

# CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL QUARTERLY



Volume 82:3-4

July/October 2018

## *Table of Contents*

---

---

### **Salvation by God's Grace, Judgment According to Our Works:**

#### **Taking a Look at Matthew and Paul**

Timo Laato ..... 163

### **Communion at Philippi**

John G. Nordling ..... 179

### ***Sola Scriptura* in Luther's Translations**

Brian T. German ..... 197

### **Is *Sola Scriptura* Obsolete? An Examination and Critique of Christian Smith's *The Bible Made Impossible***

Jack D. Kilcrease ..... 213

### **Luther's Heidelberg Disputation Revisited in Light of the Philosophical Proofs**

Eric G. Phillips ..... 235

### **Moral Warriors: A Contradiction in Terms?**

Jonathan E. Shaw ..... 247

**Theological Observer** ..... 281

A Response to Day-Age Creationism  
Creation, Science, and God's Omnipotence

<b>Book Reviews</b> .....	303
<b>Books Received</b> .....	313
<b>Indices to Volume 82 (2018)</b> .....	315

#### **Errata**

There is an error on page 79 in the article by Nathan Rinne, “Paradise Regained: Placing Nicholas Hopman’s *Lex Aeterna* Back in Luther’s Frame,” *CTQ* 82 (2018). The last sentence of the second paragraph should read, “Even if they are born of a spontaneous love, the good intentions and works that characterize the ‘new man’ can be of a very impure love, still tainted by sin, even as that sin is covered by Christ’s blood.”

The Editors

## Communion at Philippi

John G. Nordling

Scholarship on the *koinōn*- word group in the New Testament is extensive but by no means uniform—and I have not read it all.<sup>1</sup> Often translated “fellowship” or “communion,” *κοινωνία* actually possesses differing meanings in the New Testament itself and no one meaning suits every context—leading to a host of methodological problems.<sup>2</sup> Other renderings of the word *κοινωνία* in English include “association,” “close relationship,” or even “sharing/participation” in something—where the thing “shared in” occurs in the genitive case.<sup>3</sup> It all depends on the particular document and context, which varies from passage to passage. I thought it helpful, in my own coming to terms with Philippians, to investigate how Paul uses the fellowship (or communion) language within the letter in the following passages:

*κοινωνία*—Phil 1:5; 2:1; 3:10

*κοινωνέω*—Phil 4:15

*συγκοινωνός*—Phil 1:7

*συγκοινωνέω*—Phil 4:14<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Most helpful for this article have been the following: J. G. Davies, *Members One of Another: Aspects of Koinonia* (London: A. R. Mowbray & Co. Limited, 1958); B. M. Ahern, “The Fellowship of His Sufferings (Phil 3:10),” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 22 (1960): 1–32; J. Y. Campbell, “KOINONIA and Its Cognates in the New Testament,” in *Three New Testament Studies* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1965), 1–28; J. M. McDermott, “The Biblical Doctrine of KOINONIA,” *Biblische Zeitschrift* 19 (1975): 64–77, 219–233; Peter T. O’Brien, “The Fellowship Theme in Philippians,” *The Reformed Theological Review* 37, no. 1 (1978): 9–18; L. Sabourin, “Koinonia in the New Testament,” *Religious Studies Bulletin* 1 (1981): 109–115; Andrew T. Lincoln, “Communion: Some Pauline Foundations,” *Eccelesiology* 5 (2009): 135–160; Jeffrey J. Kloha, “Koinonia and Life Together in the New Testament,” *Concordia Journal* 38, no. 1 (2012): 23–32; Julien M. Ogereau, “Paul’s *κοινωνία* with the Philippians: *Societas* as a Missionary Funding Strategy,” *New Testament Studies* 60 (2014): 360–378; Julien M. Ogereau, “A Survey of *Κοινωνία* and Its Cognates in Documentary Sources,” *Novum Testamentum* 57 (2015): 275–294.

<sup>2</sup> It has become “a rather elastic term.” So Lincoln (“Communion,” 136) who also complains about historical anachronism. See also Ogereau, “A Survey of *Κοινωνία* and Its Cognates in Documentary Sources,” 276.

<sup>3</sup> W. Bauer, F. W. Danker, W. F. Arndt, and F. W. Gingrich, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 552–553; henceforth BDAG.

<sup>4</sup> I shall be using the words *fellowship*, *communion*, and *partnership* interchangeably throughout the paper, even though, for the purpose of clarity, I have settled on the title “Communion at Philippi.” Plainly, *κοινωνία* can have these meanings—and even more—in English, as already demonstrated.

---

*John G. Nordling is Professor of Exegetical Theology at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana. He may be contacted at john.nordling@ctsfw.edu.*

It will not do simply to work through this material in order of occurrence, which would be wearisome. However, how Paul uses the occurrences of *κοινωνία* and its cognates to paint a picture of his dealings with the Philippians could be interesting—provided, of course, that an acceptable way of approaching the problem can be established and maintained.

I shall begin, then, with the first citation: Philippians 1:5. This text establishes, in so many ways, the type of communion that existed between Paul and the contractually minded letter recipients at Philippi and other Christians within the Pauline assemblies. By rendering sufficient justice to the first passage, we will also in due course touch on the other passages in the letter and come away with a heightened sense of the fellowship language’s pertinence to the original situation at Philippi and other relationships operable still today within the body of Christ.

### I. The Philippians’ “Partnership in the Gospel” (Phil 1:5)

In the lengthiest and most extravagant thanksgiving of the Pauline corpus,<sup>5</sup> the apostle thanks God for the Philippians’ “partnership in the gospel [*ἐπὶ τῇ κοινωνίᾳ ὑμῶν εἰς τὸ εὐαγγέλιον*] from the first day until now” (Phil 1:5 ESV<sup>6</sup>). “First day” could be an allusion to hospitality extended to Paul by Lydia, that “seller of purple goods [*πορφυρόπωλις*]” (Acts 16:14 ESV) from Thyatira, whose heart the Lord opened to “pay heed to what was being said [to her] by Paul” (Acts 16:14<sup>7</sup>) when that apostle first set foot in Philippi. Recall Luke’s placement of the incident in his accounting of the second missionary journey in Acts: following the nighttime vision of the Macedonian man urging Paul to “come over and help us” (Acts 16:9), the apostle and his entourage<sup>8</sup> set sail from Troas (Acts 16:11) and within two days were in Philippi, “a leading city of the district of Macedonia and a Roman colony” (Acts 16:12 ESV). On the Sabbath day, Paul and his team went outside the city to a so-called “place of prayer [*προσευχή*]” (Acts 16:13 ESV), where a group of women had assembled.<sup>9</sup> Paul and the others sat down and began to speak (*ἐλαλοῦμεν*) to the

<sup>5</sup> It is, so far as Pauline thanksgivings go, “more than unusually earnest.” Thus, J. B. Lightfoot, *St. Paul’s Epistle to the Philippians* (London: Macmillan & Company, 1913), 82.

