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## Grace in Paul's Letter to Titus in Light of Greco-Roman Patronage

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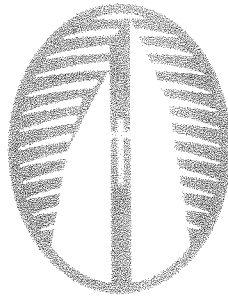
GRACE IN PAUL'S LETTER TO TITUS  
IN LIGHT OF GRECO-ROMAN PATRONAGE

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO  
THE FACULTY OF GEORGE FOX EVANGELICAL SEMINARY  
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF  
MASTER OF ARTS (THEOLOGICAL STUDIES)

BY  
JEFFREY R. SYVERSON

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UNIVERSITY OF THE PACIFIC  
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MASTERS OF ARTS IN THEOLOGICAL STUDIES


### THESIS ACCEPTANCE CERTIFICATE

**Title:** GRACE IN PAUL'S LETTER TO TITUS IN LIGHT OF GRECO-  
ROMAN PATRONAGE

**Presented by:** JEFFREY SYVERSON

**Date:** FEBRUARY 4, 2009

We, the undersigned, certify that we have read this thesis and approve it as adequate in scope and quality for the degree of Master of Arts in Theological Studies.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
(Kent Yinger)

  
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(Roger Nam)

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## ABBREVIATIONS OF ORIGINAL SOURCES

1 Clem.: 1 Clement

Aristeas, *Ep. Arist.*: *Epistle of Aristeas*

Horace, *Ep.*: *Epistulae*

Horace, *Sat.*: *Satirae*

Josephus, *Ant.*: *Jewish Antiquities*

Philo, *Quis Her.*: *Quis rerum divinarum heres sit*

Philo, *Spec. Leg.*: *De specialibus legibus*

Philo, *Virt.*: *De virtutibus*

Seneca, *Ben.*: Seneca, *De Beneficiis*

Seneca, *Ep. Mor.*: Seneca, *Epistulae Morales*

Tatian, *Or. Graec.*: Tatian, *Oratio ad Graecos*

## Other Abbreviations

Ditt. Syll.: W. Dittenberger, *Sylloge Inscriptionum Graecarum*. 4 vol. Leipzig, 1915-24.

LXX: The Greek Septuagint

## ABSTRACT

This thesis argues that patronage is a crucial and not yet sufficiently utilized interpretive lens to understanding χάρις (grace) in Paul's letter to Titus. It introduces patronage in the Greco-Roman world and surveys definitions and characteristics. It offers descriptions of the roles of clients and patrons. It discusses different forms of patronage: personal patronage, friendship, public benefaction, literary patronage, divine patronage, political patronage and brokerage. It also considers the relationship of patronage and benefaction. A major focus is a consideration of the usage of grace (χάρις) in patronage looking to inscriptions, letters, and literature from the era. The influence on Hellenistic Judaism is also considered. The thesis examines the evidence of the patronage background of grace in the New Testament and in the letters of Paul. In particular, it examines the importance of generalized reciprocity in understanding the importance of gratitude in responding to grace. It suggests that Titus 2:9-11 is seen in the context of patronage as a passage which highlights the benefaction of grace that results in a life of moral virtue in the present world. It also suggests that Titus 3:3-8 is an example of patronal synkrisis, a literary form that highlights the honor of the benefactor by recounting the effects of grace received. These significant texts evidence the importance of the patronage background of χάρις (grace).

## INTRODUCTION

The Greco-Roman patronage system used the word grace (χάρις) in describing the relationship of patron and client. Understanding the usage in that context should give insight on the use of the word in the New Testament and how it would have been understood by the original readers of the New Testament epistles. The language used in Titus is especially filled with words associated with patronage which suggests the particular importance of patronage studies to the understanding and interpretation of this text.

Looking at the work done on the topic of patronage as applied to biblical studies suggests that interest is growing, yet there is much work yet to be done. John Elliott surveys the historical, socio-scientific and biblical studies on the subject of patronage and clientage and notes much work done in the historical and socio-scientific realm that has yet to be applied to biblical exegesis. Compared to historical and sociological studies he writes: "In the field of biblical exegesis and social-world analysis, the subject of patronage and clientage has received far less attention."<sup>1</sup> He suggests a "broad semantic field of terms whose relevance to this social institution merits closer analysis."<sup>2</sup> First on his list is grace (χάρις).

Frederick Danker has a helpful work that translates relevant texts on patronage from the Greco-Roman world and suggests possible relevance to biblical study.<sup>3</sup> David DeSilva has built on that study with a good overview of the relevance of the issue to New Testament studies and has pointed the way forward to specific application in journal articles and in his commentary on

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<sup>1</sup> John Hall Elliott, "Patronage and Clientage," in *The Social Sciences and New Testament Interpretation*, ed. Richard L. Rohrbaugh (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996), 148.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 152.

<sup>3</sup> Frederick W. Danker, *Benefactor: Epigraphic Study of a Graeco-Roman and New Testament Semantic Field* (St. Louis, MO: Clayton, 1982).



Hebrews.<sup>4</sup> Recent work by Zeba Crook, Stephen Joubert and Paul Harrison evidences the fruit of applying patronage studies to New Testament interpretation. Patronage themes have also become an important part of the socio-scientific interpretation of the scripture as evidenced by the work of Bruce Malina, Jerome Neyrey and others. Still there appears to be much undiscovered territory in the application of patronage studies to Paul's letters, and especially to the Pastoral Epistles.

The language of patronage can be found throughout the Pauline epistles, but it is used most heavily in the Pastoral Epistles. The discussion of grace in Titus 2:11-14 appears to be one of the most highly influenced by patronage. Danker suggests that "almost half of the diction used in Titus 2:11-14 echoes inscriptions formulated in honor of benefactors."<sup>5</sup> It brings out a number of important themes: Christ as "benefactor of benefactors,"<sup>6</sup> "the obligated beneficiary,"<sup>7</sup> "exemplary character"<sup>8</sup> and others. While there has been discussion of the Hellenistic influence on language used in the passage for some time, the specific relationship to patronage studies seems to have largely gone unnoticed in many commentaries.<sup>9</sup>

Grace is an important word in the study of scripture and central to Pauline theology.<sup>10</sup> It seems a popular topic in preaching and teaching and has been the topic of a number of popular Christian books in recent years. There is a good bit of research on patronage studies from a

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<sup>4</sup> David A. DeSilva, *Honor, Patronage, Kinship & Purity: Unlocking New Testament Culture* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000). See also David A. DeSilva, "Exchanging Favor for Wrath: Apostasy in Hebrews and Patron-Client Relationships," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 115, no. 1 (1996).

<sup>5</sup> Frederick Danker, *Benefactor: Epigraphic Study of a Graeco-Roman and New Testament Semantic Field* (St. Louis, MO: Clayton, 1982), 322-323.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 322-323.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 450.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 348.

<sup>9</sup> For an exception see Philip H. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006). See also I. Howard Marshall and Philip H. Towner, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999). Brief but quite filled with insight is PHEME PERKINS, "Pastoral Epistles," in *Eerdmans Commentary on the Bible*, ed. James D. G. Dunn and J. W. Rogerson (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003).

<sup>10</sup> I am speaking of Pauline theology generally (including the disputed letters such as Titus).

historical and socio-scientific perspective that has only begun to be applied to biblical exegesis. So the subject proves relevant to biblical studies as there is much to be done in applying that research to Paul's letters. The fruit of that research would likely be important to theological studies of grace as many of those studies have not yet taken notice of the influence of patronage on the language of grace. Furthermore, grace is only one of the significant terms that parallels with the language of patronage. As many of these terms and ideas are closely related, there could be a cross-fertilization of significant insights for biblical exegesis as well as theology. As the topic is developed, it should prove relevant to a fuller understanding of grace as the implications are applied to writing, teaching and preaching.

The first chapter examines the patronage system in its various forms. After examining definitions and the general characteristics of patronage, we will take special notice of the issue of reciprocity in patronage. In addition, there will be a description of different types of patronage, including brokerage. This leads to a discussion of the terminology, particularly the issue of differentiation between patronage and benefaction. A discussion of the roles and responsibilities of patron and client follows. This lays the foundation for a discussion of grace (χάρις) as used in patronage.

The second chapter discusses the use of the word χάρις (grace) in the context of patronage and benefaction. It begins with a look at epigraphic inscriptions, ancient letters, and the writings of philosophers to discover how the word was used in the Greco-Roman world. It also includes a discussion of the use of χάρις in Hellenistic Judaism. This leads to an examination of the implications of these matters for the study of the New Testament. The degree to which Paul was influenced by patronage in his understanding of grace is a special focus.

The third chapter focuses on the first of two significant passages that discusses χάρις: Titus 2:11-14. It presents evidence that the patronage background to χάρις is the proper background to understand the usage in this context. Of special note will be a discussion of other terms used in the passage that point to a patronage background. The patronage background of χάρις brings a fresh perspective on grace in the passage.

The fourth chapter focuses on another significant passage: Titus 3:3-8. It considers the possibility that this passage should be seen as a patronal synkrisis. It brings out insights gained by exegeting this text in light of the patronage background of χάρις.

Finally, in the conclusion of the thesis, issues are summarized with an aim to show that patronage is a crucial and not yet sufficiently utilized interpretive lens to understanding χάρις (grace) in the book of Titus. It also presents issues for further study.

## CHAPTER ONE

### UNDERSTANDING PATRONAGE IN THE GRECO-ROMAN WORLD

While χάρις (grace) is often thought of as a theological word, it has a long history of use in more common ways. For example, it had been used for centuries in the Greco-Roman world prior to the writing of the New Testament to describe the benefits exchanged between patron and client. Examples of this usage can be found in epigraphy, in letters, and in ancient literature (especially in the writings of philosophers).<sup>1</sup> When Paul chose to use χάρις as a primary descriptor of the benefits of God, he did not choose a word that was a blank slate. Rather, it was filled with nuances of meaning that were drawn from its prior usage, particularly in describing patronage.<sup>2</sup> The importance of this usage to Pauline studies is emphasized by Zeba Crook: “The language and imagery of patronage and clientage permeate the letters of Paul; failure to comprehend and to engage this language and imagery enfeebls Paul’s work, both as it is preserved in his letters and in the communities he founded.”<sup>3</sup> This is especially true in regards to χάρις. As there is evidence of the wide use of χάρις in the language of patronage and benefaction, it will be important to understand patronage in order to place the word in its social and historical context.<sup>4</sup>

Patronage is a term referring to a “system in which access to goods, positions, or services is enjoyed by means of personal relationships and the exchange of ‘favors’ rather than by

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<sup>1</sup> This theme will be developed further in chapter 2 of this thesis.

<sup>2</sup> In sharp contrast to William Mounce who suggests that Paul chose χάρις because it was a “neutral word devoid of any deep truth and fills it with his own understanding of God’s gift of salvation.” William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 46 (Nashville: T. Nelson, 2000), 10.

<sup>3</sup> Zeba A. Crook, “The Divine Benefactions of Paul the Client,” *The Journal of Greco-Roman Christianity and Judaism* 2 (2001-2005): 9.

<sup>4</sup> See especially William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker, and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 1079-1080. See also Ceslas Spicq, “Charis,” in *Theological Lexicon of the New Testament*, ed. James D. Ernest (Peabody, MA.: Hendrickson, 1994).

impersonal and impartial systems of distribution.”<sup>5</sup> It was “one of the most characteristic features” of life in the Greco-Roman world.<sup>6</sup> It proved to be “extremely important throughout the Classical and Hellenistic periods and in both Latin and Greek regions.”<sup>7</sup> Seneca described it as “the practice that constitutes the chief bond of human society.”<sup>8</sup> While there is evidence that the city of Athens resisted patronage during at least a portion of its history, the system was well established throughout the Greco-Roman world.<sup>9</sup> There is little doubt that Paul and his readers would have understood patronage and would have been familiar with the language of patronage.

### Definitions of Patronage

Many have attempted to define patronage. A few of those definitions have become foundational and are often quoted in discussions of patronage. One of the more helpful definitions of patronage comes from Jeremy Boissevain who is writing from the social-scientific perspective. He writes:

Patronage is founded on the reciprocal relation between patrons and clients. By patron I mean a person who uses his influence to assist and protect some other person, who becomes the “client”, and in return provides certain services to his patron. The relationship is asymmetrical, though the nature of the services rendered may differ considerably. Patronage is thus the complex of relations between those who use their influence, social position, or some other attribute to assist and protect others, and those whom they so help and assist.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> David A. DeSilva, “Patronage and Reciprocity: The Context of Grace in the New Testament,” *Ashland Theological Journal* 31 (1999): 32.

<sup>6</sup> Ernst Badian, *Foreign Clientelae (264-70 B.C.)* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1958), 1. Badian refers to life in the Roman Empire, but the same could be said of life in the entire Greco-Roman world, a point well made in DeSilva, “Patronage and Reciprocity,” 37.

<sup>7</sup> Stephen C. Mott, “The Power of Giving and Receiving: Reciprocity in Hellenistic Benevolence,” in *Current Issues in Biblical and Patristic Interpretation*, ed. Gerald F. Hawthorne (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 72. See also DeSilva, *Honor, Patronage*, 102-104.

<sup>8</sup> Seneca *Ben.* 1.4.2.

<sup>9</sup> See Paul Millett, “Patronage and Its Avoidance in Classical Athens,” in *Patronage in Ancient Society. Leicester-Nottingham Studies in Ancient Society; Vol. 1*, ed. Andrew Wallace-Hadrill (London: Routledge, 1989), 15-47.

<sup>10</sup> Jeremy Boissevain, “Patronage in Sicily,” *Man* 1, no. 1 (1966): 18.

The definition points out the asymmetrical nature of the relationship: that the patron and client are of different status and means. It also rightly emphasizes the reciprocal nature of the relationship in terms of generalized rather than balanced reciprocity.<sup>11</sup>

Richard Saller describes three key elements of patronage. These elements are routinely quoted in attempts to define patronage. Saller draws these elements from Boissevain's definition while bringing his unique perspective as a historian. He lays out three "vital elements" of patronage:

First, it involves the *reciprocal* exchange of goods and services. Secondly, to distinguish it from a commercial transaction in the marketplace, the relationship must be a personal one of some duration. Thirdly, it must be asymmetrical, in the sense that the two parties are of unequal status and offer different kinds of goods and services in the exchange—a quality which sets patronage off from friendship between equals.<sup>12</sup>

As Saller's "vital elements" have become foundational to so much of the discussion of patronage, they deserve scrutiny. He again emphasizes the reciprocal exchange that takes place between patron and client. He also points out the difference between a transaction in the marketplace that leaves no debt remaining, and the exchange of patronage in which the debt creates an ongoing relationship. He also brings out the difference in status of the individuals involved as well as the contrast in the type of goods and services that would be exchanged. Each of the three elements is well stated and they do lay a good foundation for a definition of patronage.

Saller has been criticized by some for defining patronage too broadly. Claude Eilers argues that Saller's definition "disallows almost nothing" and "the concept threatens to expand to

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<sup>11</sup> A distinction that will be discussed later in this chapter, see page 16.

<sup>12</sup> Richard P. Saller, *Personal Patronage under the Early Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 1.

the vanishing-point, and to lose most of its usefulness for explaining Roman society.”<sup>13</sup> Yet, even the critics who would argue to add further definition do not deny the validity of Saller’s three elements in defining patronage. Paul Millett, for example, agrees with Saller’s three elements but adds a fourth: “the relationship was conducted along lines largely determined by the party of superior status. It is this that opens up the way for the exploitation that is so common in patron-client relations.”<sup>14</sup> Millett’s point is well taken and could easily become a fourth vital element. So, while some would add elements to provide a more precise definition, few would deny the relevance and importance of Saller’s three elements in defining and understanding patronage.

Others have offered definitions of patronage which correspond at many points to Boissevain and Saller, but suggest nuances. Carl Lande defines patronage as “a vertical dyadic alliance, i.e., an alliance between two persons of unequal status, power or resources each of whom finds it useful to have as an ally someone superior or inferior to himself.”<sup>15</sup> As the phrase “vertical dyadic alliance” is used often in the discussion of patronage it may be helpful to define the terms.<sup>16</sup> A dyadic alliance is a relationship of two persons. That the alliance is vertical suggests the asymmetrical nature of the relationship—that the two parties are of unequal status. Lande’s definition is also helpful in that it points out that each of the parties has something to gain in the patron-client relationship.

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<sup>13</sup> Claude Eilers, *Roman Patrons of Greek Cities*, Oxford Classical Monographs (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 7. Note that while Eilers finds the definition too broad, he is careful to mention that he does not want to diminish the value and foundational nature of Saller’s work.

<sup>14</sup> Millett, 16.

<sup>15</sup> Carl H. Lande, “Introduction: The Dyadic Basis of Clientelism,” in *Friends, Followers, and Factions: A Reader in Political Clientelism*, ed. Steffen W. Schmidt, Laura Guastia, Carl H. Lande and James C. Scott (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), xx.

<sup>16</sup> Bruce Malina often uses this terminology. Similar to Lande, he describes the patron-client relationship as “a special type of personal, vertical, dyadic relationship.” Bruce J. Malina, *The Social World of Jesus and the Gospels* (London; New York: Routledge, 1996), 148.

Peter Marshall describes patronage in Roman society as “a relationship of trust between patron and client, between social superior and social inferior, which creates a long and often permanent obligation.”<sup>17</sup> This definition brings out the importance of trust (often described by the Latin term *fides*) which is another of the theological terms that is borrowed from the language of patronage. Trust was the glue that bonded patron and client. The patron was expected to show *fides* through being faithful and trustworthy. The client was expected to show *fides* through trust and loyalty.

Another socio-scientific definition that is often quoted is by Anton Blok:

Patronage is a model or analytical construct which the social scientist applies in order to understand and explain a range of apparent different social relationship: God-man, saint-devotee, godfather-godchild, lord-vassal, landlord-tenant, politician-voter, professor-student, and so forth.<sup>18</sup>

This definition seems the least helpful of those that are commonly quoted, as it seems more an application of patronage studies to a wide variety of relationships than a definition. As such, it is surprising how often it is quoted in studies of patronage. Yet, it does point out the relevance of patronage studies to understanding a wide variety of social relationships in societies where patronage is common.

Many other definitions have been given.<sup>19</sup> Each builds on the foundation of Boussevain and Saller while adding various elements or emphases. In surveying the various definitions, we find little reason to deviate far from the definition laid by Boussevain and reaffirmed in the three

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<sup>17</sup> Peter Marshall, *Enmity in Corinth: Social Conventions in Paul's Relations with the Corinthians*, Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen Zum Neuen Testament. 2. Reihe, 23. (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1987).

<sup>18</sup> Anton Blok, “Variations in Patronage,” *Sociologische Gids* 16 (1969). Quoted by Jerome H. Neyrey, “God, Benefactor and Patron: The Major Cultural Model for Interpreting the Deity in Greco-Roman Antiquity,” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 27, no. 4 (2005): 467.

<sup>19</sup> Another significant one from Joubert: “Patronage can be described as a pervasive, voluntary form of interaction between socially disproportionate individuals, as well as between socially disproportionate individuals and groups involved in a reciprocal exchange of material goods and services.” Stephan Joubert, “One Form of Social Exchange or Two? 'Euergetism,' Patronage, and Testament Studies,” *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 31, no. 1 (2001): 19.



vital elements of Saller. Other elements could be added, but that may take away from the simplicity and usefulness of the definition.

### **Characteristics of Patronage**

Most of the wealth in the Greco-Roman world was concentrated in the hands of a few. The majority of people in urban society lived in poverty. For many, the only hope of survival was to become a client to a wealthy patron. In a society that emphasized honor and shame, people of means felt societal obligation to extend needed goods and services to clients in need. The reciprocal obligation created by the debt also meant leverage with the client when a favor was needed. While patronage could not solve all the problems of the urban poor, it was a means of survival for those able to find a patron. Both patron and client found benefit in the relationship, though in very different ways.

The work of many social scientists, historians and Bible scholars has sought to compare societies that functioned with a system of patronage. By analyzing patronage in various societies certain patterns emerge. S. N. Eisenstadt and L. Roniger found nine characteristics that were common in a wide variety of cultural studies.<sup>20</sup> Others have revised and edited that list to create their own.<sup>21</sup> Comparing the lists and looking to other sources, we can develop a list of characteristics that are generally true of patronage.

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<sup>20</sup> See S. N. Eisenstadt and L. Roniger, *Patrons, Clients, and Friends: Interpersonal Relations and the Structure of Trust in Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 48. Also see S. N. Eisenstadt and Ren   Lemarchand, *Political Clientelism, Patronage and Development*. Sage Studies in Contemporary Political Sociology; V. 3. (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, 1981), 276-277.

<sup>21</sup> For example: Malina, 144. See also Halvor Moxnes, "Patron-Client Relations and the New Community in Luke-Acts," in *The Social World of Luke-Acts: Models for Interpretation*, ed. Jerome H. Neyrey (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1991), 248. See also Jerome H. Neyrey, *Render to God: New Testament Understandings of the Divine* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2004), 250-251.

First, patronage is usually an “asymmetrical relationship.”<sup>22</sup> In other words, it is a relationship between people of unequal status and means. The patron typically comes from the privileged class of those who hold wealth, power and position. The client normally comes from a lower socio-economic class and thus stands in need of the benefits that the patron is able to offer. Dionysius of Halicarnassus speaks of the asymmetrical relationship of patronage as he describes Romulus distinguishing between “those of superior rank from their inferiors,” in order to establish the roles and duties of each.<sup>23</sup> These relationships created such strong vertical bonds between patron and client that they often seemed to lessen the bonds of solidarity one might expect between horizontal relationships with peers (particularly horizontal relationships with other clients).<sup>24</sup>

Secondly, these relationships are usually “particularistic and diffuse.”<sup>25</sup> A universalistic culture highly values equality. It develops laws that are to be administered without prejudice to all people and in all situations. It brings the expectation of equal access to goods and services. To a universalistic culture, patronage seems unfair and out of place. By contrast, patronage is at home in particularistic cultures where there is no expectation of equal access. In a particularistic culture the judgment of an individual in a local situation is more highly valued than universal laws which are often seen to impinge on his or her wisdom and discernment. Having such

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<sup>22</sup> Neyrey, “God, Benefactor and Patron,” 467. This is one of Richard Saller’s elements. See Saller, 1-2. See also Ernest Gellner and John Waterbury, *Patrons and Clients in Mediterranean Societies* (London: Duckworth, 1977), 4.

