Recebido em: 08/09/2016
Aceito em: 30/11/2016

Economic Subsistence and Rhetorical Power in the Corinthian treatises: Social Status Shaping Theological Parties and Practices in the Reception of Pauline Traditions[1]

Subsistência Econômica e Poder Retórico nos tratados aos Corintos: Status Social a engendrar Partidos e Práticas Teológicas na Recepção das Tradições Paulinas

Jean Felipe de Assis
Doutor em História das Ciências, Técnicas e Epistemologia (HCTE/UFRJ)
http://lattes.cnpq.br/9602315559468030

[1] This is the first of a three-part research project on Early Christianities focusing on Gnosticism and the Pauline traditions. In this first exploration, a review of the *social status* of the Pauline *ekklesiae* complements the possibility of interpreting the *Corinthians* letter as a theological treatise within post-Pauline social locations that permit the study of different literary traditions in early ecclesiological life, in which theological and sociological considerations are interrelated. Regarding Gnosticism, and the respective derived terms, the possibility of sharing literary elements and intellectual conceptualizations with different phenomena in the ancient world promote not only the dismantling of modern categories, but also a necessary re-evaluation of scholarship about ancient religious movements. The Jewish-Christian roots present in various gnostic texts during second and third centuries do not impose the same conceptualization on the first century´s intellectual productions; nevertheless, the inexistence of gnostic textual references and religious organizations in the first century do not exclude the presence of shared ideas with the New Testament mythic configuration. A mandatory revaluation of modern scholarship categories, understood as fictitious artifacts in the composition of historical methodologies, allows new approaches that dismantle artificial distinctions among *Gnosticism*, *Apocalypticism*, *Ancient Magic* and other movements while creating spaces for integrating essential common elements present in several ancient religious expressions. Considering the reception of the Pauline letters, antagonistic interpretations co-exist in religious or cultural expressions throughout multiple receptions, attestations and interpretations of Pauline ideas. As natural developments in a complex system of communication, these several attentions gradually reveal a more consolidated Pauline tradition, since Patristic authors are able to cite entire chapters or books, combining multiple ecclesiological traditions and rejecting those doctrines that they do not believe represent Christian life. Consequently, early multiple interpretations of these materials generate later theological differences, i.e., enthusiastic pneumatological characteristics based on *realized eschatology* may provide an intellectual framework for later gnostic ideas.

Abstract : This first paper of a three-part research on early Jewish-Christian traditions and Gnostic movements argues the relevance of revaluating *social status* based on economic and political data in ancient religious contexts. Taking into account the Pauline *ekklesiae* and the possibility of interpreting the *Corinthians* letters as theological treatises within post-Pauline social locations, multiple literary traditions in early ecclesiological documents reinforce the interrelationship between theological and sociological considerations. These debates, conflicts and social formations are important for understanding biblical literary constructions and receptions while, at the same time, sanction a comprehension of ancient religions at a crossroad of different standpoints in their particular contexts and within their specific cultural expressions – among those are their literary receptions, performances and collections of specific authors and their respective texts. As a result, there are theological elements in the Corinthians treatises that receive distinct interpretations in a similar *milieu* as the Pastoral Letters and later works through which theological and social stratification help developing diverse ecclesiological communities and their particular textual productions, e.g., the formation of Pauline *corpora*, including multiple interpretations of significant texts throughout the emergence of conflicting traditions.

Keywords: Pauline Corpora; Reception Theory; Corinthians Treatises; Social Status; Early Christianities

Resumo: Este primeiro trabalho, de uma tríade de textos que versam sobre as tradições judaico-cristãs primitivas e os movimentos gnósticos, aborda a importância de reavaliar o *status social* a partir da primazia dos dados econômicos e políticos nos contextos das religiões antigas. Considerando as comunidades que cultivam heranças paulinas e a possibilidade de interpretar as Cartas aos Coríntios como tratados teológicos em lugar vivencial pós-paulino, existem múltiplas tradições literárias nas experiências eclesiológicas que reforçam as sempre intensas relações entre as considerações teológicas e as práticas sociais. Tais debates, conflitos e formações eclesiais são extremamente relevantes para se entender as produções textuais bíblicas e suas recepções; ao mesmo tempo, possibilitam uma compreensão sobre as religiões antigas como uma *encruzilhada de diferentes posições intelectuais em seus contextos particulares e por meio de expressões culturais específicas* – dentre as quais se destacam as recepções, as performances e as coleções de textos específicos, mas

também a criação de importantes tradições sobre seus respectivos autores. Consequentemente, há elementos nos tratados aos Coríntios que recebem distintas interpretações em um *milieu* similar ao das Cartas Pastorais e outras obras tardias, nas quais diferentes posições teológicas e estratificações sociais auxiliariam no desenvolvimento de múltiplas comunidades eclesiais, mas também suas produções textuais particulares; entre estas, a formação dos *corpora* paulinos, incluindo inúmeras interpretações a textos importantes para o desenvolvimento de diversas tradições conflitantes.