<sup>6</sup> Scripture quotations marked ESV are from *The Holy Bible, English Standard Version* (ESV), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

<sup>7</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture translations are my own.

<sup>8</sup> This part of the narrative is comprised of the first “we” section (Acts 16:10–17), indicating that Luke—the author of Acts—was present and so an eyewitness of the events recorded. So F. F. Bruce (*The Acts of the Apostles: The Greek Text with Introduction and Commentary* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1951], 311) and many commentators.

<sup>9</sup> Though, as used among Jews, *προσευχή* is nearly always equivalent to *συναγωγή* in the sense of a cultic place (see BDAG, 963), many consider that the *προσευχή* in Acts 16:13 and 16 was not a

women (Acts 16:13), who gave them an overwhelmingly positive reception. Luke himself tells the story best:

One who heard us was a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods [πορφυρόπωλις], who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul. And after she was baptized, and her household as well, she urged us, saying, “If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay.” And she prevailed upon us [καὶ παρεβιάσατο ἡμᾶς]. (Acts 16:14–15 ESV)

So much for Lydia. In a longer and much more involved passage, we read of the conversion of the Philippian jailer (Acts 16:16–34) and how he, too, in a manner reminiscent of Lydia, was baptized at once—“he and all his family [ἐβαπτίσθη αὐτὸς καὶ οἱ αὐτοῦ πάντες παραχρῆμα]”—and set food before them (Acts 16:33–34 ESV).

These early contacts are significant because with such people—insistently generous Lydia and the converted jailer—Paul maintained relations with Christians at Philippi “from the first day,” as stated in Philippians 1:5. Neither Christian is mentioned by name in the letter, though it seems possible that Euodia and Syntyche (Phil 4:2) were among those women who, with Lydia, heard Paul’s words at the “place of prayer” just outside Philippi and gave to the apostle and his entourage a favorable response (Acts 16:13–14).<sup>10</sup> Other Christians Paul memorializes in Philippians are: Epaphroditus, who actually delivered the gift to the apostle in prison (4:18; cf. 2:25); the “genuine yoke fellow”—whoever he was—who was to help Euodia and Syntyche to reconcile (4:3); a certain Clement (4:3), now no more than a name—yet a Roman name at that;<sup>11</sup> and an otherwise undisclosed group of persons whom Paul designates as “the rest of my fellow workers [τῶν λοιπῶν συνεργῶν μου], whose names are in the book of life” (4:3 ESV). When one adds the similarly undisclosed “all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi [πᾶσιν τοῖς ἁγίοις ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ τοῖς οὖσιν ἐν Φιλίπποις]” and the “overseers and deacons [ἐπισκόποις καὶ διακόνους]” (1:1 ESV), it appears that there were a number of Christians in that Macedonian city whom Paul knew and with whom he shared

---

regular synagogue because it seems to have been attended only by women (see Acts 16:13) and συναγωγή is used in like contexts elsewhere in Acts (e.g., 17:1, 10, 17). Indeed, the προσευχή in Acts 16:13 and 16 could have been “an informal meeting place, perh[aps] in the open air.” Thus BDAG, 879.

<sup>10</sup> Lightfoot calls Euodia and Syntyche “ladies of birth and rank” (*Philippians*, 55). Other Macedonian women well-disposed to the gospel and helpful to Paul in his ministry were at Thessalonica (Acts 17:4) and Berea (Acts 17:12).

<sup>11</sup> Such persons bearing Roman names in colonies where Latin was the official language may have belonged to the original stock of colonists “who tended to get ahead.” So Wayne A. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1983), 56. For other names in the same category, see Lucius (Rom 16:21), Quartus (Rom 16:23), Achaicus, and Fortunatus (1 Cor 16:17), in Corinth.

communion. But what was the nature of that communion, and what significance did it have for the Christians that inhabited Philippi originally? Let us consider these questions next.

In the late seventies and early eighties, J. Paul Sampley argued that that slippery term *κοινωνία* in the New Testament expressed the partnership, mutuality, and reciprocity so representative of *societas*—a rather loosely defined legal contract between two or more parties in the Roman world to share profits and losses.<sup>12</sup> The contractual relationship among the partners (Lat. *socii*) came about through simple consent (Lat. *consensus*);<sup>13</sup> for example, one Gaius Fannius Chaerea was sole owner of Panurgus, a slave who early in life showed great dramatic potential. So Fannius contacted Quintus Roscius, the famous actor,<sup>14</sup> and the two agreed to enter a partnership along the following lines: Panurgus, initially Fannius’s slave, would serve both his original master and Roscius if the latter would train him to become an actor. It was further agreed that the two joint-owners of the slave would split the profits Panurgus might eventually earn. The legal means by which this agreement was reached was the consensual *societas*. Fannius and Roscius agreed to try to make a profit by contributing different things to the arrangement: Fannius, a half interest in his slave Panurgus; the professional actor Roscius, his invaluable experience, training, and skills. To effect this arrangement legally, no papers or written contracts were ever signed. Simple consent (Lat. *consensus*) was binding. To make a long story short, Panurgus turned out to be an outstanding actor—making Fannius and Roscius scads of money. However, the murder of Panurgus by Quintus Flavius, a third party, led eventually to Roscius’s suing of Flavius and an out-of-court settlement for reasons we cannot go into here. Indeed, the reason we know about this particular *societas* at all is because Cicero eventually represented Roscius against Fannius in *Pro Quinto Roscio Comoedo* (“In Defense of Quintus Roscius the Comedian”), an oration possibly dated to 66 BC.<sup>15</sup>

---

<sup>12</sup> See J. Paul Sampley, “*Societas Christi*: Roman Law and Paul’s Conception of the Christian Community,” in Jacob Jervell and Wayne A. Meeks, eds., *God’s Christ and His People: Studies in Honour of Nils Alstrup Dahl*, (Oslo, Bergen, Tromsø: Universitetsforlaget, 1977), 158–174; J. Paul Sampley, *Pauline Partnership in Christ: Christian Community and Commitment in Light of Roman Law* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980).

<sup>13</sup> So Adolf Berger, *Encyclopedic Dictionary of Roman Law* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1953), 708–709.

