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The rhetoric of suffering in Paul's letter to the Philippians

Socio-rhetorical reflections and further thoughts on a post-colonial contribution to the discussion

L. Gregory Bloomquist

1. Introduction

The word "college" is applied to institutions on the basis of a medieval practice: the practice of "reading together", co-legere. But, the word has another meaning, too, sometimes forgotten. It means to "read with". That is not entirely dissimilar from "reading together", but "reading with" gives a slight twist to the understanding.

I preface my remarks with this comment because, while I have been privileged to be once before at Codrington College, I am not a regular member of the College, nor a regular visitor to Barbados. Furthermore, I am not from the Caribbean and am not therefore a member of the College of professors and priests and other learned people who regularly read with each other in the Caribbean. So, how can I presume to read "with" you here?

But, of course, am I not a member of the college of women readers who regularly read together, of Baptist readers who regularly read together, of native people readers who regularly read together. How can anyone presume to read "with", as opposed to just read "to" or read "together"? That is, how can anyone presume to read in such a way that we can understand each other?

Well, I think that one can become a member of any group of readers when one strives to read the texts with them in a way that encourages hearing what other readers hear and reading what other readers read. So, for today at least, I would like to strive to be a member of this

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college in this sense: I would like to strive to read with you the same texts that you are reading and to read what you read and to hear with you what you hear. It is a member of this college of reader who strive to read with that I even dare to speak to you today about Paul and to do so utilizing, at least in part, insights from a post-colonial perspective that may approximate yours. I hope that you will receive what I have to say in that spirit.

What I propose to set before you is a reflection on the way Paul uses suffering in his letter to the Philippians. As you probably know, I tried to get at this question over 10 years ago by using rhetorical analysis (Bloomquist, 1993). I'd like to suggest in this paper where I believe one can confirm or say more about the subject, based not only on what I said then, but also on what new, rhetorical approaches to the text, including post-colonial insights from cultural experiences such as yours, permit one to say.[1] In doing so, I hope to make remarks that are both scholarly and pragmatic.

2. The rhetoric of suffering in Philippians: A neo-classical approach

My work on the rhetoric of suffering in Philippians utilized what I would call a neo-classical, rhetorical approach. By neo-classical, I mean two things: (1) the attempt to explain how an ancient text might have been shaped by earlier rhetorical theory (e.g., how a first century AD text might have been written in light of first-century and pre-first-century rhetorical handbooks' prescription and description), and (2) how the use of classical, rhetorical theory (specifically from the period of Isocrates through the Second Sophistic) can provide us with insight as to the rhetorical structure and purpose of texts, be they written or spoken, be they ancient or contemporary.

[1] I have chose to retain the phrase "post-colonial", as opposed to "neo-colonial". While I do not believe that there is ever a completely new experience to the colonial one, "neo-colonial" suggests simply a new form of colonial experience.

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My work on Philippians was squarely situated in the neo-classical tradition of rhetorical analysis, which, at that time, was, like most rhetorical theory of the twentieth century through the 1980s, neo-classical.[2] Like many other colleagues -- those “with” whom I read in biblical studies -- I saw neo-classical rhetorical analysis at the time as a useful tool for situating the letter in its historical context over against dogmatic and theological interpretations that had to that point often completely disregarded the historical setting when it came to the question of suffering in Philippians.

Specifically, I saw that rhetorical analysis was a useful tool in correcting “previous discussions of suffering in Philippians” that had “failed methodologically in not dealing with Philippians in its historical context, namely, as a rhetorical address in epistolary form within which suffering fulfills a specific function” (Bloomquist, 1993, p. 191). Using neo-classical rhetorical analysis, then, I was able to show the formal resemblance of Philippians to epistolary models and, via a dialectical use of epistolography and classical rhetorical theory (of which I still believe the former to be a sub-set), I was able to show how suffering functions rhetorically in this unitary letter (Bloomquist, 1993, p. 192).

I did so, first, in agreement with classical, rhetorical theory, by showing that Paul uses suffering to endear himself to the Philippian audience that had sent Paul support while he was in prison (both in the exordium [1.3-11]and in the peroratio [4.8-20]) (Bloomquist, 1993, pp. 192-193). But, second, I showed that this endearment, which dealt with Paul’s imprisonment as the immediate occasion of his words on suffering, was “more than just a communication of information” about Paul’s imprisonment. Noting that Paul pointed not just to his suffering but also to that of Timothy and Epaphroditus (in the exempla [2.19-30]), of the Philippians

[2] This is true for the period of the twentieth century after rhetoric had begun to be recovered as a discipline and until the situation began to change in the late 1980s. It would be safe to argue that most rhetorical theory that is still used by those who are not first of all rhetoricians (e.g., biblical scholars who use rhetorical theory) would still be considered neo-classical.

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themselves, and finally of the Christ, I suggested that Paul clearly was highlighting the suffering of others, rather than just his own. By noting this, I undercut both those who had argued that a function of suffering in Philippians is to show forth Paul's sufferings "in order to reprove the Philippians or to humble them" and those who had suggested that Paul's sufferings were used by him to suggest some sort of unique ontological or mystical connection with the Christ (Bloomquist, 1993, p. 193). Rather, I suggested thirdly that what Paul was trying to do was to show how the sufferings of the Christ's faithful followers -- Paul, Timothy and Epaphroditus, and the Philippians themselves -- "mirrored" those of Jesus and that in them these sufferings were being "fulfilled or re-enacted". Thus, I wrote, Paul's goal "appears to have been to set before the Philippians well-known examples in whom the Christ type was also being fulfilled" (Bloomquist, 1993, p. 194). I was able to do this by showing how Paul himself became the causa of the address -- and thus detailed his experience in both the epistolary prescript (1.1-2) and narratio (1.12-14) of the address -- with a view to pointing his audience to the goal that was before him and them: "Paul focuses on suffering in Philippians ... in order to stress that, as in the case of Christ, whatever happens to him will not undermine the progress of the gospel" (Bloomquist, 1993, p. 195).[3]

Fourth, and finally, I showed that the main point of the address -- including the avowedly "epideictic" praise of Christ (2.6-11) and blame of the opponents of Paul (the reprehensio [3.1-16], which is "a picture of those in whom the Christ type is not mirrored but who are tied to the experience of the flesh rather than to the advance of the gospel") -- functioned rhetorically within the context of the larger "deliberative" thrust of the letter (pace Betz). In this way, I was able to show that for Paul the suffering of Christ's faithful followers "points beyond itself to vindication" as a means of communicating with those "whose experiences mirror the experience

[3] In his recent work on Philippians, and specifically in the portion that deals with suffering in the letter, Peter Oakes completely misunderstands my point here (Oakes, 2001). I think that he does so because of his failure to follow the steps of the rhetorical analysis to the rhetorical structure that I identified in the letter.

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of other servants who find themselves in a situation of necessity and are forced to choose" -- as Timothy and Epaphroditus do, as the Philippians do, and as Paul does -- to continue to race forward toward vindication, not flee from suffering (Bloomquist, 1993, pp. 195-196). Understood rhetorically, I argued, what Paul set before his audience was "the Christ type as a dynamic motor that does not allow believers the complacency of a static existence but moves them, as Christ was moved, by God's grace towards future fulfillment. Philippians portrays Christian servants as part of a dynamic, forward-moving projection that risks all for the sake of an incomparable treasure" (Bloomquist, 1993, p. 197).

3. The rhetoric of suffering in Philippians: A socio-rhetorical approach

I remain convinced by and therefore committed to the results of the rhetorical analysis that I did of suffering in Philippians.[4] I find much to commend in the analysis that I did. I used with great profit a rhetorical theory that was -- and continues to be -- widely used in the biblical guild.