Palavras-chave: Corpora Paulinos; Teoria da Recepção; Tratados aos Coríntios; Status Social; Cristianismos Primitivos

Accepting the literary composition of the Corinthian letters as gradual textual receptions during the late first century demands a social location for ecclesiological debates and theological controversies. A research on origins of earlier ecclesiological traditions that aims to establish a primeval and pure Pauline expression is not possible. Additionally, pejorative notions, commonly associated with terms such as *syncretism*, *corruption*, *interpolation*, *post-Pauline* and so forth, are useless categories that masquerade different perspectives in the ancient contexts in order to privilege theoretical constructions with evident contemporary rhetoric goals. Therefore, a conceivable first effort to highlight this diversity is an overview of possible *gnostic* ideas in the Corinthian correspondence, which is one famous corollary from *History of Religions Studies* in the New Testament framework[2]. Meanwhile, different opinions about Pauline communities' *social strata* may be relevant for understanding biblical literary constructions and their respective textual receptions while instigating an understanding about ancient religions at a crossroad of different standpoints in their particular contexts and within their cultural expressions, e.g., their textual elaboration. Consequently, reading the Corinthian letters as theological treatises sharing a similar *milieu* with the Pastoral Letters and later works[3] requires a re-evaluation of arguments

[2] Some methodological and practical considerations are in order: first, the multiplicity of religious phenomena and experiences must be seriously taken into consideration; the definition of Gnosis and Gnosticism are extremely problematic because of previous lack of primary textual evidence and now because of lack of coherent systematizations to understand a variety of phenomena and texts that can be associated with Gnostic ideas; finally, depending on the definition of these terms, Gnostic categories cannot be applied to New Testament materials or underlie their mythic productions. Consequently, just by observing these initial issues, it is clear that this approach complicates more than elucidates the already elusive Pauline writings. On the other hand, because of this uncomfortable situation, scholars must propose different approaches for understanding the literary production of early Christianities, including a comprehensive approach of the ancient Hellenistic religious phenomena in which elements from Gnosticism, Apocalypticism, Magic traditions and mystery religions are amalgamated. (Pearson, 2001: 81-106; Schmithals, 1971; 1972; 1965; Perkins, 1993).

[3] This is grounded on key passages in the Pastoral letters that may be related to later gnostic ideas while rooted in Pauline argumentations present in the early letters, e.g., Corinthian. The understanding of a later composition of Corinthians, in the same period of diverse Pauline traditions´ developments, corroborate these subsequent dualistic relationships, specifically because of ecclesiological debates that can be associated to later gnostic ideas. The following literary elements in the Pauline corpus, specifically in the Corinthian letters, are sufficient to initiate a comparison between gnostic ideas and Pauline traditions: a. ascetic or Gnosis ideas as false doctrines in the Pastoral's letters (1 Tim 1:4; 2:11;4:3; 5:13; 6:20-21; 2 Tim 2:17-18; Tit 1:14); b. study of the term gnosis and derivations and semantic parallels in Corinthians; c. ascetic detachment from the world (1 Cor 7:1); d. spiritualized eschatology (1 Cor 15:12) e. docetic Christology (1 Cor 2:8; 12:3); f. gnostic anthropological myth presence (1 Cor 2:6-8); g. dualistic reminiscence (2 Cor 2:4-6); the resurrection of the body (1 Cor 3b-15); i. notions about Spirit and flesh (Rom 7:24; 1 Cor 2:14-15; 15:44-46); j. possible antinomians and those who preach another spirit (2 Cor 11:4; 6:14-7:1); k. Paul's inferior gnosis (2 Cor 11:6) and weakness (2 Cor 10:10); l. arrogance because of achievements (2 Cor 10-12) contrasting with Paul's

about Pauline *social status* being exclusively centered on economic power and political authority.

There are many approaches for understanding social strata in the ancient world. Nevertheless, these perspectives do not "reconstruct" or "depict" a palpable reality, since they are based on several theoretical choices and rational assumptions. Consequently, mapping is a good metaphor for these efforts of thinking about ancient social locations[4]. Mapping the Pauline strata is challenging, because there are no direct archeological evidences to sustain any historical reconstruction in favor of one particular argument about a specific community nor a unique literary form that explains the composition of letters, books and traditions. Therefore, studying the Pauline epistles requires different theoretical analyses, which creates multiple possibilities for interpretation and requires a variety of theoretical approaches.

In the following, after a brief *status quaestionis* concerning the social location of Pauline ekklesiae, specifically the *Corinthians*, literary arguments for a gradual composition of the letter with its final format in the late first century is in order. Indeed, as the majority of Roman population were living lower or close to subsistence levels, the Corinthians had limited access to material goods or political power[5]. Nevertheless, some differentiation in social status is detectable. Therefore, *lower strata members with slight differences in status composed this community*. These social differences find a stimulating hermeneutical locale in post-Pauline traditions.

---

weakness (2 Cor 10:12); m. divine power and visions (2 Cor 5:13; 2 Cor 12:1-5) in contrast to a depiction of Paul as mundane (2 Cor 10:3-6; 12:1-10; 5:12-13) and inadequate (2 Cor 2:14-3:5; 4:1, 16).