<sup>14</sup> Handsome in appearance (Cicero, *Pro Archia*, 17), he had a squint (Cicero, *De natura deorum*, 1.79) and wore a mask (Cicero, *De oratore*, 3.221). For these and other details, see G. C. Richards, “Roscius Gallus, Quintus,” in N. G. L. Hammond and H. H. Scullard, eds., *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1970), 937.

<sup>15</sup> For the date of the speech (complicated factors are involved), see J. H. Freese, trans., *Cicero: The Speeches*, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press; and London:

The pertinence of the contractual *societas* for Paul's letter to the Philippians can now be discerned: in the New Testament, the Greek *κοινωνία* takes the place of the Latin *societas*, as scholars have long recognized.<sup>16</sup> I submit that many of the times *κοινωνία* and its cognates appear in the Pauline epistles, and they appear often,<sup>17</sup> some version of the consensual *societas* is at play—especially in Philippians, the references for which appear in bold in the preceding footnote. Remember, *societas* was a rather loosely defined contractual relationship between two or more parties to split profits and losses—and this would have been the arrangement between Paul and the Philippians too, even if details cannot quite be worked out at this remove. What Paul would have contributed to the compact was: his obligation to preach the gospel to them (Phil 1:5), and indeed to all people (1 Cor 9:16); his vast experience as a missionary and an apostle; his boundless energy—and indeed zeal—turned now from hating and persecuting the church (Phil 3:6) to preaching Christ energetically in lands where the gospel had not been proclaimed before (Rom 15:20; cf. 2 Cor 10:15–16).

What the Philippians contributed to the compact may be summarized crassly by just one word: money—for they were apparently wealthy and generous Christians, as we shall see; but then they contributed to the partnership by what may be termed “sweat equity,” as Paul shows more subtly several times in the letter.<sup>18</sup> For example, as Paul puts it rather understatedly in 1:29, it was “granted” to the Philippians (ὁμῶν ἐχαρίσθη)<sup>19</sup> not only “to believe in him [that is, in Christ], but also

---

William Heinemann, Ltd., 1945), 271–273. For the consensual *societas* involving Fannius, Roscius, and Panurgus, see Sampley, *Pauline Partnership in Christ*, 11–12.

<sup>16</sup> E.g., J. H. Moulton and G. Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1949), 351; F. Hauck, “κοινός, κτλ.,” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 10 vols., ed. G. Kittel and G. Friedrich, trans. G. W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964–1976; henceforth *TDNT*), 3:798; Sampley, “*Societas Christi*,” 161, 165; Sampley, *Pauline Partnership in Christ*, 12, 45n26, 60; Ogereau, “Paul’s *κοινωνία* with the Philippians,” 370n69.

<sup>17</sup> *κοινωνία* –ας, f.: 1 Cor 1:9; 10:16 (twice); 2 Cor 6:14; 8:4; 9:13; 13:13; Gal 2:9; **Phil 1:5; 2:1; 3:10**; Phlm 6; *κοινωνέω*: Rom 12:13; 15:27; Gal 6:6; **Phil 4:15**; 1 Tim 5:22; *κοινωνός* –οῦ, m.: 1 Cor 10:18, 20; 2 Cor 1:7; Phlm 17; *συγκοινωνός* –οῦ, m: Rom 11:17; 1 Cor 9:23; **Phil 1:7**; *συγκοινωνέω*: Eph 5:11; **Phil 4:14**.

<sup>18</sup> By “sweat equity,” I mean nonfinancial contribution to a project in terms of labor and effort.

<sup>19</sup> The so-called divine passive could be at play here—that is, “it was granted by God to you,” etc. So, Ralph P. Martin, *Philippians*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Nottingham, UK and Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1987), 97; Peter T. O’Brien, *The Epistle to the Philippians*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans and Carlisle: Paternoster, 1991), 159n93; Gerald F. Hawthorne and Ralph P. Martin, *Philippians*, rev. ed., Word Bible Commentary 43 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2004), 76; Stephen E. Fowl, *Philippians*, The Two Horizons New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 70; Bonnie B. Thurston and Judith M. Ryan, *Philippians & Philemon*, Sacra Pagina Series 10 (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2005), 70; John Reumann, *Philippians. A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, The Anchor Yale Bible (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2008), 271–272.

to suffer on his behalf [τὸ ὑπὲρ αὐτοῦ πάσχειν]—by no means indicating directly just what their suffering consisted of (some think that the Christians in Philippi presented a “constant challenge” and even “rebuke” to their pagan neighbors<sup>20</sup>). In a similarly contrived passage, Paul states that all the Philippians were “joint partners with [him] in grace [συγκοινωνοὺς μου τῆς χάριτος],” both in “[his] own imprisonment [ἐν τε τοῖς δεσμοῖς μου]” and “in [his] defense and confirmation of the gospel [ἐν τῇ ἀπολογία καὶ βεβαιώσει τοῦ εὐαγγελίου]” (Phil 1:7). It is difficult to know from this vantage point just how the Philippians were partners with Paul in his own “imprisonment” and “defense and confirmation of the gospel.” Clearly they supported him financially, as their gift to him by way of Epaphroditus shows (Phil 4:18); but then there was their suffering for Christ in league with Paul’s own, (as stated in 1:29), their “having the same struggle [τὸν αὐτὸν ἀγῶνα ἔχοντες]” as they had “seen in Paul and now heard in him” (1:30), and most of all, their praying for a positive outcome to his trial (1:19) and the type of assiduous prayer and petition “in everything” and “with thanksgiving” that Paul asks of them in 4:6. So, reckless prayer for Paul amid adversity, sharing the apostle’s same struggle and even suffering with him, being participants with him in grace (χάρις)—which may be thought of, perhaps, as “God’s riches at Christ’s expense” (the old Sunday School adage)<sup>21</sup>—these are all evidences that the Philippians shared with their apostle in the sweat equity (if I may call it that) of actually being a minority Christian in the thoroughly paganized Philippi when Paul wrote to them in prison in perhaps AD 59–61.<sup>22</sup>

However, it was primarily in their financial support of and generosity toward Paul and his ministry that the Philippians distinguished themselves from other congregations with whom the apostle corresponded during his lengthy ministry. For, Paul writes near the end of the letter that “at the beginning of the gospel”—again, the apostle must mean at the beginning of his gospel *ministry* at Philippi, such as Luke records in Acts 16:11–15—“not one single church partnered with me in the

<sup>20</sup> O’Brien, *Philippians*, 160. Also, Hawthorne and Martin, *Philippians*, 75; Reumann, *Philippians*, 282–283; and G. Walter Hansen, *The Letter to the Philippians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids and Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2009), 103–104.