<sup>23</sup> Dionysius, *The Roman Antiquities*, trans. Earnest Cary and Edward Spelman, 7 vols., The Loeb Classical Library; 319, 347, 357, 364, 372, 378, 388. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1937), 2.9.10.

<sup>24</sup> See Eisenstadt and Roniger, *Patrons, Clients and Friends*, 48. They write: “these relations are undertaken between individuals in a vertical fashion (the simplest manifestation of which is a strong dyadic one) rather than between organized corporate groups; and they seem to undermine the horizontal group organization and solidarity of clients and patrons alike – but especially of the clients.”

<sup>25</sup> Ibid. See also Malina, 144.

flexibility in individual patron-client relationships meant that there was a great diversity of ways that patrons and clients interacted.<sup>26</sup>

Thirdly, these relationships are characterized by a reciprocal exchange of resources of various kinds.<sup>27</sup> The patron in this exchange supports and protects the client giving benefits, often of an economic nature (though not limited to these). While the client would not be in a position to return the benefits in kind, there was an expectation of reciprocity. Jerome Neyrey describes this aspect of patronage: “basic goods and services are exchanged, with clear notions of reciprocity; thus a debt is incurred by the client who then has obligations to the patron.”<sup>28</sup> The client returns the favor in a variety of ways including gratitude, loyalty and a commitment to promote the honor of the patron. Crook describes the reciprocity of the relationship:

At its simplest, the ancient patron and client relationship is characterized by the patron’s provision of some good (tangible or intangible), and the client’s obligation to express reciprocity and show gratitude since clients were never expected to repay a debt in kind. Clients increased the honour of their patron in a number of ways, but like all things have to do with honour and shame, it had to be performed in the public court of reputation.<sup>29</sup>

A fourth characteristic of patronage is that the resources are normally exchanged in a “package deal.” The exchange involves a combination of corresponding resources, though it is not an exchange in kind. Bruce Malina suggests as an example that “concretely useful goods” by a patron “must go along with loyalty, solidarity” by a client.<sup>30</sup> Both sides of the exchange are an

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<sup>26</sup> Eisenstadt and Roniger, *Patrons, Clients and Friends*, 48. They write that in practical terms this meant that “these relations established between patrons and clients are not fully legal or contractual; they are often opposed to official laws of the country and they are based much more on ‘informal’ – although very strongly binding – understandings.”

<sup>27</sup> See *ibid.* See also Halvor Moxnes, *The Economy of the Kingdom: Social Conflict and Economic Relations in Luke's Gospel*, Overtures to Biblical Theology; 23 (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988), 42. See also Malina, 144. Malina describes the exchange as involving “a whole range of generalized symbolic media: power, influence, inducement, commitment.”

<sup>28</sup> Neyrey, *Render to God*, 250. This is a point that was emphasized in Saller, 1-2. See also his further discussion: 21, 27-29.

<sup>29</sup> Crook: 11-12.

<sup>30</sup> Malina, 144.

important part of the agreement. So again, this points to reciprocity—both client and patron are involved in the exchange though the benefits exchanged will be different.

A fifth characteristic is that the patron-client relationship is usually long term with a “strong element of unconditionality.”<sup>31</sup> The relationship was generally expected to be life-long and in some cases could even be passed on to the next generation.<sup>32</sup> Yet Eilers cautions that “the evidence that patronage was inherited is scattered and not completely consistent.”<sup>33</sup> Apparently patron-client relationships were often passed down, but not in every case. It is also possible that the rhetoric of patronage did not always match up with the practice. This is suggested by Malina: “In principle, patron-client relations entered into voluntarily can be abandoned voluntarily, although always proclaimed to be life-long, long, forever, etc.”<sup>34</sup> While there may have been some variation in terms of practice, the general expectation was that the patron-client relationship would be long-lasting.

A sixth characteristic is the “interpersonal obligation” that patrons and clients had to one another. The relationship involved personal loyalty and a concern for the honor of the other. The patron and client relationship was seen as a personal attachment even though the constraints of society may have ensured that there was some ambivalence about the connection.<sup>35</sup> Johnson writes: “The essential and irreducible characteristic of patronage is that it is a personal

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<sup>31</sup> Eisenstadt and Roniger, *Patrons, Clients and Friends*, 48.

<sup>32</sup> Neyrey, *Render to God*, 250. Neyrey writes: “a son would likely inherit his father’s and mother’s patrons.”

<sup>33</sup> Claude Eilers, *Roman Patrons of Greek Cities*, Oxford Classical Monographs. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 61. Eilers focus on a particular kind of patronage, the patronage of Greek cities by Romans provides some examples where the patron-client relationship had to be renewed when the original patron died. So, he concludes, they were not always inherited, although he gives examples when they were as well.

<sup>34</sup> Malina, 144.

<sup>35</sup> See Eisenstadt and Roniger, *Patrons, Clients and Friends*, 48.

relationship – akin to friendship – but existing between unequals.”<sup>36</sup> Patrons often called their clients friends, suggesting an interpersonal relationship even if it was limited by social inequality.

A seventh characteristic follows closely: the relationships often had a “kinship glaze.”<sup>37</sup> The patron has an ongoing relationship with the client that takes on elements of kinship. The patron is sometimes referred to as father to the client. The commitment, loyalty and sense of unity that flow from the generalized reciprocity commonly found in kinship, are found in patron-client relationships. In some ways this “reduces the crassness of the exchange.”<sup>38</sup> Malina comments: “Thus economic, political and religious interactions now take place between individuals bound together by mutual commitment, solidarity and loyalty in terms of generalized reciprocity, rather than the balanced reciprocity of unconnected equals or the negative reciprocity typical of superiors to their subordinates.”<sup>39</sup>

A eighth characteristic is that by nature the relationship of patron to client is based in inequality. The upper class of society often monopolized the resources and power which were needed by the population at large. These same resources were the ones needed by the client. This was the primary motivation for a client to enter into a patron-client relationship.<sup>40</sup> This is not to say that elements of patronage did not exist between social equals. Friendship in Greco-Roman

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<sup>36</sup> Terry and Christopher Dandeker Johnson, “Patronage: Relation and System,” in *Patronage in Ancient Society: Leicester-Nottingham Studies in Ancient Society; V. I*, ed. Andrew Wallace-Hadrill (London: Routledge, 1989), 221.

<sup>37</sup> Neyrey, “God, Benefactor and Patron,” 468. In support, Neyrey cites Dionysius, *The Roman Antiquities*, trans. Earnest Cary and Edward Spelman, 7 vols., The Loeb Classical Library; 319, 347, 357, 364, 372, 378, 388. (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1937), 2.9. Elliot mentions kinship in his definition of patronage: “Formalized relations between two parties (a superior patron and an inferior client) characterized by inequality and asymmetry in power and status, combined with the reciprocal exchange of goods and services, mutual solidarity and obligations typical of kinship relations.” John Hall Elliott, *What Is Social-Scientific Criticism?*, ed. Dan Otto Via (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 132.

<sup>38</sup> Neyrey, “God, Benefactor and Patron,” 468.

<sup>39</sup> Malina, 146. Malina credits Pitt-Rivers for insight on this issue. See Julian Pitt-Rivers, “Pseudo-Kinship,” in *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, ed. David L. Sills and Robert King Merton (New York: Macmillan, 1968), Vol 5, 408-413.

<sup>40</sup> See Moxnes, “Patron-Client Relations and the New Community in Luke-Acts,” 248.

society often was carried on by a reciprocal exchange of favors that closely resembled patronage. As David DeSilva points out: “relationships of reciprocity also occur between social equals, people of like means who can exchange like resources, neither one being seen by the other or by society as the inferior of the other. Such relationships went by the name of ‘friendship.’”<sup>41</sup> While patronage-like reciprocity could exist between social equals, it would not by definition be properly called patronage. Patronage deals with the reciprocal exchange between those of unequal status.

A ninth characteristic is that patron-client relationships are often dominated by favoritism.<sup>42</sup> The reason clients seek out patrons is that they stand in need of favors. The client sought to be treated with favoritism by patron. Malina writes: “People have patrons because they need favors at certain times. They expect to be dealt with in terms more advantageous than those that can be obtained by anyone else as needs arise.”<sup>43</sup> So seeking favoritism is purposeful. It lies at the heart of the reason a client would enter into a patron-client relationship.<sup>44</sup> Malina goes so far as to say that “showing favoritism is a main means of maintaining the personal attachment that patron-client relations require.”<sup>45</sup>

A tenth characteristic is that the patron-client relationship is rooted in honor.<sup>46</sup> Honor and dishonor were “foundational social values” in the Greco-Roman world.<sup>47</sup> They functioned as deeply held values that underlie the relationship of patron and client. Honor was a primary

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<sup>41</sup> DeSilva, *Honor, Patronage*, 99.

<sup>42</sup> See Neyrey, “God, Benefactor and Patron,” 468. See also Richard P. Saller, “Patronage and Friendship in Early Imperial Rome: Drawing the Distinction,” in *Patronage in Ancient Society*, ed. Andrew Wallace-Hadrill (London: Routledge, 1990), 52-53.

<sup>43</sup> Malina, 149.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid. Malina writes: “Favoritism is one of the purposes of dyadic alliances.”

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> See Neyrey, *Render to God*, 251 and see 155-156 for a further discussion. Neyrey writes: “Honor, both given and received, is a significant feature of these relationships.” See also Paul Veyne and Oswyn Murray, *Bread and Circuses: Historical Sociology and Political Pluralism* (London: Penguin, 1992), 124-130.

<sup>47</sup> DeSilva, *Honor, Patronage*, 23.

motivation for one becoming a patron. It was also a strong motivator to maintain the relationship by ongoing benefits. An important priority for the client was the promotion of the honor of their patron. Crook writes: "Patronage and benefaction worked in harmony with the values of honour and shame, for without the importance attached to accruing honour and without the hope of doing so within one's own lifetime, patronage and benefaction would not have existed in the form or to the extent it did."<sup>48</sup>

A final characteristic of patron-client relationships is that the relationship is built on *fides* (trust/faith/faithfulness) both that of the patron and of the client. The patron takes on the client with the expectation that he will be faithful to provide needed benefits and protection. The client lives in an attitude of trust that the patron will continue to provide. This trust is also expressed in a loyalty to the patron. The patron-client relationship requires faith on the part of both parties. Peter Lampe describes the relationship in terms of *fides*: "the two made a contract based on mutual trust and loyalty (*fides*)."<sup>49</sup>

### **Patronage and Reciprocity**

One of the key characteristics of patronage is the reciprocal nature of the patron-client relationship. John Stambaugh and David Balch describe it as the "most important element in the equations governing these personal and social relationships."<sup>50</sup> As reciprocity stands at the heart of the patronage system, and since it is a concept that is rather far removed from the Western culture of our era, we would do well to examine it further.

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<sup>48</sup> Zeba A. Crook, *Reconceptualising Conversion: Patronage, Loyalty, and Conversion in the Religions of the Ancient Mediterranean* (Berlin; New York: De Gruyter, 2004), 68.

<sup>49</sup> Peter Lampe, "Paul, Patrons, and Clients," in *Paul in the Greco-Roman World: A Handbook*, ed. J. Paul Sampley (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2003), 490.

<sup>50</sup> John E. Stambaugh and David L. Balch, *The New Testament in Its Social Environment*, 1st ed., Library of Early Christianity (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986), 64.

Theorists generally identify three forms of reciprocity: generalized reciprocity (sometimes referred to as general reciprocity), balanced reciprocity and negative reciprocity.<sup>51</sup> Balanced reciprocity seeks balanced and generally immediate return.<sup>52</sup> The return should be equivalent to the benefit received.<sup>53</sup> This is the most familiar model within Western society where goods and services are exchanged “in kind.” A common example would be the buyer paying for an item by exchanging money that is equivalent to the value of the product or service they receive. When the transaction is concluded there is no debt remaining and consequently no necessary ongoing relationship between buyer and seller. They buyer and seller may continue to do business with one another if they choose, but there is no obligation.

Generalized reciprocity involves “disinterested giving”<sup>54</sup> and allows for a “delayed return.”<sup>55</sup> A return in kind is often not possible and is not expected. Nonetheless a return of some kind is expected. The debt created by the benefit received creates an ongoing relationship between patron and client; between benefactor and beneficiary. The obligation is one that is “ongoing and open ended.”<sup>56</sup> This ongoing relationship is “not stipulated by time, quantity or quality: the expectation of reciprocity is indefinite.”<sup>57</sup> The difference between balanced and generalized (general) reciprocity is well stated by Ekkehard and Wolfgang Stegmann:

Balanced reciprocity stands in sharp contrast to general reciprocity in two ways. First, general reciprocity is grounded in the unequal social status of the parties involved. Secondly, general reciprocity involves the exchange of goods or services that do not

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<sup>51</sup> Neyrey, “God, Benefactor and Patron,” 469. See also Crook, *Reconceptualising Conversion*, 54-59. For a helpful introduction to reciprocity see Ekkehard Stegmann and Wolfgang Stegmann, *The Jesus Movement: A Social History of Its First Century*, 1st English-language ed. (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1999), 34-37. See also Karl Polanyi, *Primitive, Archaic, and Modern Economies: Essays of Karl Polanyi* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971), 3-25. Also important is Marshall David Sahlins, *Stone Age Economics* (Chicago: Aldine-Atherton, 1972), 191-196.

<sup>52</sup> Crook, *Reconceptualising Conversion*, 55.

<sup>53</sup> Moxnes, *The Economy of the Kingdom: Social Conflict and Economic Relations in Luke's Gospel*, 34.

<sup>54</sup> Crook, *Reconceptualising Conversion*, 54.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Stegmann and Stegmann, 35.

<sup>57</sup> Marshall David Sahlins, *Stone Age Economics* (Chicago: Aldine-Atherton, 1972), 194. The open ended nature of the relationship is discussed in Crook, *Reconceptualising Conversion*, 55.



share equal value. Rather, general reciprocity requires repayment not in kind but by “homage and loyalty or political support or information.”<sup>58</sup>

In negative reciprocity, the parties serve as opponents that attempt to gain an advantage over the other.<sup>59</sup> Halvor Moxnes calls it “the unsocial extreme” that attempts to “get something for nothing.”<sup>60</sup> It could also be described as “doing to another what one does *not* want done to oneself.”<sup>61</sup> Negative reciprocity is not interested in balanced return, but in taking advantage of the situation for personal gain.

Of these three basic forms of exchange, patronage functioned within the system of generalized reciprocity. The inequality of means and status between patron and client assured that a balanced exchange was not possible. In most cases, the client would never be able to repay even the first benefit received. Furthermore, they stood in need of continued benefits and these placed them in an ever increasing debt to their patron. Patronage provided a system by which wealthy patrons could help needy clients within the framework of generalized reciprocity. Knowing that the patron would not be able to return the benefits in kind, they expected return in benefits that were within the ability of the client. These benefits would primarily add to the honor and status of the patron (and this was highly valued). Patronage provided a social institution that brought honor and respect to the patron and practical help to the needy. Each was benefited by the reciprocal exchange of benefits even though the exchange was not an equal one (particularly in terms of finances).

In generalized reciprocity, the ongoing debt becomes basis for a continuing relationship (unlike balanced or negative reciprocity). Sahlins describes pre-modern economies as places that

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<sup>58</sup> Stegemann and Stegemann, 35. They consistently use the term general reciprocity rather than generalized reciprocity.

<sup>59</sup> Crook, *Reconceptualising Conversion*, 54-55. See also Sahlins, 191-196.

<sup>60</sup> Moxnes, *The Economy of the Kingdom*: 34.

<sup>61</sup> Stegemann and Stegemann, 35.

hold to the maxim “if friends make gifts, gifts make friends,”<sup>62</sup> and notes that “material flow underwrites or initiates social relations.”<sup>63</sup> Sitta von Reden writes: “it is the delay of the return which makes the gift bind people together and thus renders reciprocity a concept of social cohesion. Every exchange creates a debt for a time and it is impossible not to have a relationship with someone to whom one is indebted.”<sup>64</sup> Likewise, Arthur Hands suggests that one of the functions of reciprocity is that of “establishing friendship.”<sup>65</sup> The fact that debt creates an ongoing relationship is an important key to understanding patronage which is rooted in generalized reciprocity. For the client this ongoing relationship becomes the means of securing additional benefits. For the patron the relationship created by debt means that he holds power over the client to return favors whenever and however he chooses. As Malina describes it:

Patrons provide favors to their clients, while clients know and feel themselves in debt to their patrons for whatever the patron might wish, whenever the patron might wish. This sort of open-ended debt of gratitude marks generalized reciprocity. . . . It is such an accumulation of debts of gratitude, with the culturally sanctioned awareness that they may be called in, that serves as gain for a patron.<sup>66</sup>

This power could, of course, be misused and lead to the exploitation of the client. Nonetheless, patronage did provide the potential for a mutually beneficial relationship where reciprocal benefits were exchanged in keeping with the abilities and needs of each.

In practical terms a patron might give financial help or money to a needy client. Or they may offer to provide protection. Or they may provide opportunity by setting them free from slavery. In exchange, a client was expected to reciprocate in gratitude expressed through loyalty

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<sup>62</sup> Sahlins, 186.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Sitta von Reden, “The Commodification of Symbols: Reciprocity and Its Perversions in Menander,” in *Reciprocity in Ancient Greece*, ed. Christopher Gill, Norman Postlethwaite, and Richard Seaford (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1998). von Reden bases this insight on Alvin W. Gouldner, “The Norm of Reciprocity: A Preliminary Statement,” *American Sociological Review* 25, no. 2 (1960).

<sup>65</sup> Arthur Robinson Hands, *Charities and Social Aid in Greece and Rome* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1968), 28. See also Eisenstadt and Roniger, *Patrons, Clients and Friends*, 67.

<sup>66</sup> Malina, 153-154.

in doing what they were able to bring honor to their patron.<sup>67</sup> This gratitude and loyalty could take a multitude of concrete forms, from being part of the patron's entourage who follows him and applauds his speech, to military service, to paying smaller fines and debts or through expressing thanks through an inscription that honors the patron. The client would likely never be able to repay the debt in kind,<sup>68</sup> but in return for the benefits they had received, "was obliged to show gratitude, which consisted of rendering services and providing support in any way his patron required."<sup>69</sup>

Two theological terms flow from the generalized reciprocity of patronage: grace and trust. Grace (χάρις) describes the benefits exchanged, both the benefits given by the patron and the reciprocal gratitude of the client. Trust (latin, *fides*) is the glue of the relationship. The patron expresses it in ongoing faithfulness to protect and care for the client. The client expresses it in an attitude of trust and through a life of loyalty to the patron. Our understanding of both terms is enriched by understanding the patronage background in which these words found frequent expression to describe the relationship of patron and client.

### **Types of Patronage**

Patronage existed in a number of different forms in the Greco-Roman world of the first century. Some of these forms included personal patronage, public benefaction and divine benefaction.

Friends often preferred to exchange gifts rather than use money as a basis for exchange. These gifts created a pattern of reciprocal interaction that is not unlike patronage. "A man might

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<sup>67</sup> See Stegemann and Stegemann, 35. They write: "Here a different relationship is entered into precisely because both parties do not have equal access to goods or services; hence one party is the recipient, and enters into a relationship of subservience to the giver, where their reciprocity is marked not by balanced exchange but by honour and gratitude."

<sup>68</sup> Stambaugh and Balch, 64.

<sup>69</sup> Marshall, *Enmity in Corinth*, 143.

have 'superior friends,' 'equal friends,' 'lesser friends' and 'humble clients,' and the categorization of others into one or another of these depended on their resources."<sup>70</sup> While most patronage took place between social unequals, friends often preferred a reciprocal exchange of benefits like that of patronage.<sup>71</sup> This would not meet the strict definition of patronage, but the relationship of friendship can take on the same reciprocal quality. This should not be confused with the fact that sometimes patrons called their clients friends, despite their inequality of status to show them honor. Clients however would not use the term for their patrons, but would refer to them as patrons to show them respect and honor.<sup>72</sup>

Personal patronage linked a poor client with a wealthy patron. The debt created by the favor received, linked the client to the patron in a lifelong relationship of trust where he depended on the gracious benevolence of his patron. While he could not return the favor in kind, he would seek to bring honor to his patron with gratitude and loyalty. Ingratitude was unthinkable; to be disloyal would be shameful. The benefits exchanged will be essentially different; for example, "the patron providing material gifts or opportunities for advancement, the client contributing to the patron's reputation and power base."<sup>73</sup>

Public benefaction meant that a rich benefactor would build a public building or support a sporting event or circus or something similar which would benefit a community. Though such an act did not create a formal "patron-client" relationship, there was a sense in which each individual in the community found themselves in debt with the benefactor.<sup>74</sup> Benefactors were often honored with public inscriptions that honored them as people of worth. They were praised

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<sup>70</sup> Peter Garnsey and Richard Saller, "Patronal Power Relations," in *Paul and Empire: Religion and Power in Roman Imperial Society*, ed. Richard A. Horsley (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1997), 97.

<sup>71</sup> See DeSilva, *Honor, Patronage*, 99.

<sup>72</sup> See *ibid.*

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>74</sup> For a discussion of public benefaction see *ibid.*, 100-102.

for their excellent character. Often terms such as “benefactor” (a person of “singular merit”) or “savior” were used to describe them.<sup>75</sup> Other honors could include: “special seats at public games, golden crowns, public eulogies, honorary positions in temples—even for their families and offspring.”<sup>76</sup> The public honors served as a “not-too-subtle statement to the donor that he had a reputation that could be kept up only by further benefaction.”<sup>77</sup>

Artists and writers were also clients of wealthy patrons. The favor shown them gave them freedom to use their talents. The issue of status was quite different in literary patronage than in other forms of patronage. In other forms of patronage, clients were people of low status. In literary patronage this was not necessarily the case. As Crook writes, “literary patronage frequently involved people of high social standing, the wealthy and the elite.”<sup>78</sup> Still, the relationship functioned much the same way as other types of patrons and clients.

The emperor was considered a benefactor to the Roman Empire. In *Res Gestae*, Augustus sought to characterize his reign as a patron to the Roman people, emphasizing the benefits and services he had given them during his reign.<sup>79</sup> He was to be seen as “their paternal protector and benefactor.”<sup>80</sup> In return, they were to reciprocate with “deference, respect and loyalty.”<sup>81</sup> The honorific title “savior” was often given to emperors in light of their benefaction to the empire.

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<sup>75</sup> Frederick Danker, “Benefactor,” in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 669.

<sup>76</sup> Joubert: 18.