[4] Jonathan Z. Smith claims that historians must complicate and not clarify, since they should "celebrate diversity of manners, variety of species and the opacity of things." As a consequence, our "hints are too fragile" to be solutions, since historians have "insights" and not "visions." (Smith, 1978, 290). Those who study religion face one particular way of reconstructing worlds within humans live; this does not mean that scholars have a clear and perfect perception about the concrete *territory* in which these historical actions take place. The Argentinean writer Jorge Luis Borges, ironically describes that the perfect map of an Empire would be the Empire itself with its ruins, lands, beggars, and so forth. (Borges, 1998:325). Therefore, cartographic art can be compared with history, since perceptions and scales may furnish distinct objects about the same material or territory.

[5] Even optimistic perspectives about economic growth and performance in ancient Rome highlights that the distribution of income perpetuates inequality, since the state and the minority elite capture these resources. Indeed, "middling" non-elite groups had a modest portion in this economic system. (Scheidel e Friesen, 2009:61-63). These "middling groups" were an exception in a subsistence norm, even though they formed a counter-part for the elite´s consumption and sustained local economic systems (89-91).

Margaret Mitchell sustains that *deliberative rhetoric* furnishes a fully coherent reading of 1 Corinthians in the present form[6]. Recently, nevertheless, she also emphasizes a theoretical attempt to find a temporal succession and a possible literary order in the epistolary exchange between the apostle and the Corinthian community. This diachronic reading of the letters provides a way of solving some puzzles, controversies and contradictions (Mitchell, 2005: 333-335)[7]. Even though these partition considerations and the synchronic view of 1 Corinthians may seem a contradiction, in fact, it reveals a process of composition which may highlight some sociological and theological considerations in the formation of early Christian groups[8]. Consequently, 1 Corinthians can be seen as a theological treatise, concerning mainly ecclesiological divisions, which contains an implicit narrative[9]. Therefore, by accepting the compositional format of this epistle and a process of hermeneutical involvement with this Pauline material, a post-Pauline social context provides a remarkable *Sitz im*

[6] Mitchell claims that she challenges the "partition methodologies" with her arguments (Mitchell, 1991: 296-299). The composite unity of the letter is a requirement for demonstrating that the genre of 1 Corinthians relies on ancient deliberative rhetoric. Indeed, the calling for imitation and concord in a factionalist social environment aims to eradicate division and persuade the listeners/readers to unity (63-64). The political significance of deliberative argument focuses on actions in order to change the present situation in an imminent future. As a result, it is possible to see different rhetorical elements in the letter, even if the final form relies on a deliberative structure, and inquiry about the Corinthians epistolary formation.

[7] Additionally, in this piece, Mitchell furnishes some intriguing inquiries about the Corinthian ekklesia in the Roman Empire. Therefore, one may wonder about a literary engagement within early Christian communities and rivalry in ecclesiologies, which includes political dynamics of slavery. In addition, she invites scholars to compare Pauline churches with different ancient religious experiences: the presence of slavery and its social consequence; house's cults; itinerancy; and the presence and role of women.

[8] The idea that the canonical Corinthians texts contain pieces of several Paul's letters is long present in scholarship, being defended by those who work in the literary format of the epistle, but also by those who infer different contexts and conflicts in the early ecclesiological movements. Consequently, an investigation of redaction processes is necessary in order to understand development of moral codes and doctrines. In addition, the existence of a Pauline school implies a gradual collection in larger corpora. (Jewett, 1978: 643). Similarly, Schmithals started analyzing the possible Gnostics elements in Corinthians, concluding, later, about the existence of a coherent theme in the Pauline letters that operate throughout a later gathering of texts, i.e., Pauline collections or corpora. He agrees with Baur about the common hostile attitude present in the genuine Pauline letters. Nevertheless, the identity of these opponents is not clear, even though some Jewish traditions and gnostic elements were merged (Schmithals, 1971; 1972; 1965: 13-15).

[9] Mitchell calls it an "epistolary novel" that requires a theoretical reconstruction, even though she maintains this literary unity (Mitchell, 2012: 6). Indeed, she also highlights the reception of Pauline texts and continuing hermeneutical tradition, since these writings were not just received but also they were incorporated in different contexts and "acted on" (12). This illuminates a logic of composition and reception of Pauline materials.

Leben in which ecclesiological movements and theological debates took place[10], which will be highlighted in some semantic parallels in 1 Cor 11:17-32 in the following.