<sup>21</sup> Much more than this can be said about grace, of course: First, Christians are saved by God’s grace alone, through faith (Eph 2:5, 8–9). Then, grace is shown to the sinner (Rom 3:23–24) and represents the totality of salvation (2 Cor 6:1–2). Every Christian has it (1 Cor 1:4). To the embodiment of grace in Christ Jesus corresponds that of the *sola gratia* (Rom 4:4), the *sola fide* (Rom 3:24–25; 4:16), and in Paul’s understanding of the grace given to him uniquely in his office as an apostle (Rom 12:3, 6; 1 Cor 3:10; Eph 3:2, 7, 8; 2 Tim 1:9). See H. Conzelmann, “χάρις, κτλ.” *TDNT* 9:394.

<sup>22</sup> For the complicated matters associated with dating the epistle, see John T. Fitzgerald (“Epistle to the Philippians,” in D. N. Freedman, ed., *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 6 vols. [New York: Doubleday, 1992], 5:322) who dates Philippians either to ca. AD 58–60 or 60–62—if, indeed, Paul wrote Philippians from Rome.



matter of giving and receiving, save only you [οὐδεμία μοι ἐκκλησία ἐκοινωνήσεν εἰς λόγον δόσεως καὶ λήμψεως εἰ μὴ ὑμεῖς μόνοι]” (Phil 4:15). What Paul apparently meant by such a wide-ranging statement was that “not one single church” among the many frequented by the apostle in the early days had entered into a contractual relationship with him, but “only” the Philippians.<sup>23</sup> The terms of the contract are perceptible still in the phrase “in the matter of giving and receiving [εἰς λόγον δόσεως καὶ λήμψεως].”<sup>24</sup> “Giving and receiving” was a general expression for pecuniary transactions derived from two sides of the ledger—in other words, the giving by the Philippians and the receiving by Paul.<sup>25</sup> Or might it have meant Paul’s giving of spiritual gifts to the Philippians (bringing them the gospel originally, and their resulting faith and life in Christ) and his reception of their material gifts in exchange (cf. Rom 15:27; 1 Cor 9:11)?<sup>26</sup>

Scholars have argued it both ways, as the literature cited in the two preceding footnotes demonstrates; what bears emphasis here is the vast sum of money that must have been involved. The prepositional phrase εἰς λόγον can be a technical term meaning “in the settlement of an account.”<sup>27</sup> Paul’s mercantile language reflects not only the economic realities of his day, but also, I think, the type of Christians the Philippians themselves were: wealthy and generous, to be sure, and more than willing to support Paul to the proverbial hilt. But maybe also, for that reason, they were more than a bit concerned at the prospect of Paul’s imprisonment. Thus, there are those who suppose the Philippians had “backed a bad horse” financially, in that,

<sup>23</sup> Gordon D. Fee, *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 442, 444; Markus Bockmuehl, *The Epistle to the Philippians*, Black’s New Testament Commentary (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1998), 264; Hawthorne and Martin, *Philippians*, 270.

<sup>24</sup> Fee, *Philippians*, 442–443n18. For a summary of the ways in which this pregnant phrase has been interpreted, see Gerald W. Peterman, *Paul’s Gift from Philippi: Conventions of Gift Exchange and Christian Giving*, Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series 92 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 11–15.

<sup>25</sup> So M. R. Vincent, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles to the Philippians and to Philemon*, International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1897), 148; Hawthorne and Martin, *Philippians*, 270; Fowl, *Philippians*, 197; Reumann, *Philippians*, 663.

<sup>26</sup> So J. Hugh Michael, “The First and Second Epistles to the Philippians,” *Expository Times* 34 (October 1922–September 1923): 108; F. Hauck, “κοινωνός, κτλ.,” *TDNT* 3:808; Martin, *Philippians*, 185; Moisés Silva, *Philippians*, 2nd ed. Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 207.

<sup>27</sup> BDAG, 601. Also Sampley, *Pauline Partnership in Christ*, 53. I found additional examples of this prepositional phrase in my own research. E.g.: “Ptolemy shall give him per month for the settlement of sustenance [εἰς λόγον διατροφῆς] five drachmas, and at the conclusion of the entire period for the settlement of clothing [εἰς λόγον ἱματισμοῦ] twelve drachmas” (*P.Oxy.* 2.275.18–21; AD 66; my translation). I have been able to find several documentary papyri with expressions of this sort—e.g., “for the account of silver [εἰς | λόγον ἀργυρίου]” (*P.Oxy.* 2.281.7–8; AD 20–50); “for the account of interest [εἰς λ(ό)γον τόκου]” (*P.Oxy.* 3.530.15; 2nd cent. AD); “for the account of a loan [εἰς λόγον προχρέιας]” (*P.Oxy.* 4.729.13; AD 137), etc.

far from proclaiming the gospel, Paul was now languishing in prison—and so prevented from upholding his part of the consensual *societas*.<sup>28</sup> Hence, a major reason for writing the letter was not only to acknowledge grateful receipt of the Philippians' gift borne to him recently by Epaphroditus (Phil 4:18) but also to convey the idea that, despite the imprisonment, the gospel was advancing beyond his own and the Philippians' wildest expectations:

Now I want you to know, brethren, that what has happened to me has rather advanced the gospel, with the result that my imprisonment in Christ has become manifest among the whole praetorian [guard] and to all the rest, and that more of the brothers—confident in my imprisonment in the Lord—dare the more abundantly to speak the word without fear. (Phil 1:12–14)

## II. Fellowship Language Put to Theological Use at Philippi and Beyond

Thus far, we have investigated aspects of the fellowship language that pertained to the original situation at Philippi; presumably, however, the Christians there shared much in common with others who comprised the Pauline assemblies in the New Testament—and indeed with all others who have ever been, or regarded themselves as, Christians, including ourselves. That is to say, *κοινωνία* and its cognates must have theological relevance still today—even while conceding the point that attempts to construct a “theology of *κοινωνία*” may be burdened with “methodological problems.”<sup>29</sup> While that may be true, the attempt to connect the fellowship language to the church of every time and place, including our own, seems highly desirable—lest we focus too much on documentary papyri, legal rescripts, and the historical situation at Philippi, as interesting as those matters are in their own right. No: *κοινωνία* and its cognates possess, of course, a rich theology, even if a complete accounting cannot be provided here. To conclude this article appropriately, therefore, I shall focus on four passages—1 Corinthians 10:16; Philippians 2:1; 3:10; and 4:14—that provide some sense of Paul's rich theological use of the fellowship language and its ongoing pertinence still for us today.

---

<sup>28</sup> So, e.g., Brian J. Capper, “Paul's Dispute with Philippi: Understanding Paul's Argument in Phil 1–2 from His Thanks in 4:10–20,” *Theologische Zeitschrift* 49, no. 3 (1993): 209; Hansen, *Philippians*, 67.