But, in recent years I have begun to sense ways in which a neo-classical, rhetorical approach may not be completely adequate for dealing with texts like Philippians. I have found, for example, that neo-classical analysis is very helpful in getting at and grounding scientifically the historical setting of the text and the world that it creates; however, it is not helpful when attempting to identify the world within which the rhetorical address takes place. This situation of ignorance regarding the world outside of the text leaves a reader at the mercy of the rhetor: an astute reader or hearer may be able to see the mechanisms by which the rhetoric is achieved but will be unable to make any judgments (ethical, theological, political, etc.) in terms of its "fit"

[4] I am above all thankful to my director, Richard Longenecker, for successfully guiding me through the writing of the text, to John Hurd, who gave me invaluable methodological direction, and to a former student of Longenecker, Walter Hansen, who blazed a trail for those of us in Toronto who wanted to use neo-classical rhetorical analysis for Pauline studies.

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with the larger world.[5] This means that neo-classical criticism as an historical enterprise is not able to give a sufficiently helpful historical picture.

Second, neo-classical rhetorical analysis does not incorporate hermeneutical interpretation in any way, since it is an historical enterprise. Thus, neo-classical rhetoric does not implicate the reader or hearer who is not immediately addressed directly, other than by suggesting that a reader or hearer assent to the argument as an original audience might have.[6] But, the problem is clearly stated by asking whether every reader can read or hear a text as a member of the original audience? For example, surely our historical and cultural settings mean that we have a set of expectations and judgments that are very different from an original audience's expectations? True, we could "unlearn" or skeptically "suspend belief" in terms of our current expectations, but how do we do that? Neo-classical rhetorical analysis does not tell us how to do that, only how to hear the original text with the original ears. Or again, what if one is hearing what the audience heard through the words of one who was present, rather than the speaker himself? At that point, one becomes an audience of one of the audience-members-become-rhetor, and one is therefore listening to or reading a different address than the one the audience member originally heard. And similarly, what if one is not the audience at all, but an analyst who is attempting to make sense of what another audience heard? One, then, cannot let one's self be susceptible to the rhetor's desire to persuade. Neo-classical rhetorical analysis can, then, only work for analysis by forcing the interpreter to put him/herself into the rhetorical situation as audience member, even if one is not; however, no attention is given to this hermeneutical dissonance in the process of analysis.

[5] The problem here is described as "incommensurability", a problem that has recently been analyzed by Nola Heidelbaugh (Heidlebaugh, 2001).

[6] This is captured well in the dictum that Raymond Brown regularly posed to his own readers: the challenge of historical-critical, biblical exegesis is to enable us to hear the text as the first readers heard it.

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Neo-classical rhetorical analysis is, then, a very valuable tool of historical reconstruction, though with some significant caveats, and it is an all-but-useless tool when it comes to the hermeneutical reflection required to evaluate the text (such as in judgments about whether to appropriate the text or not).[7] Accordingly, given that I am interested in both greater historical sophistication and the question of evaluation of the text's contemporary value, especially when it comes to religious texts, I have been forced to seek something more than neo-classical rhetorical analysis. My search for ways to continue to value the rhetorical approach to biblical texts, but at the same time to respond to these situations that a neo-classical rhetorical approach cannot respond to -- and others --, has led me to use an approach that is called "socio-rhetorical analysis", associated with the work of Vernon Robbins.[8] This rhetorical approach does not disregard the insights of classical and neo-classical rhetoric but seeks to expand the rhetorical horizon for a fuller interpretation of how communication takes place in the real world. It provides what I call a "full-bodied" approach to exegesis.[9]

3.1. Socio-rhetorical analysis

Socio-rhetorical analysis begins with the assumption that rhetoric is indeed about how to communicate but that this does not simply mean the determination of the stylistic or formal means for communication; rather, it concerns, as even Aristotle made clear, the appropriate setting and context for communication to take place in the real world (Robbins, 1992). Thus,

[7] It is, then, useless in resolving the dilemma bequeathed to us by the historical-critical approaches, in which we are left with "what a text meant then" and "what a text means (or "might mean") today".

[8] Robbins first used the term "socio-rhetorical" in the forward of one of his works (Robbins, 1992), but has subsequently gone on to expand what he means by the term (Robbins, 1996a; Robbins, 1996b).

[9] I first used the term at the meetings of the Canadian Society of Biblical Studies in Edmonton, AB, May, 2000 (Bloomquist, 2000).

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socio-rhetorical analysis differs from classical rhetoric and even neo-classical rhetorical analysis, not first of all by denying the value of neo-classical principles,[10] but by moving away from the formalism of both the assigned practice and the resulting analysis,[11] and in its attempt to discover new tools that will enable both those who practice rhetoric and those who use it for analysis of the rhetoric of others to get at texts (spoken or written) as inhabitants of the real world, and thus, as "thickly textured", that is, "with simultaneously interacting networks of signification" (Robbins, 1994, pp. 164-165), just as the world is. Theoretically, such an approach should provide us with the fuller historical context that allows us to assess the rhetorical presentation in terms of its "fit" with the real world, as opposed to assessing merely the rhetorical performance.

Socio-rhetorical analysis does this by gathering "current practices of interpretation together in an interdisciplinary paradigm" (Robbins, 1994, p. 165; Eagleton, 1983, p. 206). This approach means that socio-rhetorical analysis is not a "method" as such but an "interpretive analytics". By this phrase, Robbins means that socio-rhetorical analysis incorporates a hermeneutical sensitivity to the asking of certain questions in such a way that the appropriate methods that are available for analysis are brought to bear to answer the question asked in a programmatic way. Here, then, is the very hermeneutical sophistication that I wrote of above incorporated directly into the programmatic use of methodological tools.

3.1.1. Stages of socio-rhetorical analysis

There is no single way to envision the various textures that are at work in any single text. Nor is there any way to identify how many textures or how few textures should be brought into

[10] Aristotle's Rhetoric II devotes a significant amount of space to illustrations that are intended to show how rhetoric is made culturally and socially relevant.

[11] Robbins provisionally sets this approach forth in conscious contrast with George Kennedy's five stages of rhetorical analysis, viz., determination of unit, situation, disposition of arrangement, techniques or style, synchronic analysis (Kennedy, 1984, pp. 33-38).

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the discussion. There is, however, a "programmatic" element in socio-rhetorical analysis that invites analysis to take shape from a variety of perspectives. I have attempted to configure these for the sake of explanation as three: innertexture, intertexture, and ideological texture.

3.1.1.1. Inner-texture

Robbins introduces socio-rhetorical analysis by a discussion of the inner world of the text itself, independent of any considerations of the world(s) around the text. Here one seeks to "hear" the text, not as the original readers heard it, but in the formal world that the text creates as a text. For example, to "hear" a play like Shakespeare's Macbeth, one does not need to know Shakespeare's world or that of medieval Scotland. It is enough to be able to follow the play in the form of the words that are used, the characters, their relationships and actions, the arguments of the plot and narrative.

