns these two notions in the following comment: 'Commit not adultery ... do not become unjustly rich but live from

⁸³ BAGD, p. 697.

⁸⁴ Significantly, the verb here in 1 Thess. 4:6 is paralleled in Pseudo-Phocylides' *Sentences*. The Jewish poet employs the peculiar absolute in the following injunction: 'Keep off the field of your neighbour, and therefore do not be a transgressor, ὑπερβῆς' (*Sent.* 35).

⁸⁵ Richard, *Thessalonians*, p. 202. Two other reasons could be given in support of this interpretation. First, Paul, in 4:9-12, goes on to deal with a subject very much related to that of business, namely, work. Secondly, the phrase, περὶ πάντων τούτων ("all these things", v. 6b), implies that more than one issue is involved.

⁸⁶ H. H. Schade, *Apokalyptische Christologie bei Paulus. Studien zum Zusammenhang von Christologie und Eschatologie in den Paulusbriefen*. (GTA 18; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1981), p. 135; F. Laub, *Eschatologische Verkündigung und Lebensgestaltung nach Paulus. Eine Untersuchung zum Wirken des Apostels beim Aufbau der Gemeinde in Thessalonike* (MUS; Regensburg: Pustet, 1973), p. 53.

⁸⁷ E. Reinmuth, *Geist und Gesetz: Studien zu Voraussetzungen und Inhalt der paulinischen Paränese*, (Berlin: Verlagsanst, 1985), pp. 22-41; eadem, "Der erste Briefe an die Thessalonicher" in N. Walter, E. Reinmuth und P. Lampe [eds.], *Die Briefe and die Philipper, Thessalonicher und an Philemon* (NTD 8/2; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998), p. 139; Holtz, *Thessalonicher*, p. 162.

honourable means' (μήτε γαμοκλοπέει... μὴ πλουτεῖν ἀδίκως, ἀλλ' ἐξ ὀσίων βιοτεύειν, *Sent.* 3-5). Hence a possible translation of the opening phrase in v. 6a could be: 'Do not wrong or extort your brother in business'. This would also mean that when in verse 7 Paul talks of 'uncleanness' and 'purity' these must have a wider meaning and include 'dirty business'. Generally speaking, this interdiction bears a close resemblance to the rabbinic idea of 'overcharging'.⁸⁸

If such a reading is permitted, then according to 4:6 Paul is exhorting these Christian "brothers" to conduct business with each other in an honourable manner and not let shady transactions be a cause of discord among them. That this could happen is well demonstrated by Plutarch who uses the noun πρᾶγματα in the sense of 'business affairs' and acknowledges that these can be a source of trouble or conflict between natural brothers. Such divisions are a potential means of alienating brothers from one another and Plutarch's advice is for brothers to settle their differences internally (see earlier chapters 4.2.5; 4.2.6). Also, Musonius Rufus is mindful of the common expectations of biological brothers in business matters when he writes: 'What better disposed sharer of common goods could one find than a good brother?' (*frag.* 15.100.9-10.). Demosthenes also states that brothers ought to work together in business (*Dem. Orat.* 35.6), and

⁸⁸ Strack-Billerbeck, (vol. 3, p. 633) in a section entitled "Daß er seinen Bruder nicht im Geschäft übervorteile" state concerning the word תּוֹנָא: 'Übervorteilung – wenn der vereinbarte Preis um ein Sechstel über den wirklichen Wert hinausging'. These two vices of sexual immorality and greed occur in tandem in Jewish writings of the intertestamental period (e.g. *T. Jud.* 182: 'Guard yourselves therefore, my children, against *sexual immorality* and *love of money*'). Thus, Rosner ("Paul's Ethics," p. 353) concludes: 'In 4:3b-6a Paul issues a call to sexual holiness *and* the refusal to greedily cheat one's brother' (emphasis added).

Tertullian in his *Apology* 39 demonstrates an acute awareness of the distinction and difference in attitude between *natural* brothers and *Christian* brothers *vis-à-vis* belongings/property. As far as the former are concerned he states, ‘family possessions (*substantia familiari*) ... generally destroy brotherhood among *you*’ but in relation to the latter they ought to ‘create fraternal bonds among *us*’.

In summing up, whichever view one takes – whether Paul is addressing one issue (i.e. sexual, vv. 3-8) or two (sexual, vv. 3-5 and commercial, vv. 6-8) – there are strong arguments on both sides. Whilst the argument for viewing the passage as a single unit probably tips the balance slightly in favour of the former, the latter cannot be ruled out. In fact both views, as we have seen earlier in chapter 4, make good sense against the common expectations of siblings in antiquity. What is also clear however is that in both instances the conduct of the Thessalonian brotherhood in these matters ought to lead to holiness/sanctification. And as Bassler’s general comments on this letter make clear ‘when Paul defines precisely what this means’ it is that all brotherly behaviour/actions should not only lead to holiness but should ‘*also lead to peace... in the community*’.⁸⁹ In both the above scenarios such brotherly behaviour – be it taking a wife for sexual intercourse in order to preclude desire and trying to take a Christian brother’s wife/or cheating a brother-believer in a business deal – would seriously disrupt the sense of harmony which Paul is anxious to foster and develop.

Such actions do indeed represent a dangerous channel for pollution, both to the believing brother but also to the whole Christian family, thereby compromising the

⁸⁹ Bassler, “Peace in All Ways,” p. 83.

community's distinctiveness to an outside world. But more important, the notion of family harmony in the ancient world was such that all family members, especially brothers, were expected to uphold and maintain the harmony of the household. As we noted in chapter 4 this is indicated by a text like Sir. 25:1 – 'I take pleasure in three things, and they are beautiful in the sight of God and of mortals: agreement among brothers and sisters (ὁμόνοια, ἀδελφῶν), friendship among neighbours, and a wife and a husband who live in harmony'. Both Plutarch and the author of 4 Maccabees repeatedly emphasise the primacy which healthy brotherly relations play in respect of family harmony. For instance, as regards the former, brothers were expected not to 'create a vicious practice of offending and exasperating one another' (*Frat. Amor.* 17/487F). On the contrary, brotherly intimacy and unity were to be such that in 'walking together' they should not allow 'a stone to come between them' (*Frat. Amor.* 19/490D). And in 4 Maccabees the writer provides a most poignant example of the lengths to which brothers were prepared to go in order to preserve brotherly concord – all seven died together: 'How holy and harmonious the concord of the seven brothers for piety's sake! None of the seven brothers turned coward nor cowered away from death... Just as the hands and feet were moved in unison... so did those holy youths... go in harmony to death... O all holy seven-fold assembly of brothers in harmony' (4 Macc. 14:3-7).

To conclude, Paul in these verses, and throughout the letter, jealously guards *two* matters in regard to the Thessalonian brotherhood: *cohesion* and *separation*. Collins aptly summarises the issues involved when he states:

For Paul to write of the church of the Thessalonians as a

brotherhood is to say something about that community *ab intra* and *ad extra*. Brotherhood speaks of *togetherness* and *apartness*. The recognition of their existence as a specific religious brotherhood marks a *distinctive* stage in the *ecclesial* self-awareness of the Thessalonians. They are distinct from other religious brotherhoods....The recognition of brotherhood is a recognition of *distinctness*, yet the recognition is also a recognition of *togetherness*. *Ab intra* the description of a community as a brotherhood draws attention to the bonds that link the members *together* ⁹⁰

7.6 Summary

1 Thess. 4:3-8 closely follows earlier remarks made by Paul where he drew attention to certain deficiencies in the Thessalonians' faith (3:10b). Although not all scholars are agreed, there are reasonable grounds for understanding the community was facing a real *internal* problem. The context, the coercive and threatening language used, not to mention Paul's need to reiterate this teaching (4:1, 6b), all strongly suggest that some of the Thessalonians were being tempted to revert to their old pagan practices, including sexual immorality.

However, the issue of morality has, in our opinion, often overshadowed the fact that Paul is concerned with something else here; it is hardly, if ever, recognised that the apostle is primarily addressing his remarks to the *Christian fraternity*, evident by his description and the central location of the term ἀδελφός (v. 6a; cf. 4:1 and 4:9, 10). This is also borne out by the fact that Paul's instructions indicate he has certain aspirations or social expectations (e.g. the upholding of family honour, family harmony etc.) in mind *vis-à-vis* how these brothers *ought* to conduct themselves.

⁹⁰ Collins, "The Church of the Thessalonians," p. 296 (emphasis added).

Two concerns are uppermost in the apostle's mind: first, Paul wants to strengthen the internal bonds of the brotherhood and secondly, he is anxious to draw the boundary lines between them and the outside world. He does this firstly, and more generally, by reminding the community that they are Christian brothers, who have been called by God and whose life-style is characterised as 'sanctification'. This sets them apart from those who do not belong or 'who do not know God' and whose behaviour is characterised by uncleanness, passionate desire, and sexual immorality.

Second, and at a deeper level, Paul addresses the issue of the honour of the household which he sees is at risk, evident by the way that he juxtaposes the phrases 'in holiness and honour' (v. 4b) and 'not like the Gentiles who do not know God' (v. 5b). The problem specifically relates to the brotherhood being threatened by the polluting and contaminating influence of sexual immorality ("fornication") from *outside*. To be sure, God's will and the brothers' holiness is important in all this – a point Paul repeatedly stresses in this pericope – but so also is the honour of the entire Pauline family. Consequently, Paul issues practical steps which they must take in order to live like this. The Thessalonians need to take wives in holiness and honour and *not* in the passion of desire like the Gentiles who do not know – Pauline-speak for these brothers to marry, *not* in order to satisfy their sexual desire (as the pagan notion), but in order that such desire may be eradicated. Paul, it seems, believed it was possible and necessary for these Christian brothers to experience sexual intercourse within the context of marriage but also in the absence of sexual passion and desire. Acquiring a wife as a safe receptacle for their sexual overflow not only excludes desire from the relationship, but will also distinguish

them from those outside and grant honour to the brotherhood.

In addition, honour will also be accorded to the community – assuming in the first instance that vv. 3-8 are a single literary unity – if these brothers (vv. 6-8) do not try to take another brother's wife. To enter into an adulterous relationship with the wife of someone who is outside the community is a very serious offence and would incur the judgement of God. However, Paul here is chiefly concerned with the taking of a Christian brother's wife *within* the community – to behave in this manner would have disastrous *social* consequences and cause chaos within the Pauline congregation. Christian brothers should avoid such sexual encounters and behave in accordance with the common assumptions of natural brothers in the ancient world which was to work for and ensure that in all circumstances familial harmony and unity prevailed.

Alternatively, if in vv. 6-8, Paul moves on to deal with a new topic, namely, commerce he may be addressing a situation where certain brothers were guilty of exploiting or cheating other brothers in business or inheritance matters. Once again in the interests of peace, harmony and the reputation of the Christian family, Paul expects these Christian brothers to deal (literally!) properly with each other.

8. φιλαδελφία, FAMILY HONOUR AND THE IMPORTANCE OF EARNING YOUR OWN 'BREAD' (1 Thess. 4:9-12)

8.1 Introduction

Most commentators regard 1 Thess.4:9-12 as a separate pericope from that of 4:3-8, evidenced by the fact that the apostle begins verse 9 with the formulae Περὶ δέ, 'Now concerning'. This construction itself has led some to conclude that Paul, like in 1 Cor. 7:1, 25; 8:1; 12:1, is here (and elsewhere cf. 4:13; 5:1) responding to a previous letter received from the Thessalonians.¹ However, it is more likely that the apostle is here responding to an oral question which the Thessalonians had asked via Timothy² concerning their brotherly responsibilities towards those inside and outside the *ekklesia*.

Exegetes also disagree in regard to whether vv. 9-12 should be viewed as a single pericope. Some hold that vv. 9-10a are separate from vv. 10b-12 where, in the

¹ C. E. Faw holds the view that it is only in 1 Corinthians and 1 Thessalonians (two letters which are separated by a short interval of time) that Paul employs the formula *περὶ δέ*, although there are other instances of it being used in the New Testament in connection with replies (e.g. Mk. 12:26; 13:32; Jn. 16:11; Acts 21:25); see "On the Writing of First Thessalonians," *JBL* vol. 71 (1952), pp. 217-35. Abraham J. Malherbe maintains that Paul possibly wrote a letter to the Thessalonians and that they in turn probably responded. He comes to this conclusion on the basis that the apostle employs well known "epistolary conventions" in the letter e.g. the writer's longing to see the recipients (3:6), the need to give advice (4:9) etc.; see "Did the Thessalonians Write to Paul?" in Fortna and Gaventa (eds.), *The Conversation Continues*, pp. 246-257.

² Wanamaker, *Thessalonians*, p. 159; Richard, *Thessalonians*, p. 213; M. M. Mitchell ("Concerning Περὶ δέ in 1 Corinthians," *NovT* vol. 31 [1989], pp. 229-56 [253]) argues persuasively that 'the use of *περὶ δέ* in 1 Thess. alone provides no evidence of a previous letter from the Thessalonians, as the formula is well attested in letters which do not respond to other letters. It is merely one way to introduce a new topic of discussion, and in itself gives no information about the source of that topic. The topics which Paul introduces with the formula in 1 Thessalonians are either in response to oral information brought by Timothy (3:1-6), or are topics which Paul himself wishes to introduce, or some combination of the two'.

former, Paul deals with the characteristics of brotherly love, while in the latter he focuses on how they should conduct themselves towards *outsiders*. This conclusion is reached on the basis that the passage comprises two main clauses, the second of which is a *parakalo* clause which is often employed to introduce a new section in Paul's letters.³ However, the phrase παρακαλοῦμεν δὲ ὑμᾶς, ἀδελφοί, περισσεύειν μᾶλλον ("We urge you brothers to abound [in love] more and more", v. 10b) should be understood in the first instance as referring back to their love for the brotherhood/family.⁴ This being so, the conjunction δέ (v. 10b) need not be understood in an adversative sense, but as a general contrast and further elaboration on what has gone before (see later exegesis).⁵

But v. 10b not only refers retrospectively, it is also an important bridge linking the the subject of brotherly love with what Paul goes on to discuss in vv. 11-12. This is seen in the way that the infinitive περισσεύειν 'to abound' (v. 10b), the first of four infinitives (cf. φιλοτιμεῖθαι ἡσυχάζειν, 'to aspire to live quietly'; πράσσειν τὰ ἴδια, 'to mind one's own affairs'; and ἐργάζεσθαι ταῖς [ἰδίαις] χερσὶν ὑμῶν, 'to work with your [own] hands' v. 11), is dependent upon the main verb παρακαλοῦμεν 'we urge' (v. 10b).⁶ This clearly indicates that vv. 10b-12 are a *continuation* of the theme of brotherly love begun in vv. 9-10a. Thus, Paul addresses brothers in vv. 9-10a and how they are to

³ See, for example, Rom. 12:1.

⁴ Best, *Thessalonians*, p. 174; Wanamaker, *Thessalonians*, p. 162; Holtz, *Thessalonicher*, p. 172; Richard, *Thessalonians*, p. 210; Schäfer, *Gemeinde als 'Bruderschaft'*, pp. 131-33; Weima, "How You Must Walk," p. 115; Aasgaard, "My Beloved Brothers and Sisters!", p. 174.

⁵ See F. Blass, A. De Brunner and R.W. Funk, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago/London: The University of Chicago Press, 1961), p. 447.

⁶ Wanamaker, *Thessalonians*, p. 162.

show love to one another, but brotherly love is also the link with vv. 10b-12 where this theme is continued. The only differences in vv. 10b-12 are the additional and new thoughts of how brotherly love can affect internal unity as well as outsiders' views of the community. Earl Richard captures the linkage and thrust of the argument admirably when he comments:

“Love of brother and sister” (*philadelphia*) is of prime concern for a fellowship that must foster inner unity and outer definition, but it also involves social behaviour which of necessity concerns relations with outsiders. The question then will have been about *philadelphia* and its inner dynamic as a unifying force, while Paul’s answer, after a calculated statement of praise for the community’s devotion to one another, focuses on love’s outer dynamic as it influences life, concerns work, and the social milieu in which these are engaged.⁷

Thus, it is our view that the above mentioned clauses i.e. verses 9-10a (Περὶ δὲ... ἐν ὅλῃ τῇ Μακεδονίᾳ) and verses 10b-11 (παρακαλοῦμεν δὲ ὑμᾶς, ἀδελφοί, ... ἐργάζεσθαι ταῖς [ἰδίας] χερσὶν ὑμῶν...) both address the subject of φιλαδελφία.

The Greek text of verses 9-12 reads as follows:

⁹ Περὶ δὲ τῆς φιλαδελφίας οὐ χρεῖαν ἔχετε γράφειν ὑμῖν,
αὐτοὶ γὰρ ὑμεῖς θεοδίδακτοὶ ἐστε εἰς τὸ ἀγαπᾶν ἀλλήλους,
¹⁰ καὶ γὰρ ποιεῖτε αὐτὸ εἰς πάντας τοὺς ἀδελφοὺς [τοὺς] ἐν
ὅλῃ τῇ Μακεδονίᾳ. παρακαλοῦμεν δὲ ὑμᾶς, ἀδελφοί, περισσεύειν
μᾶλλον ¹¹ καὶ φιλοτιμεῖσθαι ἡσυχάζειν καὶ πράσσειν τὰ
ἴδια καὶ ἐργάζεσθαι ταῖς [ἰδίαις] χερσὶν ὑμῶν, καθὼς

⁷ Richard, *Thessalonians*, p. 214.

ὕμῖν παρηγγείλαμεν, ¹² ἵνα περιπατῆτε εὐσχημόνως
πρὸς τοὺς ἔξω καὶ μηδενὸς χρείαν ἔχητε.