Subsistence level and slight differences on social status: *Status Quaestionis* of Pauline *ekklesiae*

Among the possibilities to analyze social strata in the ancient texts, some prefer to research individuals[11] while others prefer to study literary or material evidences, investigating particular communities and trying to imagine their respective social locations[12]. These *foci* cannot subsist isolated, but they *co-exist* illuminating each other. As a result, even though the following emphasizes the "Corinthian Pauline community," the representation and self-representation of Paul[13] are important to our investigation as well as different textual traditions and social analyses in the ancient Roman period. Therefore, scholars must detect diverse literary forms and genres in

[10] There is no contestation that the Pastoral Epistles, within their disputes and contexts, receive and recreate a former Pauline tradition. This implies the existence of different groups inside local communities, rejecting and preserving "teachings" and "traditions." Revelation, Pastoral Epistles, letters of John and later texts share conflict zone in which multiple theological and social perspectives *mêlée* with each other. (Marshall, 1972: 8-13). In addition, this later *milieu* adjusts well with the conflicts between Paul and the female leadership described in 1 Corinthians, since there are social, theological and gender issues underlying these disputes (Wire, 1990: 47-62). Some of the Pastoral Epistles' debates reveal that those who were combating the writer received considerable support, especially among women. (Marshall: 1999, 42-44).

[11] This was a famous historical consideration popularized after the works of Thomas Carlyle and Herbet Spencer, rooted in the idea of the Romantic genius that can change historical events (Gardiner, 1959: 80-85). This methodology may lead to historical and archeological conclusions according to some political and ethical agendas in the present. Steven Friesen shows this while evaluating the name "Erastus" in Rom 16:23 (Friesen, 2010: 254-256).

[12] Despite the usual critiques about evidences and inferences, the combination of textual and material artifacts constantly illuminates scholarship. (Murphy-O'Connor, 1983: 153-173). For instance, Numismatic and others´ complementary archeological data are very common. Mary Walbank sustains that coins within their historical contexts and within the conventions furnish considerable information about Roman Corinth society, including stratification and religious cults. However, in the introduction to the same volume, Steven Friesen reminds that this does not illuminate much of private religion (Walbank, 2010: 151-197).

[13] The diverse ways through which Paul is described in different textual evidences reveal more the social location of the community of interpreters, which receives a tradition, than the historical social status of the apostle. In addition, the self-representation in the Pauline letters may reflect several redactions that create a better acceptance of their message and authors. Therefore, discussions about Paul's social status illuminate the early Christian communities. There is a clear tension between lower class predicaments and higher class status, e.g., Paul, the manual worker is almost a master of ancient rhetoric. Ronald Hock asserts that the practice of "tent making" is not as important as Paul's attitude concerning his position as a tent maker. He concludes that Paul had "aristocratic attitudes toward" his own manual labor, since he sees this as humiliating (Hock, 2008: 12-14).

their ancient texts and their respective performance; only then, it is possible to observe how social movements interact with their conceptual constructions.

Gustav Adolf Deissmann argues against "*fatal generalization*" that does not evaluate texts in their respective context, since elitist documents do not provide an accurate description of the entire ancient society. Then, he concludes, "*the social structure of primitive Christianity points unequivocally to lower and middle class*"[14]. Deissmann suggests a tension between higher and lower strata in the New Testament writings, specifically because there are those who emerged from groups that did not have full access to political powers[15]. An immediate corollary is that communities and individuals in early Christian movements must be understood through political lenses, i.e., lower social strata articulating themselves in and through their respective cultural elements, which enrich, perpetuate and critique social realities[16].

Some, based on Deissmann's position, argue that early Christians were comprised only by slaves, poor peasants, those who are destitute or perform only manual labors. Others maintain that Pauline churches encompass people from different social strata, levels and backgrounds[17]. Recently, Justin J. Meggitt and Steven Friesen contested the so-called "new consensus" about the social location of the Pauline communities, affirming that these are composed by poor, indigent and destitute peasants who lived at subsistence level with primary concern in obtaining minimum compensation for

[14] In the specific case of Paul's social stratum, Deissmann believes that an inquiry about Pauline social status and the possible description through literature and archaeology would furnish a theoretical description at least (Deissmann, 1991: 6-8). Therefore, he concludes that Paul does not come from an "upper class," but from the "artisan non-literary class." After analyzing Paul's context and language, Deissmann affirms that Paul is below the "literary upper class" and above the "purely proletarian lowest class." (Deissmann, 1926:45-53). These perspectives are important and will reappear in future scholarship in different manners and contexts.

[15] Consequently, the only possible comparison is between those groups who lived in the same social situation. Deissmann also suggests that only through language, literature, as well as religious and social history a precise discussion is possible (Deissmann, *1991:* 408-410).

[16] This includes language, religious experiences, as well as construction of political and urban space (Deissmann, 1991: 63-75).