<sup>77</sup> Tessa Rajak, “Benefactors in the Greco-Jewish Diaspora,” in *Geschichte, Tradition, Reflexion: Festschrift für Martin Hengel Zum 70. Geburtstag*, ed. Martin Hengel et al. (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1996), 308.

<sup>78</sup> Crook, *Reconceptualising Conversion*, 74.

<sup>79</sup> See Peter Garnsey and Richard Saller, “Patronal Power Relations,” in *Paul and Empire: Religion and Power in Roman Imperial Society*, ed. Richard A. Horsley (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1997), 97.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

Political patronage extended to other members of the government as well. Roman generals often became patrons of cities they conquered.<sup>82</sup> Senators, governors and others were also part of the political patronage system. Even among the politicians themselves, patronage was a part of life when favors were exchanged for political gain.<sup>83</sup>

Divine patronage described the relationship of Greek and Roman deities to their human clients. People in the Greco-Roman world looked to the gods as a source of divine benefaction. They assumed that the rules that applied to patrons and clients in the natural realm, applied equally to the divine realm.<sup>84</sup> The language of prayer and worship was similar to the language of human clients asking for help from their human patrons. The gods were a source of many kinds of benefaction from guidance to healing to meeting basic needs.<sup>85</sup> Sacrifices, prayer and worship were ways of showing gratitude and loyalty to the divine benefactor. Expressing gratitude and thanksgiving publicly for benefactions received was also expected. In some cases, proselytization was another way of honoring the divine benefactor.<sup>86</sup>

### **Brokerage**

Another important form of patronage is called brokerage. A broker is a patron that dispenses the benefits of access and influence. These well connected individuals enable connections to be made so that goods or services can be exchanged. Generally, they bring access to clients that need favors from patrons more powerful or wealthier than themselves.<sup>87</sup> David DeSilva writes:

Sometimes the most important gift a patron could give was access to (and influence with) another patron who actually had power over the benefit being sought. For the sake of

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<sup>82</sup> Eilers, 38.

<sup>83</sup> See the discussion in Joubert: 20.

<sup>84</sup> See Crook, "The Divine Benefactions of Paul the Client," 13.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> See Moxnes, "Patron-Client Relations and the New Community in Luke-Acts," 248.

clarity, a patron who provides access to another patron for his or her client has been called a “broker” (a classical term for this was “mediator”). Brokerage was commonplace and expected in public life.<sup>88</sup>

Sophocles in *Oedipus* describes a character named Creon who acts as a broker for those who sought access to King Oedipus. He boasts:

I am welcome everywhere; every man salutes me,  
And those who want your favor seek my ear,  
Since I know how to manage what they ask. (*Oed.* 771-774)

Such is the power of the broker in ancient society.

A biblical example of brokerage is seen in Luke’s account of the centurion who seeks healing for his slave in Luke 7. He sends Jewish elders who had benefited from a synagogue he had built to serve as brokers who would ask for a miracle of healing on his behalf. This incident shows that patronage and brokerage were very much a part of the first century world.<sup>89</sup>

Jesus is presented in scripture as both a benefactor and broker. Luke’s summary statement of Jesus’ ministry reveals him as a benefactor: “he went about doing good and healing.” (Acts 10:38). The verb εὐεργετῶν, translated here as “doing good,” is a form of the noun used for benefactors (εὐεργέτης). It highlights Jesus ministry in the language of patronage and benefaction. Jesus ministry of healing, releasing people from the demonic realm and sometimes even raising the dead were acts of benefaction. Yet, the nature of Jesus relationship with the Father, shows Christ to be acting as a broker who provides access and influence to those in need of benefits from the Father. As DeSilva writes, “Jesus’ ability to confer benefits of such kind derives from his relationship with God, specifically as the mediator of favors that reside in the province of God’s power and prerogatives to grant or withhold.” Similarly, Moxnes views

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<sup>88</sup> DeSilva, “Patronage and Reciprocity,” 33.

<sup>89</sup> For an interesting discussion of this passage in light of patronage and brokerage see DeSilva, *Honor, Patronage*, 123-124. Also see Neyrey, *Render to God*, 251.

Jesus' brokerage as a central theme to understanding the gospel of Luke: "The central theme of the Gospel is that God acts as a benefactor-patron through Jesus. Jesus is not a patron in his own right, distributing his own resources, but a broker who gives access to the benefactions of God."<sup>90</sup> While it is appropriate to call Jesus a patron or benefactor, he is a specific type of patron often referred to as a broker or mediator.

### **Patronage and Benefaction**

Are patronage and benefaction equivalent terms that describe the same institution? Or are they significantly different terms that should be distinguished from one another? Stephen Joubert raised these questions and concluded that they are significantly different.<sup>91</sup> The majority of scholars tend to use the language of benefaction and patronage interchangeably and see benefaction as a form of patronage. Veyne argues that benefaction is a form of patronage.<sup>92</sup> Wallace-Hadrill argues "one can properly speak of patronage even if the Greeks didn't have a word for it."<sup>93</sup> And this interchangeable usage of terms is found throughout the literature of patronage.<sup>94</sup>

While, he would agree that there are many similarities between patronage and benefaction, Joubert argues that the two should not be confused. Romans understood patronage

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<sup>90</sup> Moxnes, "Patron-Client Relations and the New Community in Luke-Acts," 258. The reference to Malina is to Bruce J. Malina, "Patron and Client: The Analogy Behind Synoptic Theology," *Forum* 4 (1988). See also Malina, *The Social World of Jesus and the Gospels*, 152. There Malina writes that Jesus "is a broker of the Kingdom of God/Heaven, offering to put people in contact with a heavenly patron who, in turn, is ready to provide first-order resources of a political, religious and economic sort." For a thorough treatment of the issue of Jesus as broker see 149-157. See also DeSilva, "Patronage and Reciprocity," 56-61.

<sup>91</sup> Joubert: 21.

<sup>92</sup> Veyne and Murray, 86.

<sup>93</sup> Andrew Wallace-Hadrill, "Patronage in Roman Society: From Republic to Empire," in *Patronage in Ancient Society*, ed. Andrew Wallace-Hadrill (London; New York: Routledge, 1990), 65-66. He suggests that this is the same conclusion reached in M. I. Finley, Brent D. Shaw, and Richard P. Saller, *Economy and Society in Ancient Greece* (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 1983), 41.

<sup>94</sup> Moxnes, "Patron-Client Relations and the New Community in Luke-Acts," 249. See for example this quote from Moxnes: "Another predominant form of patronage in antiquity was the 'benefactor' or 'patron' to a city or local community." It is common to see such an interchangeable use of the terms.



as a specifically Roman relationship and Greek authors show some negative reaction to Roman patronage.<sup>95</sup> He further explains: "The Greeks in general did not understand the Roman rule over them as *patrocinium* (as the Romans did). . . The Romans were rather seen, and duly honored, as *powerful* benefactors, less frequently as *patrons*."<sup>96</sup> He then concludes:

In both these relationships we have an exchange of goods and services that leads to mutual obligations, together with differentiations of status and power between the interlocutors. However the contents of the relationships (in terms of the status and reciprocal responsibilities of the individuals/groups) are different.<sup>97</sup>

In Joubert's analysis, patronage language describes a more exploitive relationship than benefaction language.

Alicia Batten echoes the argument of Joubert and differentiates between patrons and benefactors. She sees God more as an "ideal benefactor and friend to a community of the faithful" rather than as "a patron who forms alliances with individuals, and potentially exploits power differentials."<sup>98</sup> She follows Joubert in arguing that patronage was more exploitive.

Admittedly there are places where the terms patron and benefactor are differentiated. In some cases, the evidence may suggest that patron was a word that had more of an exploitive connotation. Yet the data is inconsistent. There are other places where the terms seem interchangeable. While it may be possible to distinguish between them at times, the similarities between the terms make the distinction between them very difficult. Furthermore, there is evidence that both benefactors and patrons could abuse power and exploit beneficiaries and clients. Zeba Crook examines the evidence and concludes:

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<sup>95</sup> Joubert: 21.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.: 22.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.: 23.

<sup>98</sup> Alicia Batten, "God in the Letter of James: Patron or Benefactor?," *New Testament Studies* 50, no. 2 (2004): 268.

Patronage and benefaction were slightly different forms of exchange that together comprised a large social structure of exchange known to us as general reciprocity, which should not be confused with balanced reciprocity (gift exchange in which each gift in turn places the recipient under obligation). Often however, it is difficult and awkward to decide whether the giver is in this instance a patron and in another instance a benefactor.<sup>99</sup>

While Joubert is probably right that it is possible to make a distinction between patronage and benefaction in some cases, there clearly are overlaps in the usage of the terms both in the ancient source material and in the current discussions. The issue of whether patronage holds a more negative connotation (being more exploitive) seems an open one. Distinctions would be difficult to make in many cases and unnecessary for this study. Both patronage and benefaction describe a similar social exchange system rooted in generalized reciprocity. The similarities between the two terms are much greater than any differences. We do well to follow the wise model of Crook:

I use the terms 'patron' and 'benefactor' carefully where the context demands it but interchangeably most of time. I use patronage when I mean to refer to daily acts that involve individual interaction and benefaction to refer to items given to collectivities. The term 'client' refers to the person or group who has been placed under an obligation, whether to a patron or to a benefactor.<sup>100</sup>

### **The Roles of the Patron and Client**

The patron's responsibility is to provide protection and assistance to the client. Often the aid given to the client was referred to as  $\chi\acute{\alpha}\rho\iota\varsigma$ . In some cases the benefit would be freedom from slavery, freedom from taxation or more equitable taxation.<sup>101</sup> Sometimes it came in granting citizenship. Often the benefit would be in the form of basic necessities such as food or money—sometimes a small basket of food or some pocket money referred to as a *sportula*.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> Crook, *Reconceptualising Conversion*, 66.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> Elliott, "Patronage and Clientage"

<sup>102</sup> Lampe, 491.

Sometimes the benefit would be in the form of property or a place to live. Other times the benefit might have involved employment or advancement in the client's career. Still other times the benefit might include support in a legal case or help in paying off a debt. Even the giving of advice or helpful teaching could be seen as a benefit given by a patron.<sup>103</sup> The variety of benefits given corresponds to almost any conceivable human need.<sup>104</sup>

The benefits received obligated the client to return the favor in the form of gratitude. Seneca writes that the proper response of a client to the benefaction of a patron is to say "you have obligated me more than you think."<sup>105</sup> Expressing χάρις in the form of gratitude was more than just an attitude, it was expressed in a variety of concrete ways with the purpose of magnifying the honor and reputation of the patron.<sup>106</sup> One common expression of this was coming to the patron's home in the early morning to give salutations.<sup>107</sup> They sometimes followed the patron around as part of his entourage addressing him with titles of honor such as "sir" "benefactor" or even "king" and clapping when he gave a speech at the Forum.<sup>108</sup> "Escorts like this would have honoured the patron because in the eyes of the public court of reputation, the greater the retinue trailing a patron, the greater must one's honour have been."<sup>109</sup> In some cases they provided political support or helped in campaigns.<sup>110</sup> While they were rarely able to repay monetary assistance, they sometimes would help pay a fine, a ransom or a small debt.<sup>111</sup> Sometimes they reciprocated by providing information or by agreeing not to testify against the

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<sup>103</sup> DeSilva, "Patronage and Reciprocity," 56. Seneca refers to both advice and "sound precepts" in *Ben.* 1.2.4.

<sup>104</sup> See Elliott, "Patronage and Clientage," 149. Drawing from various sources, Elliott has compiled a helpful list of benefits.

<sup>105</sup> Mott, 60. Seneca, *Ben.* 2.24.4.

<sup>106</sup> Elliott, "Patronage and Clientage," 149.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid. See also Lampe, 491. See also Horace, *Sat.* 1.1.9-10; *Ep.* 2.1.103-107; *Martial* 10.82.

<sup>108</sup> Lampe, 491. See also Horace, *Ep.* 1.7.9; *Martial* 2.18; 2.57; 6.48

<sup>109</sup> Crook, *Reconceptualising Conversion*, 71.

<sup>110</sup> Lampe, 491. Lampe cites evidence from Pompeii.

<sup>111</sup> Elliott, "Patronage and Clientage," 149.

patron in court.<sup>112</sup> It was not uncommon for the client to show gratitude by helping through physical labor or by fighting in a battle for the client.<sup>113</sup> A common expectation is that the client would testify publicly to the benefits they had received and how their lives had been changed because of the generosity of their patron.<sup>114</sup> In some cases, they might even honor the patron with an inscription or statue.<sup>115</sup> Whatever the specific response, their gratitude was to be expressed in terms of loyalty to the patron in ways that contributed to their honor.<sup>116</sup>

## Summary

Patronage, as we have seen, is a “largely instrumental friendship in which an individual of higher socio-economic status (the patron) uses his own influence and resources to provide protection or benefits, or both, for a person of lower status (the client) who for his part reciprocates by offering social support and assistance including personal services to the patron.”<sup>117</sup> It was common in the Greco-Roman world and a source of social cohesion. It is particularly relevant to biblical studies in that the language it uses overlaps with some very important biblical terms, including grace (χάρις).

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<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

<sup>113</sup> Crook, *Reconceptualising Conversion*, 71. See also Seneca, *Ben.* 2.24.4

<sup>114</sup> Ibid. See also Seneca, *Ben.* 2.11.3; 2.23.1-2; 2.24.4

<sup>115</sup> Ibid. See also Seneca, *Ben.* 5.8.2.

<sup>116</sup> Elliott, “Patronage and Clientage.”

<sup>117</sup> James Scott, “Patronage or Exploitation?,” in *Patrons and Clients in Mediterranean Societies*, ed. Ernest Gellner and John Waterbury (London; Hanover, NH: Duckworth, 1977).

## CHAPTER TWO

### PATRONAGE AND GRACE

Having looked more generally at the patronage system, we now turn to the use of the word grace (χάρις) in the system of patronage and the potential significance that has for New Testament and, especially, Pauline studies. After laying a foundational understanding of χάρις, by looking at lexical data, we will seek to place the word in its benefaction and patronage context. Then we will consider the implications for the use of χάρις in the study of the New Testament.

#### Lexical Data

In the LXX, χάρις is used approximately 190 times. It is used most often to translate חן.<sup>1</sup> Only rarely is it used to translate חסד.<sup>2</sup> It can be used in a number of senses from favor to beauty to grace. It often speaks of a stronger person coming to the aid of a weaker one.<sup>3</sup> As such it becomes an expression of “the special intervention of God who supplies grace to the weak.”<sup>4</sup> While חן, as it is used in the Hebrew scriptures, does not appear to include the corresponding reciprocal sense of gratitude that is typical of χάρις in Greco-Roman contexts, there is some question as to whether any such sense should be understood in the LXX. What is clear is that later interpreters such as Philo and Josephus did find that sense in their interpretation of the text.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This is true in 62 of the 70 uses of חן in the Old Testament. See Conzelmann, “Χάρις”, 389.

<sup>2</sup> חסד is normally translated by ἔλεος. The exception is Esther 2:17 where the phrase חסד חן is translated χάρις. For a further discussion see James Allan Montgomery, “Hebrew Hese and Greek Charis.” *Harvard Theological Review* 32, no. 2 (1939): 97-102.

<sup>3</sup> See H. Esser, “Grace, Spiritual Gifts” *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, ed. Colin Brown and David Townsley, II (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1986), 116-117.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 117.

<sup>5</sup> See the discussion of χάρις in Hellenistic Judaism, pp. 37-40.

In the New Testament, the semantic range of χάρις includes grace, favor, beauty, kindness, goodwill, thankfulness, gratitude, boon, graciousness, winsomeness, attractiveness, and benefaction.<sup>6</sup> The word is most often used in three senses: objective, subjective and concrete.<sup>7</sup>

Used in the objective sense, χάρις describes the beauty, attractiveness, grace, or favor of a person (or portrait) or thing. As such, it is that “winning quality or attractiveness that invites a favorable reaction.”<sup>8</sup>

In the subjective sense, it may describe the “grace or favor felt” by either the giver or recipient.<sup>9</sup> For the giver, it may be expressed as the benevolent goodness, kindness or graciousness toward or for another or “a beneficent disposition.”<sup>10</sup> For the recipient, it is the favor felt and expressed in gratitude or thankfulness.<sup>11</sup>

The concrete sense of χάρις refers to the favor or benevolence done (by a patron, for example) or returned (by a client, to follow the same example). As such it may refer to the “practical application of goodwill” of the patron in terms of the benefit given.<sup>12</sup> Beyond that it may also refer to the “exceptional effect produced” by the benevolence of the patron.<sup>13</sup> Spicq describes this sense: “any gift, present, pardon or concession that is granted freely, out of one’s goodness, is called a *charis*.”<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Henry George Liddell and others, *A Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 1978. See also Arndt, Danker, and Bauer, 1079-1080. See also James Hope Moulton and George Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament: Illustrated from the Papyri and Other Non-Literary Sources* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1949), 684-685.

<sup>7</sup> Liddell and others, 1978. There are a few specialized uses that are of limited relevance to the topic at hand.

<sup>8</sup> Arndt, Danker, and Bauer, 1079.

<sup>9</sup> Liddell and others, 1978.

<sup>10</sup> Arndt, Danker, and Bauer, 1079.

<sup>11</sup> Liddell and others, 1978.

<sup>12</sup> Arndt, Danker, and Bauer, 1079.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Spicq, 3:503.

From the perspective of the client, the objective sense of the word describes the response of gratitude and thanksgiving to the generosity received.<sup>15</sup> Similarly many ancient sources refer to χάρις as a “debt of gratitude.”<sup>16</sup> Spicq expresses the reciprocal nature of χάρις in light of the patronage background:

A benefit arising purely from the goodness of the benefactor necessarily inspires gratitude on the part of the one who receives it. Hence the final meaning of *charis*, apparently predominant in the documents of the Hellenistic period: thanksgiving, gratitude felt or expressed. A person does not stop at merely feeling gratitude toward a benefactor but makes an effort to pay him back, as if paying off a debt by returning benefit for benefit.<sup>17</sup>

Spicq, looking to the patronage usage of χάρις rightly recognizes that gratitude is more than just a feeling or attitude; it is also expressed concretely in acts of gratitude in response to the benefits they have received. Although they cannot pay grace back in kind (nor were they expected to in the generalized reciprocity of patronage), χάρις received is to be reciprocated by χάρις as expressed in attitudes and actions that flow from gratitude. In all this, the patronage background is quite evident.

There is another significant use of χάρις as well, that should be noted. It need not be seen in opposition to the benefaction and patronage background.<sup>18</sup> Conzelmann develops the idea that grace can be used to describe “power in a substantial sense.”<sup>19</sup> He suggests that from its beginning, it indicated the power of love. Yet it began to develop a sense of having magical power coming from the heavens.<sup>20</sup> John Nolland agrees with Conzelmann that “divine power”

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<sup>15</sup> Arndt, Danker, and Bauer, 1079.

<sup>16</sup> Liddell and others, 1978.

<sup>17</sup> Spicq, 3:503-504.

<sup>18</sup> Conzelmann emphasizes this idea, but not to the exclusion of the influence of the ruler cult and divine benefaction in his article on χάρις.

<sup>19</sup> H. Conzelmann, “Χάρις,” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel and Geoffrey William Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964), 376.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid. He writes, “it appears in the θεῖος ἀνὴρ and expresses itself in magic.”

may underlie the meaning of χάρις in some contexts.<sup>21</sup> He disagrees that it is a late development in Hellenism, arguing that it was already used that way in classical Greek and in the Jewish Greek of the Diaspora.<sup>22</sup> So, while the origin and development of the idea may be debated, there is evidence that χάρις can be used meaningfully to express the idea of power—especially divine power.

In examining the lexical data, we may note a number of different images that lie behind the meaning of χάρις, from beauty to power to patronage. Each of these images adds potential shades of meaning to χάρις. The degree to which any or all of those images influence the meaning of χάρις in any given usage will require looking at other factors such as context. In any case, a survey of the lexical data points to the significance of the patronage background to χάρις in understanding its New Testament usage.

### **Patronage as a Key to Understanding Grace in the New Testament**

There is a growing body of evidence that patronage provides a helpful background for understanding the New Testament use of χάρις. G. P. Wetter in his extensive study on χάρις, noted inscriptions from the first century that used χάρις to describe favor shown in the benefaction of the emperor to a city. He noted the similarities of these inscriptions to Paul's usage of the word χάρις. As such, he laid the foundation for understanding χάρις in light of the language of patronage.<sup>23</sup> While Wetter was focused primarily on the inscriptions of the ruler cult, much of what he wrote is also applicable to patronage and benefaction more generally. It was in his role as benefactor, that honorific titles such as savior were given to the emperor. Much of the

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<sup>21</sup> See John Nolland, "Grace as Power," *Novum Testamentum* 28, no. 1 (1986): 26-31.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.: 31. He writes: "We conclude, therefore, that there is no need to look to late Hellenistic sources to establish the provenance that does justice to that strand of New Testament usage of χάρις in which the word is seen to designate a tangible power at work in the believer. The semantic conditions for such a use are already met in the usage of both Classical Greek and of the Jewish Greek of the diaspora."

<sup>23</sup> See Gillis Pison Wetter, "Charis; Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des ältesten Christentums" (Doctoral Thesis --Uppsala 1913, Almqvist, 1913), 15-19.



language of χάρις that is found clearly in the ruler cult, is found in other forms of patronage as well.

This idea was further explored by Manson in *The Doctrine of Grace*.<sup>24</sup> He refers to Wetter's discovery of inscriptions that shed light on the first century understanding of χάρις. He suggest that grace in the New Testament is best understood in Pauline terms as

the "gift" or "benefaction" of God to man, the generous favour by which the Supreme Being makes men recipients of his salvation. The expression registers not simply a will to give but a deed of gift, not only an attitude of favour but an outflowing of favour in largess, not a mere benevolence towards men or cities or states, but an enriching of them with real blessings. For St. Paul it means the whole self-giving of God to men in Jesus Christ.<sup>25</sup>

Building on the foundation of Wetter, Manson serves as an early example of those who sought to understand grace in light of the patronage background.<sup>26</sup>

Conzelmann picked up on the use of χάρις in the ruler cult. In his article, he suggests that "χάρις is a fixed term for demonstrations of a ruler's favour"<sup>27</sup> as demonstrated in inscriptions related to emperor worship.<sup>28</sup> It is surprising that he does not clearly identify the benefaction background of the usage in these inscriptions.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> See William Manson, "Grace in the New Testament," in *The Doctrine of Grace*, ed. William Thomas Whitley (London: Student Christian Movement Press, 1932), 33-60. He later describes grace as "the generous love or gift of God by which in Christ salvation is bestowed on man and a new world of blessings opened." (39) He also describes it as 'boon' flowing from the generous, unmerited graciousness of God to sinful, lost humanity, as expressed supremely on the Cross of Christ." (59)

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 39.