Likewise, in the study of texts, attention to the "innertexture" of the text requires that an interpreter will explore textures like the repetitive texture and pattern of words, phrases, and topics throughout the unit, as well as the progressive texture and pattern of sequences of words, phrases, and topics that form patterns throughout the unit (Robbins, 1994, p. 165; Robbins, 1996a, pp. 8-14)[12] . Both repetition and progression will help to determine the opening-middle-closing texture and pattern of the text. Here as well, an interpreter will likely attend to the narrational texture and pattern, that is, to the patterns formed by the voices of those in the text, including narrator and actors, who configure the action of the text, because it is here that one is most directly concerned with the world created by the text, independently of any analysis of the world outside the text (Robbins, 1996a, pp. 15-19). It is also here, I believe, that aesthetic texture and pattern is important since attention to a character's action -- purposeful, self-

[12] The basic rhetorical elements of language according to Kenneth Burke are "the repetitive, progressive, conventional and minor rhetorical forms of language" (Burke, 1931, pp. 123-183).

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expressive, or emotion-fused -- is to attend to the “stage directions” that provide a reader or hearer with a guide to the positioning, direction, and look of the actors on the stage of the text (Robbins, 1996a, pp. 29-36). Finally, it is here that the “point” that the author is making is sought through the text’s argumentative texture, a texture that one explores by seeking ways in which the characters and narrator make their points, via deductive (enthymematic) arguments or via inductive (paradigmatic) arguments, as well as by elaborations of various kinds (thematic, narrative, etc.) (Robbins, 1996a, pp. 21-29).

3.1.1.2. Intertexture

The world of the text does not stand on its own; rather, it stands, as noted above, in relation to “simultaneously interacting networks of signification” (Robbins, 1994, pp. 164-165). What this means generally is that the world of the text stands within a larger world that at various points will intersect with the world of the text but that will also be completely ignored in terms of the world that the text creates. What this means specifically is that the world of the text intersects at various points with other “worlds” of other texts, as well as with the social, cultural and sacred worlds of people’s experience.

In the case of the intersection with other texts, it becomes clear in reading or hearing almost any text that texts generally stand in relation to other texts (Robbins, 1994, p. 179), whether these texts are or are not part of a related corpus or canon (Robbins, 1994, p. 181). Robbins, following the work of others, suggests a variety of ways in which these relationships with other texts may be analyzed (Robbins, 1994, p. 179; Robbins, 1996a, pp. 40-58). James Harding’s essay on Pauline indebtedness to Jewish texts and Frank Hughes’ essay on Pauline indebtedness to Graeco-Roman texts are significant examples of the way that oral-scribal intertexture in Pauline texts may best be shown.

But, texts alone are not the only realities that “intersect” the world of a text or speech that we may be interested in. Richly textured texts also have an existence in a complex web of social

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and cultural relationships (Robbins, 1996a, pp. 58-94). Accordingly, socio-rhetorical analysis seeks to incorporate insights not only from historical analysis and reconstruction but also from social-scientific modeling in order to explore the way that social and cultural phenomena are integrated into a text. Socio-rhetorical analysis, then, is interested in (1) overarching cultural and anthropological questions, such as honour, guilt, purity, rights, and legal arrangements (both individualist and dyadic), (2) forms of social interaction (such as challenge-response and dialectic interaction), (3) economic wealth exchanges common to the means of production (agriculture, industry, information technology), (4) social relations arising from these exchanges, (5) self-understanding, including understandings of the body (Robbins, 1996a, pp. 75-86), as well as (6) the specific historical context within which any text arises and with which it in some way intersects.

In the case of religious materials, socio-rhetorical analysis will also be interested in the intersection of the textual world with the sacred realm, a realm that consists of socially and culturally constructed topics. Such "sacred" topics may include experience of the divine, of holy persons, of special forces whether good or evil, of divine control and guidance in social or personal history, and experience of human redemption, commitment, community, and behaviour that are shaped by encounters with the sacred (Robbins, 1996a, pp. 120-131).

In sum, socio-rhetorical analysis here seeks to move from the analysis of world that can be construed as self-contained, that is, having a textual existence independent of any "real" (i.e., historical) significance, to explore how this textual world intersects a larger world, a world that we can know through historical reconstruction and social-scientific modeling. In doing so, socio-rhetorical analysis suggests a more hermeneutically sophisticated untangling of the threads of the experience of dominant forms of interpretation than much dominant historical-critical study has done because of its lack of innate, hermeneutical sophistication.

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3.1.1.3. Ideological texture

A third perspective on texture is crucial because texts rarely purport simply either to present a "textual" world without further ado or simply to report social and cultural realities (which no text could do anyway since no text can exhaust the social and cultural world of experience or even identify all historical events of any given moment in time). Accordingly, socio-rhetorical analysis alerts us to what Robbins calls "ideological texture", that is, the forms whereby people configure and reconfigure their belief systems and their "biases, opinions, preferences, and stereotypes". This configuration or reconfiguration is done by writers, their original audiences, the narrative characters in their texts, and even by subsequent interpreters,[13] either in the form of a confirmation of existing social, cultural and sacred knowledge shared by these persons or in the form of a challenge to it.[14] James Harding's examination of a primarily oral-scribal themes in Second Temple Judaism and they way they are picked up in Paul emphasizes that Paul does not simply pick them up as such, but that he does something with them. That is, I think, a primarily ideological question: how does Paul configure or reconfigure the themes of Second Temple Judaism?

My position here is premised on the assertion that people normally remain in the social and cultural world they are given and create value systems that mirror these social and cultural realities unless forced, by experience or reflection, to adopt another. In neo-classical rhetorical terms, we may say that they continue to use and talk about what Aristotle called "final topics", namely, those issues and concerns "that most decisively identify one's cultural location" and concern "the manner in which people present their propositions, reasons, and arguments both to

[13] Robbins has recently called the analysis of ideological texture "an agreement by various people that they will dialogue and disagree with one another with a text as a guest in the conversation" (Robbins, 1996a, pp. 95-119).

[14] My reading of Robbins suggests that what he describes as "ideological texture" might be understood to be a further development of social and cultural texture.

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themselves and to other people" (Robbins, 1996a, p. 86) as long as these "topics" and their configuration helpfully explain their world and allow them to be "at home" in their world. When, however, their culture and their culture's topics fail them, then they adopt other "topics" and other cultural configurations of those topics.

For example, in terms of sociological analysis, it is possible to see how someone from a "dominant" culture (i.e., an "imperial" rhetoric that imposes itself broadly throughout space and time, e.g., the Roman empire in the first century C.E. or American culture in the 20th century C.E.) could begin to think that his or her culture is not adequately explaining injustices and might then seek to find or establish a culture that can. If the person does so without jettisoning the essential values of the dominant culture, then s/he might look for or seek to establish a "subculture" (a culture characterized by a rhetoric that mirrors the dominant culture rhetoric but to do so in subgroups in which one seeks to enact the dominant culture more justly or "correctly"). This, for example, is the culture and thus the rhetoric of many women in North America, who are unwilling to give up the values of North American society (e.g., choice, rights- and freedom-based democracy, capitalist employment practices based on equal pay for equal work, etc.) but who wish to redress the injustices of a male dominated society in North America. Others, however, may seek to reject either a dominant culture or a subculture by seeking out or creating a "counterculture" (i.e., a culture and a rhetoric that proposes an alternative to the existing rhetorics). Someone who rejects the dominant culture of North American capitalism or its subcultural forms (Christianity, feminism, immigrant populations' attempt to acculturate themselves in ethnically sensitive ways to North American values [e.g., Latinos], etc.) might decide to adopt, say, Buddhism or drop out completely and join a cult living in a rural compound, thus adopting a rhetoric that envisions a new order that will replace the existing one. If, on the other hand, there were no clear vision in mind and what one wanted to do was simply to attack the existing culture without a clear vision of what it was to replaced with, then, one might adopt a contra-culture and its rhetorical topics, as often happens with mass movements of people in the

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early days of revolutionary upheaval or with the rejection of dominant sub-cultures by young men in urban gangs. Finally, a similar situation arises in what is called “liminal culture”, that is a culture and a rhetoric that are characteristic of moments of transition in individual or corporate lives, as in the case of those in states of generational flux (e.g., teenagers) or migrational flux (e.g., exiles, refugees, and immigrants in their early days) (Robbins, 1996a, pp. 86-88; Roberts, 1978).