Paul, by employing the words ‘now concerning’ (περὶ δέ) in relation to the subject of φιλαδελφία, indicates that he deems this subject important enough to treat it separately. That this is the case is evident from the manner in which the compound expression φιλαδελφία is syntactically arranged as to stand in the emphatic position in the sentence. But it is also important to note that Paul’s introductory statement ‘now concerning brotherly love you have no need [for us] to write to you,’⁸ – an example of paralipsis (cf. 5:1 and 2 Cor. 9:1) – is a rhetorical device used by ancient writers whereby they mention something which they feign to pass over but in fact deem as most important and go on to discuss in some detail.⁹ The fact that Paul does this is evidence that there is a problem¹⁰ facing the Thessalonian brotherhood. Indeed, it is our view that this dilemma has a double-edge and specifically relates to the main subject of brotherly love. This is seen in the manner in which φιλαδελφία is qualified – the Thessalonians have been showing brotherly love but the apostle has to exhort them (παρακαλοῦμεν, v. 10b) περισσεύειν

⁸ It also represents an example of parenesis found among ancient writers e.g. Cicero, *Ep. Fam.* 1.4.3; 2.4.2. Some manuscripts read ‘we do/did not need’ (i.e. ἔχομεν/εἶχομεν) but the adopted reading has better attestation and is probably the more original; see Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, p. 632.

⁹ See Blass, De Brunner and Funk, *Greek Grammar*, p. 95; Holtz, *Thessalonicher*, p. 172. The force of this rhetorical strategy is pointed out by Gaventa (*Thessalonians*, p. 56) who advances a modern-day-equivalent: ‘I won’t say a thing about how late you were last night’.

¹⁰ E.g., Richard, *Thessalonians*, p. 214; Weima, “How You Must Walk,” p. 117; Michael W. Holmes, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*. The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids/Michigan: Zondervan, 1998), p. 139.

μᾶλλον ('to do so more and more', v. 10b). The implications of this refer back to what Paul has immediately stated but also look forward and relate to what he is about to say concerning proper working practices. We will briefly outline the nature of the difficulties which were confronting the brotherhood.

8.2 φιλαδελφία with respect to Insiders

Although Paul at the outset of this pericope begins by discussing the subject of brotherly love, this topic does not acquire specificity until v. 10b-12 where he identifies a related problem. The difficulty concerns the fact that some of the Thessalonian brothers had stopped working most likely in order to engage in evangelism¹¹ and the apostle exhorts them 'to work with your [own] hands' (v. 11b) so 'that you may...not be dependent upon *anybody*' (v. 12b).¹² Some understand this purpose clause as a reference to the brothers to work in order to be self-supporting and free from the affairs of *outsiders*. However, it is better to regard Paul's instructions as relating to the brothers not being a burden on *other brothers* within the community.¹³ Thus, if as we argued earlier the linkage between vv. 9-10a and 10b-12 is the subject of brotherly love, then the need to work – or in this instance the *refusal to do so by some* – and provide for one's family is as much an expression of

¹¹ Barclay, "Conflict," p. 522. John Barclay has rightly drawn attention to the fact the *Christians* were at loggerheads with *non-Christians*, a point specifically identified in v. 12a (for more on this aspect see 8.7 below) In addition, and as we have argued earlier, it is also likely that there were tensions within the brotherhood i.e. between one *Christian-brother* and another *Christian-brother*.

¹² Wanamaker (*Thessalonians*, p. 163) concludes regarding this view: 'This interpretation is...confirmed by the second part of v. 12'. The word μηδενός could be understood as neuter and not masculine hence the translation 'that you have need of *nothing*'. However, in this instance the masculine is to be preferred and is confirmed by the fact that the word μηδενός is closely linked with the phrase 'work with your [own] hands'.

¹³ Best, *Thessalonians*, pp. 177-78; Wanamaker, *Thessalonians*, p. 164; Weima, "How You Must Walk", p. 117; Holmes, *Thessalonians*, p. 139.

brotherly love as anything. Those who are able to work should do so (a point assumed by the instructions given here) and ought not to take advantage of the willingness of fellow brothers to bail them out.¹⁴ We shall return to this matter in more detail later, but it is important to note that Paul's *purpose* in dealing with φιλαδελφία at the *start* of the pericope (vv. 9-10a) is that brotherly love serves as a *corrective measure* to the issue of idleness addressed in the second part (vv. 10b-12). By relating the two themes (brotherly love and work) in this way, Paul shows that those brothers who refused to work, thereby taking advantage of other brothers' generosity, are in clear breach of what it means to live with one another in love (see 8.6 below)¹⁵

8.3 φιλαδελφία with respect to Outsiders

This takes us on to the second part – φιλαδελφία is clearly 'bi-directional'¹⁶ - of the problem to do with brotherly love, namely, how it relates specifically to *non-Christians*.

Another reason for the Thessalonians to labour and provide for their own families is ἵνα περιπατήτε εὐσχημόνως πρὸς τοὺς ἔξω ('so that your daily life may win the respect of *outsiders*', v. 12a).

It is very likely – and again we shall return to this below – given the fact that *some brothers* had probably stopped working in order to embark upon an intensive programme

¹⁴ Stott (*Thessalonians*, p. 90) strikes the right balance when he recognises the responsibility to help those in the community who are in need whilst at the same time not allowing fellow brothers to be exploited: 'It is an expression of love to support others who are in need; *but it is also an expression of love to support ourselves, so as not to need to be supported by others*' (emphasis added).

¹⁵ Weima, "How You Must Walk," p. 115.

¹⁶ Holmes, *Thessalonians*, p. 142.

of evangelisation, that some of the Thessalonians had also become a nuisance to outsiders.¹⁷ This aggravation was directly related to the methods employed by the Thessalonians in the spreading of the gospel message which may have included pouring scorn on non-Christian's morals and beliefs. Such tactics could well have been provocative, and could have put these new converts and the Christian church in danger and at risk from attack by outsiders.¹⁸ Also, when those not connected to the brotherhood would hear of or begin to see Christians failing to provide for their own families, the reputation and high respect/honour with which the community should have been held by those outside it would have been compromised. So brotherly love is not only an important matter which relates to those inside the brotherhood but also concerns how the group presents itself to those *outside* it (see 8.7 below). Both these matters (internal and external relations) will be taken up later in our discussion, but it is important to signal these community difficulties at this juncture.

8.4 φιλαδελφία as a Divine Instruction

At the outset, it is significant to note that Paul in v. 9 informs the Thessalonians: Περὶ δὲ τῆς φιλαδελφίας οὐ χρεῖαν ἔχετε γράφειν ὑμῖν ('concerning brotherly love you do not need anyone to write to you'). Brotherly love, for the most part, already belongs to the Thessalonians' pool of knowledge, even though, there is debate among scholars regarding how such an understanding was acquired.

There is in these verses a particular focus on the divine origin of this characteristic

¹⁷ Barclay, "Conflict," pp. 522-24.

¹⁸ Barclay, "Conflict," p. 522.

since Paul continues: ‘you yourselves have been taught by God to love one another’ – αὐτοὶ γὰρ ὑμεῖς θεοδίδακτο ἔστε εἰς τὸ ἀγαπᾶν ἀλλήλους. The above phrase has been regarded as unusual given the fact that we would have expected Paul to have written ‘you yourselves know how to love’. This is true; however, it is the ‘divine’ source of this love which is the focus here.¹⁹ The passive verbal adjective θεοδίδακτοί is a *hapax legomenon* in the New Testament and the earliest extant occurrence in Greek literature.²⁰ Indeed, this word may well be an instance of a neologism coined by the apostle Paul himself.

Linguistically Isaiah 54:13 (LXX) is the nearest equivalent to this expression and reads ‘taught of God’ where – instead of Paul’s compound expression – the author juxtaposes two separate words (διδασκτοὺς θεοῦ). To be sure, the Old Testament looked forward to a time when the sons of Zion would be taught by God who will reign over them and Paul may be alluding to the eschatological era when ‘God will live so intimately in and among his people through his Spirit that they will no longer have to be taught by human intermediaries, but will be “taught of God” (“*didaktous theou*”).²¹ On the other hand,

¹⁹ Koester suggests θεοδίδακτοί refers to divine love in *contrast* to human love taught by humans i.e. philosophers such as the Epicureans; see “1 Thessalonians – An Experiment in Christian Writing,” in Church and George (eds.), *Continuity and Discontinuity*, p. 39; see also Malherbe, “Exhortation,” pp. 251-54.

²⁰ It does, however, occur at the turn of the century; cf. Barn. *Ep.* 21.

²¹ Weima, “How You Must Walk,” p. 116. The juxtaposition of v. 9 alongside of v. 8 where Paul mentions the Holy Spirit provides *part of the answer* as to how the Thessalonians have been divinely taught. Since Paul teaches elsewhere that the Holy Spirit leads Christians in other areas of their lives (e.g. Rom. 8: 14-17), it is possible that the same Holy Spirit also instructs the Thessalonians regarding their love for their brothers; see John M. G. Barclay, *Obeying the Truth: A Study of Paul’s Ethics in Galatians* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1988), p. 71; Trevor J. Burke, “Adoption and the Spirit in Romans 8,” *EvQ* vol. 70.4 (1998), pp. 311-24 esp. pp. 318-20.

the closest *thematic* parallel in the Old Testament is probably Ezk. 36:26-27.²² For Paul, that new epoch of salvation had already been inaugurated – because of the resurrection of Christ – and the apostle is equating this with the era when Christians are to be taught of God, including how they are to love their fellow-brothers in Christ.

It is strange, in light of Paul's fatherly responsibility and role as teacher (2:12), that he should coyly admit to the Thessalonians: 'you are taught by God and do not need me'. Is Paul, by appealing to God's instruction, stepping back and deliberately putting himself in the background, thereby relaxing his authority (see p. 174f.)? Or is he merely using this as a cover or a smokescreen for presenting his own teaching under the guise that it is really God's? An important question to ask here is how in *practice* were the Thessalonians taught? It ought to be noted that earlier in chapter 4 Paul says that 'This is the will of God' – probably a circumlocution for "taught of God" – namely, their sanctification, a *reminder* to his converts of what *he* had taught them when he was in their midst. Similarly, in 4:1 Paul states that *he* had exhorted them how to live *in order to please God*. Therefore, even though the Thessalonians were "God-taught" this does not negate nor detract from any part which Paul may have played in their instruction. Indeed, it is hard to believe that during the short time he was with the Thessalonians the apostle did not *begin* to teach them in this vital area; moreover, we earlier noted the importance of the apostle's

²² J. S. Kloppenborg ("Philadelphia, Theodidaktos and the Discouri: Rhetorical Engagement in 1 Thess. 4:9-12," *NTS* vol. 39 [1993], pp. 265-89) advances the view that θεοδιδάκτοί has as its *background* the 'divine' love manifested by the mythological Discouri brothers Castor and Pollux. This is unlikely given the apostle Paul's background in Jewish monotheism, a point made clear by the repeated emphasis of the noun θεός (thirty-four times in 1 Thessalonians, excluding 1 Thess. 2:14-16); see further E. J. Richard "Early Pauline Thought: An Analysis of 1 Thessalonians," in J. M. Bassler (ed.), *Pauline Theology vol. 1: Thessalonians, Philippians, Galatians, Philemon* (Minneapolis; Fortress Press, 1991), pp. 39-52.

didactic role (2:12) in teaching and exhorting his converts. As an apostle and one who had been given authority by God (4:2), it is entirely possible that Paul believed the teaching he was giving was none other than God's instruction.²³ Also, the way that Paul here singles out brotherly love for special treatment in similar manner to other authors (cf. 4.2.1; 4.6; 4.10.4) of the period seems to indicate that this is an ideal opportunity for him to impress upon his readers the necessity for φιλαδελφία.

8.5 A Love for Brothers in other Locations

Having generally praised the Thessalonians for their current conduct, Paul builds upon what he has so far said. The particle γάρ (v. 10a) links what he has already stated with what he is about to say. The apostle does this by the use of phrases such as καὶ γὰρ ποιεῖτε (v. 10a) and περισσεύειν μᾶλλον (v. 10b), evidence that he is using a standard feature of ancient parenesis²⁴ whereby writers employed a positive approach to encourage their readers in good moral practices.

Not only do most of the Thessalonians know what it means to love one another, they also *act* on the basis of what they have been taught, proof that they have indeed been θεοδίδακτοί. This is borne out by the use of the present continuous tense of the verb ποιεῖτε (v. 10a) where the emphasis is on brotherly love as a habitual attitude displayed

²³ Meeks (*Origins of Christian Morality*, p. 85) states: "God's will" seems to have been spelled out for the new members of the Christian groups by all means of moral instruction that were at the disposal of *their leaders*'. See also Wanamaker, *Thessalonians*, p. 160; Gaventa, *Thessalonians*, p. 57.

²⁴ See similar examples found in Seneca, *Ep.* 25.4 (*ut facis*); 1.1 (*ita fac*); Cicero, *Ep. Fam.* 6.10b.4 (*idque ut facias, etiam atque etiam te hortor*).

in Christian conduct.²⁵ Brotherly love, in Paul's view, was not an ethereal concept but was demonstrated in concrete acts of service, *especially towards other members of the Christian family*, a note struck by the apostle elsewhere: 'Do good to all men *especially* to those who are of the household/family of believers' (οἰκείους τῆς πίστεως, Gal. 6:10). Such brotherly love was not only manifested internally i.e. towards one another ἀλλήλους, but towards (lit.) 'all the brothers in the whole of Macedonia' (εἰς πάντας τοὺς ἀδελφοὺς ἐν ὅλῃ τῇ Μακεδονίᾳ).²⁶ There is nothing to preclude the fact that a number of groups of believers existed in other places – Paul earlier (cf. 1:7-8) states that the example of the brotherhood at Thessalonica to others in the general vicinity had become well known. Moreover, Paul's comments have the desired effect of linking brothers who were probably complete strangers²⁷ and had never before met with those in other areas. This associating of churches in different locations was an integral part of Paul's own evangelistic and missionary strategy wherever he went (1 Cor. 16:1, 19; 2 Cor. 1:1; Gal. 1:2) and had the effect of encouraging Christians through the realization that they were not alone (2:14). This also goes some way towards helping to define their

²⁵ J. B. Lightfoot (*Notes on the Epistles of St. Paul* [London/New York: Macmillan, 1895] p. 59) says regarding the particles καὶ γάρ that this 'statement marks an advance upon the preceding one. "You are not only taught the lesson, but you also practise it"'.

²⁶ Paul's statement here could be understood as exaggerated given the fact that in the Acts narrative the only other Macedonian churches which were in existence at this time, barring Thessalonica, were those located at Philippi and Berea. However, there may well have been other churches about which we have no record; indeed, it is quite possible that in the intervening period between Paul leaving Macedonia and his writing his letter from Corinth other communities had begun to spring up in the larger towns such as Amphipolis and Pella. This is not impossible since we know that the early church was quick to 'plant' churches and recent Thessalonian converts, or, indeed, Luke or Timothy may have been responsible for doing so.

²⁷ E. A. Judge (*The Conversion of Rome: Ancient Sources of Modern Social Tensions* (North Ryde, Australia: Ancient History Association, 1980, p. 7) writes in this regard, 'Security and hospitality when travelling had traditionally been the privilege of the powerful...[but]...these domestic advantages were now extended to the household of faith, who are accepted on trust though complete strangers'.

identity as a self-contained/independent movement. They were, in so far as the ancient world understood it, part of a global brotherhood, a 'world-wide people'²⁸ (cf. the geographical mobility implied in 1:7-8).

If Paul's focus here is on the brotherly *actions*²⁹ of the Thessalonians demonstrated in their love for one another in Thessalonica and beyond, what exactly has the apostle in mind? How was such affection demonstrated? In this regard, it is important to note that Thessalonica was not only the seat of Roman administration for the province but also an important port and mercantile centre. In addition, Thessalonica was also situated on the *Via Egnatia* which was the main route between Rome and the East, hence making it an ideal location for Christian travelers to rest the night and obtain much needed hospitality. That Paul has a more practical kind of hospitality (not excluding the giving of money, aid etc.) in mind is evident from the context where, in verse 9, he speaks about the love to be practised in the local community, while verse 10 looks further, to the province of which Thessalonica is a part.³⁰ It is also borne out by the fact that in the only other context where he employs the compound expression *philadelphia* (Rom. 12:10; cf. 2 Clem. 4:1-3) he also goes on to exhort his readers to 'practice hospitality' (Rom. 12:13; cf. also the linkage in Heb. 13:1-3).³¹ In relation to this Meggitt rightly states concerning

²⁸ Meeks, *First Urban Christians*, p. 107.

²⁹ Wanamaker (*Thessalonians*, p. 161) writes, 'At a more practical level... Christians travelling between cities could obtain hospitality from their brothers and sisters in places where they knew no one'; also Richard, *Thessalonians*, p. 217; Schäfer, *Gemeinde als 'Bruderschaft'*, p. 161.

³⁰ Sandnes, *A New Family*, p. 114.

³¹ Could it also be argued that Paul, in 1 Thess. 5: 25-27, where he mentions the term 'brothers' (x3) and in connection with the need 'to greet' each other with a 'kiss', is thinking specifically of Thessalonica's situation as a sea-port and the need to show hospitality to sea-faring brothers?

1 Thess. 4:9-11:

For the early Christians to ‘love’ a person often implied rendering her/him material support, and the context seems to imply just *such a concrete aspect to the behaviour Paul expected of the Thessalonians*.³²

The giving of hospitality was a distinctively *familial* (as opposed to friendly) phenomenon – Paul ‘does not speak of φιλία or φίλοι, but of brotherly love and brothers’.³³ To be sure Paul ‘is familiar with the topos on friendship’³⁴ but he steers clear of the expression as he does the description of Christians as friends.³⁵ Moreover, as Wayne Meeks points out, the very real ‘sense of belonging to... a brotherhood’³⁶ was different to the so-called ‘clubs of the time’³⁷ and was demonstrated in copious, practical ways – ‘A traveler to a distant city, armed with a letter of recommendation from a recognised leader... could find there not merely friends but “brothers and sisters,” ready

³² J. Meggitt, *Paul, Poverty and Survival* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1998), p. 162 (emphasis added).