[17] It would be impossible to carefully summarize all the arguments about these positions and their respective corollaries. Nevertheless, some authors sustain that early Christians would have a higher status and social location than those present in Deissmann's descriptions (Malherbe, 1982: 28-33). Since relying on static data does not furnish strong evidences, the formation of ekklesia relies on literary testimonies, which Meeks describes as communities with mix strata and ambiguous status (Meeks, 2003:72-75). Friesen, on the other hand, argues there is no new-consensus, but a shift from an industrial-capitalist interpretation based on the notion of class to a consumer-capitalist interpretation based on the notion of status (Friesen, 2004: 358-361).

survival[18]. Meggitt identifies limitations for creating or inventing a context for interpreting *Corinthians*, specifically if one takes into account those strata that are not part of social elites (Meggitt, 1998: 39)[19]. Friesen suggests that modern scholars have access to a narrow literary material for proposing solid inferences; also, he notes the lack of attention on poverty and wealth in the Roman world (Friesen, 2004: 358-359)[20]. In other words, scholars should avoid generalizations without concrete evidence[21] and resist romanticizing social models with their modern characteristics and their respective applications in the ancient world[22]. Consequently, he proposes systematic discussions about wealth and poverty in ancient Rome through which nuanced scales may emerge (Friesen, 2005:362)[23]. Instead of vague polarities, e.g., high and low strata, particular texts and their situations must receive a critical and contextualized analysis. This resonates in multiple dimensions of particular social activities, including theological claims and social status[24].

Some descriptions and qualifications about poverty in Pauline churches do not necessarily correspond to possible social status and its relation to rhetorical devices (Martin, 1995: 50), literary compositions or subjects in the letters[25]. Dale Martin asserts that Meggitt commits some overstatements when depicting different positions

[18] Friesen states, "there is no evidence of wealthy members in the Pauline ekklesiae"; he continues, "most of them can be described as poor or living below the level of subsistence." (Friesen, 2004: 325); (Meggitt, 1998: 1-7; Friesen, 2005: 368-369).

[19] In addition, there is an assumption about arduous experiences for a regular urban poor, which the author generalizes to Pauline communities, even though some particular distinctions should be acknowledged (96; 153).

[20] This is the reason he directly address this point later (Scheidel e Friesen, 2009: 61-63).

[21] Friesen tries to provide statistical and archeological evidences to support his arguments, specifically analyzing urban material data and literary evidences that sustain that Paul has founded communities (Friesen, 2005: 353-355).

[22] Because of few literary and material evidences from an insufficient number of ancient cities to infer something concrete, we cannot accurately describe the early Christian social context of particular communities. Therefore, any consensus that is based on a "cross-section of Pauline churches" or ancient strata does not have a solid argument, since scholars do not have concrete information about these communities and individuals. On the other hand, this idea of eliminating the poor from ancient contexts may reflect contemporary attempts to sweep the current poor from our communities (Friesen, 2005:361).

[23] This idea of different scales resembles cartography but also indicates differentiations in Roman society, even among the poorest levels of society. Therefore, *urban lower stratum* includes different activities with certain material prosperity but with a lack of participation in the public power (Stegemann e Stegemann, 1999: 86).

[24] Indeed, this multi-dimensional aspect asserts that scholars should pay attention to the multiple dimensions of status and avoid generalizations without particular evidence (Meeks, 2003: 55).

[25] E.g., Antoinette Wire defends that Paul experiences a voluntary status loss which appears in different contexts in the period. This indicates a possible social context for a "free, educated, Jewish male." (Wire, *1990:69*).

on social strata in the Pauline communities. Martin concludes that Meggitt's statements have a corrective element to some exaggerations; nevertheless, his positions, according to Martin, would not represent a challenge to the present consensus about social strata in the Pauline communities (Martin, 2001: 54-56)[26]. Indeed, some social distinctions cannot be overlooked in the roman ancient contexts[27].

Gerd Theissen argues that there does not exist a homogenous low class in the Pauline ekklesiae; whereas defending *dissonance of status and social deviance* as common social interactions in the ancient Rome. In addition, he suggests that different texts outside the Pauline *corpus* must be analyzed[28] and a social analysis about *ancient clubs* and *macellum* must be taken into consideration (Theissen, 2001: 68-75). Theissen agrees with the general picture about Ancient Rome in which only an extreme minority represents the elite (1%). Nevertheless, this generalization does not differentiate those who exercise distinct forms of power in different forms of *ekklesiae*. Therefore, even though he agrees that Pauline movements are from *plebs urbana*, he highlights that few individuals had access to some sort of privilege, which automatically generates social status differences and tensions inside particular communities, e.g., Pauline *ekklesiae*[29]. After eliminating the idea of a homogenous social mass in the ancient world, Theissen seeks for literary evidences in the Pauline

[26] In addition, Martin summarizes his critiques as follows: methodological over-simplification for insisting on two social strata in ancient Rome; misleading rhetoric, since Meggitt caricaturizes divergent positions and presupposes historical evidences that are impossible to prove; tendentious use of ancient and contemporary sources; absence of contextualization for models of mutualism in the ancient world (64).

[27] Some examples in the Pauline letters follow: being a slave or a freed-person – letter to Philemon; being a household or hosting a church (1 Cor 11:22; 16:15; Phi 4:22); being in absolute absence of resources and yet being able to support others (1 Cor 16:1-15). Meggitt recognizes these possible differentiations, nevertheless, he focuses on an elite and destitute dichotomy (Meggitt, 2011:92-93).