<sup>29</sup> So Ogereau, “A Survey of *Koinōnía* and Its Cognates,” 276n4. Ogereau supposes that Lincoln's essay (“Communion: Some Pauline Foundations”) is “quite instructive” in pointing out problems in this regard.

*1 Corinthians 10:16*

*Κοινωνία* is used, first, to express what is offered in the Lord's Supper—namely, the body and blood of Christ. Paul states, “The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a communion with the blood of Christ [οὐχὶ κοινωνία ἐστὶν τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ;]? The bread loaf that we break, is it not a communion with the body of Christ [οὐχὶ κοινωνία τοῦ σώματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐστὶν;]?” (1 Cor 10:16). The grammatical form of these rhetorical questions requires the answer *yes*:<sup>30</sup> *yes*, the cup of blessing *is* (ἐστὶν) a communion with the blood of Christ, and the bread we break *is* (ἐστὶν) a communion with the body of Christ. Here ἐστὶν appears twice, as in the Words of Institution from the synoptic Gospels: “This *is* [ἐστὶν] my body,” etc.<sup>31</sup> Paul appealed to what the Corinthians knew about the Lord's Supper from their shared communion practice<sup>32</sup>—which must be thought of as *the church's* communion practice: what obtained at Corinth obtained also at Philippi and, in fact, in all the Pauline assemblies. Basil explained *κοινωνία* in this passage as a *μετάληψις* (“partaking, receiving”), and Chrysostom as a *μετοχή* (“participation”).<sup>33</sup> In either case, the fathers—as the church in Paul's day—interpreted *κοινωνία* as a literal sharing in, and participation of, Christ's blood and body in the Lord's Supper.<sup>34</sup> As Lockwood puts it: “Through the sacramental bread and wine there is direct oral reception of the Lord's crucified and glorified body and blood.”<sup>35</sup> The passage is cited by the Small Catechism to support the notion that the Sacrament of the Altar

---

<sup>30</sup> The negative particle οὐ (οὐχὶ) requires the answer *yes* (H. W. Smyth, *A Greek Grammar for Colleges* [Cambridge, MA: Harvard, 1920], §2651.a; James W. Voelz, *Fundamental Greek Grammar*, 4th ed. [St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2014], 261).

<sup>31</sup> The only exception is Luke 22:20, where ἐστὶν does not appear in reference to the cup (it does appear in Luke 22:19 in reference to the host). Otherwise, ἐστὶν appears twice (once with each element) in three of the four places wherein the Words of Institution occur—namely, in Matt 26:26, 28; Mark 14:22, 24; and 1 Cor 11:24, 25.

<sup>32</sup> So Gregory J. Lockwood, *1 Corinthians*, Concordia Commentary (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2000), 340.

<sup>33</sup> Martin Chemnitz, *The Lord's Supper*, trans. J. A. O. Preus (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1979), 140, citing Basil, *Homilies on First Corinthians*, homily 24 (PG 61:202), and Chrysostom, in *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, Second Series*, ed. P. Schaff (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956), 12:139–140. See Lockwood, *1 Corinthians*, 342n22.

<sup>34</sup> “This has also been the unanimous teaching of the leading Church Fathers, such as Chrysostom, Cyprian, Leo I, Gregory, Ambrose, Augustine,” FC Ep VII 15, in Theodore G. Tappert, ed., *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959), 483. The references are listed in SD VII 66, in Tappert, *The Book of Concord*, 581n4.

<sup>35</sup> This quotation is italicized in Lockwood, *1 Corinthians*, 341.

is rightly called “Holy Communion,”<sup>36</sup> and that the consecrated bread and wine are Christ’s body and blood by sacramental union (*unio sacramentalis*).<sup>37</sup>

Finally, when a genitive is used with *κοινωνία* (as happens here), “It is highly probable that it is a genitive of the thing shared.”<sup>38</sup> Hence, according to the normal rules of Greek usage, the phrases naturally can mean only “‘participation (with others) in the blood of Christ’ and ‘participation (with others) in the body of Christ.’”<sup>39</sup> So Paul expresses here not only a “communion” between the earthly elements and Christ’s body and blood in the sacrament (the Lutheran understanding), but also a “communion” between the communicants and Christ, who offers himself corporeally in the consecrated bread and wine (vertical dimension) and betwixt and among the communicants themselves (horizontal dimension). One sees in this sacramental understanding a movement from life in Christ through the shared means of grace to a more tangible—one might almost say, corporeal—fellowship with other Christians in whom the Spirit resides. So it has always been in the church and among Christians:

At the Eucharist, celebrated in the private house on the common dining-table with an every day cup and plate and with ordinary food and drink—bread, water, and wine—the believer could see for himself and know for himself that by these divinely appointed means through the simple tokens of his day to day existence in the world that existence was sanctified and drawn into the orbit of Christ’s redeeming work. God, who in Christ had met man at the level of his daily life, continued to meet him through the Sacrament. In the *koinonia* of the Church and through the *koinonia* of the Body and Blood all that was *koinos* was hallowed, i.e., through communion in the community all that was common was sanctified.<sup>40</sup>

---

<sup>36</sup> *Luther’s Small Catechism with Explanation* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1986), §285. The other names for this sacrament are the Lord’s Supper, the Lord’s Table, the Breaking of Bread, and the Eucharist. See also Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, 3 vols. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1950–53), 3:292n4.

<sup>37</sup> *Luther’s Small Catechism*, §291. See also FC SD VII 35, in Tappert, *Book of Concord*, 575; Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, 3:296–297, 342n78, 343n79.

<sup>38</sup> Campbell, “KOINΩNIA and its Cognates in the New Testament,” 6.

<sup>39</sup> Campbell, “KOINΩNIA and its Cognates in the New Testament,” 23. Cf., e.g., “a participation in the present undertakings [ἐπι κοινωνία τῶν παρόντων]” (Appian, *Bella civilia*, 1.8.67.13); “a participation in rule [ἐπι κοινωνία τῆς ἀρχῆς]” (Appian, *Bella civilia*, 5.8.71.17); “a certain sharing in the foul deed [κοινωνία τις τοῦ μιάσματος]” (Gregory of Nyssa, *Contra Eunomium*, 1.1.332.6); “a sharing in excellence [ἐπι κοινωνία τῆς ἀρετῆς]” (Maximus of Tyre, *Dialexeis*, 19.3b.2); “a sharing in the deeds of others [τῆ κοινωνία τῶν ἔργων]” (Synesius, *Oratio de regno*, 13.7). My translations. Most of these passages appear in BDAG, 553.