³³ Malherbe, “Exhortation,” p. 252. I am indebted to Malherbe for some of the thoughts that follow. Greer (*Broken Lights and Mended Lives*, p. 120) also states, ‘The Christians often appeared to care only for one another and not for those outside the faith. They were brothers and sisters because... charity.. seems to have begun at home’. However, there is sufficient evidence in this letter to show that brothers extended their brotherly love beyond the boundaries of the fraternal community (see later discussion of 4:11-12; also 3:12; 5:15). Interestingly, Tertullian (*Praescr.* 20) links the sharing of food and the brotherhood-character of the Christians in such a way as to suggest that this and hospitality is how brotherhood is actually put into practice: “...*probant unitatem ecclesiarum communicatio pacis et appellatio fraternitatis et contesseratio hospitalitatis*” (‘they all proved to be one, in unbroken unity, by their peaceful communion and title of brotherhood, and bond of hospitality’). And Aristides (*Apol.* 15) an early second century Athenian Christian also writes in defence of Christians and how they ‘call [one another] brothers without distinction’. Moreover he concludes, ‘a Christian with possessions shares generously with anyone without. If they see a stranger, they bring him into their own homes and greet them like a real brother – for they call one another “brothers” not by any physical connection but by the soul’ (trans. by Meeks, *Origins of Christian Morality*, p. 9).

³⁴ Malherbe, “Exhortation,” p. 252; see also H. D. Betz, *Galatians* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), pp. 221-330; J. M. Rist, “Epicurus on Friendship,” *CPh* vol. 75 (1980), pp. 121-29.

³⁵ Malherbe, “Exhortation,” p. 252; Aasgaard, “Brotherhood in Plutarch and Paul,” p. 176; A. C. Mitchell, ‘“Greet Friends by Name”: New Testament Evidence for the Graeco-Roman Topos on Friendship’, paper presented at the Hellenistic Moral Philosophy and Early Christianity Consultation on ‘Friendship in Greek Authors and Sources’, Annual Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature, 1991 pp. 1-9, 21f.

³⁶ Meeks, *Moral World*, p. 121

³⁷ Meeks, *Moral World*, p. 121.

to offer hospitality. These brothers and sisters might even be prepared to offer support and help in case of trouble...’³⁸ Hospitality for the traveller ‘was a concrete reminder of what it meant to belong to the *ekklesia*... that could welcome one as “brother” or “sister” in Laodicea, Ephesus, Corinth, or Rome’³⁹ or Thessalonica. In short, ‘hospitality characterised the family life of the Church’.⁴⁰

8.6 φιλαδελφία Manifested in a Practical Work Ethic

In vv. 10b-12 Paul continues the theme of φιλαδελφία but there is a shift in the apostle’s thinking to how brotherly love specifically relates to the issue of work. As argued above, the infinitive clause περισσεύειν in v. 10b is one in a string of four constructions dependent upon the main verb παρακαλοῦμεν (“we exhort”) thereby linking the theme of brotherly love (vv. 9-10a) with what is to follow in vv. 11-12. However, a cursory read through verses 10b-12 could lead us to conclude that what Paul writes bears little, or no, relation to what has gone before. Indeed, what is the connection between φιλαδελφία and the three-fold exhortation to: ‘make it your ambition to lead a quiet life’ ‘to mind your own business’ and ‘to work with your [own] hands’? Before we look at these in more detail and why Paul issues this advice, it is important to establish the

³⁸ Meeks, *Moral World*, p. 121. Meeks (*First Urban Christians*, p. 109) states elsewhere : ‘It is evident too, that Paul...worked actively to inculcate the notion of a universal brotherhood of believers in Messiah Jesus’.

³⁹ Meeks, *First Urban Christians*, p. 110.

⁴⁰ Greer, *Broken Lights and Mended Lives*, p. 122. See also M. Puzicha (*Christus Peregrinus, Die Fremdenaufnahme {Mt. 25:35} als Werk der privaten Wohltätigkeit im Urteil der Alten Kirche*) [MBTH 47; Munster: Aschendorff, 1980], pp. 17-21) who demonstrates that stranger (*xenós*, Mt. 25:35) was equated with Christian brothers and sisters.

context of these verses in relation to the main thrust of the *topos* on brotherly love.

We have already noted how the brothers at Thessalonica were experiencing problems within and without the brotherhood which was due to a small element who were refusing to work. Thus it appears that *some of the Thessalonians* were to blame, *at least in part*, for the suffering they were enduring.⁴¹ Those brothers who did not want to work, preferring instead to engage in the propagation of the gospel, were (through their dependency on the others) putting undue economic strain upon the community. Such actions may also have been perceived by other hard-working-brothers as irresponsible which might in turn have caused internal tensions and relational difficulties. Indeed, there is evidence of a similar kind of thing in a related pericope on brotherly relations (see 5:12-15 and discussion in chapter 9) where Paul identifies the conflict facing the brotherhood: ‘see that none of you pays back evil for evil [κακὸν ἀντὶ κακοῦ] but always seek *to do good to one another and to everyone else*’ (5:15). The kind of retaliatory actions described here by Paul could apply equally to certain brothers seeking revenge against other brothers *within* (“do good to one another”) and to brothers seeking reprisal against those *outside* the brotherhood (“and to everyone else”).

It is our view that Paul addresses both these aspects in this pericope: first, he is concerned with the need to maintain healthy fraternal relations *within* the community, but secondly, his outlook broadens⁴² in the sense that brotherly love is also concerned with ‘the social...behaviour that is pleasing to God as *it involves brothers and sisters in daily*

⁴¹ So Barclay, “Conflict,” p. 520.

⁴² Richard, *Thessalonians*, p. 218.

*activity and proper conduct in the company of non-believers*⁴³ (lit. οἱ ἔξω, “the outsiders”, v. 12). The precise relationship between brotherly love within (v. 12b) and without (οἱ ἔξω, v. 12a) is unpacked by Paul in vv. 11-12, where the instructions given by the apostle imply, as mentioned earlier, an *internal* (real) problem which has *external* ramifications. We will consider the latter of these later in this chapter but for the present we will focus on the former.

The first question concerns how are we to understand the three-fold instructions given to the Thessalonian Christians in vv. 11-12: ‘to make it [your] ambition to lead a quiet life, to mind your own affairs, and to work with your [own] hands’ (φιλοτιμεῖσθαι ἡσυχάζειν καὶ πράσσειν τὰ ἴδια καὶ ἐργάζεσθαι ταῖς [ἰδίαις] χερσὶν ὑμῶν). These infinitival clauses have provoked much disagreement and debate among scholars as regards the nature of the problem which the community was facing – was it eschatological, political, or sociological in nature?

Many commentators, for example, think the difficulty was to do with ‘undue eschatological excitement that had induced a restless tendency in some of the Thessalonians Christians and made them disinclined to attend to their ordinary business’⁴⁴ The thinking behind such a hypothesis is that this eschatological excitement affected the Thessalonians to the extent that they had become idle and, it is argued, Paul’s two references to this problem (i.e. 4:11-12; 5:14) are wrapped around the main

⁴³ Richard, *Thessalonians*, p. 218; Moore, *Thessalonians*, p. 66.

⁴⁴ Bruce, *Thessalonians*, p. 91; Best, *Thessalonians*, pp. 175-76; Morris, *Thessalonians*, p. 131; Rigaux, *Thessaloniciens*, pp. 519-21; von Dobschütz, *Thessalonicher*, pp. 180-83.

eschatological discourse concerning the parousia (4:13-5:11), suggesting that there is a relationship between these two subjects. However, whilst the ‘eschatological solution’ may go some way towards explaining the problem it does not adequately account for the fact that Paul does not *explicitly* link the problem of idleness with the second advent of Christ.

Others⁴⁵ have posited a social hypothesis by which they link the problem of ‘disorderliness’ with manual labourers from the lower classes living in a Hellenistic city who would have had little opportunity for work. With a scarcity of work and low wages on offer the urban poor were therefore caught in the poverty trap. It is against this background that many of the poor attached themselves to a wealthy benefactor who was in a position to support them in exchange for expressions of gratitude. Thus, Paul’s converts had become over-dependent and even exploited the kindness of the more wealthy members (-patrons)⁴⁶ of the church at Thessalonica. However, whilst a patron-client relationship may have been in operation in the church at Thessalonica, we cannot be certain;⁴⁷ even if it was, the activities associated with the role of client would have been much more strenuous than one might be given to think. For example, a client’s

⁴⁵ R. Russell, “The Idle in 2 Thess. 3:6-12: An Eschatological or a Social Problem,” *NTS* vol. 34 (1988), pp. 105-19; see also M. Rostovtzeff, *The Social and Economic History of the Hellenistic World* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1941) vol. 2 pp. 1126-27; C. Lee, “Social Unrest and Primitive Christianity,” in S. Benko and J. O’Rourke (eds.), *The Catacombs and the Colosseum* (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1971), p. 129.

⁴⁶ B. W. Winter, (“ ‘If a Man does not wish to Work ...’: A Cultural and Historical Setting for 2 Thessalonians 3: 6-16” *TynBul* vol. 40 [1989], pp. 303-15) also points out that the Thessalonians’ problems in relation to work were compounded by the fact that in A.D. 51 a famine occurred with the result that many may well have been on the ‘corn dole’. But for this to happen special arrangements must have been in place since such a practice did not exist outside Rome.

⁴⁷ Meggitt (*Paul*, p. 168) makes the point that ‘patronage certainly was not the all pervasive phenomenon so often assumed by Classical and New Testament scholars. They have been rather too easily attracted to it as a catch-all explanation for the assumed social cohesion of most of the Empire’.

duties included not only greeting the benefactor each morning with the *salutatio* or ‘morning salute’ but also appearing with them in public, being involved in their political campaigns etc., activities which it is difficult to square with being idle.⁴⁸ In any case, it is probably unlikely that the Thessalonians were lazy and the above sociological ‘solutions’ do not provide a motive for the idle not being *willing*⁴⁹ to work.

I am more inclined to agree with those scholars who emphasise the prevailing social and religious unrest as the context for understanding these verses.⁵⁰ This makes good sense in light of the re-socialisation which conversion brought about and the practically oriented injunctions for the Thessalonians to conduct themselves properly towards one another (v. 12b) and those outside (v. 12b). But, might there not also be something else at work here? Could it be, as we have demonstrated earlier, that Paul is again drawing on a whole raft of familial/household expectations in antiquity in order to regulate and exercise social control over the Thessalonian family? There are reasonable grounds for thinking that he is. For example, the apostle has already emphasised the need for these brothers to demonstrate φιλαδελφία, a common assumption of brotherly relations in antiquity. In addition, Paul stresses that siblings should work and co-operate together for the good of the family. And thirdly, the apostle also insists that brothers should be mindful of the honour/respect of the family name in the eyes of outsiders – aspects which every member of the ancient household, especially brothers, were expected to uphold and maintain. Thus, it is our view that Paul once again skillfully employs a whole range of

⁴⁸ Weima, “How You Must Walk,” p. 115.

⁴⁹ M. J. J. Menken, *2 Thessalonians*, (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 141.

⁵⁰ E.g., Barclay, “Conflict,” p. 523-24.

conventional attitudes of family life in antiquity in order to deal with and address the tensions within and without the brotherhood.

Turning more directly to the text, if Paul in 4:11-12 is countering the same problem as that of 5:14 – the Thessalonians’ unwillingness to work (see chapter 9 later) – then it is very likely that the apostle has the same group of brothers in mind; indeed, Paul appears to connect the two passages in 2 Thess. 3:6-13, assuming the latter is authentically Pauline.⁵¹ Having said this, the derivation of the word ἄτακτοι is much disputed. Some understand this term to come from a military context meaning to break rank or to be undisciplined or rebellious.⁵² Alternatively, many insist that the word stems from how it is employed in the papyri of the Hellenistic period and therefore means ‘idle’ or ‘lazy’.⁵³ This is unlikely since there is very little evidence in 2 Thess. 3:6-13 that the Thessalonians’ behaviour was lazy and also for ‘the fact that Paul counterposes his example of self-sufficient labour’.⁵⁴ A better understanding of this term is that forwarded by Milligan who demonstrates from the papyri that in particular contexts the verb and adverb can mean ‘work-shy’ (this would also appear to be the meaning of the word as it is used in 2 Thess. 3:7, 11).⁵⁵ If this is so, it is quite possible that behind Paul’s instructions here in 4:11-12 (and 2:1-12) lies an awareness of the bad reputation of certain Cynic preachers⁵⁶ whose deliberately rough tongues were employed in parading their message to a waiting audience, all for an excessive fee. The apostle, recognising

⁵¹ E.g. Best, *Thessalonians*, p. 175; Marshall, *Thessalonians*, p. 117.

⁵² LSJ, p. 267; *TDNT*, vol. 8, pp. 47-48. Jewett, *Thessalonian Correspondence*, p. 105

⁵³ Weima, “How You Must Walk,” p. 113. BAGD, p. 119; Milligan, *Thessalonians*, pp. 152-54.

⁵⁴ Jewett, *Thessalonian Correspondence*, p. 105.

⁵⁵ BAGD, p. 119; Milligan, *Thessalonians*, pp. 152-54.

⁵⁶ For the relevant Cynic parallels to 4:1-12 see Malherbe, *Paul and the Thessalonians*, pp. 99-101.

this, does not want the Thessalonians through a similar aversion to work also to gain a poor reputation with their over-zealous, verbose and public presentation of the gospel.

More positively, and instead, these brothers are to work with their [own] hands (ἐργάζεσθε ταῖς [ιδίαις] χερσὶν ὑμῶν, 4:11 cf. the parallel passage in 2 Thess. 3:10 ὅτι εἴ τις οὐ θέλει ἐργάζεσθαι μηδὲ ἐσθιέτω) just as Paul himself had done when he was in their midst (2:8-9). As we observed above, Paul uses four infinitival clauses here, the last of which “to work with your [own] hands” climaxes in the purpose clause in v. 12 ‘in order that... you may *be dependent on nobody*’. As this clause makes clear, brothers should work and provide for their own families and not become parasites on the brotherhood.⁵⁷ If the same group of people in the above mentioned texts (4:11; 2 Thess. 3:10) is in view, the apostle is directing his comments towards those ‘who are capable of earning their own living but have *chosen not to*’.⁵⁸ Paul does not want such brothers to abuse their fraternal position by willingly foregoing to work and relying on other brothers to supply the basic necessities of food. To be sure, the apostle is not afraid of these brothers being mutually dependent upon one another (cf. 1 Tim. 5:8, “If anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for his immediately family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever”) nor of them exercising φιλαδελφία, but at the same time he does not want to undercut this by permitting some brothers to become *over-dependent* on fellow brothers. It is *this* about which Paul registers his disquiet. ‘Brotherly

⁵⁷ Weima, “How You Must Walk,” p. 117.

⁵⁸ Meggitt, *Paul*, p. 162; Moore (*Thessalonians*, p. 66) also states: ‘...some Thessalonians misunderstood, supposing that, being now one “family”...they could...be supported by their “brethren”’.

love demanded sober and industrious habits'⁵⁹ rather than opting out of one's work-related responsibilities in order to proclaim the good news. Paul's point is that if brotherly love is sincere, it will best be demonstrated when a fellow-brother works with his own hands to support himself and his dependents. In short, his advice to the Thessalonian brotherhood is: "stop witnessing – to the extent that you will not be able to provide adequately for your own families – and start working".

In light of Paul's instructions here we can see that φιλαδελφία in 4:10b-12 is very likely a counter-strategy employed by Paul by which he limits or puts certain restraints upon how this concept is understood and worked out (literally!) in the Thessalonian community (or brotherhood).⁶⁰ In all this, the apostle's advice very much reflects the ethos of family ideals and expectations in the ancient world where each brother had responsibilities towards the *oikos* and was expected to work for the good of it. In antiquity the household was the basic unit of production and brothers were expected to work and contribute towards it. This co-operative spirit is depicted, for example, in Plutarch's treatise "On Brotherly Love" where he uses different parts of the body (e.g. eyes, hands etc.) to stress the point that brothers are like 'twins' and, in order to function properly, should 'contrive together to assist each other' (*Frat. Amor.* 15/486A) for the

⁵⁹ Bruce, *Thessalonians*, p. 91. Martin (*Corinthian Body*, p. 80) states in relation to this passage: 'Paul projects no sympathy for labourers who seek a less than laborious life. And his advice here works to keep Christianity as a *hierarchy-supporting*, rather than a hierarchy-questioning, movement, at least as far as manual labourers are concerned'.