<sup>26</sup> For another early attempt to understand grace in light of the inscriptions mentioned by Wetter, see James Moffatt, *Grace in the New Testament* (New York: R. Long & R.R. Smith, Inc., 1932), 21-29. More typical is the dismissal or diminishing of such data. For example, see Elmer E. Flack, "The Concept of Grace in Biblical Thought," in *Biblical Studies in Memory of H. C. Alleman*, ed. Jacob Martin Myers (Locust Valley, NY: J. J. Augustin, 1960), 147. He quotes with approval David H. Gray, *The Christian Doctrine of Grace* (London: Independent Press, Ltd., 1949), 40. Gray writes: "In the writings of St. Paul the meaning of grace in Christian thought and experience is differentiated from all nonbiblical conceptions of grace."

<sup>27</sup> Conzelmann, 375.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Conzelmann mentions the usage of χάρις in the ruler cult and divine benefaction, but fails to mention the more common usage found in patronage and benefaction more generally.

Harrison also points out the use of χάρις in inscriptions honoring the benefaction of the emperors and offers a number of examples. One such example would be an inscription in Ephesus in 14 C.E.: “By the favour ([χάρι]τι) of Caesar Augustus God (θεοῦ) from the holy revenues which he himself gave to the goddess the road was made level in the proconsulship of Sextus Appuleius.”<sup>30</sup> Harrison points out that such language was used for other benefactors as well, and not just for the emperor, though the emperor inscriptions are “an important parallel to the early Christian use.”<sup>31</sup>

The language of χάρις is also found in inscriptions related to the gods of the ancient world. Conzelmann notes examples of χάρις as referring to the “favour of the gods,” in divine benefaction.<sup>32</sup> Here again it serves both to describe the benefits given by the gods, and the expected response of gratitude by the people who are recipients of the blessings. An inscription to Apollo speaks of gaining “the appropriate favors (τὰς καταξίας χάριτας)” from the gods.<sup>33</sup> Failure to respond in gratitude to grace given was reason for the gods to be filled with anger for those who were forgetful of favor (χάριτος).<sup>34</sup>

The language of χάρις is found not only in inscriptions related to emperor worship and divine benefaction, but also in inscriptions devoted to other types of benefactors and patrons.<sup>35</sup> Quite a number of sources suggest that χάρις was used widely in the language of patronage. It had been a common practice for at least five centuries before the New Testament era to honor benefactors and patrons with an inscription.<sup>36</sup> Χάρις was used, first, to describe the favor and

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<sup>30</sup> James R. Harrison, *Paul's Language of Grace in Its Graeco-Roman Context*, Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen Zum Neuen Testament. 2. Reihe, 172 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 49. His source for the quote is F. Jacoby, ed., *Fouilles de Delphes*. 3. *Epigraphie*, 308

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Conzelmann, 374.

<sup>33</sup> Harrison, 55. Harrison gives a good number of examples.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 56.

<sup>35</sup> See examples in Danker, *Benefactor*.

<sup>36</sup> See *ibid.* Danker gives a good selection of inscriptions translated into English.

benefits given by the patron or benefactor. One example would be the inscription in 71 B.C.E. where Roman benefactors named Gytheion, Numerius and Marcus Cloatius granted χάρις to the city by releasing them from the obligation of repaying two loans.<sup>37</sup> In an inscription from the late second century B.C.E., Xenocleas of Akraephiae had “performed not a few favours (χάριτας) for the people.”<sup>38</sup> The favors shown came in the form of corn during a time when food was scarce. In another inscription two centuries later, Oenoanda also gives corn and in addition money to citizens of the city “so that all who dwell in the city share this benevolence (χάριτας).”<sup>39</sup> In each of these cases, the benefits given by the benefactor or patron are described as χάρις.

It is even more common for χάρις to be used in inscriptions where it is found in expressing the reciprocation of favor by the client to the patron in the form of gratitude.<sup>40</sup> The city of Hadrianopolis honored Nerva the emperor in the first century C.E. in a typical inscription:

To the god Nerva, from the inhabitants of the added land belonging to the Caesars, the Council and the people [offer] thanks (χάριν).<sup>41</sup>

In regards to gratitude, Harrison looks to this and other examples then states: “χάρις, therefore, captures the attitudinal aspects behind the reciprocity system, spotlighting not only the conventional return of favour but also the importance of a genuine and commensurate gratitude on the part of the beneficiary.”<sup>42</sup>

The use of χάρις in the context of patronage and benefaction is found not only in inscriptions but also found in papyri from the Greco-Roman world. Numerous letters speak of

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<sup>37</sup> Harrison, 47.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid. His sources for these inscriptions were O. Michel, *Der Brief an die Römer* (Gottingen 1978), 236 and R. Cagnat, ed, *Inscriptions Graecae ad res Romanas perinentes*, 493.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 147.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 48. Harrison includes other examples as well.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

χάρις to describe the benefits exchanged on both sides of a patron-client relationship. Of some significance to biblical studies is the discovery that “Jewish papyri point to the pervasiveness of benefaction terminology and motifs within a Jewish milieu.”<sup>43</sup> This indicates the influence of the patronage background of χάρις even in Jewish culture.

### The Patronage Background of Grace in Hellenistic Judaism

There are other indications of the influence of patronage in the use of χάρις in Jewish backgrounds. Earlier, we considered the lexical data noting that in the Greek Septuagint, χάρις is often used to translate the Hebrew word נָחַם. In this word God reveals himself as “full of goodness and mercy.”<sup>44</sup> The most common usage of χάρις in the Septuagint is found in the phrase “to find favor” (εὕρειν χάριν, ἔχειν χάριν), but it can also describe God showing favor to a person in the eyes of others or to favor given or kindness shown.<sup>45</sup> Apocryphal literature shows an increase of Hellenistic ideas, including patronage. Χάρις as a return of gratitude is found clearly in the Apocrypha (Sir 3.31, 30.6 and 33.2).<sup>46</sup> Ingratitude by a beneficiary is condemned; a value that reflects the Greco-Roman patronage context (Wis 14:26). Likewise, the Pseudepigrapha offer examples of benefaction language as well in works such as *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, the *Sibylline Oracles* and the *Letter of Aristeas*.<sup>47</sup> The influence of Hellenistic ideas such as patronage were clearly seen in the language and literature of the Jewish people in the New Testament era.

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 95. Harrison gives numerous helpful examples of the language of χάρις in patronage contexts found in papyri of various types. See pages 64-96.

<sup>44</sup> Stephan Joubert, “Χάρις in Paul: An Investigation into the Apostle’s ‘Performative’ Application of the Language of Grace within the Framework of His Theological Reflection on the Event / Process of Salvation,” in *Salvation in the New Testament: Perspectives on Soteriology*, ed. Jan G. Van der Watt, Supplements to Novum Testamentum, 121 (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 191.

<sup>45</sup> Harrison, 108.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 110-111. He notes that he is making an artificial distinction by separating the Apocrypha from the LXX.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 111-114.

Jewish historian Josephus shows the influence of patronage in his discussions of grace. Josephus often retells the narrative of the Patriarchs and other heroes of the Old Testament in phrases influenced by the language of patronage.<sup>48</sup> Josephus also uses the language of patronage to describe Yahweh's relationship to Israel. Joubert summarizes his thought:

Israelites knew Yahweh as their benefactor who set them apart as his holy people, and bestowed upon them the gifts of circumcision, the law, the temple and land. In response to these benefactions, as Josephus (*Ant.* 16.42A) suggests, the people of Israel owed him their undivided loyalty so as to bring public honour to his holy name. However, this did not imply that human expressions of gratitude placed God in their debt, because Josephus also knows that "it is not possible for men to return thanks to God by means of works (*ergois*), for God stands in need of nothing and is above any such recompense." (*Ant.* 8.111).<sup>49</sup>

Josephus was not afraid to criticize the benefaction system, particularly for its self-centeredness.<sup>50</sup> Still, the language of patronage and reciprocity underlies much of his thinking, particularly in regards to grace.

Philo is a prime example of how patronage impacted the thinking of Hellenistic Judaism. In regards to  $\chi\acute{\alpha}\rho\iota\varsigma$ , Philo often uses the language of patronage and benefaction to describe God and his grace.<sup>51</sup> Stephen Mott raised the possibility that the Hellenistic Judaism that is represented in Philo may be the source from which the language of patronage and benefaction in the New Testament is derived.<sup>52</sup> He offers impressive parallels in the language of Philo and the New Testament, especially the language of grace found in the book of Titus. As an example, he cites Philo's interpretation of Gen. 15:4 as an example of reciprocity that is evidenced in Philo's understanding of grace in language of patronage:

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 135-136.

<sup>49</sup> Joubert, " $\chi\acute{\alpha}\rho\iota\varsigma$  in Paul," 191.

<sup>50</sup> Harrison, 144-145.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 133.

<sup>52</sup> Stephen C. Mott, "The Greek Benefactor and Deliverance from Moral Distress" (PhD Dissertation, Harvard, 1971), 308-338. See also Stephen C. Mott, "Greek Ethics and Christian Conversion: The Philonic Background of Titus II10-14 and III 3-7," *Novum Testamentum* 20, no. 1 (1978): 22-48.

Although you receive, you receive not for yourself; but by considering what was given to be a loan or trust and repaying the one who lent and entrusted it, you repay justly and requite properly the favor which preceded, i.e. you respond to earlier favor with later gratitude" (πρεσβυτέραν χάριν χάριτι νεωτέρᾳ προχατάρχουσαν ἀντεχτινούς διχαίως καὶ προσηχόντως ἀμειψόμενος, *Quis Her.* 104).<sup>53</sup>

Mott finds in Philo someone who recognized the reciprocal nature of grace and used the language of benefaction to describe χάρις. Similarly, Harrison finds that when Philo refers to passages from the Septuagint, he often deviates from a traditional Old Testament view of grace in favor of a view of grace influenced by patronage and benefaction.<sup>54</sup> He concludes that while Philo is sometimes critical of aspects of patronage, his "understanding of χάρις and the ethos of reciprocity is largely typical of his times, with the exception of his stronger emphasis on the unilateral nature of divine grace."<sup>55</sup> His first point is well taken. Yet, Harrison may be overstating Philo's emphasis on the "unilateral nature of divine grace."<sup>56</sup> This may stem from a failure to distinguish between balanced and generalized reciprocity. While Harrison's work with original sources on grace and benefaction is unmatched, he seems quick to distance God's grace from reciprocity. What he views as indications of unilateral grace, may be expressions of the limited return expected in generalized reciprocity.<sup>57</sup> Of course Philo knew the limitations of the return of grace. God can never be repaid in kind. This does not mean, however, that divine grace expects no return of gratitude. It may be better to see Philo as an example of a form of

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<sup>53</sup> Mott, "The Greek Benefactor and Deliverance from Moral Distress", 106.

<sup>54</sup> Harrison, 133. Harrison finds little evidence for reciprocity in the Old Testament prior to the influence of Hellenism. I am referring to Harrison's view when I refer to "the traditional Old Testament understanding." Not all are agreed that this was indeed the Jewish understanding prior to Hellenism. What is clear is that reciprocity is found in the interpretation of Hellenistic Judaism.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> See for example, Mott's discussion of Philo and Titus for a discussion of notions of reciprocity in Philo's views of χάρις. See Mott, "The Greek Benefactor," 308-338.

<sup>57</sup> For a further discussion of this issue as it finds expression in Harrison's understanding of grace in Paul, see pages 43-44.

Hellenistic Judaism that was quite at home in using the language of patronage to discuss χάρις—even divine grace.

Examples of benefaction language in discussions of grace can also be found in inscriptions of Jewish synagogues, in Jewish funerary inscriptions, in rabbinic literature and in sermons preached in Jewish synagogues.<sup>58</sup> Surveying the literature as a whole, the evidence seems to suggest that the influence of patronage on χάρις was a rather late development in Hellenistic Judaism.<sup>59</sup> Still, using χάρις in a manner that clearly reflects the influence of patronage seems quite at home in the Hellenistic Judaism of the first century world.

### Patronage and Grace in Seneca

The language of patronage and reciprocity finds broad expression in the discussion of philosophers of the Greco-Roman world. The work of Seneca is especially pertinent as he wrote so extensively on the issue of patronage. He clearly understands χάρις as a reciprocal exchange of benefits, in keeping with the cultural norms of his day. In one particularly descriptive passage he speaks of χάρις as a circle dance of three sisters each representing one of the aspects of grace in benefaction (giving, receiving, and returning):

Why do the sisters hand in hand dance in a ring which returns upon itself? For the reason that a benefit passing in its course from hand to hand returns nevertheless to the giver; the beauty of the whole is destroyed if the course is anywhere broken, and it has most beauty if it is continuous and maintains an uninterrupted succession. . . . Their faces are cheerful, as are ordinarily the faces of those who bestow or receive benefits. They are young because the memory of benefits ought not to grow old. They are maidens because benefits are pure and holy and undefiled in the eyes of all; [their robes] are transparent because benefits desire to be seen (*Ben.* 1.3.2-5; LCL).<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> See Harrison, 146-165.

<sup>59</sup> The clearest examples are found in apocryphal texts in the LXX, as well as in Josephus and Philo. The Masoretic Text shows little or no evidence of patronage influence. This at least raises the possibility that Paul's usage could show diversity depending on which source he is quoting from.

<sup>60</sup> Quoted in DeSilva, *Honor, Patronage*, 106.

Seneca here emphasizes the reciprocity of grace in the Greco-Roman patronage system. In reference to this illustration of Seneca, DeSilva writes: “to fail to return favor for favor is, in effect, to break off the dance and destroy the beauty of the gracious act.”<sup>61</sup> He goes on to say, “an act of favor must give rise to a response of gratitude—grace must answer grace, or else something beautiful will be defaced and turned into something ugly.”<sup>62</sup> For Seneca, χάρις is expressed in the beauty of a dance of the ongoing exchange of favors.

Gratitude in Seneca is more than just an attitude; it finds expression in acts of loyalty even to the point of sacrifice. He writes, “If you wish to make a return for a favor, you must be willing to go into exile, or to pour forth your blood, or to undergo poverty, or . . . even to let your very innocence be stained and exposed to shameful slanders” (*Ep. Mor.* 81.27).<sup>63</sup> Ingratitude for grace given is unthinkable for Seneca:

Ingratitude is something to be avoided in itself because there is nothing that so effectively disrupts the harmony of the human race as this vice. For how else do we live in security if it is not that we help each other by an exchange of good offices? It is only through the interchange of benefits that life becomes in some measure equipped and fortified against sudden disasters. Take us singly, and what are we? The prey of all creatures (*Ben.* 4.18.1 LCL).<sup>64</sup>

### Grace and Reciprocity

Examining inscriptions, papyri, first century Jewish sources and Greek and Roman philosophers we find reason to conclude that there was widespread evidence of the patronage background of χάρις in the first century world in which the New Testament was written. This is the environment in which Paul travelled, preached and wrote his epistles. Paul, though a Jew, was also a Roman citizen. He was likely familiar with the ruler cult and its terminology based in patronage. Furthermore, he was quite well-travelled in the Greco-Roman world. Records of his

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 109.

<sup>63</sup> Quote found in *ibid.*, 115.

<sup>64</sup> Quote discussed in *ibid.*, 110.



missionary travels suggest that he travelled in many of the cities where Greek inscriptions using χάρις would have been publicly displayed. He also shows familiarity with Greek religion which also used the conventions of patronage.<sup>65</sup> There is indication that patrons and clients were represented in the churches he visited and to whom he wrote. He would have also been familiar with the way that χάρις was used in the Septuagint and in Hellenistic Judaism. His readers too, were members of Greco-Roman society who would likely have been familiar with the practices and language of patronage. Harrison surveys the evidence and concludes “that the Graeco-Roman *benefaction* context of χάρις is the backdrop for Paul’s understanding of divine and human grace.” Furthermore, he suggests that “Paul’s language of grace would have been assessed by his auditors against the Hellenistic reciprocity system that shaped the rituals of giving and receiving throughout the eastern Mediterranean basin.”<sup>66</sup> Spicq comes to the same conclusion arguing that the secular usage of the word in the patronage context “was suited for taking on a theological meaning, and its nuances made sense to new converts.”<sup>67</sup> James Dunn also identifies the benefaction context of grace in Paul: “When his converts read the word *charis*, the language of benefaction would usually have been the most immediate context of meaning for their understanding of the term.”<sup>68</sup> In this light, it would seem reasonable to conclude that Paul and his readers would have likely been aware of the usage of χάρις in the patronage system in the world in which they lived.

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<sup>65</sup> Paul’s sermon in Acts 17, for example, shows an interest in and some familiarity with Greek religion, philosophy and poetry.

<sup>66</sup> Harrison, I. Harrison, though, sets Paul apart from the patronage context when it comes to reciprocity. He views God’s grace as unilateral.

<sup>67</sup> Spicq, 3:500.

<sup>68</sup> James D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 321. Dunn, though, differentiates between Paul’s view and benefaction on the issue of reciprocity, arguing that God’s grace is unilateral. Many others have identified patronage and benefaction as a key background to New Testament χάρις including Crook, DeSilva, Joubert, Malina, and Neyrey. Yet, they differ from Harrison and Dunn in that they are not hesitant to include reciprocity as important to Paul’s understanding.

One of the surprising conclusions of Harrison is the idea that while benefaction is viewed as the primary context for rightly understanding χάρις, Paul's view is to be differentiated because he argued that God's grace is unilateral and not reciprocal. Harrison writes:

Paul's description of divine beneficence may well have intrigued, puzzled, or alienated the popular philosophers – depending on the viewpoint of their school and the overall context of the discussion. In this regard, it is noteworthy that the closest approximation of a 'servant theology' in antiquity, Antisthenes' portrait of the enslaved and impoverished Odysseus, is still driven by the demand for reciprocation. Only the grace of Christ – in sharp contrast to the beneficence of the gods and human beings – is unilateral, not reciprocal.<sup>69</sup>

The conclusion that there is no reciprocity in Paul's use of χάρις seems out of place in a study that has presented such compelling evidence that benefaction is the context of the language of grace. One reason he has come to this conclusion is apparently found in that "Paul magnifies grace precisely because human beings are morally incapable of reciprocating God's infinite generosity (Rom 11:35; 1 Cor 4:7)."<sup>70</sup> As discussed earlier in terms of his views of Philo on grace, Harrison again seems to be thinking in terms of balanced reciprocity (payment in kind) rather than generalized reciprocity (gratitude and loyalty as appropriate responses to grace). Of course, we can never repay the grace of God in kind, but do these texts rule out the expected balanced reciprocity of patronage and benefaction? It would seem they do not. Another reason Harrison seems to be reticent to accept reciprocity is his concern to distance Paul's understanding of χάρις and merit theology (*do ut des* – I give that you may give): "For Paul all such attempts at manipulating the divine favour. . . amounted to a fatal reliance on works rather than upon God's grace."<sup>71</sup> While Paul does speak of grace in contrast with works this need not rule out reciprocity as an expected response to God's grace. Joubert offers an alternative

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<sup>69</sup> Harrison, 288.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 285.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 284.

explanation that is more in keeping with the patronage and benefaction context: "People cannot, by 'returning' a χάρις, make God their debtor. However, they are obligated to respond to God's grace."<sup>72</sup> Despite Harrison's surprising conclusion about reciprocity, his book is invaluable for its survey of relevant source material. While he fails to find reciprocity in Paul's understanding of grace (at least in terms of the grace of God), he clearly places χάρις in the context of patronage and benefaction in the Greco-Roman world.

James Dunn is another author who recognizes the benefaction context of χάρις, yet denies that Paul includes ideas of reciprocity. He argues that in Paul, reciprocity is "left behind:"

In Paul's letters the unilateral nature of this grace is given even more emphatic expression. The idea of mutuality which was attached to human *chesed* in the OT, and the importance of reciprocity which was such a central feature of the benefaction ideology of the Greco-Roman world, are both left behind in Paul, even more than in the OT's concept of divine *chesed*. Typical of Paul's theology of grace is the use of terms like "overflow" (*perisseuō*) "abound" (*pleonazō*), "surpassing/extraordinary" (*hyperballō*), and "riches" (*ploutos*); "grace overflowed in abundance" (*hyperperisseusen*) (Rom. 5:20). No room is left for any thought that the human recipient of divine grace can somehow repay it. The one to whom *charis* has been given should return *charis* indeed, but always in the sense of "thanks," never in the sense of "favour" returned. "Grace" remains God's wholly generous and undeserved action from beginning to end.<sup>73</sup>

Dunn is right to place grace in the patronage and benefaction context. Yet, he too quickly dismisses reciprocity. Like Harrison, it appears that Dunn fails to differentiate between balanced and generalized reciprocity. He is right to point out that grace deserves a response of grace, but grace in this sense is more than "thanks," it is gratitude and loyalty in attitude and actions that honors God as gracious benefactor. He also emphasizes the language of abundance and overflow that Paul uses to describe God's grace. While the terminology may set apart God and Christ as unusually beneficent, going beyond the usual expectations of grace, it would not in any way take away the expectation that the client would reciprocate. Rather, the ever-increasing debt

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<sup>72</sup> Joubert, "Χάρις in Paul," 206. See also DeSilva, *Honor, Patronage*, 127.

<sup>73</sup> Dunn, 322-323.

intensifies and magnifies the glory and honor of the benefactor. The client, realizing the abundance of grace that can never be repaid, finds even greater reason to continue on in gratitude and loyalty to his benefactor. That God is unusually abundant in his giving, is no argument against reciprocity.

As patronage and benefaction were common in the Greco-Roman world, it is hard to imagine that Paul and his readers would have been unaware of such usage. Paul's choice of this particular word as a favorite to describe his understanding of the gospel seems to suggest that there is something in the way it was already being used and understood in common usage that led to its selection as a prime descriptor of the benefits exchanged between God and persons who become the recipients of his grace. Perhaps better than any other word, χάρις is a term that describes the ethos of the patronage system of the ancient world as it is a word that describes both sides of the exchange between patron and client.

### **Patronage in the New Testament**

In addition to the widespread evidence of the use of χάρις in the context of patronage, the New Testament itself gives indication of the importance of patronage to understanding χάρις. The writers of the New Testament show familiarity with patronage, particularly Luke and Paul. Luke 7:1-10 is a shining example of narrative which assumes a patronage background.<sup>74</sup> Several parables also reflect an understanding of patronage (Luke 12:42-46; Luke 16:1-9; Luke 19:11-27).<sup>75</sup> There are indications that Luke portrays the apostles as brokers of the kingdom of

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<sup>74</sup> See the earlier discussion of this passage, pp. 19-20.