There are, however, other ways of dealing with a reality that has, in the mind of someone, disappointed. For example, in terms of sacred texture, the topics may be configured or reconfigured by in what we might call a “religious” way. In his ground-breaking study of sects, Bryan Wilson identified 7 ways in which religious groups face and deal with obstacles or impediments to well-being: (1) conversionist (the problem is in the human heart and when the heart is changed, the problems begin to be dealt with), (2) revolutionist (the problem faced is so dramatic or cosmic that only a complete overthrow and recreation of social or cosmic order will remedy the situation), (3) introversionist (the problem faced can only be dealt with by withdrawal from the situation, or society or world), (4) gnostic-manipulationist (the problem can be dealt with by a rigorous and disciplined ritual introduced into a person’s or community’s life), (5) thaumaturgic (the problem can be dealt with by a supernatural or miraculous intervention), (6) reformist (the problem can be dealt with by progressive reforms of the individual or corporate life), and (7) utopian (the problem demands a new order, created in a new space and time, without necessarily requiring the destruction of the old order) (Wilson, 1969, pp. 361-383; Robbins, 1996a, pp. 72-75) . Culturally, as long as someone is culturally “happy” with, say, a thaumaturgical culture, there is no problem and the rhetoric and rhetorical “topics” used by that person will reflect that culture as their “cultural texture” (e.g., Pentecostal or “Toronto Blessing” cultures); however, if thaumaturgical responses to evil begin to be seen to be inadequate or regularly fail or simply disappoint, the person will perhaps adopt an alternative “cultural” and “sacred” response to the evils that one is facing (e.g., from a thaumaturgical culture in

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Pentecostalism to a more liberal Christian "reformist" approach that employs the topics of the ills of society and holistic approaches to health-care).[15]

Eventually, though, a movement to a new identity, whether it be identified sociologically, religiously, or otherwise, will necessitate the creation of an explanatory system that will resolve the conflict that generated it by re-ordering the old "topics" and/or creating and re-ordering new ones, a process that Ricoeur calls "integration" (Ricoeur, 1984, p. 58). The new, explanatory system is created to provide for those within the system "a coherent, if systematically simplified, over-all orientation in space and time, in means and ends" (Erikson, 1968, pp. 189-190). In time, this explanatory system will take on a shape that allows it to be studied and explored, a process that happens quite quickly even in the often brilliant and short-lived life of apocalyptic sects (e.g., the Branch Davidians in Waco). Furthermore, in time the explanatory system will itself become a culture susceptible to transformation (e.g., Marxism moved from its counter-cultural beginnings to becoming a dominant system in Eastern Europe) and even one to be moved out of by those who will leave it for another.

In sum, what we discover in social and cultural texture are "images" of the self in the context of society and culture (Ricoeur, 1978, p. 17). When, however, we need new images of the self because we need a new social and cultural setting to explain new experiences or reflections that cannot be successfully explained through the existing social and cultural

[15] Ideological texture also explores the dynamic whereby this social and cultural shift toward a new identity happens (Robbins, 1996a, p. 95; Boissevain, 1974). For example, in the above example used concerning the creation of a North American, feminist sub-culture, it is possible that some women may meet to voice grievances and explore alternatives. Various women, having distinct agenda but with an understanding of common grievances and purpose, might begin to meet regularly, even forming regular rhetorical presentations (conferences, lectures, newsletters, magazines, etc.), thus forming a "clique"; or, they might meet briefly with a specific target or objective in mind, thus forming an "action set"; or they might be drawn together by a powerful, charismatic leader who would herself give shape to this new movement, and thus form a "gang"; etc. The point is that there are various helpful ways of exploring the dynamics whereby the shift can take place.

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categories, then our existing social and cultural identification will fail us. It is at that point, however, that we can chart the transformation or proposed transformation that leads someone in that position from one system to another as s/he attempts to discover a new configuration (or a reconfiguration of the existing system) so as to be able to incorporate the new experience or reflection into his/her explanatory "grid" of reality. Accordingly, we can see that ideological shifts are a natural element of cultural systems but that they are not equivalent to the cultural system; rather, they help to explain transitions between systems and even the genesis of some systems.

3.1.1.3.1. Post-colonial reflections in the context of ideological analysis

Because socio-rhetorical analysis challenges interpreters to broaden their horizon when examining texts rhetorically in order to incorporate methods that enable readers to discern "forms of activity inseparable from the wider social relations between writers and readers, orators and audiences" (Robbins, 1994, p. 165; Eagleton, 1983, p. 206), socio-rhetorical analysis is ideally suited to incorporate insights from the hermeneutical vantage point of readers in a variety of settings and perspectives. As such, it is ideally suited to incorporate insights from readers not only in cultures where classical and neo-classical analysis have dominated but also in the perspectives of post-colonial settings, those settings that are in flux because they are in the process of emerging "from the colonial testimony of Third World countries and the discourses of "minorities" within the geopolitical divisions of east and west, north and south" (Bhabha, 1992, p. 437)[16].

In large part, this happens through the above incorporation of cultural analysis and study into rhetorical analysis. For example, cultural study helps us to find ways of recovering a lost

[16] Here, as elsewhere, the term "post-colonial" covers all culture affected in some way by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin, 1989).

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history when it is not clear how that history is to be recovered and interpreted and the impact that that recovery has on interpretation of other non-lost histories and experiences. It does so by allowing contrasting cultural possibilities to erode universalizing narratives. In this, it shares profound connections with post-colonial reflection (Bhabha, 1992, p. 461).

Like much current reflection on post-colonialism, socio-rhetorical analysis does not argue simply for polarization, as if there were simply the pre-colonial experience and the colonial experience, and all we need to do is separate the two and then choose which is more suitable or "truer" today.[17] In the case of socio-rhetorical analysis, it is not as if there were simply classical or neo-classical and post-classical rhetoric. Nor does socio-rhetorical analysis argue for the dominance of one method over another, just as post-colonial reflection does not simply argue for the adoption of colonialist norms (usually Western, Christian, capitalist values) or for a return to the pre-colonial experience as if colonialism had never happened. Rather, just as colonialism has profoundly re-shaped pre-colonial cultures in a way that makes the colonial experience of "aporia, ambivalence, indeterminacy, the question of discursive closure, the threat to agency, the status of intentionality, the challenge to "totalizing" concepts" (Bhabha, 1992, p. 439)[18] the very matrix of today's colonial societies (e.g., in the social behaviour of black men in colonial slave-societies and the consequent lack of social agency), so, too, in rhetorical analysis, it is the impasse to further developments in neo-classical rhetorical analysis that has led to attempts to transcend the impasse without denying the value of rhetorical analysis for further exploration.

Specifically, I would argue that it is the cultural form of liminality that has been associated with the post-colonial experience that may here be a useful heuristic tool. According

[17] According to Bhabha, these are "nativist" pedagogies "that set up the relation of Third World and First World in a binary structure of opposition" (Bhabha, 1992, p. 439).

[18] Building on the work of Frantz Fanon, Bhabha argues against the "primitive Manichaeanism" between black and white, Arab and Christian, polarities that "come to be replaced with truths that are only partial, limited and unstable" (Bhabha, 1992, p. 459; Fanon, 1963, pp. 117-118).