⁶⁰ See D. deSilva, " 'Worthy of His Kingdom': Honour Discourse and Social Engineering in 1 Thessalonians," *JSNT* vol. 64 (1996), pp. 49-79. In Paul's mind there is a dialectic between two things: on the one hand he does not want the idle brothers to exploit the generosity of other brothers whilst on the other he also does not want the community to decrease its commitment to manifesting love towards all its members.

good of the household (see chapter 4.2.3; cf. 4.6; 4.7).⁶¹ Hierocles makes a similar point in that he stresses that brothers – even more than the components of a physical body – are better suited to working together: *‘brothers far more than parts of the body are adapted by nature to help each other*. For the eyes, indeed, being present with each other, see together, and one hand works together with the other that is present. But the co-operation of brothers with each other is much more varied, for they do things which by common consent are excellent even if they should be completely separate from each other’ (4.27.20). One reason given by our ancient writers for the need for brothers to work together is that brothers belong closely together and should be, as Musonius Rufus puts it, ‘the strongest supporters’ (*frag.* 15.100.5-6). Evidence from our non-élite sources also seems to corroborate this point. Artimedorus, for example, likens the supportive co-operation of brothers to the function of the (two) shoulders which uphold and bolster the rest of the body (Bk. 1.40). These twin notions of working together and of collective responsibility in the case of brotherly relations were deeply embedded in the ancient Mediterranean psyche. They are clearly manifested in the following quote by Josephus,

⁶¹ C. J. Bannon (*The Brothers of Romulus: Fraternal Pietas in Roman Law, Literature and Society* [Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press], 1997, p. 101) informs us that the co-operation demonstrated between brothers in the public arena was no different to the support and work expected of brothers within the private family: ‘brothers were expected to co-operate in their political activities... much as they did *in the household*’ (emphasis added). See also R. MacMullen (*Roman Social Relations 50 BC to AD 284* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974], p. 98) who remarks how some Egyptian papyri and inscriptions depict brothers co-operating in the same line of work. As regards the former and especially in relation to the trade of weaving, MacMullen states: ‘It is common to find a pair *of brothers working at this together*’. In relation to the latter he writes: ‘the same tight texture of business often appears in other provinces... of ...two brothers making pigments’. Lampe (“‘Family’ in Church”, pp. 1-5) points out that as far as work and production is concerned rural families were units of production. He cites Cato’s famous saying ‘The master of the house has to be a seller, not a buyer’, *De Agr.* 2.7) which expresses the importance of the household as striving for self-sufficiency. Lampe concludes: ‘each household tried to supply its requirements by its own work’ (p. 5). Rural families lived off their own produce; the situation in the cities was different. Here the private city household depended more on work done by family members outside the household.

even though the context is that of prayer: ‘the welfare of the community must take precedence over those for ourselves’ (*Ap.* 2.195-96).⁶²

We also observed earlier that an integral part of the apostle’s missionary strategy was to work hard (when needed), something about which the Thessalonians were fully aware and which Paul had earlier reminded them: ‘we worked day and night in order not to be a burden to anyone’ (2:9).⁶³ So Paul himself espoused and *practised* the very principles that he strongly exhorts the Thessalonians to emulate. Moreover, the fact that there is a shift in emphasis from the second person plural (vv. 9-10a) to the first person plural (v. 10b), “*We* exhort” (παρακαλοῦμεν), may suggest that lurking behind Paul’s concerns about the Thessalonian brothers’ failure to manifest φιλαδελφία is the shared assumption with our ancient writers that it would reflect poorly on him as their ‘father’. Plutarch, for instance, states that ‘brotherly love (φιλαδελφία) is forthwith proof of love for mother and father’ (*Frat. Amor.* 5/480F).⁶⁴ The corollary of this is also true in that ‘he that hates his own brother and is angry with him cannot refrain from blaming the father that begat...such a brother’ (*Frat. Amor.* 5/480D). As the Thessalonians’ ‘father-in-the-faith’, Paul is keen to keep his ‘children’s’ and his *own* reputation in tact.

⁶² Pseudo-Phocylides’ remarks (although occurring prior to the major section on household management and therefore not specifically addressed to brothers) on work/labour are striking too: ‘work hard so that you can live from your own means - ἐργάζεν μοιχῶν ὡς ἐξ ἰδιῶν βιοτεύσης - ‘for every idle man lives for what his hands can steal’ (*Sent.* 153-154; cf. 2 Thess. 3:10). A few verses later the same writer also states: ‘Eat without shame from what you have earned yourself’ (*Sent.* 157).

⁶³ Paul did not burden financially any of his churches that he had established or ministered to (e.g. 2 Cor. 11:9) - ironically in this case some ‘brothers’ from Macedonia (probably Philippi) had supplied him with gifts.

⁶⁴ Elsewhere Plutarch shows an awareness of the fact that in the classical period when two brothers disagreed with one another, the father was to blame and was punished for permitting his sons to quarrel (*Apop. Lac.* 233.32).

8.7 Brotherhood and Gaining the respect of οἱ

ἔξω

This takes us on to the second aspect which the Thessalonian brothers needed to address, namely, their relationship towards those outside the community. The infinitives in v. 11 ‘to make it your ambition to lead quiet lives,’ ‘to mind your own affairs’ and ‘to work with your [own] hands’ also climax in the first part of the purpose clause in v. 12 ‘*that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders* – ἵνα περιπατῆτε εὐσχημόνως πρὸς τοὺς ἔξω. The above social descriptions are not simply designed to change attitudes within the Thessalonian brotherhood. Rather, they emphasise the need for action⁶⁵ and a change in *conduct* thereby affecting the perception of those on the periphery towards the community (cf. 3:12; 5:15).⁶⁶ Paul’s overriding concern here is that the Thessalonian brothers should not only be aware of behaving indecently towards one another but also of how they could adversely affecting the perspective of ‘the outsiders’ (οἱ ἔξω).

There is good reason to believe, as John Barclay argues, that the social context here is such that the Thessalonian Christians were being harassed by non-Christians because of the former’s refusal to work and preference to engage in evangelism instead.⁶⁷ Such was the Thessalonians’ evangelistic fervour that the message of the gospel appears to have

⁶⁵ In this regard Barclay (“Conflict,” p. 522 n 35) insists that the preposition πρὸς in verse 12 carries the full force of “towards”. He states that ‘Paul is concerned that the Christians’ behaviour be proper in their relations with outsiders, not just “in view of” outsiders’; see also Wanamaker, *Thessalonians*, pp. 162-64.

⁶⁶ de Vos (*Church and Community Conflicts*, p. 290) is quite right to state that (compared to Philippi) Paul’s injunctions in 4:11-12 are aimed at ‘reducing the conflict’ between the Thessalonians and those outside the community.

⁶⁷ Barclay, “Conflict,” p. 522.

extended beyond that of the city itself to other areas such as Achaia (cf. 1:8). The contents of their message probably included the pouring of contempt upon Gentile morals or the lack of them (4:5; 5:7) and this no doubt would have caused rancor among the inhabitants of Thessalonica. According to Barclay, if part of the converts' 'aggressive evangelistic activity' included the tearing down of shrines and idols, it is not surprising they incurred the wrath of the Thessalonian citizens and were bitterly resented and persecuted. All these activities would have had important repercussions for the brotherhood *vis-à-vis outsiders*. As a consequence, the respect and reputation with which the Christian family ought to have been held was being tarnished. (Was there prevalent among the Thessalonian community – as it is today – the misplaced thought that it was more 'spiritual' to engage in proclaiming the gospel than to be engaged in 'ordinary' everyday work?).

The double reference to 'honour' in v. 11 (φιλοτιμῆσθαι, lit. 'love of honour') and the more unusual term in v. 12 εὐσχημόνως (e.g. Rom. 13:13; 1 Cor. 14:40), are therefore timely and point up the fact that if 'respect' is important as regards internal relationships within the brotherhood (cf. 5:12f. and chapter 9) then living honourably is equally important for brothers as regards their external relations. Paul's main concern is that brotherly love is not just a domestic affair but also concerns itself with how the group is perceived by those not connected to it. Thus, the exhortation to brotherly love carries with it not only the necessity for providing for one's own needs, but failure to do so could endanger the reputation of the group on the part of those outside. Paul's advice in the circumstances is to urge the Thessalonians to *reduce* their evangelising (not stop it) in

order that they might ‘get back to work’⁶⁸ and provide for their own households.

There is in all this an understanding by Paul, consonant with our earlier socio-historical material, namely, that the perceptions of those outside the family could be coloured by a brother’s (mis)-treatment or hatred of another brother. Plutarch demonstrates an acute awareness of this very thing when he states: ‘...hatred of brothers...is a cause of slander and accusations against such brothers; for *their fellow citizens think* that after having been so closely bound together...brothers could become deadly enemies unless each were aware of many wicked deeds committed by the other. There must be, *they infer* great reason for the breaking up of a great goodwill and affection’ (emphasis added) (7/481B-B). Moreover, Lucian of Samosata (see chapter 4.7) is a prime example of an unbeliever, and therefore an *outsider*, whose perception has been affected by the co-operation of ‘brothers’ who consider ‘all things ..common property’. In the case of Peregrinus, Lucian is suspicious and critical of Christian brothers who could be easy pickings for others to exploit: ‘any charlatan and trickster able to profit by occasions, comes among them, he quickly acquires sudden wealth by imposing upon simple folk’ (*Per.* 13; cf. Tertullian, *Apol.* 39).

Viewed in this manner, the key to interpreting this passage is to understand the Thessalonians’ behaviour in light of the importance which the ancient world placed upon family honour. In antiquity the honour of the household was inextricably linked with family ideology and seen as a crucial value for family members to uphold. Brothers – in their relations to one another – were part of this household matrix and were not only

⁶⁸ Barclay, “Conflict,” p. 523.

expected to conduct themselves in an honourable fashion, but were to do so in order that the family name should not be besmirched. To be sure, we have observed how when one brother 'mistreated' another brother this reflected poorly on their father's honour. But above and beyond this was the honour of the *entire family name* and when this was upheld, for instance by brothers 'pulling their weight' and providing for their own families, then respect was accorded to the whole household. Mutual relationships affect mutual behaviour, and the family honour of the group depends upon the reinforcing of brotherly love *and* conduct that not only distinguishes them from those outside it, but also presents the brotherhood in a positive manner to those not connected to it.⁶⁹

8.8 Summary

Chapter 4:9-12 is found in the paraenetic section of this letter where Paul, having dealt earlier with a moral problem (vv. 3-5) goes on to address the brothers (x2 v. 10) concerning the subject of brotherly-love (vv. 9-12) and how it relates to work. Using an ancient writing device (paralipsis), the apostle gives the impression that he is merely passing over the *topos* of φιλαδελφία, but in fact goes on to discuss it at some length. By so doing, Paul demonstrates that there are *internal* and *external* problems concerning the behavioural implications of brotherly love. More important, in order to diffuse and regulate these difficulties which were affecting the brotherhood, Paul draws on a set of

⁶⁹ Wanamaker, *Thessalonians*, p. 164; Meeks, *First Urban Christians*, pp. 84-107. Sandnes (*A New Family*, p. 149) on the basis of a number of Jewish (e.g. Philo, *Spec. Leg.* 3.169, 171) and Graeco-Roman (e.g. Plutarch, *Conj. Praec.* 32/142D) texts argues that when 'Paul speaks of those "outside" (exô) in contrast to those "inside" (esô) this is ordinary language for the boundaries of the house, home or the family'.

cultural expectations prevalent in families in antiquity.

For the most part the apostle commends the Thessalonian brothers for their *φιλαδελφία* and mutual love. It would appear that his readers are well acquainted (either through the Spirit or Paul's own instruction) with brotherly love and that in general they are demonstrating this to one another. Further, this is a love which extends beyond the confines of the brotherhood itself in that it is also demonstrated towards other Christian brothers (e.g. hospitality) completely unknown to them and who reside elsewhere.

However, Paul's praise is qualified – although he generally commends the brotherhood for their brotherly love, he has occasion to exhort the brothers to show greater manifestations of *φιλαδελφία*. His reason for doing so is because a certain element within the brotherhood were refusing to work, preferring instead to engage in evangelistic activities through the propagation of the gospel message. The failure of these brothers in this domain was causing over-dependency on other brothers – not to mention the strain on community relations – who continued to work. In response, and in keeping with the normal social expectations of households in the ancient world, Paul calls upon these brothers to curtail their evangelistic endeavours and to get back to work, so that they can adequately provide for their own households. Certainly, Paul is not afraid of the brothers showing brotherly love and helping others who are genuinely in need, but neither does he want some brothers to use this as an excuse to exploit the rest of the brotherhood. In this way Paul employs the *topos* of *φιλαδελφία* as a corrective measure and a counter-strategy to put certain restraints upon how this concept is understood and

worked out.

Concomitant with this was the fact that the refusal of some brothers to work, coupled with their overly-zealous evangelism would in both cases adversely affect the perception of those outside the community. As regards the former, the failure of certain Christian brothers to provide for their own household could have been perceived by those not connected to the brotherhood as indifference whilst the type of aggressive evangelism in which they were engaged was also affecting their reputation in the eyes of *outsiders*. Paul's method of dealing with this problem again concurs with the common assumptions of family life in antiquity: brothers were expected to work and contribute towards the maintenance of the family and strive to uphold its interests and honour in the face of outsiders. Φιλαδελφία not only relates to those inside the brotherhood but should also impact favourably upon those not connected to it. To be sure, the apostle's exhortations show a concern for the need to keep his own reputation intact but, more importantly, he is anxious to see that the honour of the *whole Pauline family* is maintained in the eyes of outsiders.

9. ORDER IN THE AFFAIRS OF THE BROTHERHOOD (1 Thess. 5:12-15)

9.1 Introduction

We turn now to our third main piece of exegesis concerning brotherly relations in 1 Thessalonians, namely, chapter 5:12-15. These verses occur in that section of the epistle where Paul provides a series of exhortations on a number of different issues. The subjects include recognition and respect for leaders (vv. 12-13); exhortation of those requiring it (v. 14); teaching in regard to personal relationships (v. 15); requirements for living the Christian life (vv. 16-18); and living in the *pneuma* (vv. 19-22).¹ Indeed, the range of issues here mentioned has led some commentators to conclude that they have no immediate relevance to the specific situation in Thessalonica.² This is partly based upon the close similarities between 1 Thess. 5:12-22 and Rom. 12:18f., an affinity which is used to advocate that since Paul in the latter deals with general and unrelated injunctions he is also dealing with a series of unconnected issues in the former.³ But Paul's

¹ von Dobschütz, *Thessalonicher*, p. 215; Wanamaker, *Thessalonians*, p. 191.

² Marxsen (*Thessalonicher*, p. 33) entitles this section "Einzelermahnungen". E. Lohse (*Die Entstehung des Neuen Testaments* [Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1979], p. 27) also states: 'In diesen Abschnitten werden nicht Weisungen erteilt, die durch bestimmte Vorfälle oder Anfragen der Gemeinde ausgelöst sind, sondern es wird traditionelles Gut entfaltet, um der Gemeinde zu zeigen, was ständig gilt und wie sie sich verhalten hat'; F. F. Bruce ("St. Paul in Macedonia: 2. The Thessalonian Correspondence," *BJRL* vol. 62 [1980], pp. 328-45 [335]) describes these verses as 'general principles of Christian ethics'; C. J. Roetzel (*The Letters of Paul: Conversations in Context* [Atlanta: John Knox, 1975], p. 41) gives the division 5:12-22 the heading: "Shotgun Paraenesis (Random Instruction)"; Koester ("Experiment in Christian Writing," pp. 38-39) states that these verses 'are not occasioned by the situation, rather they elaborate a tradition.'

³ Some commentators (e.g. Best, *Thessalonians*, p. 223) regard Paul as employing an already existing (Jewish-Christian) tradition without any specific reference to the particularities of the Thessalonian situation.

exhortations in Romans 12 need not be understood as addressing unspecific issues;⁴ therefore there is no need to conclude prematurely that he is also doing so here.

And, even if Paul is drawing from traditional material, there is every reason to suppose – as he does elsewhere – that he tailors it to fit the specific situation at Thessalonica.

Moreover, whilst there may be some ‘general exhortations’ in these verses it is not Paul’s style to be unspecific in his teaching. On the contrary, he is usually concrete in his remarks as Victor Furnish points out:

There is a sense in which such exhortations may be classified as “basic principles” or described as “general truths,” but this does not mean that the Pauline ethic is devoid of specific content. On the one hand, these “general” exhortations are themselves directed to concrete situations and problems in Christian congregations. And on the other hand, they stand side-by-side with other Pauline admonitions – which are *quite specific*.⁵

This argument is further substantiated by the internal remarks in this pericope, comments that can be related to the rest of the letter and which indicate that all *within* and *without* the Thessalonian community is not well (see 9.2 and 9.3 below).⁶ Although there is much which Paul says to commend the young Thessalonian community, there are

⁴ See W. S. Campbell (“Romans III as a Key to the Situation and Thought of the Letter,” *NovT* vol. 23 [1981], pp. 22-40, esp. pp. 37-40) for example, who views Romans 12 as addressing particular concerns of the apostle Paul; see also E. Adams, *Constructing the World: A Study of Paul’s Cosmological Language* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1999), pp. 199-201.

⁵ V. P. Furnish, *Theology and Ethics in Paul* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1968), pp. 72-73 (emphasis added); R. Bultmann (“Allegemeine Wahrheiten und christliche Verkündigung,” *ZTK* vol. 54 [1957], pp. 244-54 (253) also states: “Es ist nach allem verständlich, dass allegemeine Wahrheiten, sofern sie in der konkreten Situation als Ancrede begegnen, ihren notwendigen Platz...haben.”

⁶ Some scholars are of the opinion that there are no conflicts within the Thessalonian church. This conclusion is generally reached on the basis of the positive report that Timothy brought back to Paul. See for example, Neil, *Thessalonians*, p. xv; W. Hendriksen, *Exposition of 1 and 2 Thessalonians* (NTC; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1955), pp. 11-12; J. M. Reese, *1 and 2 Thessalonians* (Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1979), p. xiii.

indications in these verses that he is addressing particular concerns where progress and improvement still needed to be made.⁷ These problems certainly do not represent a crisis in the church, evident from the brevity of Paul's remarks on the contentious issues;⁸ nevertheless the apostle's material is specifically adapted to his knowledge of the Thessalonian church, information which was probably received orally via his emissary Timothy (cf. 3:6).⁹

Before we turn to these issues, it is important to put them into context. First, it is rarely, if at all, recognised that Paul in these verses is primarily concerned with relationships between ἀδελφοί (vv. 12a and 14a),¹⁰ even though the apostle here makes important distinctions between these brothers (see immediately below).¹¹ Moreover, as we have already observed, throughout the course of the letter the apostle repeatedly refers to the Christians within the community at Thessalonica as ἀδελφοί (see chapter 6 earlier).

⁷ Williams, *Thessalonians*, p. 94; Marshall, *Thessalonians*, p. 146.

⁸ This is to be compared with his comments in 1 Corinthians, a church founded shortly after Thessalonica, where he gives extensive coverage to the problems facing the church e.g. disunity (1 Cor. 1:10), food sacrificed to idols (1 Cor. 8-10), spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 12-14), the resurrection of Christ (1 Cor. 15).