<sup>40</sup> Davies, *Members One of Another*, 25.

*Philippians 2:1*

Paul uses the expression “sharing in [the] Spirit” as part of a highly rhetorical series intended to encourage the Philippians:

If, accordingly, [there is]  
 any encouragement in Christ,  
 any consolation of love,  
**any sharing in [the] Spirit** [εἴ τις κοινωνία πνεύματος],  
 any compassions and mercies,  
 complete my joy  
 [by] thinking the same thing,  
 having the same love,  
 united in spirit,  
 thinking the one thing. (Phil 2:1–2)

Most commentators interpret πνεῦμα here as referring to the Holy Spirit, as indicated by the capitalized S in the above translation.<sup>41</sup> A more difficult problem is the type of genitive that πνεύματος may be. If subjective, the meaning is “the Spirit’s fellowship”—in other words, fellowship created by the Holy Spirit, which only this person of the Godhead can give through what Lutherans would call the means of grace.<sup>42</sup> If objective, the meaning is “fellowship *in* the Spirit” (note emphasis)—in other words, fellowship brought about through the Spirit’s indwelling presence in the congregation and a Christian’s personal communion with the third person of the Trinity.<sup>43</sup> Probably the objective genitive works best here: Paul encourages the Philippians by reminding them of their “joint stock” in the Spirit by which they are partners with him, he with them, and they jointly with one another.<sup>44</sup>

“Sharing in the Spirit” is third in the series, the first two members of which are “encouragement in Christ [παράκλησις ἐν Χριστῷ]” and “consolation of love [παραμύθιον ἀγάπης]”—concerning which there is no opportunity to elaborate here.

<sup>41</sup> Thus, Lightfoot, *Philippians*, 107–108; Vincent, *Philippians and Philemon*, 54; Martin, *Philippians*, 99; O’Brien, *Philippians*, 163; Fee, *Philippians*, 174; Bockmuehl, *Philippians*, 104; Hawthorne and Martin, *Philippians*, 80; Fowl, *Philippians*, 77; Silva, *Philippians*, 85, etc.

<sup>42</sup> This understanding of the means of grace surfaces repeatedly in the Lutheran Confessions, e.g., SA III VIII 10–13, in Tappert, *The Book of Concord*, 313; Ep II 13, in Tappert, *The Book of Concord*, 471; Ep XII 22, in Tappert, *The Book of Concord*, 499; SD II 4, in Tappert, *The Book of Concord*, 520; SD XI 76–77, in Tappert, *The Book of Concord*, 628–629, etc. Also, “Baptism . . . [is] the occasion when the individual is drawn into the unity of the Spirit” (Davies, *Members One of Another*, 14).

<sup>43</sup> So O’Brien, “The Fellowship Theme in Philippians,” 16n23, and most commentators.

<sup>44</sup> Just as Simon and his associates possessed “joint stock” in the two boats and several nets wherein they shared (this is the technical meaning of μέτοχοι, Luke 5:7), so Christians possess “joint stock” in the Holy Spirit. Thus Davies, *Members One of Another*, 14.

I should like to point out, however, that *παράκλησις*, *παραμύθιον*, and *κοινωνία* are “head nouns”<sup>45</sup> that possess a special relationship with *ἐν Χριστῷ*, *ἀγάπης*, and *πνεύματος*, respectively. Superficially, the construction resembles the construct chain in the Hebrew language,<sup>46</sup> and grammarians have referred to the attached genitives as the “Attributive Genitive,” “Hebrew Genitive,” or “Genitive of Quality.”<sup>47</sup> Such genitives are grammatically loose and so difficult to pin down precisely.<sup>48</sup> The words in 2:1 are big in meaning yet boil down to brief verb-less phrases rarely found elsewhere. Overall, Paul may have been searching for a rhetorically powerful way to get the Philippians to feel deeply about their shared unity in Christ (2:2–4) in spite of sinful tendencies to put themselves first (2:3). Likewise, Paul’s emphasis on thinking “the same” (2:2, 5) prepares the Philippians for the “thinking” among themselves that Christ exemplifies in the hymn that immediately follows (2:5–11).

#### *Philippians 3:10*

Paul states his earnest desire to “know him [Christ] [*τοῦ γινῶναι αὐτόν*] and the power of his resurrection and share his sufferings [*καὶ [τὴν] κοινωνίαν [τῶν] παθημάτων αὐτοῦ*], being conformed to his death” (Phil 3:10). This sentiment follows that résumé of seven items that would have set Paul apart as an exemplary Jew in his pre-Christian days (3:5–6),<sup>49</sup> his having been brought to see such “gains” as “loss” and even “rubbish” for the sake of Christ (3:7–8), and his earnest desire that he might be found in Christ not having his own law-oriented “righteousness” but

<sup>45</sup> So Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 87.

<sup>46</sup> Wallace (*Greek Grammar*, 86): “The category is very common in the NT, largely due to the Semitic mindset of most of its authors.”

<sup>47</sup> So Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 86, with the application to Phil 2:1 on p. 88. See the helpful studies in A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research* (Nashville: Broadman, 1934), 496–497; Maximilian Zerwick, *Biblical Greek*, trans. and adapted by Joseph Smith (Rome: Pontificio Instituto Biblico, 1990), §§40–41; F. Blass, A. Debrunner, and R. W. Funk, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), §165.

<sup>48</sup> Some comparable expressions, rendered hyper-literally, might be: “the hell of fire [*τὴν γέενναν τοῦ πυρός*]” (Matt 18:9); “baptism of repentance [*βάπτισμα μετανοίας*]” (Mark 1:4); “the body of sin” [*τὸ σῶμα τῆς ἁμαρτίας*]” (Rom 6:6); “the body of our humility [*τὸ σῶμα τῆς ταπεινώσεως ἡμῶν*]” and “the body of his glory [*τῷ σώματι τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ*]” (Phil 3:21); “sons of light [*υἱοὶ φωτός*]” (1 Thess 5:5), etc.

<sup>49</sup> Namely, his (1) circumcision on the eighth day; (2) being of the race of Israel and (3) of the tribe of Benjamin; (4) a Hebrew of Hebrews; (5) a Pharisee according to the law; (6) a persecutor of the church according to zeal; and (7) blamelessness according to a righteousness which is in the law.

rather the “righteousness” that comes through faith in Christ and on the basis of faith (3:9–10).