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to Bhabha, "the contingent and the liminal become the times and the spaces for the historical representation of the subjects of cultural difference in a post-colonial criticism where the dialectic of culture and identification is neither binary nor sublatory" (Bhabha, 1992, p. 445). Within the cultural space created by reflection on the post-colonial experience, new identifiers appear that "may confuse the continuity of historical temporalities, confound the ordering of cultural symbols, traumatize tradition" (Bhabha, 1992, p. 445)[19].

3.2. The rhetoric of suffering in Philippians from a socio-rhetorical viewpoint

Using the tools that socio-rhetorical analysis affords us, how might I describe the rhetorical function of suffering in Philippians differently from how I described it using neo-classical, rhetorical analysis ten years ago?

3.2.1. What I would not change

First of all, it is important to re-state that socio-rhetorical analysis does not ignore the results of neo-classical rhetorical analysis. In the case of my study, I believe that for the most part the analysis of what I would now describe as innertexture would reveal the same kind of internal structure and lexical clues that my neo-classical analysis revealed then. I continue to

[19] Not surprisingly, post-colonial readings often have an activist, or proactive element that takes the "reading" to the stage of active interpretation. According to Bhabha, such readings "intervene in those ideological discourses of modernity that attempt to give a hegemonic "normality" to the uneven development and the differential, often disadvantaged, histories of nations, races, communities, peoples." (Bhabha, 1992, p. 437) Interpretation that is nourished by a post-colonial reading therefore attains a socially relevant function. Again, according to Bhabha, such readings "formulate their critical revisions around issues of cultural difference, social authority, and political discrimination in order to reveal the antagonistic and ambivalent moments within the "rationalizations" of modernity." (Bhabha, 1992, p. 437) For this reason, many departments that represent a "post-colonial" interpretation (e.g., African American Studies departments in US universities) are often seen as both teaching and research oriented, as well as loci of political agitationSuch departments can "be seen as having a political purpose - to "do your scholarship and trouble the waters," as one scholar said". (Kate Zernike, "Can crying race be crying wolf?," New York Times, Week in Review, January 13, 2002).

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believe that the letter is not only unitary but that it follows the rhetorical divisions that I identified through a dialectical use of rhetorical analysis and epistolography (which I still consider to be a sub-discipline within the larger discipline of rhetoric in the ancient world).[20]

I also feel that what I described in terms of oral-scribal intertextuality remains valid and insightful. For example, my view that Paul is clearly invoking the example of the Isaian "suffering servant" in the Christ-hymn (2.6-11) and is then using that topos throughout the letter to recall ways in which Christians are "servants", as Jesus was, in the manner of the "suffering servant" remains valid (Bloomquist, 1993, pp. 161-168). I believe that the conclusion is eminently suited to the socio-rhetorical analysis of intertexture of oral-scribal material and sacred texture: "in light of its epistolographic and rhetorical contexts, it seems clear that 2.6-11 is not a presentation of Christology -- that is, a reflection on the abasement of the Lord and his exaltation after death -- but a functional depiction of the suffering of God's servant in the light of the servant's mission. Paul depicts not only Jesus' experience in terms of the Isaian suffering servant, but also his own experience, the experiences of his co-workers, and those of the Philippians in terms of the same figure. ... Paul uses the Servant Song material to depict servants" (Bloomquist, 1993, p. 167)[21].

I also believe that the description that I gave of the narrative world of Paul in Philippians, in terms of suffering, still holds. And, this was, of course, one of my central points in what I wrote then, namely, that what we find in Philippians is a picture of cascading examples of suffering in the narrative characters: Jesus suffered, Paul reflects that suffering in his suffering,

[20] The one exception would likely be in the realm of argumentative texture. I feel that I paid more attention to the neo-classical categories and formal divisions than I did to the actual argument that Paul was seeking to make. I do think that the categories and divisions are the ones that I discovered then, and that they are helpful, but I think now that more could be said in terms of argumentation. I hope to address this question in presentations that I will be making in the summer of 2002.

[21] The distinction between ontological and functional realities is well developed by Longenecker (Longenecker, 1970).

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Epaphroditus and Timothy reflect Jesus' suffering and also Paul's suffering, and the Philippians reflect Jesus' suffering, Paul's suffering, and Paul's co-workers' suffering. In the end, they are united in the functional depiction of their suffering, even if not in the specifics of their suffering. But, working back up the cascade, just as Jesus suffered and was raised to glory, so will Paul, and so will Paul's co-workers, and so will the Philippians. Thus, they are not just united in suffering, but their suffering is their assurance of their union also in glory.

3.2.2. Social and cultural texture

Nevertheless, it is in the description of their union, where one of the significant changes in my analysis now enables me to say more and to say it more helpfully. I first do so in terms of social and cultural texture, and specifically, in terms of the economic pattern expressed in the texture.

3.2.2.1. General Comments

As noted above, one of the features of social texture that socio-rhetorical analysis regularly incorporates is analysis of the economic world, which is understood to be a principal factor in configuring people's cultural worlds. Historical and and neo-classical exegesis have been carried out by assuming that economic transactions were of one kind only, rather than of a variety of forms and means, has caused many Western interpreters to think of economic transactions in the first century in ways that follow the rules of capitalist market systems and that build cultures of rights and obligations that are dependent on these rules; however, there is no reason to believe that such rules and cultural configurations occur everywhere, including the first century. In fact, in terms of post-colonial analysis, there are better reasons to think that they do not.[22] The same holds for cultural interpretations of other realities, such as "love", often

[22] This does not mean having to decide which form of economic exchange is "better" or "worse", only that not all systems are the same.

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interpreted in a post-19th century Freudian way that privileges romanticism and emotions, rather than the social obligation associated with the word "love" in the first century.

Specifically, in the eastern Mediterranean world, there are particular and different economic exigencies that lead to particular sets of economic transactions.[23] The principal exigency that we can idenify is that of "limited goods". The world of the eastern Mediterranean during the 1st century was, like parts of the world today, a world that can best be described as one of "limited goods". In contrast to worlds that we might describe as economically "abundant" (worlds either that are characterized by unlimited geographical space for expansion and cultivation, as, for example, the US and Canada, as well as central and eastern Europe, or that are characterized by the ability to produce abundance industrially and scientifically), the world of the eastern Mediterranean in the first century is better viewed as a pie with limited slices available for all the inhabitants: the pie can only be divided in so many ways so that people have any economic goods, because once the pie is gone, there is no more! Another cannot be discovered nor can more goods be produced.

Not surprisingly, the particular forms of economic transactions that we find at work in the "limited goods" world of the eastern Mediterranean can be boiled down to two: unequal and equal. Essentially these two forms of economic transactions encompass what any inhabitants of that world might do with the limited pieces of the pie available to them.

By "unequal" economic transactions, I mean those transactions in which one individual has more of the pie than another and is in a significantly different position to the other. On the one hand, there are "unequal" transactions that are achieved by contracts between persons of different statuses, who are bound together through a formal or informal economic contract. For example, a "client", who has less, works for a "patron", who has more. As described by Elliott,

[23] That this is so has been suggested both on the basis of what we know historically of the society and also on the basis of social-scientific modeling (which takes contemporary social settings and attempts to discover economic dynamics at work within them and suggest ancient analogues).