⁹ Morris (*Thessalonians*, p. 163) writes: 'There were evidently some problems in personal relationships among the Thessalonians, and in the concluding moments of his epistle Paul gives attention to them'. See also Weima (*Neglected Endings*, pp. 185-86) who demonstrates that the closing remarks of 1 Thessalonians (i.e. vv. 23-28) provide a hermeneutical key to understanding the letter. In an extended "kiss" benediction, Paul calls for *all* the brothers (5:26) to be greeted, an indication that there were tensions within the brotherhood. According to Weima, these problems are earlier identified in 5:12-15 - certain idlers (5:14) were failing to respect and obey church leaders and as a consequence were disturbing the peace (5:13b) within the community. Paul calls upon the leaders of the church to admonish these 'idlers'. Weima (*Neglected Endings*, p. 186) concludes: 'There is sufficient evidence...for postulating the existence of *internal tensions* within the Thessalonian congregation, with those tensions originating from the failure of the idlers to respect and obey the church's leaders' (emphasis added).

¹⁰ We are fully aware of the fact that while Luke refers to Paul establishing 'elders' during his first missionary campaign (cf. Acts 14:23) and the church at Thessalonica was established during the *second* missionary journey. The reason for Luke using such a term is due to his later nomenclature.

¹¹ In fact the noun ἀδελφοί is used frequently in chapter 5 (vv. 12, 14, 25, 26, and 27).

Again the fact that brotherly relations are uppermost in Paul's mind here is evident in the way that he specifically identifies certain distinctive features of such relationships e.g. respect, love, work and honour – all of which family members in the ancient world were normally expected to uphold.

Returning to the note sounded earlier, i.e. that there are problems in the community which Paul appears to be addressing in these verses, what evidence is there in 5:12-15 for such tensions? Essentially the difficulties are two-fold in that there were conflicts *within*¹² and *without* the community.

9.2 Internal Conflicts Facing the Brotherhood

Regarding the domestic problems, if as we have earlier argued it is highly likely that the ἄτακτοι here in 5:14 are to be identified with those 'idlers'¹³ mentioned in 4:11-12,¹⁴ then there was a general reluctance and refusal by certain brothers to work and provide for the basic necessities of their own families. Indeed, it is striking to note the number of

¹² Although a number of commentators agree that there are internal difficulties in the community, some have, in our view, misunderstood the nature of these tensions. For example, A. von Harnack ("Das Problem des zweiten Thessalonicherbriefes," *Sitzungsbericht der Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaft zu Berlin, philosophisch-historischen Classe* vol. 31 [1910], pp. 560-78) posits that two Thessalonian communities existed, one Gentile, the other Jewish, and that the two letters 1 and 2 Thessalonians were addressed to each church respectively. E. E. Ellis ("Paul and his Co-Workers," *NTS* vol. 17 [1970-71], pp. 437-52) is of the view that the division rested between the leaders and the laity of the church, with 2 Thessalonians specifically written to the former group and 1 Thessalonians to the latter.

¹³ Some scholars translate the term ἄτακτοι as 'insubordinate' on the basis that it was a military expression for insubordinate soldiers who had stepped out of line (see C. Spicq "Les Thesaloniens 'inquiets' étaient-ils des paresseux?" *ST* vol. 10 [1956], pp. 1-13). de Vos (*Church and Community Conflicts*, p. 165) argues that the ἄτακτοι refers to those who were guilty of *civil* disobedience. However, 2 Thess. 3:6-15 clearly identifies the ἄτακτοι as those who either refuse or are unwilling to work (cf. 1 Thess. 4:11-12 and our earlier discussion in chapter 8), hence our understanding of this term as 'idlers'.

¹⁴ See Barclay, "Conflict," p. 530. It is also striking that in both these pericopae the addressees are referred to as ἀδελφοί (cf. 4:10b, and 5:12 and 14) whom Paul exhorts to 'work' (4:11-12 and 5:13). Also in both instances 'love' is the under-girding characteristic that distinguishes sibling relations (cf. 4:9 and 5:13).

references Paul makes to work/labour in this letter, evident, for example, in the way it is repeated in the thanksgiving: ‘We continually remember your work [ἔργον] produced by faith’ (1:3) and ‘your labour [κόπον] prompted by love’ (1:3). The apostle also calls upon the Thessalonians to remember his own labour among them: ‘You remember, brothers, our toil [κόπον] and hardship [μόχθον]... we worked [ἐργαζόμενοι] night and day in order not to be a burden to you’ (2:9). In our earlier exegesis of 4:9-12 we saw how Paul exhorted his readers to ‘make it your ambition to mind your own business, to work [ἐργάζεσθαι] with your [own] hands’ (v. 11). Now, towards the end of the letter, Paul returns to this topic again to drive home the necessity to work, only this time he holds up certain brothers within the community as industrious. He urges the ‘brothers’ ‘to acknowledge those who work [κοπιῶντας] hard’ among them (5:12) and respect them ‘because of their work’ [ἔργον] (5:13). These exhortations to work, together with the command “Be at peace among yourselves” (v. 13),¹⁵ and the double reference ‘to admonish’ (νουθετεῖν, vv. 13 and 14), strongly suggest that there are tensions/conflicts between the brothers in relation to this area .¹⁶

In addition to the problem of some brothers being unwilling or refusing to work, there was also the related difficulty on their part of failing to show proper respect (v. 13a) and

¹⁵ The variant αὐτοῖς has some attestation (N D). If it is taken with a rough breathing then the meaning would be the same as ἑαυτοῖς. On the other hand, if the smooth breathing is accepted then the rendering would be ‘be at peace with them’ (i.e. with ‘the leading brothers who toil’).

¹⁶ Gaventa, *Thessalonians*, p. 80; Weima, *Neglected Endings*, p. 185.

obedience to these leading brothers.¹⁷ Quite probably what is at issue here is the fact that, from Paul's perspective, certain brothers were unaware of the position and worth of the people in question and they are called upon to acknowledge their position.¹⁸ In light of these internal problems, Paul's exhortations in 5:12-15 are partly 'aimed at strengthening the community's boundaries by encouraging internal unity'.¹⁹

9.3 External Conflicts Facing the Brotherhood

Secondly, Paul is also concerned about the Thessalonians community's relations with outsiders, as 5:15 indicates: 'See that none of you pays back evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another *and to everyone else*' (καὶ εἰς πάντα, v. 15b). By employing the phrase καὶ εἰς πάντα (5:15) we have *further* evidence (see chapter 8.3 earlier) that relations between those inside the community and non-Christians were not good and that the apostle is anxious to improve them.²⁰ We observed earlier how the brotherhood had tarnished its reputation in relation to outsiders by certain brothers opting out of their responsibilities to work and engaging in evangelistic activity instead. By so doing they had become a public nuisance to non-Christians. Consequently, Paul orders them to return to work and gain the respect of οἱ ἔξω (4:12). More than likely this same problem is addressed by Paul in 5:14; indeed, if his instructions in 5:15 are anything to go by, here we have a further indication of tension between those inside and outside the community

¹⁷ Wanamaker, *Thessalonians*, p. 192.

¹⁸ Morris, *Thessalonians*, p. 165.

¹⁹ de Vos, *Church and Community Conflicts*, p. 174.

²⁰ Barclay, "Conflict," p. 520; de Vos, *Church and Community Conflicts*, p. 160; Still, *Conflict at Thessalonica*, pp. 208-27.

in the sense that the Thessalonian believers may well have taken *retaliatory action* against the repression experienced at the hands of non-Christians.²¹

We have only briefly sketched some of the divisive issues (both internal and external) which the Thessalonian community was facing. In the course of our exegesis we shall discuss in further detail the nature of these conflicts and the strategies Paul advocates in order to diffuse them.

9.4 Brotherly Relations – Patriarchal or Non-Patriarchal?²²

Before we proceed with our exegesis, one of the many important issues which these verses raise for us and which have provoked scholarly debate is the *structure* of early Christian communities. In particular, does the fact that brothers are to demonstrate mutual concern (πάντοτε τὸ ἀγαθὸν διώκετε²³ [καὶ] εἰς ἀλλήλους, 5:15) *exclude* the possibility that some brothers were endowed with a certain degree of authority over others (v. 12b)? In other words, does the apostle look upon brotherly relations in terms of a hierarchy, or is his thinking more closely aligned with non-patriarchal structures? Was Paul's social 'style' structuralist or anti-structuralist?²⁴ Some comment on these issues is

²¹ Barclay, "Conflict", p. 161; de Vos, *Church and Community Relations*, p. 160; Best, *Thessalonians*, p. 177; Marshall, *Thessalonians*, pp. 152-53.

²² See p. 7 for some comment on our use and meaning of these terms.

²³ The Greek verb διώκω can either mean 'pursue' or 'persecute' and whilst the former is better in this context, R. A. Ward (cited in Morris [*Thessalonians*, p. 171 n 57]) asks: 'Did he [i.e. Paul] want his readers to put the same intensity into altruism as he had put into his persecution?'

²⁴ The terms 'structure' and 'anti-structure' are sociological expressions employed to describe two different modes of social relations of every society. According to sociologists no society can adequately function without some form of superordination. Hence, the 'structuralist' 'position' describes the system governed by hierarchically differentiated roles. Others (e.g. V. Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* [Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1977], pp. 106-07) suggest that members of a society not only relate to one another in a non-hierarchical, but also in an *anti*-hierarchical or (at certain points of ritual transition) *anti*-structural manner.

required at this stage.

As we observed in chapter 1.2, many scholars²⁵ are of the opinion that at the outset the early Christian groups started as non-patriarchal in composition which, through the passage of time, ‘degenerated’ into more rigid patriarchal structures. Such views continue to be held and have recently been articulated by Scott Bartchy who asserts that Paul was anti-patriarchal without being egalitarian. Instead, suggests Bartchy, Paul’s aim was similar to that of Jesus, which was ‘to undermine the authority and social cohesiveness of the blood kin group and patriarchal family, to offer an alternative form of social bonding in the place of the patrilineal biological family’.²⁶ Brothers were an integral part of ancient family life and, according to Bartchy, *Christians* or ‘new surrogate siblings’ were to treat one another as they would have biological brothers and sisters.²⁷

In response to this, it is our opinion that relations among brothers in the ancient world are not as simplistic or as straight-forward as Bartchy might be led to think.²⁸ That is to

²⁵ E.g., Meeks, *First Urban Christians*, pp. 85-90; Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, pp. 180-83; Petersen, *Rediscovering Paul*, pp. 96.

²⁶ Bartchy, “Undermining Ancient Patriarchy,” p. 71.

²⁷ Bartchy, “Undermining Ancient Patriarchy,” p. 69.

²⁸ Gaventa, (“Our Mother St. Paul,” p. 43) falls into this same trap when she comments: ‘One reading strategy that has become conventional in recent decades involves dissecting Paul’s letters into texts labelled “hierarchical” and other texts labelled ‘egalitarian’. With that dualistic approach to Paul, the texts in which he refers to himself as “father” fall neatly into the *hierarchical* pile, and those in which he refers to believers as brothers fall neatly into the *egalitarian* pile’. John S. Kloppenborg’s (“Egalitarianism in the Myth and Rhetoric of Pauline Churches,” in E. A. Castelli and H. Taussig [eds.], *Reimagining Christian Origins: A Colloquium Honoring Burton L. Mack* [Pennsylvania: Trinity Press International, 1996], pp. 247-263 [248]) comments are typical: ‘It has now become something of a truism that the earliest churches – the Pauline churches, at least, and perhaps some sectors of the Jesus movement in Galilee – were “egalitarian”’. Kloppenborg states that in the past most of the ‘evidence’ for egalitarianism has been from Hebrew sources but he goes on to suggest, rather optimistically in our view, that ‘other comparisons should not be excluded, especially when considering groups such as the *Thessalonian Christians*, among whom there is no such evidence of a Jewish component at all’ (emphasis added). Under the general heading “The Evidence of Egalitarianism” he states: ‘the dense use of fictive family terms, most importantly *adelphos*,

say, brotherly relations in antiquity were not always non-patriarchal. Moreover, we have demonstrated earlier in our primary source material, hierarchical relationships were a important feature of brotherly relations in antiquity (cf. 4.2.2; 4.2.4; 4.5; 4.10.1). For instance, Plutarch reminds brothers that ‘it is impossible for them to be on an equal footing in all respects’ (*Frat. Amor.* 12/484C). Such differences are also apparent by the manner in which Plutarch repeatedly refers to some brothers as ‘superior’ (*Frat. Amor.* 12/484D, 13/485C) and to others as ‘inferior’ (*Frat. Amor.* 14/485C), even though they are to guard against these inequalities. Certainly, brothers were of equal *value* but it is quite another matter to say that brothers have the same *status* and hence *function* in the same manner. One of the aims of this chapter is to test the validity of this hypothesis. If it could be shown that there is evidence *in this letter* for understanding *some* sibling relations in hierarchical terms this, coupled with our previous finding of Paul’s hierarchical – yet affectionate – relationship as ‘father’ to the Thessalonians, may have far-reaching implications for our understanding of the structure of early Christian communities. If differences in rank and status between the Thessalonian brothers could be shown, then such evidence could suggest that, rather than viewing the early Christian communities as having shifted *from* a non-patriarchal *to* a patriarchal structure, here – in *his earliest extant correspondence* – they never were non-patriarchal.²⁹ Can such a view

suggests a rather sustained rhetoric of “belonging” in use in Pauline groups’. Both Gaventa and Kloppenborg *assume* that the term ἀδελφός is non-hierarchical.

²⁹ Martin’s comment (*Slavery as Salvation*, p. 59) is instructive in this regard: ‘The early Christian usage of household language is one bit of evidence that there was *no* egalitarian stage of early Christianity followed by a hierarchical stage’ (emphasis added). This false assumption that early Christianity developed from an egalitarian, charismatic origin to a patriarchal and hierarchical society has also been challenged by U. Brockhaus (*Charisma und Amt: Die paulinische Charismenlehre aus dem Hintergrund der frühchristlichen*

be sustained from Paul's remarks in 5:12-15? Some preliminary response to this question is in order.

Many commentators are of the opinion that Paul in vv. 12-15 is addressing his comments towards all the brothers, or ordinary believers. This conclusion is usually made on the basis that similar phraseology and terms are employed in vv. 12 and 14:³⁰ in v. 12, Paul calls upon the entire brotherhood (ἀδελφοί) to respect their 'leaders' (apparently a different category), and in v. 14 these same brothers (ἀδελφοί) share the duties and responsibilities ('warn' 'help' etc.) which Paul goes on to delineate.³¹ Thus, the instructions given by the apostle apply to every Christian or brother in the Thessalonian community.

However, there are strong and convincing reasons for thinking otherwise since Paul seems to make a *distinction* between 'ordinary/led brothers' (vv. 12-13) and 'leading brothers' (vv. 14-15).³² In the first instance, the apostle, in verse 12, exhorts the 'brothers' to respect those who lead, but importantly they too are referred to as 'brothers'.

Gemeindefunktion [Wuppertal: Theologischer Verlag R. Brockhaus, 1972], pp. 237-47). Brockhaus argues that elements of the institutional office (e.g. permanence of position, titles, legitimation, authority etc.) were *already* issues facing the apostle in his earliest churches. B. Witherington (*Conflict and Community in Corinth: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995], p. 453) also states: '...there is *no* evidence that Paul's communities were ever egalitarian, if by that one means nonhierarchical' (emphasis added).

³⁰ Best (*Thessalonians*, p. 229) also makes the point that 'ask' and 'request' are synonyms for Paul and that parallels with other Pauline passages (e.g. Rom. 12:12-14) suggest both are spoken to the community as a whole.

³¹ Best, *Thessalonians*, p. 229; Bruce, *Thessalonians*, p. 122; Marshall, *Thessalonians*, p. 150; Morris, *Thessalonians*, p. 168; Williams, *Thessalonians*, p. 96.

³² Campbell (*The Elders*, p. 135) is of the view that 'ἀδελφοί...is in fact Paul's preferred vocabulary for leadership' (emphasis added); see also Ellis ("Paul," p. 446) who argues that ἀδελφοί with the definite article 'in the Pauline literature fairly consistently refers to a relatively limited group of workers'; *contra* Petersen, *Rediscovering Paul*, p. 172 n 5.

This is because, as noted earlier, *all Christians* in the church at Thessalonica are addressed as brothers, and there are no others who could be something or anything other than ‘brother’. Secondly, Paul’s instructions in v. 14f. appear to be directly addressed to these leading brothers³³ since it makes little sense for the apostle Paul, after having called for the brotherhood to respect its leaders and the work they are doing (vv. 12-13), to suddenly turn to the *entire* community (vv. 14-15) and inform them ‘[Now] *you* do the work of the ministry’.³⁴ Furthermore, Church Fathers such as Chrysostom are of the view that Paul in vv. 14-15 ‘addresses those who have the rule’.³⁵ Lastly, as a number of commentators point out, when one reads this passage, it does seem to have what can only be described as a ring of authority such as church leaders are assumed to possess, and vv. 14-15 delineate how such authority was to be administered by these leading brothers (i.e. ‘admonish’, ‘help’ etc.). Thus, it is better to see here a situation in which there are ‘ordinary/led brothers’ (addressed in vv. 12-13) and ‘leading brothers’ (addressed in vv. 14); in short a hierarchy of brothers.³⁶

³³ W. Bornemann, *Die Thessalonicherbriefe* 6th ed. (Göttingen, 1894); G. G. Findlay, *The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Thessalonians* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 124; C. Masson, *Les deux Épîtres de Saint Paul aux Thessaloniens* (CNT, 11; Neuchâtel: Delachaux et Niestlé, 1957), p. 73; G. Friedrich, “Der erste an die Thessalonicher und Der Zweite Brief an die Thessalonicher,” in *Die Briefe an die Galater, Epheser, Philipper, Kolosser, Thessalonicher und Philemon*. Trans and Comm. by J.

Becker, H. Conzelmann, and G. Friedrich (NTD, 8: Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1976), pp 202-251 [248].

³⁴ Masson, *Thessaloniens*, p. 73. Masson’s comment is appropriate but once again it should be noted that he like many others is locked into the argument of whether or not those mentioned are ‘ministers/clergy’.

³⁵ Cited in Morris, *Thessalonians*, p. 168. Theodore of Mopsuestia (cited in Black, “The Weak in Thessalonica”, p. 314) also asks whether Paul at this juncture ‘vertit suum sermonem ad doctores’, as opposed to addressing the whole community.