<sup>75</sup> See a brief explanation of each in terms of patronage in Moxnes, "Patron-Client Relations and the New Community in Luke-Acts," 253.

God.<sup>76</sup> There is some indication that Lydia of Philippi mentioned in Acts 16:14-15, may have been a patron.<sup>77</sup>

Paul, too, shows a familiarity with patronage. For example, in Romans 16:2, he refers to Chloe as a patron or benefactor (προστάτις). Issues of both slavery and patronage seem to underlie Paul's request to free Onesimus in the book of Philemon. Issues of patronage may also be important to understanding Paul's reticence to take support from the church in Corinth.<sup>78</sup>

Grace in the letter to the Romans is placed in the context of patronage in a recent article by Stephen Joubert. In Paul, χάρις is often used as "a verbal reference to God's active goodness in the death and resurrection of Christ."<sup>79</sup> He explains that in Romans 1:18-31 God reveals his divine power as the supreme benefactor. The response to God's gracious actions is one of ingratitude as shown by the people's refusal to honor him as he deserves as a benefactor. The consequence of such ingratitude is that they are handed over to their own desires and to the power of sin.<sup>80</sup> Romans 3:21-31 reveals a decisive event when in the death and resurrection of Christ, "righteousness is given as the concretization of God's gift of grace."<sup>81</sup> This grace is "the power that is revealed in his act of declaring people righteous (as indicated by the verb δικαιουσθαι in v.24)."<sup>82</sup>

Harrison, too, looks at χάρις in the writings of Paul, looking first to the book of Romans. He sets the book in an honor and shame context. He argues that Augustus and the ruler cult stand as a relevant backdrop to Paul's "reign of grace" in Romans 5:12-21 (while not discounting the

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 260-261.

<sup>77</sup> See the discussion in *ibid.*, 262-263.

<sup>78</sup> A thesis argued in Marshall, *Enmity in Corinth*, 101-105; 165-177.

<sup>79</sup> Joubert, "Χάρις in Paul," 201-203.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 201.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 202.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

influence of Jewish apocalyptic literature).<sup>83</sup> So the language of benefaction is being used but it has an unexpected twist, a “dishonored benefactor” extends grace as “the gift of divine righteousness” to beneficiaries who are unworthy.<sup>84</sup> Furthermore he sees Romans 6:12-23 as a metaphor of believers as “obligated beneficiaries.”<sup>85</sup> He sees the household of Caesar as the background for this metaphor (the *familia Caesaris*—which would include both slaves and freedmen). Here, again, he sees the example of the ruler cult as an example of patronage more generally. He suggests that the patronage background brings out the significance of grace in Romans: “Christ’s divine patronage supersedes the eschatological beneficence of Augustus both at Rome and throughout the Empire. While God demands loyalty of the dependants in His household, God’s reign of grace provides a security and status that totally surpasses the lucrative career prospects within the *familia Caesaris*.”<sup>86</sup>

Harrison’s study of χάρις in Paul, then turns to other letters. First to Ephesians, where he suggests that the extended blessing of the first chapter follows the form of the honorific decree associated with honoring benefactors. Paul is showing the superiority of God’s benefaction as compared to the benefaction of Artemis.<sup>87</sup> Galatians is an example of the need to respond “worthily to their benefactor.”<sup>88</sup> In 2 Corinthians 8:9 he finds the motif of “the impoverished benefactor.” Then he discusses Paul’s use of χάρις in terms of gratitude, looking especially to Paul’s thanksgiving passages. While Harrison finds some modification in Paul, he gives extensive evidence to the widespread influence of patronage and benefaction to χάρις in the writings of Paul. Harrison summarizes his findings on χάρις in Paul’s letters:

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<sup>83</sup> Harrison, 226.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 224.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 234.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 287.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 245.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 247.

Against the backdrop of the universal dishonouring of God as the cosmic and covenantal Benefactor, God extends His χάρις to ungrateful enemies, while still maintaining the righteous demands of His honour. The prized status of δικαιοσύνη – reserved for the καλοκάγαθοί in antiquity – is ‘democratised’ and extended to the entire Christian community through Christ as the dishonoured and impoverished Benefactor.<sup>89</sup>

In the final analysis, God’s grace stands superior to that found in the ruler cult, the mystery religions and other benefactors—human or divine.<sup>90</sup>

Joubert places grace in the context of benefaction in the undisputed Pauline letters. He summarizes Paul’s perspective on grace as follows: First, Paul presents God as “the divine benefactor *par excellence*.”<sup>91</sup> Second, Paul differentiates himself from the prevailing notion of grace in showing that χάρις benefits God’s enemies, sinners, and the offer is given without regard to the standard divisions of ethnicity, sex or social status (Gal 3:28).<sup>92</sup> Third, Paul suggests that χάρις “turns salvation into a present reality.”<sup>93</sup> Finally, χάρις calls for reciprocal grace, a life characterized by gratitude and loyalty. Paul himself displayed that loyalty in obedience, sacrifice and hardship. Failure to live in a way that brings honor to God is to reject his grace and this could lead to being cut off from grace (Gal 1:6; 5:4).<sup>94</sup>

Zeba Crook in *Reconceptualising Conversion*, has a great deal of relevant information about grace and patronage. He seeks to explain conversion in terms of the language of patronage. He is especially helpful in developing the theme of loyalty, which is important to understanding grace. Loyalty (*fides* in Latin and sometimes πίστις in Greek) is a quality that is expected in the patronage relationship, both for the patron and the client (though in different ways).<sup>95</sup> Loyalty is

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 287.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> Joubert, “Χάρις in Paul,” 208.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 208-209.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 209.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> Crook, *Reconceptualising Conversion*, 203. Crook here refers to the research of Hellegouarch in *Le vocabulaire latin des relations et des parties politiques sous la république* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1963), 23-32.

demonstrated in a concrete set of behaviors; it is not just a feeling.<sup>96</sup> He sees loyalty as closely related to gratitude in that it was expected in return for grace given. Loyalty is what “stands behind” all “appropriate client conduct.”<sup>97</sup> It, like gratitude, was focused on bringing honor to the patron. He gives evidence of the importance of loyalty by examining the evidence in three areas of patronage: “the loyalty of client-kings and client-cities to the Emperor, the loyalty of former slaves to their patrons (manumission loyalty), and the loyalty of students of philosophy to their philosopher-patrons (philosophical loyalty).”<sup>98</sup>

David DeSilva has written extensively on issues of patronage and grace in the New Testament. He shows the significance of the language of patronage especially in the book of Hebrews.<sup>99</sup> His book *Honor, Patronage, Kinship and Purity* is a helpful introduction to grace and patronage. He is especially helpful in bringing out the importance of gratitude in response to grace. DeSilva’s key insight is that “the fundamental ethos governing relationships of patrons and clients, benefactors and beneficiaries, and friends is that grace must answer grace. The receiving of favor must lead to the return of gratitude, or else the beauty and nobility of the relationship is defaced (dis-graced).”<sup>100</sup> Another key insight he makes is that loyalty is another “component of gratitude” that is expected in a patron-client relationship. Loyalty to one’s patron is expected “even when fortunes turn, and it becomes costly.”<sup>101</sup> The issue of loyalty is also highlighted in his discussion of grace and faith:

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 200.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 215.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 217-243.

<sup>99</sup> See David A. DeSilva, *Perseverance in Gratitude: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Epistle "To the Hebrews"* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000). See also David A. DeSilva, “Exchanging Favor for Wrath: Apostasy in Hebrews and Patron-Client Relationships,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 115, no. 1 (1996). See also David A. DeSilva, *Despising Shame: Honor Discourse and Community Maintenance in the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1995).

<sup>100</sup> DeSilva, *Honor, Patronage*, 155.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., 114.



Faith (Lat *fides*; Gk *pistis*) is a term also very much at home in patron-client and friendship relations and had, like grace, a variety of meanings as the context shifted from the patron's faith to the client's faith. In one sense, faith meant "dependability." The patron needed to prove reliable in providing the assistance he or she promised to grant. The client needed to 'keep faith' as well, in the sense of showing loyalty and commitment to the patron to whom the client entrusted his or her need, that the patron would indeed perform what he or she promised, what the benefactor would also have to trust the recipients to act nobly and make a grateful response.<sup>102</sup>

Both dependability and trust were necessary for the relationship of a patron and client.

A number of factors suggest the significance of χάρις in the patronage system as a background to understanding patronage in the New Testament. We have examined the use of χάρις in patronage and benefaction in the Greco-Roman world of the first century as evidenced by epigraphic inscriptions, ancient letters, and the writings of historians and philosophers of the era. In addition, the New Testament writers show a familiarity with the system.

### **The Asymmetrical Relationship of Grace**

Understanding χάρις in its patronage context suggests nuances to its usage in other contexts. Χάρις highlights the asymmetrical nature of the patron-client relationship. It can be used to describe both the benefits given by the wealthy patron and to the reciprocal gratitude of the client. In this context, it highlights the inequality of status and disparity of resources between patron and client. Χάρις then is easily applied to the New Testament which highlights the supremacy and beneficence of God and the dependency and need of human beings.

The benefits exchanged in the patron-client relationship create a debt that cannot be repaid in kind. This debt becomes the basis for a long-term relationship in which grace is exchanged over and over again. The relationship established had elements of kinship and solidarity that would not normally occur in society between social unequals. As such, χάρις is a

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<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 115.

relational word. The client is often referred to as a friend. The patron becomes like a father.

Applied to the New Testament context, God's grace leaves its recipients in a debt that cannot be repaid in kind, this creates an ongoing relationship where grace answers grace in gratitude.

The χάρις of the patron or benefactor served to highlight their honor. The one who is gracious, who does good, is a person to be honored. The application to the New Testament context is obvious, God's grace highlights the goodness of God and so magnifies his honor. The client reciprocates by telling others about how their lives have changed because of the grace of God. Thanksgiving and praise flow from a heart of gratitude.

Χάρις also suggests the favoritism of patron to client. The patron who shows grace treats the client better than they deserve. The client receives benefits that can never be repaid in kind. Beyond that the patron continues to give χάρις even when the first instance was not repaid. The ongoing beneficence of God is beautifully pictured in the word χάρις.

Χάρις functions in a relationship of faith and trust. This too fits the context of grace in the New Testament.

## Summary

Having looked at patronage and grace, we may conclude that the background of patronage and benefaction is important to understanding χάρις in the New Testament. That it would become such a key to Paul's understanding of salvation is not surprising in light of insights that can be drawn from the ways χάρις was used to describe the relationship of patrons and clients: Χάρις highlights the honor and beneficence of the giver. It reminds us of the contrasting asymmetrical relationship between God and humans who stand in need of God's grace. The χάρις of the patron or benefactor creates a debt that cannot be repaid in kind, and this debt places the client in life-long relationship characterized by trust, depending on the benefactor

for further benefits. Χάρις also describes the appropriate response of the client: gratitude. This gratitude is to be expressed not only in attitude and words, but also in a lifestyle of loyalty that seeks to bring honor to the client. The whole relationship of patron and client (or benefactor and beneficiary) is a dance of grace (ongoing favor reciprocated by ongoing gratitude) in an embrace of faith (both the ongoing faithfulness of the benefactor and the ongoing trust of the client). As such, much can be drawn from the patronage context of χάρις that is easily transferable to the theology of the New Testament and especially that of Paul.

## CHAPTER THREE

### GRACE IN TITUS 2

Titus 2:11-15 places grace (χάρις) at the heart of a discussion encouraging ethical behavior. There are significant clues that the patronage background of χάρις is important to interpreting this passage. We will consider the evidence for placing the passage in that context, and also consider how the patronage backdrop might impact the interpretation.

Looking to the context, it seems that Titus 2:11-15 (the discussion of grace) provides the theological rationale for the encouragement to ethical behavior in the first part of the chapter. This connection is made clear by the γάρ (for) at the beginning of verse 11. This discussion of grace, may, in fact, be the key theological foundation of the epistle as it may be seen as the source of ethical behavior that is commended throughout the book. Between the two appearances of Christ, ongoing benefits of grace are drawn from that which was accomplished in the first coming in the hope of fulfillment in the second. Grace provides the incentive and means to live godly lives in the interim.<sup>1</sup> As such, it seems foundational to the entire discussion of the book.

Other backgrounds than patronage have been suggested for this text. Some have argued that Titus 2:11-14 (along with 3:4-7) was taken from a baptismal liturgy.<sup>2</sup> While the text would certainly be appropriate for such a liturgy, there appears to be no direct evidence for this.<sup>3</sup> Even

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<sup>1</sup> James D. G. Dunn, "The First and Second Letters to Timothy and the Letter to Titus," in *The New Interpreter's Bible: General Articles & Introduction, Commentary, & Reflections for Each Book of the Bible, Including the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994), 871. Dunn says it well: [grace] "focuses on the coherence between the two appearances of Christ (vv. 11, 13), between what has already been accomplished (vv. 11, 13) and the hope for what is yet to happen (v. 13). It is this correlation that provides the rationale for godly living in the present (v. 12), as illustrated by the preceding paragraph."

<sup>2</sup> See Anthony Tyrrell Hanson, *The Pastoral Epistles: Based on the Revised Standard Version*, New Century Bible Commentary. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 44 and 183. He gives no evidence for this theory as he suggests, "this is so obvious it hardly needs illustration." This seems a less than satisfactory explanation.

<sup>3</sup> Patzia, Bradshaw, and Dunn have criticized the tendency to "pan-liturgism" among some biblical scholars who find liturgical formulas too often in the text without any real evidence. See Paul F. Bradshaw, *The Search for the Origins of Christian Worship: Sources and Methods for the Study of Early Liturgy* (New York: Oxford

if it were taken from such a source, it would not necessarily take away from the influence of patronage in the description of grace, especially in light of the wide-spread nature of patronage in the ancient world.

Others have emphasized parallels from the Old Testament, especially in the language of verse 14. This verse seems to echo such passages as Psalm 130:8; Deut 14:2; Ex 19:5; and Ezek 37:23.<sup>4</sup> These significant parallels do not, however, suggest that patronage is irrelevant to the discussion of grace. The author may well be influenced by both Jewish and Hellenistic sources. In addition, as noted previously, the language of Greco-Roman patronage is easily found in Jewish sources of that era.<sup>5</sup> A very real possibility is that the author is saying that not only Hellenistic virtues (described in verse 12), but also the virtues of Judaism (verse 14) result from the education of grace.

The language of grace that is found in Titus 2 shows remarkable parallels to that found in patronage and benefaction. Grace and its appearance as an epiphany is typical of the language found in inscriptions of benefactors like the emperor. Martin Dibelius and Hans Conzelmann highlight the Hellenistic language and its similarity to language used in the “ruler cult” of Rome. They write: “If one is familiar with the lofty, stylized manner in which the emperor was honored as a god in the inscriptions, he will sense that it is the same language being spoken both there and here.”<sup>6</sup> The language in these verses does parallel the language that describes the benefaction of the emperor, as well as the benefaction of other benefactors both human and divine. The ruler

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University Press, 1992), 30-34. See also Arthur G. Patzia, *The Emergence of the Church: Context, Growth, Leadership & Worship* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 185. See also James D. G. Dunn, *Unity and Diversity in the New Testament: An Inquiry into the Character of Earliest Christianity*, 2nd ed. (Harrisburgh, PA: Trinity Press International, 1990), 141-143.

<sup>4</sup> Ben Witherington, *Letters and Homilies for Hellenized Christians* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006), 142.

<sup>5</sup> See the discussion in chapter 2, pp. 32-34.

<sup>6</sup> Martin Dibelius and Hans Conzelmann, *The Pastoral Epistles: A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, Hermeneia--a Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1972), 144-145.

cult was a prominent form of patronage that provides good examples of the types of language that were commonly used in describing patronage and benefaction. The parallels are striking and may indeed become important for the interpretation of this text.

In another form of the language of patronage, Kidd makes the case for the distinctive Cretan mythology of Zeus as a background to the language in this passage.<sup>7</sup> Looking to Diodorus as a source, he writes: “In the face of Olympus’ claim to be the seat of the gods, Crete countered that those very gods were but men and women of Crete elevated to deity by virtue of benefactions bestowed upon the human race (*Diodorus* 5.64.2).”<sup>8</sup> So, according to Cretan mythology (and in contrast to some other Greek traditions), Zeus was a human born in Crete who became divine because of his benefaction. Kidd sees the author contrasting Jesus and Zeus with an apologetic aim. While Zeus was a man who becomes a god because of his benefaction, Jesus exists as God and becomes a man in order to bring benefaction to mankind. As such, Christ stands supreme among the benefactors—even Zeus who was seen by the Cretans as the greatest divine benefactor. The evidence for this view is likewise compelling and deserves closer examination.

Another possibility is to consider the language of patronage and benefaction more generally, recognizing the difficulty of determining precise parallels. Danker notes that the language used here is the language of benefaction: “Almost half of the diction used in Titus 2:11-14 echoes inscriptions formulated in honor of benefactors.”<sup>9</sup> For example, the description of epiphany (appearing), the virtues that are produced through grace, and the inclusion of honorific titles such as savior, are examples of the language of patronage and benefaction. Whether Zeus

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<sup>7</sup> See Reggie M. Kidd, “Titus as Apologia: Grace for Liars, Beasts, and Bellies,” *Horizons in Biblical Theology* 21 (1999). See also Towner, 476-477.

<sup>8</sup> Kidd: 195.

<sup>9</sup> Danker, *Benefactor*, 322-323.

or the emperor was in the mind of the author, either or both would serve as examples of the benefaction language used in this text. What is clear is that the language of patronage and benefaction is at the heart of this text.

### **Χάρις and Benefaction**

The grace of God should be understood in the context of patronage and benefaction. I. Howard Marshall rightly identifies χάρις as “a virtue associated with benefactors” that is “described in language which may echo that used of imperial gifts; it is a ‘demonstration of a ruler’s favour, gift’ or the disposition that lies behind the gift.”<sup>10</sup> Of course, the language of patronage can take other forms than that of a ruler; whatever the form of patronage, the language of grace describes both the disposition of the giver and the benefits given (as well as the expected return of gratitude). Many discussions of this text seem unaware of that context.

The grace of God is a common theme throughout the letters of Paul.<sup>11</sup> Philip Towner writes: “Paul is fond of the phrase ‘the grace of God,’ and often uses it to denote some experience of God’s benevolence”<sup>12</sup> Despite the common use of the phrase throughout the letters of Paul, scholars are divided on whether χάρις is used in Titus in a typically Pauline way.<sup>13</sup> Kelly argues that grace is used in a normal Pauline sense as “God’s free favour, the spontaneous goodness by which he intervenes to help and deliver men.”<sup>14</sup> Collins argues that it is not used in a Pauline sense (justifying grace) but in “its usual Hellenistic sense of ‘favor’ or

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<sup>10</sup> Marshall and Towner, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, 267.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid. Marshall writes: “The whole phrase ‘the grace of God’ is strongly Pauline.”

<sup>12</sup> Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 745.

<sup>13</sup> Among those who argue that grace here is distinctly different than that in the undisputed Pauline letters is Dibelius and Conzelmann, 144. They write “grace (χάρις) in this context does not recall the grace of God of which Paul writes, but rather the ‘graces’ of the epiphanous gods in their manifestations (as they are praised, e.g., in the cult of the ruler.)” Marshall responds from the other side of the issue: “Rather the author sets the Christian revelation of grace in its traditional sense over against the pagan manifestations.” See Marshall and Towner, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, 267.

<sup>14</sup> J. N. D. Kelly, *A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles: I Timothy, II Timothy, Titus*, 1st ed., Black’s New Testament Commentaries (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), 244.

‘beneficence.’”<sup>15</sup> Though—as we have already noted—there may be no real need to make such a distinction as the usual Hellenistic sense may be found in even in the undisputed Pauline texts and need not be differentiated from justifying grace. Indeed, justifying grace is mentioned in the broader context (Tit 3:7). In addition other common Pauline themes are seen in the immediate context, such as redemption. Whatever refinements we may find in the pastorals, it would seem that the author is building upon the understanding of grace revealed in earlier Pauline texts.<sup>16</sup> The language of benefaction is more pronounced in the Pastorals, to be sure, but the concepts of patronage are found in earlier, undisputed Pauline epistles. As we examine the texts in Titus, we find some new ground, but it is in keeping with the foundation already laid in Paul’s letters. If the context of patronage and benefaction lay behind Paul’s understanding of grace in earlier epistles, as we have argued, this background is made ever more clear in the language used in Titus.

Grace in this context should be seen both as the favor of God expressed to believers by the mediating work of Christ in salvation, and the ongoing favor of God as expressed to those same believers in bringing moral transformation in this present life. The favor and benefits given by God are not due to human works or merit and cannot be repaid in kind (a point that will be made in Titus 3). All of this is in keeping with the understanding of grace from the background of patronage.

We would do well at this point to recall the conclusions we came to after studying grace and patronage. Χάρις, as we have seen, highlights the honor and beneficence of the giver. The

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<sup>15</sup> Raymond F. Collins, *1 & 2 Timothy and Titus: A Commentary*, 1st ed., The New Testament Library. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 349.

<sup>16</sup> Most scholars argue that Paul is not really the author of the Pastoral Epistles, though strong objections to that consensus have been made. While my sympathies lie in the minority opinion, it is beyond the scope of this paper to argue for or against Pauline authorship. Whether the author is Paul (perhaps with an amanuensis) or someone in the Pauline tradition, matters little to the point. Even if Paul is not the author, he seems to be building on a Pauline foundation—and would probably need to if the work was to be considered authentic. The further it strayed from Pauline tradition, the more likely it would be rejected.



beneficence of God is seen in this passage especially in Jesus' giving himself to bring redemption. Though the cross is not specifically referred to, it is implied by the language of giving in connection with redemption: he "gave himself for us that he might redeem us." (14) This is a relatively common idea in the Pauline letters (Gal 1:4; 2:20; Eph 5:2, 25; 1 Ti 2:6). The act of giving one's own life to benefit his clients would be a supreme act of benefaction. Such an act reveals the honor and worth of a benefactor that is unparalleled in either divine or human benefaction. In addition to highlighting the honor of God in his first appearing, he also points the recipients of that grace to the glory of the benefactor who will once again appear, this time as a glorious savior.