[28] Theissen argues that Acts cannot be excluded, even if it is seen as secondary source, since it is useful for socio-historical reconstructions, e.g., women in the congregations (17:2-4), ruler of synagogue in Corinth (18:8); and so forth. (Theissen, 2001: 65-68). In addition, he uses later texts, such as *Shepherd of Hermas, Contra Celsum and Minucius Felix*, to reconstruct ancient social locations. Meggitt criticizes both perspectives: first, because Meggitt sustains his arguments in the distinction between authentic and non-authentic letters, then he rejects Acts as a primary historical source (Meggitt, 1998: 8-10); consequently, he argues that Theissen sustains his arguments in texts away from Paul's life and actions (Meggitt, 2011: 91).

[29] Theissen argues that "Meggitt, however, starts by sketching a picture of the whole society and immediately analyzes the Pauline congregations without taking into account these analogies within the Roman-Hellenistic society" (Theissen, 2001: 75). In his defense, Meggitt states: "I am still not convinced that we can determine with any precision the nature of social diversity within the Pauline communities and what part it can legitimately be said to play in their conflict" (Meggitt, 2011: 94). Therefore, the question about the social status of Pauline *ekklesiae* achieves a turning point, since Meggitt requires a precision about these hypothetical groups, while those who defend the so-called new consensus – which is neither new nor a consensus – affirm the social strata differentiation without solid evidence. This is the movement Theissen aims in his responses based on several later literary pieces.

letters in order to compare with ancient Roman social elements[30]. Therefore, in a further essay, he examines Paul's social status, the social status attributed to Paul[31] and conflicts concerning meals in Corinth, which, in his opinion, indicate a social differentiation expressed in theological rhetoric[32].

Therefore, in the absence of solid material or literary evidence, scholars must face the problem of *social strata* in early ecclesiological movements with some imaginative historical consideration based on different methodologies or models. Nevertheless, an agreement among such a diverse range of opinions, considers the lower social locations of Pauline communities under Roman Empire. The point of debate about social differences inside these communities cannot be solved with the exclusive utilization of social and economic terms based on data modern scholars have accessed. For instance, divisions in the Corinthian community share social and theological dimensions that are impossible to be separated or analyzed apart from each other. As a result, this paper suggests a later reception for these Pauline texts as an interesting *Sitz im Leben* to understand the message, rhetoric and application of the Pauline traditions on the Corinthians Letters in the ancient world. In conclusion, the slight *defiance* and *dissonance* may not have an immediate relation with economic and social realities, but rather they are products of multi-dimensional aspects concerning status in the ancient Roman Empire. This does not mean that these conceptual or theological ideas lack social pragmatic consequences about social strata.

[30] Theissen also rejects that social homogeneity is necessary for mutualism. This generates a review of his former thesis in which *love patriarchalism* patterns emerge because of social stratifications in the Pauline and early Christian communities. This idea was already present in Ernst Troeltsch's analysis of Christian constructions under Roman Empire in which conservative aspects are taking place (Troeltsch, 1992: 79-103). Theissen maintains social stratification and wonders about mutualism in this context. This raises a hermeneutical question about the function of these models to understand ancient texts and contexts, because of the inevitable "ideological grounds" of our methodologies (Syreeni, 2003: 398).

[31] Theissen argues that Paul has a privilege status, even as a manual worker, which corroborates with Paul´s education and rhetoric. This also attests the existence of Roman citizens in Christian communities (Theissen, 2003: 373)

[32] Theissen based his arguments in reconstructing analogies which combine these elements in the first two centuries: elitist groups within early Christianity; eating meat sacrificed; legitimation by *gnosis*; having modest social status (Theissen, *2003:*390). Instead of elitist, "privileged group" is preferred, since they were not part of a Roman elite but rather exercised power in local communities.

Final Remarks: The Corinthian meal as a differentiation on social strata and theological positions in the reception of Pauline ideas

Even without a complete exegetical consideration of 1 Cor 11:17-32, it is possible to observe the Pauline rhetoric and a selective use of terms. First, it is possible to perceive a chiastic structure in which the liturgical tradition locates the Eucharistic meal as the center of a social ceremony (ABC-CBA). Therefore, the idea of an improper attitude in the Lord's prayer (11:21-22;27) reveals divisions in the community (11:19). These communitarian partitions have positive elements, since those who are "tested," "approved" or are "genuine" may become notorious (11:19); and a negative side, such as taking part of the Lord's supper without discernment, results in illness and condemnation (11:29-30). Ironically, because some are eating earlier, the apostle claims that there are those who are drunk (μεθύει) and those who are hungry (πεινᾷ), i.e., some have excessive drinking and others have insufficient food. In 11:22, there is clear distinction between those who have and those who do not have a house where they can eat and drink[33]. Therefore, in the rhetorical development of this chiastic structure, the apostle's initial condemnation becomes an admonition, and then a commandment.

Additionally, some terminological semantic choices in this passage reveal a unique interaction with the gospels and later traditions, i.e., some important terms in this passage may have a post-Pauline social location[34]. These textual evidences provide an interesting argument to study the *myth-making* process in Pauline traditions, but also help in understanding the relationship among gospel materials and later second century documents. For instance, αἱρέσεις, which comes from the middle passive verb that may indicate a selective preference between some possibilities, is a term highly

[33] The former appears in a rhetorical questioning format, μὴ γὰρ οἰκίας οὐκ ἔχετε εἰς τὸ ἐσθίειν καὶ πίνειν; while the latter modifications complement the verb "dishonor, shame, humiliate" τοὺς μὴ ἔχοντας.