³⁶ P. Garnsey, “Sons, Slaves --- and Christians,” in Rawson and Weaver (eds.), *The Roman Family in Italy*, pp. 101-121 [119]) makes a similar observation with regard to *slaves in the Christian community*: ‘within the Christian community, there is a hierarchy of authority, of which living proof and exemplum is the vertically structured church. *There are slaves who serve by giving orders, and there are slaves who serve by carrying out those orders without question*’ (emphasis added).

It is also worth noting one other important point which these verses raise, namely, whether these ruling brothers occupied a formal ‘office’ as such. This a question which has also (pre)-occupied commentators – whose conclusions are determined to a large extent by their own denominational affiliation – in any discussion of this text.³⁷ Much depends upon how we interpret those as being οἱ προϊσταμένοι (see pp. 302-05 below) which together with the three activities delineated, suggests a certain permanency of differentiation³⁸ or particularity or even fixity which is perhaps just on the cusp of constituting an office. It is unlikely at this stage of the development of these early Christian communities that these ‘leaders’ were occupying a formal ‘office’; nevertheless, something more than a formalised *role*, or temporary or even ad hoc agreement is in view.³⁹ A. L. Chapple may be near the truth when he states that the brothers’ position is one ‘*tending towards office*’.⁴⁰ If so, here at the earliest stages of the development of Christian communities some form of routinisation is present.⁴¹

We turn now to a discussion of the text.

³⁷ Best (*Thessalonians*, p. 226) and Morris (*Thessalonians*, p. 165), presbyterian and episcopalian respectively, are two instances of scholars who are preoccupied with questions of the clergy.

³⁸ Holmberg, *Paul and Power*, p. 110

³⁹ Holmberg (*Paul and Power*, p. 112) takes to task those who dismiss these local leadership functions as unimportant. He states: ‘Before we come to this conclusion...it is evident that even a general exhortation such as ‘Admonish the idle’...presupposes the fact that some people in the church are more orderly, are stronger, and more capable of admonishing and helping than others are. And this *actual difference* seems from the few hints we have to partly coincide with the existence of leaders who admonish when necessary’ (emphasis added). Collins (“The Church of the Thessalonians,” p. 297) writes: ‘his singular use of the term [οἱ προϊσταμένοι] in our letter provides us with an indication that the church of the Thessalonians was indeed an ordered and *structured* community’ (emphasis added).

⁴⁰ A. L. Chapple, “Local Leadership in the Pauline Churches,” p. 207 unpub. PhD diss., Durham, 1984 (emphasis added).

⁴¹ Campbell, *The Elders*, p. 122.

9.5 ‘Acknowledge those Brothers who Work hard among You...’

In verse 12 Paul’s final exhortations are introduced by formal paraenetic language and by a direct address to the ἀδελφοί . This is followed by a double infinitive phrase, the first of which comprises three participial phrases: τοὺς κοπιῶντας ἐν ὑμῖν καὶ προΐσταμένους ὑμῶν ἐν κυρίῳ καὶ νοουθετοῦντας ὑμᾶς . This triplet of participles is prefaced by the definite article τοὺς ‘the ones’ or ‘those’⁴² whom Paul later identifies as worthy of respect. If the above three participles (κοπιῶντας, προΐσταμένους and νοουθετοῦντας) in verse 12 point to the fact that ‘a group were active in teaching, leading and correcting *their fellow-members*’⁴³ then in each of the above three statements Paul is describing the sort of behaviour appropriate to *one* as opposed to three different groups of people.

Regarding the first infinitival phrase, Paul urges his readers to εἰδέναι causing some commentators to translate it at its face value – ‘recognise’.⁴⁴ But evidently more than simply ‘to know’ or ‘to understand’ is meant in this context. Other commentators understand this infinitive as ‘respect’⁴⁵ on the grounds that in 1 Cor. 16:18 the compound

⁴² Paul gives no indication as to who these brothers are; we can only conjecture. In Acts 17:1-9 where the author tells us of Paul’s evangelistic activity in Thessalonica, we read of a Jason. Later in Acts we read of Aristarchus of Thessalonica (Acts 19:29) and Secundus (Acts 20:4). Also, a Demas associated with Thessalonica is mentioned in Col. 4:14.

⁴³ Campbell, *The Elders*, p. 121. See also Chapple (“Local Leadership,” p. 207) who demonstrates that κοπιῶντας is a semi-technical term for preaching and teaching.

⁴⁴ Richard, *Thessalonians*, p. 267; Wanamaker, *Thessalonians*, p. 192.

⁴⁵ BAGD 556.5 translates this verb as ‘respect or honour’. Commentators who follow this interpretation are Best, *Thessalonians*, p. 224; Moore, *Thessalonians*, p. 79; Morris, *Thessalonians*, p. 165; Marshall, *Thessalonians*, p. 146.

verb ἐπιγινώσκω is employed by Paul (cf. Ignatius of Antioch's use of εἰδέναι in *Smy.* 9:1) in the sense of knowing the worth of someone and hence demonstrating appropriate respect or honour towards them. But, it could be argued, this renders the later infinitive ἡγεῖσθαι "to respect" (v. 13a) redundant and in any case we should not make too much of this 'parallel' in 1 Cor. 16:18 since the verb roots are different. Perhaps a more likely meaning of this infinitive is 'acknowledge'⁴⁶ which points up the fact that in these very early days of the Christian church certain brothers of the community were to be endorsed as leaders, something other brothers within the community should have accepted but were slow to do.

One of the three terms that the apostle uses to describe these leading brothers is κοπιᾶν, elsewhere employed in connection with manual labour, a subject raised by Paul earlier in the letter (2:8-9; cf. 1 Cor. 4:12; 2 Thess. 3:8). Moreover, since Paul himself engaged in working with his hands in order that he might be free to proclaim the gospel, it should not surprise us to find that he uses the same word to describe his evangelistic work of teaching and preaching the gospel (e.g. 1 Cor. 15:10; Gal. 4:11). Interestingly in 1 Cor. 16:16 where there are a number of parallels with 1 Thess. 5:12-15 (e.g. respect, familial language) the apostle also requests the Corinthians to 'submit to everyone who joins in the work and labours hard among you' (καὶ παντὶ τῷ συνεργοῦντι καὶ κοπιῶντι, 1 Cor. 16:16). Holding certain brothers up as worthy of recognition due to the work they perform is therefore of a piece with the apostle's own work ethic but also

⁴⁶ See LSJ, p. 483.

paves the way for Paul's accusations against some idle brothers who refused to work to provide for their own needs and the needs of their households (cf. v. 14a).

9.6 '...who rule over you and admonish you'⁴⁷ (v. 12b)

The two remaining participles *προϊσταμένους* and *νουθετοῦντας* describe the responsibilities of oversight and correction on the part of these leading brothers. Some understand this first participle to mean 'those who stand before you as protectors'⁴⁸ or who 'care for or are concerned about you'⁴⁹ since Rom. 12:8, a similar passage, delineates protection. The only other occurrence of the term is in the Pastorals (1 Tim. 3:4, 12, 17) where, although the context is of a father caring for children, the term nevertheless contains clear overtones of oversight.

According to some scholars, this group functioned more in the way of wealthy figures at Corinth (cf. 1 Cor. 16:15ff.) who, because of their affluence and greater status, naturally served as patrons or guardians of the community.⁵⁰ As a result 'a position of authority grows out of the benefits that persons of relatively higher wealth and status could confer on the community'.⁵¹ Thus, the remainder of the Thessalonian community ought to submit to them in the same way that Paul tells the Corinthians to be subject to

⁴⁷ Since the task of admonishment strictly belongs to the *leading-brothers* who, in our opinion, are specifically addressed in vv. 14-15 we shall treat this aspect below.

⁴⁸ Meeks, *First Urban Christians*, p. 134.

⁴⁹ Both BAGD, p. 707 and LSJ, pp. 1482-83 give the meaning 'care for or be concerned about'.

⁵⁰ Meeks, *First Urban Christians*, p. 134; G. Theissen, *The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity: Essays on Corinth* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982), p. 95.

⁵¹ Meeks, *First Urban Christians*, p. 134.

their 'carer' or 'protector' Stephanas and his household (1 Cor. 16:15-16).⁵²

The difficulty, however, with this hypothesis is that it has recently been shown that the long held notion that travel, houses, and services rendered by individuals etc. (e.g. Phoebe, Rom. 16:1; Stephanas, 1 Cor. 16:15f.) – supposedly indicative of an 'elevated social status,'⁵³ – is not as well founded as was previously thought. As Justin Meggitt points out: 'If we suppose that services *in any way* demonstrated elite status we fail to recognise that all exchange... is redolent with compelling symbolic significance for all sectors of society and is not purely motivated by 'economic rationality'; it does not require, for example, a comfortable surplus on the part of the giver'.⁵⁴ He concludes that if references to households, and more important references 'to...*services rendered to the church...* are not sustainable for regarding an individual as wealthy, then we have no indication that Aquila... or *Stephanas* differ in their economic status from the rest of the church members or society at large'.⁵⁵ Thus, it need not be argued that individuals who evolved as leaders of the church at Thessalonica (or any of Paul's churches for that matter) were necessarily those from the social elite and hence in a better position to look after the other, less well off, members of the community.

⁵² Wanamaker, *Thessalonians*, p. 195. Wanamaker, on the basis of Theissen's conclusions, states that the most active members of the Corinthian community were those from the higher social strata and that such a situation prevailed in the church at Thessalonica. Thus, those better-off members of the Thessalonian community could afford to care for others, serving as their patrons and protector. According to Theissen (*Social Setting*, p. 107), this is an example of 'love-patriarchalism [which] takes social differences for granted but ameliorates them through an obligation of respect and love, an obligation imposed upon those who are socially stronger. From the weaker are required subordination, fidelity and esteem'.

⁵³ Meggitt, *Paul*, p. 133.

⁵⁴ Meggitt, *Paul*, p. 132. Meggitt cites primary sources (e.g. Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*, 9.32-33) which describe how a poor market gardener (*hortulanus*) provided accommodation for a traveller even though he was unable to afford a straw mat or a blanket for himself.

⁵⁵ Meggitt, *Paul*, p. 134 (emphasis added).

A better way forward is to view this participle as referring to ‘those who rule over you’ where it is understood intransitively as ‘preside,’ ‘rule,’ or ‘govern’. Indeed, if one compares a parallel passage in Rom. 12:14-17 with 1 Thess. 5:12-15 – which some commentators regard as having a common underlying tradition⁵⁶ – the term occurs again in the list of gifts mentioned and which most English translations render as ‘leadership’ or ‘leader’.⁵⁷ Also, evidence from the papyri demonstrates that the term is used of the activities of many kinds of official.⁵⁸ And this word is also used in the LXX and in contemporary Greek in relation to the exercise of authority⁵⁹ and direction, and this meaning fits in with the first infinitive εἰδέναι (v. 12a).

More specifically, since it is brothers whom Paul is primarily addressing, our earlier primary evidence may help to shed new light on these relations, given the fact that brothers in the ancient world and within the one family did not have the same rank or *status* (e.g. 4.2.2). Of particular importance for our text here is Plutarch’s exhortation concerning siblings, that the ‘older [brother] should be solicitous about the younger and should lead’ (καθηγέισθαι, *Frat. Amor.* 16/487B) him. Also, a verse from Ben Sira (Sir. 10:20) is illuminating where the writer makes it clear that ‘among brothers their leader is

⁵⁶ Best, *Thessalonians*, p. 229

⁵⁷ Rigaux, *Thessaloniciens*, pp. 576-579. Most English versions translate the participle προΐσταμένουσ in Rom. 12:8 with the word ‘leadership’. For example, ‘If it is leadership’ NIV; ‘If you are a leader JB; ‘If you are put in charge’ REB. The only exception is the RSV which renders it: ‘He who gives aid’.

⁵⁸ See J.H. Moulton and G. Milligan (*Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament* [Peabody, MA: Hendrikson, 1997], p. 541) who have demonstrated from the papyri how this term was applied to officials, superintendents, village heads or chiefs, landlords, estate managers.

⁵⁹ Zerwick and Grosvenor (*A Grammatical Analysis*, p. 620) understand this participle to mean: ‘be a leader, be in authority over one.’

worthy of honour'. If, in light of this evidence, 'to rule'⁶⁰ is better, then this finding is significant for our thesis because it shows that within a matter of a few months there were certain brothers in the Thessalonian congregation who were leaders because of the service they rendered and the status that they held.⁶¹ Whichever view one takes regarding the above participle – 'to rule' or 'to protect'⁶² – the conclusion amounts to much the same thing since some form of hierarchy is implied⁶³ which is not incompatible with brotherly relations in the ancient world.

9. 7 'Highly Respect those brothers who rule over you' (v. 13)

Paul continues to address the whole brotherhood and builds upon what he has already stated, namely, that these leading brothers were not only expected to be acknowledged and to be in authority over other brothers, but they were also ἡγεῖσθαι αὐτοὺς ὑπερεκπερισσοῦ.⁶⁴ Usually the verb ἡγεῖσθαι means 'to count' or 'to deem' but like the infinitive εἰδέναι (v. 12) in the previous verse it has a particular nuance. Since it is qualified by the adverb ὑπερεκπερισσοῦ "very highly" and the adverbial phrase "in

⁶⁰ B. Reicke, "προϊσταμένους," *TDNT* vol. 6, p. 700-03 (701). Moore (*Thessalonians*, p. 80) also states: 'The word [προϊσταμένους] is not altogether devoid of a note of superiority'.

⁶¹ Campbell (*The Elders*, p. 122) is prepared to go even further by suggesting that 'from a very early stage in its life, perhaps *within a matter of weeks*, there were those who could be called leaders in the church whose position rested not on *charisma* in a Weberian sense, but on the service they performed and the *status* they enjoyed'.

⁶² Murphy-O'Connor, (*Paul*, p. 128) tries to get the best of both worlds and translates this participle as: 'take the lead in caring for you'.

⁶³ In this regard Wanamaker (*Thessalonians*, p. 194) is right when he comments: 'Such a non-egalitarian form of leadership should not surprise us as this is precisely the way leadership in the Diaspora synagogues emerged and it reflects the hierarchical character of Greco-Roman society'.

⁶⁴ Paul uses super-superlatives elsewhere but, on this occasion, the piling up of prefixes in the Greek is very pronounced. Findlay (cited in Morris, *Thessalonians*, p. 99) describes this expression as 'a triple Pauline intensive'.

love” it is better in the present context to place the emphasis upon ‘esteem very highly’ where the adverbial expression ὑπερεκπερισσοῦ (cf. 3:10) is understood as a modifier (cf. Herodotus 2.115 and Thucydides, 2.89), giving the sense that these brothers were to be held in the very highest regard.

Here Paul is addressing a situation where the leading brothers were not being given the rightful respect they deserved because certain brothers or ἄτακτοι, through their failure to work, were not making adequate provision for their own families. This divisive situation is further emphasised by the change in verbal mood from the indicative “we ask” (v. 12a) to the imperative “live in peace” (v. 13b)⁶⁵ and also by the fact that the apostle goes on to give the order for these ‘idlers’ to be admonished (vv. 12b and 14a).⁶⁶ The need for brotherly respect is a sentiment which finds corroboration in our earlier primary sources where brothers, and younger brothers in particular, were expected to honour an older sibling. For instance, Plutarch states that a younger brother is charged with the responsibility ‘to honour (τιμῆ) and emulate and follow the older’ brother (*Frat. Amor.* 16/487B). Such ‘respectfulness’ (αἰδώς), he informs us, ‘brings about a staunch goodwill and favour’ (*Frat. Amor.* 16/487C; cf. Epictetus, *Diss.* 2.10.8). And Josephus recounts how when Ben-hadad, the king of Syria, was defeated by Aphek, he presented himself in mourning before Ahab and vowed to remain his servant. However, Ahab

⁶⁵ There is some debate regarding the relevance of the imperative phrase “Live at Peace” to the argument. Even though it might appear to be a general comment, Paul does use it in other contexts where divisions were clearly present in the church (e.g. 2 Cor. 13:11). It fits in nicely with what Paul says in vv. 12-13a and, in light of the discord, sets the scene for the necessary action which he wants the leading brothers to take in order to diffuse the tension.

⁶⁶ Weima, *Neglected Endings*, p. 186.

promised that he would accord Ben-hadad ‘the honour he would give to a brother’ (τιμὴ μαὶ εὐνοία, *Ant.* 8.385-86).

But such respect is qualified and, according to Paul, is to be expressed “in love” (ἐν ἀγάπῃ) which, in light of the echo of 4:9-12, means both a *willingness to work and obey* those brothers who were in authority over them.⁶⁷ Given the fact that Paul in verses 12-13 is addressing the entire community, it is instructive to note that these brothers who lead should be worthy objects of love where ‘love’ goes up the hierarchy (and no doubt ‘down’ it too). Indeed, just as affection was an integral part of Paul’s hierarchical relationship between himself and his Thessalonian children (cf. 2:11-12) so love was to be the glue that binds the *intrafamilial* brotherly relations to one another. Again, it ought to be noted that Paul’s repeated use of the theme of work is no accident – it recurs here in v. 13 and the apostle does not want the Thessalonian brotherhood to be in any doubt of the importance of providing for the basic necessities of life. More importantly, by twice referring to the hard work of those brothers in authority – the new significant others in Paul’s absence – the apostle is very likely holding these leading brothers up as an example for the ‘idlers’ to follow.

⁶⁷ Marxsen, *Thessalonicher*, pp. 62, 71-72; Marshall, *Thessalonians*, p. 149; Weima, *Neglected Endings*, p. 186. See also J. E. Frame (“οἱ ἄτακτοι {1 Thess. 5:14},” *Essays in Modern Theology and related Subjects: Gathered and Published as a Testimonial to C. A. Briggs* [New York: Scribners’, 1911], pp. 191-206) who also calls attention to the conflict and division between the church leaders and the idlers, but misses the point when he lays the blame at the door of the tactless leaders.