The patronage context of grace also highlights the contrasting asymmetrical relationship between God and humans who stand in need of God's grace. We, as frail human beings, stand in need of grace to renounce the vices of our former life. God, as our benefactor, stands in complete contrast to us as a person of great virtue and with unlimited resources. In God's strength, we find grace to become people characterized by the highest ideals of virtue.

The χάρις of the patron or benefactor creates a debt that cannot be repaid in kind, and this debt places the client in life-long relationship characterized by trust where he or she depends on the benefactor for further benefits. The interim, the period between the first and second coming of Christ requires the education of grace that transforms the clients into people of virtue as they wait in hope (trust) for the consummation of grace, the glorious appearing of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. The debt created by grace, brings relationship: "we are his own people."

Χάρις also describes the appropriate response of the client: gratitude. Grace repays grace through gratitude, as it should in the patronage system. This gratitude is to be expressed not only

in attitude and words, but also in a lifestyle of loyalty that seeks to bring honor to the client; a way of life where sin is denied by utilizing the ongoing benefaction of God. It finds expression in this text as a virtuous life that will honor our benefactor as we wait for his eschatological return. Furthermore it expresses itself in the zeal for good deeds. Such a lifestyle enables one to look with hope to the glory of the future appearing of Christ. As A. B. Luter, Jr writes: “The future appearing (*epiphaneia*) of Jesus as Savior is the Christian’s ‘blessed hope’ and generates a lifestyle of godly gratitude (2 Tim 2:11–14).”<sup>17</sup>

The whole relationship of patron and client (or benefactor and beneficiary) is a dance of grace (ongoing favor reciprocated by ongoing gratitude) in an embrace of faith (both the ongoing faithfulness of the benefactor and the ongoing trust of the client). That this relationship is a lifelong dance of grace fits well the context of Titus 2 where χάρις is the ongoing favor and benefits of God that begins in Jesus’ first appearance, and finds consummation in his second. The interim between appearances is a time for us to continually rely on grace to educate us in virtuous living that will honor our benefactor as we look forward with hope to his second coming. As we trust him for more and more grace, we rightfully honor him by lives of gratitude expressed in zeal for good deeds.

Some scholars find another layer of meaning in the term grace, as it can take on the meaning of “divine power.”<sup>18</sup> As grace brings transformation evidenced in lives of ethical behavior, one may rightly see this nuance in the understanding of grace. Bassler explains: “God’s grace is understood here as a power that brings about a real moral transformation in the present. As a consequence, it also enables believers to look forward with hope to the parousia (second

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<sup>17</sup> A. B. Luter, Jr., “Savior,” in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, ed. Gerald F. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin, and Daniel G. Reid (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993).

<sup>18</sup> Dibelius and Conzelmann, 145.

coming) of Christ, described here as elsewhere in these letters as a second epiphany or ‘manifestation’ (see also 1 Tim 6:14; 2 Tim 4:8), and to eternal life (1:2; 3:7).”<sup>19</sup> The context does seem to suggest that grace enables the recipient to resist sin and to live a life of honor and virtue. This shade of meaning may be as easily found in chapter 3:4-6 where the transformative power of grace is manifested in individual believers through Jesus the broker who pours out the Spirit into the lives of clients (a transformation expressed in rebirth and renewal). Grace as expressed in the Christ-act (the life, death and resurrection of Christ) is the foundation for this power of transformation. Such a meaning fits the context here, but I would argue that such a transformative understanding of grace is not foreign to other Pauline texts nor to the other primary reference to grace in chapter 3 of Titus (where it brings rebirth and renewal).<sup>20</sup> Nor does it take away from the importance of understanding χάρις in the context of patronage.

### Epiphany and Benefaction

One indicator that the language of patronage and benefaction is in view in this passage is the repeated use of the term epiphany (ἐπιφάνεια). Dibelius and Conzelmann define the term: “Strictly speaking, the religious term ‘epiphany’ means the appearance of a divinity that is otherwise hidden, manifested as a *deus praesens* either in a vision, by a healing or some other helping action, or by any manifestation of power.”<sup>21</sup> The word is used twice in this passage to describe first of all the appearance of χάρις,<sup>22</sup> and secondly to describe “the glorious appearing

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<sup>19</sup> Jouette M. Bassler, *1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus*, Abingdon New Testament Commentaries. (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1996), 199.

<sup>20</sup> I have Dibelius and Conzelmann in mind who argue that “grace as power” is not Pauline, and that grace in chapter 2 and 3 are not in continuity of meaning (With chapter 2 being non-Pauline, and chapter 3 being used in a Pauline way). See Dibelius and Conzelmann, 145. I would argue that grace as power would be at home in Romans 6, for example, as it enables us to walk in newness of life and break free from the power of sin.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 104.

<sup>22</sup> Technically the word is used as a verb in verse 11 in describing the appearing of χάρις. This appearance of χάρις is likely referring to the so called “Christ event,” his incarnation, life, death and resurrection.

of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.”<sup>23</sup> The language would have evoked among the readers ideas of royal and/or divine benefaction. Consider Caesar’s title: “God manifest (θεὸν ἐπιφανῆ), descendent of Ares and Aphrodite, common savior (σωτήρα) of human life.”<sup>24</sup> Inscriptions resulting from a visit from a great benefactor like the emperor, would sometimes describe the event as an epiphany. Greek myths also used epiphany language to describe appearances of gods.<sup>25</sup> The title “savior” (σωτήρ) was commonly used in the same context as epiphany, to honor the benefactor.<sup>26</sup> Ordinarily, in the context of benefaction, an epiphany brings the expectation of an “extraordinary display of a savior’s help.”<sup>27</sup> As these individuals were viewed as benefactors with extraordinary resources at their disposal, such an appearance had the potential of bringing further benefits (χάρις) to the community and its people.

In the “ruler cult,” where the emperor was viewed as divine, various events in his life could be celebrated as times of epiphany. These included a festival on his birthday (his first appearance), a feast on the anniversary of his rise to power, and sometimes a festival to celebrate a miracle, or the emperor’s return from a journey.<sup>28</sup> The terminology was easily transferable to Jesus’ appearances, both his incarnation (his historical, earthly appearance) and his expected appearing at his second coming (his eschatological coming). It is likely that the author has these two events in mind as he describes grace in terms of the two appearances. As Dibelius and Conzelmann write,

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<sup>23</sup> Tit 2:13, NIV.

<sup>24</sup> Dibelius and Conzelmann, 104. I have inserted the original Greek words where relevant to the discussion.

<sup>25</sup> Mounce, 422. Mounce notes that this Greek word “is common in secular thought denoting the appearance of a god, demigod, or king.”

<sup>26</sup> Dibelius and Conzelmann, 104. They write that the term ἐπιφάνεια is “intimately related to the term ‘savior’ (σωτήρ).”

<sup>27</sup> Danker, *Benefactor*, 373. He adds, “Ordinarily an epiphany of a deity means that a special favor is being displayed.”

<sup>28</sup> Dibelius and Conzelmann, 104.

This “visitation” (ἐπιδημία) corresponds, in the Christian context, to the eschatological coming, to the parousia, which is designated as ‘epiphany’ (ἐπιφάνεια) in several passages. However, according to the usage of the word elsewhere, it is not surprising that the Christians came to apply the term “epiphany,” and later the word “parousia,” also to the earthly appearance of Jesus, namely his birth. Even the life of Jesus is seen as the breaking in of the time of salvation and the proclamation of God on earth.<sup>29</sup>

The language of epiphany can also be found in the Septuagint where it often refers to the appearance of God’s face, often with a consequent blessing.<sup>30</sup> See for example, from the priestly blessing of Num 6:25: “the LORD make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you.” (See also Pss 30:17; 66:2; 79:4, 8, 20; 117:27; 118:135, LXX). God’s presence, the appearance of his face, brings grace and blessing. This usage is quite similar to what we find in the language of epiphany in benefaction.

The term ἐπιφάνεια also has a significant parallel in 2 Timothy 1:9-10 where grace is revealed in the appearing of Jesus.<sup>31</sup> Comparing the texts, along with the parallel found in Titus 3:4, gives further evidence that the χάρις that appears is Jesus himself in his appearance on this earth. Benjamin Fiore looks at some of the parallels and suggests:

Second Timothy 1:9-10 explains that the favor of God was bestowed in Christ Jesus and became manifest through Christ Jesus’ human life and saving work (compare Luke 2:40 4:22 and John 1:17; Acts 20:24 Rom 5:15; 1 Cor 1:4). This passage is not as clear, but the hymn at 3:4-7 presents the same soteriological teaching. The favor of God effects the conversion (vs 12, *paideuousai*, “teaching”; v. 14, *lytrosetai*, “purify”) from vice to virtue and makes Christians capable (v. 14, *katharisei*, “cleanse”) of performing good deeds.<sup>32</sup>

As the “appearance” of the benefactor is in view, and in light of the parallels to the benefaction context as seen in the ruler cult, to usage in the LXX and in parallel passages in the

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> For a discussion of this issue see Mounce, 422.

<sup>31</sup> For a discussion of this significant parallel, see George W. Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1992), 318-319. The discussion of another parallel in Titus 3 is found in the next chapter.

<sup>32</sup> Benjamin Fiore, *The Pastoral Epistles: First Timothy, Second Timothy, Titus*, ed. Daniel J. Harrington, Sacra Pagina, vol. 12 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2007), 210.

Pastoral Epistles, we may conclude that grace makes its appearance first in the Christ-event: the life, death and resurrection of Christ whereby God makes a way for the salvation of all people. It is in Christ's incarnation, his earthly life and especially in his death on the cross on our behalf that grace was manifested—the first glorious appearing (epiphany). In this appearance, God's gracious disposition is seen in giving his son to bring salvation to all people. Moreover, in the Christ-event, salvation and all of its benefits are made available to needy clients in need of forgiveness and grace. Barrett is right, then to see grace as “the gracious activity of God which was put into effect in the historic mission of Jesus Christ.”<sup>33</sup>

### **The Benefaction of Salvation**

What is the nature of the benefaction that appears in the historical appearance of Jesus on this earth? What benefits result from the grace of God manifest in Christ's life, death and resurrection? Titus 2:11 suggests that χάρις, expressed in the appearance of Christ, brings salvation to all people. The client graced with salvation experiences both a conversion from vice as well as training in moral virtue.

This education in grace teaches us to deny impiety or ungodliness (ἀσέβειαν). This impiety is the “way of the world . . . a general reference to all that is anti-God (3:3).”<sup>34</sup> It includes wrong thinking about God and the consequent actions which typified the lifestyle of unbelievers.<sup>35</sup> It is the “antithesis of the frequently repeated call to godliness.”<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> C. K. Barrett, *The Pastoral Epistles in the New English Bible* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), 136-137.

<sup>34</sup> Philip H. Towner, *1-2 Timothy & Titus*, The IVP New Testament Commentary Series, vol. 14 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 245.

<sup>35</sup> Walter Lock, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles (I & II Timothy and Titus)*, The International Critical Commentary on the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, [V.39] (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1924), 144.

<sup>36</sup> Donald Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles, an Introduction and Commentary*, 1st ed., The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957), 198.

Grace also trains us to deny worldly passions (κοσμικὰς ἐπιθυμίας). The term passion is not necessarily negative, though it is often used that way, as it is here. The passions here are “those sinful impulses characteristic of ‘the world’ and its value system in its opposition to God.”<sup>37</sup> Collins notes that Stoic philosophy was concerned “that a person not allow himself or herself to become subject to passion.”<sup>38</sup> Of course, it is at least as likely that the rejection of worldly passions here reflects the Jewish background and its abhorrence of Gentile sexual mores.<sup>39</sup> This is a concern that found its way into Christian thought as well. “Together these two expressions summarize the old life, the life natural to the inhabitants of this world before they have the knowledge of God.”<sup>40</sup> Grace then sets us free from the old patterns of life that were characteristic of life in the world before we entered into the χάρις of our divine benefactor.

Barrett distinguishes between grace as liberation (which he describes as Paul’s view) versus grace as education (which he considers the view of the Pastoral Epistles). He writes: “in Paul grace is not educative, but liberating.”<sup>41</sup> He suggests that “we are not liberated by an act of divine grace from godless ways and worldly desires, but trained to renounce them, that is to turn our back on them.”<sup>42</sup> Barrett seems too eager to find distinction where it may not be necessary. Perhaps the vocabulary has distinct elements and perhaps there is a distinction of emphasis, but a case can be made that liberation from the power of sin is very much in view in this text: “It teaches us to say ‘no’ to ungodliness and worldly passions.” (2:12, TNIV) The term “redeems” also suggests a liberating function of grace and is so translated in the TEV (the translation upon

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<sup>37</sup> Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 749.

<sup>38</sup> Collins, 351.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Towner, *1-2 Timothy & Titus*, 245.

<sup>41</sup> Barrett, 137.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

which Barrett commentary is based): “He it is who sacrificed himself for us, to set us free from all wickedness.”

This benefaction of salvation redeems us from sin. This redemption is made possible by the self-giving act of love shown in his death on the cross, as is clearly implied in verse 14, “He it is who gave himself for us” (2:14a). While the first and second comings have been highlighted, the author also highlights a familiar Pauline theme: the death of Christ on the cross. The language here echoes that of many other passages (Mark 10:45; Gal 1:4; Eph 5:2; 1 Tim 2:6). Any discussion of grace would be incomplete without pointing out the sacrificial act of Christ which makes grace effective. His gracious attitude toward us was most powerfully expressed in his giving himself for us.

That he died “for us” is a reminder that in his sacrificial death he represented us, stood in solidarity with us and became our substitute. While any act of benefaction has a cost, Jesus part in giving the benefaction of grace was the supreme sacrifice. As such, he stands as the ultimate benefactor.

The reason for his sacrifice is that he might redeem us from our iniquity (14). Redemption has the effect of removing us from the sphere of sin.<sup>43</sup> He is employing a familiar metaphor that describes the act of paying a ransom to set a slave free. The same metaphor was commonly used in the OT describe God’s redemption of Israel, most notably in the classic demonstration of being set free from Egypt. Here the image is applied to the believer who is set free from sin by the price paid by Christ on the cross.<sup>44</sup>

The patronage context is instructive again. While not all manumission was patronage, it was common for freedom from slavery to be an act of patronage. The freed slave would then

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<sup>43</sup> Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 760.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.



become a client. Perhaps that is the thought here. Christ's sacrificial death paid the price for the benefaction of grace that brings freedom from the sphere of sin and iniquity. The debt paid places us in relationship of grace and faith with God as benefactor.

God's benefaction of grace is also impressive in its scope: it brings salvation to all people. This leads to a great deal of conjecture regarding the phrase πάντων ἀνθρώποις (all people). Some see this as a "clear cut statement of the universalism of the gospel."<sup>45</sup> Others object to seeing universalism. They argue instead that this is a typical theme found in the Pastoral Epistles in which God's gift is available to all people (without regard to ethnic or social distinctions). The "all," in this view, is limited to refer to only those who believe. In other words, grace is universal in scope but not application.<sup>46</sup> One of the problems of the universalist interpretation of the text, is that the salvation is expected to manifest itself in this present life in very tangible ways: deliverance from vice and character formation (education in the cardinal virtues). If the salvation is universal in its application, why is it not evidenced by universal moral transformation in the lives of all peoples here on the earth? The patronage background may suggest that the moral transformation that results from the education of grace comes only to those who enter into the dance of grace in the embrace of faith—those who enter into a grace/faith relationship with the divine benefactor.

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<sup>45</sup> Fred D. Gealy and Morgan P. Noyes, "The First and Second Epistles to Timothy and the Epistle to Titus," in *The Interpreter's Bible: The Holy Scriptures in the King James and Revised Standard Versions with General Articles and Introduction, Exegesis, Exposition for Each Book of the Bible*, ed. George Arthur Buttrick (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1951), 539.

<sup>46</sup> See Towner, *1-2 Timothy & Titus*, 244. He writes: In scope it is universal, reaching in some way to all men. This does not mean that all people respond to the appearance of Christ—to his birth, ministry, death and resurrection—with equal acceptance." See also Witherington, 105. He writes: 1 Timothy 2:3-4 provides the sort of context in which we should view this matter: God desires that 'all people be saved and come to the full knowledge of the truth'—a theme that we find also in 1 Timothy 4:10, where we hear of 'the living God who is the Savior of all people, especially of the faithful.' Notice that the limitation comes at the point of those who respond in faith, not at the point of God's desire or will."

Some see the emphasis of the text on breaking down the boundaries of social distinction (noting the reference to slaves in the previous verses).<sup>47</sup> Others suggest the focus is on the boundaries of race, with a view to show that the gospel of Christ cannot be confined to the Jews, but is freely available to Gentiles as well.<sup>48</sup> The concern for the gospel of Christ to break down all barriers of race, sex and social identity suggest that both of these concerns (and others) are in keeping with thinking of Paul.<sup>49</sup> The universality of the benefaction suggested in the text does show continuity with the Pauline concern for God's grace to break through all the usual cultural distinctions, prejudices and barriers. Compared to the limitations and favoritism typical of the patronage system of the day, God's unusual benefaction is highlighted.

The context of benefaction reveals a number of parallels to this discussion. Frederick Danker suggests a parallel with the benefactor epigraph of Artaxerxes:

God desires all human beings to be saved (1 Timothy 2:4; see also 4:10). Christ Jesus, God's arbitrator, attests the intention by identifying with the human situation and giving himself in behalf of all (2:5-6). Like the beneficence of Artaxerxes (No. 49A) God's generosity (philanthrōpia) extends to all people (Titus 2:11).<sup>50</sup>

Another parallel is suggested by Dibelius and Conzelmann concerning the benefaction of the emperor Galba: "From the benefactor who shone forth upon us for the salvation of the whole race of men (παρὰ τοῦ ἐπιλαμψαντος ἡμῖν ἐπὶ σωτηρίᾳ τοῦ παντὸς ἀνθρώπων γένους εὐεργέτου)."<sup>51</sup> Both of these descriptions of universal benefaction parallel the grace of God that brings salvation to all people. God, in the grace mediated through Christ stands as an example of

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<sup>47</sup> See Kelly, 244-245. Kelly writes: "It is possible that the Apostle is also implying that God's grace extends to all classes of mankind, including the slaves mentioned above." Similarly, see Lock, 143. See also Knight, 319.

<sup>48</sup> Marshall and Towner, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, 268. He looks to Luke-Acts (Acts 17:30; 22:14f; Lk 2:10, 14) and Timothy 2:4-6 as parallels that suggest this meaning. See also Collins, 350. Collins raises the possibility that the author is countering Jewish exclusivism.

<sup>49</sup> See for e.g. Gal 3:28.

<sup>50</sup> Danker, *Benefactor*, 337.

<sup>51</sup> Dibelius and Conzelmann, 144. Original source: Ditt. *Syll.* II, 760.7

the greatest of benefactors. His benefaction breaks down the walls that divide and opens the availability of God's benefaction to all people. The equal access provided by God's benefaction supersedes the particularism common to other patrons and shows God's grace to be the ultimate benefaction.<sup>52</sup>

### **Grace and the Benefaction of Moral Virtue**

Another aspect of the salvation brought by God's grace is that it educates in moral virtue. This is in keeping with the ideals of Greek education which sought to produce virtue.<sup>53</sup> God's grace is not mere head knowledge or theory for it "effects a real movement from vice to virtue."<sup>54</sup> For the Greeks, education must include "character formation."<sup>55</sup> That character formation is the focus of the teaching in these verses is confirmed by the list of virtues that are said to result from the education of grace. Stephen Mott writes: "The goal of the educative (παιδεύειν) task of χάρις in Tit. ii 12 is the acquisition of virtue as represented by the listing of cardinal virtues."<sup>56</sup>

Teaching may be used in a positive sense as education or training or in a negative sense as chastisement or correction. Most are agreed that it is being used with a positive connotation in this passage.<sup>57</sup> While we cannot rule out the possibility that the sense of "discipline" could stand behind the word in some sense, Towner is likely right in his assessment that it is "the educational character or function of the event that stands at the center of what Paul is saying. In this case, the

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<sup>52</sup> See the discussion of particularistic cultures and patronage in Chapter 1 of this thesis, page 11.

<sup>53</sup> Towner, *1-2 Timothy & Titus*, 244. Towner points out that "in Greek thought, education . . . produces virtue."

<sup>54</sup> Robert J. Karris, *The Pastoral Epistles*, New Testament Message vol. 17 (Wilmington, DE: M. Glazier, 1979), 116.

<sup>55</sup> Gealy and Noyes, 539.

<sup>56</sup> Mott, "Greek Ethics and Christian Conversion: The Philonic Background of Titus II 10-14 and III 3-7," 30.

<sup>57</sup> The notable exception is Mounce, 423. He writes: "There is nothing in our text that necessitates the meaning 'to educate' rather than 'to teach by discipline.' It may seem more appropriate to some, but there is a fine line between teaching and teaching with discipline." See also Kelly, 245. Kelly also leaves the door open to both senses.

*paideia/paideuo* word group refers positively to training or instruction. And Paul's intention to echo or co-opt the Hellenistic concept of *paideia* is unmistakable."<sup>58</sup>

Stephen Mott looks to Philo as a backdrop to understanding the role of teaching in producing virtue:

Philo again provides a helpful background to Tit. ii 12 for understanding as education the conversion from impiety and desires to the virtues of moderation, justice, and piety. Not only does he too have the Hellenistic view that παιδεία has virtue, or specifically, the cardinal virtues, as its object, but also he understands παιδεία as the instrument of the decisive change from vice to virtue. As such it is the beginning of the life of virtue and is described as σωτήριος. Tit. ii 12, in the light of this background, quite appropriately describes God the σωτήρ's work as education in the denial of desire and the acquisition of virtue.<sup>59</sup>

Furthermore, "the highest task of education is the moulding of men to the pattern of true ἀρετή."<sup>60</sup> Grace then educates and trains us to become people of honor and virtue—people characterized by ἀρετή. The term ἀρετή was commonly used to describe the essential character of a benefactor. Danker, in fact, defines the term benefactor as "a person or deity who is considered to be of singular merit (Gk ἀρετή)."<sup>61</sup> The recipient of grace, then, is educated and trained in the very qualities exemplified by benefactors of particular honor. As grace educates, the character of the client is formed to become a person of honor and virtue. The transformation leads the believer to become more and more like the character expected of and aspired to by benefactors.

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<sup>58</sup> Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 747.

<sup>59</sup> Mott, "Greek Ethics and Christian Conversion: The Philonic Background of Titus II 10-14 and III 3-7," 35.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.: 31.

<sup>61</sup> Danker, "Benefactor," 669.