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patron-client relationships have several characteristics, but "in general, the relation is one of personal loyalty and commitment (fides) of some duration entered into voluntarily by two or more individuals of unequal status. It is based on differences in social roles and access to power, and involves the reciprocal exchange of different kinds of goods and services of value to each partner" (Elliott, 1996, p. 148). The situation of labourers who depend on a land-lord for the land they live on, but even more importantly for the seed that they need to plant the land and grow crops for the land-lord and a portion for themselves and their family, is a kind of "clientage". On the other hand, "unequal" economic transactions may also be achieved without a contract, when, for example, it concerns a slave who is the property of the master; here no contract obtains. In such an unequal relationship, the master is obliged to provide that which ensures the good of his property and the slave is required to show obedience (or "love") toward the master.

By "equal" transactions, I mean those economic relationships that take place among social equals who are socially obliged to share the pie. This may happen when two or more unrelated men share the same social status, and social "honour" alone demands that both share their goods, as well as their status. For example, it is expected among equals that if one has need of something (say, bread, or seed, or a tool), that the other will share with the equal what he needs without interest or increased demands on the other, though reciprocation is expected. Such a relationship extends to all social relationships. For example, one may invite an equal to supper: it is expected that there will be no cost for the supper, but it is also expected that the one invited will go to the dinner. The reciprocity that obtains among social equals (in that the one invited to supper is expected to invite the host back, and one who has borrowed is expected to be equally willing to loan from his stock) is nevertheless still characterized by an aspect of inequality, given the limited state of goods. For, no matter how "equal" one may think himself to be, others are always set to challenge you for a portion of what you have in order to advance their own interests.

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This sharing among equals happens in terms of goods as we perceive them (land, food, possessions, etc.), but it also happens concerning the "currency" of the eastern Mediterranean world, namely, "honour".[24] While our capitalist world since the 1500s has understood wealth as measured by the "currency" that we call "money", in the first-century Mediterranean world "wealth" is measured by another "currency", namely, "honour". How much honour a person has determines the person's wealth and thus that person's place within the boundaries of society. "Honor is a claim to worth along with the social acknowledgement of worth", and it will determine the transactions in which a person can be involved in society (Robbins, 1996a, p. 76). A very honourable person, like a person today who is wealthy in money, has more opportunities open to him, has a greater prestige associated with him and is thus able to engage in cultural activities in a way that person who is less "wealthy", that is, less honourable cannot.[25]

A person's wealth understood this way usually comes through a person's birth into a particular status or rank in society or through the gift of honour being bestowed upon someone. We call this honour "ascribed" honour.[26] As noted above, however, even among equals there is an element of inequality that allows one to gain "wealth" at the expense of an equal. When this happens honour is gained or "acquired" at the expense of an equal.

[24] While neo-classical analysis incorporates the term "honour", as shown in the essay by Frank Hughes, it does not show the socio-economic realities within which the term functioned.

[25] Usually, of course, a person who is honoured is wealthy, but not always. It is possible, though rare in the ancient world, to have a person who is, for whatever reason, born into poverty who is rich because he is honourable. Usually this does not happen because poverty is understood to lead to dishonour, since you are forced to become dependent on those superior in status (by begging, slavery, becoming a client, receiving charity, etc.) or to steal (which is to take in a dishonourable fashion what belongs to another rather than to challenge the other for what is his with the risk of losing what you have, which if you are poor, likely means your life).

[26] "Ascribed honor befalls or happens to a person passively through birth, family connections, or endowment by notable persons of power" (Robbins, 1996a, p. 76).

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The mechanism by which honour is "acquired" happens through the social dynamic of "challenge", in which an equal will seek to take something from an equal. This may be in the form of what we today understand to be possessions (land, food, woman, etc.) or in the larger social capital of "honour". The latter is what happens regularly in social intercourse, for example in the marketplace, or at the banquet, when someone makes a boast at the expense of another.

But, there is another form of "equal" relationships where exchange happens without "challenge" and "response", and thus without any loss or gain of any kind, namely, the family. Here we find the characteristic economic form of transaction which is called "mutual reciprocity". The family is an essential economic refuge in this world, a context in which goods are freely exchanged with neither interest nor expectation of repayment.

But, who is family? The immediate family is not difficult to discern: father, mother, children, grandparents. As one moves to lesser degrees of sanguinity, the bond of family is less tight: aunts, uncles, cousins. Nevertheless, even the most distant clan member is still family as compared with one who is a family member of a different clan; a member of one ethnic group is never an alien in the way a non-ethnically related person is. So, while it is true that there are degrees of family, the family always presents the essential unit for gauging "mutual reciprocity" and can be appealed to as a context for unlimited sharing.

The above is a description of the economic reality of the first century eastern Mediterranean. But, this economic reality has powerfully significant cultural implications, and they rival our own own cultural knowledge. For just as a child does not need to be taught explicitly who his family is and what that means, it is simply learned as s/he grows, the economic realities themselves, from the chief exigency within that world -- limited goods -- to economic forms by which limited goods are shared, gained, and lost, did not have to be taught, just as a culturally dominant perspective that incorporates abundance does not need to be taught to children in most North American settings. They profoundly shape the inhabitants' view of their world and do not need to be explained; rather, from birth, children grow up immersed in the

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knowledge that their world is one of limited goods and, depending on where there birth has placed them socially, they will either be those who engage in equal exchange with those who have or with those who do not have or they will be engaged in unequal exchange with a view to gaining (or possibly losing) what they have. "Becoming an adult in that environment means acquiring knowledge, consciously or unconsciously, of these social and cultural values, patterns, or codes" (Robbins, 1996a, p. 75). And, as noted above, these codes are fixed unless they fail or are challenged.

3.2.2.2. Philippians and suffering

When, then, we turn to Philippians and the immediate question of the rhetorical function of suffering in that letter, what are the implications of these cultural values? First of all, we need to note that all that has been said above regarding the first century eastern Mediterranean world likely applies here: this is a world that, in spite of or because of the growing urbanism of the Roman Empire is definitely a world of limited goods. In fact, at the time of Paul it had probably gotten worse, since there was a significant disintegration of the peasant's world because of "exploitative urbanism" and of overly powerful landholding central institutions (Oakman, 1986, p. 211). The problem for the villages that Paul traversed was that as the wealth of the land moved out of the sphere of reciprocal distribution characteristic of village life based on kinship to the ever-increasing centralization of wealth into "urban areas, temple complexes, or state coffers", the cultivator became necessarily impoverished and village life degenerated into a "survivalist mentality" (Oakman, 1986, pp. 79-80).[27] What is available is in short supply and in greater short-supply than in any age. This was the social setting of Philippians, and it had profound implications for shaping the cultures of the inhabitants: a survivalist mentality would

[27] In order not to go into "a hopeless spiral of debt that would led to the loss of the family plot, the peasant would have to curtail consumption. The option of extending the production base was not available since more arable land was not available."

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encourage clinging at all costs to what one had, especially if, as recent studies suggest, the Pauline congregation at Philippi derives members primarily from the lower class elements and brokers (Oakes, 2001, pp. 55-76).

Second, given this context, the audience at Philippi was used to economic exchanges based on "limited goods" either as those who promoted the survivalism (knowingly or unknowingly) or those who suffered through it. What this meant was that, while one might share goods with equals and with family, one would definitely avoid relationships with unequals, except where there was something to be gained. Paul, coming into a Macedonian village like Philippi, populated in part at least by Roman veterans of the civil wars, and by some Jews, shared almost nothing in common with any of the inhabitants, other than his Judaism (which his opponents had evidently cast in doubt) and possibly his Roman citizenship (which we only know of from Acts, not Paul's letters). If Paul's approach in Philippi was comparable to his approach elsewhere, then his main work during the week was to earn enough to be able to support himself and not become a charitable case or a client of wealthy interests at Philippi (cf. 1 Thess 2.1-12). Paul's goal here, if other letters provide any recurring perspective on Paul, was to avoid decreasing the Philippian converts' goods or to become dependent on powerful status holders in Philippi. In doing so, Paul would surely have enhanced his ethos vis-à-vis his Philippian hearers and first adherents of his gospel.