For the grammatical construction *κοινωνία* + objective genitive (“sharing in his [Christ’s] sufferings”), see “if [there is] any sharing in [the] Spirit [εἴ τις κοινωνία πνεύματος]” (Phil 2:1) immediately above. Another parallel to the passage is “sharers in our sufferings [*κοινωνοί . . . τῶν παθημάτων*]” (2 Cor 1:7). The antecedent of the αὐτοῦ is Χριστοῦ in Philippians 3:9, and the expression “his sufferings” seems reminiscent of “the sufferings of the Christ [*τὰ παθήματα τοῦ Χριστοῦ*]” in 2 Corinthians 1:5.<sup>50</sup> Earlier, Paul wrote that the Philippians were granted not only to believe in Christ but also to “suffer for his sake [*ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸ ὑπὲρ αὐτοῦ πάσχειν*]” (Phil 1:29). However, the phrase has been interpreted as suggestive of Jesus’ passion and death and the sufferings of Paul—or of Christians in general.<sup>51</sup> Further, suffering with Christ is a prerequisite for being glorified with him (Rom 8:17; 2 Cor 1:5; 4:10; Col 1:24; 1 Pet 4:13). Such participation in Christ’s sufferings is not a sharing in their expiatory quality as such, but rather it results on account of the world’s hatred of Jesus extended to believers because of their connection to him in Holy Baptism: “the plural [*παθημάτων*] refers to all the sufferings of Christ and not only to the final ones; they climaxed in his death.”<sup>52</sup> In several passages, Paul refers to suffering on behalf of Christ as the ordinary lot of believers (Rom 8:17; 2 Cor 1:5; 4:7–18; Phil 1:29; Col 1:24; 1 Thess 1:6; and 3:2–3).

#### *Philippians 4:14*

Near the end of the letter, Paul states that the Philippians had “done well” to share with him in his trouble: “Only you did well [*καλῶς ἐποιήσατε*] to partner with me in my trouble [*συγκοινωνήσαντές μου τῆ θλίψει*]” (Phil 4:14). In the New Testament, the idiom *καλῶς ποιεῖν* + aorist participle occurs at Acts 10:33 and 3 John 6 (in 2 Pet 1:19, the present participle occurs).<sup>53</sup> Such New Testament occurrences likely replicate a pattern encountered in the papyri—for example, “you will do well to say [*καλῶς ποιήσεις εἰπών(ν)*] that the loaves [have been baked] and that you’ve pickled the olives for me.”<sup>54</sup> Elsewhere in the New Testament, the verb *συγκοινωνέω*

<sup>50</sup> So O’Brien, *Philippians*, 405. See the related “the afflictions of Christ [*αἱ θλιψεις τοῦ Χριστοῦ*]” (Col 1:24).

<sup>51</sup> See the various possibilities in Reumann, *Philippians*, 501. The idea is developed at greater length in Ahern, “Fellowship of His Sufferings,” *passim*.

<sup>52</sup> R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul’s Epistles to the Galatians, to the Ephesians and to the Philippians* (Columbus, OH: Lutheran Book Concern, 1937), 842–843. Also Fee, *Philippians*, 332.

<sup>53</sup> For the NT idiom “do well” (*καλῶς ποιεῖν*), see Mark 7:37; Luke 6:27; 1 Cor 7:37.

<sup>54</sup> *P.Ryl.* 2.231.3–5, Arsnome, AD 40; my translation. Clear examples of this pattern occur in the following papyri: *BGU* 1.93.6; 2.596.4; 3.829.1; *P.Aberd.* 189.3; *P.Cair.Zen.* 1.59057.3; *P.Col.* 4.87.7–8; *P.Corn.* 5.5–7; *P.Eleph.* 18.3.

is used negatively—namely, of “partnering in” the works of darkness (Eph 5:11) or in fallen Babylon’s sins (Rev 18:4). Here, however, the meaning is quite positive: Paul warmly commends the Philippians for having partnered with him in his “trouble”—whatever that was.<sup>55</sup> The weighty compound *συγκοινωνήσαντες* likely recalls Paul’s more cumbersome statement in the Thanksgiving that the Philippians—“all” of them—were “joint partners” with the apostle in grace (*συγκοινωνούς μου τῆς χάριτος πάντας ὑμᾶς ὄντας*, 1:7). Again, Paul’s mentioning of “trouble” here possibly bookends his earlier witticism that the rival preachers were supposing that they were raising (i.e., resurrecting) “trouble” for Paul in his imprisonment (see *οἰόμενοι θλίψιν ἐγείρειν τοῖς δεσμοῖς μου*, 1:17). For the use of *θλίψις* to describe difficult—yet otherwise undifferentiated—circumstances,<sup>56</sup> see 2 Corinthians 8:13 and James 1:27. The “trouble” could have consisted of Paul’s financial constraints<sup>57</sup> or of his imprisonment.<sup>58</sup> We shall never know for sure. But the definite article *τῆ* with noun-head *θλίψει* quite suggests that Paul had some definite problem (or at least irregularity) in mind; that impression is reinforced by the moving forward of the genitive pronoun *μου* here for emphasis: “with me in my affliction.”<sup>59</sup> The very phraseology of these weighty Greek words could suggest, therefore, that the Philippians had partnered with Paul in *his* singular, unique, and personal “trouble”—whatever that was. Paul phrases it this way because the Philippians had proved their mettle by sharing with him not only in the holy things (the gospel and sacraments) and in affection, of course, but even in adversity, where true friendships are tested and forged: a friend in need is a friend indeed.

Elsewhere, Paul states that the Corinthians were called into a fellowship with God’s Son (“*εἰς κοινωνίαν τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ*”), “Jesus Christ our Lord” (1 Cor 1:9), and the author of 1 John states that his fellowship—a fellowship he is keen to share with his epistolary audience—is “with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ [*ἡ κοινωνία . . . ἡ ἡμετέρα μετὰ τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ μετὰ τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ*]” (1 John 1:3 ESV). And in a liturgical formula probably well established by the time Paul used it, the apostle desires that the “fellowship of the Holy Spirit [be] with you all [*ἡ κοινωνία τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος μετὰ πάντων ὑμῶν*]”—meaning the Corinthians originally (2 Cor 13:13–14). In Holy Baptism, initially, then, as one grows in the life

<sup>55</sup> Paul’s use of the aorist participle *συγκοινωνήσαντες* indicates that, at time of writing, he envisioned some specific occasion in the past when he had experienced “trouble.”

<sup>56</sup> BDAG, 457.

<sup>57</sup> So, e.g., O’Brien, *Philippians*, 528.

<sup>58</sup> Lenski, *Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians*, 891; Bockmuehl, *Philippians*, 262; Hawthorne and Martin, *Philippians*, 268; Fowl, *Philippians*, 196.