Luke Timothy Johnson defines παιδεύουσα as used in this context as “educating in human culture.”<sup>62</sup> Towner likewise describes it as a civilizing influence:

The *paideia* concept was effectively equivalent to what we would think of as “Greek culture”; that is, the whole process by which human (Greek/Hellenistic) civilization was to become civilized (this civilizing activity being expressed by the verb). For Plato and other thinkers this involved acquiring *aretē* (‘virtue’), as quantified in the cardinal virtues, and ultimately involved coming to resemble the divine.<sup>63</sup>

Grace then civilizes us in the virtues of a life lived with honor. This, again, means that it enables us to take on the virtues of the benefactor. Or, in light of Greek philosophy, to take on qualities that resemble those found in our savior—qualities that resemble the divine.

Dibelius and Conzelmann describe the use of παιδεύουσα in this text: “Here the word is used in its actual Hellenic sense, which contrasts the ‘uninstructed’ (ἰδιώτης) with the one who ‘is educated’ (πεπαιδευμένος).”<sup>64</sup> They also highlight the use of the word in Jewish contexts giving the example of *Ep. Ar.* 287: “where it is said of the ‘lovers of learning’ (φιλομαθείς) that ‘these are beloved by God, for they have educated their minds toward what is excellent’ (οὗτοι γὰρ θεοφιλεῖς εἰσι πρὸς τὰ κάλλιστα πεπαιδευκότες τὰς διανοίας).”<sup>65</sup> They also point out an interesting parallel in the literature of the early church: “though Jesus Christ . . . through him have you taught us, made us holy, and brought us to honor” (διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ . . . , δι’ οὗ ἡμᾶς ἐπάιδευσας, ἡγίασας, ἐτίμησας).<sup>66</sup> Tatian also uses the word in his description of the process of enculturation/conversion from pagan Assyria (his place of birth) to Christianity in the Greco-Roman world.<sup>67</sup> In each case, the word describes the process of being trained in the ways

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<sup>62</sup> Luke Timothy Johnson, *Letters to Paul's Delegates: 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus*, The New Testament in Context. (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1996), 240-241.

<sup>63</sup> Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 747-748.

<sup>64</sup> Dibelius and Conzelmann, 143.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid. Quote from *1 Clem.* 59.3.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid. They cite the example of Tatian's *Or. Graec.* 42.

of virtue—of a conversion from an old way of life to a better one—a life of honor. That seems to be the very idea that underlies the training of grace that is described in this passage.

While the specific terminology may be new to Pauline literature, the concept of a life lived with virtue, a life lived honorably as it reflects Christ-like behavior is certainly in keeping with Paul's understanding of grace.

Furthermore, grace purifies and makes us zealous for good deeds. The ability to renounce sin is an important part of the effect of grace, but it is not limited to that in this text. Grace's work is more than education of right and wrong, enabling a good choice. Grace's education is transformative and involves spiritual cleansing, rebirth, renewal and a total reorientation of life (we become zealous for good deeds). Grace's work enables us to live out our lives in accordance with the ideals of God and man. This includes both the exemplary life idealized by Greek and Roman philosophers in the cardinal virtues and the ideals laid out by God for his people in the Old Testament. To achieve such lofty goals, it seems unlikely that grace here has no sense of the typically Pauline understanding of the liberating power from sin. The terminology may be distinct, but the idea does seem to be very much at home in the text.

### **The Cardinal Virtues**

The Greco-Roman patronage and benefaction context is again clearly in view. The virtues listed are representative of "the four cardinal virtues" and "only 'courage' (ἀνδρεία) is missing."<sup>68</sup> The list here is "the summation of a citizen of virtue."<sup>69</sup> The inclusion of εὐσέβεια in the list rather than ἀνδρεία does not take away from the sense that the cardinal virtues of Greco-Roman society are in view. In fact, Mott finds evidence for the inclusion of εὐσέβεια in some

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 142.

<sup>69</sup> Werner Wilhelm Jaeger and Gilbert Highet, *Paideia: The Ideals of Greek Culture*, 2d ed., vol. I (New York: Oxford University Press, 1945), 104.

early groupings of the virtues. He cites the example of Aeschylus in the early 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C. who describes the virtuous man: “σώφρων, δίκαιος, ἀγαθός, εὐσεβὴς ἀνὴρ.”<sup>70</sup> He gives other examples of the usage of the word in virtue lists by various authors showing that the list was somewhat fluid in its formation and often included εὐσέβεια until the list was standardized by Aristotle in *the Republic*. He also shows that it was a favorite word for virtue in the writings of Philo. He summarizes his thoughts on the matter:

The function of the fourfold canon of virtues thus is to indicate virtue par excellence and the unity of virtue. The citing of the virtues implies more than the specific contents of the particular virtues named. The whole fourfold canon with its function of summation, unification, and perfection can be intended even when only enough of the four virtues are cited to indicate that the whole canon is implied.<sup>71</sup>

The educative function of grace enables us to enter into a life of the highest virtue—the ideal of life as described by the philosophers of the Greco-Roman world. It not only sets us free from our old patterns of thinking and behavior, it trains us in virtuous living.

Towner views this description of the new life as a refashioning of the ideals of Greek philosophy “to reflect Christian truth.”<sup>72</sup> The new way of life, here characterized by the cardinal virtues, “characterize the life God intends (Christian existence) as one in which the physical appetites are under control, justice is exemplified in behavior, and the knowledge of God is acted on and workout out at the observable level.”<sup>73</sup>

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24. <sup>70</sup> Mott, “Greek Ethics and Christian Conversion: The Philonic Background of Titus II 10-14 and III 3-7,”

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.: 27.

<sup>72</sup> Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 749.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

## The Virtues of Judaism

In verse 14, the author moves to a series of words and images that reflect a Jewish context.<sup>74</sup> The author uses familiar phrases from the Greek Septuagint. Some of the more significant include:

“And he himself will ransom Israel from all its lawless deeds” (καὶ αὐτὸς λυτρώσεται τὸν Ἰσραὴλ ἐκ πασῶν τῶν ἀνομιῶν αὐτοῦ) (Ps 130:8).

“Because you are a holy people to the Lord your God and the Lord your God has chosen you so that you become for him a chosen people out of all the nations on the face of the earth” (ὅτι λαὸς ἅγιος εἶ κυρίῳ τῷ θεῷ σου καὶ σὲ ἐξελέξατο κύριος ὁ θεός σου γενέσθαι σε αὐτῷ λαὸν περιούσιον ἀπὸ πάντων τῶν ἐθνῶν τῶν ἐπὶ προσώπου τῆς γῆς) (Deut 14:2).

“You will be to me a chosen people from all the nations” (καὶ νῦν ἐὰν ἀκοῇ ἀκούσητε τῆς ἐμῆς φωνῆς καὶ φυλάξητε τὴν διαθήκην μου ἔσεσθέ μοι λαὸς περιούσιος ἀπὸ πάντων τῶν ἐθνῶν ἐμὴ γάρ ἐστιν πᾶσα ἡ γῆ) (Ex 19:5).

I will rescue them from all their lawlessnesses in which they have sinned, and I will cleanse them, and they will be for me a people.’ (ρύσομαι αὐτοὺς ἀπὸ πασῶν τῶν ἀνομιῶν αὐτῶν ὧν ἡμάρτοσαν ἐν αὐταῖς καὶ καθαριῶ αὐτούς καὶ ἔσονταί μοι εἰς λαὸν καὶ ἐγὼ κύριος ἔσομαι αὐτοῖς εἰς θεόν) (Eze 37:23)<sup>75</sup>

The close parallels to these OT texts which speak of God’s ideal for his chosen people are significant. He has already presented the Christian life in terms of the Greco-Roman ideal. Grace trains in the highest ideals of civilized human society. Here he speaks of the ideals of Judaism. Grace not only trains us in the highest ideals of man, it frees us to serve God in keeping with his highest ideals for mankind. Through grace, we become the people God created us to be.

Grace purifies us and sets us apart from the ways of the world. God’s intent was to show forth his holiness through a people who would live according to his ways. Grace frees us from our idolatries, our sinful passions and addiction to sin. By his grace, we become his holy people.

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<sup>74</sup> Johnson, 239. The Greek translations that follow are from Johnson.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid. The English translations appear to be those of Luke Timothy Johnson. Towner mentions many of these as well and includes some very significant texts from Ezekiel 36 and 37. See Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 762-765.



Grace enables us to be “a people of his own.” We have already considered the implication in terms of patronage, that grace brings a debt that creates a relationship with the patron. Here grace provides opportunity for all, without distinction, to become the people of God. Towner explains the significance of the phrase:

Paul sets the identity of the church into the OT context specifically focused on the promise of the new (or renewed) covenant (cf. Ezek 36:26-28). The textual network, beginning with Ezek 37:23, superimposes Christ’s purifying act over God’s act in the OT. The result is a people whose messianic identity is uniquely imprinted on them. In the OT covenantal transaction, by YHWH’s action of purifying (Ezek 37:23) and electing (Deut 7:6; 14:2), and on the condition of the people’s faithfulness (Exod 19:5), Israel would be known as “a people for his own possession”—that is YHWH’s “very own” possession, bearing the imprint of his holiness.<sup>76</sup>

### Grace as Gratitude

Χάρις also describes the reciprocal gratitude of the client. Here the expected gratitude of the client would be expressed in a life of virtue that reflects and honors the benefactor. After all, gratitude may be expressed in a whole range of appropriate ways including behavior that would honor the benefactor. This point is well stated by Joubert:

God’s benefactions always call for a fitting human response. According to Paul, the only appropriate reply is one of overwhelming gratefulness, which first and foremost should be translated into verbal expressions of thanksgiving, χάρις τῷ Θεῷ (1 Cor 15:57; 2 Cor 9:14-15). However, human χάρις or gratitude in response to the favour of God should also become visible in their behaviour.<sup>77</sup>

The gracious response of gratitude is to be shown in life here in this present age—in our earthly existence. Grace trains us to respond in gratitude by godly living. It has a positive, transformative effect that is seen in our daily living. While we live between the epiphanies of grace, the first and second coming of Christ, our gracious response is shown in lives of honor—lives that will reflect well on the honor of our great benefactor, God. Collins describes this well:

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<sup>76</sup> Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 763.

<sup>77</sup> Joubert, “Χάρις in Paul,” 194.

People of faith, whose responsibilities have been described in the previous periscope (2:1-10), are people who live between epiphanies. Their existence is defined by a temporal tension. They live as they do in time—one might note the similar importance of the temporal perspective in the Pastor's description of Paul's ministry (1:1-3)—whose horizons extend from the manifestation in the past to the epiphany in the future. Instructed by a teaching that comes from the past, they are to pray for the future. They live their lives, however, in this age." In this age they are to live modestly, justly, and piously."<sup>78</sup>

Yet the emphasis on the present does not suggest that eschatological hope is not present in the theology of the letter, as the text makes clear: "while we wait for the blessed hope and the manifestation of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ" (2:13a). The second coming of Christ provides impetus to continue on until we are fully trained in *χάρις*. Towner presents the contrast well: "this present Christian existence (2:2-10) – salvation here and now – must always be regarded with reference to the future event that will complete the present experience. It is a real but unfinished contingent experience of salvation."<sup>79</sup> The "real transformation in the present" that is brought about by the power of God's grace gives the believer hope to press forward in expectation of the second coming of Christ (see also 1 Tim 6:14; 2 Tim 4:8).<sup>80</sup>

While some argue that the Pastorals reflect a loss of hope for the imminent return of Christ, that is not reflected in this passage. Marshall rightly states: "suggestions that the eschatological outlook is here unemphasised and has a different force from what it had in early Christianity where it was the primary factor in determining how believers lived are not convincing."<sup>81</sup> The second coming of Christ remains the blessed hope and a powerful motivation to allow grace's work of education to continue to produce a virtuous life.

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<sup>78</sup> Collins, 348.

<sup>79</sup> Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus.*, 750.

<sup>80</sup> Bassler, 199.

<sup>81</sup> Marshall and Towner, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, 273.

One of the more difficult phrases in Titus is found here in verse 13: τοῦ μεγάλου θεοῦ καὶ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ. Is the reference to “our Great God” to God the Father or is it an ascription of deity to Jesus Christ? The implications for Christology are profound and scholars have come to very different conclusions.

Marshall lays out the arguments for all three major positions. He concludes that the phrase should be interpreted so that “our God and Savior” refers to Jesus Christ. He views the following points as decisive ones in his decision:

- (a) the probability that ‘God and Savior’ must be treated as one phrase rather than being split in two in view of the absence of the article with ‘Savior’ and the attestation of the phrase as a divine attribute;
- (b) the improbability that Jesus Christ is in apposition to ‘glory’ or that two epiphanies are in mind;
- (c) the background in the later NT writings and the AF in which the title of ‘God’ was being to be applied to Jesus.<sup>82</sup>

PHEME PERKINS comes to the same conclusion finding significance in looking to a benefaction parallel—the epiphany in the ruler cult. “The image is that of the risen Christ returning to manifest God’s glory. For a Greco-Roman audience, the appearance of an emperor was often described in divinizing language as ‘epiphany.’ In ceremonial contexts phrases such as ‘god’ and ‘savior’ were also applied to the emperor. Therefore, it seems more likely that this sentence should be read as referring to Jesus as ‘our God and Savior.’”<sup>83</sup>

DIBELIUS and CONZELMANN suggest that “there is no conscious reflection upon the relationship between the titles given to God and to Christ.”<sup>84</sup> This seems unlikely. Both are called “Savior,” taking on the honorific title of a benefactor. God the Father seems to be the

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 282. A thorough discussion of this issue is beyond the scope of this paper. Marshall’s discussion would be a good starting point for further research on the issue (276-283). It lays out each of the arguments nicely and gives a good list of sources for further study.

<sup>83</sup> Perkins, 1444. See also Witherington, 146-148.

<sup>84</sup> Dibelius and Conzelmann, 145-146.

primary benefactor in these texts, and thus rightfully is given the title Savior. Christ is the mediator of the grace, or in the terms of patronage and benefaction, the broker. He is, then, “the person perfectly positioned between God-Patron and people-clients to intercede on their behalf or to convey a heavenly revelation.”<sup>85</sup> An act of brokerage is in itself an act of benefaction, as access is a needed benefit. So, his supreme act of mediation (the cross) may be seen as an act of benefaction. As this is so, the honorific title of Savior may be rightly given to Jesus, the broker who entered into the benefaction sacrificially. Furthermore, Christ not only brings access, his self-giving act of sacrifice on the cross becomes the ground of the benefaction. In this sense, he may be seen as a benefactor. Of course, the title also suggests divine status and one should not dismiss the influence of a high Christology by the author which may stand behind his honorific language for Jesus.<sup>86</sup>

Finally, grace makes us zealous to do good deeds. It is here, especially, that Danker finds a theme he calls the “obligated beneficiary.” He writes, “that receipt of benefits from a head of state puts one under obligation and loyalty, is well understood in antiquity.”<sup>87</sup> This theme becomes a “favorite among contributors to the New Testament canon.”<sup>88</sup> Danker views this text as a key example of the theme.<sup>89</sup>

Danker continues: “Instruction ought to be in accordance with piety (1 Timothy 6:3). Titus 2: 12-14 is the principal exhibit for this juxtaposition: *sōphronōs kai dikaiōs kai eusebōs zēsōmen* (that we might live prudently and uprightly and reverently, verse 12), with a climactic

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<sup>85</sup> Neyrey, *Render to God*, 255.

<sup>86</sup> See the discussion in Mounce, 426.

<sup>87</sup> Danker, *Benefactor*, 450.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid. This is evidenced by the fact that it is given as the primary New Testament example.

description of Christians as benefactors; *zēlōtēn kalōn ergōn* (enthusiastic for fine deeds), stimulated by the Great Benefactor (verse 14).”<sup>90</sup>

Joubert points out that “God’s χάρις places the recipients in permanent debt to him. They must continually express their gratitude in thanksgiving and deeds of obedience.”<sup>91</sup> He goes on to speak of the cost of following God as a beneficiary of his grace:

On the performative level of Paul’s texts, this knowledge underscores the fact that attachment to God, as divine benefactor, is a ‘costly’ undertaking, since it requires personal sacrifices and absolute loyalty to him under all circumstances, as Paul’s own life of hardship and sacrifice illuminates (2 Cor 6:3-10; Phil 3:7-11). It implies constant obedience and the honouring of God’s name, as well as the performance of any services expected by him in grateful response to his benefactions.<sup>92</sup>

The benefactor is a person who does good. The characteristic here of being zealous for good deeds was one you might expect to describe a benefactor. Here it becomes a description of the proper response of one who has received grace. The surprising twist is that the clients are to show gratitude in response to grace, by taking on the character of a benefactor by being zealous for good deeds.

Grace enables individuals to live a life of virtue—a life that brings honor to God, the great benefactor and to Christ, the one whose sacrifice made possible the benefaction of grace. As we respond in loyalty and gratitude, zealous for good deeds, we become a witness to the unbelieving world to the power of the gospel of grace. Gratitude expressed in thanksgiving, in loyal obedience and in “doing good,” becomes a testimony that brings honor to God which is our privilege and responsibility as a client of his grace.

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 344.

<sup>91</sup> Joubert, “Χάρις in Paul,” 207.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 209.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### GRACE IN TITUS 3

The discussion of grace continues in chapter 3 in a passage that highlights the transformative effects of grace in a form that was commonly used for honoring patrons and benefactors. Zeba Crook refers to verses three to seven as a “patronal synkrisis.”<sup>1</sup> This refers to the practice of a client honoring one’s benefactor by recounting the ways his or her life has been changed by the favor (χάρις) received. By highlighting the difference between their lifestyle before they became a client to that lived in relationship with the benefactor, the honor of the benefactor is magnified. It was common in a patronal synkrisis to praise the patron or benefactor for the happiness and joy that characterized their state of life because of the benefits and favor shown to them.<sup>2</sup> Crook writes:

Synkrisis was a common rhetorical convention available to clients seeking to honour their patrons and benefactors for benefactions received. Synkrisis was a part of the typical client behaviour that involves advertising the deeds and generosity of one’s patron. Synkrisis was a way of showing the good things a patron, human or divine, had done for a client and simultaneously emphasizing the positive impact of this on the life of the client.<sup>3</sup>

Crook offers multiple examples of patronal synkrisis. The *Metamorphoses* of Apuleius, as a whole is an example of synkrisis where Lucius honors Isis for benefactions received by contrasting his life before and after the benefaction. This is indicated by Lucius statement in

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<sup>1</sup> Crook, *Reconceptualising Conversion*, 130-131. He offers the examples in the Septuagint. Philo is a prime example of this technique.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 131-132. Crook writes: “Patronal synkrisis focuses on the client, specifically on the state of the client, and functions to honour the patron or benefactor by crediting him/her/or it with the present state of happiness, bliss, or favour.”

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 124.

11.9, “And so I dutifully spoke to each of them and rapidly described both my former sufferings and my present joys.”<sup>4</sup>

Other examples of patronal synkrisis can be identified. Sometimes the patronal synkrisis is found in an inscription, as benefactions of healing by Asclepius are recounted in inscriptions, including one in Crete where honor is shown to Asclepius for curing an incessant cough.<sup>5</sup> There are also numerous examples in the writings of the philosophers.<sup>6</sup> The Wisdom of Solomon provides examples in the LXX (11:1-14; 16:1-4, 5-14; 16:15-29; 17:1-18:4; 18:5-25; 19:1-12).<sup>7</sup> Philo uses the technique in describing conversion (*Virt.* 180 and *Virt.* 182). Crook considers Titus 3 as a prime example of the technique as used in the New Testament: “Titus contains a synkrisis that is full of philosophical language, especially Tit 3:3-7, and all within the context of conversion.”<sup>8</sup>

### **Recalling Life Before Grace**

Paul begins the synkrisis with a list of vices that characterized the clients before receiving the benefaction of grace. The vices listed are typical of those found in other such lists in the Greco-Roman world. Mott compares the list to those found in Philo and finds five of the nine vices are found commonly in his vice lists (κακία, ἐπιθυμία, ἡδονή, ἄνοια and ἀπειθής), usually in contexts that refer to conversion.<sup>9</sup> Five of the vices are listed only here in the New Testament (ἄνοητος, ἀπειθής, πλανώμενος, ἡδονή, and στυγητός). Four of the vices are

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 123.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 124. See Emma Jeannette Levy Edelstein and Ludwig Edelstein, *Asclepius: A Collection and Interpretation of the Testimonies*, Ancient Religion and Mythology. (New York: Arno Press, 1975), 439.

<sup>6</sup> See Crook, *Reconceptualising Conversion*, 124-128.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 128-129.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 130.

<sup>9</sup> Mott, “Greek Ethics and Christian Conversion: The Philonic Background of Titus II 10-14 and III 3-7,” 35-36. Mott makes a strong argument that the language of Titus closely resembles that of Hellenistic Judaism in general and in Philo in particular.

found only rarely in the LXX (άνόητος, άπειθής, πλανώμενος, ήδονή). Στυγητός is not found at all in the LXX.

The list is not intended to be exhaustive, but gives examples of common vices that were deemed to be particularly dishonorable.<sup>10</sup> They are expressed to give examples of the kinds of vices that were practiced before conversion to Christ. As they are being used to highlight the effects of grace, the focus is probably on those vices that were especially looked down upon not only by the Christians, but also by the society in general. Paul has already emphasized that he is giving these instructions “so that the word of God may not be discredited” (2:5). It is likely that the vice list was chosen with such an apologetic function in mind.

### **The Appearance of Grace**

Both goodness (χρηστότης) and lovingkindness (φιλανθρωπία) are character qualities that are often used to describe benefactors.<sup>11</sup> The benefaction context of this passage is further suggested by Perkins.<sup>12</sup> Mott also emphasized the benefaction context in his explanation of this text: “The qualities of God which are personified in Tit. ii 11 and iii 4, χάρις, χρηστότης, and φιλανθρωπία are benevolent virtues. Σωτήρ which appears four times in the passages (ii 10, 13; iii 4, 6), is closely associated with these terms.”<sup>13</sup> Perkins also points out that “Hellenistic Jewish authors exhort humans to imitate these attributes of God (see *ep. Arist.* 208; Philo *Spec. Leg.* 2.141).”<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Bassler. Bassler points out that, “the list is intended to be illustrative, not exhaustive.”

<sup>11</sup> Perkins, 1445. Perkins writes: “3:4-7 are a single long sentence in Greek which defines how God’s beneficence was expressed.” Witherington suggests that these terms were commonly used and had become “almost a cliché in Paul’s day” for patrons and benefactors. See Witherington, 156.