[34] Examples include the following: the middle passive verb συνέρχομαι, "gathering together," appears only in the four gospels, Acts and 1 Corinthians; distinct forms of the verb ἐπαινέω, "to praise," appear only in Luke, Romans and 1 Corinthians; while the term, σχίσμα, directly associated with divisions and factions is attested only in Mat 9:16; Mar 2:21; John 7:43; 9:16;10:19; 1 Cor 1:10; 11:18;12:25; the root that originates "heresies," αἱρέσεις, appears six times in Acts; 1 Cor 11:19; Gal 5:10 and 2 Pet 2:1; δόκιμος, "tested, approved" is attested twice in Romans, 1 Cor 11:19; twice in 2 Corinthians; 2 Tim 2:15; and James; the expression ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτὸ is only present in Mat 22:34; Luk 17:35; appears five times in Acts; and three times in 1 Corinthians; the term δεῖπνον "supper, dinner, meal" appears only in the gospels, 1 Corinthians and Revelation.

present in rabbinic writings in the late first century[35]; while σχίσματα, the nominative form of the verb σχίσμα, has a literal sense, but also a generic sense well-attested in later periods[36]. Therefore, reading 1 Cor 11:17-32 in a post-Pauline social location allows the study of its reception within early ecclesiological constructions. These two aforementioned terms, for instance, are well attested in similar later contexts[37]. Additionally, the social distinctions in this passage can be understood as household moral codes, which is noticeably a post-Pauline characteristic.

Theological and *social strata* nuances in the Corinthians letters may be better understood in the development of Pauline traditions in the late first century and early second century. This requires attention on the development of multiple ecclesiological communities and their particular textual productions, including Pauline *corpora* formations. Consequently, some *polyphonic* descriptions present in the Corinthian correspondences have an important *milieu* in the crossroads of texts, traditions and contexts in late first and early second centuries. Therefore, *dissonance of status and social deviance* do not rely only on economic realities but reflect multi-dimensional contexts in which ideas, individuals and communities were accepted and rejected.

[35] Indeed, Liddel sustains that in different contexts, this term can mean: taking a choice, a course of action having a purpose, or philosophical principles (Liddell e Scott, 1996: 41). Schlier in the TDNT (180-183) edited by Gerhard Kittel, affirms that this term can be associated to the teachings of a particular school. In addition, he attests that the formation of ekklesiae generates tensions and hostilities which is attested by the term αἱρέσεις. Schilier also sustains that in the end of the second century this term is associated not only to sects, but also to adherences of different faith groups. This cannot be sustained anymore, since a clear differentiation between some ancient religious practices may not be possible. In the specific case between Judaism and Christianity, this hybrid identity may have existed until, at least, the fourth century, when a separation may be clearly noted (Boyarin, 1999: 18-19). Consequently, this term has a similar religious and social location even in late second century and further.

[36] Liddell suggests the literal meaning of splitting or dividing, but also indicates more abstract ideas, such as divided opinions. Maurer, In TDNT (964) asserts that the presence of this term indicates "formulated doctrinal difference" in Corinthians. Nevertheless, different than his supposition, the distinction between personal rivalry (σχίσμα) and fundamental error (αἱρέσεις) seems to not exist in 1 Cor 11:18-19.

[37] For instance, 1 Clem 2,6 associates the term σχίσμα with the term στάσις, "rebellion," "riot," revolt". In addition, in 46:5-7, the term is related with strives and wraths, while the community is called to unity in Christ, since divisions among the Corinthians had perverted many. In 54:1-2, the term is preceded for some questions that resonate in the Pauline arguments in 1 Corinthians, since the author asks, *who was born in nobility? Who is compassionate? Who is full of love?* (Τίς οὖν ἐν ὑμῖν γενναῖος τίς εὔσπλαγχνος τίς πεπληροφορημένος ἀγάπης). As Paul, Clement emphasizes the Corinthian's social location as well as suggests love as a way to solve these dissolution issues (49:5). Ignatius affirms that if someone follows those who encourage divisions (εἴ τις σχίζοντι), s/he does not experience the Kingdom of God (Ign Phld 3:3). In addition, Ignatius hopes that no religious divisions or sects exist in the church - ἐν ὑμῖν οὐδεμία αἵρεσις κατοικει (Ign Eph 6:2); in addition, these sects are associated with poison that must be avoided (Ign Trall 6:1)– This resonates with the disease in the Lord's supper according to 1 Cor 11:30.

Bibliography

BORGES, Jorge Luis. *A Universal History of Infamy*. New York: Viking Penguin, 1998.

BOYARIN, Daniel. *Dying for God: Martyrdom and the Making of Christianity and Judaism*. Stanford: University Press, 1999.