But, what then happened when Paul was thrown into prison? Who would meet his need in this incapacitated state? How would they have done so? And why? What would they hope to gain or not gain from it? The situation could not be resolved in the economic context of the first century, other than by abandoning Paul's principles or by "breaking" the cultural code.[28] What

[28] On "breaking cultural codes", see also my work on how apocalyptic does this (Bloomquist, Carey & Bloomquist, 1999). There I indicate that while "apocalyptic" texts can be identified by the codes that they break, I also suggest -- following Derrida and Deleuze -- that rhetoric itself is often "apocalyptic" in that it seeks to set forth a series of values that are in

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we find is that the code is broken, and this is the rhetorical impact of Philippians understood ideologically.

3.2.3. Ideological texture

The above understanding of economic exchange hinges on the common social and cultural knowledge of the region and time being accepted by the characters involved in this rhetorical narrative; however, their understanding and acceptance of the exchanges in question is clearly transformed in Paul's rhetorical presentation in Philippians. Paul would have had no claim of any kind to make on the Philippians and no reason to expect their "participation" or "communion" in the gospel were it not for the ideological shift created by that very gospel in their cultural knowledge. For, in contrast to a dominant culture (Roman or Greco-Roman) or subculture (Hellenistic Jewish) that perpetuates the values of limited goods and patron-client relationships -- except where equal-status and genetic and ethnic familial mutual-reciprocity economic relationships obtain -- a new sub-cultural understanding is introduced in which all those who share faith in God through Christ are, in fact, family. Philippians allows us to observe how Paul (perhaps following what he learned of Jesus' ministry from Jesus' followers) sets forth this shift that breaks a series of first-century codes.

First, in spite of the lack of economic reciprocity, Paul emphasizes that he shared in an "unmeasured" way with the Philippians the gospel of Jesus, giving them the gospel without expectation of return on what culturally would have been viewed as his investment of money, time, and, above all, honour: it is not an investment but a gift! Paul's own words suggest that this is the case. But, Paul's words also suggest that the Philippian response to his action was, in turn, unmeasured and testimony to their adherence to the gospel. Why? Because, he says, it

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contrast to the audience's cultural codes (or, at least, are in contrast to what the speaker/writer thinks are the audience's cultural codes).

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mirrors his own action! He writes that they did what he did: he shared with them what he had: the gospel, and he did so by not failing to share with them his money, time and honour; and they have shared with him, if not the gospel, then certainly their economic substance and their honour. This is clear from our exploration of innertexture of Philippians where we discover the remarkable repetition of words having to do with "communion" (κοινωνία) that suggests a sharing on the part of Paul of what he has and a reciprocal sharing on the part of the Philippians of what they have. Both sharings, however, lead to suffering: on Paul's part, his sharing of the gospel leads to his being persecuted; on the Philippians' part, their sharing leads to their decreasing share of the pie (with no real hope of recovery of what is lost). And yet, Paul argues, in doing what they do, the Philippians mirror not only Paul, but more importantly, Jesus, who is the model mirrored by Paul.

Second, the Philippians thus appear conjoined as functional "equals" with Paul. And, while we might at first conclude that this meant an economic relationship of "equality", probably one of "friendship", it is more likely that the relationship is one of "family", since Paul uses the term ἀδελφοί at epistolarily significant points: the first verse of the body opening or narratio 1.12, the first verse of the reprehensio 3.1 and of its concluding section 4.1, the first verse of the exhortatio of the reprehensio 3.17, as well as the first verse of the peroratio 4.8. In other words, at the beginning and end of his rhetorical address, as well as where Paul's own familial relation to the Philippians has been called into doubt, Paul underscores the family relationship with the Philippians, a relationship that implies a culture of "mutual reciprocity" within which goods are shared. But, here again, Paul also asserts that in this regard, they are brothers beccause of the new cultural values that Jesus has brought about through giving himself freely to those that were clearly of a different status from him ("who being in the form of God"). In doing so, Paul argues, Jesus created family members who became family through his death. And, as such, all those who become family members of Jesus become also family of each other, joined in a familial bond that requires an economic relationship of mutual reciprocity.

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Third, this economic exchange is not exhausted in its understanding by seeing how the Philippians gave of their possessions to Paul for his support during his imprisonment. At least, that is not the end of the rhetorical presentation as Paul makes. Rather, in sharing with Paul, and by extension, with Christ, suffering itself is exchanged: in exchange for poverty, riches are given, by giving riches, poverty is the result (literally "is gained"). In other words, a corollary to the exchange that happens in a limited goods context is that not only are goods exchanged but also goods and loss are exchanged. Thus, if someone takes something from someone else, what is gained is exchanged for a comparable loss, except where equals are involved and the relationship of loss can subsequently be compensated for by re-payment. But, where that is not so, and re-payment is not possible or likely, any "gift" is exchanged for a significant loss.

So, in his letter to them, Paul bases his argument on the cultural realisties that they and he both knew were operative in that setting: the Philippians had gained life from Paul's proclamation of the gospel and Paul had gained suffering from his proclamation to them; the Philippians had gained suffering from Paul in prison because in supporting Paul they became impoverished by giving Paul of their substance with no hope of repayment (while Paul was in prison), while Paul gained both life and encouragement. But, of course, this was comparable in Paul's mind to what had initially happened when Paul had first visited them and they had first believed: the Philippians had gained life and all the riches of heaven from Christ, and had given him via a socio-cultural economic transaction their death, their illnesses, their sin. Neither Jesus, nor Paul, nor the Philippians, had any hope of having their investment repaid; rather, they were freely given. What possible re-payment, for example, could there be in this cultural context for the gift that God has given or from Paul whose imprisonment might well have ended in his death? None. No, there is only, then, the exchange of loss (from humans to God) for goods (salvation, healing, meaning... from God to humans via Jesus). There is, to put it simply, no bargain here, since though these are all economic exchanges, they make for very bad economics: poverty for wealth. But, this is what happens in the mutual reciprocity of exchanges in families in which the future hangs on the family acting as a family.

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But, fourth and finally, it appears that for Paul, though suffering is taken on one's self or community as a loss (a "negative sum"), it does not remain so because of God. In light of Jesus' action -- hymned epideictically in Phil 2.6-11 --, God had given highest honour to Jesus, life through resurrection after his dishonoured death; deliberatively, Paul writes that it is the same honour that will be bestowed on all those who, like Christ, act as family toward other followers of Christ and who bring others into the family. It is, then, something that the Philippians would gain as an exchange for their suffering, as well as Paul, Timothy and Epaphroditus, and all other Christian "servants". According to Paul, the Philippians will not be left depleted since, as he writes, God will re-supply them and thus fill the "hole" left by their gift to him (4.19) because God will do so out of the abundance -- rather than the "limited goods" -- of his riches. This has been Paul's experience and, he writes, this was also Jesus' experience: God, in the end, recompenses even the most profound loss when lost in defense of God's honour out of the abudance of his "wealth" or honour. This was the experience of Jesus, who was stripped of all his wealth (his "honour") through his "accursed" death on the cross, but was highly rewarded in the end through the gift of resurrection life. In the end, the family is the locus of a new economy of abundance that is real, in spite of the limited-goods perspective that Paul's immediate converts carried with them, and they can share readily because in the end God will recompense every debt, thus making it foolishness beyond measure to hold anyone in the Christian family responsible for debts when all debts will in fact be covered in the end by God.