<sup>12</sup> Perkins, 1445.

<sup>13</sup> Mott, “Greek Ethics and Christian Conversion: The Philonic Background of Titus II 10-14 and III 3-7,” 43.

<sup>14</sup> Perkins, 1445.



Paul is expanding on the epiphany of χάρις in 2:11, here emphasizing God's character as expressed in his χρηστότης and φιλάνθρωπία (both of which may serve as "synonyms of grace").<sup>15</sup> Χρηστότης is used by Paul as a divine attribute in Romans 2:4 and 11:22 (where it is used three times). It is also used in Ephesians 2:7. So it is not uncommon in Pauline literature. It refers to "the quality of being helpful or beneficial" and can be translated as goodness, kindness, or generosity.<sup>16</sup> As such it is a primary characteristic of benefactors, whether human or divine.

φιλάνθρωπία is used only here in Pauline literature. It describes the "affectionate concern for and interest in humanity" and is translated as loving kindness.<sup>17</sup> It too is used in referring to the character of benefactors, especially the emperor in the ruler cult.<sup>18</sup> Towner argues that "the main point in describing the epiphany as a display of these specific virtues – as a demonstration of God's character – is to explain that God has communicated the very qualities needed to live the life prescribed in 3:1-2."<sup>19</sup>

The epiphany described here, like that in chapter 2, took place "historically in the person and work of Christ."<sup>20</sup> God's mercy and loving kindness was manifested in the appearing of Christ—in his birth, life, death and resurrection. While that is true, the emphasis in this passage appears to be on the epiphany of grace, mercy and loving kindness that each believer experiences "at the time of their rebirth and renewal."<sup>21</sup> In any case, both the historical appearing of grace, loving kindness and mercy in the person of Christ and the personal application of grace at the time of each believer's rebirth highlight the benefaction of God who comes in his loving kindness and mercy to bring grace that saves us.

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<sup>15</sup> Bassler, 207.

<sup>16</sup> Arndt, Danker, and Bauer, 1090.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 1055.

<sup>18</sup> Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 778.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 778-779.

<sup>20</sup> Gordon D. Fee, *First and Second Timothy, Titus*, New International Biblical Commentary (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1989), 203.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

## Grace that Brings Salvation

Salvation in this context is seen on one hand as the deliverance from the former way of life—a life without virtue. It is also salvation that brings justification and makes us heirs of the hope of eternal life. Furthermore it is a salvation that transforms us by the rebirth and renewal of the Holy Spirit. As such, grace trains and transforms us for a life of virtue even now in this present age (especially in light of 2:11-14). By grace, we are enabled to live lives in this present age that will keep us from shame and bring honor and glory to our benefactor—God, our Savior. Indeed, we become like our benefactor—living lives characterized by doing good (2:11; 3:8). Furthermore, the testimony of God’s grace at work in our lives serves an apologetic purpose in making the gospel attractive to prospective recipients of God’s salvation. Knight nicely summarizes the scope of this salvation:

The concept of salvation presented here is, therefore, grand in its perspective and inclusive in its accomplishment. The perspective is that God enters into history with his gracious attitude to act for us, transforming us now and making us heirs for an eternity with him. The accomplishment is that we are delivered from past bondage to sin, made here and now a new and transformed people who are indwelt by God’s Holy Spirit, thus already declared justified at the bar of God’s judgment, and finally made heirs of future eternal life.<sup>22</sup>

This passage is often seen as reflecting Paul’s theology with a concern to set works righteousness in opposition to grace.<sup>23</sup> Dibelius and Conzelmann write: “righteousness by works is here repudiated; such expressions have been taken over from Paul.”<sup>24</sup> They have argued for discontinuity between the description of grace here (which they see as Pauline in nature) and the grace in chapter 2 (which they see as non-Pauline). Yet it seems unlikely that the theme which

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<sup>22</sup> Knight, 341.

<sup>23</sup> Of course the point here may have to do more with contrasting God’s potential motivations for the benefaction of grace than the issue of humans seeking to merit salvation. This too could provide continuity between the undisputed epistles of Paul and the Pastorals. In either case, the differences seem a bit overstated.

<sup>24</sup> Dibelius and Conzelmann, 148.

dominates the two chapters with little interruption would show such discontinuity. It raises doubt to their claim that “the expressions are already formulaic and are used without any attempt to relate them to each other.”<sup>25</sup> It seems very unlikely that the author would place two passages on grace so closely together if there was not some continuity of thought.

A more careful reading of the text may suggest a slightly different focus. The point of the passage in context is not human motivation to earn salvation by works righteousness. Rather, the focus is God’s motivation to grant the benefaction of grace in salvation. The contrast is not so much between human works and grace, as it is between two potential motivations for God’s benefaction of grace. In that respect, he shows his preference to show benefaction based on his mercy rather than on the basis of our deeds. This seems consistent with other Pauline texts, such as Ephesians 2:8-10 which shows a similar motivation.

Clients in the Greco-Roman world would likely relate to the concept that grace results from a merciful benefactor. Their own efforts have fallen short and they too, stand in a hopeless situation in need of a benefactor—a savior—who would provide grace for their need. What was true in a world of material poverty, translates well into a context describing spiritual poverty. One’s own efforts are not enough to bring deliverance from sin. Each of us must, as an impoverished client, rely on the grace of God for eternal life.

While the author is clear that good works or righteous deeds are insufficient for salvation—that grace is not based on human merit—he is not denying the proper place of good works. Good works are a part of the expected response to grace. Remember that in the Greco-Roman context, the one who has received grace, returns grace in the sense of gratitude. The dance of grace requires reciprocity and the expectation is that gratitude would be expressed

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 145.

concretely in good works. So, while he dismisses good works as a way to salvation (a point consistent in Pauline theology), he never disparages good works. Dunn explains:

It is not a disparagement of good works or righteous deeds. That could hardly be the case in an author who commends good works so strongly (as consistently in this passage, see vv. 1, 8, 14; see also Eph 2:10). It is rather, a reminder that neither human actions nor human goodness can provide an adequate basis for relationship with God, however good, however righteous. Only God can establish and sustain that relationship. Good works are necessary, but as the fruit, not the root of the discipleship. Good works will be the inevitable expression (and proof) that the relationship is sound, not its basis.<sup>26</sup>

It is the benefaction of God that is the focus of this salvation. As Dunn writes, “the saving action spoken of is entirely that of God; it is God who ‘saved us’ and poured out on us the Spirit (vv. 5-6). Although both God and Christ are described as ‘our Savior’ (vv. 4, 6), God is clearly understood as source and author, and Christ as agent of the divine action.”<sup>27</sup> Or in the language of patronage and benefaction: Christ is the broker or mediator of grace.

The description of salvation in verse 5, particularly the phrase διὰ λουτροῦ παλιγγενεσίας καὶ ἀνακαινώσεως πνεύματος ἁγίου is the source of much debate. Many authors view the mention of water or washing as a signal that the author is referring to water baptism. Some agree that baptism is in view, but only as an outward symbol of the baptism of the Spirit that brings rebirth and renewal. Others argue that the focus of the passage is Spirit baptism alone. While terms related to washing and water are used in the passage, Dunn points out that the reference here is to the “washing of regeneration and renewal which the Spirit effects.”<sup>28</sup> He suggests: “of water-baptism as such there is here no mention.”<sup>29</sup> The focus of the passage is on the salvation brought by God through the Holy Spirit. Marshall points out that, “a reference to an

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<sup>26</sup> Dunn, “The First and Second Letters to Timothy and the Letter to Titus,” 877.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 876.

<sup>28</sup> James D. G. Dunn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit: A Re-Examination of the New Testament Teaching on the Gift of the Spirit in Relation to Pentecostalism Today* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1970), 168.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid. Interestingly, his view may have mellowed a bit. See Dunn, “The First and Second Letters to Timothy and the Letter to Titus,” 877.

outward rite as the means of salvation is very unlikely in a context which is replete with references to divine action.”<sup>30</sup> In light of these factors, it is probably best to see Spirit baptism rather than water baptism as the focus of this passage. While water baptism may serve as a helpful illustration or symbol of the internal washing of the Spirit, the priority still seems to be on the internal change and transformation effected by the Spirit—“the spiritual cleansing”<sup>31</sup>—rather than the external rite of water baptism.

Another issue has to do with the relationship of rebirth and renewal. Are they to be seen as two distinct events (whether baptism and confirmation in more liturgical contexts or as the Pentecostal tradition might suggest: conversion and Holy Spirit baptism). That the two terms are virtually synonymous and governed by a single preposition (διὰ) makes it unlikely (though not impossible) that two distinct events are in view.<sup>32</sup>

παλιγγενεσίας is a difficult word to translate. Marshall writes, “It was a term in use in everyday language to refer to any kind of rebirth, regeneration or re-creation. It can signify both a return to a former existence and renewal to a higher existence. It is used of life after death.”<sup>33</sup> Stoics used it to signify the renewal of the world after a world-wide disaster. Some highlight its usage in the mystery religions where it brings “ecstasy ‘for a brief time.’”<sup>34</sup> Though such a concept could hardly be in view here; this verse speaks not of a moment of ecstasy, but “of the lasting power of a new life.”<sup>35</sup> Witherington is skeptical regarding the influence of the mystery religions: “In Titus there is no mention of ecstasy, only the resulting change life and lifestyle. For that matter, there is no direct mention of the ritual of baptism here either. Furthermore, what is

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<sup>30</sup> Marshall and Towner, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, 318.

<sup>31</sup> Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 781. See Also Mounce, 448-449.

<sup>32</sup> See Fee, 204. See also Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 782-783.

<sup>33</sup> Marshall and Towner, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, 319.

<sup>34</sup> Dibelius and Conzelmann, 149.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 150. While they argue for the influence of mystery religions, they do see the limitations.

described here is the fundamental change that happens to all Christians, not just something that is the privilege of the elect few who are allowed initiation into a mystery rite.”<sup>36</sup> A number of scholars stress that the word was a common word for renewal that was used widely in many contexts.<sup>37</sup> Towner writes: “In the present context, the idea of the new birth associated with conversion (symbolized in baptism?) gives the best sense.”<sup>38</sup>

The parallel term, ἀνακαινώσεως (renewal), is probably to be seen as a synonym to παλιγγενεσίας. As such it too expresses the very Pauline “concept of renewed life in connection with conversion”<sup>39</sup> that is found in “newness of life” (Rom 6:4) as a “new creation” (2 Cor 5:17).

Dunn notes “that the gift of the Spirit is the fundamental and decisive feature in conversion/initiation is a central feature in Pauline theology (see, e.g. Rom 8:9; Gal 3:2-3).”<sup>40</sup> This picture of Christ “pouring out the Spirit” is reminiscent of Ezekiel 36:25-27 and Joel 3:1 (and its usage in the New Testament book of Acts). This terminology is also in keeping with the promise of the Spirit in the gospels (Mat 3:11; Mk 1:8; Lk 3:16; John 16:7) and in the book of Acts (Acts 2:17, 18, 33) where Christ is seen as the mediator (or in the terms of patronage, broker) of the gift of the Holy Spirit. Here the eschatological promise is powerfully expressed as Christ pours out the Spirit into the lives of believers at their conversion. The outpouring is described as being lavish or profuse indicating “the abundance and lavishness of God’s gift of the Spirit.”<sup>41</sup> This does not mean that eschatological hope is exhausted, there is more to come as

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<sup>36</sup> Witherington, 159.

<sup>37</sup> See Mounce, 17-61.

<sup>38</sup> Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus.*, 782. So also Marshall who believes the term refers to the “concept of new birth which is already associated with baptism and conversion.” See Marshall and Towner, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, 320.

<sup>39</sup> Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus.*, 782.

<sup>40</sup> Dunn, “The First and Second Letters to Timothy and the Letter to Titus,” 877.

<sup>41</sup> Collins, 366. Collins points out that the lavishness of the gift is an emphasis found in Johannine literature (John 4:14-15).

the next verse makes clear: the believers indwelt by the Spirit are “heirs according to the hope of eternal life.”

It must also be noted that this verse is remarkably Trinitarian. All three persons of the Godhead are working together in various ways to bring the benefaction of grace. Hanson contrasts the view of Spicq --who viewed this as “one of the most elegant expressions of the Trinity in the NT”<sup>42</sup>--with Holtz statement that “a distinct Trinitarian terminology is not present.”<sup>43</sup> Hanson clearly leans toward Holtz’s view. Yet, while one may quibble about its elegance or distinctness, the Trinitarian foundation is hard to miss--all three persons are working cooperatively to bring the benefaction of grace. While most scholars will disagree, it is interesting to note Kelly’s statement that “the triadic scheme, with its underlying assumption of the cooperation of Father, Son, and Spirit, is also of a kind very familiar in his [Paul’s] other letters.”<sup>44</sup> While the nuances of Trinitarian language and theology will come through councils and in creeds in the centuries to come, the seeds of Trinitarian thought have found good soil in this text.

### **Righteousness and Justification by Grace**

Righteousness and justification by grace are themes quite familiar in Pauline literature. Another familiar Pauline theme is also found here: “the saving purpose of God, which is that we might be justified and become heirs, is effected by baptism in the Spirit”<sup>45</sup> Dunn rightly points out that “the absence of any mention of faith here (cf. Acts 15:9) is hardly significant in view of

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<sup>42</sup> Hanson, 192.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Kelly, 253.

<sup>45</sup> Dunn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit: A Re-Examination of the New Testament Teaching on the Gift of the Spirit in Relation to Pentecostalism Today*, 167.

its prominence elsewhere in the letter (here vv. 8, 15).<sup>46</sup> Mounce likewise finds it absurd to insist that Paul must “always mentions faith whenever he mentions justification (cf. 1 Cor 6:11, where there is no mention of faith).”<sup>47</sup> Faith would likely be implied by its common association to justification in Pauline literature. The context of benefaction may also lead one to expect an implied faith here, as the relationship of patron and client was “based on mutual trust and loyalty (*fides*).”<sup>48</sup> While some try to find distinctions between justification here and justification in the undisputed Pauline letters, this text seems to follow the familiar path of Pauline theology.

God’s grace as manifested in the lives of believers through Christ’s outpouring of the Spirit bringing spiritual cleansing, rebirth and renewal, also brings right relationship or right standing before God. Mounce rightly notes that “δικαιωθέντες, ‘having been justified’ stands in stark contrast to δικαιοσύνη, ‘righteousness’ in verse 5. There it describes human attempts to perform certain works and earn one’s salvation; here it describes true justification, which can only be received as a result of God’s graciousness and the believer’s faith.”<sup>49</sup> Justification is usually understood as a forensic declaration – “a verdict of acquittal or vindication.”<sup>50</sup> This verdict of not guilty comes because of “his grace” (τῇ ἐκείνου χάριτι). The nearest antecedent is Christ, so this is presumably the “grace of Christ.”<sup>51</sup> The fact that the title “Savior” is given to Christ in this passage may also hint in that direction when we realize that it was a title of honor given to benefactors. As both God the Father and Jesus Christ are viewed as benefactors, they are rightly given the honor of the title, savior. In Jesus case, he is a benefactor of a particular type, a broker. The broker is a benefactor who specializes in the benefits of influence and access. In any

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<sup>46</sup> Dunn, “The First and Second Letters to Timothy and the Letter to Titus,” 877. This is in response to Leaney and others who make much of the fact that the word faith is not included here.

<sup>47</sup> Mounce, 451.

<sup>48</sup> Lampe, 490.

<sup>49</sup> Mounce, 450.

<sup>50</sup> Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 787.

<sup>51</sup> Towner argues for Christ as the nearest antecedent, noting that the term Grace of Christ is not unknown in Paul (2 Tim 1:14; 2 Cor 8:9. Others disagree, arguing for God the Father: See Mounce, 450. Also see Knight, 346.



case, right relationship with God is based not on our works of righteousness, but on the grace made possible by the work of Christ on our behalf.

Witherington takes issue with seeing justification in a “purely forensic sense here—‘to count as righteous,’ There is enunciated a connection between the internal transformation and the being set right or made upright before and with God. The two go together, and indeed one can say that without the renewal, one is not ‘upright’ before God.”<sup>52</sup> The point is well taken, forensic terminology sometimes gives the impression that justification is “legal fiction” that is unrelated to the actual work of grace in our lives that brings about rebirth, renewal and spiritual cleansing. Yet, we cannot dismiss the fact that grace justifies. Christ brings us into right relationship with God, both through rebirth and renewal and through the declaration of justification by grace.

Not only are we justified by grace, we also “become heirs in hope of eternal life.”

Towner notes that “Christians are heirs in process of coming into their inheritance, and the significance of the process is never minimized in Paul.”<sup>53</sup> Dunn notes that

The language echoes a familiar and central theme in Paul’s theology. On the one hand, there is the theme of inheritance (absent in the rest of the Pastorals)—that is, of Christian believers as entering into a share of the inheritance promised to the seed of Abraham (Rom 4:13-14; Gal 3:29; cf. Col 1:12). On the other hand, there is the idea that believers share with Christ both as son and heir to Abraham and as son and heir to God (Rom 8:17; Gal 4:7). The central and richness of the Christology should not go unmarked; Christ embodies both the saving grace of God and the inheritance promise to Abraham and is the one through whom humans experience that grace.<sup>54</sup>

The issue of inheritance may also hint at another feature of the relationship of patron and client. The debt created by the benefaction creates a relationship—generally a life-long relationship. The benefits of grace are not exhausted in the initial outpouring of grace. Instead, this marks the beginning of a life-long relationship characterized by the dance of grace—ongoing

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<sup>52</sup> Witherington, 161.

<sup>53</sup> Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 789.

<sup>54</sup> Dunn, “The First and Second Letters to Timothy and the Letter to Titus,” 877.

grace from the benefactor to the client, and ongoing grace, expressed as gratitude, from the client back to the benefactor. While it is a slightly different metaphor than inheritance, the idea of living in hope of further (and perhaps greater) benefits is not unlike the situation we find between patron and client.

### **Grace Reciprocated in Good Works**

Gratitude can be expressed in many ways including a life of loyalty. This loyalty could take the form of doing good works. That seems to be the implication here. Danker looks to this passage as another example of the obligated beneficiary theme where the recipient of grace is obligated to respond in gratitude. Of this passage he writes:

After extolling the beneficence of “our Savior God” (Titus 3:4), the writer of the Epistle to Titus encourages his addressee to remain firm in his moral counsel, “so that those who are committed to God may apply their minds to being champions of good works” (hina phrontizōsin kalōn ergōn proistasthai hoi pepisteukotes theōi, verse 8). In this way they can themselves be real benefactors, and in true Hellenistic fashion their fundamental relationship of piety will be in harmony with their horizontal relationship of uprightness.<sup>55</sup>

So again, we see that those who have received the benefaction of grace are called to respond in appropriate ways. Here the gratitude and loyalty of the client-believer is expressed by following the encouragement to imitate their benefactor—to live a life devoted to doing good works. While these good works could never merit grace, they are the rightful response to God the benefactor’s goodness as expressed in his grace. Grace becomes the means and the incentive to live a life of good works that bring honor to God as benefactor.

Pauline parallels include Eph 2:8-10. Good works done in human effort are unable to save, but having been saved by grace through faith, we are created to do good works.

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<sup>55</sup> Danker, *Benefactor*, 361.

## Conclusion

Grace enables us to live our lives in a way that honors our benefactor and evidences a life of virtue that will be a testimony to the unbelieving world. Grace makes our lives attractive and winsome. One of our best means of witness is our testimony. That is in essence what a patronal synkrisis is, a testimony of the effect of grace in our lives. It honors our benefactor by highlighting his grace and testifies of the greatness of our benefactor to all who will listen.

Towner writes:

The importance of the visible attractiveness of the Christian life is that it might point others to belief in God. Paul's thought is that since God's love in Christ has transformed the lives of those who have believed (3:3-7), the manifestation of that love in their lives (3:1-2, 8) should have similar results in the lives of others. Mission is one of the primary reasons for the performance of the Christian life in the world.<sup>56</sup>

By describing grace in the form of patronal synkrisis, Paul has highlighted the transforming power of the grace of God and has honored God as the greatest benefactor. The lives changed by the benefaction of God serve as a powerful witness to a world in need of grace.

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<sup>56</sup> Towner, *1-2 Timothy & Titus*, 260.

## CONCLUSION

We have examined the patronage system and its use of the word grace (χάρις). There is widespread evidence of the use of the word in the Greco-Roman world as evidenced by inscriptions, by letters, and by the discussions of historians and philosophers around the time of the writing of the New Testament. There is also evidence of the influence of patronage in the use of the word χάρις in Hellenistic Judaism with Philo being a prime example. The New Testament shows a familiarity with the system evidencing the fact that writers such as Luke and Paul understood patronage. A number of studies have already identified the influence of patronage in Paul's understanding of grace. All this being the case, we should not be surprised to find a heavy concentration of language associated with patronage in the two primary contexts of Titus that concern grace. Having looked at the evidence, we conclude that patronage is an important and underutilized interpretive lens for understanding grace in Paul's letter to Titus.

A number of insights from our research seem especially relevant. Perhaps most importantly, grace, while unearned, must still be reciprocated in gratitude and loyalty in a life of virtue. Another key insight is that in the context of benefaction, salvation and redemption are expressed more in terms of relationship than legal status. Also, grace in Titus brings more than entry into salvation, it trains the recipient in moral virtue in this life; it effects ongoing transformation. We also noted the influence of patronage not only in the Greco-Roman world, but also its influence on the development of χάρις in Hellenistic Judaism.

A number of areas for further research are suggested by this study. First of all, the other Pastoral Epistles are also quite rich in the language of patronage. These letters would likely yield further insight on the influence of patronage on the language of χάρις, not to mention a good number of other important theological words. Secondly, while some work has been done on

grace in Paul's letters generally, each deserves a more thorough study. Since so much of the language in the Pastoral Epistles (and other books where Pauline authorship is questioned) that is seen as distinctive and un-Pauline comes from Hellenistic and patronage backgrounds, it may prove fruitful to do a thorough study comparing Paul's use of χάρις in the undisputed epistles with those in dispute. It would at least provide relevant material for future discussions of the issue of authorship of the Pastoral Epistles. Also, the fruit of exegetical discoveries in the study of patronage and grace would likely have some important implications for New Testament theology and Pauline theology in particular. While the influence of patronage on grace is beginning to make an appearance in some studies, understanding grace and gratitude in terms of generalized reciprocity may provide clarity to the current discussion and open doors for further inquiry. As our understanding of χάρις in the context of patronage grows, so will our understanding of grace in the New Testament.

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