9.8 Ruling brothers: ‘Admonish the ἄτακτοι’ (v. 14)

In vv. 14-15, Paul moves on to specifically address the ‘leading brothers’.⁶⁸ The repetition of the verb *νουθετέω* in verse 14a (cf. v. 12b) also paves the way for a direct call for these brothers to exercise a cautionary role in respect of the ἄτακτοι or ‘idlers’ who were unwilling to work and provide for themselves.⁶⁹ This is borne out by the way in which the second infinitival clause (*καὶ ἠγγεῖσθαι αὐτοὺς ὑπερεκπερισσοῦ ἐν ἀγάπῃ διὰ τὸ ἔργον αὐτῶν*, ‘hold them with the greatest respect in the Lord because of their work’, v. 13a) is sandwiched between the two ‘admonishment clauses’ (*νουθετοῦντας ὑμᾶς*, v. 12b and *νουθετεῖτε τοὺς ἀτάκτους*, v. 14b) suggesting that ‘the conflict in the Thessalonian congregation centred on the idlers who were failing to respect and obey the church’s leaders’.⁷⁰ Such tensions are further indicated by Paul’s exhortation in v. 13b: “Be at peace among yourselves” (v. 13b).

By employing the term ἄτακτοι, Paul, on the basis of our previous exegesis (cf. 4:11-12) and the use of the related verb and adverb in 2 Thess. 3:6, 7, 11, has more than likely got certain brothers in his sights who had become dependent upon other brothers and did

⁶⁸ Campbell (*The Elders*, p. 121) writes: ‘For Paul to speak in this way of “those who admonish you” is clearly to single out a certain group of people who did this more regularly than others...and thus clearly point to a leadership group’ (emphasis added).

⁶⁹ F. Reinecker and C. Rogers (*Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980], p. 602) state regarding the verb ‘admonish’: ‘the word is used for the administration and correction of those who are in error’.

⁷⁰ Weima, *Neglected Endings*, p. 186.

not want to work.⁷¹ Brothers who refused to engage in work and chose instead to engage in evangelistic endeavour⁷² were not to sponge off other brothers and take advantage; rather they must return to their occupations and provide for their households. If, those mentioned in 4:11 are most likely identified as the ‘loafers’ here in 5:14 such brothers needed to be exhorted and admonished regarding the importance of earning so-to-speak their own ‘bread’!

Administering correction to his own converts, when needed, was not something foreign to the apostle Paul. In 1 Cor. 4:14 such warnings are given within the context of Paul’s role as ‘spiritual father’ to his convert children (cf. 2:11) and it is very likely that he envisages a similar role for this leading group of brothers in the Thessalonian community. It is also instructive to note that the same verb *νουθετέω* is employed in relation to moral discipline and frequently of a *father* who admonishes *children* (e.g. Wisd. 11:10; Pss. Sol. 13:19; Josephus, *Bell. Jud.* 1.481; 1 Cor. 4:14). That Paul expects these leading brothers to exercise an admonishing role is also clear from what he states elsewhere in his letters e.g. Gal. 6:1, ‘brothers (ἀδελφοί), if someone is caught in a sin, *you who are spiritual* should correct him’.

Now, in his absence, the apostle expects those brothers in authority to exercise this corrective responsibility. Certainly, the issue(s) in 5:12-15 are connected to Paul’s honour as father – again see earlier for parallels of this in antiquity e.g. 4.2.1 – but the problem here is also bound up with the honour of the entire family. Paul knows full well that if

⁷¹ As far as this second view is concerned the meaning is not ‘those who are unemployed’ or ‘those who have no work’ or ‘those who do not work’ but rather ‘those who refuse to work’.

⁷² Barclay, “Conflict,” p. 526.

certain brothers are to continue to fail to provide for their own families the sense of harmony and unity in the brotherhood, not to mention the honour of the entire Pauline family, will be at risk. This is no small point given the fact that the honour of a group, in this case the family, in the ancient Mediterranean world⁷³ centred around the upholding of its values and expectations by those members who pertained to it. The corollary of this is that dishonour represents a group's disapproval of a member whose behaviour does not conform to the values deemed necessary for the continuance and maintenance of the group. If 'honour discourse [was] an essential component of social control in the ancient Mediterranean'⁷⁴ such social control applies not only to Paul's relations to his converts but to these leading brothers who have become the new group of significant others – in Paul's absence – for the rest of the brotherhood.

We have earlier discussed how the honour of the Thessalonian community was threatened by sexual immorality (e.g. 4:3-8 see chapter 7 earlier), but a failure by certain brothers to work would inevitably give rise to dissension and strife. Paul is anxious that there should be concord and unity amongst the brotherhood and to this end he exhorts the brothers to respect the Christian brothers in leadership and heed their counsel. 'Brotherhood does not mean turning a blind eye to the faults of others'⁷⁵ but if the well-being of

⁷³ deSilva (" 'Worthy of His Kingdom,' " pp. 49-97) has recently made the point that 'the concept of the honourable and disgraceful are given content and meaning only within a specific culture in a specific period. An individual has self-respect on the basis of his perception of how fully he or she has embodied the *culture's ideals*; that individual has honour on the basis of the society's recognition of the person's conformity with essential values' (emphasis added). As far our understanding of these cultural ideals and assumptions it is clear from this investigation that we place more emphasis upon what classical texts can tell us about family relations than anthropological studies. See F. G. Downing, "Honour Among Exegetes," *CBQ* vol. 61 (1999), pp. 53-73 for similar reservations concerning the methodology of Malina, et al.

⁷⁴ deSilva, " 'Worthy of His Kingdom,' " p. 96.

⁷⁵ Williams, *Thessalonians*, p. 96.

the community is to remain intact administering proper counsel is necessary. Positively, part of the responsibility of these leading brothers in helping to build up the group was to ‘help the weak’⁷⁶ and ‘encourage the timid’ (5:14) but negatively, it included the need to shame deviant brothers within the group who failed to conform fully to the ‘family’s’ norms (cf. 2 Thess. 3:6, 14-15). As we have seen earlier, Paul is concerned that there should be strong social reinforcement within the brotherhood (4:9-12), reinforcement which is also ‘mirrored in the interaction of the believing community as its reliable and ethical leaders offer admonition... *and* as group members reflect back to one another the group’s values and ideals’.⁷⁷ By admonishing the ‘idle’ brothers and reminding them of the necessity of getting back to work, the leaders will also help to enhance the harmony and respect of the whole ‘family’ in the eyes of outsiders. Thus, the desire for honour becomes the means by which these leading brothers can motivate the idle brothers to seek the good of the larger group.

In relation to this context of brotherly admonishment, it is significant that there are linguistic parallels in Plutarch where the author states that ‘it is fitting that the older [brother]... should ... *admonish* νοουθετέω [the younger],’ but it should be done ‘to persuade rather than command’ (*Frat. Amor.* 16/487B; cf. Dio Chrysostom, *Diss.* 32.27). Plutarch also counsels certain brothers to remonstrate with careless brothers, but to do so

⁷⁶ Paul’s mention of certain brothers who are ‘weak’ presupposes that other leading brothers were ‘strong’. Whatever the precise meaning of what this weakness was there is nothing in 1 Thessalonians to suggest that it had anything to do with eating certain foods etc. In this respect, there is a theme which bears a close resemblance to this in Plutarch’s *De Fraternali Amore* where the philosopher stresses that although the older/superior brothers are responsible for admonishing younger brothers, nevertheless when this is done it ought to be carried out in ‘a spirit [which] desires to help’ (*Frat. Amor.* 16/487B).

⁷⁷ deSilva, “‘Worthy of his Kingdom,’” p. 69.

firmly (μετὰ παρρησίας) whilst not failing to point out the errors of their ways (*Frat. Amor.* 10/483A-B). To be sure, we do not know exactly how the ἄτακτοι responded in light of this admonishment – certainly the problem appears to have persisted, if 2 Thess. 3 is anything to go by. Nevertheless, there is good reason to believe that in the long run the Thessalonian brothers' response was positive since another common assumption of brotherly relations in antiquity was that a younger brother would be expected to obey an older brother: 'it is fitting that the younger [brother] render to their elders obedience' (Plutarch, *Frat. Amor.* 16/487C; cf. Epictetus, *Diss.* 2.10.8).⁷⁸

The hierarchical tone in 1 Thess. 5:12-15 is therefore clear in that there is not just a 'brotherly' but a 'big brotherly'⁷⁹ feel where certain brothers within the Thessalonian community are entrusted with the responsibility of warning other brothers of the necessity of working and providing for themselves. This again would appear to substantiate our thesis that at this early stage of the life of the early Christian communities some form of hierarchy differentiation existed within the brotherhood itself.

9.9 'Do not Pay back κακὸν ἀντὶ κακοῦ'

In verse 15 the apostle continues to address the leading brothers and the conflict *within* and *without*⁸⁰ the community with the command: 'see that no-one pays back wrong for wrong but always try to be kind to each other and to everyone else'. The former problem

⁷⁸ Meeks' (*First Urban Christians*, p. 175) comment on this Pauline text leads him to expect also that this would be the desired outcome: 'Appropriate behaviour includes internal discipline and obedience of leaders'.

⁷⁹ Morris, *Thessalonians*, p. 166.

⁸⁰ Richard's (*Thessalonians*, p. 276) remarks are, in our view, misplaced when he merely sees 5:14 related to those *within* the community.

– at least for the first part of the verse – is clearly in view but the scope widens in v. 15b to outsiders.⁸¹ In v. 15a the internal conflicts/tensions between the brothers links with 4:9-12 – whereas in 4:9-12 there is an explicit reference to *philadelphia*, here Paul asserts the negative form of the Golden Rule⁸² on the basis of his rejection of the *lex talionis* of the Old Testament (Ex. 21:23-25; Lev. 24:19f; Deut. 19:21) and later on in Judaism (Sir. 28:1-7; 1 QS 10.17f; Jos. and Asen. 23:9; 28:4, 14; 29:3).

The immediate context would suggest that the apostle's remarks are probably addressing the situation in which the idle brothers were failing to support themselves or their dependants and as a consequence were rebuked for not doing so. As a result of such admonishment, which they may not have liked, such brothers may have been provoked to retaliate against those brothers in authority. Earlier Paul had commanded the brothers to 'live in peace with each other' (v. 13b), a timely reminder, in light of the internal tensions, of the need for there to be harmonious relations between them. Here again Paul is most likely mirroring the ideals and common assumptions of brotherly relations in the ancient world (cf. 4.2.5; 4.2.6; 4.4; 4.10.2) in that fraternal relations were to be characterised by peace and concord. For example, Plutarch repeatedly uses the paradigm of the body to stress the harmony and unity that there is supposed to be between siblings. He states that 'the concord of brothers both family (γένος) and household (οἶκος) are sound and flourish... like an harmonious choir, [they] neither do nor say, nor think anything

⁸¹ Morris (*Thessalonians*, p. 171) strikes the right balance when he states: 'The line of conduct in question is to be exercised toward *members of the brotherhood* and *outsiders* alike' (emphasis added).

⁸² See chapter 4.2.4 where we noted how Hiercoles in his treatise "On Brotherly Love" demonstrates an awareness of the Golden Rule when he states that one should 'deal with his brother in the same way that he would expect his brother to deal with him' (4.27.20).

discordant' (*Frat. Amor.* 2/479A).

Instead of retaliating or repaying evil for evil Paul exhorts the Thessalonian brothers to do good to ἀλλήλους. There is as, van der Horst⁸³ rightly points out, a similarity here in 1 Thess. 5:15 with what Pseudo-Phocylides (*Sent.* 77) states: 'Do not imitate evil, but leave vengeance to justice, μὴ μιμοῦ κακότητα Δίκη δ' ἀπόλειπον ἄμυναν. More specifically, the apostle's advice here is particularly reminiscent of remarks made by Epictetus who states that in situations where one brother has been wronged by another common *status* is more important than actions. The advice given then is not to focus on *the wrong which a brother has done* but rather on *who a brother is*:

Everything has two handles, by one of which it ought to be carried and by the other not. *If your brother wrongs you*, do not lay hold of the matter by the handle of the wrong that he is doing, because this is the handle by which the matter ought not to be carried; but rather by the other handle – that he is your brother, that you were brought up together, and then you will be laying hold of the matter by the handle by which it ought to be carried (*Ench.* 43) (emphasis added).

Similarly, Plutarch enjoins that when there are tensions between brothers restraint is to be shown and forgiveness offered. Nature has allotted to each, says Plutarch, 'gentleness and forbearance, the child of restraint' and brothers ought to 'make the utmost use of these virtues in [their] relations with [their] family (συγγενεῖς) and relatives' (οἰκείους, *Frat. Amor.* 18/489D). In fact, when a brother has 'been wronged' he should 'forestall their request for forgiveness by granting it before being asked' (*Frat. Amor.* 18/489C). Receiving forgiveness from a sibling, for wrongs committed, is as good an indicator of

⁸³ van der Horst, *Sentences*, p. 166.

brotherly 'affection' (φιλοστοργία) as anything else (*Frat. Amor.* 18/489C).

In the circumstances, for some of the Thessalonian brothers to retaliate against the leadership would do little to enhance the sense of internal unity which Paul is anxious to strengthen and develop. Rather, such in-squabbling would ultimately work against this and be detrimental to the solidarity of the group. Paul's concern is that even if certain brothers have been on the receiving end of such admonishment and feel they have been wronged in some sense, any attempt at retribution is not the Christian and certainly not the Pauline 'family's' way of resolving such matters. What is required is a recognition and a respect of the differences in standing within the brotherhood and the need to 'always pursue good' (πάντοτε τὸ ἀγαθὸν διώκετε) which will go some way towards alleviating the internal divisions. Above all the deviant brothers need to heed and obey the warnings and admonishment of their elder brothers and become self-sufficient again by returning to their employment.

However, as the phrase καὶ εἰς πάντα (v. 15b) suggests, 'this injunction also applies to their relations to 'outsiders' (see 3:12) and, as we have seen, there is good evidence that they were receiving a fair amount of *kakon* from that source'.⁸⁴ We earlier noted that the apostle Paul is fully aware how brothers within the community are not exempt from the natural human reaction to seek revenge. As a result of their conversion, the jettisoning of old religious practices, the fracturing of familial relations and their over-zealous engagement in evangelistic activities, the Thessalonians had proved to be an annoyance and caused resentment between themselves and outsiders. Paul, in an effort to foster

⁸⁴ Barclay, "Conflict," p. 520.

solidarity in the brotherhood and in what amounts to a damage limitation exercise, seeks to exhort the believers not to repay back evil in kind to those outside the brotherhood. Here, in this instance, Paul's advice appears to part company with that of our ancient sources in that the latter show little or no inclination towards outsiders. Whereas, for example, the author Plutarch actually advises quarrelling brothers to displace their tensions on those outside the family – ('they should turn their malignancy *outwards* and drain it off on those not of their blood', *Frat. Amor.* 14/485E) – the apostle in this letter not only shows a concern for *proper behaviour* towards outsiders, but also advocates kindness and love to be demonstrated towards *outsiders themselves* (e.g. 3:12; 4:12; 5:15). If the Thessalonian brothers will heed Paul's advice, who knows, such conduct *vis-à-vis* those outside the community may eventually lead to their inclusion as they 'turn from idols to serve the living and true God' (1:9-10).

9.10 Summary

In 1 Thess. 5:12-15 Paul, contrary to some scholars' views, is addressing concrete problems facing the community, difficulties which were *internal* (disunity) and *external* (retaliation) in nature. More important, Paul once again specifically addresses the community in terms of ἀδελφοί (vv. 12a and 14a, cf. also vv. 25, 26 and 27), a brotherhood in which there were leading brothers (vv. 14-15) and brothers who were led (vv. 12-13). Moreover, the key to any proper interpretation of these verses is that Paul seeks to resolve the conflicts within and without the community in accordance with the normal social expectations of brotherly relations in the ancient world.

In 1 Thess. 5:12-15 it is highly likely that Paul is addressing the same problem as that of 4:1-12 – there are common themes (e.g. brothers, brotherly love, honour/respect etc.) – where certain brothers or ἄτακτοι (i.e. ‘idlers’) were causing internal disunity by refusing to work. In light of this Paul deliberately holds up those brothers who worked hard among them – something the ἄτακτοι refused to do – and in vv. 12-13 calls upon the entire brotherhood to acknowledge these ἀδελφοί. Not only were these brothers to be acknowledged but they were also ‘to rule over’ and ‘lead’ the rest of the brothers who were to ‘highly respect’ and love them in return. To be sure, these ruling brothers probably did not hold any formal office as such; nevertheless, they had such clearly defined responsibilities as to suggest a more formal function.

Having addressed the whole brotherhood in vv. 12-13 Paul then turns specifically (vv. 14-15) to address the leading brothers and charges them with a number of responsibilities e.g. to help the weak. However, the apostle particularly singles out the need for these leading brothers to exercise the authoritative task of admonishing the ἄτακτοι who were refusing to work and provide for their own households. The desired aim is for the ruling brothers to shame these deviant brothers into seeking the welfare of the community instead of pursuing their own individual path.

In light of all this, these hierarchical relations within the Thessalonian brotherhood – rarely acknowledged and often overlooked by scholars – are highly significant for our investigation. They do not concur with the claims of Petersen and Bartchy who both suggest that *all* brotherly relations in the apostle Paul’s communities were non-

patriarchal. Nor do they accord with Meeks' views that the apostle's congregations stand in *contrast* to the hierarchical structure of the household. Rather, as in the case of Paul's hierarchical relations with his converts, the Thessalonians' relations to one another are structured and ordered – not on the basis of a patron-client relationship – but, and in keeping with the common assumptions of brotherly relations in antiquity, on the grounds of a difference in rank and status between them.