<sup>59</sup> So Reumann, *Philippians*, 659. Cf. Fee, *Philippians*, 439n9; Hawthorne and Martin, *Philippians*, 268.



of Christ through the means of grace, the Christian communes with all three persons of the Holy Trinity at once: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (vertical dimension).<sup>60</sup> When one is in Christ, however, the communion becomes at once outward-looking, external, corporeal, and involved with other believers in the messy problems and predicaments wherein the church finds herself this side of heaven (horizontal direction).<sup>61</sup>

Thus it was in the earliest church following the descent of the Spirit at Pentecost: the believers were devoted to the teaching of the apostles, to the fellowship (τῆ κοινωνίᾳ), the breaking of the bread, and the prayers (Acts 2:42). Next, Acts relates that “all” who believed were together and had “all things in common [κοινά]”; and that they sold their possessions and goods and apportioned them to “all,” to any as had need (Acts 2:44–45). So, the κοινωνία wherein the believers were devoted apparently consisted in the sharing of material goods: an outward expression of their having shared in the divine things.<sup>62</sup> The practice did not persist—it was probably too unsound financially—but Paul soon organized a system of monetary contributions, with which he was not a little preoccupied, that moved from wealthier to more destitute Christians. The churches of the Gentile converts sent collections to impoverished members of the mother church in Jerusalem (Rom 15:25–27; cf. 1 Cor 16:1–4; 2 Cor 8–9).

Now it happens that Paul twice refers to the collection as the κοινωνία: first he speaks of “the generosity of your κοινωνία” (2 Cor 9:13), which the ESV translates as “contribution,” and he states that the Christians of Macedonia and Achaia have been good enough to “make a certain κοινωνία [ESV, contribution] for the poor among the saints that are at Jerusalem” (Rom 15:26). Here, κοινωνία means the Christians’ tangible and financial concern for other members within the body of Christ with whom one shares the holy things. Some version of this occurred at Philippi, too, where Paul states that Christians there had “done well” to commune with him in some “trouble” that cannot be recovered here (Phil 4:14). I submit that pretty much the same happens today when wealthier Lutherans support poorer Lutherans in a foreign country, or even—if I may use myself as an example—when stateside Lutherans “partner” with me so that I am enabled financially to teach New Testament exegetical courses at Lutheran Theological Seminary, Pretoria, South Africa, as I have for ten of the past eleven years. In thank-you letters to the donor congregations, I usually commend them for having partnered with me “in the

---

<sup>60</sup> “We enter into communion with God.” So Davies, *Members One of Another*, 9.

<sup>61</sup> For scholars who conceive of the vertical and horizontal dimensions of the fellowship, see Sabourin, “Koinonia in the New Testament,” 110; and Davies, *Members One of Another*, 28–35.

<sup>62</sup> Davies, *Members One of Another*, 28. Cf. Bruce, *Acts*, 100; Ernst Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles. A Commentary* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1971), 191.

gospel”—citing Philippians 1:5, the passage with which this paper began. We have come full circle.

### III. Conclusion

What emerges from this study is the ongoing ambiguity of *κοινωνία* when subjected to exegetical scrutiny. Frequently bandied about by glib churchmen and Christians of every kind nowadays, “fellowship” actually possesses a quite richly textured pattern of interpretation, as we have seen. With the Philippians, Paul was involved in some type of contractual relationship, which Sampley has called the consensual *societas*—a complicated legal contract that Paul and his associates took over from current business practice. However, it did not stay there. Paul was a working man, to be sure, as were a good many of his contemporaries in the mid-first century AD,<sup>63</sup> but this apostle never ceased to be a theologian of the first order who used common things and everyday relationships to communicate the fullness of the gospel in Christ Jesus—things like, for example, the Stoic notion of “advancement” (*προκοπή* –ῆς, f.) to convey the idea that Paul’s imprisonment tended “for the advancement of the gospel [εἰς προκοπὴν τοῦ εὐαγγελίου]” (Phil 1:12; cf. 1:25; 1 Tim 4:15),<sup>64</sup> or that the apostle’s repayment of Onesimus’s debt actually showed on a smaller scale how the Lord Jesus Christ paid, and still pays, sinful humanity’s debt fully before God the Father in heaven (Phlm 18–19).<sup>65</sup>

I suspect that the fellowship language possessed similar purchase in the world Paul and the first Christians inhabited. It came to have, to be sure, thoroughly financial—and even secular—applications in Greco-Roman antiquity, as we have seen; but in Paul’s capable hands, “fellowship”—or “communion,” as it appears in this article’s title—acquired also a profound theological meaning. Indeed, as I have come to see, *κοινωνία* is christological at core—expressive of nothing less than the relationship between God and man in Christ Jesus. As expressed in the

---

<sup>63</sup> See, e.g., Ronald F. Hock, *The Social Context of Paul’s Ministry: Tentmaking and Apostleship* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980); Meeks, *The First Urban Christians*, 17, 64–65; P. W. Barnett, “Tentmaking,” in Gerald F. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin, and Daniel G. Reid, eds., *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993), 925–927; John G. Nordling, “Attitudes toward Work: The Classical Ideal versus That of Scripture,” in *Philemon*, Concordia Commentary (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2004), 128–137; Todd D. Still, “Did Paul Loathe the Manual Labor? Revisiting the Work of Ronald F. Hock on the Apostle’s Tentmaking and Social Class,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 125 (2006): 781–795.

<sup>64</sup> In Stoicism, the “advancement” from folly and vice to wisdom and virtue depended on one’s “disposition, will, choices, instruction from philosophy teachers, and influences and examples from friends.” So Reumann, *Philippians*, 194.

<sup>65</sup> See Nordling, “Paul’s Promise to Make Amends (vv 18–19a),” in *Philemon*, 272–275; John G. Nordling, “The Gospel in Philemon,” *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 71 (2007): 71–83.

Athanasian Creed, Christ is “one, not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh [*unus autem non conversione divinitatis in carnem*], but by taking the manhood into God [*sed assumptione humanitatis in Deum*].”<sup>66</sup> Thus, the unity of the two natures in Christ is not merely a moral or intellectual unity, although both of these factors are involved. It is instead an organic unity, because, in Christ Jesus, the divine and human natures become one person, and Christ’s personhood is the locus of unity between God and man: “Thus koinonia involves organic unity and to interpret it merely in terms of ‘fellowship’ is misleading. The koinonia of Christ is the participation in the very being of the God-man, and it involves sharing His life. To partake of Christ is indeed to partake of His life.”<sup>67</sup>

---

<sup>66</sup> Athanasian Creed 33, as translated in *Triglot Concordia: The Symbolical Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1921), 35.

<sup>67</sup> Davies, *Members One of Another*, 9.