In sum, Paul's rhetorical reconfiguration suggests that in servant self-giving, an exchange happens in which the "wealth" (e.g., honour, capital, strength, etc.) is shared without measure with those who become family and, in doing so, the one who shares gains loss (e.g., loss of honour, loss of capital, fatigue, imprisonment, etc.). While this situation could continue for a period of time within the family confines, Paul also finds that it is not purely a recycled system, since God blesses both parties out of God's abundance, and so, both those who are "enriched"

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and those who are “empoverished” find themselves possessors of overflowing abundance through God.[29]

4. By way of conclusion

The above re-reading of the rhetorical function of suffering in Philippians relies heavily on both a better understanding of the social and cultural texture that we can observe in the economic exchange of the first century Mediterranean world and an ideological reading of how Paul reconfigures that texture to get across his argument.

I have offered this re-reading in this post-colonial setting of my academic “reading with” other scholars here in the context of Codrington College because in my mind the post-colonial setting of our day is, in its liminality, a very helpful “space” for a re-reading of the liminal world in which Paul worked out the implications of his gospel in his day. For, unless we believe that the colonial experience is limited to the historical and conjunctural realities of developing countries in the post-19th century world and are not in some way transcultural and transtemporal,[30] then it is helpful to think of Paul, too, working out of a liminal, post-colonial Christian reflection. Thus, our “reading with” each other has helped me better to read “with” Paul and to understand him more fully.

I realize that this strikes at a major pillar of contemporary post-colonial theories, namely, that they are somehow dealing with unique situations and that this appears simply to make post-

[29] The situation is comparable to those who experience in pastoral care via the “cure of souls” the sharing of the sufferings of those who are ministered to. For example, a terminally Christian, visited by another Christian, has nothing to return to the one who visits and encourages the one who is dying; the visitor can only gain loss. It is, however, the experience of both the one dying and the one who has given of his/her “wealth” to uphold the one dying that both experience the overflowing riches of God (abundance) whereby the one impoverished is enriched and whereby the one who is enriched by the visitor is enriched and yet further enriched.

[30] Bhabha, for example, contends that post-colonialist readings must be limited to the historically contingent present day experiences (Bhabha, 1992, p. 437).

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colonial reflection function in service of my original historical initiative rather than bringing something new to the table. I do not wish to suggest that each colonial situation is not unique in its cultural particulars, but I do wish to suggest that there are social dynamics of post-colonialism (such as the liminal experience) that resonate across space and time. This is why the dynamics of post-colonial reflections that I have observed in the work of post-colonial authors resonate strongly with me as I read the work of someone like Paul: a colonized Jew, living under the dominant culture of Rome and using the dominant Greco-Roman rhetorical tools to set forth a completely new experience -- his experience of Christ -- in ideologically reshaping his whole, social and cultural value system, and they resonate in a way that reveals something in Paul that I had not seen before. Rhetorically, Paul presents before the Philippians an understanding of suffering that suggests that it is a "liminal space" within which, for a time, God is mirroring the work accomplished through his Christ, both for the ongoing redemption of humans in this world and to assure those who have become new beings in Christ that they shall one day be glorified. In this respect, then, Paul's Christian vision is an excellent example of precisely the kind of post-colonial space Bhabha writes about when he says that a "liminal form of signification" (in the case of Paul, the topoi associated with this passing world) "creates a space for the contingent, indeterminate articulation of social "experience" that is particularly important for envisaging emergent cultural identities" (Bhabha, 1992, p. 445). In this case, the nascent Christian church is that emerging cultural identity. Paul does so not by detaching Christian faith from its Hellenistic context but by using the Hellenistic cultural topoi to create a new space that is transitory and limited in scope.

But, of course, Paul was not alone. There are few better examples, as we have seen in the papers by James Harding and Frank Hughes, than Second Temple Judaism and early Christianity as examples of reactions to the imposition of a new dominant culture. In fact, subcultures are most often the result of attempts to renegotiate the hold that a dominant culture has over members of an ethnic group or other social group living in but not fully identifying with the

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dominant culture. But, they need a "space" within which they can be created. This is why, for example, the liminal experience of immigrants, or exiles, or refugees before they establish their subcultural or other cultural identity in their new "home" is an important post-colonial setting.[31]

It is here, as well, that we can see most clearly how Philippians further develops within the context of the death-resurrection rhetorical culture that became synonymous with orthodox Christian discourse. It was this culture that proved to be the rhetorical-cultural context for the development of Paul's words to the Philippians, and not the classical fora of the polis (in the case of deliberative rhetoric), the law court (in the case of forensic rhetoric), nor the ceremonies (in the case of epideictic rhetoric), nor even one of the other, early Christian rhetorical cultures (e.g., thaumaturgical or prophetic rhetorical culture). I believe that this was so because death-resurrection rhetoric takes shape in that liminal space that we can often discern today not in established dominant or sub-cultural rhetoric but in the struggles of God's people, for example those emerging from colonial slavery or other oppressions.[32]

And, my guess is that in this particular post-colonial setting in which Codrington College finds itself, there are many stories that can be told that, if we have "ears to hear" will help us to "read with" the people of this island their stories of economic exchange in which poverty became riches and riches became poverty through death and resurrection. For myself, I hear it in the marvelously eloquent sermon of the escaped slave, Henry Highland Garnet who became the minister of New York City's Shiloh Presbyterian Church, preached on February 12, 1865 (the date of Abraham Lincoln's last birthday). In this sermon, Garnet preached to the whole slave

[31] For an excellent sociological study of immigrant adaptation to new settings in a liminal "space" and the eventual religious nature of the sub-culture that results, see the work of the Catalan sociologist, Juan Estruch (Estruch, 1968).

[32] I believe that the discourse of Paul is not primarily prophetic rhetoric, which I see as a kind of deliberative rhetoric, directed to keeping or bringing back the community to the ethical requirements of its self-identity. Pauline rhetoric does become at some points "prophetic" (e.g. Galatians, 1 Thessalonians) but is always interwoven with death-resurrection discourse.

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population of the southern United States, joining the free blacks of the rest of the country with those still in the prison of slavery, and telling them that the time was now for them to act:

> Brethren and Fellow Citizens: Your brethren of the North, East, and West have been accustomed to meet together in National Conventions, to sympathize with each other, and to weep over your unhappy condition. In these meetings we have addressed all classes of the free, but we have never, until this time, sent a word of consolation and advice to you. We have been contented in sitting still and mourning over your sorrows earnestly hoping that before this day your sacred liberties would have been restored. But, we have hoped in vain. Years have rolled on, and tens of thousands have been borne on streams of blood and tears to the shores of eternity. While you have been oppressed, we have also been partakers with you; nor can we be free while you are enslaved. We, therefore, write to you as being bound with you (Garnet, 1972, p. 176).

And in doing so, Garnet looked to something that Paul also looked to.

To get a fair picture of Paul, we need to understand Paul in his own context then and to read him the experiences of now. When we do both, we see the sufferings of Jesus mirrored in the lives of his faithful followers, then and now. We see not the followers alone (men like Paul, or the Philippians or Timothy and Epaphroditus) of then, nor the followers alone (men and women like those concerning whom Garnet preaches and whom the people of Barbados know) of now, but the Lord Himself. And in seeing, we hear the Gospel anew, not now as historical reconstruction, but as living testament, the real and really new testament.

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