In relation to the *internal* and *external* difficulties which the community was facing, the aberrant behaviour of the 'idlers' also meant that certain of the brothers were at loggerheads with other *brothers* and with *outsiders*. As a result of their refusal to work and overly zealous evangelism, certain brothers had made a public nuisance of themselves and had incurred the anger of non-believers. These offending brothers had probably retaliated against the social repression experienced at the hands of those on the periphery of the brotherhood. Additionally, they may also have taken retaliatory action at the correction and rebuke handed out by the leading-brothers in authority. Two points are particularly noteworthy here. First, as regards retaliation against other brothers, Paul, calls for no reprisals of any kind, a view also consonant with the ideals of sibling relations among the ancients where, in matters of wrong-doing, common *status* as brothers took priority over the offence that has occurred. But secondly and most significantly, Paul's concern for those outside the community *differs* in one important respect from our ancient secular sources in Part II of this investigation. Although natural brothers in the ancient world were concerned with their *reputation* in respect of those not connected to the family, they actually showed little or no concern for the latter. Paul, on the other hand

here, as elsewhere in this letter (cf. 4:12), stresses that Christian brothers, out of regard for the entire 'household', should not only be concerned for the Christian family's reputation in the eyes of outsiders *but also for the outsiders themselves* (5:15).

10. CONCLUSIONS

It is now time to draw together all of the strands of our investigation and attempt some analysis. There is no need to recapitulate but we shall delineate the main contours of our research.

In this investigation we have carried out an in-depth study of Paul's familial metaphors in 1 Thessalonians, an area which, to date, has not been sufficiently explored. We have demonstrated that the apostle employs an array of fictive kinship terms in 1 Thessalonians (e.g. father, children, brother etc.) derived from the socio-historical context of his own day. As a means of assisting us, we employed the language of metaphor and metaphor theory as a linguistic tool to help us understand Christian relationships (recipient field) in terms of the biological family (donor field). The usefulness of such an approach was confirmed by the fact that the metaphor of 'family' was a 'live' metaphor for the apostle Paul and, as we have shown in Part II of this investigation, there is a shared world of meaning about families (Jewish and non-Jewish) from which he is drawing.

The familial metaphors in 1 Thessalonians are a central means by which Paul seeks to shape, regulate and control the Christian community. But rather than the apostle simply utilizing family metaphors to describe the ἐκκλησία as an 'alternative community' as Sandnes, Meeks and Malherbe propose, something more radical and fundamental is at work here. That is to say, we have demonstrated from a broad range of

primary sources, Jewish and non-Jewish, literary and non-literary, and what they have to say re family life that Paul is very likely drawing on a whole range of cultural expectations of households in antiquity. to describe how he thought both he and his converts ought to conduct themselves towards one another and in view of outsiders. Moreover, an in-depth investigation of an eclectic range of ancient literature has revealed that underlying these familial roles in both Jewish and Graeco-Roman families are a number of clearly identifiable stock meanings or associations. In other words, there were stereotypical roles and assumptions associated with and expected of fathers (authority, instruction, imitation, affection, etc.), children (reciprocation, obedience, affection, care for elderly parents) and brothers (φιλαδελφία, respecting and obeying an elder sibling, etc.) in the ancient Mediterranean.

Regarding the first of these relations, Paul's role as a 'father' is profound and many-sided. Crucially, as the one who had founded the Thessalonian community, Paul's fatherly functions are similar to that of the *paterfamilias* (head of household) who exercised control over his family. Contrary to Meeks and Schüssler Fiorenza who regard the early Christian communities as standing in *contrast* to the hierarchical structures of ancient society, it is highly probable that Paul employs the patriarchal structure of the household to organise and regulate relations between himself and the Thessalonians (and the Thessalonians' relationships with one another). As such, he situates himself at the apex of the hierarchical pyramid as *pater* over his Thessalonian 'offspring'. His rank and position mean that no-one can challenge him or his authority. Given that Paul had

established the Thessalonian community, the church belonged to him; he exercised ownership of it. As a result, Paul expected the Thessalonians to obey him in matters of conduct and lifestyle; indeed, his holy way of life and loving example are two areas where he expected them to do so. However, whilst Paul had every right to use his apostolic authority and make demands, because the Thessalonians are his converts – and if the variant ἡπιοι is accepted – this is mollified by a more gentle formulation.

One aspect of his paternal role which Paul emphasises in this letter is his fatherly responsibility to teach, instruct and exhort his young converts. This is especially significant given the fact that the Thessalonians were mostly converts from the pagan religions, thereby underscoring the need for them to be grounded in the *Christian* faith and conduct. The apostle's instructions are personally crafted and cover a range of practical issues including sexual morality, work ethics and answering their questions (e.g. re the parousia), all of which would ensure their growth, maturity and obedience to Paul. Coupled with this is the apostle's expectation that his 'children' would imitate their father which included the need to model Paul's missionary methods (e.g. hard work) as well as his missionary example (e.g. love).

Another striking characteristic of this role is Paul's deep affection for his Thessalonian 'children'. Such love is natural since Paul had 'given birth' to the Thessalonians, and is demonstrated in different ways throughout the course of the letter. For example, Paul was prepared to work and support himself rather than being a burden to his converts. However, it is the apostle's sudden and enforced departure which left a longing parent desperate to see his children (and they him) and which invokes an unprecedented display

of affection. This severance and the accompanying emotional language used, akin to a 'death' or 'bereavement', compares with the affective outbursts of ancient fathers when they lost a child. As far as this aspect is concerned, it is our view that such affection need not, and does not, conflict with his hierarchical role. Contrary to Castelli who views Paul's fatherhood as a single expression of his hierarchical stance channeled through his call to imitate him, the apostle's paternal role/functions *vis-à-vis* his spiritual offspring are highly complex and variegated. Whilst Paul's relationship to the Thessalonians might be a superior one, it does not negate the deep love he felt for his converts. On the contrary, there is a dialectic between his elevated position as 'father' and the obvious devotion he felt for his Thessalonian 'children'.

In addition to the paternal metaphor, Paul, unusually for a male, also employs maternal imagery by referring to himself as a 'nursing-mother'. By so doing Paul catches the reader's attention but also adds and extends our understanding of a role normally associated with a female. Like the term 'father', 'nursing-mother' is another (less)-powerful role and underscores the hierarchical relationship between himself and his converts. Especially prominent here is the nurturing of the infant congregation during the early stages of their Christian existence. As we have shown from our primary source evidence in Part II, it was commonly expected that a nursing-mother and her child ought to stay together during this period, which may go some ways towards explaining Paul's agitation and anxiety, not to mention his converts' sense of loss, upon being suddenly separated from the Thessalonians at such a formative stage in the community's development.

Paradoxically, on two occasions the apostle inverts the above two parental relations by referring to himself (and his co-workers) as ‘infants’ (if 2:7 reads νήπιοι) and ‘orphans’ (2:17). In both instances he puts himself in vulnerable and non-authoritative familial roles, roles which the reader does not expect. As far as these functions are concerned, it is important to remember that Paul is struggling to communicate his depth of feeling for his converts and the array of metaphors employed show his relations with the Thessalonians are highly composite to say the least. Metaphors such as father, children, brother *and* infant and orphan demonstrate coherency as opposed to consistency – (see Part 1.3.3) – in that the apostle draws on the same important source domain to describe *different* aspects of his relations with the Thessalonians. Thus, terms like ‘infant’ and ‘orphan’ complete the family-album of metaphors in this letter; more importantly, the ease with which the apostle can use these two metaphors is illustrative of the fact that because Paul is not under threat from anyone *inside* his Thessalonian ‘family’ he can risk placing himself in such non-authoritarian roles.

Turning to our second main family relationship, namely, brothers, we observed that the term ἀδελφοί occurs proportionately most often in 1 Thessalonians compared to the rest of the corpus Paulinum, thus constituting his favourite appellation for the Thessalonian Christians. More specifically, the apostle’s use of this image is also deliberate and purposeful, for once again, as we have demonstrated (in Part II, chapter 4) from an in-depth study of brotherly relations in the ancient world, Paul is reflecting the normal social expectations of brothers in regulating and controlling relations between the

Thessalonians. What is more, it is seldom if ever recognised that ‘brothers’ are not only the central figures in the letter as a whole, but are specifically addressed in Paul’s discussions concerning two main contentious issues, namely, sexual morality/business (4:3-8) and ethical working practices (4:9-12; 5:12-15). These three pericopes are therefore test cases for our hypothesis, namely, that Paul delineates certain norms or presuppositions regarding brotherly relations. In particular, four main *ideals* are highlighted by the apostle Paul, – *peace/harmony, brotherly love, honour/respect in relation to the brotherhood and to outsiders, and status* – all of which he skillfully employs in regulating the community.

In relation to the first, although not all scholars are agreed that there are *internal* as well as *external* conflicts facing the Thessalonian church, there are reasonable grounds for thinking real or potential tensions existed *within* and *without* the brotherhood. We will deal with the internal (see p. 328f. for the latter) relationships first. In this regard, Paul in 4:3-5, having addressed the problem of marriage and desire, goes on in vv. 6-8 to address two possible situations which could have presented themselves to the Thessalonian brotherhood. The apostle is concerned about the fact that one brother was trying to enter into an adulterous affair with another brother’s wife – or trying to take advantage of another brother in a business deal or inheritance matter. To engage in such behaviour would incur the judgement of God but would also result in serious disruption to the sense of unity/harmony, not to mention the very existence of the community, which Paul is keen to foster and develop.

Disruption to the community, as a result of certain brothers (‘idlers’, ἄτακτοι)

refusing to work, is also to the fore in Paul's remarks to the community in 4:9-12 and 5:12-15. Some brothers had stopped working, perhaps preferring to engage in evangelism instead. This was causing serious internal tensions with some brothers becoming over-dependent on other brothers, thereby putting a heavy onus on those who continued to work. Such was the friction and ill-feeling among the community that Paul has occasion to call for peace and non-retaliation (5:13b, 15). In keeping with the expectations of family in general and brotherly relations in particular, the apostle's advice to the Thessalonian brothers is for them to return to their employment but also for no one to seek reprisals of any kind. Moreover in accordance with these conventional attitudes of family life, the Thessalonians' brotherly relations should be governed by peace and harmony and their conduct should enhance the sense of solidarity and cohesion expected within the Christian family.

Still on internal matters, one of the distinctive characteristics of fraternal relations in this letter is that they are grounded upon the common assumption of *brotherly love* (φιλαδελφία). Such affection was a demonstration of the fact that 'brother' was the most intimate of familial bonds. It is particularly striking to note the way in which the apostle's approach to 'brotherly love' is practical and very much in keeping with other ancient writers (e.g. Plutarch). Paul, on the whole, commends the Thessalonians for manifesting this characteristic; indeed, he also commends the ἀδελφοί for the manner in which they showed such love to other brothers – completely unknown to them – who were residing in other geographical locations. In this instance, Paul's own connotations of brotherly

relations differ from those of other sources of his day in the sense the Thessalonians were not limited by geographical location. Christian brothers are not only to be found in the locale of Thessalonica, but in other places too, places which neither Paul nor his converts had ever visited and people with whom he had no previous acquaintance.

But, as just mentioned, the practical importance of brotherly love is seen in the way that Paul links this with the notion of hard work in 4:9-12. Those brothers who had failed to work and provide for their own families were also putting undue financial strain on the whole brotherhood. To be sure, Paul does not want the ἐκκλησία to decrease its commitment to showing love to each other, but neither does he want some brothers exploiting the generosity of others. The apostle's point in all this is that hard work is as much a manifestation of φιλαδελφία as anything; thus, he enjoins these brothers to reduce their evangelistic activity presumably so that they can return to work and make provision for their own families. Linking these two commonly held expectations together – brotherly love and hard work – in this manner, serves as a corrective or counter-strategy to this kind of exploitation.

In addition, Paul places a premium on the *honour which brothers were to demonstrate towards one another* within the brotherhood (see immediately below for how this also relates to *outsiders*). In a culture which was motivated by honour, it is instructive to note how Paul uses this ideal to reinforce the cohesion within, whilst also drawing the boundaries *vis-à-vis* outsiders. Paul recognises that brothers were to respect one another, but he is especially aware of the ancient ideal of younger brothers respecting older brothers when he calls for the whole brotherhood to hold certain brothers as being worthy of

greater honour because of their elevated position.

As regards brotherly relations towards outsiders, Paul, in 4:3-8, links the aspects of *honour with outsiders* in matters of sexual morality and business as a means of distinguishing the brotherhood from those who do not belong to the community. Paul's primary aim is to strengthen the social boundaries of the Thessalonian family. To assist him in this goal, he addresses the problem of 'impurity' (outside) over against 'holiness and honour' (inside) where he urges the Christian brothers to conduct themselves 'not like the Gentiles' but 'to take a wife in holiness and honour'. It is the fear of filthy, unbridled sexuality which surfaces here and where marriage is regarded as a protective mechanism against desire. The taking of a wife as a prophylaxis to desire was for the Thessalonian brothers an honourable way of setting them apart from the polluting atmosphere of those on the periphery.

Again, the focus on honour and outsiders is part of the thrust in 4:9-12 (especially vv. 11-12) where brothers who refused to work and who preferred to engage in the proclamation of the gospel were colouring the perception of the community in the face of outsiders. When those not belonging to the brotherhood 'caught wind' of certain brothers spending their energy evangelising (and presumably neglecting to provide for their own families) the reputation of the entire Christian community would be brought into serious disrepute. Paul's instruction is for these wayward brothers to seek the good of the whole community over against their own personal goals and return to their employment which would ensure that the name of the community would no longer be besmirched in the eyes of outsiders. As far as this aspect is concerned, we have here an example of Paul's own

views on familial relations not found in any of our ancient sources. Whilst some authors in antiquity (e.g. Plutarch) show a concern for the reputation of the family name in the face of outsiders they show little or no concern for outsiders themselves – Plutarch (*Frat. Amor.* 14/485E) even advises brothers who cannot get along with each other to displace their anger on people outside the family – Paul, on the other hand, always exhorts the Thessalonian brothers (cf. 3:12) to behave circumspectly in view of outsiders *and to be concerned for them*. In this way, the apostle’s approach to brotherly relations is more far-reaching and universal in the sense that he demonstrates a clear (evangelistic?) concern for those who have no attachment to the Christian community i.e. non-members.

Finally, perhaps one of the most significant discoveries of this investigation is that Paul, in conformity with the norms and conventional attitudes of brothers in the ancient world, recognises *a hierarchy or difference in status/seniority between brothers*.

Scholars like Gaventa and Petersen give little credence to the fact that brothers in the ancient world were not always equal in standing or rank. From a study of the primary source evidence and the frequency of the expression “brothers” in this letter it is highly likely that Paul is not only aware of these assumptions but is drawing upon them in the structuring and organisation of this community. Thus, in the midst of a potentially divisive situation, and against a background where some brothers refused to work and respect other brothers, Paul commends and holds up other hard-working brothers to the rest of the community (5:12-15 esp. vv. 13b and 15). The apostle diffuses this hostile situation by calling upon the entire brotherhood (vv. 12-13) to acknowledge, love and respect certain brothers who were given ‘to rule’ over the whole brotherhood. In turn, he

specifically exhorts these ‘leading’ brothers (in his absence) to exercise their authoritative duty of admonishing the rest, and to ensure that no brother retaliated against another brother or against those outside.

This last finding could have profound and far-reaching implications for those scholars who are of the view that the early Christian communities began as non-hierarchical only to ‘degenerate’ through the passing of time into hierarchical structures. Schüssler Fiorenza, for instance, specifically associates ‘the *beginnings* of [the] patriarchalization’¹ of the church with the *later* Pastoral epistles which in her view is a retrograde development. But, if as we have demonstrated in this investigation, hierarchies existed not only between Paul as ‘father’ and his Thessalonian ‘children’ (inter-generational) but also between the Thessalonians as ‘brothers’ (interfamilial) themselves, then rather than viewing these nascent Christian churches as having shifted away from a non-patriarchal structure, on the strength of this evidence – Paul’s earliest extant letter and also the earliest Christian writing – it would appear that they never were entirely non-hierarchical.

¹ Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, p. 279 (emphasis added).

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in that the entire passage is wrapped round by Paul's three-fold use of the ἅγιος ('holy') word-family in verses 3-8. Having stated that God's will for the Thessalonian brothers is their ἁγιασμός, these same brothers are also to acquire a σκεῦος "in holiness (ἁγιασμῶ) and honour". The motivation for such holy living is then stated negatively: "God has not called you to uncleanness but to holiness" (οὐ γὰρ ἐκάλεσεν ἡμᾶς ὁ θεὸς ἐπὶ ἀκαρθασία ἀλλ' ἐν ἁγιασμῶ, v. 7). Rather, and more positively, it is for the purpose of holiness that God gives 'his Spirit' (τὸ πνεῦμα αὐτοῦ, v. 8) which is 'holy' (ἅγιον, v. 8) 'into us' (εἰς ὑμᾶς, v. 8). Crucially, the apostle's desire for the Thessalonians is that they might stand 'blameless in holiness' (ἀμέμπτους ἐν ἁγιωσύνη) on the Last Day (3:13), a prayer he repeats in the benediction at the end of the letter (5:23-24).³²

This is followed by a number of infinitives, the first of which is ἀπεχέσθαι ('keep away from', v. 3b), a strong word, which coupled with the term πορνεία, conveys the

unifying leitmotif of the entire sentence'. Also, it is important to note that since θέλημα is anarthous this is not the entirety of God's will, but *one* sphere of conduct; *contra* Bruce, *Thessalonians*, p. 81.

³² Interestingly, Paul, in his *expanded* peace benediction (5:23f.) stresses the importance of sanctification by twice using a verbal mood rarely seen in the New Testament – the optative ("May he sanctify you" and "May your spirit be kept blameless" cf. also 3:11). According to C. F. D. Moule (*An Idiom Book of New Testament Greek* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953, p. 23), the optative mood 'compared to the subjunctive, ... might be said to be remoter, vaguer, *less assured in tone*' (emphasis added). One wonders whether Paul's use of this longer closing invocation together with the two-fold occurrence of the optative mood indicates the apostle's scepticism and concern as regards the Thessalonians' sanctified lifestyle. Jeffrey A. D. Weima (*Neglected Endings: The Significance of the Pauline Letter Closings* [JSNTSup 101; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1994], pp. 175-86) has an informed discussion on the theme of sanctification in the letter, an issue which Paul picks up again in the closing section (5:23-24) 'to drive home to his readers one last time the importance of living a holy life'.

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