DEISSMANN, Gustav Adolf. *Light from the Ancient East: The New Testament Illustrated by recently discovered texts of the Graeco-Roman World*. New York: Hodder and Stoughton, 1991.

DEISSMANN, Gustav Adolf. *St.Paul: A Study in Social and Religious History*. New York: Hodder and Stoughton,1926.

FRIESEN, Steven J. *Prospects for a Demography of the Pauline Mission: Corinth Among the Churches*. In: SCHOWALTER, Daniel N e Steven J. Friesen ed. *Urban Religion in Roman Corinth: Interdisciplinary Approaches*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005, 351-370.

FRIESEN, Steven. *Poverty in Pauline Studies: Beyond the so-called New Consensus*. JSNT v. 26, n.3, p. 25-34, 2004.

FRIESEN, Steven. *The Wrong Erastus: Ideology, Archeology and Exegesis.* In: FRIESEN, Steven et al ed. *Corinth in Context: Comparative Studies on Religion and Society*. Leiden: Brill, 2010, 224-249.

GARDINER, Patrick. *Theories of History: Reading from Classical and Contemporary Sources*. Michingan: Free Press, 1959.

HOCK, Ronald. *The Problem of Paul's Social Class: Further Reflections*. In: PORTER, Stanley. *Paul's World*, ed. Leiden: Brill, 2008, 7-18.

JEWETT, Robert. *The Redaction of 1 Corinthians and the Trajectory of the Pauline School*. JAAR v.46, pp. 398-571, 1978

LIDDELL, Henry e Robert Scott ed. *A Greek-English Lexicon*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996.

MALHERBE, Abraham. *The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity: Essays on Corinth*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982.

MARSHALL, Howard. *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999.

MARSHALL, Howard. *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earlier Christianity. Themelios* v.2, p.5-14 ,1972.

MARTIN, Dale. *Review Essay: Justin J. Meggitt, Paul, Poverty and Survival. JSNT* v.84, p. 51-64, 2001.

MARTIN, Dale. *The Corinthian Body*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995.

MEEKS, Wayne. *The First Urban Christians: the Social World of the Apostle* Paul. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003.

MEGGITT, Justin. *Paul, Poverty and Survival*. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998.

MEGGITT, Justin. *Response to Martin and Theissen*. *JSNT v.*84, p. 92-93, 2011.

MITCHELL, Margaret M. *Paul and the Rhetoric of Reconciliation: An Exegetical Investigation of the Language and Composition of 1 Corinthians*. Tübingen: Mohr, 1991.

MITCHELL, Margaret M. *Paul's Letters to Corinth: The Interpretative Intertwining of Literary and Historical Reconstruction*. In: SCHOWALTER, Daniel N e Steven J. Friesen ed. *Urban Religion in Roman Corinth: Interdisciplinary approaches*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005, 307-338.

MITCHELL, Margaret. *Paul, the Corinthians and the Birth of Christian Hermeneutics*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012.

MURPHY-O'CONNOR, Jerome. *St. Paul's Corinth: Texts and Archeology*. Delaware: Michael Glazier, 1983.

PEARSON, Birger. *Early Christianity and Gnosticism in the History of Religions.* Studia Theologica v.55, p.81-106, 2001.

PERKINS, Pheme. *Gnosticism and the New Testament*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1993.

SCHEIDEL, Walter e Steven Friesen. *The Size of the Economy and the Distribution of Income in the Roman Empire*. *JRS* v. 99, p.61-91, 2009.

SCHMITHALS, Walther. *Gnosticism in Corinth: an Investigation of the Letters to the Corinthians*. New York: Abingdon Press, 1971.

SCHMITHALS*,* Walther. *Paul and James*. London: SCM Press, 1965.

SCHMITHALS, Walther. *Paul and the Gnostics*. New York: Abingdon, 1972.

SMITH, Jonathan. *Map is Not Territory: Studies in the History of Religions*. Leiden: Brill, 1978.

STEGEMANN, Ekkehard e Wolfgang Stegemann. *The Jesus Movement: a Social History of its First Century*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999.

SYREENI, K. *Paul and Love Patriarchalism: Problems and Prospects*. *Die Skriflig* v.37, p. 395-422, 2003.

THEISSEN, Gerd. *Social Conflicts in the Corinthian Community: Further remarks on J.J. Meggitt, Paul, Poverty and Survival*. JSNT v., p. ,2003.

THEISSEN, Gerd. *The Social Structure of Pauline Communities: Some Critical Remarks on J.J. Meggitt, Paul, Poverty and Survival*. *JSNT* v.84, p. 65-84, 2001.

TROELTSCH, Ernst. *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches*. Louisville: John Knox Press, 1992.

WALBANK, Mary. *Image and Cult: The Coinage of Roman Corinth*. In FRIESEN, Steven et al ed. *Corinth in Context: Comparative Studies on Religion and Society*. Leiden: Brill, 2010, 151-197.

WIRE, Antoinette. *The Corinthian Women Prophets: a Reconstruction through Paul's Rhetoric*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990.